



Auburn, Maine

Conservation Commission

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ANNUAL REPORT 2021

The Auburn Conservation Commission enjoyed a productive year in 2021, as we worked to protect and improve our natural resources and raise public awareness of environmental issues. In accordance with our ordinance, the Annual Report below outlines key accomplishments from 2021 and ongoing initiatives for 2022. Attached at the bottom of the report are some images documenting our activities.

Members:

Commissioners: Sam Boss, Chair; Amy Dieterich, Vice-Chair; Jane Costlow, Secretary; Rhyanna Larose; Dave Griswold; and Adam Platz.

The Commission extends its deep gratitude to outgoing Commissioners Jordan Tate, Tizz Crowley, and Michelle Melaragno for the time, energy, and dedication they invested in supporting conservation efforts in Auburn.

Key accomplishments

Events & Activities

- *Winter Tree & Bird ID Walk.* The Conservation Commission/Community Forest subcommittee hosted a Winter Tree & Bird Identification Walk in Pettengill Park for Auburn Winter Fest, to help residents gain appreciation for Pettengill trails and the different habitats and species found in the City forests.
- *Earth Day Neighborhood Clean-Up.* This event promoted pride in our neighborhoods and natural spaces, and awareness of litter and proper waste disposal. 40 volunteers helped remove approximately 100 contractor bags of waste from parks, waterways, and neighborhoods around the city.
- *Walk in the Park Day.* In collaboration with the United New Auburn Association, the Conservation Commission's Parks and Cemeteries Subcommittee organized and led walks at major parks around the city in order to build community and promote appreciation of Auburn's natural spaces.
- *Arbor Day Activities.* The Auburn Forest Subcommittee/LACFB organized a series of Arbor Day activities, which included planting seedlings in the City nursery from the Maine Forest Service and a Storywalk that offered information on invasive species. These activities helped Auburn retain its Tree City USA status.
- *Agriculture and Forestry Storywalk.* In collaboration with the Auburn Agriculture Committee, the Conservation Commission contributed content on invasive plants and insects for the October Storywalk on local agriculture and forestry.

Ongoing Initiatives

- **Support City staff and public engagement on FERC Relicensing of Lewiston Falls Dam**
The Conservation Commission worked to support Eric Cousens through the FERC relicensing of the Lewiston Falls Dam by participating in and organizing stakeholders meetings, and identifying contacts to support requests for studies. The FERC dam relicensing process is ongoing, and we look forward to supporting public engagement with and awareness as that work continues.
- **Promote awareness and effective management of Browntail Moth and other invasive species**
The Commission worked with the Maine State Forest Service to identify resources on Browntail moth management to share with Liz Allen and the City Manager's office in order to promote public awareness and effective management. We will be hosting Alison Kanoti, the State Entomologist from the Maine Forest Service, for an information session about nest removal and other management strategies in February. Event details forthcoming.
- **Research ecological and recreational improvements to Little Androscoggin**
A working group of the Commission has focused on identifying ways for the City of Auburn to improve access to the Little Androscoggin River and improve the health of its ecosystems by improving fish passage; this would align with stated goals from the Comprehensive and Strategic plans to promote water access/health and recreation. We organized an assessment by federal fisheries biologist Chris Reidy of the Littlefield Dam, which he deemed to present a significant barrier to fish passage on the River. His full report is forthcoming in January, 2022. We are exploring opportunities for funding the removal of the dam, possible boat launch or portage locations, and trail extensions.
- **Host speakers and consider support of legislation relevant to Auburn conservation**
The Commission hosted Peter Rubins from Grow L-A to speak about reclassification of the Androscoggin River. Chair Sam Boss provided testimony in support of LD 676, which would reclassify the Androscoggin River from a class C to Class B River. The Commission also hosted Ed Friedman from the Friends of Merrymeeting Bay to discuss LD 883, an Act to Protect Endangered Species, which would declare the Atlantic Salmon and Endangered species in Maine.
- **Maintain healthy street trees in Auburn and promote sustainable forestry practices**
Through the Auburn Forest Subcommittee/LACFB, the Conservation Commission successfully supported an application to the Project Canopy Grant, which funded the planting of Gingko trees on Washington Street at the gateway to Auburn. Commissioner Dave Griswold, a career forester, regularly attends workshops with the State Forest Service and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative and is leading research into policies that will increase the number of street trees in Auburn. Dave monitored two Emerald Ash Borer traps this year, and found no sign they have spread in Auburn.
- **Create StoryMaps Featuring Auburn Trails, Forests, and Parks.** In collaboration with students at Bates College, the Conservation Commission worked with Sabrina Best and Rosemary Mosher on efforts to create StoryMaps to promote Auburn's trail systems, including Pettengill Park and Mt. Apatite. We aim to finalize these projects this year.

The events, activities, and initiatives outlined above reflect our commitment to building collaborations with other City groups and local organizations in Auburn. They also reflect the dedication and expertise of our members and the community members who have been involved in local conservation efforts. We are eager to continue our work with staff and deepen engagement with the Council in the upcoming year, and invite you to consult with our group on matters relating to conservation and sustainability.

Respectfully submitted,
Sam Boss, Chair