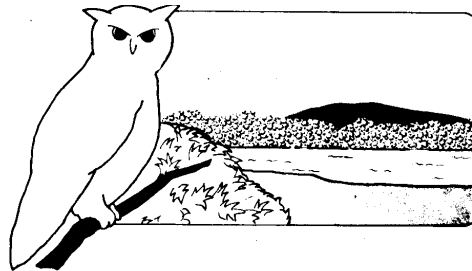


# Handbook for Connecticut Conservation Commissions

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*A Guide to the  
Principles and Practices of  
Local Environmental Administration  
in Connecticut*



Published by CACIWC  
Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc.

# Handbook for Connecticut Conservation Commissions

A Guide to the Principles and Practices of Local  
Environmental Administration in Connecticut

Third Edition

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## I. INTRODUCTION

This handbook is part of the effort to ensure the continuous success of conservation commissions throughout Connecticut. By offering explicit suggestions of ways to improve performance and efficiency, the *Handbook for Connecticut Conservation Commissions* provides a means by which every commission may improve upon itself.

Conservation commissions have no regulatory role, thus they must derive their power and influence elsewhere. Mandated essentially to compile and analyze information specific to their town, conservation commissions may gain credibility which leads to influence, and therefore to power, through the use and dissemination of reliable information. By providing accurate information to other municipal agencies as well as to the residents themselves, the conservation commission will become known and relied upon as a valuable source of information. Without an accurate information base, however, the recommendations may be ignored and not seriously considered.

Many conservation commissions have already compiled and are currently utilizing a reliable information base, typically in the form of a Natural Resource Inventory, and have gained significant influence and success in their towns. Others are just beginning this process, and some are still searching for this path. Even with such an inventory completed, a commission must be motivated, internally well organized, and aware of the political as well as organizational framework in which it must operate for it to be effective. This handbook attempts to give guidance in all these areas and to provide additional resources and ideas to assist commissions in becoming leaders in the field of conservation.

While using this handbook, the reader may notice some redundancy in concepts. This has been done intentionally. For conservation commissioners and staff alike, time is a scarce and precious commodity. The repetition of ideas throughout the handbook ensures that commissioners and staff will at least be introduced to all of the major concepts as each section is read for information on a particular subject area. To gain the most from this publication, however, it should be read in its entirety.

The information in this handbook is based on interviews with environmental professionals throughout Connecticut, various conservation commissioners and staff members, as well as on the first edition of this handbook written in 1976 by Elizabeth Jester. Many thanks to all who were involved.

## II. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The conservation commission is an official body of the municipality, created by vote of the local legislature, with its members appointed by the chief executive officer. The enabling legislation for the operation of Connecticut conservation commissions is found in **Chapter 97, Section 7-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes**. Its duties and discretionary abilities stem from its purpose: "...the development, conservation, supervision and regulation of natural resources, including water resources within its territorial limits."

### A. Legislative Authorization

According to this legislation, a conservation commission **must** perform the following:

1. **Keep an index** of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas,
2. **Conduct research** into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas of the municipality,
3. **Administer gifts** in the name of the municipality for the commission's purposes subject to the terms of the gift,
4. **Approve**, prior to submission, **state grant-in-aid applications** for programs to preserve or restrict the use of open space land to conservation or recreation purposes.
5. **Keep records of its meetings and activities** and **shall make an annual report** to the municipality in the manner required of other municipal agencies.

Conservation commissions are **permitted**, but **not required**, to perform the following:

1. **Make recommendations on proposed land use changes** to zoning commissions, planning commissions, inland wetlands agencies and other municipal agencies;
2. **Recommend plans and programs for the development and use of all open areas** to the planning commission (or if none, to the chief executive officer or the legislative body);
3. **Exchange information** with the Commissioner of Environmental Protection;

4. **Request technical personnel** to be assigned to the commission by the Commissioner of Environmental Protection for assistance in planning its overall program and for coordinating state and local conservation activities;
5. **Coordinate the activities of non-government bodies** (volunteers, etc.) organized for the purpose of conducting land use research;
6. **Advertise, prepare, and distribute** books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets necessary for its purposes;
7. **Inventory natural resources and formulate watershed management and drought management plans;**
8. **Acquire land and easements** in the name of the municipality, with the approval of the legislative body;
9. **Promulgate rules and regulations**, such as the establishment of reasonable charges for the use of land and easements, for any of its purposes;
10. **Receive gifts** in the name of the municipality and **administer** these gifts for such purposes subject to the terms of the gift;
11. **Apply**, if the municipality so designates, **for state grant-in-aid** of a program to preserve or restrict to conservation or recreation purposes the use of open space;
12. Supervise and **manage municipally owned open space or park property** when the agency normally responsible for such duties delegates that power.

All the above duties and discretionary abilities are spelled out in **Section 7-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes** as revised to 1994. These, however, also imply many other roles and functions that a conservation commissions may take on, examples of which are listed in Appendix D: Potential Projects. A common misconception is that these duties and abilities place conservation commission in competition with other land use agencies such as planning and zoning, which designate land use. *In reality, the duties and abilities given to conservation commissions by the State better fit the role of the "Conservation Consciousness of the Community."* The statutes, however, also place constraints on the actions of conservation commissions. If the commission enters into a grey area or is uncertain of its legal limitations, consult the Connecticut Statutes themselves and seek legal advice (See Appendix B: Constraints and the Right to Intervene for further information).

## **B. Local Authorization**

According to **Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-131a (a)** as revised to 1994: Any town, city or borough, by vote of its legislative body, may establish a conservation commission for the development, conservation, supervision, and regulation of natural resources, including water resources, within its territorial limits. The commission shall consist of not less than three nor more than eleven members and not more than three alternates, to be appointed by the chief executive officer of the municipality, to serve for terms to be designated by the legislative body establishing the commission. Part (d) allows for municipal funds to be appropriated to the commission.

Each municipality will have different parliamentary procedures to establish conservation commissions. This may require a special ordinance or an amendment to the municipal charter; each town will have different procedures, and the Town Attorney should be consulted to establish the necessary format. No matter what form the legislation takes, it must contain certain items:

1. Number of commission members and alternates,
2. Appointing body for these members (First Selectman, Mayor, Town Manager, etc.),
3. Term length, including the exact day upon which a term shall start and end for members and alternates (ie. for four years beginning April 1 and ending March 31).
4. Powers and duties as cited in **Section 7-131a of the Connecticut General Statutes**, and which can also include any additional powers given to it by the municipality,

In Connecticut, approximately 70 of the 146 Conservation Commissions are joint commissions with the dual responsibilities of overseeing the regulation of inland wetlands as well as attending to conservation matters within the town. Survey data indicate that these commissions spend on average 10% or less of their time on activities related to conservation. There are 23 towns within the State that, at present, do not have a Conservation Commission.

For assistance in establishing a conservation commission, please contact the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions.



### III. EFFECTIVE INTERNAL OPERATIONS

It is important to remember that conservation commission members are volunteers and few staff members receive salaries commensurate with those in the private sector. Since money is not the motivating factor, conservation commissioners and staff should both derive intangible rewards from their efforts. Formalizing procedures and duties within a conservation commission is one way to increase efficiency and enjoyment by decreasing bureaucracy and conflict. This section attempts to suggest ways in which these goals may be accomplished.

Some of a commission's operating procedures may be formalized in the municipality's enabling legislation. The size of the commission (no fewer than three and no more than eleven - **Connecticut General Statute Sec. 7-131a**), the appointment of its members (by the chief executive officer - **Connecticut General Statute Sec. 7-131a**), and the length of terms (typically between two and four years) are usually spelled out in this legislation. Also included would be procedures to fill vacancies as well as the requirements necessary to remove a commissioner. Other aspects such as some record filing requirements are determined by municipal ordinances that apply to all agencies within that municipality. The commission itself defines the majority of the conservation commission's structure and operating procedure.

#### A. Conservation Commission Structure

Diversity in commissioners' backgrounds can be of great benefit to the commission. Not only can it increase the knowledge base of the commission itself, but it can also play a crucial role in gaining credibility from the perspective of other agencies. Diversity may also help combat any perceptions of bias that other organizations may perceive in the commission.

The **officers** of a commission should consist of at least a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, a treasurer or comptroller, and a secretary. The appointed commissioners from within the commission elect these officers. The chairperson is responsible for setting the agendas, running the meetings, and is typically the official voice of the commission when dealing with other agencies, the media, or the public. The vice-chairperson assists the chairperson in handling many of his or her duties and officiates at meetings when the chairperson is absent. The treasurer or comptroller is responsible for the finances of the commission, designing and monitoring the budget, writing checks, and the like. The secretary is responsible for all internal communications, records, and minutes. Staff is sometimes hired to assist in this role (see Section III. C. Staff).

A **subcommittee** structure should also exist within the commission. For small commissions with large time constraints, the subcommittee structure might be nothing more than categorizing projects so that different individuals are responsible for the logistics and organization, and no one person is burdened with managing all of the commission's projects. Subcommittees are typically

established to focus attention on a particular issue. The subcommittees help educate the board as a whole and serve as the organizers on commission-related issues such as:

1. Open space - planning, acquisition, management, protection, easements, and inventory
2. Natural resource inventory - habitat delineation, floral and faunal inventories, identify areas of concern or value
3. Water quality and water-related issues
4. Municipal commissions liaison - monitor activities of other municipal agencies to discover areas where the conservation commission may be of assistance
5. Recycling
6. Environmental Education
7. Special annual programs - Earth Day celebrations, Arbor Day festivals, Household Hazardous Waste Pick-Up Day

Other subcommittees may be formed to address concerns specific of the municipality such as:

agriculture  
archeological, historical, and cultural resources  
fishways  
forests (see Section IX. A Recommended Project: Community Forestry Program)  
industrial, urban, or rural pollution problems  
rare and endangered species  
mining (sand, gravel, traprock, etc.)  
greenways  
ridgeline protection

## **B. Responsibilities of the Commissioners**

Each commission should explicitly state the responsibilities and the expectations it has for its commissioners, possibly in the form of an official job description. These should include attendance requirements, duties associated with each officer position (chairperson, treasurer, etc) and how these positions are determined, mandatory participation on a subcommittee, subcommittee organization of a special project, and the possible requirement of organizing at least one project of his or her own interest.

Providing opportunity for each member to head his or her own project can be of great importance. By permitting each commissioner to explore, in depth, some aspect of conservation

in the municipality, the commission can help cultivate motivation and energy in all its commissioners, not just its officers. When the officers are the only members acting on ideas, the officers will tend to be left with all the work, and the remainder of the commission will lose interest. For commissions that feel their time is too limited to add more projects to their agendas, this concept could simply consist of educating the rest of the board on an issue, such as drinking water quality, and possibly gathering facts about the municipality in that respect. Such projects will diversify the knowledge base of the commission as a whole with each member essentially becoming an expert and a leader in a different field. Volunteers who assist in the activities of the commission should especially be acknowledged for their efforts. Positive feedback helps to maintain enthusiasm and motivation.

Each commissioner should have a working knowledge of parliamentary procedure (See Section III. D. 3. Running the Meeting) along with the ability to read and interpret maps. Because maps are the primary method of storing and presenting information, map-reading skills can be crucial to the functioning of commissions that rely heavily on the compilation and dissemination of natural resource and land-use information. All commissioners should also be familiar with the municipal government structure and regulations as well as the infrastructure and resources within the municipality.

Some things to consider:

1. Municipal Government Structure (individuals, commissions, agencies):
  - who is responsible for what
  - who reports to whom
  - what other non-governmental organizations have influence in government (Rotary Club, agriculturally oriented organizations, sportsmen's associations, etc.)
2. Municipal regulations:
  - subdivision regulations
  - inland wetland and water course regulations and map
  - zoning regulations and map
  - building zone requirements
3. Infrastructure (Most of this information can be derived from the Natural Resource Inventory as described in Section IV: Open Space Index and Natural Resource Inventory):
  - location of roads, sewers, wells, power lines, greenways, storage areas
  - distribution of population both geographically and demographically
  - relationships of infrastructure to open space, agricultural land, streams (and stream runoff), flora, and fauna.

### C. Staff

The decision to hire staff members is a very serious step and should not be done without due consideration. Having a paid staff neither guarantees success nor ensures conflict, but opens the door for both. As a benefit, paid staff can:

1. Make a representative of the commission available to the public and other agencies at all times and help the commission comply with the requirements of the Freedom of Information Act (See Section III.D. The Nuts and Bolts of Conservation Commission Operations).
2. Perform the administrative duties of the commission and thus free the commissioners to focus more on policies and other community projects.
3. Provide technical assistance and support by acquiring and disseminating information so that the commissioners may better understand the range of issues as well as feasible solutions.
4. Act as liaison and attend the meetings, hearings, and presentations of other agencies to both acquire and disseminate information on behalf of the conservation commission.

There are, however, costs to these luxuries. Not including the obvious financial cost, a paid staff can:

1. Increase the complexity of the budget and the responsibilities of the commission as an employer.
2. Add tension and conflict to the commission. If all the members and all the staff do not understand their exact roles and positions in relation to one another, tension can arise over power and direction of the commission, which inevitably leads to conflict and ineffectiveness.
3. Add further burdens on the shoulders of the commissioners due to the increased formalities and bureaucracies necessary in managing employees, some who may even be unionized.

By detailing the specific responsibilities of each position, and by hiring individuals who are knowledgeable of environmental issues and possess good interpersonal skills, a commission has the potential to greatly improve its efficiency and effectiveness. A commission must have the financial foundation, support of the local government, and a strong internal consensus in order to make this situation a reality.

## **D. The Nuts and Bolts of Conservation Commission Operations**

The conservation commission is a municipal government body; therefore all meetings must be open to the public with no registration or other prerequisite for attendance. Under the **Freedom of Information Act**, which establishes this law, meetings are defined as any hearing, proceeding or gathering of a quorum of a multi-member public body to discuss any matter over which it has control. The term excludes caucuses along with chance and social meetings not intended to relate to official business. This “right to attend”, however, does not give the public the right to participate in the meeting.

**Executive sessions**, which are closed to the public, may be held if two-thirds of the present members so vote. These sessions may be held only for:

1. Discussion of employee hiring, evaluation, or health (though the employee may request such discussion be held at an open meeting and have that request granted),
2. Strategy and negotiation of pending claims and litigation,
3. Strategy on security,
4. Real estate, site selection, sale or purchase when public discussion would cause an increase in price (this holds true until the transaction is terminated),
5. Discussion that would result in disclosure of preliminary drafts or notes not in the public's interest.

### ***1. Notification of Meetings***

The chairperson and secretary shall file a schedule of **regular meetings** for the coming year with the municipal clerk not later than January 31 of each year. No meeting shall be held sooner than 30 days after the schedule has been filed; it would therefore be advisable to file at least thirty days prior to the first meeting of the year (ie. file in late November if the first meeting of the upcoming year is January 1). The time and place of the meetings shall be designated either by ordinance or resolution of the conservation commission.

Notification of **special meetings** shall be given to the municipal clerk at least 24 hours in advance, and no business other than that posted in the notice may be considered at the special meeting. These are typically reserved for minor emergencies or situations that arise unexpectedly.

**Emergency meetings** may be held without prior notice, but the minutes of the meeting must be filed with the municipal clerk within 72 hours following the meeting.

Some municipalities require that notice of regular meetings shall be given by mail at least one week prior to the meeting to those persons who request notification. It is in the best interest of the conservation commission to follow this procedure even if it is not required. Increased attendance by non-commissioners allows for a more accurate perception of the residents' needs and desires. This leads to broader and greater support for the commission and its projects, which in turn, leads to increased influence and power.

## ***2. Preparation for the Meetings: Setting the Agenda***

Conservation commissions will normally meet once a month. Subcommittee meetings are usually scheduled between the full commission meetings. The agenda for any of these meetings is essentially a road map or outline that explains what items will be discussed and acted upon and in what order. It is typically set by the chairperson in advance of the next meeting, but close enough to it so that commissioners so desiring may request certain items to be included. Items can be added to the agenda at the beginning of the meeting if new situations arise and require discussion. An agenda can fulfill three purposes:

- a. When distributed in advance of the meeting (at least one-week), an agenda will allow commissioners, staff, and other interested parties to gather information pertinent to the topics being discussed and be more prepared to participate in the discussion and decision-making process. This will allow for more meaningful discussion by all members and lead to more informed and reliable decision making.
- b. By distributing agendas to other organizations (both governmental and non-governmental) and interested individuals, the conservation commission can arouse interest and encourage attendance by liaisons from other municipal agencies. This is an excellent way to garner support, or at least become aware of potential conflicts before formal discussions begin. This will also provide a signal to other agencies that the conservation commission is eager and willing to give technical advice and assist in the projects and goals of these agencies.
- c. During the meeting, an agenda assists the chairperson in facilitating order and increasing the overall efficiency of the meeting. Inefficient, or rambling meetings, may lead to boredom and / or frustration for commission members.

**The basic structure of the agenda** should be tailored to suit the specific needs of each meeting. One model is as follows:

1. Call to Order by the Presiding Officer
2. Roll Call
3. Amendments to Agenda
4. Approval of Agenda
5. Comments from members of the public who are present
6. Reading and Approval of the Minutes of the Previous Meeting
7. Financial Matters (Treasurer's Report, bills, etc.)
8. Correspondence
9. Committee Reports
10. Resolutions
11. Unfinished Business
12. New Business
13. Comments from Commissioners
14. Adjournment

### **3. *Running the Meeting***

It is suggested that meetings be run using at least an informal form of parliamentary procedure based on *Roberts Rules of Order*. A basic understanding of *Roberts Rules of Order* will also help commissioners feel comfortable at other commission meetings. This book can be purchased at almost any bookstore and will help meetings run more efficiently while still preserving the rights of the individual and the harmony of the commission. These procedures and rules should be used to make the meeting more effective, not to increase bureaucracy. If they become overly burdensome or restrictive, then they are typically being misapplied or over-applied. Parliamentary procedure operates on the grounds of common sense and common courtesy and can be distilled down to four basic axioms:

1. Only one person speaks at a time.
2. Each member has equal rights.
3. Each item presented is entitled to discussion time.
4. The decisions of the majority are upheld, but the rights of the minority to offer dissenting opinions and differing views are respected.

The chairperson determines the extent to which the procedures are followed and should be flexible enough to vary the levels of intensity in which they are applied to the specific occasion and commission. The procedures should be followed fairly strictly when tensions are likely to be high, such as when debating the commission's final comment on a development plan or whether or not to hire staff. In calmer situations, such as discussions over the exact date to hold the town clean-up day, parliamentary procedures may be applied in a more casual fashion.

Commissions most often approve specific actions via a "**motion**". A motion is a request for official agreement by the members concerning some issue. It is normally phrased as, "I move that...the minutes be accepted as read...the resolution be adopted...the development plan be given a positive recommendation...we adjourn..." This motion must then be seconded, which merely entails another member of the commission signaling that he or she agrees with the motion and can be done so by saying "I second the motion." the chairperson should ask for discussion of the motion on the floor. The motion may then be approved by a majority vote of the members, thus formalizing the action. Without majority approval, the motion does not pass.

A **resolution** is a formal way in which a conservation commission can express belief in a concept ("Be it resolved that the commission endorses recycling."), take a quasi-official action ("The commission declares the month of March biodiversity month."), or performs a routine duty authorized by state law which specifies that the action must take the form of a resolution. A member must present a motion in order for the resolution to be officially adopted by the commission.

**The secretary or other member besides the individual leading the meeting should take minutes (notes and records of a meeting) during all meetings, typically.** These minutes are required by **Connecticut's Freedom of Information Act** and must be made available to the public upon request. At minimum, these minutes should include:

1. Date, time, and location of the meeting (regular, special, or emergency)
2. Presiding officers and commissioners present
3. Names of others present
4. Approval of the minutes of the previous meeting
5. Financial Report
6. Identification of all documents presented
7. Summary of any presentations
8. Complete statement of each motion and vote, and disposition of each
9. Time of adjournment
10. Date of next meeting
11. Date and subsequent approval and corrections
12. Name of person taking the minutes

The more detailed the minutes are, the more valuable a resource they become. These minutes can be provided to new commissioners to help them familiarize themselves with previous actions and proposals of the commission. As with the agenda, forwarding the minutes to other organizations and individuals will help to arouse interest and educate others as to the projects and goals of the commission. Things that may compromise the position of the commission in any litigation or situation need not be included as they are likely to be exempt from the Freedom of Information Act (consult the Act to determine if a specific case applies).

An agency may **adjourn** any regular or special meeting to a time and place specified in the order of adjournment. A copy of such order shall be posted on or near the door of the meeting



place within 24 hours of adjournment or immediately if the subsequent meeting is to be held within 24 hours. The order of adjournment tells those who arrive after the meeting has been closed when the meeting closed along with where and when the next meeting will be held. If the next meeting is within 24 hours, then the order must be posted immediately.

**"Brevity is the soul of wit...."** (William Shakespeare, *Hamlet* II, 2)

In most Committee Reports, the treasurer's Finance Report, and the secretary's Correspondence, information should be summarized if it is routine, lengthy or repetitious. This summary should include only pertinent information such as dates and times, names of the parties involved, important facts or figures, and a summary of the actions taken or planned. All correspondence should be available for reading by the members at their leisure. If discussion is warranted, the topic will likely fall under New Business

#### **4. Records**

All records, except as described below, shall be public. Any person may inspect or copy them at reasonable times. They must be kept in an accessible place (the commission's office, the local library, the chairperson's home (not recommended, but acceptable), etc. and shall be competent evidence in any state court. The commission must also maintain a record of the proceedings of its meeting (the minutes). Any votes taken at the meeting must be recorded and available to the public forty-eight (48) hours after the meeting (excluding non-work days), and must be recorded in the minutes available for public inspection at all reasonable hours. Persons denied rights enumerated in the Freedom of Information Act may appeal to the Public Information Commission established by this act, and thereafter to the courts.

#### **Copying Records**

If the records are in computer storage, a printout must be provided to citizens requesting to view the records. Copies of records must be provided to persons requesting them in writing. Any fee must not exceed the cost to the commission and may be waived under certain conditions. Meetings may be photographed, broadcast or recorded by the media, though the commission may adopt rules governing such activity. Those aggrieved by violations of this provision may appeal for an injunction against such actions in the court of common pleas.

#### **Non-disclosure**

Certain records need not be made available to the public according to the Freedom of Information Act.

1. Preliminary drafts and notes, including records of any pre-decisional, deliberative process, provided that the commission make a good faith determination that the public interest in withholding such documents clearly outweighs the public interest in disclosure. The statute places the responsibility for making the determination on the commission, which must support its decision by specific, well-founded reasons.
2. Personnel, medical files and others which would constitute and invasion of personal privacy.
3. A record pertaining to strategy and negotiations with respect to pending claims and litigation's to which the agency is a party, until such litigation or claim has been finally adjudicated or otherwise settled.
4. Trade secrets.
5. Commercial or financial information given in confidence, and which is not required by statute.
6. The contents of real estate appraisals, engineering or feasibility estimates and evaluations made for or by the commission relative to the acquisition of property or to prospective public supply and construction contracts, until such time as all of the property has been acquired or all proceedings or transactions have been terminated or abandoned; provided that the law of eminent domain shall not be affected by this provision.
7. Statements of personal worth or personal financial data required by a licensing agency and filed by an applicant for a license, certificate, or permit in order to establish the individual's personal qualification.
8. Records, reports and statements of strategy or negotiations with respect to collective bargaining.
9. Records, tax returns, reports and statements specifically exempted by federal law or other state statutes or communications privileged by the attorney-client relationship.
10. Records of an investigation conducted or the name of an employee providing information under the **Connecticut General Statutes §4-61dd** governing disclosure of information to auditors of public accounts.
11. Any page of a primary petition, nominating petition, referendum petition, or petition for a town meeting submitted under any provision of the general statutes or of any special act, municipal charter or ordinance until the required processing and certification of such page has been completed by the official(s) charged with such duty, after which time, disclosure of such page shall be required.

## ***5. Staying on Track: The Manual***

With the power to define its own internal structure and functioning, each commission can tailor these aspects to the local conditions in which it must operate. Documentation of these guidelines and procedures in the form of a manual is a good idea. This manual should be distributed to every commissioner and will guide new commissioners as they join the conservation commission. This manual should contain:

1. Legislative authorization from both the state and municipal levels to describe the powers and limitations of the commission.
2. Description of meetings:  
time, place, protocol (what constitutes a quorum, how the meetings shall be run, establishing the agenda, etc.).
3. Subcommittee structure.
4. Explicit commissioner responsibilities.
5. Staff responsibilities.
6. Any specific policies or guidelines such as those concerning plan or permit review procedures if applicable.
7. Copies of all pertinent legislation and regulations.
8. Some system should be established so that commissioners can retain and organize copies of the minutes from each meeting along with any other information that is disseminated during the meetings. This could be done using a separate folder or three-ring binder with dividers. This will also facilitate smooth transitions as new members join the board.

## 6. *Staying on Track: Motivation and Goal Setting*

Additional internal procedures, those that could not be accommodated in a manual, may also be adopted to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of a conservation commission.

2. The commission should strive to keep abreast of legal, social, and scientific trends. One strategy is to invite guest speakers such as scientists, lawyers or public officials to share their expertise. The best way to accomplish such a task is to invite guest speakers to share their expertise.
2. Commission motivation should be of primary concern when the question of internal operations arises. Because the reward \ value system of the commission depends on successful accomplishment of conservation goals, frequent, yet small, successes will do more to maintain morale and enthusiasm than will the expectation of a large success sometime in the indeterminate future. The constant activity associated with this will help prevent boredom and apathy on the part of the individual commissioners.
2. For commissions still in their formative years. The previous point concerning small success is especially important, not only from a reward \ value point of view, but also from an educational perspective. Despite all efforts, a large portion of the education of a commission in the areas of coalition building, negotiation and the like still tends to be accomplished by a great deal of trial and error. Small-scale projects are much more likely to result in a successful experience than large scale, hit-or-miss projects that require the majority of a commission's limited resources. The effectiveness of this technique dramatically increases when these smaller goals are part of a larger, well-planned goal, and this holds for young commissions as well as for established conservation commissions.
2. Establishing goals. It is important to establish goals and objectives and review them periodically. Commission activities and actions should be consistent with their goals. Tangible goals might include completing a Natural Resource Inventory for a particular community watershed, or developing an open space plan. An intangible goal might be earning the reputation of being a reliable, credible and unbiased source of information for other land use commissions. Goal setting meetings should be held annually to re-emphasize the continuing efforts of the commission.

## E. JOINT COMMISSIONS

In 1974, Connecticut passed the Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Act that mandated towns to establish Inland Wetlands Commissions. (At that time, municipalities not establishing local commissions could opt for inland wetland regulation by the CT DEP). Many Connecticut municipalities gave to their conservation commission the added responsibility of regulating inland wetlands, thus establishing a joint or combined commission. At present, there are 70 municipalities with joint commissions. The results of a 1993 CACIWC survey indicate that most

of these combined commissions spend 10% or less of their time on matters devoted to conservation. This is understandable due to the fact that the regulation of inland wetlands and watercourses is now, in most municipalities, expanded to include a regulated upland review area surrounding the wetlands and watercourses. This adds an additional layer of regulatory responsibility. Regulation, the issuance of permits, and the enforcement of regulations can be full time work for a volunteer commission. Nonetheless, protection of natural resources, comprehensive evaluation of natural resources, and conservation planning are no less vital.

This points to the fact that Connecticut municipalities which have separated conservation commissions and inland wetland commissions are likely to be better served in terms of overall conservation planning and the management of the natural resources of the community. CACIWC strongly advocates the restoration of Conservation Commissions in each of the 99 towns, which presently does not have a separate and independent Conservation Commission.

All joint commissions should set as an annual goal the devotion of greater amounts of time to planning and natural resource protection. An ideal project for a joint or combined commission would be a functional inventory of the town's inland wetlands. The information from the study would significantly enhance the commission's technical capability as a regulatory agency but would assist the planning commission in the development of the Municipal Plan of Conservation and Development.

#### **IV. OPEN SPACE INDEX AND NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY**

One of the first goals that every conservation commission should set for itself is to compile an index of all open areas as mandated by the **Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-131a (b)**. At a minimum, this index should list the location and ownership of all open spaces within the municipal boundaries. To be most useful as a basis for land use decision-making, however, this index should be linked with the natural resource inventory and consist of all natural resources located within the municipal boundary. The index of open spaces is essentially a subset of the Natural Resources Inventory and is the first step in creating a Natural Resource Inventory. C. James Gibbons of the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System has written numerous documents concerning Natural Resource Inventories along with Open Space Planning, and it is from his "Manual of Mapping Techniques for Natural Resource Inventories" that much of the following information has been taken.

The Natural Resource Inventory summarizes a municipality's committed and uncommitted open space, water resource areas, natural and cultural areas designated for preservation, as well as potential wildlife corridors. The inventory should be displayed in map form on mylar, plastic-drafting film. In some areas a large portion of the necessary information can be found in the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection's Geographic Information Systems (GIS), a computer-based mapping system. Most municipalities, however, will have to rely on felt-tip markers or drafting pens to draw the maps by hand, which can be as easy as tracing various paper maps. A base map of the municipality and each of the nine factors listed in Section IV. A., should be drawn on separate mylar overlays so that these can be mixed and matched to provide relational data. It might then be helpful to check the accuracy of the map by visiting some of the key areas and measuring distances and boundaries on foot or by car.

To many people, this represents a daunting exercise. This need not be the case. One idea to make the process less cumbersome would be to create a Natural Resource Inventory on a watershed by watershed basis. Maps showing all the watersheds in the state are available at the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection book store. A watershed is the entire area which drains into a single body of water (lake, reservoir, river, etc.), and is bounded by elevation maxima. A single municipality may have multiple watersheds. Because many state and federal agencies manage by watersheds and the State of Connecticut is initiating watershed management, the commission will not only simplify the scale of the project, but also collect data in a way that is transferable to other agencies. The majority of the information can be taken from other maps that already exist and simply be traced or otherwise transferred to mylar. The remainder of the information can typically be gathered by actually visiting the areas and requesting the help of individuals and organizations which frequent or manage these areas. (See section IV. B. for more suggestions on where to get assistance).

These maps can assist people in visualizing the geographic relationship of each of the municipality's resources to the others. This ability will prove invaluable to the conservation

commission in its planning process and in the design of its policies. The commission can set long-term goals for open space acquisition. When a development project is proposed for a given area, not only can the commission see the areas that it may impact, but it can also encourage the set-aside of certain areas based on how they will fit into the entire landscape. The commission can also determine which areas may need careful management or protection in the future, and work with the current landowner to ensure this. With these data, it is possible to look at resources at the watershed scale, thus being able to analyze the effects of both development and protection on downstream areas. By supplying this kind of information to developers and other agencies, problems and disagreements can be avoided. The commission can then become pro-active rather than reactive. Rather than attempting to convince others that Plan X is faulty in some way, the conservation commission can work with these organizations to design the optimal plan from the outset. Resolving discrepancies at the initial planning phase is considerably easier than after resources have been allocated to a completed project proposal.

#### **A. Natural Resource Inventory Maps**

##### **1. Municipality Base Map**

The municipality base map should include the political boundaries, man-made structures and features such as roads (possibly including traffic volumes), utility lines, and cemeteries. Water resources such as rivers, lakes, streams, and wetlands should also be included. Accurate property lines should also be included as an acetate or mylar overlay, for they are essential for developing open space plans or prioritizing lands for acquisition. Many of these maps are already prepared in most municipalities and are found in the planning departments.

##### **2. Committed Open Space Map**

The committed open space map should describe areas that are presently open and committed to remain as such, and that are owned by state, municipal, public utilities and non-profit agencies. Such areas include forests, parks, water accesses, preserves, wildlife management areas, fisheries, farmland in Purchase of Development Rights program, federal lands, recreation sites, schools, water department lands, local Land Trust and conservation organization (The Nature Conservancy, Audubon, etc.) areas, and even vacant lots. The vegetation species in these areas could also be mapped at this time to aid in future projects such as the information files for the Open Space Plan or the Tree Inventory for the Community Forestry Program (see Section IX. A Recommended Project: Community Forestry Program).

##### **3. Uncommitted Open Space Map**

The uncommitted open space map should include areas that have been historically open, but are not guaranteed to remain as such and open spaces and forests as designated by 490 Tax Classification. This type of area includes resorts, golf courses, camps, marinas,

fairgrounds, rod and gun clubs, stables, ball fields, utility lines (electric, telephone, gas), Department of Transportation property and selected water company lands. (Class III, off-watershed).

4. Natural Areas Designated for Preservation Map

This map should include areas of land or water containing, or potentially containing, plant or animal life or geological features worthy of preservation IN THEIR NATURAL CONDITION. These areas can be located in such resources as the DEP's Natural Diversity Database, proposals from the DEP Land Acquisition Unit, consultant reports, and local, regional, or state plans of development which will have already listed some of these areas. The perceived risk of negative impacts should also be assessed. Is it a heavily or intensively used recreation site? Is it situated in such a way that developers may soon be looking to develop the area? These need not be quantified, but acknowledging the presence of these risks will be of great benefit later in the planning process.

5. Water Resource Areas Map

The water resource areas map should delineate watersheds and show wetlands, surface water (streams, major springs, rivers, lakes, dams, and seasonal streams), subsurface water such as aquifers, and should include direction of flow and water quality classifications.

6. Soils Map

The soils map delineates the different soil types and describes their characteristics. This information is helpful with issues such as groundwater flows, contaminant leaching, and even predicting future vegetation. Such maps already exist at various levels of scale for all of Connecticut.

7. Greenways Map

A greenways map depicts how the scattered and fragmented open areas could possibly be linked so as to provide both recreational and wildlife movement from one area to another. This will likely be closely linked to the wildlife corridor and habitat maps, and should provide guidance for preserving the rural character of the community.

8. Cultural Areas Designated For Preservation Map

This map should mark sites designated by the state archaeologist as being significant and should also include areas of historical significance.



9. Potential Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Map

The potential wildlife corridor map attempts to show areas that may serve to support movement of wildlife from one habitat to another. Areas that have already been committed to open space, and potentially act as corridors, should be included along with areas that could act as corridors if they were to be committed as open space.

10. Topographic Map

The topographic map describes changes in elevation throughout the municipality. This information is helpful for predicting the direction of water and waste run-off, vegetation patterns, and various aesthetic qualities such as aspect and viewsheds. It will also be helpful in identifying areas of excessively steep slopes and ridgetops.

11. Ridgetop Map

In 1995, “An Act Concerning Protection of Ridgelines” P. A. 95-239 was passed by the general assembly of the State of Connecticut. This acts specifically addresses trap rock ridges and allows for certain development restrictions within ridgeline setback areas. Towns that contain trap rock ridges within their borders should develop maps that delineate these areas.

12. Other Maps

The above set of maps is merely a general guideline. Each municipality should tailor their maps to the needs and resources of the community. Rural areas may wish to have detailed maps of their agricultural areas based on the type of agriculture. Urban, industrial areas may wish to map their airsheds in order to track air-borne particulate. Coastal areas may wish to develop detailed fisheries maps. Do not be afraid to be creative; the more information that a commission has, the better its planning process will be.

## **B. Where to Look for Assistance**

A great majority of the information needed to complete these maps can be found in one form or another by communicating with other local, state and regional agencies, along with many non-profit organizations. The Municipal Planning Commission must review the municipality's Plan of Conservation and Development every ten years. This may serve as a good starting point. Another good source of information (especially maps) and assistance are the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Natural Resources Center, Regional Planning Agencies and the County Soil and Water Conservation Districts. Other places that may have information readily available for the Natural Resources Inventory are listed in Appendix D.

Generating a Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) need not be viewed as a goal achievable only by those with training or education in planning or the environment. Persistence and the ability to gather information from reliable sources are the primary traits required for producing the Natural Resource Inventory. Once this is completed, the conservation commission can use the information contained in the inventory as a tool to gain credibility and influence, and therefore the ability to persuade others in conserving the municipality's natural resources. For example, the commission can use the NRI and associated maps during the review of proposed development. The natural resource limitations and requirements can then be brought to the attention of the agency responsible for permitting. The Natural Resource Inventory must be updated regularly, otherwise the commission may inadvertently begin to supply inaccurate information and lose the credibility it had fought so hard to achieve.

The Natural Resource Inventory alone is not enough. A conservation commission must know how these raw data fit into the processes governing the ecosystem, as well as how to effectively interact with other agencies and individuals. To know only that a sand barren exists, for example, is not sufficient when determining how to best manage and protect it. Why will certain types of actions harm the system (fire suppression) while other actions may help protect the system (building a boardwalk). The answer to such questions requires research into specific issues. This can be done by interviewing and consulting experts, by using the resources supplied by the state, the municipality, and other organizations, and by going to the local or university library (see Appendix D: Resources).

## **V. LAND ACQUISITION AND OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION**

One of the primary roles of all conservation commissions is to ensure the proliferation and proper use of open space. Open spaces of all kinds help define the character of a municipality and tend to increase the aesthetic value of the community as a whole. Increasing the amount of open space and conserving these areas once they have been identified helps to promote these values. The Natural Resource Inventory provides the informational backbone behind this function of conservation commissions, and the Open Space Index, in turn, is the starting point for the Natural Resources Inventory. Once the "proper uses" of an area are determined (where "proper" refers to those impacts which do not adversely affect an ecosystems health and function) the conservation commission must focus its efforts in ensuring that appropriate activities only occur in that space (see Section VI. Open Space Plan). This can be done in a variety of ways including education. Often, specific regulation and \ or acquisition by either a public or private entity is required. The following is adopted from the literature provided by C. James Gibbons of The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service.

### **A. Possible Objectives in Preserving Open Space**

1. Protect water quality of surface water and public access to these areas
2. Increase the size of already committed open spaces
3. Create trail and wildlife linkages (corridors and greenways) between isolated open spaces
4. Protect critical habitat, especially those listed in Connecticut's Natural Diversity Database and the Endangered Species List for both Connecticut and the federal government
5. Protect public drinking water (aquifers, reservoirs)
6. Protect natural drainage ways
7. Protect lands of social or cultural importance
8. Provide sites for active as well as passive recreation
9. Protect the municipality's unique natural features such as trap rock ridges and wetlands, along with those that help define a community's character such as plazas and scenic views
10. Preserve prime agricultural lands
11. Ward against soil erosion
12. Reduction of municipal expenditures (Open space is actually less expensive to maintain than development based on increased costs associated with larger populations such as the need to provide public services like fire, police, sewer, and education facilities.)

## **B. Methods for Obtaining and Preserving Open Space**

### **1. *Obtaining Ownership***

#### a. Fee Simple

In this case, the government or non-profit agency purchases the full title to the land and thus has full control over its use. This will oftentimes be costly in both the direct acquisition, and also in the long-term costs of maintenance. This option may also be politically difficult due to the fact that this removes land from the tax rolls and adds maximum liability to the ownership - management role.

#### b. Fee Simple with a Leaseback

By adding a leaseback, the government or non-profit agency purchases the full title to the land, but leases the land to the previous owner, thus potentially transferring the responsibility of maintenance along with the liability to the lessee. This would be worked out in the leasing agreement. The major drawback to this option is that the land must have some leaseback value (quantifiable and justifiable) such as with farmland. Along with this, only restricted access to this land is achieved; it is not wholly part of the public domain.

#### c. Purchase of Development Rights or Conservation Easements

This option allows the agency to hold certain rights (place certain restrictions) on the land and entails many benefits along with many disadvantages. Conservation easements and the purchasing of development rights is typically less expensive than the Fee Simple option because the landowner retains ownership of the land which stays on the municipal tax rolls. The tax, however, is at a reduced rate due to the added restrictions on the use of the land. These restrictions may also lower the resale value of the land, but may confer additional tax benefits if the land is sold at less than the appraised value. As the property changes ownership, the restrictions remain. One of the disadvantages is that the owner of the easement or development rights is now legally responsible for ensuring that the restrictions are followed and can be taken to court if found negligent in these duties. As such, the commission would have to monitor the activity on land for which it possessed easements.

#### d. Lease

These rental agreements provide only limited and temporary protection of the land. The landowner, however, may be most willing to accept this type of arrangement because he or she will not only receive income, but will also retain control of the land.

## **2. Options when Land is Purchased by a Non-profit Agency**

### **a. Non-profit Acquires Land and Conveys it to a Public Agency**

The real estate market is oftentimes more accessible to non-profits than to public agencies. The non-profit can hold land until a public agency acquires the necessary funds, possibly through financial arrangements with Land Trusts, to purchase the property.

### **b. Non-profit Acquires and Manages the Land**

Organizations such as the Audubon Society, the Nature Conservancy, local land trusts, and the Trust for Public Lands have a very strong record in this area. This can be a boon to conservation commissions with their limited resources because land management can be quite expensive, and non-profit agencies tend to have better records in securing funds for such activities. These agencies, however, may request assistance in obtaining these funds and conservation commissions should assist them in these endeavors.

### **c. Non-profit Acquires the Land and then Sells or Leases the Land with Restrictive Easements or Covenants**

This is quite similar to the purchase of a conservation easement, but here the agency purchases the title and then sells it at a discount because it retains the development rights. Because the price is lower than the fair market value for the land, a buyer who might not have been able to afford the land without the restrictions might be found.

### **d. Non-profit Acquires the Land and then Sells it in order to Finance the Preservation of Other Open Spaces**

This technique is becoming more common with Land Trusts and is the cornerstone for such organizations as the Conservation Fund.

## **3. Options when Transferring Titles**

### **a. Fair Market Value Sale**

This option generates the greatest income for the seller and is most expensive for the buyer. The purchase price is determined by the highest possible value of the land given all management goals.

b. Bargain Sale

The purchase price of the land under this option lies below the fair market value. The difference between the fair market price and the actual sale price of the land is considered a charitable donation, which confers tax benefits on the seller in the form of reduced capital gains taxes.

c. Outright Donation

This is by far one of the most preferable options in acquiring the title to a property. This can result in the long-term protection of the land at no cost to the agency, and benefits the donor because the entire fair market value of the property is considered to be a charitable donation. The drawback to this is that, like a Fee Simple purchase, the management and liability associated with the land become the responsibility of the receiving agency.

d. Donation upon Death of Owner

e. Donation with Lifetime Use

These "Reserved Life Estates" convey tax benefits upon the living donor, but the agency does not acquire the title until the death of the owner. This adds an element of uncertainty as to when the agencies will actually receive the property.

f. Land Exchange

Public agencies or non-profits exchange parcels of land with development potential for private lands of equal monetary value, but high conservation value.

g. Eminent Domain

This should be a last resort measure. Under this option, the government exercises its right to take private property for public use upon paying just compensation to the owners. This will often lead to costly litigation and instill resentment in the public towards the government agency.

h. Tax Foreclosure

Upon the default of tax payments by the owners, the government may acquire the property. Land acquired in this manner may not be desirable for open space, however, it might be sold or landbanked to finance more pressing preservation and acquisition efforts.

#### **4. *Regulatory and Planning Options***

- a. Various municipal and state regulations may restrict the types of development permissible in certain locations.

- b. Subdivision Regulations

When properties are approved for development, the developer has three options: a certain percentage of the land must be set aside as designated open space; a fee may be paid in lieu of open space upon the approval of the planning commission; or a combination of the two. The 1990 law enables Planning and Zoning Commissions to require a fee of up to 10% of the pre-subdivided value of the land instead of designating a percentage of the land as open space. The fees must then be placed in a fund specifically dedicated to the purchasing of open space. However, not all municipalities have granted this power to their Planning and Zoning Commissions. Careful consideration must be taken when choosing between these options.

- c. Land Use Planning

The municipal planning commission is mandated to update its Town Plan of Conservation and Development every ten years. This plan must include areas of designated open space which the conservation commission is mandated to index. The conservation commission is further permitted to make recommendations for the development and use of these open areas. Only with a detailed plan can municipalities make wise decisions concerning development, growth, and open space protection. Without a plan, property can not be prioritized in reference to protection and acquisition.

Like all programs developed by public agencies, all the municipal agencies and residents must be part of the design and implementation process. By permitting such input into the Town Plan of Conservation and Development, the municipality can clearly state the public's desire for the direction of future growth as well as future land protection.

- d. New Planning Regulations

The conservation commission can draft and lobby for the passage of new planning regulations that will help in the goal of conserving open space.

### **C. Things to Consider when Evaluating and Prioritizing Open Space**

When attempting to evaluate open space or prioritize it for protection or acquisition, it is important not only to know the facts, but how these facts interrelate. How do the surficial geology, vegetation, and drainage patterns affect soil erodibility? How has human interference, whether past or present, affected the vegetation and wildlife of the area? How will future interference, or lack thereof, shape the environment? How does this particular piece of property fit into the landscape? Consulting with experts from the public, private, non-profit, and even academic sectors will aid in finding answers to these questions. Some may even be answered by merely spending time researching in the nearest school library. In order to preserve the function of the open space, whether it is flood attenuation or recreation, the processes within the ecosystem must also be preserved.

Some factors to consider:

1. Geology (bedrock, surficial, interesting features)
2. Hydrology (groundwater, surface water, aquifers, water quality, sensitivity, accessibility)
3. Soils (fertility, erodibility, depth, slope)
4. Flora and Fauna (dominate species, rare or endangered species and habitats, successional stage and pattern)
5. Disturbance Regime (fire prone, fire suppression, flooding, insect outbreak)
6. Historic, Present, and Potential Future Land Use
7. Recreational Values
8. Educational Values
9. Scenic Values
10. Public Access to Public Lands
11. Hazardous Wastes Sites and Landfills



## VI. OPEN SPACE PLAN

One of the goals of an Open Space Plan is to provide direction and validity to land use and development policies. The Plan should be incorporated into the Town Plan of Conservation and Development and could be completed by the conservation commission. This project would require communication, cooperation, and collaboration, for the planning commission, which is responsible for the Town Plan of Conservation and Development. The Planning and Zoning Commission will more likely follow the recommendations that are embodied in the Open Space Plan if the conservation commission has already established itself as a source of reliable information. The first step in designing an Open Space Plan is the same as the first step in achieving a credible reputation: the completion of an accurate Open Space Index and Natural Resources Inventory. It would be wise to consult with the Regional Planning Agency (RPA) at this point; this agency possesses valuable information and will willingly assist in such projects.

The next step is to categorize open space by the function, both long term and short term that it serves. This includes its biological functions such as core habitat or corridor, its designation under **Public Act 63-490**, along with its functions for direct human benefit such as passive and active recreation, resource supply, public health, and aesthetics. Public information forums should be conducted to discuss these issues. Following this, the commission should attempt to delineate linkages between these areas for the movement of wildlife and humans alike (a trail system, for example, is much easier to complete once the path is established). Based on the objectives behind the preservation of each open space as defined by its functions, these areas should be prioritized for preservation. Next, a financial plan should be developed to determine the projected costs of acquiring each parcel and the plan as a whole. The most realistic method of acquisition (Fee Simple, Donation with Lifetime Use, etc.) should be used for a specific property along with potential sources of funding.

Ideally, an information file should be compiled for each piece of property in and around the municipality. This should include not only the information contained in the Open Space - Natural Resource Inventory, but also such details as type of ownership, zoning restrictions etc. With these steps completed, and after consulting with people who have dealt with open space planning, the landowners can be contacted. It should be explained to them why their land has been included in the Open Space Plan and what it means to them. Finally, public information forums should be conducted to discuss the plan with all municipal residents.

Conservation commissions should work with the Regional Planning Agencies in the development of the Open Space Index, the municipal Open Space Plan, and the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. By working together, the efforts of the both organizations may be combined to achieve a landscape level perspective in the local Open Space Plan and ensure that local concerns are addressed in the Regional Plan of Conservation and Development. A public hearing must be held before adoption of the regional plan of development; adoption of the plan is made by vote of a majority of the representatives of the agency. Copies are sent to the chief executive officers, municipal clerks, and the planning commission.

## Referrals to Regional Planning Agencies

RPAs must comment upon or receive copies of proposals for a variety of projects:

1. Municipal proposals for inter-local agreements or formation of districts
2. Community development action plans
3. Zoning commission proposals to establish or change a zone or any regulation affecting the use of a zone within 500 feet of the boundary of another municipality in the RPA region
4. A proposed subdivision of land abutting or including land in two or more municipalities
5. Applications for open space grants-in-aid (the DEP commissioner must assure him / herself that the proposal is in harmony with RPA regional development plans before granting the funds)
6. Plans for municipal development projects, which must be in accordance with RPA plan of development.

RPAs, like conservation commissions, are advisory rather than regulatory. Lacking legal enforcement powers, they must depend on education, persuasion and certain financial inducements to make their recommendations reality. An RPA is as useful and vital as its staff members who in many RPAs are very active and involved. RPAs provide excellent library and consultant services which commissions and citizens are welcome to use. Commissions should certainly be familiar with the regional plan of development the RPA has proposed and adopted, and take advantage of its wealth of data on the planning region itself, and on possible sources of funding assistance.

RPAs are also very important as an already existing mechanism and focal point for regional cooperation in planning, also called planning on a landscape scale. Protection of air or water quality in Town A will do little good if polluted air or water from Town B is drifting across the political border. Neither watercourses, air masses, wildlife, nor landforms recognize political boundaries. Commissions formed to safeguard the natural resources and environment in a municipality must therefore be concerned with the activities in adjacent municipalities. RPAs can make a commission's regional tasks easier, so take full advantage of them.

For more information concerning the development of Open Space Plans, contact the regional University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension Service Center or the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetland Commissions.

## **WETLANDS EVALUATION AND FUNCTIONAL INVENTORY**

### **A. Wetland Evaluation Methodologies**

There are several techniques in current use for wetland function assessment. These include: The Hydrogeomorphic Approach for Wetland Function Assessment (HGM); the Highway Methodology or “Descriptive Approach”; and the Method for the Evaluation of Inland Wetlands in Connecticut”, DEP Bulletin No. 9. Each methodology has its strengths and weaknesses.

The first step in utilizing the HGM approach is to classify wetlands according to their hydrogeomorphic class. This is based on an assumption that wetland functions are largely dependent upon the wetland’s hydrology which, in turn, is controlled by the wetland’s geomorphology. The HGM approach uses reference wetlands, and the level of functioning within the reference wetlands. Assessments are based upon distinguishing differences between the wetlands being assessed and the reference standard. For additional information on HGM, contact the NRCS, the USACE or the EPA.

The Highway Methodology or “Descriptive Approach” has been outlined in a document prepared by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE). The descriptive approach outlined in this document is the official recommended approach for wetland evaluation in New England. The document entitled “The Highway Methodology Workbook Supplement, Wetland Functions and Values, a Descriptive Approach” advocates a qualitative description of the physical characteristics of wetlands, an identification of functions and values and a description of the bases for conclusions. For additional information on the Highway Methodology, contact the New England Division of the USACE at 1-800-343-4789.

Bulletin # 9 is probably the best known methodology to Connecticut commissions because it has been in use since 1986 and was developed for Connecticut. This Bulletin outlines 13 wetland functions and utilizes simple mathematical and word models to determine Wetland Value Units (WVU) for each function. The methodology was designed with the premise that all wetlands within a given watershed should be analyzed. Although the method may be useful in identifying functions of an individual wetland, a numerical value for a single wetland should be disregarded. Many consultants use this methodology in evaluating a wetland for a particular project. Commission members should be aware of the fact that the method was designed for a broader use.

## **B. Potential Project for Joint Conservation / Wetland Commissions**

A number of towns have conducted town-wide wetland evaluations using Bulletin # 9. Such a survey could be very useful in that it would provide a complete picture of the town's wetland resources and provide commissions with fact-based knowledge upon which to base regulatory decisions. A Bulletin # 9 assessment can also be useful for a wetland commission in evaluating an application for which a consultant has used Bulletin # 9 as the evaluation methodology. Agencies such as the NRCS are sometimes willing and able to offer assistance in preparing Bulletin # 9 evaluations.

## VIII. EFFECTIVE EXTERNAL OPERATIONS - HOW TO DEAL WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD

In order for the conservation commission to fully discharge its duties as an advisory commission, it must interact with other agencies and individuals. To be effective, communication, cooperation, and oftentimes collaboration (the Three C's) are required. The new Comprehensive Ecosystem Approach adopted by most federal and state agencies exemplifies the need for the Three C's. This approach attempts to focus land-use policies on a watershed basis rather than along political or ownership lines and bases these policies on ecological, social, and economic constraints. No single agency has the information to accurately assess a policy decision on all these grounds; communication, cooperation, and collaboration between the various agencies and landowners must occur for the approach to prove effective. Not only can conservation commissions assist other agencies in designing and implementing land-use decisions based on information not previously available to these agencies, but other agencies can supply valuable resources to assist conservation commissions in their own projects.

By providing access to its detailed information base, the conservation commissions can assist other agencies in making wise land use decisions. This "providing access" often goes one step further in the presentation of information in order to question or suggest an alternative to some land use decision. This step, however, should not be taken lightly. If the information is well founded, and the questions or suggestions logically follow from this, then such a step, when taken in a non-confrontational manner, can improve the commission's reputation as a reliable and credible resource. As this continues over time, and it may take quite a while, the commission will become an asset to these other agencies and to individuals who will eventually turn to the commission for advice. If, however, these suggestions or questions are unfounded or the information upon which they are based is inaccurate, then the reputation of the commission will be compromised; the effect of which will likely last for quite some time. Much of the work to establish a reputation of reliability and credibility will be undone, sometimes in a matter of hours. Similarly, if this action is taken without regard to the political climate, the questions and suggestions will fall on deaf ears no matter how reliable, accurate, or impartial they may be.

The message is surprisingly simple. By using their legislatively derived powers **to improve cooperation and understanding** among other agencies, as well as among the residents of the municipality, conservation commissions can increase both their influence and power. Confrontation, applicable to some cases, will only go so far and typically at a high price in terms of energy and long-term relations.

### A. Communication

Open lines of communication are vital for the conservation commission to perform its duties. Communication is the tool by which a commission educates and persuades others in order to improve the conservation of a municipality's natural, cultural, and economic resources. To work

more effectively in the municipality, a commission should be open to the ideas, opinions, and needs of their community and of the other agencies working within the municipality.

*Similarly, the conservation commission should communicate with those outside of the municipality such as the conservation commissions in neighboring municipalities.* This type of communication can both increase the support base of the commission and ensure that commission resources are put to the best use. One example is that of a commission attempting to construct or preserve a greenway to serve as a wildlife corridor. It should know what kind of development is being planned for the terminal points at the municipal boundary, because the effectiveness of the corridor will depend on whether those points will be used for industrial development, a subdivision, or open space. Another benefit of this form of communication is that some other commission, somewhere, has or is dealing with similar problems and could lend valuable insight into situation.

### **1. *Openness to Ideas, Opinions, and Needs of Others***

If a commission wishes to conserve, supervise, and regulate the natural resources within a municipality, it must have the support of the residents. The most effective way to gain their support is to serve the public interest. This can only be done if the commission knows where the public interest lies. When dealing with other agencies or questioning their policies or practices, it is important to remember that these agencies are also attempting to act in the best interest of the public. Their perceptions of that interest or their methods of implementation may have a different focus, but their motivation is rarely faulty (and even if it is, never express that opinion). Many techniques can be used to accurately assess the opinions and needs of the municipality.

#### **a. Discussion**

By encouraging discussion with residents and other agencies, a conservation commission can educate itself as well as the public. This can be achieved via public forums or making presentations and soliciting feedback from governmental and non-governmental organizations. A commission will gain valuable insight into the possible array of needs and opinions of the municipality while also becoming aware of potential ideas and projects that the commissioners may not have realized. Residents and other agencies will not only become aware of the motivations behind the actions and policies of the commission, but will also gain a sense of being active participants in the formation of these; both of which will tend to foster support for the conservation commission as a whole.

#### **b. Survey / Questionnaire**

Merely encouraging discussion may not actually lead to an exchange of information; conservation commissions will likely have to solicit outright these diverse and valuable opinions. A survey, when properly designed, is one means of obtaining ideas and

perceptions from the entire spectrum within the municipality. The Regional Planning Agencies can serve as a resource on how to accomplish this. A survey will not only generate information, but it may also motivate others to become active participants in the resulting discussion of the issues. The wording of survey questions may, however, skew the results and cause misconceptions to arise concerning the motivations and values of a commission. Consider the following Yes-No questions:

1. Do you feel that deer hunting is an appropriate use of wildlife resources?
2. Do you support the slaughtering of deer for sport and food?

Question (1) would result in a non-biased answer that would not cast the perception of bias onto the conservation commission's ideals and values. Very few people, however, would feel comfortable answering "yes" to Question (2), and this question might cause the public to perceive the commission as an extreme anti-hunting organization. These are rather dramatic examples, yet convey the point that the wording and content of every question should be carefully considered because these will convey as much information to the respondents as the answers will to the commission. As such, the commission may wish to consult with professionals (Regional Planning Agencies, academicians, and professional consultants) when designing a survey.

Once a survey has been completed, returned, analyzed, summarized and reported, the conservation commission can organize its projects and goals around the opinions and needs of the public. Encouraging discussion with the residents of the municipality along with other agencies at this point will likely result in higher levels of participation as well as support. Conflicts that arise will typically be over the logistics and implementation of the projects rather than the concept that the project embodies.

#### c. Institutionalized Methods

Many formal means exist to gather information on official positions, opinions, and projects that require minimal effort on the part of the conservation commission. All public agencies, including the conservation commission, must, upon request, provide copies of the minutes for regular meetings. The conservation commission can take advantage of this by **requesting the minutes** of other agencies (planning and zoning, public works, inland wetland, parks and recreation, board of selectmen, board of finance, etc.).

Another and more effective, means of acquiring similar information is by **attending the regular meetings** of these agencies. Again, like conservation commissions, all regular meetings of governmental agencies are open to the public. In similar fashion, the conservation commission should **invite other agencies** to sit in on its meetings.

## ***2. Spreading the Word***

Once the goals and projects of the commission are established, the conservation commission should inform the agencies and individuals who might have an interest in these. These people should be contacted frequently as new projects are being planned and as other projects come to fruition. Direct communication, such as a newsletter, phone call, or a personally addressed letter, is best when announcing new projects and soliciting opinions and suggestions. Another way to facilitate this type of communication is through Chairpersons' Meetings where the chairperson of every land use agency or commission, liaisons from the state DEP, and the chief executive officer of the municipality meet to discuss the various issues and projects being addressed by these agencies. Such meetings could be held on a regular basis or when any agency feels that it has encountered an issue that should be attended to by most of these agencies. Many sources of mass media, outside of talk shows or radio call-in programs, will, unfortunately, find these information exchange aspects uninteresting, and are unlikely to publish them.

Direct communications and the mass media can be used to publicize the accomplishments and successes of the commission. The media should be used extensively for this purpose because it will reach a broader audience and will arouse interest in upcoming projects.

To effectively use the media, a commission should know exactly with what and with whom it is dealing - programs which are broadcast by radio and television, the deadlines for acceptance of stories, the reporters who write and place the news. The more local the media source, the more likely time or space will be given for coverage. It can only help relations to permit affected parties (whether they are another commission, the chief executive officer, or an individual resident) to review and comment on press releases before they are sent to the press.

The credibility and support of a conservation commission can be eroded if correspondence with the media is carried out without proper planning. There should be a single voice of the commission, typically the chairperson, and no other member should consult with the media. This is to ensure that the media does not confuse personal opinion with the official opinion of the commission. This will also help prevent any accidental contradiction due to misunderstandings of either objectives or procedures on behalf of the individual commissioners. Whoever is giving the statement, whether verbal or written, the rationale behind the decision must also be presented and the statement should be reflected in the minutes of the commission's meeting. To support or oppose, say a development plan, without supporting evidence or facts may be construed as bias (or worse, extremist) and would destroy the commission's reputation of credibility.

The following considerations should be taken into account when choosing among the various forms of publicity. Do not, however, rely solely on one form of publicity. As with any endeavor, diversify the plan of attack.



### **a. Newsletters**

1. These can vary in size (anything from a one-page leaflet to a multi-paged pamphlet) as well as in frequency of distribution (quarterly, semiannually, and annually). These considerations should be based on purpose as much as on economics. If the newsletter is being used as a tool to disseminate information and to convince others to become involved, then a relatively short, frequent format may be preferable. Resources, however, may limit the size, frequency, and aesthetics of the letter.
2. Accomplishments, new projects, upcoming events and meetings, along with general information concerning both the commission and local environmental issues should be included.
3. If it is not easy to read and digest, people will not read it and the information (along with all the resources used to publish) will be lost. A single person with a computer and a standard word processing package can easily write a very professional newsletter.

### **b. Newspapers**

1. The Press Release. Make sure the release is in the form the newspaper prefers. This will increase its chance of being printed.
2. The Reporters. Keep an up to date file of names and phone numbers of reporters. Personal contact is a good way to achieve publication of an event or response to an issue.
3. The Column. Commissioners or volunteers may write a weekly or periodic column on environmental issues.
4. The Picture. Newspapers are usually eager for pictures, and most people read the captions associated with picture, whether they are interested in the issues or not. These pictures can also serve as illustrations in publications (such as the annual report or a funding petition to the Board of Finance) or lectures.

### **c. Radio**

1. The News Release. These should be as short as possible and in the form preferred by the radio station.
2. The Public Service Announcement (PSA). The Federal Communications Commission requires that some free time be made available for these announcements.
3. The Announcement. Most radio stations have some form of "community calendars". Know the programs available on local stations.

4. The Talk Show or Feature. Commission members might appear on talk shows or create / sponsor a commission radio show or feature to discuss current issues.
5. The University or Educational Station. Either of these can provide good opportunities for discussion programs, educational features, and community interest news.

#### **d. Television**

1. News Announcements. Television time is obviously more limited and more expensive than other media. Know the community news programs and other shows that the commission might take advantage of for free. Call the local television station if commission activities might provide dramatic pictorial coverage of a subject, such as a river cleanup.
2. Educational or Cable Television. Cable television may be the commission's best bet; all cable franchise holders must provide a separate channel available for education, government, and public access. A commission may even wish to tape and then broadcast its meetings. Contact the local cable provider for more information.

### **3. *Communicating with the Legislature and Other Politicians***

At times, the conservation commission may find it necessary or desirable to contact, verbally or in writing, its local representative to the state legislature or other municipal elected official. A few simple guidelines should be followed:

1. When writing, make sure to be clear and concise. Letters should be typed and typically less than one page in length.
2. Try to limit the subject of the letter to only one issue so that the request for action or funding is clear and not overshadowed by multiple topics.
3. State your purpose in the first line of the letter, this will give the official a frame of reference while reading the following statements.
4. Include supporting materials such as articles from the local newspaper to bolster your opinion.

5. Point out how actions in support of your request will benefit the public, both locally and statewide.
6. Do not threaten opposition or promise support for the next election. The official will understand this implicitly and such comments can only lead to problems in the future.
7. Always ask for the official's position on the topic. This will not only give the commission valuable information, but it will also stimulate further discussion.
8. Address elected officials as "The Honorable So-and-so," but the salutation of letters should read: "Dear Senator / Representative / etc. So-and-so."

When testifying before committees or legislative bodies, either the chairperson or the most expert commissioner should make the statement. One should keep these guidelines in mind:

1. For the actual presentation of the statement, first identify yourself and state your role on the conservation commission. Next, state the commission's position or recommendations, then follow with explanations. Restate the commission's position or recommendations at the end of the testimony, and conclude by thanking the committee for the opportunity to speak.
2. The presenter should make sure that his or her copy of the statement is easy to read and rehearse the presentation, anticipating potential questions. Be brief; often the presenter is limited to 5 minutes or less.
3. Arrive early and sign up on the list of speakers. Speakers will testify in the order their names appear on the list.
4. Bring enough copies of the prepared statement for the entire committee and give the clerk a copy for the record. Keep one copy for the commission's files. Make sure committee members who weren't present receive a copy of the testimony. If the testimony is very technical, ask the committee clerk to distribute copies of the testimony to the committee before you testify.
5. Do not repeat the points of speakers who presented before you. If all your points have already been made, simply state your agreement with the previous speakers and urge the committee to take appropriate action.
6. If you can not answer a question correctly or with certainty, offer to research the question and deliver the information promptly. Do not argue with committee members or other presenters.

## **B. Cooperation**

A conservation commission can establish and maintain its credibility as well as increase the effectiveness of its operations by cooperating with other agencies whose jurisdictions are inside or outside the commission's municipal boundaries.

### ***1. Establishing and Maintaining Credibility***

The commission should establish and maintain a reputation of credibility so that it will be seen by other agencies and individuals as a resource rather than as a competitor to be opposed. The first step in establishing this reputation is to compile an accurate information base upon which recommendations can be founded. Part of this is accomplished by discovering what the residents of the municipality want and need (see Section VII. A. Communication), the remainder will typically take the form of a Natural Resource Inventory (see Section IV. Open Space Index and Natural Resource Inventory). A foundation based upon the facts contained in the Natural Resource Inventory and an accurate assessment of the needs and desires of the community will lend credence to any commission action or recommendation.

With the foundation established, the next step is to offer specific assistance or suggestions to these agencies based on this information. If a conservation commission begins by demanding things or by lecturing, these organizations will likely turn a deaf ear. By showing an earnest interest in their problems, and by offering solutions, a conservation commission will become an active participant and slowly gain support.

Offering **assistance** is one way to open doors. The commission could approach the Department of Public Works and inquire if there are any educational roles which the commission may play to improve the efforts of the department such as informing the public as to the benefits of recycling or the problems created by dumping waste down sewer drains. Offers of this type will rarely be turned down and will give the commission an excellent opportunity to prove itself. In the future, the Department of Public Works may request the help of the conservation commission when attempting to educate the public or persuade them to act a certain way. When dealing with territorial agencies, a conservation commission must be careful to not appear as if it is encroaching on the agency's responsibilities and usurping their power.

Offering **alternate solutions** and constructive criticism is yet another method to gain acceptance and respect, both which lead to a credible reputation. Leaf composting can serve as such an example. Some municipalities spend large sums of money to remove and transport leaves that "clutter" the parks in autumn. The conservation commission could research the methods used by other towns to compost and market the resulting fertilizer, and then determine whether leaf composting is a viable option for the town. A viable option would be any program that costs less than the current technique. It need not make a profit, only cost less in the long run. Even if leaf composting were not an alternative, the agency responsible for leaf removal would still appreciate this information because it may save them time and effort researching the topic later.

It will take time, patience, and persistence to establish the reputation of being a credible and reliable source of information. Eventually, other agencies will realize the value of conservation commission input when designing and implementing natural resource policies, and they will seek out the commission's help. By accommodating the needs of the other agencies, the conservation commission can influence the policies of other agencies and promote wise use of the community's resources.

When presenting findings or suggestions, do not lecture. It may also be useful to bring in outside experts to support the commission's ideas. This will help establish credibility and will demonstrate a concerted effort on the commission's part to apply the best available knowledge. Use **constructive criticism** so that the commission will appear to be helping rather than criticizing. Here are some hints on how to offer suggestions to a potentially hostile audience.

1. *Never say that the current technique is "bad" or "wrong".* Such words will automatically put the audience on the defensive and they will not hear the true point of your suggestions.
2. *Support the recommendations with facts.* Without facts, these will appear to be nothing more than biased opinions.
3. *Ask questions rather than accuse.* Do not accuse them of overlooking something. Rather, ask how this fit into their assessment of the situation.
4. *No recommendation or suggestion is definitely implementable.* The commission can not know the complete situation in which the other agencies operate; therefore, any solution that is feasible economically or ecologically may not be implementable due to other constraints not obvious to the commission (such as politics).
5. *Ask for feedback.* This will show that the commission is truly trying to help rather than criticize.

Some examples....

1. "We thought you might be interested in this. Our research shows that \_\_\_\_\_ MIGHT be a viable alternative to \_\_\_\_\_ BECAUSE \_\_\_\_\_. WHAT DO YOU THINK?"
2. "We were wondering how you accounted for the effect of \_\_\_\_\_ on \_\_\_\_\_, because our research shows that \_\_\_\_\_ may cause \_\_\_\_\_. A solution we came up with would be to \_\_\_\_\_. WHAT DO YOU THINK?"

## ***2. Increasing Effectiveness through Cooperation***

By offering suggestions and alternatives to current practices, the conservation commission is promoting the wise use of the municipality's resources without actually expending much of its own limited resources. In these cases, the commission is an impetus for change rather than the instrument of change. It uses its information to educate and persuade other agencies and organizations to take the responsibility of enacting the change. From the previous composting example, the commission would only perform research to determine its viability and then allow the other organization, with its own resources, to actually organize and manage the composting program. The goal of the conservation commission is achieved without threatening another organization's jurisdiction, and the other organization's resources are providing the necessary means to maintain it.

### **C. Collaboration**

In order to accomplish many of its goals and solve many of its problems, a conservation commission will likely have to go beyond the mere initiation of projects. The commission will normally have to continue active participation in the management of these ventures. By collaborating with other organizations, and pooling their resources, a conservation commission can address a wider breadth of issues with greater effectiveness and efficiency than if the commission attempted to manage the situations alone. These efforts may, in some cases, eliminate the need to find increased financial resources. See Appendix C: Potential Projects and Appendix D: Resources.

Other organizations can provide:

1. New perspectives to solving the problems;

Because different organizations are accustomed to addressing problems from different angles, each will suggest solutions that will attack the problem from different sides. The final solution generated by these collaborative efforts will inevitably be more effective.

2. Increased access to information and expertise;

Access to information and expertise will increase not only due to the increased number of organization members addressing the problem, but also because each organization will have its own set of contacts that the group as a whole can now draw upon.

3. A greater foundation for support and therefor influence to implement the joint solutions;

Simply stated, the more people involved in the process, the more support the project or solution will have, and the more likely it is that the project will be initiated or the solution enacted.

4. Financial assistance;

Other organizations may have funding available to assist in the projects, or at least know where funds might be found. Similarly, by providing services at no charge (or reduced charge) the conservation commission saves both time and money. This can be considered another form of financial assistance, and may actually prove more desirable and reliable than those that require more formal requesting procedures.

5. People.

When organized properly and cognizant of their own specific duties, an increase in the numbers of people involved helps solutions to be discovered in less time and with less effort, and permits programs to be administered with less burden to any one individual.

## IX. FUNDING

The two most limiting resources for conservation commissions tend to be time and money. Direct trade-off may exist between these two constraints. For example, the conservation commission can choose to sacrifice finances in order to save time by hiring experts or consultants (though this is not the only reason a commission might choose to hire experts). If such an option is chosen, the conservation commission members should at least make an attempt to complete as much of the project as possible on its own. Doing so will provide an excellent educational opportunity for the commissioners. The consultant, if hired, will know exactly what needs to be done, thus not wasting any of the commission's limited finances on superfluous research. In many cases, the commission will find that it may do a great deal on its own without sacrificing its limited resources.

Other times, and these will increase as the conservation commission expands its role, the commission may need to operate beyond the current constraints of both time and money. By improving internal operations along with the commission's interactions with other organizations, a conservation commission can increase the efficiency of its use of the limited time made available by its commissioners. The contacts and resources discovered through communication, cooperation, and collaboration will prove invaluable in the search for money, because the key to successful fund-raising is knowing who to ask and what to ask for. If the commission wants to build a boardwalk, for example, it could ask for the lumber directly from a supplier, or it could attempt to raise the money necessary to purchase the materials. It never hurts to try the former before expending the efforts of the latter.

There are a wide variety of agencies, organizations, and individuals, both governmental and non-governmental, that the conservation commission may approach (see Appendix C: Resources). Each request should be tailored to the specific interests of the entity being solicited. If the commission can justify the request and demonstrate how the allocation of these funds will further the purpose of the solicited agency, then the conservation commission should by all means request the funds. The commission should also attempt to prove that there is a wide base of support among other collaborating or effected agencies in order to add further validity to the proposal. This can be simply done by including letters of support from these agencies or individuals.

The conservation commission has three principal sources of revenue:

1. A budget appropriated by the municipality and special municipal funds that may be available for commission purposes
2. Funds or grants from programs run by state, federal, and other municipal agencies
3. Funds or grants from private sources such as foundations or businesses

A commission should not limit its search for funds to any one category, but should diversify its attempts. Sometimes these sources can work together in the form of a matching fund where each dollar donated by one set of sources will be matched with an equal amount raised from other sources. Some government programs work this way, with every dollar raised elsewhere matched



by the program up to a certain limit. This matching fund approach may also be used when attempting community fund drives in times of immediate need, say when a desirable land purchase opportunity arises but the municipal funds are not available.

Proposals for funds from any source should contain the following elements:

1. Specificity

The project(s) for which funding is requested must have a clear purpose with well-defined and described objectives and implementation plan. An indication of how the project(s) will further the goals of both the conservation commission and the funding source should also be included.

2. Need

The conservation commission must demonstrate why it needs these funds from this particular source. Showing that cost-cutting measures have been taken and alternative sources have been explored and are not available should help convince the funding source.

3. Imagination

Projects that are imaginative and will produce verifiable results are often most appealing. Any intangible goal can typically be manifest in some tangible product. For example, if education on a certain topic is the goal, then publications and seminars may be the products.

4. Homework

At least some investigation is vital to determine the specific funding criteria and possible motivating factors behind the funding source.

## **A. The Municipal Budget**

As a municipal agency, the conservation commission may have a budget appropriated to it, or municipal funds may be allocated to the commission for a specific purpose. In general, the municipal budget will be the best avenue for a commission to acquire its "operating funds"; the money needed to run day to day operations. Thus, it is extremely important to learn the budget cycle of the municipality. Funds from public programs and agencies, as well as private sources, tend to be restricted to specific projects.

The town board of finance, or similar municipal financial institution, controls the municipal

funding and is thus the key to a commission's budget (**Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-340 to 349**). Generally, municipal commissions submit an itemized estimate of budget needs for the coming year to the Board of Finance. The Board then compiles a draft town budget based on these estimates.

After the preliminary budget is drafted, and at least two weeks before the town's annual budget meeting, the Board of Finance holds a public hearing on the proposed budget. After the hearing, the Board may meet in executive session to prepare a final budget. This must be published in the local newspaper unless the local population is less than 5,000, in which case copies must be readily available 5 days before the meeting.

The Board of Finance then submits the budget and any additional recommendations to the town meeting. According to **Section 7-344**, the town meeting may not allocate funds exceeding the amount recommended by the Board, and no funds may be allocated to purposes other than those recommended by the Board.

Effective presentation of the conservation commission's proposal to the town Board of Finance is therefore essential in securing an adequate commission budget. If the Board recommends an inadequate budget, the town meeting can not increase the amount authorized. Finance Boards usually respect details and exactness; therefore support budget requests with detailed, accurate figures and descriptions. Explain how projects will benefit the municipality's residents and compliment the efforts of other agencies, and how the requested funds are crucial to the success of these endeavors. It may also prove beneficial to briefly describe the successes of the commission over the past years and how adequate budgets contributed to these successes. Funding for projects undertaken jointly with another commission should be clearly spelled out and presented by the commission most apt to be granted the funds.

## **B. Funds from Public Agencies**

Funds may also be obtained from state, federal, and other municipal agencies. These funds will usually be given for specific projects, and the commission may "apply" to receive these funds. Money may be available through specific funding programs run by these agencies, or may be accessible directly from the agency itself. Examples of the former are listed in Appendix D: Resources. An example of the later might be when the commission is publishing a pamphlet to educate the municipality as to the benefits of recycling. The Department of Public Works, or other municipal agency responsible for recycling, may have money in its own budget specifically for public outreach, education, or promotions and might be convinced to financially support, at least partially, the conservation commission's project.

In seeking funds from federal agencies, the Federal Domestic Assistance Catalog issued by the Office of Management and Budget in the Executive Office of the President may prove particularly useful. This is an annual, well-indexed guide to federal agencies dispensing funds and assistance and may be found in the local library or purchased by contacting:

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance  
Superintendent of Documents  
Government Printing Office  
Washington, D.C. 20402

It is wise to have at least one commissioner responsible for tracking municipal, state, federal, and even private funding programs.

### **C. Funds from Private Sources**

These funds may come from a philanthropic community resident, from a local or national foundation, or from a community-minded local business. Foundations, both local and national, typically dispense their funds in much the same way as a public program, by application. A commissioner should become familiar with the possible incentives such as the Neighborhood Assistance Act, that may motivate the potential local donor, whether an individual or business. Many of these incentives do not depend on the donor's dedication to conservation, but rather on satisfying their own needs (supplying a means to an end):

1. The warm feeling derived from helping their community
2. Tax advantages through donations
3. Recognition or publicity
4. Personal, intangible benefits such as the preservation of an area of cultural or personal importance
5. Increased well-being of the community as a whole - economically, culturally, or environmentally

When approaching donors, especially private individuals, with project proposals, discretion is of utmost importance. Donors will typically receive a constant inflow of requests from many potential recipients, and the final decisions on whether or not to fund a particular project may have as much, if not more, to do with personal impressions of the commission rather than the validity of the projects. Some donors may even wish to remain anonymous.

## **APPENDIX A: HISTORY OF CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS IN CONNECTICUT**

"Nothing in the world is so sure of success as an idea whose time has come" (Jester, 1976). With these affirmative words, the conservation commission movement in Connecticut began to evolve.

The speaker was Ward E. Duffy, then the editor of the Hartford Times, and his forum was the First New England Conference on Conservation, held at the Harvard Business School in 1960. The theme of the conference was "Solving Your Town's Natural Resources Problems". The solution discussed was the conservation commission concept, which had been developing in Massachusetts since 1957.

Duffy returned from the conference full of enthusiasm for the commission idea, and passed this enthusiasm on to a coalition of citizen leaders, including members of the League of Women Voters, conservation groups and garden clubs. They enlisted the support of two state legislators, Roger Eddy of Newington, a Republican, and Ward Pinney of Bloomfield, a Democrat. At the request of Eddy and Pinney, the Connecticut Legislature's Research Council drafted a bill that tailored the Massachusetts Conservation Commission Act to Connecticut law, tastes, and needs. The bill was successfully shepherded through the Legislature by the coalition in 1961. Under this law, conservation commissions could be established "...for the development, conservation, supervision, and regulation of natural resources, including water resources...." This would be accomplished by "...conduct[ing] researches into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas...." and by "...keep[ing] an index of all open areas publicly or privately owned...." (Jester, 1976)

The number of conservation commissioners in Connecticut grew rapidly thereafter. By 1963, 34 towns had commissions; by 1970, 102; and by 1975, 152 Connecticut towns had commissions (Jester, 1976). In 1993, however, only 138 of the 169 Connecticut towns had commissions in some form. Potential reasons for this recent decline will be discussed later.

Several factors gave impetus to this initial growth. First was local initiative and the freedom to exercise it. The enabling legislation set broad guidelines for commission activities, but gave each town discretion to form the local commissions and tailor its duties according to community needs. Concerned citizens seized upon this opportunity to address environmental needs in the ways most suited to the town.

These local efforts were aided by state support, through the Connecticut Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Under Commissioner Joseph N. Gill, who strongly favored the commission concept, the department helped the new commissions to organize and provided them with technical assistance.

In 1964, the Connecticut Association of Conservation Commissions (CACC) was formed. CACC helped educate the new conservation commissioners and provided a means of communication among them through special programs, field investigations of land use areas, circulation of movies and literature, and a newsletter, *Connecticut's Environment*. The state

Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources printed this newsletter and the chief of the department's Soil and Water Conservation division, Joseph Ward, also served as secretary-treasurer of CACC. This provided a close connection between the state department, the local commissions, and their statewide organization.

Connecticut's grant-in-aid program for land acquisition by municipalities also aided commission growth and influence. The grant-in-aid idea was originally advanced in a 1962 document titled *Connecticut's Natural Resources - A Proposal For Action*, written by William H. Whyte for the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources under Commissioner Gill. The report stressed the role commissions could play in natural resource planning and protection, and discussed the advisability of requiring a town to have a conservation commission in order to warrant a grant. While the 1963 legislation did not require this, it did allow for municipalities to designate the commission to make application for the grant and stipulated that conservation commissions, where they exist, must approve open space grant applications prior to submission. Thus, the law not only suggested, but also made provisions for, commission participation in open space acquisition.

In 1971, most of the state-level environmental functions were transferred from the Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources to the newly formed Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). The Department of Agriculture became a separate agency, some functions were transferred from the Department of Health, and the DEP was given additional responsibilities for the protection of environmental quality. Much like its predecessor, the DEP currently offers its powers, expertise, and increasingly limited resources to assist both conservation commissions and inland wetland commissions.

In 1974, the state Legislature gave municipalities the power to regulate activities in designated local inland wetlands through a commission of their choosing. In some cases, separate regulatory bodies called "Inland Wetland Commissions" were formed; in others, this power was conveyed to the conservation commissions and resulted in "Joint Conservation-Inland Wetland Commissions". Appropriately, the Connecticut Association of Conservation Commissions (CACC) expanded its role to assist the inland wetland commissions, updated its name to the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions (CACIWC), the name it currently holds, and began publishing a quarterly newsletter called *The Habitat*.

While this 1974 legislation increased the ability of each municipality to conserve its environment, the creation of the inland wetland commissions with regulatory mandates possibly contributed to the loss of direction and purpose now common to many conservation commissions. Many commissioners with technical training saw a greater need for their abilities in the inland wetland commission and transferred out of their town's conservation commission. This loss of leadership, combined with no defined regulatory role, caused some commissions to lose sight of their purpose and stagnate. In some towns the conservation commission was dissolved for lack of leadership, focus, and community support. Unfortunately this disturbing trend continues to weaken statewide conservation efforts. Those that became joint conservation - inland wetland

commissions soon became mired in their regulatory responsibilities and began to neglect their conservation commission duties.

In 1993, the state Legislature increased the potential role of conservation commissions by giving them the right (not the mandate) to inventory natural resources, formulate watershed and drought management plans, make recommendations to other municipal agencies on proposed land use changes, and supervise as well as manage municipally-owned open space. For active conservation commissions that have maintained their focus and momentum, this provides an excellent opportunity. The numerous joint conservation-inland wetland commissions will unlikely be able to take advantage of these new abilities because their inland wetland regulatory responsibilities utilize the majority of their time and energy. For those stand-alone conservation commissions that lost their sense of purpose, these new powers may only add to their confusion as they attempt to perform these duties without the proper resources and direction.

## **APPENDIX B: CONSTRAINTS ON CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS AND THE RIGHT TO INTERVENE**

There are limits to where and how a conservation commission can interact in a situation. One of the major foundations underlying these limitations is that many of the natural resources, with which the commission concerns itself rarely, if ever, conform to the political boundaries of the municipalities. Water and wildlife make up the two most obvious examples.

Any development project upstream of a town, outside its legal jurisdiction, even miles away, can affect that town's natural resources such as water quality. Similarly, the projects it undertakes will affect all other towns downstream. Because downstream towns can not regulate the actions of upstream towns, communication and cooperation are necessary to ensure that problems are resolved with consideration to the entire basin and not inadvertently passed downstream. With their large resources of information, the conservation commissions in these towns should serve as liaisons between the towns and complement each other's efforts in conserving their own local environment.

Wildlife also defies political boundaries. Partially because of this, wildlife (everything from insects to birds to mammals) is public property under the jurisdiction of the state. The state often abdicates its management responsibilities to the municipalities, while still retaining its regulatory role. For instance, the state establishes the guidelines for licensing animal control specialists. Migratory birds, endangered species, marine mammals, and some fisheries fall under the jurisdiction of the federal government, some of which are even regulated by international treaties. This puts direct limitations on what a conservation commission can and can not do. For example, it is illegal to feed hunted animals where baiting is an illegal hunting technique. If an animal is legally killed in an area where baiting is not permitted, but the animal had been fed by other humans, then the municipality could be in trouble for permitting what may be considered baiting by the state (**Connecticut General Statutes, Section 26**). When conservation commissions supervise and manage municipally owned property, they must be aware of these types of issues. Such seemingly benign actions as feeding the Canada geese or removing a beaver dam can have drastic political, financial, and most importantly, ecological consequences. Therefore, be sure to consult the DEP Wildlife Division before attempting to manage such resources.

The Environmental Protection Act of 1971 (**Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 22a-14 to 22a-20**) discusses when and how individuals, organizations, and agencies can intervene to protect the public trust of air, water, and other natural resources of the state of Connecticut from unreasonable pollution, impairment, or destruction. Under this act, the conservation commission can bring to superior court any subdivision or agency of the state government, any person, partnership, corporation, association, organization or other legal entity which the commission feels is unreasonably polluting, impairing, or destroying any natural resource, including historic structures and landmarks. The commission may go to court over the issuance of permits and licenses that may result in such damage. If the court rules in favor of the commission, the court may grant temporary or permanent relief, or may impose such conditions as are required to protect the natural resources. The commission may also be compensated for its court-related

costs, including costs for witnesses and reasonable attorney fees, if the court rules in favor of the commission and the commission had requested such compensation.

The conservation commission should, however, think very carefully before attempting to legally intervene in an action; it should be a last line of defense. Not only can legal action be incredibly costly if the case is lost, but it can also result in long-term damage to interagency relations. In a matter of weeks, a bitter court battle can undo years of work in developing ties of cooperation. An adversarial relationship with another agency, especially if it is a powerful one, can result in decreased effectiveness for the conservation commission in the long term. Once embroiled in legal conflict and thus an adversarial relationship, the commission might win the battle, but as a result, it could lose the war. Therefore, conservation commissions should choose their battles wisely.



## APPENDIX C: POTENTIAL PROJECTS

Activities commissions can undertake are described throughout the manual. In this section, the activities are briefly listed by subject. The list can never be complete, for the commission enabling legislation is broad and leaves a wide range of possibilities for action open to any commission, depending on the needs and desires of the community. Some projects can best be run by volunteers for the commission, some by co-sponsorship with other organizations. Imagination and local needs and resources are the keys.

It can be desirable to initiate commission projects that will serve a community need. Strategically placed projects that can be completed quickly and with great success will enhance the commission's community position and sustain community interest.

### A. Remember the Important Concepts

The value of the regional, watershed, and ecosystem approaches - natural systems obey no political boundaries.

The worth of a multi-use approach to certain land uses - could the utility right-of-way also be used for recreation, or an underground sewer line corridor accommodate many other utility lines?

The interdependence of the environment - any action causes a reaction in some other part of the natural system.

The necessity for continued performance and protection of certain natural systems - some environmental resources, such as an important aquifer cannot be disrupted without potential costs in human health and expenses and destruction of a natural system necessary for life.

The comprehensiveness of the real "environmental picture," where preservation of natural resource quality and fulfillment of social and legal needs meet.

### B. Education

Request the chief elected official and other town officials to support environmental principles. Request their support for environmental education programs through the budget process.

Develop and maintain communication with the Board of Education. Enlist their support for school-based environmental education programs. Encourage their participation.

Design a student internship program whereby a high school or college student learns by working with the commission, and the commission gains a temporary employee. Or appoint a student to serve a term as a member.

Keep, or collaborate with, a volunteer, library, or nature center in keeping a comprehensive resource file and library of books, pamphlets, and films.

Know the sources from which to obtain additional information on issues.

Write informative minutes and annual reports and circulate them.

Write brochures, pamphlets, newspaper columns, research reports on issues, sponsor or participate in a radio show (a commission "may advertise, prepare and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets as necessary for its purposes." Sec. 7-131a).

Run a "teacher training" course, or at least have a "teachers' meeting", to let them know what commission functions and goals are, how it can help teachers (and vice versa), and what resources are available to help in teaching environmental and ecological principles.

Sponsor or cosponsor lectures, seminars, workshops and courses.

Give lectures, seminars, workshops, or courses such as a "town environment" course wherein half the time is devoted to studying the natural features of the town, and half devoted to the social structures that deal directly with or impact on these resources such as sewage plants, septic systems, gas stack scrubbers, landfills, reservoirs, etc.

Help the schools set up outdoor laboratories or environmental study areas. Start with enlisting support from the Board of Education.

Give a scholarship for a deserving student to

- a. attend a summer nature camp
- b. go to college in environmental studies (the Granby Conservation Commission got the town recycling committee to donate funds from their proceeds for such a scholarship.)

Give a scholarship for a teacher to attend an environmental course or go to a summer training workshop.

Hold occasional "self-education meetings" of the commission where members can explore important issues through discussion with experts, investigation of land areas, etc.

### **C. Energy**

Publicize, provide information on, and set a good example for, energy conservation.

### **D. Forestry and Wildlife Habitat**

Advocate good forest management techniques on municipal as well as private lands.

Consider a reforestation or wildlife habitat management program for appropriate land. Inform landowners that they may purchase "buffer bunches" to plant for wildlife habitat, from DEP's regional headquarters.

Establish a municipal forest. Refer to Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-131, which authorizes towns to appoint conservation commissions to manage open space.

If appropriate for forest management on municipal lands, initiate a cordwood program open to residents.

Collaborate with the tree warden, the garden club, and others to plant and protect trees. Take the long view when necessary. The Trumbull Conservation Commission runs an unusual program - the commission reserves a tree (usually donated by cooperating nurseries) for each child born in the town, and on Arbor Day, plants the year's accumulation.

Collaborate with the local garden club or other interested groups in tree or shrub planting to screen dumps, dumpsters, or unsightly land areas such as highway medians, etc.

### **E. Funding**

Assign one member to investigate funding possibilities for the commission itself, and for other projects or agencies which would benefit the environment. This would include financial watchdogging to see that the town is receiving its maximum share of, for instance, sewage facility or solid waste facility money, or making sure industries know of the tax abatements possible for installation of pollution control equipment.

Make sure the town board of finance or other local financial agency knows the importance of commission work and the degree of citizen support, to assure the commission is given an adequate budget.

### **F. Land Use - Mapping and Inventory**

Complete a natural resource inventory.

Keep "an index of all open areas, publicly or privately owned, including open marshlands, swamps and other wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas" (**Section 7-131a**).

Combine these and other information into a community resources map that includes:

1. Natural resources;
2. Sensitive areas such as open areas, wetlands, and floodplains;
3. Existing land uses such as housing, industry;
4. Infrastructure such as sewer and utility lines.

Find out the utility and transportation facilities forecast for the town.

Survey the existing maps in the community, use the data where appropriate

If possible centralize the data and maps into a well indexed recovery system

Where possible, initiate a common mapping scale so information on all community maps is easily integrated.

Explore the use of Geographical Information System (GIS) mapping. Contact the municipal planning agency, the regional planning agency, or the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection.

### **G. Land Use - Participation in Planning**

The commission may make recommendations to the zoning commissions, planning commissions, inland wetland agencies, and other municipal agencies on proposed land use changes (**Section 7-131a**).

Study the existing land use plans affecting the community, make sure the plans are based on proper natural resource data, and participate in the planning process when appropriate.

Provide an open space, natural resource, or conservation plan for the community as an adjunct to the community development plan. This could be particularly effective if the community plan is not based on proper natural resource data and updating of the plan does not seem likely.

Develop a recreation plan to promote recreational appropriate recreational opportunities in open spaces.

Establish a liaison with the Planning and Zoning Commission(s) and review all development plans for their potential environmental impact. Focus on land use as it relates to protection of natural resources, establishment of greenways, and on impact on adjacent open space.

### **H. Land Use- Research**

"A conservation commission shall conduct research into the utilization and possible utilization of land areas of the municipality" (**Section 7- 131a**).

Survey residents to find what land uses and developments they want in the community. Enlist the assistance of the regional planning agency to ensure the survey is designed to provide comprehensive answers to the questions your asking.

Study and remain current on land management techniques - social, legal and scientific.

Contact historic districts, historic preservation groups, and others with compatible interests to help preserve the town's character and see if joint programs can benefit common or closely related goals.

Determine availability of resources for developing flood plain management plans for critical town watersheds.

Examine land areas such as flood control projects, forests, historic districts, utility corridors, and rights-of-ways for compatible multiple use possibilities.

Search town records for abandoned or forgotten public rights-of-way, and propose a proper use for such.

### **I. Land Use- Environmental Impact Assessment**

Draft a model environmental impact assessment procedure for the town, and work with other commissions to get it implemented, through an ordinance, or if that is not possible, through informal agreement.

Work with other municipal organizations such as the inland wetland agency to perform environmental impact assessments on activities in certain land areas, such as projects funded under the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974 that require environmental impact statements.

Form an environmental impact assessment team with local experts, schoolteachers, college professors, and experienced students.

Organize an Adopt-a-Stream program and organize school children to monitor water quality.

Review the list of federal and state environmental impact statements and, if appropriate, comment on those pertaining to the community.

### **J. Land Use- Regulation**

Work with the planning and zoning commission to introduce environmental ordinances and regulations such as flood plain zoning, agricultural land preservation, model sign ordinances, etc. Investigate cooperation with the planning and zoning commission (and the inland wetland agency) to allow the zoning enforcement (inland wetland) officer to act as the environmental enforcement officer as well.

Work with the planning commission to include a clause in the subdivision regulations that requires due regard in the development process to preservation and potential enhancement of existing natural features, large trees, scenic points, historic structures, etc.

Organize an Easement Monitoring and Management program

### **K. Land Use- Acquisition and Open Space**

The commission may "with the approval of (the municipal) legislative body, acquire land and easements in the name of the municipality and promulgate rules and regulations, including but not

limited to the establishment of reasonable charges for the use of land and easements, for any of its purposes as set out in this section." (**Section 7-131a**).

Annually review lands on which back taxes are owed, and make recommendations for acquisition of such land or easements thereon.

Review subdivision plans for possible open space.

Work with (or if none, establish) a local land trust to acquire land and easements in the community.

Work with the tax assessor to see that **P.A. 490** is used effectively in the community to encourage preservation of farm, forest, and open space land.

Establish linear greenways connecting open space areas and streambelts with corridors of land or easements.

Ensure that dedicated open space is deeded in such a way that the municipality cannot use it for other purposes such as ballfields, school sites, etc.

Establish a Rails-to-Trails Program, converting unused railroad corridors to hiking and biking trails.

Make sure community land is used effectively.

1. Assure public access to vacant lots or, where appropriate, turn them into vest pocket parks, or plant them for wildlife habitat
2. Where appropriate, encourage proper upkeep of cemeteries to encourage use as passive open space or wildlife habitat
3. Investigate recently closed dumps for hazards to see if they can be used for open space
4. Investigate acquisition of public access points to water bodies.

## **L. Community Forestry Program**

Community forests can provide economic, public health and social benefits to a municipality if they are properly managed. The presence of healthy trees increases property values, decreases surface temperature by providing shade, decreases heat loss due to wind, filters pollutants out of the air, controls erosion, recycles water, and even improves physical and mental well-being of community residents. Unhealthy or poorly managed trees, however, can increase municipal liability, drain community funds because of constant trimming and removal, and can even result in decreased psychological well-being as they become eyesores. The appointment of tree wardens and the development of a community forestry program will help maintain municipal trees in healthy, well-managed conditions.

Conservation commissions can help develop tree ordinances along with the formation of a community forestry commission to oversee the program and assist the tree warden. One of the first steps in accomplishing either of these tasks is to create a tree inventory. This tree inventory should include species, sizes, condition \ health, site characteristics, and the like. Much of this information is readily available in the Open Space - Natural Resource Inventory that the conservation commission is mandated to establish. The management and protection of the municipality's tree resources are no different than any other resource such as land or water. Proper management and effective regulations require specific goals and objectives, delineation of authority and responsibilities, methods of enforcement or influence, and even financial or budgetary constraints.

For more information on the development of community forestry programs and tree ordinances, contact the University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System.

#### **M. Legal and Legislative**

Submit or stimulate other agencies, such as the planning and zoning commission (s), to submit local environmental protection ordinances or regulations concerning issues such as open space in subdivisions, floodplain-zoning, etc.

Along with other commissions and agencies, meet with the state senators and representatives for the area. Learn what they are doing and inform them of the commissions' activities and concerns. There may be issues before the legislature on which a commission should take a stand. CACIWC informs its members regarding critical legislative issues for which written or oral testimony is important.

#### **N. Liaison**

Identify public and private environmentally concerned agencies and become aware of their concerns, work with them, make sure that those with similar aims know of and work with each other. (A commission "...may coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized or similar purposes...." and "...may exchange information with the commissioner of environmental protection, and said commissioner may, on request, assign technical personnel to a commission for assistance in planning its overall program and for coordinating state and local conservation activities," (Section **7-131a**).

Join the Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions. Consider establishing awards for outstanding environmental projects or performance. Awards can serve the dual purpose of encouraging the type of project being rewarded and implying the commission is active enough to present the award.

## **O. Noise**

Inventory areas of excessive noise in the community and propose methods to reduce such noise.

Consider an educational effort or publication to encourage use of quieter products. Noise does not necessarily equal power; too many people think it does.

## **P. Pesticides**

Write a brochure or distribute information on pesticide use including non-chemical pesticides, those resulting in the least damage to the environment and those that should only be used as a last resort.

Work with the Board of Education, the public works department, the parks and recreation department, and utility companies to encourage use of safe pesticides, herbicides, and other chemical agents.

## **Q. Pollution**

Study environmental laws and regulations and the federal, state and local authorities that implement them.

Form an environmental watchdog system to report violations of environmental laws and regulations. If possible, document the violation with photographs or a video recorder.

Develop a program to monitor groundwater and protect it from contaminants.

Investigate the storage, recovery, and disposal of winter road sand.

Write a handbook detailing agencies and groups responsible for, concerned with, or conducting activities affecting the local environment. List telephone numbers and addresses so violations of environmental regulations may be reported or progressive actions can be supported.

Learn what proportions of salt to sand the town uses in its highway de-icing procedures and how \ where it is stored; investigate damage this might be causing to plants, ground- water, etc.; and suggest, if warranted, a more environmentally sound methods.

Organize a Household Hazardous Waste Pick-up Day.



## **R. Solid Waste**

Co-sponsor or organize a litter pick-up. Keep America Beautiful and Scouts often conduct one in the spring. Take caution, however, do not spend great energies on cosmetic approaches such as clean-ups, which are necessary, but may produce little in the long run. Educate the community members to love and respect the environment and thereafter not litter in the first place.

## **S. Water**

Develop a watershed management plan in cooperation with neighboring towns, if appropriate.

Initiate a streambelt survey.

Establish water-testing sites in collaboration with DEP or USGS (which samples water quality at 4 stations on the rivers in the state and with DEP collaboration computerizes the information for quick retrieval), as a project for school classes.

Initiate an erosion and sedimentation ordinance.

Check the local septic tank testing and installation procedures. Investigate the feasibility of an ordinance requiring septic system maintenance (pump-outs) on a regular schedule.

Co-sponsor a river or pond clean up.

Watchdog town flood plain zoning efforts required by the National Flood Insurance program.

## **T. Greenways**

Develop a town plan for greenways.

Study the town Open Space Map and identify potential linkages for greenway connections.

Seek easements on or acquisition of properties that could provide critical linkages in the establishment of greenways.

Look at greenway plans in neighboring towns for possible intra-town connections.

Study the feasibility of a town bicycle path

Establish an ordinance that protects existing trail systems. (The Wilton Conservation Commission together with the planning and zoning commission established a regulation for preserving trails in town).

## **APPENDIX D: RESOURCES**

### **A. Municipal**

#### **The Chief Executive Officer**

S/he appoints the commissioners, and they are responsible to the chief executive officer. The backing of the chief executive officer can be important in attaining commission goals.

#### **Local Conservation Law Enforcement Officers**

Responsible for enforcing the conservation laws, these individuals have full police powers and training. Along with this, they can be valuable resources and contacts to learn what issues are being faced by the community.

#### **Fire Department**

The Engineer or Water Officer is often very knowledgeable about the condition of local water bodies, and the Department might profitably be consulted during certain land development activities. Settling basins might, for instance, also serve as fire wells, or cul-de-sacs be designed large enough for easy fire engine access. These are safety issues which can effect land conservation and water quality.

#### **Flood and Erosion Control Board**

This board is concerned with flood and erosion prevention, as should conservation commissions.

#### **Local or District Board of Health**

The board is involved with, among other things, activities such as siting of subsurface sewage disposal systems and water pollution; the results of natural resource misuse and therefore of obvious concern to conservation commissions.

#### **Highway and Public Works Department**

The commission might collaborate with these departments in determining suitable de-icing materials and proportions to use, as well as in community projects such as recycling centers, leaf composting, or litter removal. Conservation commissions can diplomatically assist these departments in meeting municipal and state environmental regulations and thus gain credibility.

#### **Historic Commission**

Under **Connecticut General Statutes Section 7-147a through m**, municipalities may establish historic commissions, which may establish historic districts and receive grants for preservation or restoration of historic areas. Preservation of the natural environs of a historic site can be important aesthetically, historically, and scientifically. The conservation and historic commissions can often work in tandem to accomplish compatible goals.

### **Inland Wetland Commissions**

Conservation commissions may also be inland wetland commissions, may have members sitting on a separate wetlands agency, or may have no representation. In any case, conservation commissions should cooperate closely with these agencies for it is the commission that has the power to assess the environmental impact of a proposed action in wetlands. Conservation commissions can assist inland wetland commissions by assessing the value and function of wetlands on a town-wide basis, or by researching potential impacts of regulated activities on individual wetlands.

### **Lake Association and Authorities**

Many lakeside property owners have formed organizations to oversee their lake. Municipalities may, under **Section 7-151a of the Connecticut General Statutes**, form lake authorities to act as agent for the member towns in such activities as enforcing boating laws, controlling algae and aquatic weeds, studying water management, regulating dock installation as size, etc.

### **Local Indirect Source Liaison for Air Quality**

This liaison helps the DEP access certain community developments which could attract large amounts of vehicular traffic and therefore generate large amounts of certain pollutants. In some cases, the conservation commission has been designated the liaison, if not, it should collaborate closely with the liaison.

### **Municipal Attorney**

The municipal attorney may serve as the lawyer for all municipal agencies, including the conservation commission and is especially useful if no conservation commissioner is a lawyer or has access to legal advice. Commissions should, however, request legal assistance through the town C.E.O.

### **Municipal Board of Finance**

The agency which recommends the size of the budget to be appropriated to the commission is obviously important. **See Section VII. A. Funding.**

### **Planning Commission** (may be combined with zoning commission)

The planning commission is responsible for preparing, adopting and amending the Plan of Conservation and Development for the municipality. Conservation commissions should work closely with this commission in the preparation of this land use document. The planning commission is also responsible for establishing, changing or repealing regulations for subdivisions, including requirements for open space.

### **Public Recreational Facilities Authorities**

According to **Connecticut General Statutes, Section 7-131m**, the conservation commission may be combined with the recreation commission. In any case, the concerns of the two commissions, recreation and land use for recreation, are similar. The recreation commission may administer a substantial fund for park and recreation purposes.

### **School Board**

The board is concerned with education, as is the conservation commission. Working with the board can further the goals of both organizations simultaneously.

### **Tax Assessor**

The Assessor determines within Public Act 490 guidelines, which land may be classified as farm, forest, or open space land, and thus receive the use value tax assessment which may encourage preservation of the land in its undeveloped state. The Assessor's office usually has property maps, which can assist the commission in its natural resource inventory, and mapping duties.

### **Tax Collector**

Lands that are seized and sold for non-payment of taxes may be valuable plots to add to the community open space system. Commissions can request a list of such lands so that adequate analysis can be completed before they are available for town acquisition.

### **Town Planner or Manager**

Town planners can assist in carrying out natural resource inventory and open space planning. Often they have available various base maps of the municipality. They also are responsible for coordinating revisions to the Plan of Conservation and Development.

### **Tree Warden**

Under **Sections 23-59 and 16-234 of the Connecticut General Statutes**, the tree warden shall be appointed by the municipality's chief executive officer and has the responsibility for the care of all trees and shrubs on local public grounds. Take special care to include the tree warden in the decision-making and implementation process because they can be a valuable resource when properly motivated. See Appendix C, Potential Projects—L

### **Zoning Board of Appeals**

This commission hears, considers and decides appeals when it is claimed that there is an error in any order requirement or decision of a zoning enforcement officer. Conservation commissions should be aware of appeals that might impact the environment.

### **Zoning Enforcement Officer**

The official who looks most closely and frequently at actual land uses. Collaboration on environmental impact of actions could be most important.

### **Other Commission and Town Employees**

The Development Commission, Housing Authority, Water Pollution Control Commission, Building Official, Open Burning Official, Animal Control Officer, Town Clerk, local police officials and the Planning and Zoning Secretary may all perform functions or have knowledge of concern to conservation commissions.

## **B. State and Regional**

**Connecticut Department of Agriculture**, 165 Capitol Avenue; Room 273; State Office Building; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 566-4667

DOA is a regulatory agency, overseeing the dairy, cattle, gardening, orchard, nursery and shellfish industries. The department is integrally involved with efforts to preserve prime agricultural lands.

The bureau responsible for this is the **Land and Agricultural Resources Bureau**, which has two divisions:

1. **The Farmland Preservation Division** is charged with the administration of the state's farmland preservation program, which is accomplished through the fee simple purchase of farmland and the purchase of development rights. (860) 566-3227.
2. **The Aquaculture Division** has jurisdiction of all state shell fisheries and the shell fisheries of Westport, Milford, West Haven, and New Haven, conducts research in ground management and predator control, and cooperates with the State Health Department in pollution and hydrographic surveys.

### **Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Stations**

123 Huntington Street; New Haven, Connecticut 06511; (203) 789-7272

The stations are chartered and supported by the State to conduct research and offer assistance in the biological sciences such as effects and biological control of the gypsy moth and other forest defoliators, genetics and resistance to plant disease, air pollutants, effect of foliage on dust and noise pollution, removal of biochemical hindrances in crop plants, biological means of disposing of wastes, and study of plant nutrients in soil and water.

Results of important experiments are published twice a year in the station's publication, *Frontiers of Plant Science*, as well as outside journals. A list of publications may be obtained by writing the station.

### **Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection Book Store**, (860) 424-3555

Source for books, maps and other references for municipal, state and regional natural resource information.

### **Connecticut River Gateway Commission**

P.O. Box 778; Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475; (860) 388-3497.

In 1973, "...an Act Concerning the Preservation of the Lower Connecticut River Areas"; was passed. The act established a conservation zone in the eight towns along the lower Connecticut River, and, upon vote of the towns, set up a commission responsible for approving local zoning regulations and revisions within the conservation zone. The planning and zoning commissions in each town subsequently revised their zoning ordinances and plans of development to meet minimum standards proposed by the commission. DEP may acquire scenic easements and development right within the zone.

## **Regional Council of Governments**

The Regional Councils of Governments were established by legislative action under **Connecticut General Statutes, Sections 4-124i-p**. In many cases, these councils assist in the planning of land use, watershed protection, transportation, housing, and economic development. They also will typically offer technical assistance and supply regional data to municipal agencies, including maps and land-use regulations on file. See also, Regional Planning Agencies.

Capitol Region  
221 Main Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
Phone: (860) 522-2217

Central Naugatuck Valley  
20 East Main Street, Suite 303  
Waterbury, Connecticut 06702  
Phone: (203) 757-0535

Northeastern Connecticut  
P.O. Box 198  
Brooklyn, Connecticut 06234  
Phone: (860) 774-1253

Northwestern Connecticut  
17 Sackett Hill Road  
Warren, Connecticut 06754  
Phone: (860) 868-7341

South Central Connecticut  
23 Peck Street  
North Haven, Connecticut 06473  
Phone: (203) 234-7555

Valley  
Derby R.R. Station  
Derby, Connecticut 06418  
Phone: (203) 735-8688

## **Connecticut Department of Economic Development**

865 Brook Street; Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067; (860) 258-7800

The Department of Economic Development provides leadership and services to enhance the state's economy and expand opportunities for individual, business, and community prosperity, promote equity and improve the quality of life for Connecticut citizens.

## **Connecticut Department of Education/Board of Education**

165 Capitol Avenue; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 566-6018

A nine member Board of Education is charged with the general supervision and control of the educational interests of the state. The Department of Education is the agent of the state board in carrying out its responsibilities. While there is no law mandating environmental education in the schools, the Department is interested in such education and those likewise interested should work with the agency.

## **The Environment Committee of the Connecticut General Assembly**

Legislative Office Building (LOB), Room 3200; Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591,  
(860) 240-0440

The Environment Committee reviews most of the environmentally related bills, holds public hearings on them, and makes decisions on which bills to send to the floor. Hearings and meetings are open to the public. Contact the clerk of the committee for information. The Information Room of the LOB compiles legislative subject indexes after the deadline for filing

bills, and can provide up-to-date computerized lists of bills during the session. The Information Room is on the first floor of the LOB and is staffed to provide copies of bills.

### **Office of Legislative Research**

LOB, Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1591; (860) 240-8400

Maintains a file on all bills passed by the legislature and signed by the Governor. Also, is usually involved in providing background researches on bills and can provide help in determining intent of legislation.

### **Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection**

79 Elm St.; Hartford, Connecticut; (860) 424-5599

Created by the Connecticut General Assembly to conserve, protect, and improve the State's environment and to manage the environment for present and future generations. With the Department of Environmental Protection, there exist the following areas of focus:

#### **BUREAU OF NATURAL RESOURCES (860) 424-3010**

Protects and manages fish, forest, and wildlife resources for the public's use and enjoyment.

Fisheries Division, 424-3474

Forestry Division, 424-3630

Wildlife Division, 424-3011

Report Wildlife/Fishing Violations: 1-800-842-HELP

#### **BUREAU OF OUTDOOR RECREATION, (860) 424-3014**

Manages state owned recreation lands to meet the outdoor recreation needs of the public and acquires open space for conservation and recreational purposes.

State Parks Division, 424-3200

Boating Division, 434-8638

Land Acquisition & Management Division, 424-3016

Conservation Law Enforcement Division, 424-3012

#### **BUREAU OF AIR MANAGEMENT, (860) 424-3026**

Works to maintain and improve air quality so health standards are met while the economic development of the state is not impeded; promotes pollution prevention and compliance assurance.

Planning and Standards Division, 424-3027

Monitoring and Radiation Division, 424-3029

Engineering and Enforcement Division, 424-3028

Report Gasoline Vapor Recovery Problems: 1-800-249-1234

#### **BUREAU OF WASTE MANAGEMENT, (860) 424-3021**

Works to minimize adverse effects from the treatment, storage, disposal and transportation of solid and hazardous wastes, hazardous substances, and pesticides; promotes compliance with applicable laws and regulations; and offers education and technical assistance to the public, business and industry, and professionals in the waste field; promotes pollution prevention and compliance assurance.

Waste Planning and Standards Division, 424-3022  
Waste Engineering and Enforcement Division, 424-3023  
Oil and Chemical Spill Response Division, 424-3024  
24-Hour Emergency Spill Reporting, 1-(860)-424-3338  
Pesticide, PCB, Underground Tank & Terminal Division, 424-3369

**BUREAU OF WATER MANAGEMENT, (860) 424-3704**

Administers programs to protect and restore the state's surface and ground waters and related resources to protect public water supplies, human health, and safety as well as protecting fish and aquatic life, preserving and enhancing water-based recreation, and restoring the state's rivers; promotes pollution prevention and compliance assurance.

Municipal Facilities and Grants Section, 424-3704  
Planning and Assistance Section, 424-3020  
Permitting and Enforcement Section, 424-3018  
Remediation Section, 424-3705  
Wetlands Section, 424-3019  
Dam Safety Section, 424-3706

**OFFICE OF LONG ISLAND SOUND PROGRAMS, (860) 424-3034**

NATURAL RESOURCES CENTER, (860) 424-3540  
State Geological and Natural History Survey, 424-3550  
DEP Map and Publication Sales Outlet, 424-3555  
Geographic Information Services, 424-3540

**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER**

Office of the Ombudsman, 424-3003  
Office of Urban and Community Ecology, 424-3002  
Greenways Assistance Center, 424-4099  
Indian Affairs Coordinator, 424-3066

**ADJUDICATIONS, (860) 424-3037**

Conducts public hearings and issues written decisions on permit applications and enforcement proceedings.

**COMMUNICATIONS, EDUCATION, AND PUBLICATIONS, (860) 424-4100**

Environmental Education Program, 424-3542



### **Connecticut Council on Environmental Quality**

79 Elm Street, 3<sup>rd</sup> floor; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 424-4000

Under **Connecticut General Statutes, Section 22a-11 to 13**, the Council on Environmental Quality's three primary functions are to prepare and submit an annual report to the governor on the status of Connecticut's environment, to review construction projects of state agencies, and to receive and investigate citizen complaints. CEQ personnel will assist commissions regarding statewide issues affecting local land use decisions.

### **Connecticut Department of Public Health and Addiction Services, Bureau of Health Promotion, Environmental Health Services Division**

150 Washington Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 566-4800

The Environmental Services Division oversees activities directly concerned with natural resource protection and consists of six sections: Water Supplies, Food Protection. Recreational Health and Safety, Lead Poison Prevention, Asbestos Section and On-Site Sewage Disposal.

### **Connecticut Historical Commission**

59 South Prospect Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 566-3005

The Connecticut Historical Commission consists of 12 members appointed by the Governor. The Commission administers a grant aid program to assist in the acquisition, relocation and restoration of historic structures, advises municipalities on the formation of historic districts, acquires, restores and maintains public properties, provides markers for historic sites, makes nominations to the National Register of historic places, and compiles a ten-year plan *The State Historic Preservation Plan*.

### **Connecticut Office of Policy and Management**

80 Washington Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 418-6500

The Office of Policy and Management provides the Governor information and analysis necessary in formulating public policy goals for the State and assists state agencies and municipalities in implementing policy decisions on behalf of the people of Connecticut. They are responsible for reviewing and periodically updating the State's Plan of Conservation and Development. Conservation Commissions should use this document when assisting the Planning Commission in preparing and updating the municipal Plan of Conservation and Development.

### **Connecticut Department of Public Utilities Control**

1 Central Park Plaza; New Britain, Connecticut 06051; 1-800-382-4586

The Department of Public Utility Control has primary regulatory responsibility for investor-owned electric, gas, water, telecommunications, and cable television companies in Connecticut. The Department also monitors compliance of these companies with federal mandates. Conservation Commissions should be familiar with the authority of the DPUC relative to municipal land use.

### **Environmental Review Team, (860) 345-3977**

The Environmental Review Team (ERT) is a group of environmental professionals drawn together from a variety of federal, state, and regional agencies. Specialists on the team include

geologists, biologists, soil scientists, foresters, climatologists, landscape architects, recreational specialists, engineers, and planners. The ERT operates with state funding under the aegis of the King's Mark Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Area and the Eastern Connecticut RC&D Area. The ERT is available to assist towns in the review of sites proposed for major land use activities or natural resource inventories for critical areas. As a public service activity, the ERT is available to serve towns free of charge. Applications for an ERT, are submitted by a municipal commission, Board of Selectmen, or Town Council, to the ERT coordinator or County Soil & Water Conservation District.

### **Regional Planning Agencies**

Regional planning in Connecticut began when the 1949 General Assembly authorized two or more contiguous municipalities with planning commissions to form regional planning authorities. General enabling legislation was adopted in 1955, and state funding for the agencies came in 1957.

The state is now divided into 15 planning regions, which are, in all but two instances, presided over by a regional planning agency. The planning commission of the Capitol Region Council of Governments and the Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials performs RPA functions for their respective planning regions. Municipalities join the RPA by ordinance of the legislative body, and are represented in numbers according to a formula based on population.

“Each regional planning agency shall make a plan of development for its area of operation, showing its recommendations for the general use of the area including land use, principal highways and freeways, bridges, airports, parks, playgrounds, recreational areas, schools, public institutions, public utilities and such other matters as, in the opinion of the agency, will be beneficial to the area. Any regional plan so developed shall be based on studies of physical, social, economic, and governmental conditions and trends and shall be designed to promote with the greatest efficiency and economy the coordinated development of its area of operation and the general welfare and prosperity of its people.... The regional planning agency shall assist municipalities within its region and state agencies and may assist other public and private agencies in developing and carrying out any regional plan or plans of such regional planning agency. The regional planning agency may provide technical assistance to municipalities within its region and other public agencies under such terms as it may determine....” **(Section 8-35a as amended by P.A. 75-537)**

Capitol Region Council of Governments  
221 Main Street  
Hartford, Connecticut 06106  
Phone: (860) 522-2217

Central CT Regional Planning Agency  
225 North Main Street, P.O. Box 1880  
Bristol, Connecticut 06011  
Phone: (860) 589-7820

Central Naugatuck Valley RPA  
20 East Main Street  
Waterbury, Connecticut 06702  
Phone: (203) 757-0535

CT River Estuary Regional Planning Agency  
455 Boston Post Road, P.O. Box 778  
Old Saybrook, Connecticut 06475  
Phone: (860) 388-3497

Greater Bridgeport Reg. Planning Agency  
525 Water Street  
Bridgeport, Connecticut 06604  
Phone: (203) 366-5405

Housatonic Valley Council of Elected Officials  
Old Town Hall, Route 25  
Brookfield Center, Connecticut 06804  
Phone: (203) 775-6256

Litchfield Hills Council of Elected Officials  
42 North Street, P.O. Box 187  
Goshen, Connecticut 06756  
Phone: (860) 491-9884

Midstate Regional Planning Agency  
100 deKoven Drive, P.O. Box 139  
Middletown, Connecticut 06457  
Phone: (860) 347-7214

NE CT Regional Council of Governments  
P.O. Box 198  
Brooklyn, Connecticut 06234  
Phone: (860) 774-1253

NW CT Regional Council of Governments  
17 Sackett Hill Road  
Warren, Connecticut 06754  
Phone: (860) 868-7341

Regional Council of Governments  
Regional Planning Commission  
(South Central Connecticut)  
23 Peck Street  
North Haven, Connecticut 06473  
Phone: (203) 234-7555

SE CT Regional Planning Agency  
139 Boswell Avenue  
Norwich, Connecticut 06360  
Phone: (860) 889-2324

SW Regional Planning Agency  
213 Liberty Square  
East Norwalk, Connecticut 06855  
Phone: (203) 866-5543

Valley Regional Planning Agency  
Derby R.R. Station  
Derby, Connecticut 06418  
Phone: (203) 735-8688

Windham Regional Planning Agency  
968 Main Street  
Willimantic, Connecticut 06226  
Phone: (860) 456-2221 or 456-2222

### **Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority**

179 Allyn Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06103; (860) 549-6390

The Connecticut Resources Recovery Authority is charged with implementation of Connecticut's statewide solid waste. A nine-person Board of Directors administers the CRRA; a staff carries out their policy; an advisory council oversees operations. The CRRA is an independent public instrumentality and political subdivision of the state, and in no way connected with DEP, as is sometimes thought. DEP's solid waste unit sets standards of environmental quality with which all solid waste facilities, including those established by CRRA, must conform.

### **Connecticut Siting Council**

136 Main Street; Suite 401; New Britain, Connecticut 06051

The Connecticut Siting Council regulates the siting of electric generating facilities and substations of utilities and large private owner producers, fuel and electric transmission lines,

community antenna television towers, cellular telephone towers, and telecommunications towers owned or operated by the state or public service company, hazardous waste management facilities, low-level radioactive waste management facilities, and ash residue management facilities.

### **Soil and Water Conservation Districts**

Soil and Water Conservation Districts are countywide groups administered by a board of resident landowners elected by those living or owning land in the county. The districts provide advice and technical assistance to municipal agencies, landowners and agriculture producers on management of natural resources. Specifically they provide technical assistance on management of non-point source pollution, erosion and sediment control, management of agricultural wastes, storm water management, and stream bank stabilization. They also can provide assistance in locating information and resources for specific projects.

**Connecticut General Statutes Section 25-104a** places the districts under the aegis of DEP, empowering them to “advise (the DEP commissioner) on matters of soil and water conservation, erosion and sedimentation control and assist in implementing programs concerning such matters.”

The act also established a Connecticut Council on Soil and Water Conservation to coordinate the activities of the local district boards, DEP, and other state, regional and local agencies. The liaison between the DEP and the council operates from DEP’s Bureau of Water Management. Addresses for the eight county district offices are:

Litchfield Soil & Water Conservation Dist.  
1185 New Litchfield Street  
Torrington, CT 06790  
Phone: (860) 626-8258

Hartford Soil & Water Conserv. District  
627 River Street  
Windsor, CT 06095  
Phone: (860) 688-7725

Tolland Soil & Water Conserv. District  
24 Hyde Avenue  
Vernon, CT 06066  
Phone: (860) 875-3881

Windham Soil & Water Conserv. District  
Wolf Den Road, P.O. Box 112  
Brooklyn, CT 06234  
Phone: (860) 774-0224

Fairfield Soil & Water Conserv. Dist.  
69 B Stony Hill Road  
Bethel, CT 06801  
(203) 744-6109

New Haven Soil and Water Conserv. Dist.  
North Farms Executive Park  
900 Northrop Road, Suite A  
Wallingford, CT 06492  
Phone: (203) 269-7509

Middlesex Soil & Water Conserv. Dist.  
Extension Center, P.O. Box 70  
Haddam, CT 06438  
Phone: (860) 345-3219

New London Soil & Water Conserv. Dist.  
238 West Town Street  
Norwich, CT 06360  
Phone: (860) 887-4163

## **Connecticut Department of Transportation**

2800 Berlin Turnpike; Newington, Connecticut 06131-7546; (203) 556-3477

The Department of Transportation and its regional offices are charged to develop and maintain transportation systems and facilities in the state. Obviously, its activities have great environmental impact, not only on the actual site of a road or transportation system, but for miles around, as development is cited along transportation corridors, or concentrated around transport systems. Energy concerns also figure in DOT plans, as systems that minimize energy consumption become more necessary.

**The DOT Division of Environmental Quality** sets and enforces departmental policy on noise, air, water, economic and other social and environmental aspects of transportation projects.

## **The University of Connecticut Cooperative Extension System**

The college's Cooperative Extension System is one of two public education arms of the university. It includes a staff of specialists and county extension agents and makes available the results of research and other information to Connecticut residents. The Extension method involves local people in the planning and implementation of educational programs.

Extension's community development programs are designed to strengthen decision-making processes, improve the quality of governmental activities administered by municipal executives, boards and commissions, and help community groups increase their effectiveness in public affairs. Extension's Non-point Education for Municipal Officials (NEMO) has a program that will assist communities in developing land use practices that reduce impact to wetlands and watercourses. Contact the Middlesex County office for information and publication on the NEMO program.

Community Resource Development Agents of the Extension System are available to assist individuals, community groups, municipal officials, and public agencies by assisting in the research of problems facing communities; providing background information and suggesting alternative solutions to identified problems; and initiating and conducting educational activities on the needs for, the planning of, and the achievement of community development. County Agricultural Extension Centers can be found in:

### *Fairfield County:*

Bethel Cooperative Extension Center  
67 Stony Hill Road  
Bethel, Connecticut 06801  
Phone: (203) 797-4176

### *Hartford County:*

West Hartford Cooperative Extension Center  
1800 Asylum Avenue  
West Hartford, Connecticut 06117  
Phone: (860) 241-4940

### *Litchfield County:*

Torrington Cooperative Extension Center  
1304 Winsted Road  
Torrington, Connecticut 06790  
Phone: (860) 626-6240

### *Middlesex County:*

Haddam Cooperative Extension Center  
P.O. Box 70  
Haddam, Connecticut 06438  
Phone: (860) 345-4511

*New Haven County:*

North Haven Cooperative Extension Ctr.  
305 Skiff Street  
North Haven, Connecticut 06473  
Phone: (203) 789-7865

*New London County:*

Norwich Cooperative Extension Center  
562 New London Turnpike  
Norwich, CT 06360  
Phone: (860) 887-1608

*Tolland County:*

Vernon Cooperative Extension Center  
24 Hyde Avenue  
Vernon, Connecticut 06066  
Phone: (860) 875-3331

*Windham County:*

Brooklyn Cooperative Extension Center  
139 Wolf Den Road  
Brooklyn, Connecticut 06234  
Phone: (860) 774-9600

**U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)**

16 Professional Park Road; Route 44A; Storrs, Connecticut 06268-1299; (860) 487-4011

The NRCS is an agency of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Assistance provided by NRCS operations in Connecticut has an ecosystem based approach, utilizing project coordinators for each of Connecticut's four major watershed basins, and resource teams to address agricultural and community assistance priorities. Assistance is primarily through six service centers and the County Soil & Water Conservation Districts. NRCS staff is multi-disciplinary, including soil scientists, engineers, agronomists and wildlife biologists. They provide technical assistance to agriculture producers, municipalities, state agencies, watershed associations, and landowners.

NRCS, in cooperation with the Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection, has developed digitized soils maps for all of Connecticut for use in geographic information systems.

**U.S. Department of Commerce, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration,  
National Weather Service**

705 Bloomfield Avenue; Bloomfield, Connecticut 06002; (860) 623-3888

The National Weather Service at Bradley International Airport furnishes meteorological services to Connecticut and the Greater Springfield area. It also furnishes specialized services for aviation (domestic and international), agriculture, marine, and forestry interests.

**U.S. Environmental Protection Agency**

Region I; Room 2203; John F. Kennedy Federal Building; Boston, Massachusetts 02203;  
(617) 565-3400

EPA is the federal agency charged with setting and enforcing environmental standards and conducting research on the causes, effects and control of environmental problems such as air and water pollution, solid waste management, pesticides, radiation and noise. Connecticut commissions will find much information at the Region I headquarters that serves Connecticut, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. The EPA Regional Wetland Education number is (617) 565-4868.

**Council on Environmental Quality**

722 Jackson Place, N.W.; Washington, D.C. 20503; (202) 395-5750

Established to assist and advise the President on environmental matters and prepare a yearly Environmental Quality Report on the nation. The CEQ gathers information concerning the conditions and trends in the quality of the nation's environment, reviews the various programs and activities of the federal government and receives and reviews all environmental impact statements submitted under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). Commissions interested in commenting on the environmental impact statements for federally funded projects in their area can review the list of titles of such statements published in the Federal Register, a daily record of federal actions to which most libraries subscribe.

### **U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

New England Division, 696 Virginia Road; Concord, Massachusetts 01742-2751;  
1-800-343-4789.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) have responsibility for certain activities in wetlands and navigable waters under the national Clean Water Act. Commissions should maintain contact with the Corps to understand their role, permitting procedure, and decision criteria. Conservation Commissions can request USACE review of wetland applications to determine need for USACE permit. This will save municipality time and money if applicant needs to reapply if a USACE permit is required.

### **U.S. Geological Survey**

Abraham A. Ribicoff Federal Building; 450 Main Street, Room 525; Hartford, Connecticut  
06103; (860) 240-3060

The U.S. Geological Survey (USGS), undertakes preparation of topographic, geologic, and hydrologic maps; inventory of national water resources and study of special water problems; classification of federal lands for mineral and waterpower potential; and supervision of mining and oil and gas development on federal and Indian lands. The Water Resources Division, located in Hartford, is the public contact in Connecticut for all U.S. Geological Survey information requests.

The Water Resources USGA consists of the collection of basic information through its hydrologic data stations, areal hydrologic and interpretive studies, and research projects. The results of these efforts are presented in publications of the U.S. Geological Survey and Connecticut agencies, as well as technical and professional journals.

Much of the work is a cooperative effort in which state and local governments and other federal agencies share the planning and financial support. In Connecticut, various parts of the program are conducted in cooperation with DEP, DPEP, and U.S. Army Engineer Division, New England, Corps of Engineers.

### **U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation**

Northeast Regional Office, 1421 Cherry Street; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19102

The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation is responsible for coordination and development of effective programs relating to outdoor recreation. The bureau administers the Land and Water Conservation Fund which provides monies for a matching grant program to help states and their political subdivisions plan, acquire and develop outdoor recreation areas and facilities. This 50/50 cost sharing program is administered in Connecticut through the DEP.

Another important part of the bureau's mission, under the National Environmental Policy Act, is to review projects having an impact on outdoor recreation. The bureau also acts on applications from states and municipalities for funding of public parks and recreation. Under the Department of Transportation Act, the possible adverse effects of transportation projects and programs on parks, recreation areas, and wildlife and waterfowl refuges are reviewed. Certain rivers and trails are also studied for possible inclusion in the National Wild and Scenic Rivers and Trails Systems.



## **Non-Governmental Organizations**

Many non-governmental organizations are concerned with environmental quality, natural resource management and land use; others are glad to cooperate with conservation commissions on specific environmental problems. DEP publishes a Directory of Connecticut Conservation-Oriented Organizations, which lists the address, phone number and directors of private environmental groups in Connecticut. A commission will find listed the land trusts, local environmental groups, etc., closest to its community, as well as the statewide groups. Call the DEP Book Store for further information. Phone: (860) 424-3555.

### **Audubon Council of Connecticut**

Route 4, R. R. 1; Box 171; Sharon, Connecticut 06069; (860) 364-0520

The Audubon Council of Connecticut is the statewide organization of the National Audubon Society that initiates and supports programs to advance the protection and wise use of wildlife, plants, soil and water, and other natural resources in Connecticut. It also publishes the *Audubon Update*.

### **Business Organizations and Service Clubs** such as the Kiwanis, Rotary, Lions Clubs

These clubs and organizations have often cooperated in commission projects such as a recycling program, a scholarship for a teacher to participate in an environmental training course, a radio show, and the publication of a brochure.

### **The Connecticut Association of Conservation and Inland Wetlands Commissions, Inc. (CACIWC)**, for information call (860) 345-9175

See Appendix A: History of the Conservation Commissions in Connecticut.

### **Connecticut Audubon Environmental Center**

118 Oak Street, Hartford, Connecticut 06106-1514; (860) 527-8737

Connecticut Audubon established this Center to collect and disseminate information about state policies and programs to all Connecticut environment organizations. The Center houses Connecticut Audubon's Hartford office. Organizations can use the Center and its facilities under one of two membership plans, or are welcome to use its services informally.

### **Connecticut Audubon Society**, 118 Oak Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 572-8737

The Audubon Society is dedicated to environmental education, preserves 1000 acres in wildlife sanctuaries, and produces a bimonthly newsletter, periodic special reports, and educational materials. Connecticut Audubon Society is independent of the National Audubon Society.

### **Connecticut Citizens Action Group (CCAG) and Connecticut Citizen Research Group (CCRG)**

2074 Park Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 523-9232

CCAG is organized to mobilize citizen interest in environmental and consumer issues. CCRG provides research assistance and technical information on issues in these areas. Special environmental concerns include land use, open space preservation, and energy. These organizations produce a bimonthly newsletter and can furnish publication lists upon request.

### **Connecticut Conservation Association**

P.O. Box 32; Redding Center, Connecticut 06875-0032; (203) 775-3800

The Connecticut Conservation Association is organized to stimulate awareness of, and solutions to, environmental problems. Special areas of concern include tidal wetlands, agricultural lands, and pesticides. It also publishes a newsletter with periodic in-depth white papers.

### **Connecticut Farm Bureau Association, Inc. (CFB)**

510 Pigeon Hill Road; Windsor, Connecticut 06095; (860) 683-1922

CFB is the voice of the state's agriculture community. Commission's with questions relating to agriculture can request assistance from CFB staff.

### **Connecticut Forest and Park Association**

16 Meriden Road; Rockfall, Connecticut 06481; (860) 346-2372

The Connecticut Forest and Park Association is dedicated to conserving and protecting forests, providing parks and recreation, and runs a volunteer trail maintenance program. It is also concerned with the role and performance of state agencies and the preservation of open space and agricultural lands. Commissions may call for consultation on open space acquisition. It also produces a quarterly publication, *Connecticut Woodlands*, along with periodic newsletters.

### **Connecticut Wildlife Federation**

438 Main Street, P.O. Box 7; Middletown, Connecticut 06457

The Connecticut Wildlife Federation is dedicated to management and preservation of wildlife and wildlife habitat. It publishes a quarterly newsletter *Connecticut Wildlife*, and can put a commission in touch with its parent National Wildlife Federation, which has a wealth of publications of interest to commissions including educational literature for children and a weekly (in session) *Conservation Report*, an excellent listing and discussion of federal legislation.

### **Educational Organizations and Schools**

From kindergarten to college, these organizations offer environmental courses and extracurricular clubs. Both students and faculty are often eager to extend their "book learning" to the field and cooperate on projects such as environmental information centers, aid in wetland identification, or production of an information pamphlet. These resources, especially those at all the universities and colleges throughout Connecticut, should not be overlooked. Undergraduate and graduate students are an excellent source of inexpensive, yet informed, labor and information! It was by utilizing these resources that this manual was written.

### **E-P Education Services, Inc.**

15 Brittany Court; Cheshire, Connecticut 06410; (203) 271-2756

E-P Education Services, Inc., is a non-profit group formed to promote environmental and population education in Connecticut, and is committed to assisting educators in the task of providing quality environmental education for the citizens of Connecticut.

### **Explorer Posts, Boy and Girl Scout Troops, Cub Scouts and Brownies**

These organizations can be enthusiastic participants in activities such as litter removal, river clean-ups, or environmental fairs, and may appreciate help on their projects or badge work, which is often environmentally oriented.

### **4H Clubs, Future Farmers of America, and Granges**

These have, of course, been involved in land use issues their entire existence, and commissions would do well to benefit from their experience by combining forces with them and supporting them on such important issues as preservation of agricultural lands.

### **Garden Clubs, Federated Garden Clubs of Connecticut**

Garden clubs were strong supporters of the initial conservation commission enabling legislation. Many clubs have a local conservation chairperson who is glad to work with the commission; many garden club projects such as beautification plantings or sponsorship of educational workshops can be undertaken jointly with conservation commissions.

### **Land Trusts**

A land trust is a private, non-profit service organization formed to acquire land and, where the charter so states, encourage its preservation and use for education, historic or scientific purposes. Most trusts are membership organizations. A land trust can be an important ally of a conservation commission; both are concerned with open space and land preservation and use. Indeed, many land trusts were formed by conservation commissioners to aid in the open space planning and acquisition efforts of the town, and in many cases members of the commission are represented on the board of directors of the land trust, to insure close cooperation between the two.

Trusts can acquire land by many methods including outright purchase, outright gift, acquisition or donation of a conservation restriction or easement. None of these tools are necessarily unique to trusts, but land trusts can employ them in particularly effective ways.

Further information on trusts and aid in the formation of new ones are available from the Land Trust Service Bureau, 55 High Street; Middletown, Connecticut 06457; (860) 344-0716.

### **The League of Women Voters**

1890 Dixwell Avenue; Hamden, Connecticut 06514; (203) 288-7996

The League has an excellent record of thorough study and well supported stands on issues, many of them environmental. League members research an issue and take a "consensus" on it, after which League representatives may speak officially on the subject within the bonds of the consensus.

Leagues in Connecticut, both state and local, have been involved with conservation commissions since the inception of the commission concept in the state: helping initiate the enabling legislation, encouraging formation of local commissions, and supporting others in various community environmental efforts and issues.

### **Long Island Sound Task Force**

Stamford Marine Center; Magee Avenue; Stamford, Connecticut 06902; (203) 327-9786

Devoted to protecting the Long Island Sound and its watershed. Operates year-round programs in education, research, and advocacy.

### **Land Conservation Coalition of Connecticut (LCCC)**

55 High Street, Middletown, Connecticut 06457; (860) 344-0716

LCCC is an effective coalition of environmental organizations advocating protection of open space in Connecticut, with particular emphasis on state use of the Recreation and Natural Heritage Trust Fund (RNHT). LCCC will assist municipalities in gaining support for funding open space purchase with RNHT funds, or with other types of funding initiatives.

### **Natural Resources Council of Connecticut**

P.O. Box 352, West Haven, Connecticut 06516

The Natural Resources Council of Connecticut exists to provide a forum for understanding of natural resources, which it accomplishes mainly through conferences. Members include conservation organizations, industries, and individuals.

### **Nature Centers and Museums**

These are, of course, environmentally concerned organizations. Most run nature-oriented, educational programs. Many also offer sophisticated courses on environmental and ecological issues and are glad to cooperate with commissions.

### **The Nature Conservancy**

Connecticut Chapter, 55 High Street; Middletown, Connecticut 06457; (860) 344-0716

The Nature Conservancy is devoted to the preservation of natural areas that are ecologically and environmentally significant. The Conservancy owns over 8,000 acres throughout the state. Of special interest to conservation commissions and land trusts should be its program to assist commissions that might not be able to afford and at the moment, and sell it to the commission at a later date. Occasionally emergency funds for purchase will be lent.

**New England Wild Flower Society, Inc.**

“Garden in the Woods;” 180 Hemenway Road; Framingham, Massachusetts 01701-2699;  
(617) 237-4924

Non-profit organization established to promote the conservation of temperate North American flora. The Society holds field trips, classes and events for adults, children, naturalists, and professionals; maintains a library of 3,000 volumes and a collection of 20,000 colored slides; is a clearinghouse for native plant projects in the New England region; plays an activist role in promoting protective legislation for native plants and critical habitats; and owns sanctuaries protecting rare native plants.

**Sierra Club - Connecticut Chapter**

P.O. Box 271551; West Hartford, Connecticut 06127; (860) 232-9419

The Sierra Club is organized to preserve, protect and enhance the environment (especially related to energy, air quality, land use, and wildlife) and publish a periodic newsletter.

**Soil and Water Conservation Society**

16 Professional Park Road; Storrs, Connecticut 06268-1299; (860) 478-4047

**Sportsmen’s Groups**

Groups such as the Connecticut Sportsman’s Alliance, the Housatonic Fly Fisherman’s Association, The American Bass Association of Connecticut, Connecticut Waterfowlers, and other state and local sportsman’s groups have been involved “in the environment” since their inception and have been actively participating in many natural resource management and environmental quality projects. Members will typically have extensive knowledge of the natural resources within and around the community and can provide new perspectives to many conservation problems. If the community or the region has such a group, collaboration could be valuable.

**Watershed Organizations**

Many Watershed Organizations do a fine job of overseeing a regional environmental entity, the watershed, and can be invaluable in land and water-related issues in the area:

River’s Alliance of Connecticut, Inc.  
111 Main Street  
Collinsville, CT 06022  
Phone: (860) 693-1602

Connecticut River Watershed Council  
One Ferry Street  
Easthampton, Massachusetts 01027  
Phone: (413) 529-9500

Blackledge River Watershed Committee  
64 Cone Road  
Hebron, CT 06248  
Phone: (860) 228-3211

Branford River Project.  
P.O. Box 254  
Branford, CT 06405  
Phone: (203) 481-5765

Byram River Watershed Alliance  
c/o Bob Jensen  
24 Caroline Place  
Greenwich, CT 06831  
Phone: (203) 637-9333

Coginchaug River Task Force  
P.O. Box 96  
Middlefield, CT 06455  
Phone: (860) 349-9593

Farmington River Watershed Assoc.  
749 Hopmeadow Street  
Simsbury, CT 06070  
Phone: (860) 658-4442

Hockanum River Linear Park Committee  
407 Woodbridge Street  
Manchester, CT 06040  
Phone: (860) 649-5678

Housatonic Valley Association  
P.O. Box 28  
Cornwall Bridge, CT 06754  
Phone: (860) 672-6678

Mattabassett River Watershed Assoc.  
c/o James Creighton  
186 Hillcrest Avenue  
Newington, CT 06111  
Phone: (860) 667-9233

Mianus River Watershed Council  
P.O. Box 421  
Greenwich, CT 06830  
Phone: (203) 869-5200

Mystic River, Whitford Brook Watershed Assoc.  
24 West Mystic Avenue  
Mystic, CT 06355  
Phone: (860) 536-1804

Naugatuck River Watershed Assoc.  
P.O. Box 122  
Middlebury, CT 06762  
Phone: (203) 758-9166

Niantic River Watershed Association  
29 Attawan Avenue  
Niantic, CT 06357  
Phone: (860) 739-4481

Norwalk River Watershed Assoc., Inc.  
P.O. Box 935  
Norwalk, CT 06852  
Phone: (203) 846-8210

Quinnipiac River Watershed Assoc.  
99 Colony Road  
Meriden, CT 06451  
Phone: (203) 237-2237

Scantic River Watershed Association  
5 Ballouville Road #A  
Dayville, CT 06241  
Phone: (860) 627-8062

Shepaug River Association  
Box 293  
Washington Depot, CT 06794  
Phone: (860) 868-9131

Thames River Watershed Association  
P.O. Box 232  
Ledyard, CT 06339  
Phone: (860) 464-8025

## **Legal Organizations**

Commissions should look to town attorneys or their own lawyers for specific legal advice. There are, however, organizations that are concerned with environmental quality from a legal standpoint.

### **Connecticut Fund for the Environment**

1032 Chapel Street, Fourth Floor; New Haven, Connecticut 06510; (203) 787-0646 or 32 Grand Street; Hartford, Connecticut 06106; (860) 524-1639

Dedicated to protecting Connecticut's natural resources through legal action, education, and scientific investigation, and may provide pro bono legal advice and assistance to municipalities.

### **Connecticut Bar Association, Conservation and Environmental Quality Section**

101 Corporate Place; Rocky Hill, Connecticut 06067; (860) 721-0025

Members of the section are concerned with environmental issues and some may be willing to discuss legal issues.

### **The Conservation Law Foundation of New England**

506 Statler Office Building, Park Square, Boston, Massachusetts 02116; (617) 542-1354

The Conservation Law Foundation of New England will assist conservation commissions with legal interpretation and opinions, and help locate lawyers who might aid commissions.

**Environmental Defense Fund**, 257 Park Avenue South; New York, New York 10010; (212) 505-2100.

**Natural Resources Defense Council**, 40 W. 20<sup>th</sup> Street; New York, NY 10011; (212) 727-2700

The Environmental Defense Fund and the Natural Resources Defense Council are two national organizations particularly involved in legal defense of environmental issues, usually on a national scale. Both publish newsletters.