

Conservation Commission End of Year Report 2011

The Old Lyme Conservation Commission coordinates conservation efforts, supervises natural resource monitoring, aids in the coordination of land development in an effort to preserve our natural resources, our remaining open land, and to sustain recreational property. The Old Lyme Conservation Commission also coordinates the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes and conducts research into the utilization and preservation of land areas of the municipality. In addition, the Conservation Commission often makes recommendations to zoning, planning, inland wetland commissions and water pollution control authority or other municipal agencies on proposed land use changes.

In 2011, the Conservation Commission focused on encouraging the reduction of pesticide use in Old Lyme. Thanks to state law, the grounds of play schools, elementary schools, and middle schools are required to eliminate the use of pesticides. The Board of Education agreed to extend this to include the entire central campus including the High School. Over the past year, the Conservation Commission has petitioned the Town of Old Lyme to extend the pesticide ban to include town playing fields such as Cross Lane and Town Woods. In response to this petition, First Selectman Tim Griswold appointed a Pesticide Committee to evaluate the proposed organic treatment of town fields. Two of the Conservation Commission members, George James and Lauralyn Lewis, participated in the discussions held by the Committee. A letter summarizing the Committee's findings has recently been submitted to new First Selectwoman Bonnie Reemsnyder and the Conservation Commission hopes to see action on this issue in the near future.

Increasing Awareness Regarding Pesticides

The Commission has designed a campaign to increase community awareness regarding the negative impact of pesticides throughout our region. Centered around the theme "Keep it Clean... Because We're All Downstream", the effort includes instructional materials (Brochure/Flyers/etc.) that provide information to assist residents in making safe and effective choices regarding household chemicals and lawn care products. To this end, the Commission has prepared materials that will be available to residents at the town hall and the library (also, see the Commission web site for a link to a Pesticide Fact Sheet @ http://www.oldlyme-ct.gov/pages/oldlymect_bcomm/conservation). In addition, the Commission has developed a banner that we hope to soon see displayed in town.



Rogers Lake

The Commission continued to make a concerted effort to focus town attention on Rogers Lake as one of the town's most valuable resources. Commission members are actively working towards establishing barrier plantings at Hain's Park to prevent runoff into the water and use of the beach by Canada geese. This project has created collaboration with

other organizations which provided input and resources: UCONN Extension Service Master Gardeners, C.L.E.A.R. Program of UCONN Extension Services, CT DEEP, and a local professional ecotourism and environmental interpretation specialist/planner. A welcome sign will be erected at Hain's Park, with both suggestions for residents as well as rules to protect this major aquifer. Also included will be bags for dog owners to use to clean up after their pets.

On other fronts at the lake, volunteers were recruited and trained by the CT DEEP to monitor the CT boat launch on Grassy Hill Road and prevent invasive plant and animal life from entering the lake. An East Lyme Girl Scout organized a Rowing Regatta, which created contacts with the community, especially lake area residents. Rogers Lake Authority provides riparian mats at the rowing docks which will retard the growth of plant life in the water. The Commission is also pursuing other outreach efforts to educate the community.

Grant Applications

Alternate member Maureen Plumleigh has actively pursued several pending grant applications on behalf of the Commission. One such application is for a grant that would help fund a local environmental cause selected by student winners to a Commission sponsored video competition. The video contest would take place annually for three years and would be open to Region 18 students in grades K-12. The video shorts would be created by students on an environmental theme of their choosing.

Cooperation with Congregational Church

The Commission continues to cooperate with the Congregational Church's Environmental Committee in their effort to promote organic treatment of lawns and to "go green." Commission member Tom Sherer wrote a recent article appearing in LymeLine that linked the combined efforts of the First Congregational Church, the Board of Education and the Pesticide Committee to eliminate pesticide use in our town. In support of the Commission, the First Congregational Church Environmental Committee recently sent a letter to the selectmen asking for their cooperation in banning the use of pesticides at Town Woods.

Other Commission Projects

The Commission continues to actively support the efforts of the Old Lyme Land Trust to establish a town wide network of trails. The Commission has also worked closely with a group of interested citizens to establish a network of safe bicycle routes within town and improve the riding surfaces and install bike route signage. The Commission is also investigating the incidence of radon gas in town, working to identify a location for a town leaf and composting facility, and promoting solar panel and geothermal heating and cooling installations. The Commission recently manned a table at Health Day hosted by Christ the King Church.

Respectfully submitted,
Tom Sherer, Acting Chairman