

## **Lincoln Conservation Commission Town Report 2006**

The Lincoln Conservation Commission sees itself as a collaborative, community-building advisory group, interested in connecting Lincoln residents with the town's natural resources and in facilitating respectful community dialog on current issues that impact those resources. The Lincoln Conservation Commission does not utilize town funds to carry out its activities, but has applied for and received grant funds for specific projects.

The Lincoln Conservation Commission started off 2006 by hosting a Conservation Forum in January. During the forum, 24 Lincoln residents identified and ranked strategies to conserve Lincoln's natural heritage. (This forum followed up on a forum we had held three months earlier, during which participants identified Lincoln's most important natural heritage values).

As spring unfolded, we continued the wildlife habitat work we began in 2005 on the Colby Hill Town Forest, using grant funds we obtained from the state's Wildlife Habitat Improvement Program (WHIP). These funds enabled us to release approximately 50 apple and hawthorn trees, which provide "soft mast" (fruit) for many wildlife species. We contacted Bill Scott from the Hannaford Career Center, and he and his forestry students felled competing trees and pruned the fruit trees to encourage new growth. They performed this service free of charge, asking only for compensation for gas and bar-and-chain oil. We encourage Lincoln residents to explore the beautiful Colby Hill Town Forest and see the results of this work for yourselves—as you walk the access road into the forest at the end of Colby Hill Road, you'll see the pruning work on your right.

During the spring, the Lincoln Conservation Commission participated in an amphibian escort project, coordinated by Otter Creek Audubon. Each year, thousands of amphibians—representing many species of salamanders, frogs, and toads—cross a particular stretch of road in Salisbury on rainy nights in springtime as they move to wetlands to mate. Volunteers help reduce mortality by carrying them across the road, and also record numbers and species (as many 1,461 amphibians in one night!). We would love to provide the same kind of service in Lincoln. If you know of a stretch of road in Lincoln that has a lot of amphibian activity in springtime, please let us know.

In 2006, we contacted Chris Olsen, the Addison County Forester, to request that he develop a management plan for the Ripton Lot Town Forest. Chris expects to complete the management plan by the summer of 2007. He will use the Vermont Family Forests management plan template, meaning that the management plan for the Ripton Lot will be Forest Stewardship Council-certified, helping ensure that any management activities maintain or improve the forest's health.

We carried out our 3<sup>rd</sup> season of Japanese knotweed control at two sites along the New Haven River—Garland's Bridge and across from the fire house. In 2004, we began work at these two sites to demonstrate a non-chemical method of controlling this invasive exotic that has overspread the New Haven River corridor in Lincoln, crowding out native plants. Although the knotweed is still present at these sites, the stalks are very thin and easily and quickly cut. We bring cuttings to the town dump for burning, so that cuttings don't wash downstream and sprout at new sites. Just two cutting sessions this

year controlled knotweed growth at these sites. We encourage residents with Japanese knotweed on their property to try this non-toxic control method.

During the year, we discussed renewable energy options with members of OilFree, a Lincoln group interested in promoting local energy solutions. We offered our volunteer services to the Lincoln Community School, to help them carry out conservation recommendations from a recent energy audit, and we agreed to co-sponsor the 2007 Addison County Conservation Congress, *Fueling our Communities: Building Local, Sustainable Energy Alternatives*, to be held March 17, 2007 at Mount Abraham Union High School.

In early December, we began what we hope is the first of regular seasonal outings on the town forests. Wildlife biologist and conservation commission member Tina Scharf led a walk on the Colby Hill Town Forest, teaching participants how to identify woody plants by bark and twig. Our next outing—Winter Tracking—will be February 3, 2007, from 1 p.m.-3 p.m.

We welcome and need new members—please join us! Enthusiasm for Lincoln's landscape, flexibility, and a sense of humor are helpful member qualities. Please contact any conservation commission member if you're interested.

Respectfully submitted by Lincoln Conservation Commission members:

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