

**Williston Conservation Commission  
Annual Report  
July 1, 2021 - June 30, 2022**

Dr. Carl Runge has stepped down as an extremely valued member of the Williston Conservation Committee. Carl performed over 32 years of volunteer service to the town. Much of the time he was a Conservation Committee member Carl served as the treasurer for the committee including keeping track of Williston Environmental Reserve Fund. Carl's love for wildlife and especially birds led to many important discussions about how informed land management can favor wildlife as well as humans. He was an extraordinary editor and his longevity on the commission provided much appreciated facts from the past. Thank you Carl.

In FY 2021 the WCC developed new criteria and maps for Significant Wildlife Habitat Areas (SWHAs). In FY 2022 the WCC continued to evaluate how the new SWHA mapping will impact conservation strategy for the Town. The new SWHA map has areas of primary and secondary importance separated out, and more weight was given to large forest blocks and road crossings that preserve connectivity between large forest blocks based on current scientific understanding of the importance of those habitat characteristics. These discussions have led to the WCC taking a fresh look at all of the land conservation tools at our disposal as a town, from partnering with farmers, to encouraging enrollment in the state's recently expanded current use programs, to traditional land acquisition leveraging our Environmental Reserve Fund (ERF).

The Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was confirmed in Williston this year, in the summer of 2022. The invasive beetle threatens white, green and black ash trees. White ash have some genetic resistance but about 99% of them will die (unless injected with insecticide). A few large specimens at the Catamount Community Forest have been treated. The CC is keeping an eye on one large white ash tree at the Mud Pond parking area as these forest trees are large and become brittle when dying. Black ash stands are in the Mud Pond Country Park and the Mud Pond Conservation Area. It is thought that all these trees will succumb to EAB. Because of the importance of black (brown) ash to indigenous communities, the WCC amended the Mud Pond Conservation Area Management plan to allow collection of these trees with permission. Green ash are typically planted as street trees and are not addressed by the WCC.

Sustainable Williston volunteers and partners at The Intervale worked to improve the riparian environment of the Allen Brook near Taft Farms off Talcott Road including treatment of invasive species and new tree planting. This was organized by Chapin Kaynor, and coordinated with WCC and Conservation Planner to maximize its impact.



The replacement Allenbrook boardwalk was completed in April this year. The boardwalk is the most heavily used in town, knitting together some of Williston’s residential neighborhoods with the village. It was first constructed in 1995 and then repaired in 2005 and 2008. Timber and Stone, a recreational trail company, constructed the new boardwalk and did a fantastic job. The decking is made from black locust, a hardwood that is very durable and strong, resists rot and looks great. WCC is confident that the quality of the workmanship and materials mean it will last a lot longer than the previous bridge. We appreciate the grant from the Outdoor Gear Exchange, but most importantly we appreciate the funding from the citizens of Williston and the patience and cooperation of the public during construction of this important project.



During 2021 the WCC developed a new Management Plan for the Mud Pond Conservation Area, which is one of six conservation areas owned by the town. Management plans had previously been prepared jointly with Mud Pond Country Park, dating back to the 1990s when the town acquired the 158 acres of peat bog and surrounding upland forest that became the Conservation Area. The different management goals and strategies for the two areas led the WCC to draft a separate plan. The management plan was developed with the assistance of residents and local stakeholders through a consultative process over the summer of 2021. The new plan sets out management objectives and recommendations, including how the physical improvements to the property will be maintained, and how the land will be managed to balance the passive recreational use of the property with its natural resources and habitat conservation. It concludes with a list of action items for the WCC to work on over the coming years.

The Conservation Commission also reviewed a consultation on wakeboarding at Lake Iroquois and the Restricted Firearms Discharge Ordinance during the year, and started work reviewing the town’s Trapping Policy.

The Conservation Commission also reviewed 5 Discretionary Permits and 6 Pre-Application requests.

Respectfully submitted by the Williston Conservation Commission:

Eric Howe, Chair	Kim Coleman
Reed Carr, Vice Chair	Gary Hawley
Carl Runge	Terry Marron
Laura Meyer	