

BELMONT CONSERVATION COMMISSION NEWSLETTER

*"Working to Conserve Your
Natural Resources"*

Spring Issue 2009

***Aquifer Protection Ordinance Annual**

Inspections Since March 2008, Code Enforcement Officer Steve Dalton has inspected 60 of the 97 businesses on the aquifer with contamination potential. Most compliance issues concerned inadequate labeling of regulated substances. The purpose of the inspection program is to bring businesses into compliance with the ordinance. We appreciate the prompt response that most businesses have made.

***Belmont Conservation Commission**

Needs 2 New Members, one full and one alternate. To apply, please call Rick Ball, Land Use, 267-8300 x 19. We do need you!

* **Public Information Night on NH Shoreline Protection Act & New Changes**

Corner Meeting House, Belmont, NH
Wed., June 3, 2009, 7:00PM

Shoreline property owners, please attend!



Many creatures depend on the watery habitat provided by ephemeral vernal pools. Are there any on your property?

*BCC Meetings: 1st Wed. of the Month, 7:00 PM
Corner Meeting House, Belmont NH
Public Welcome and Encouraged to Attend*

Belmont Conservation Commission

PO Box 310

Belmont, NH 03220

POSTAL CUSTOMER

BELMONT, NH 03220

"Working to Conserve Your Natural Resources"

Belmont Purchases Sanborn Farm for Conservation Land

This past year was especially newsworthy for the BCC as we were able to preserve a significant open space for current and future generations of Belmont citizens and, of course, wildlife and their native habitats. With money from the Conservation Fund, the BCC purchased an important 172 acre parcel of land known as the Andrew P. Sanborn Farm. The Conservation Fund receives 100% of the proceeds from the Land Use Change Tax collected when property is developed and comes out of current use. The BCC has dedicated this fund to the acquisition and maintenance of conservation land.

The Sanborn Farm property borders Durrell Mountain, Middle Route, and Rogers Roads. It abuts 203 acres owned by the Society for the Protection of NH Forests in Gilmanton, and another 500 acres of conservation land in Gilford. The headwaters of the Tioga River are located on the property. This large block of unfragmented conservation lands lies within the Belknap Mountain Range. It is important to remember that the larger the unfragmented conservation block, the greater the conservation value.

This property is an exceptional open space which carries out the twin goals of the BCC to protect natural resources and provide low-impact recreation land for Belmont's citizens. Boasting forest, pond, meadow, and wetland habitats, this beautiful tract will be invaluable for fishing, hunting, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, nature observation, birding, and biking. We are developing a stewardship plan and look forward to sharing the plan with the public.



Evaluation & Mapping of Belmont's Significant Wetlands

The BCC has employed Stoney Ridge Environmental to complete an evaluation and mapping of the significant wetlands in Belmont. This fulfills one of the primary statutory responsibilities of the Commission: to keep an index of marshlands, swamps, and all other wetlands. The field work has now been completed. Preliminary findings, maps and tabular data were presented by Tracy Tarr at the February 2008 BCC meeting

Using the New Hampshire Method of wetland evaluation, the study describes those functions used to score each wetland: Ecological Integrity, Wildlife Habitat, Fish Habitat in Rivers & Streams, Fish Habitat in Ponds & Lakes, Educational Potential, Visual/Aesthetic Quality, Water-based Recreation, Ground Water Use Potential, Sediment Trapping, Nutrient Attenuation, Shoreline Anchoring, Historical Site Potential & Noteworthiness.

Maps and overlays are also being created. They will depict the general boundaries of the most significant wetlands in Town and do not take the place of site-specific wetland mapping for individual lot development. When finished, the findings will be available to the public on the town website and in the Town Hall Land Use Office.



Jeff Marden Town Forest



Eagle Scout Kiosk Project, Universal Access Trail, and Beaver Activity

For a quiet, tranquil space in the heart of Belmont, the Town Forest has been a busy place lately. Kurtis Bartlett built and installed a sturdy wooden information kiosk at the entrance of the Jeff Marden Town Forest. This project fulfilled his Eagle Scout requirements. The kiosk will display informational posters on the Town Forest, its allowed uses, trail maps, and biographical information on Jeff Marden. BCC Chairman Ken Knowlton attended the Eagle Scout ceremony for Kurtis and named a trail after him in way of thanks.

The Commission has applied for a grant through the NH Trails Bureau to construct an 800 foot universal access trail. This trail was the dream of Jeff Marden, who died suddenly in 2007. He was paralyzed in a diving accident as a teen, but overcame his physical handicaps to become a community activist for conservation and wildlife as well as for the physically challenged. Should the grant be awarded, the trail will be installed by the BCC and volunteers this summer. Pike Industries has generously donated 125 tons of base material for construction. The trail will allow people with walking handicaps to make their way to the pond where beavers and birds can be observed and a little fishing done. We expect all ages to use this universal access trail, from seniors at the Belmont Senior Center to Belmont Elementary School students using the forest as an outdoor classroom.

Finally, the beaver family is hard at work in the Town Forest Pond. They have created three dams below their abandoned dam. Take a walk into the Town Forest this spring to watch for the beaver family—or go in on your snowshoes!



Old Home Day: Celebrating Our Agricultural Heritage

The Belmont Conservation Commission will sponsor a booth at Belmont's Old Home Day on August 8, 2009. The theme this year is "Celebrating Belmont's Agricultural Heritage". As the Commission is charged with proper utilization and protection of Belmont's natural resources, including our land, soils, minerals, and water, we especially look forward to participating in this annual celebration. We are pleased that the focus will be on our town's agricultural heritage. The Belmont Master Plan states that an overriding goal for the Town is maintaining its rural character; this requires conserving open space and historic places such as the farm lands that have historically served Belmont agricultural needs over decades, if not centuries.

According to our 2007 Natural Resources Inventory we have a high potential for agricultural land use; 64% of Belmont land is designated as important farmland on national, state, and local scales. Losses of Belmont farmlands over the last 10 years average about 9%. It is important to remember that land lost to development cannot easily be reclaimed for farming.

Currently there is much interest in a safe and sustainable food supply. We are seeing a renaissance of home vegetable gardening,

popular during World War II and the Great Depression. Local farmer's markets are proliferating. "Localvores" are those who commit themselves to a diet of foods that are produced within about a 100 mile radius of one's home. There is a burgeoning interest in organic food production. To raise food, we need good soils. Stop by our booth to see what we are doing to keep our agricultural heritage alive and well. You can learn about your own garden soil, too.



WICKED BIG PUDDLES

Vernal pools are often overlooked as important habitats because they dry up in early spring or summer, making them hard to detect for much of the year. Having no outlets, they harbor no fish and are safe places to reproduce for amphibians like frogs, salamanders and also the smaller invertebrates and insects. Without these ephemeral pools, many animals like spring peepers cannot lay there eggs and raise their young.

Many amphibians die on the roads in spring while crossing to find the vernal pools they use each year. Use caution or avoid driving at night on roadways where you have observed an area that frogs and salamanders frequently cross.

Vernal pools affect the entire forest ecosystem by supplying food and water for turtles, ducks, newts, dragonflies, and even deer. If you have one or more of these "wicked big puddles" on your property, protect them. To learn more, go to www.vernalpool.org.



JEFF MARDEN CONSERVATION COMMISSION SCHOLARSHIP

The Belmont Conservation Commission established a scholarship in 2006 for Belmont High School graduates planning to pursue higher education in either environmental or conservation studies or by showing a high degree of interest and community work in these areas during high school. The scholarship is funded by contributions from the community and is managed by the Lakes Region Scholarship Foundation. In 2007, the scholarship was renamed the Jeff Marden Belmont Conservation Commission Scholarship in honor of Jeff, who died unexpectedly in March 2007. He was a much admired activist for conservation in Belmont.

We have awarded the scholarship to five BHS students to date, in amounts ranging from \$250.00 to \$500.00. Recipients were Matt Pickowitz, Leonard Smock-Randall, Brett Donovan, and Eric Trendell.

Due to the economy, the Lakes Region Scholarship Foundation is anticipating an increase in scholarship requests this year. Please consider a contribution. Checks may be made out to the LRSF (write "Jeff Marden BCC Scholarship" on the memo line) and mailed to: Lakes Region Scholarship Foundation, PO Box 7312, Gilford, NH 03247



Belmont's Ground Water and Water Rights

As of part of its mandate to assure the proper utilization and protection of Belmont's surface and ground waters, the Belmont Conservation Commission is currently examining the issues of water quantity and water rights. Water is currently a hot button issue all over the world and right here in NH as well. It has been said that water is the new oil.

Is water a commodity (a good) or is it a human right? Is it a need and public trust that belongs to everyone and to no one? Or is it up for sale to the highest bidder? The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (DES) states in [DES Environmental Fact Sheet WD-WSEB-22-13](#) that "surface water and groundwater are an integrated public resource to be conserved, protected, and managed for the public good." However, the rights of businesses and corporations can come head to head with the rights of citizens when it comes to the public water supply.

In NH, water bottling corporations or their threat have caused area towns such as Barnstead, Nottingham, and Goffstown to either enact or to consider water rights ordinances, even though New Hampshire has a [Large Groundwater Protection Act, RSA 485-C](#) which governs all groundwater withdrawals of more than 57, 600 gallons/day. A number of NH communities have been financially impacted by the privatization and/or attempts to privatize the use of local water resources. At least 15 towns in NH have lost partial or total control of their water resources, which supply local public and private wells. NH towns are enacting or planning to enact local control groundwater ordinances to ensure they do not become entangled in costly, time-consuming legal action. (Goffstown, NH Water Rights Committee, 2007).

In Belmont, a water withdrawal business is currently undergoing the state's permitting process needed before it can begin to withdraw and sell water from Belmont's aquifer.

As water shortages appear worldwide, water becomes a big money-maker. USA Springs, for instance, planned to sell Nottingham, NH water to the country of Malta, near Italy. Malta is the country with the smallest freshwater reserves in the entire Mediterranean.

The State of NH continues to work on safeguarding our water resources, as should we. NHDES is holding a series of evening public meetings to discuss the state's water challenges. The meetings will both inform and build public involvement in the Water Resources Plan being developed by the legislature's Water Resources Committee. "The report represents what the state's water experts think; we've done a survey of state and local policy makers to see what they think; and *now we're looking for the public's reaction and we want to hear what they think about the state's water resources management challenges,*" explained Sarah Pillsbury, administrator of the Drinking Water and Groundwater Bureau at DES and primary coordinator for the water planning effort. The link to NHDES's Water Resources Primer is <http://des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/wrpp/primer.htm>

Each DES water resources presentation will be followed by an hour of public discussion. The closest meeting for Belmont residents will be on Monday, March 23, at the Pines Community Center, 61 Summer Street, Northfield, NH. Please plan to attend.

Groundwater Classification

The state has four categories for groundwater. Initially all groundwater supplies are classified as GB or GA2. However, a municipality can increase protection by applying for reclassification.

Groundwater Classification

Benefits of Reclassification:

- Active management ensures compliance with Best Management Practices
- Inspection, Investigation, and Cease and Desist powers to municipal government
- Prior notice for state environmental permits

Class	Description/Comments
GAA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most Protected Class. • Includes groundwater flowing to public water supply wells (wellhead protection areas). • Prohibits six high risk land uses.
GA1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local entities identify valuable groundwater resources they want to protect via management of potential contamination sources.
GA2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes high-yield stratified drift aquifers mapped by the USGS that are potentially valuable sources of drinking water.
GB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Includes all groundwater not in a higher classification. As in all classes, groundwater must meet drinking water quality standards.

Source: NH Dept. of Environmental Sciences

How to Protect Your Drinking Water



Road signs are one tool communities can use to educate the public


- Establish goals for groundwater protection
- Inventory Potential Contamination Sources (PCSs)
- Develop Water Protection and Management Plans
- Educate the community on the importance of clean groundwater
- Develop vulnerability assessments for drinking water supplies
- Review regulations to ensure that they protect groundwater supplies
- Utilize zoning ordinances to protect water supply areas
- Preserve valuable open space

Use Best Management Practices

Promote BMPs in new construction and on redeveloped sites to protect drinking water.

- Use approved technologies for infiltration.
- Identify and inspect PCSs as identified in the Groundwater Protection Act (RSA 485-C).
- Properly store & handle regulated substances.
- Post steps to take if a spill occurs.
- Work with businesses to promote and integrate BMPs into everyday practices.

Aquifer Protection Best Management Practices






Tri-Town Aquifer Project

Protecting Shared Drinking Water Resources

Belmont Northfield Tilton



LRPC
April 2007

Additional Information for Drinking Water Protection:

Lakes Region Planning Commission (*Tri-Town Reports*): www.lakesrpc.org/services_resources_aquifer.asp
 NH Dept. of Environmental Services: www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/dwgb/dwspp/
 University of New Hampshire Stormwater Center: <http://www.unh.edu/erg/cstev/>
 US Environmental Protection Agency: www.epa.gov/safewater/