



New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions

SERVING NEW HAMPSHIRE'S COMMUNITIES SINCE 1970

NHACC's mission is to foster conservation and appropriate use of New Hampshire's natural resources by providing assistance to conservation commission, facilitating communication and cooperation among commissions, and helping to create a climate in which commissions can be successful.

Executive Director's Report 2024

The New Hampshire Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC) is dedicated to providing support, education, and advocacy for New Hampshire's 217 conservation commissions. NHACC has supported the work of conservation commissions for more than 50 years, helping them to be effective in their communities. NH's conservation commissions are the local stewards of their town's natural resources and wildlife. They serve as advisors to their town government and residents, they manage land for public benefits including recreation, forest management, drinking water protection and wildlife habitat. NH is a patchwork of villages, towns, and cities and the work being done by conservation commissions is a reflection of that variety. All year long, municipal conservation commissions work to protect clean water, clean air, and wildlife habitat.

NHACC achieved many significant goals in 2024. We continued to provide educational opportunities for our members with an on-line Lunch & Learn series. NHACC has partnered with NH Healthcare Workers for Climate Action to present our Spring Lunch & Learn series, which focused on **Health & Climate**. This webinar series was designed to increase awareness of the impacts changing climate has on our physical and mental health. We worked with our partners at UNH Extension and NH Fish & Game to present the *Wildlife Webinar Series* connecting commission members to resources that help towns protect wildlife habitat on town lands.

NHACC continues to provide education and networking opportunities for commissions through our listserv, NHACC Exchange, so commission members to reach out directly to each other. We also facilitate and attend conservation commission roundtables all over the state. In the Summer we presented two field training programs for our members. *Wetlands Ecology* explored a wide variety of wetland plant communities to learn about the functions wetlands provide. We worked with UNH Extension to present *Conservation Easement Monitoring for Conservation Commissions* to train commissioners responsible for monitoring conservation lands.

To keep our members up-to-date on current issues and topics we sent out a dozen monthly E-newsletters to a list of more than 1,500 people. We also sent out legislative updates to make sure our members were aware of proposed bills in the legislature. NHACC tracked 21 bills this year and provided testimony on 8 bills to ensure our member's voices are heard at the state house. Aside from speaking at the State House, NHACC continues to represent our members at more than a dozen state-wide committees and initiatives. We have a seat at the table on the Taking Action for Wildlife Team, Current Use Board, the State Conservation Committee, and many other state committees.

This year we received a grant from the Davis Conservation Foundation to fund internships with conservation commissions. The funding will be used in 2025 to create a conservation internship program that will assist conservation commissions in finding interns to help achieve their conservation goals.

This year's conference has a focus on wildlife. Our keynote program explores the complexity of nature and how we can teach more people about NH's natural heritage. Many NH Conservation Commissions are focused on protecting nature and managing town lands for wildlife as a public benefit. Town Forest management plans increase habitat by opening up patch cuts in woodlands to provide low vegetation that offer food and cover for wildlife. Stewardship plans developed by conservation commissions now address invasive species on conservation lands with careful removal and control methods. Conservation commissions are maintaining trails and evaluating trail systems with the help of NH Fish & Game's *Trails for People and Wildlife* program to ensure trails are located in the most wildlife-friendly way.

Conservation commissions support biodiversity in their communities. They work to expand habitat by restoring old fields and grasslands, offering food, cover, and breeding sites for various species of wildlife. Commissions protect aquatic habitat by restoring streams and planting vegetative protective buffer zones to improve water quality. Commissions seek help from the public to identify and document flora and fauna with iNaturalist and a community Bioblitz. Even small properties can benefit wildlife and commission members help to educate landowners about backyard habitat for birds and pollinators.

At NHACC we have many people to thank for the success of our organization. We rely on our organization partners, business members, board, and volunteers to accomplish all the work we do to ensure NH remains a healthy, beautiful place to live and work. First, I want to thank our sponsors for their continued support of NHACC. Sponsors not only help support NHACC financially, they also provide important services to municipalities that help identify and protect natural resources. I would also like to thank our session presenters. We are grateful to have such talented experts who are willing to share their knowledge and experience with us today to help protect NH's natural environment.

I have great appreciation for our dedicated NHACC Board of Directors. The NHACC Board of Directors share their time, energy, and guidance as leaders of this extraordinary organization. I rely heavily on their good advice, leadership, and connection to community. They respond to conservation commissions' issues and concerns and provide feedback from their experience as commission members.

Thanks to our conservation commission members for the important work they do protecting their local natural resources. By joining NHACC, you have made it possible to build a network of conservation volunteers focused on preserving NH's natural environment. Together we can accomplish much more, effect change on the local and state level, and build strength in solidarity. NH would not have such a clean and healthy environment without municipal conservation commissioners who care deeply about their communities. It is my pleasure to encourage and assist your efforts to protect our environment and the special places we all love.

Respectfully submitted,

Barbara Richter, NHACC Executive Director