



## Fundamentals of Conservation Commissions



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 Larry Spencer, Holderness Conservation Commission  
 NH Association of Conservation Commissions  
 November , 2025

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## WORKSHOP GOALS



2023 Photo  
 Contest  
 Keith Kullman,  
 Mason

- Where do Conservation Commissions (CCs) derive their authority?
- What are the primary roles of a CC?
- What are other potential roles of a CC?
- What can lead to success for a CC?

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## REGULATORY AUTHORITY



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## CC – MAKE UP

- 3 – 7 Members appointed by Mayor (Subject to City Charter) or Selectmen
- Alternate members may be appointed in like manner
- “May appoint such clerks or other employees or subcommittees”
- Appointed for alternating terms (usually 3 year terms)
- May be on other Commissions and Boards
- One may be from the planning board
- New possibility of electing members of a commission

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## CC RESPONSIBILITY

"FOR THE PROPER  
UTILIZATION AND  
PROTECTION OF THE  
NATURAL RESOURCES  
AND FOR THE  
PROTECTION OF  
WATERSHED RESOURCES  
OF THE TOWN."



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## CC RESPONSIBILITY

"SHALL CONDUCT RESEARCHES INTO ITS LOCAL LAND AND  
WATER AREAS."

### EXAMPLES:

- NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY
- FORESTRY MANAGEMENT PLANS
- BASELINE DOCUMENTATION
- BIOBLITZ
- EASEMENT MONITORING
- TRAIL HIKES



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## CC RESPONSIBILITY

“Coordinate the activities of unofficial bodies organized for similar purposes and may advertise prepare, print, and distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets”

### EXAMPLES:

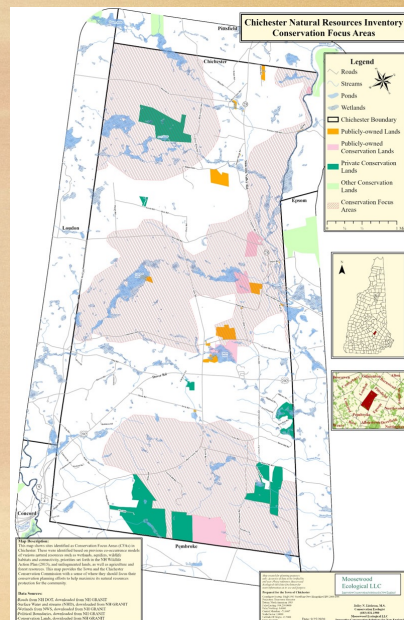
- NRI
- Conservation area plans
- Forestry management plans
- Trail maps



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## CC RESPONSIBILITY

- “SHALL KEEP AN INDEX OF ALL OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL, AESTHETIC, OR ECOLOGICAL AREAS WITHIN THE CITY OR TOWN.”



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## CC RESPONSIBILITY



“SHALL KEEP AN INDEX OF ALL MARSHLANDS, SWAMPS, AND ALL OTHER WETLANDS IN A LIKE MANNER.”



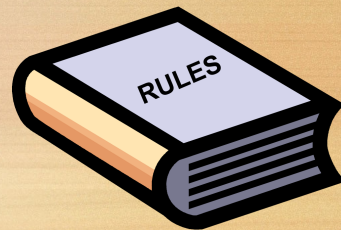
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## CC - RESPONSIBILITY

“MAY” RECOMMEND TO THE CITY COUNCIL/SELECTMEN OR DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL RESOURCES “A PROGRAM FOR THE PROTECTION, DEVELOPMENT OR BETTER UTILITIZATION OF ALL SUCH AREAS.”

- Wetland/Natural Resource ordinances
- Land protection
- Conservation Areas
- Designate Prime Wetlands



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## CC RESPONSIBILITY



“KEEP  
ACCURATE  
RECORDS OF ITS  
MEETINGS AND  
ACTIONS.”

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## CC RESPONSIBILITY

“RSA 91-A Access to Governmental Records and Meeting”

- “Meeting” quorum or majority of members
- In Person, Telephone, Electronic Communications
- Discussing or acting upon matters
- NOT - Circulation of Draft Documents
- Post all meetings
- Minutes promptly recorded and open to public inspection in not more than 5 business days.
- NON-Public Sessions – Acquisition sale or lease of real or personal property

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## CC - RESPONSIBILITY

“File an annual report which shall be printed in the annual town or municipal report”

“May appoint such clerks or other employees or subcommittees”

- Land Protection Committee
- Trails Committee
- Forestry Commission

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## CC – Subcommittees

- “May appoint such clerks or
- other employees or
- subcommittees”
- - Secretary, Treasurer
- - Land Protection Committee
- - Trails Committee
- - Forestry Commission

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## CC – POWERS

- Receive gift of money, personal property, real property within or outside political boundary by gift, grant, bequest subject to approval of governing body
- Acquire in the name of the municipality by purchase land or water rights or lesser rights such as easements subject to approval of the governing body.
- No commission, its member or designees shall enter private property with out permission (written or oral)
- Towns may appropriate money for the purposes, may be put in Conservation Fund under control of Town Treasurer.

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## CC – Optional Town Forest RSA 31 Sections 110-113

- The legislative body may establish City or Town Forest
- Encourage proper management of timber, firewood and other natural resource through planting, timber stand improvement, thinning, harvesting reforestation and other multiple use programs consistent with forest management program and any restrictions
- Managed by Forestry Committee 3-5 Members, Tree warden?
- May be managed by the Conservation Commission
- Proceeds from said Forest shall be place in Special Forest Maintenance Fund

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## Current Use Land Tax Considerations

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## SOURCES OF INFORMATION

- **NHACC – Networking with other towns**
- **UNH Cooperative Extension**
- **UNH GRANIT**
- **NH Wetland Mapper**
- **NRCS Web Soil Survey**
- **Wildlife Action Plan**



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## WHY COMPLETE A WETLAND ASSESSMENT?

- An obligation of Conservation Commissions
- Component of Natural Resource Inventories
- To identify highest values wetlands in Town (e.g. for prime wetland assessment)
- Essential for impact assessment
- Component of wetland mitigation and restoration
- Important for buffer width justification
- Land use decisions

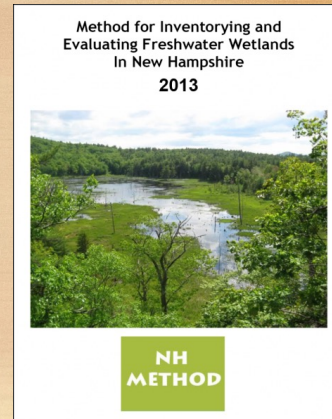


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## NEW HAMPSHIRE METHOD

- Last Updated in 2016
- Designed to compare wetlands
- Assesses 12 functions and values
- Generates a value (for ranking wetlands)
- <https://nhmethod.org/>



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## CC – Wetlands Bureau Input

- State looks to CCs for input on wetland permits, permit-by-notifications, and wetland mitigation
- CC may request a 40-day application hold for review
- May request a site walk (ask permission)
- Provide input to applicant, DES and Planning Board



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## INPUT ON WETLAND MITIGATION

- 1989 – “NO NET LOSS OF FUNCTIONS AND VALUES”
  - Mitigation required by feds and states at certain thresholds (10,000 Sq Ft)
  - Individual municipalities may have mitigation requirements
    - Open Space Protection
    - Restoration
    - Creation
    - In-lieu fee
    - Stewardship Funds



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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

- BASE YOUR COMMENTS ON RELEVANT RULES, REGULATIONS, ZONING
- Work with Planning Board to update zoning ordinance to address items outside of the scope of state wetland permitting



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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

- BE PREDICTABLE
- consider a list of application considerations for your website
- Criteria for Accepting Easement

Town of Hudson  
Conservation Commission  
Town Hall, 12 School Street,  
Hudson NH 03051-4249

**CHECKLIST** Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

Project address: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Owner: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name(s) of wetland/buffer impact: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Applicant: \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLY A NARRATIVE REPORT FOR INFORMATION ON THE CHECKLIST**  
 Check off Yes, No, or Not Applicable in the appropriate circle regarding the documentation provided. This checklist is to be attached to the HCC APPLICATION FORM.

Yes ☐ No ☐ NA ☐ Questions/Comments/Notes: \_\_\_\_\_

**NARRATIVE REPORT**

**Exclusion of Conditions**

☐ Has a DCE Change and fill permit been issued for any part of this site? If yes, provide number, date, and description.

☐ Is there evidence of altered wetlands or surface waters on site?

☐ All prime and other wetlands in the vicinity, plus any wetland/waterbody past the comparable "undisturbed" buffer project.

☐ Description of each wetland and associated values.

☐ Wetland mapping results - including the mapping date and technique plus the name, competence, qualifications of the wetland scientist.

☐ (After property surveyed? If yes, the date of survey. (Please attach the survey plot).)

**Natural Wetland Territory**

☐ Vegetative cover types.

☐ Evidence of wetland pools and associated habitat.

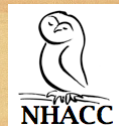
☐ Unique geological and cultural features.

☐ Site Natural Heritage Inventory - For list of rare and endangered species, contact the NH Division of Forests and Land (603) 271-3000.

☐ Wildlife and fauna species, including endangered number and locations (large projects).

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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

- BE CONSISTENT :
- BE TRANSPARENT:
- HAVE A PRESENCE AT YOUR ANNUAL TOWN MEETING (maps, photos, trail brochures, etc.)

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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS



Don't try to function as a technical specialist, consider a third-party review for contentious/legal matters

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## HOW DO I FIND A PROFESSIONAL

- NH Joint Board of Licensure
  - List of certified professionals by name and town
  - NH Association of Natural Resource Scientists ([www.nhanrs.org](http://www.nhanrs.org))
  - Certified Wetland Scientist



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## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS

- BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH PLANNING & MUNICIPAL STAFF



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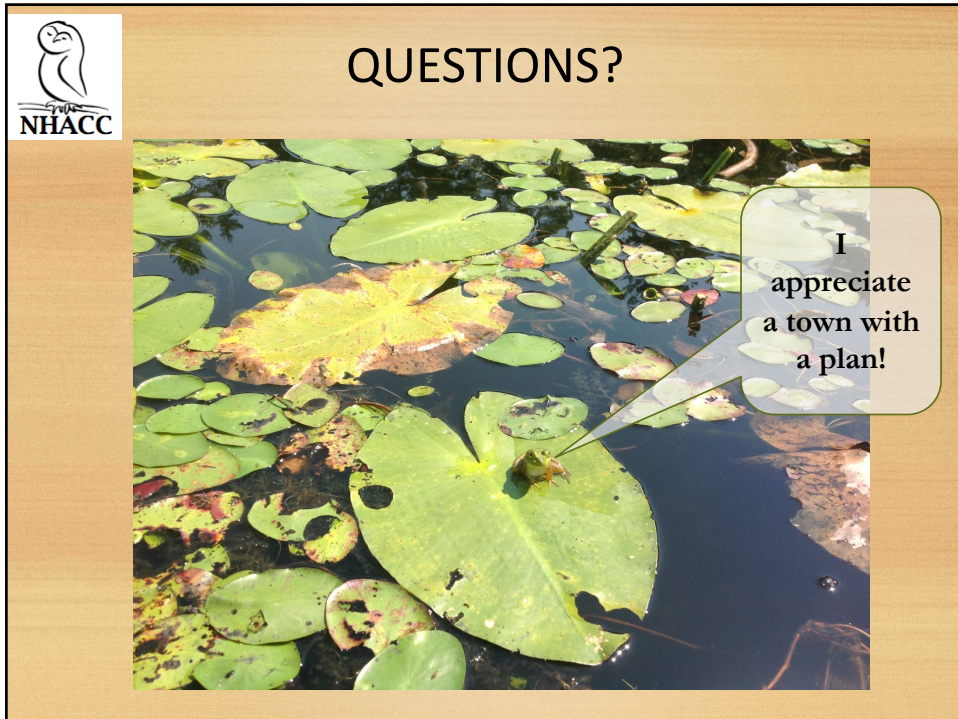


## TOOLS FOR SUCCESS



-IDENTIFY POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS TO PROBLEMS

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