

## Center Harbor Conservation Commission

The Center Harbor Conservation Commission experienced an active year in 2011. The Commission drafted a warrant article for the 2011 Town Meeting designed to protect the Center Harbor side of Snake River wetlands between Lake Winona and Lake Waukewan. The Prime Wetlands designation was approved by a large majority of the town's voters. This pristine wetlands complex is home to a number of protected species and acts as an important filter for the water flowing into Lake Waukewan. Mirror efforts by the Waukewan Watershed Advisory Committee and the New Hampton Conservation Commission on the New Hampton side of the wetlands will protect this critical waterway for the future.

The CHCC continued to work with naturalist Rick Van De Poll to complete the Natural Resource Inventory chapter including mapping for inclusion into the town's Master Plan. The NRI is a major component of the town's resident's desire to protect the rural nature of the town, to control and direct future development within the town. We are hopeful that the NRI project will be completed before the end of 2011.

The CHCC has been involved in discussions with other conservation organizations and a number of local residents and land owners to explore the possibility of establishing a large tract of land on the west side of Center Harbor for conservation. This project, if successful, will be a multiple year effort, but with significant conservation implications for the town.

The CHCC has recently become aware of a serious shift within the New Hampshire state government which has resulted in a reduction of commitment to environmental protection. Most significant was the gutting of the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act which among other protections, closely regulated the taking of healthy trees in close proximity to lakes and ponds. This shift has made it more likely that healthy stands of trees may be taken within 50' of lakes and ponds which in turn will have a negative impact on water quality. The relaxing of environmental protection laws and rules at the state level has made it imperative that local municipalities step into the vacuum and establish town ordinances to replace the diminished state regulations. Towards this end, CHCC will be proposing new town environmental ordinances for the voters to consider on the 2012 Town Warrant. We encourage the voters to support the CHCC in our efforts to protect the rural nature of the town.

As usual, the CHCC continues to seek new volunteers for the Commission. If you are curious about the activities of the Conservation Commission, you are invited to attend any one of our meetings as a guest to determine if you might be interested in joining. We usually meet once per month on the second Tuesday at 10 AM. The minutes of our meetings are on-line at the Town's web page.