

Wetlands Bylaw Review Committee

Mission

“Originally adopted at the 1980 Annual Town Meeting and amended in 2001 and 2003, the local by-law has generally served the town well. However, as with many of our local by-laws, periodic review is appropriate to insure the original intent remains relevant to Groton’s future and balances fairness with protection of the Town’s natural resources. The charge of the committee would be to review the by-law and its implementation history and report back to the Board of Selectmen with recommendations for changes, if any, that would then be brought forward at a future Town Meeting.”

Membership

David Black	Chair
Peter Cunningham	Member
Marshall E. Giguere	Secretary
Bob Pine	Member
Steve Webber	Vice-Chair
Scott Wilson	Member
Alexander Woodle	Member

Meeting History

- First meeting was June 27th, 2012
- 20 meetings since then; most recent was on February 20, 2014
- Participation by non-committee members included representatives from the Conservation Commission, the Conservation Administrator, local business people, landowners and other interested parties.
- All work has been reviewed by Town Counsel and his suggestions have been incorporated into the proposed document

Summary of Conclusions

- The committee feels that the Bylaw is an effective means of protecting natural resources in the Town of Groton and that these protections have been important to the community.
- The passage of time has required some modifications to the Bylaw to make application of the principles easier for both the Conservation Commission and applicants.
- Careful rereading of the Bylaw by so many people has pointed out some inconsistencies and clarifications needed in the initial version.

Highlighted Changes

- We have suggested changes to the Bylaw in three general categories:
 - Making the bylaw more precise and clear for users
 - Correcting inconsistencies with current laws and updating terms
 - Changes to the protection afforded to different resources

Examples of Changes

- Addition of more introductory material to the “Purpose and Intent” explaining the need for a local bylaw and highlighting the ecological importance of Groton’s wetlands.
- Listing of Town Boards who should receive necessary forms
- Clarifying definitions (e.g. “Building” and “Customary Physical Appurtenance)
- Changes in terminology, for example, replacing “Request for Determination” (RFD) with the “Request for Determination of Applicability” (RDA) and similar adjustments.
- Clarifying policies for previously altered areas

Future Work

- The definition of a “stream” has proven problematic and the Committee recommends that the Conservation Commission pursue the creation of a Stream Map that would clearly identify the protected resources.
- There is a large body of scientific literature that suggests that a 50’ or 100’ buffer zone is inadequate to protect many of the plant and animal populations which depend on Groton’s wetlands. We urge the Conservation Commission to revisit this issue in the future.