



Annual Environmental Conference, February 28 – March 9, 2023
Workshop Descriptions and Fundamentals for Conservation Commissioners Units Content

Tuesday, February 28, 2023

Workshop Series A

9:00 – 10:00 AM

A1 Delineating Coastal Beaches, Dunes, Banks and Barrier Beaches in Developed/Altered Areas, and Evaluating Functions under the WPA Regulations

Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection (MassDEP) and Coastal Zone Management (CZM) representatives will provide up-to-date guidance on the delineation of coastal beaches, coastal dunes, barrier beaches, and coastal banks in developed areas and/or areas with human alteration. In addition, this workshop will clarify how to assess storm damage and flood control functions of these altered resource areas to reduce future flooding and erosion impacts. Case studies will be reviewed to provide conservation commissioners and consultants with keys to understanding how to evaluate the functions of resource areas in developed and altered areas.

Speakers: Rebecca Haney, CFM, Coastal Geologist, MA Office of Coastal Zone Management
Nate Corcoran, Coastal Geologist, MassDEP, Southeast Regional Office

10:30 – 11:30 AM

A2 Climate Change Provisions for Local Wetland Bylaws and Regulations

Funded by the Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program (MVP) and in collaboration with the MACC Climate Conversations Committee, the towns of Bolton and Clinton and their consulting team have developed recommended language to update municipal wetland protection bylaws and regulations with climate-smart provisions. This presentation will review the publicly available tools produced by the project, including a climate wetland bylaw provision database and a user-friendly website tool for climate wetland regulations. The MACC Climate Conversations Committee, along with the project team consultants, reviewed climate-smart provisions from municipalities across the state. The MVP project team consultants, including an attorney and a wetland scientist, then integrated, added to, and prioritized into recommended climate-smart bylaw and regulatory provisions, which were then reviewed by the MACC Climate Conversations Committee and by the Bolton and Clinton Conservation Commissions. The tools developed in this project are intended to facilitate integration of climate-smart provisions into local wetland bylaws and regulations.

Speakers: Gillian Davies, PWS, Senior Ecologist, Natural Climate Solutions Specialist, BSC Group, Inc.
Rebecca Bucciaglia, Conservation Agent, Town of Bolton; Conservation Commissioner, Town of Clinton
Nathaniel Stevens, Esq., Partner, McGregor Legere & Stevens PC; Conservation Commissioner, Town of Arlington; MACC Director

1:00 – 2:00 PM

A3 Assessing, Replacing and Permitting Road-Stream Crossings

Conservation commissions have a dual role regarding the replacement of culverts (and bridges) in their communities. They can play an important role in assessing and prioritizing culverts for replacement, and as advocates for better crossing designs that allow fish and wildlife passage. Commissions are also responsible for permitting culvert replacements, including review of crossing designs and construction plans, and interpretation of the regulatory standard to meet the River and Stream Crossing Standards “to the maximum extent practicable.” This workshop will cover the assessment and prioritization of culverts for replacement, as well as what to look for when permitting culvert replacements and how commissions can apply the “maximum extent practicable” standard.

Speaker: Scott Jackson, Extension Professor, Department of Environmental Conservation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; Conservation Commission, Town of Whately

2:30 – 3:30 PM

A4 Vernal Pools: What They are and How to Protect Them in a Changing Climate

Vernal pools are an important component of healthy ecosystems across the state, and they receive a host of legal protections under federal, state, and local wetland regulations. Their ecological values are at the root of why we protect them; their variety, temporary nature, and fluctuations are at the root of why we’re often confused about how we protect them. This presentation will explore and explain the function of vernal pools and get deep into the muddy regulatory protection for these important wildlife habitats. This workshop does not specifically focus on vernal pool certification methodology.

Speaker: Matt Burne, Senior Ecologist, BSC Group, Inc.; Conservation Commission, City of Malden; Vice President, Vernal Pool Association; MACC Director

4:00 – 5:00 PM

A5 Encouraging BIPOC Environmental Professionals to Serve on Conservation Commissions

This workshop discusses mentorship opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) interested in the environmental field. Learn about opportunities and career tracks from a panel of BIPOC professionals from across the state; about their work and experiences in the field of climate resilience and natural resource (land and water) conservation. Panelists will speak to their organization or practice addressing issues of Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Justice as well as involving Environmental Justice populations in crafting climate resilience strategies for their neighborhoods. The panel will include members of the Professionals of Color in the Environment (POCIE) network and will discuss how conservation commissions across MA can increase awareness about and encourage the participation of the next generation of BIPOC professionals to serve on these commissions.

Speakers: Pallavi K. Mande, Founding Director, Tamraparni; Conservation Commission, Brookline; MACC DEI Committee Co-Chair

Fundamentals for Conservation Commissioners

6:00 – 8:30 PM

Unit 101: Overview of Conservation Commissions: Organizational Structure and Authority

This Fundamentals unit covers a commission’s key responsibilities and discusses the importance of building productive relationships with local boards and state/federal agencies. The sources of a conservation commission’s funding and fees are also covered. This is a required class for the MACC Certificate

Program. Take this class and build on your Fundamentals Program credits throughout the conference! Learn tips from experienced professionals.

Instructor: Michele Grzenda, Conservation Director, Lincoln; President, Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals

Wednesday, March 1, 2023

Workshop Series B

9:00 – 10:00 AM

B1 Planning for Open Space Protection and DCS Grant Opportunities

Massachusetts Division of Conservation Services (DCS) offers several grant programs for acquisition and protection of open space. This workshop will provide a brief overview of programs available to municipalities including the Local Acquisition for Natural Diversity Grant (LAND) grant, Conservation Assistance for Small Communities grant, Landscape Partnership grant and the Land & Water Conservation Fund program. Learn how an Open Space and Recreation Plan can help prioritize land conservation opportunities and ensure your municipality's eligibility, as well as highlight examples where non-profit partnerships helped achieve complex, but important transactions.

Speakers: Vanessa Farny, Forest and Land Program Manager, MA Division of Conservation Services
Melissa Cryan, Grant Programs Supervisor, MA Division of Conservation Services

10:30 – 11:30 AM

B2 Respectful Relationships: How Conservation Entities Can Engage with Northeast Indigenous Tribes

This important workshop will outline how conservation groups can include land justice in their work. The presenters will review tools that can be used to engage in this work and describe appropriate ways to engage Indigenous Tribes in the region. Two land trust practitioners, along with a member of the Nipmuc Tribe, will share their experiences of collaborating and working together. Learn the principles of respectful relationships so that environmental scientists, conservation commissions, and other environmental professionals can work with Indigenous persons in a way that respects their culture and acknowledges and appropriately compensates them for their time and expertise. They will discuss the importance of centering relationships and reciprocity in this work. Tools, such as cultural use and respect agreements, cultural inventories, and co-management plans, will be shared. There will also be a discussion of the need and opportunity for land rematriation, and opportunity for a question-and-answer period. Do not miss this worthwhile presentation!

Speakers: Jennifer Albertine, Climate and Land Justice Specialist, Mount Grace Land Conservation Trust;
Conservation Commission, Town of Petersham
Sally Loomis, Executive Director of Hilltown Land Trust
Andre Strongbearheart Gaines, Jr., Nipmuc Citizen, Cultural Steward, Creative Director of No Loose Braids

1:00 – 2:00 PM

B3 Identifying Mean Annual High Water using Bankfull Field Indicators under the Rivers Protection Act

The Wetlands Protection Act regulations define Riverfront Area (RFA) as that area between a river's mean annual high water (MAHW) line and a parallel line measured horizontally. In most cases, a riverbank's first observable break in slope is coincident with the MAHW line. However, in some instances, the MAHW line is determined by using bankfull field indicators. This workshop will describe the concept of bankfull discharge

and its regulatory relationship to MAHW. Field indicators of bankfull discharge will be described and discussion will include difficult field situations. Attendees may find it helpful to be familiar with the regulatory language concerning RFA.

Speaker: Heidi Davis, Senior Environmental Analyst, Lead for MassDOT Unit, MassDEP

2:30 – 3:30 PM

B4 Creating Conservation Commission and Land Trust Partnerships to Enhance Land Protection Successes

Land conservation work is becoming increasingly complex and the window of time in many communities to conserve important properties is growing shorter. The presenters will highlight three recent successful land protection projects in Stow that were accomplished in partnership between the town conservation commission and a volunteer land trust. The projects each used creativity and nontraditional partners to advance community housing and planning goals and accomplish more than either partner could have done individually. The focus will be on lessons learned and strategies to maximize success. Come prepared to be inspired to tackle your community's most challenging project!

Speakers: Kathy Sferra, Conservation Director, Town of Stow
Bob Wilber, Director of Conservation Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts; President Stow Conservation Trust

4:00 – 5:00 PM

B5 Biodiversity and Buffer Zone Restoration at Franklin's DelCarte Conservation Area

The purpose of this restoration project was to increase the biodiversity of the native pollinator-plant and aquatic-terrestrial systems within the Buffer Zone at DelCarte Conservation Area in Franklin via the 1) revegetation of native flowering plants with different bloom times and source types for three native at-risk *Bombus* (bumblebee) species and the 2) installation and demarcation of designated freshwater Turtle Nesting Habitat in a previously disturbed area. The purpose of this work was to maintain the function and diversity of DelCarte's natural ecosystem. In doing so, this project aims to ensure future protection and success of Massachusetts native flora and fauna species and their ecological interactions. This workshop will provide lessons learned from the project so conservation commissioners and other environmental professionals can apply these steps to foster biodiversity during restoration projects in their community.

Speakers: Breeka Li Goodlander, CWS, PWS, CERPIT, Conservation Agent and Natural Resource Protection Manager, Town of Franklin
Patrick Gallagher, Esq., Chair, Conservation Commission, Town of Franklin

Thursday, March 2, 2023

Workshop Series C

9:00 – 10:00 AM

C1 BioMap: Informing the Future of Conservation in Massachusetts

The new BioMap, released in the Fall of 2022, builds on BioMap2 with many new innovations and advances. Statewide habitat data are now complemented by the addition of local biodiversity components. This opens a world of new opportunities for Massachusetts cities and towns to apply this innovative tool to plan, prioritize, and seek funding. BioMap also functions as a climate resilience planning tool, incorporating resilient habitat and ecosystem data. Other enhancements include a habitat restoration and management resource center, the latest rare species habitat data, and regional components for planning at scales larger than Massachusetts. This session will include three phases: 1) An overview of the new BioMap, including local components and other innovations 2) A live tour of BioMap

tools and resources, and a tutorial on the interactive map. 3) Questions and answers, along with input from participants on BioMap resources, web tools, and interactive map. Don't miss this important presentation!

Speakers: Andy Finton, Conservation Ecologist, The Nature Conservancy
Everose Schlüter, Assistant Director, Natural Heritage & Endangered Species Program

10:30 – 11:30 AM

C2 Protecting Wildlife Habitat

Wildlife habitat is one of the eight “interests” protected by the MA Wetlands Protection Act. Applicants are required to submit wildlife habitat evaluations for certain projects and conservation commissions are supposed to ensure that projects affecting resource areas do not reduce the capacity of those areas to serve as wildlife habitat. Conservation commissions have other ways of protecting habitat as well, including land protection, land stewardship, and by seeking opportunities to enhance landscape connectivity. This workshop will cover the basics of protecting wildlife habitat during project review and permitting, and how to work with others in your community to protect habitat more broadly.

Speaker: Scott Jackson, Extension Professor, Department of Environmental Conservation, University of Massachusetts-Amherst; Conservation Commission, Town of Whately

1:00 – 2:00 PM

C3 Utility Project Planning: A Blueprint for a Grey Area

This workshop will present an overview of planning large-scale capital utility infrastructure projects. From data collection, to permitting, to construction, we hope to provide insight into the planning and coordination required to repair and improve electric utilities. This discussion will shine a spotlight on the extensive coordination conducted with regulatory agencies and our efforts towards avoidance, protection, and preservation efforts in stewardship. This presentation will also include a discussion of early successional habitat found on Rights of Way (ROWs) in New England (highly valuable habitat for turtles, osprey, snakes, etc.), Monarch Candidate Conservation Agreement with Assurances (CCCA), drone program, Natural Capital Enhancements program, ROW biodiversity study and Integrated Vegetation Management (IVM) Plans.

Speakers: Corey Schutzman, Lead Environmental Scientist, National Grid
Melaina Polan, Associate Specialist, Graduate Development Program, National Grid
Jason Magoon, Senior Vegetation Operations Supervisor, National Grid

2:30 – 3:30 PM

C4 Stormwater Management Systems: Importance of Groundwater Hydrology

Notices of Intent (NOIs) for larger projects include a stormwater management report containing the stormwater management system design. To meet the recharge goal of the Massachusetts Stormwater Handbook, the design will include surface and subsurface detention Best Management Practices (BMPs) used to infiltrate runoff into the subsurface. Consultants use HydroCad to design these systems in accordance with the Handbook, Volume 3, Standards 2 and 3. However, the Standards and HydroCad either neglect or oversimplify groundwater hydrology. Furthermore, the investigation requirements described in Volume 2, Chapter 2 of the handbook are often not met, which can lead to inadequately designed systems. This workshop will provide a layman's primer on groundwater hydrology; a description of the Volume 2 requirements; an investigation requirement checklist that commissions or peer reviewers can use; some suggested language for Orders of Conditions; and one or two case studies. Bring your questions to this important workshop!!

Speaker: Andrew Koenigsberg, Hydrogeologist, Member of Westborough Conservation Commission

4:00 – 5:00 PM

C5 Reforming Mosquito Control in Massachusetts

The existing mosquito control program in Massachusetts is antiquated and needs a major overhaul, as documented by the Mosquito Control for the 21st Century Task Force. The mosquito control program relies far too much on routine spraying of chemicals that are highly toxic to fish, pollinators, and many other beneficial species and not enough on ecologically-based solutions like good housekeeping, improved stormwater management, and restoration of streams and wetlands. The Massquito Coalition, of which MACC is a member, is supporting legislation that would overhaul this outdated system, benefiting both human and environmental health. Bring your questions about mosquito management, proposed legislation, and related issues, to this presentation!

Speakers: Heidi Ricci, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Mass Audubon; MACC Officer (and former member of the Mosquito Control for the 21st Century Task Force)
Kyla Bennett, PhD, JD, Science Director at Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility, and member of the Massquito Coalition.

6:00 – 7:30 PM

Special Session 1 Guest Speaker and Environmental Service Awards Celebration

All conference attendees, speakers, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters are invited to this FREE virtual celebration to honor environmental service award recipients and listen to our Guest Speaker. MACC is finalizing this part of the schedule and will update our members as we get closer to the conference. Our celebration will start at 6:00 PM with our speaker, and then we will move into the awards celebration. This virtual celebration is not to be missed!

Saturday, March 4, 2023

9:00 – 10:00 AM

Special Session 2 Annual Business Meeting and Guest Speaker

MACC will hold the 2023 Board of Directors' Election and Annual Business meeting on March 4, 2023, starting promptly at 9:00 AM. Following the completion of the Annual Business Meeting, at approximately 9:30 AM, we will have a Guest Speaker (MACC is finalizing this part of the schedule and will update our members as we get closer to the conference). All conference attendees, speakers, volunteers, sponsors, and supporters are invited to this FREE virtual celebration.

Fundamentals for Conservation Commissioners

10:00 AM – 12:30 PM

Unit 203 Open Space Planning and Protection Techniques

This is an elective class for the MACC Certificate Program. Participants will learn about establishing conservation goals and objectives, taking inventories of local natural resources, selecting parcels, and working with landowners. Participants will also learn about conservation restrictions, grants, and funding sources for acquiring land. This is a useful class for commission members, staff, and new members of land trusts alike.

Instructor: Robert Wilber, Director of Conservation Services, Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Workshop Series D

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

D1 Potpourri Q & A: All Your Burning Legal and Practical Commission Questions

Conservation agents and commission members have so many questions on so many subjects and so few sources of straight answers and useful tips. This workshop is a space for you to throw out what's on your mind. It will be fast paced, focused on nuts and bolts, and painfully practical. Expect responses to be brief and to the point. Bring your burning questions relating to wetlands, laws, procedures, meetings, powers, enforcement, financial or personnel issues, politics, practices, needs, and problems that plague conservation commissions. We will give you off-the-record legal information and reliable practical direction of the sort you get on the MACC Help Line without having to write it down or wait for a reply! This workshop is perfect for beginner as well as advanced participants.

Speakers: Gregor I. McGregor, Esq., Principal, McGregor Legere & Stevens, PC; MACC Director
Michele Grzenda, Conservation Director, Lincoln; President, Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals

1:00 – 2:00 PM

D2 Understanding the Wetlands Protection Act's Agricultural and Forestry Exemptions

In a general sense, both agriculture and timber harvesting are exempt activities under the Wetlands Protection Act. However, there are some important terms and considerations that define and qualify the agricultural exemption, such as: distinguishing agriculture from backyard gardens or the keeping of recreational animals (e.g., horses); production versus processing (sugar houses) or sale (e.g. farm stands) of an agricultural commodity; and what types of farming activities are and are not covered under the exemption. For timber harvesting, the exemption applies differently for commercial harvests versus when landowners cut timber for their own use. This workshop will cover the details of the agricultural/forestry exemptions and limited project provisions for some agricultural activities.

Speaker: Scott Jackson, Extension Professor, Department of Environmental Conservation, UMass Amherst; Conservation Commissioner, Town of Whately

2:30 – 3:30 PM

D3 Industrial Ground-Mounted Solar: Challenges Municipalities Face while Protecting Wetlands, Rivers, Forests, and Farmland

About 5,000 acres of open space have already been converted to industrial scale solar since approximately 2010, with 150,000 more acres potentially targeted under the state's climate plan. It's up to local governments to ensure that the siting, operation and decommissioning of these multimillion-dollar projects is consistent with goals for climate resiliency, biodiversity, water quality, water quantity and river and wetland health. Land use in Massachusetts is a matter of local home rule and zoning powers leaving local governments to play a key role in balancing these considerations. Hear about case studies and trends that impact conservation commissions and municipal bodies grappling with solar siting.

Speakers: Margaret Sheehan, Esq., Organizer, Save the Pine Barrens
Fred Beddall, Farmer and Owner, Pie in the Sky Berry Farm

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Workshop Series E

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

E1 Dam Removal, Culvert Upgrades, and Wetland Restoration: Best Practices for Conservation Commissions

Interest in river and wetland restoration continues to grow across the state as communities and landowners deal with aging infrastructure and seek to build resilience to climate change. Common project types include culvert upgrades, dam removals, and coastal wetland restoration. Conservation commissions play many roles in relation to these projects. Some commissions are project proponents. Others are partners or supporters. All have a critical role in project review under the Wetlands Protection Act. This workshop provides an update on restoration in Massachusetts followed by a panel discussion of the best practices for commissions involved in these projects.

Speaker: Beth Lambert, Director, Division of Ecological Restoration, MA Department of Fish and Game

1:00 – 2:00 PM

E2 Protecting Habitat and Wetlands while Permitting Utility Maintenance Projects

As the demand for energy continues to rise, maintaining a safe and reliable electric and gas transmission system has never been more critical. To ensure reliability and support the Commonwealth's clean energy goals, utility companies must maintain existing infrastructure to prepare for increased electrical loading, support proliferation of renewable generation, and improve resiliency in the face of more frequent and intense storm events.

Presenters will discuss the steps necessary to plan, permit, and maintain electric and gas transmission systems while keeping wetland and wildlife protection a priority. An overview of compliance with Wetlands Protection Act Regulations will be provided. Project examples will be discussed to demonstrate how utility maintenance projects can be successfully completed while protecting or improving the functions and values of wetland resource areas.

Speakers: Matthew Waldrip, CESSWI, PWS, Licensing & Permitting Supervisor, Eversource
Rebecca Weissman, PWS, CWS, Energy Director – Northeast, SWCA Environmental

2:30 – 3:30 PM

E3 Developing and Implementing a Municipal Sustainability and Climate Action Plan

This workshop will cover practical actions towns can take to develop and integrate ENERGY (e.g., renewable power), CLIMATE (e.g., stormwater management) and ENVIRONMENT (e.g., open space and land use strategies) into a more holistic and systematic sustainability / climate action plan. We will cover examples of what other cities and towns are doing both on their own and within their given planning regions. We will also cover funding opportunities, key action items, and how to leverage existing initiatives already being undertaken, including master planning and public engagement efforts. This more holistic, systematic approach is important because climate change is caused by carbon-based energy consumption, which is driving more severe droughts and flooding events, which requires better freshwater and stormwater management as well as land use practices. In addition, sustainability-related initiatives often go through similar funding and oversight processes, while impacting similar community stakeholders, and it is becoming increasingly difficult for municipalities to manage all this work without improved coordination and additional resources.

Speaker: Thomas Birmingham, Member, Canton Conservation Commission

Saturday, March 4, 2023

Workshop Series F

11:00 AM – 12:00 PM

F1 Creating Opportunities for Environmental Education in Your Community

Climate change as a concept can be overwhelming for many people. Through Environmental Education and Outreach we can inform and educate individuals on ways to make small changes to their lifestyles that can have big impacts locally and globally. Many communities have a limited staff and budget for their Natural Resources Commission or their Conservation Commission and often do not have experienced science educators on staff. This workshop will empower non-traditional educators to develop programs and program materials for education and outreach to reach their target demographic. Participants will learn how to get started, how to develop meaningful collaborations, and will hear about several examples of simple start-up opportunities for providing Environmental Education to different members of the community.

Speaker: Lisa Moore, Environmental Education, Outreach and Compliance Coordinator, Natural Resources Commission, Town of Wellesley

1:00 – 2:00 PM

F2 Desktop Wetlands Delineation Review

This important workshop will provide practical tips and strategies for reviewing the locations of jurisdictional resource areas on plans prior to a site visit or to aid in the decision to ask for a third-party review. Topics covered will include how to review Delineation Data Sheets; Abbreviated Notice of Resource Area Delineation (ANRAD) reviews; how to determine Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) floodplain elevations; calculation reviews for Isolated Land Subject to Flooding (ILSF); interpreting aerial photos and topographic maps; using the desktop review to conduct an effective site visit; and online resources (MassMapper, Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS) Soil Survey, etc.). The material presented will be appropriate for both new and experienced conservation commissioners/agents.

Speakers: Judith Schmitz, Section Chief, MassDEP Wetlands Program Central Region
Mia McDonald, Circuit Rider, MassDEP Wetlands Program Central Region

2:30 – 3:30 PM

F3 Effective Project Review: Best Practices for Conservation Commissions

This workshop will provide conservation commissioners and agents with best practices to apply throughout a proposed project's life cycle. We will discuss practices and strategies to implement at each stage of a project, including reviewing an application, taking public comment, how to conduct site visits, closing a public hearing, drafting strong decisions, and enforcing those decisions later. We'll illustrate these points with case studies and real-life examples. Conservation commissioners with two or more years or more experience will find this workshop very beneficial.

Speakers: Olympia Bowker, Esq., Senior Associate, Anderson & Kreiger LLP
Jessica Wall, Esq., Partner, Anderson & Kreiger LLP

Tuesday, March 7, 2023

Workshop Series G

9:00 – 10:00 AM

G1A Soils of Massachusetts and Wetlands: Part A (double session)

How did the soils of Massachusetts get to be the way they are, and how does that affect where and how wetlands form? The speaker will provide an overview of soil formation in the glaciated northeast and the resultant general characteristics and variabilities with emphasis on soil parent material; the stuff from which the soils developed. The objective is to provide a context for wetland formation under different soil-landscape scenarios and background information for “Soils of Massachusetts and Wetlands, Part B”. This workshop will be useful to all commissioners and consultants alike.

Speaker: Al Averill, Certified Professional Soil Scientist

10:30 – 11:30 AM

G1B Soils of Massachusetts and Wetlands: Part B (double session)

How does soil morphology serve to identify wetlands? The speaker will offer a discussion of soil-hydrological relationships and influence on soil profile formation and morphology with emphasis on the effect of wet conditions. The objective is for folks to have an increased understanding of the morphological variabilities under different wetness and soils conditions. Standards applied to field documentation and sources of information will be covered. **Prerequisite: “Soils of Massachusetts and Wetlands, Part A”.**

Speaker: Al Averill, Certified Professional Soil Scientist

1:00 – 2:00 PM

G2 Restoring Old-Growth Characteristics to the Forests of Massachusetts

Old forests, with their abundant downed deadwood, multiple canopy layers, and variation in tree densities and sizes, are different from our second growth forests. These differences have important implications for forest benefits such as wildlife habitat and climate change mitigation, but old forests are rare in our landscape. A combination of passive and active approaches can restore these missing characteristics. This webinar is designed for professional foresters, ecologists, forest landowners, and local conservation leaders.

Speaker: Paul Catanzaro, Professor, State Extension Forester, and Co-Director of the Family Forest Research Center, University of Massachusetts – Amherst

2:30 – 3:30 PM

G3 Massachusetts Forest Health Updates

The presentation will cover the Department of Conservation & Recreation (DCR) Forest Health Program’s annual aerial survey results, as well as insect and disease updates for our most damaging pests. Topics will include Asian Long-horned Beetle, Beech Leaf Disease, Spongy Moth, Spotted Lanternfly, and more.

Speakers: Felicia Hubacz, Forest Health Specialist, MA Department of Conservation and Recreation Forest Health Program
Elizabeth Barnes, Forest Pest Outreach Coordinator, MA Department of Agricultural Resources

4:00 – 5:00 PM

G4 Trail Tales: Engaging the Public in Trail Use Discussions and Developing an Implementation

Conservation land and trails are often utilized for recreation, quiet contemplation, and to feel a connection to nature. Trail use and visitation has been steadily rising for many years. While our appreciation for local open spaces jumped to a whole new level during COVID-19, increased visitation resulted in greater conflict in user groups, overuse of parking lots, erosion along trails and trailheads, and creation of illegal trails. As a result of this, there is no better time for a town to look at their land use vision and philosophy. Michele Grzenda will do a deep dive into several trail use activities, why some of these activities cause conflict, and how to engage the public in a conversation about changes in allowed trail uses. We will also discuss ways to improve the visitor experience with signage, education, and outreach ideas.

Speaker: Michele Grzenda, Conservation Director, Town of Lincoln; President, Massachusetts Society of Municipal Conservation Professionals

Fundamentals for Conservation Commissioners

6:00 – 8:30 PM

Unit 102 The Wetlands Protection Act: Fundamentals, Process and Procedures

This required Fundamentals Unit will provide participants with an understanding of the Interests of the Act and a Commission's jurisdiction, permit submittal requirements and forms, an overview of identifying resource areas, and a discussion of "Limited Projects". Learn tips from experienced professionals!

Instructors: Jennifer Hughes, Environmental Analyst, Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act Office; Conservation Commission, Town of Ipswich; MACC Director
Claire Rundelli, ENV SP, Planner Conservation Agent, Town of Natick; MACC Education Committee Member

Wednesday, March 8, 2023

9:00 – 10:00 AM

H1-A Winter Woody Wetland Plants: Part A (double session)

In the virtual realm, hands-on workshops are challenging. But as commissioners, we still need to know some basic wetland plants – especially in the off-season – as part of field recognition of vegetated wetlands. Rather than limiting the number of participants by the number of twig samples we are able to collect and then mail to participants, we will more broadly present photographs and images of common wetland plants in Massachusetts, and then focus on the most prominent characteristics that make identification easier – particularly in the off-season.

The first part of the workshop will be dedicated to a review of some basic botanical terminology and then in the second part we will explore some of the more common woody wetland plants found in forested swamps and shrub swamps in Massachusetts. This workshop is intended for beginners and/or a refresher on basic wetland plant identification.

Speakers: Amy Ball, PWS, CWS, Senior Project Manager – Ecology, Horsley Witten Group; MACC President Karro Frost, Conservation Planning Botanist, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

10:30 – 11:30 AM

H1-B Winter Woody Wetland Plants: Part B (double session)

In the virtual realm, hands-on workshops are challenging. But as commissioners, we still need to know some basic wetland plants – especially in the off-season – as part of field recognition of vegetated wetlands. Rather than limiting the number of participants by the number of twig samples we are able to collect and then mail to participants, we will more broadly present photographs and images of common wetland plants in Massachusetts, and then focus on the most prominent characteristics that make identification easier – particularly in the off-season.

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Speakers: Amy Ball, PWS, CWS, Senior Project Manager – Ecology, Horsley Witten Group; MACC Director Karro Frost, Conservation Planning Botanist, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

1:00 – 2:00 PM

H2 Cutting the Green Tape: Streamlining Wetlands Restoration

Massachusetts is a leader in wetlands protection and restoration, and climate change makes this work even more urgent. From upgrading culverts and removing dams to restoring salt marshes, rivers, and cranberry bogs and removing invasive plants, there are thousands of opportunities to reverse the damage caused by centuries of development. With hundreds of millions of dollars in federal and state funding now becoming available, we have a once in a lifetime opportunity to accelerate restoration. Learn about efforts to reduce the cost and paperwork required to advance this work, and examples of success from other states. Bring your burning questions and suggestions for streamlining wetlands restoration.

Speakers: Heidi Ricci, Director of Policy & Advocacy, Mass Audubon; MACC Officer Beth Lambert, Director, Division of Ecological Restoration, MA Department of Fish and Game

2:30 – 3:30 PM

H3 Japanese Knotweed Three Ways: Teaching Tool, Management Muddles, and Troubles with Contaminated Fill

Japanese knotweed is one of the most difficult invasive plants to manage. Three invasive plant management and restoration practitioners will relay their experience battling this pernicious plant- focusing on both the challenges, and opportunities that knotweed management in a municipal setting presents. The workshop will be divided into three sections- (1) An overview of Japanese Knotweed biology and current strategies for management; (2) A look at the Town of Weston's approach to using volunteers to map knotweed populations and establish management test plots on municipal conservation land; and (3) A look into a recent court case initiated by a landowner against a contractor for introducing knotweed to a site through contaminated fill.

Speakers: Joan Deely, Senior Project Manager and Permitting Specialist, Land Stewardship, Inc.; Conservation Commission, Town of Leverett; MACC Director Chris Polatin, MS, CERP, President, Land Stewardship, Inc.; Conservation Commission, Town of Gill
Jordan McCarron, Conservation Administrator, Town of Weston

4:00 – 5:00 PM

H4 Helping People Out of Harm's Way - Home Buyouts and "Un-developing" Floodplains

Does your community have homes and other structures built in the floodplain? Have you thought about whether and how to help those households relocate to higher ground and restore the land to floodable terrain? Many municipalities across the country, as well as state and federal agencies, use home buyouts as a tool to reduce risk to the residents and reclaim land that should be serving as a buffer between the water and development. Carri Hulet is a collaboration expert who has been working with buyout program managers and buyout recipients in various contexts for over seven years. She will share best practices and common challenges when doing buyouts, and facilitate a workshop-style conversation about how and where to start or expand an existing program. Carri will be joined by Ben Wicker, a state government buyout manager from Louisiana who is now working as a private contractor with SHK Consulting, LLC. Ben helped build one of the largest buyout programs in the country, including customizing the program for local needs across a diverse range of communities.

Speaker: Carri Hulet, Principal, CH Consulting (collaboration expert, facilitator, and mediator focused on climate resilience)
Ben Wicker, Associate Partner, SHK Consulting, LLC

Thursday, March 9, 2023

Workshop Series J

9:00 – 10:00 AM

J1 MassDEP Update on Proposed Wetlands Climate Resiliency Regulations

MassDEP's Wetlands program is embarking on several initiatives to support climate resiliency. Learn about the latest in the regulatory and other fronts that the program is implementing to support climate resiliency.

Speaker: Lisa Rhodes, Wetlands Program Chief, MassDEP

10:30 – 11:30 AM

J2 Survey of Seminal Land Use and Environmental Cases in 2021-2022

MACC members, who range from conservation commissioners and staff to professional consultants and scientists, to planners and engineers, to educators and advocates, to landowners and land trusts, to applicants and their legal counsel, need to understand and appreciate the body of land use law coming constantly from the US Supreme Court, MA Supreme Judicial Court, and our Appeals Court. The reason is that these precedent-setting court decisions legally govern and guide administration and enforcement of our wetlands, water, wildlife, zoning, health, safety, climate, coastal, energy, and other laws. This growing jurisprudence provides the legal foundation (and ceiling) for governmental powers and procedures. The audience will receive a collection of 12 short articles on these seminal federal and Massachusetts cases decided during the years 2021-2022.

Speaker: Gregor I. McGregor, Esq., McGregor Legere & Stevens PC; MACC Director

1:00 – 2:00 PM

J3A Restoration of Retired Cranberry Bogs: Part A - Presentation (double session)

This workshop will provide an overview of the restoration opportunities for cranberry farm owners looking to retire their bogs. We will provide a background on the history of cranberry farming and the cranberry plant, an outline of the typical process for retiring bogs and restoring them to wetlands, an overview of funding opportunities, and an introduction to possible restoration methods. We will discuss some of the design and construction challenges. This presentation **will be followed in Part B by a virtual field trip** to the Tidmarsh Farms Wildlife Sanctuary (Mass Audubon) and the Foothills Preserve (Town of Falmouth) where we will observe the restoration practices implemented from 2017 to 2020 to see different stages of recovery.

Speaker: Nick Nelson, Fluvial Geomorphologist, Inter-fluve, Inc.

2:30 – 3:30 PM

J3B Restoration of Retired Cranberry Bogs: Part B – Virtual Field Trip (double session)

This 2nd part of the workshop will be a virtual field trip to the Tidmarsh Farms Wildlife Sanctuary (Mass Audubon) and the Foothills Preserve (Town of Falmouth) where we will observe the restoration practices implemented from 2017 to 2020 to see different stages of recovery.

See J3A for the description of the first half of this double-session workshop.

Speaker: Nick Nelson, Fluvial Geomorphologist, Inter-fluve, Inc.

4:00 – 5:00 pm

J4 Overview of the *Massachusetts Handbook for Delineation of BVWs and Massachusetts Inland Wetland Replacement Guidelines*

In the spring of 2023, MassDEP and UMass-Amherst will release revised versions of both the *Massachusetts Handbook for Delineation of [Bordering Vegetated Wetlands] BVWs* and *Massachusetts Inland Wetland Replacement Guidelines*. This presentation provides an overview of the new document highlights. A tentative schedule of upcoming field training classes will be provided for more in-depth, future outreach events for the late spring and early summer 2023. Learn about important changes and enhancements of these newly revised guidance documents from experts at MassDEP and UMass Amherst.

Speakers: David Hilgeman, Supervisor of the Major Projects and Policy Unit, MassDEP Wetlands Program
Scott Jackson, Extension Professor, Department of Environmental Conservation, UMass Amherst;
Conservation Commissioner, Town of Whately

Fundamentals for Conservation Commissioners

6:00 – 8:30 PM

Unit 103 Plan Review and Site Visit Procedures

This required Fundamentals Unit will provide participants with an understanding of how to read maps and engineering plans typically submitted to conservation commissions. The class also provides an understanding and overview of site visits, including how to prepare for and conduct site visits as a commission. This is a great class for new commissioners as well as consultants.

Instructor: Karro Frost, Conservation Planning Botanist, Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program, Massachusetts Division of Fisheries and Wildlife