

Lisbon Conservation Commission Champions Education, Engagement

By Justin Roshak

LISBON—We live in a beautiful corner of a beautiful state, but in an era of unceasing development, it takes a lot of work to keep it that way. The Lisbon Conservation Commission are stepping up, reaching out, and taking on the challenge of keeping New Hampshire beautiful.

Started in 2014, the Commission is staffed entirely by volunteers with an interest in conservation, wildlife, and the outdoors. They meet once a month in Lisbon's beautifully remodeled train station, surrounded by handsome, framed photographs from the town's history. Their focus, though, is on the future of Lisbon's wild spaces and natural treasures.

One of their goals is to be a community resource that can aid planning and conservation efforts. Part of that is taking responsibility for collecting data on Lisbon's ecology. They have partnered with Lisbon science teacher Pauline Corzilius to produce a natural resources inventory, much of the work for which has been woven into the Sophomore biology curriculum.

It's not just students that have the opportunity to enrich their community's knowledge. Citizens are encouraged to pick up one of the Commission's wildlife surveys. If you spot one of fifty-eight different local critters, mark down the date. The Commission plans to contribute this data to the town's new Master Plan, where it will guide town decision-making.

Last year, the Commission organized a community cleanup day. This year, they plan a repeat for Saturday, May 20th. Citizens are invited to join their neighbors in sprucing up the town. Bags, gloves, and refreshments will be provided; a sturdy pair of shoes and a cheerful attitude are all that's required.

Another, potentially more divisive responsibility of the commission, is to handle land-use conflicts. One such issue was brought to them this week by Lisbon citizen Mike Shores. Mr. Shores enjoys the outdoors, in particular one piece of public land completely surrounded by a private owner.

Ms. Shores claimed that the owner erected a gate illegally in the 1990's, and has completely posted the forest surrounding the parcel in question. As a result, Mr. Shores can no longer access it. He asked the Conservation Commission to arrange for a right-of-way to protect public access to the forest. The Commission was supportive, and member Robert Cook agreed to reach out to the landowner in question.

Protecting public resources is central to the Commission's goals, members told the courier. Member Mark Roberts said the goal was to, "Make sure they stay public." Betsy Stead agreed, adding that providing education and engaging citizens was a primary goal. If so, they have hit the ground running.

The Lisbon Conservation Commission will meet next on Thursday, May 18th at 5:30, in the railroad station near 25 Central Street. Anyone with an interest in nature, public policy, and the intersection of the two, should attend.