

## **CONSERVATION COMMISSION**

Efforts to reclaim and develop acres of salt marsh in Rye go back as far as the 1920's and continue today with such efforts as the acquisition of Goss Farm on Harbor Road and Route 1 A, which is being cultivated as a town farm. The Rye Conservation Commission was enabled by State Statute in 1963, and established by Town Meeting vote in 1965, to protect and preserve the existing freshwater and saltwater wetlands and wetland buffers in Rye and to oversee all of the Town's natural resources. It is in the public interest to protect the valuable functions these areas serve, such as providing groundwater protection, storm water control, nutrient and pollution filtering, recreation and aesthetic enjoyment, and habitats for fish, wildlife and flora. The Commission has distinguished itself as "the Town of Rye's gatekeeper for environmental guardianship."

The Conservation Commission consists of seven members who are appointed by the Select Board for staggered 3-year terms. Two alternate members are also appointed by the Select Board and can take the place of any absent regular member at Commission meetings. All members must be residents of the Town of Rye.

The Commission advises the Rye Planning Board regarding requests for Town Special Permits, which are required for all site work within a wetland or within seventy five (75) feet of wetlands. This seventy five (75) foot border is known as the wetland buffer. The area including the wetlands and the buffer is referred to as the Town Wetland Conservation District. Freshwater wetlands include any marsh, swamp, bog, or meadow that is subject to permanent or periodic flooding by fresh water, including any surrounding or abutting soil designated as poorly drained or very poorly drained.

Freshwater wetlands can also be defined by the types of vegetation present. Tidal (saltwater) wetlands are defined by the State of New Hampshire as the area one hundred feet or less from the highest observable high tide.

The Commission is advisor to all other municipal boards concerning environmental issues. It has significantly acquired hundreds of acres in Rye for protection of our water resources and defined wellhead, in perpetuity

The Commission reviews applications for State DES [Department of Environmental Services] Wetlands Bureau Permits, and forwards recommendations to the State. The Commission also reviews applications for Special Permits which are considered by the Rye Planning Board and are required for all site work within wetlands, or within seventy five (75) feet of wetlands. The Commission helps the State ensure that the regulations of the New Hampshire Shoreland Protection Act are followed. The Shoreland Protection Act applies to any projects within 250 feet of most coastal waters, large ponds, and/or major streams and rivers. New Hampshire State Wetlands Bureau Permit applications can be obtained at the Town Clerk's office. Rye Special Permit applications can be obtained at the Planning Board office. Both are on the main floor at the Town Hall. If you have any questions about the completeness of your application, please contact the Conservation Commission.

Full and complete plans for your project must accompany your application. If your application is not complete at the time of your appointment, the Commission may not be able to vote on your proposed project, and you may have to reschedule your appointment for the following month's meeting. In addition to advising the Planning Board and the state DES regarding permit applications, the Conservation Commission can, with the approval of the Select Board, negotiate for the purchase of conservation land and/or the granting of conservation easements. These purchases or easements may be in the name of the Conservation Commission, on behalf of the Town of Rye.

In 2018-2019, the Conservation Commission expanded the number of conservation properties with maintained trails open to the public. Trailgate events are scheduled periodically to introduce town residents to these trails. The Commission requests that those who use and enjoy these trails be mindful that they are habitat for wildlife. The privacy and property rights of the abutters to these trails should be respected, as well.

The Conservation Commission maintains the Goss Farm property along with guest farmers. Much of the food produced is donated to food pantries in the region. The site is also used for Rye Elementary students for educational experiences in nature and farming. The Commission is also dedicated to reducing invasive species in the town-owned salt marshes.

The Conservation Commission meets on the third Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM in the Court Room on the lower level at the Town Hall. These meetings are open to the public, and the public may speak in support of or against any application. To be placed on the agenda for a meeting, contact the Commission and submit your permit application to the Town Clerk for State Department of Environmental Services permit applications or Planning Office for Town Special Permit Applications at least a week prior to the meeting.