

Center Harbor Conservation Commission (CHCC) Annual Report 2013

The Conservation Commission has worked diligently in 2013, striving to protect the Town's natural resources through land and water conservation and preservation.

Late in 2012, discussions commenced between the CHCC and the Lakes Region Conservation Trust (LRCT) pertaining to the purchase of a Conservation Easement by the Town on a property atop Fogg Hill in West Center Harbor. The Conservation Easement would be paid for using monies from the Conservation Fund. Subsequent to a presentation given to the Select Board and with their unanimous approval of the project, a Public Hearing was held in March 2013. The purchase of this 192 acre tract of land by LRCT occurred on December 2, 2013. Conveyance of this Easement is expected to occur during the first part of 2014.

Early in 2013, the development of the Center Harbor Water Resources Conservation Overlay District (WRCOD) project began. The purpose of this project is to guide land use in proximity to wetland, shore land and groundwater resources. A combined effort between the Select Board, Planning Board and Conservation Commission, along with assistance from a Certified Wetland Scientist and Municipal Planner has produced an updated and detailed Water Resources Map for vote in 2014. A draft ordinance has been written and is currently undergoing review by the Planning Board and citizens of the Town.

In March of 2013, the voters of Center Harbor elected to place FIVE more wetland complexes into Prime Wetland status. The **final** candidate wetland, The Belknap Woods Beaver Ponds, will appear on the Town voter ballot in March 2014. With the Town's and NH Department of Environmental Services' (DES) approvals of this last proposed wetland comes the COMPLETION of the Prime Wetlands Project in Center Harbor, which was initiated in 2005 by alumni of the CHCC.

An extensive review by the CHCC and Board of Selectmen of the current Land Use Change Tax (LUCT) allocation to the Conservation Fund occurred in November 2013. Given the direct comparisons of LUCT allocations between Center Harbor and towns of similar population and square miles, along with that of our neighboring towns, it was determined by the CHCC and unanimously approved by the Board of Selectmen that an increase in the LUCT allocation to the Conservation Fund from 25% to 50% would be appropriate. The CHCC hopes that this warrant article for 2014 will be received with equal enthusiasm by the voters, as it is with the monies from the Conservation Fund that the CHCC was able to purchase Conservation Easements for Center Harbor Woods and Fogg Hill while developing a comprehensive Natural Resources Inventory and completing the Prime Wetlands Project.