

Report of the
CONSERVATION COMMISSION

"If future generations are to remember us with gratitude rather than contempt, we must leave them something more than the miracles of technology. We must leave them a glimpse of the world as it was in the beginning, not just after we got through with it."

President Lyndon B. Johnson, on the signing of the Wilderness Act of 1964

To the Honorable Board of Selectmen:

During the year ending December 31, 2009, the Marion Conservation Commission issued:

- 27 Orders of Conditions
- 36 Determinations of Applicability
- 17 Extensions to existing Orders
- 1 Amendment to a previously-approved Order
- 32 Certificates of Compliance
- 1 Enforcement Order

The numbers for the first two categories were higher in 2009, possibly reflecting impending changes to the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (F.E.M.A.) revised Flood Insurance Rate Maps (F.I.R.M.) that are expected to be finalized in July 2010. These digitized maps contain changes to flood zones and base flood elevations that, in conjunction with a new requirement that the lowest elevation of a structure be two feet above the base flood elevation, will impact future building plans.

Requests for Certificates of Compliance remained high in response to reminder letters sent to holders of expired Orders of Conditions. These documents were written and approved at the 22 meetings held by the Commission during the year. Prior to the meetings, Commission Members conducted more than 131 Saturday morning site inspections in support of the meeting agenda or for inspections of potential violations. This effort represented approximately 480 hours of volunteer service. The Commission's effectiveness is a direct result of the knowledgeable and dedicated support provided by our Secretary, Diane Drake, since 1988.

Commission membership changed in 2009 - Member Bruce Hebbel was replaced by Associate Member Joel Hartley, and Wendy Carreau became our new Associate Member. Several Members of the Commission attended training sessions and conferences held by the Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions to expand their education of state requirements, professional knowledge, and administrative processes. We continue to work with applicants on their proposed projects, providing requirements and comments that can result in changes acceptable to the Wetlands Protection Act at some compromise to the initial proposal.

The Commission was successful in having two vernal pools certified by the Massachusetts Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program in 2009. Vernal pools are temporary bodies of fresh water that constitute a unique and increasingly vulnerable type of wetland. They are inhabited by many species of wildlife, some of which are totally dependent on vernal pools for their survival. We believe there are many more potential vernal pools in Marion that need to be identified and certified.

Respectfully submitted,

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