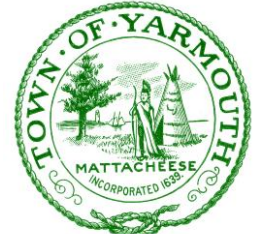


Yarmouth's Conservation Land

A Guide to the Open Space in Your Neighborhood



Conservation
Commission

Over the years, Yarmouth residents have had the foresight to set aside more than 1,800 acres of town-owned conservation land to help protect wildlife, provide outdoor recreation opportunities, and maintain the Town's natural resources and character. Many of these lands, – like Horse Pond, Dennis Pond and Callery-Darling Conservation Areas, have parking and trails so the public can enjoy them. Other parcels are smaller and do not have established trails. They provide wildlife habitat and buffers, helping maintain the sense of “elbow room” in neighborhoods. The Yarmouth Conservation Commission is responsible for managing these lands, creating and enforcing regulations for their use, monitoring boundaries and maintaining a trail network with the help of the Town's Division of Natural Resources.

What does the Conservation Commission do?

The Yarmouth Conservation Commission is a seven-member, volunteer appointed body. It is part of the Conservation Commission's mission and legal obligation to protect the lands it owns in trust for the citizens of Yarmouth. Town conservation land is protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts Constitution and regulated by Massachusetts General Laws as well as the Town of Yarmouth By-Laws. Some of these parcels were donated to the commission to be protected as conservation land; others were purchased by the town for this purpose. The Conservation Commission, in conjunction with the Division of Natural Resources, is responsible for managing this land, posting boundaries, maintaining trails and parking lots, and stewarding the natural resources of these properties.

What activities are permitted on conservation land?

The town's conservation lands are protected for their natural resource values and passive recreation, including walking, picnicking, photography, fishing, hunting, birding, nature study, and other passive recreation from half an hour before sunrise to half an hour after sunset.

What's not permitted on conservation land by the public?

- Use of motorized vehicles including ATVs and dirt bikes
- Cutting or clearing of any kind, including creating trails
- Collecting plants and animal, firewood, or stones
- Camping and fires
- Metal detecting
- Construction of fences, sheds and other buildings.
- Dumping or disposal of lawn clippings, leaves and brush from nearby residential lots and/or lawns, and landscaping
- Storing personal property like canoes, lawn equipment, or firewood.



Is hunting allowed on conservation land?

Hunting is allowed on some conservation land parcels. The Division of Natural Resources and the Conservation Commission have developed local hunting policies and regulations for the safety of everyone. Please refer to these policies and regulations for further information.

How do I know where my lot ends and conservation land begins?

The Conservation Commission has copies of existing surveys for town-owned land and can assist in locating boundary markers between residential lots and town owned land. For precise location of lot lines or installation of bounds, homeowners need to consult with a licensed surveyor.

May I remove trees on conservation land?

You need to obtain permission from the Conservation Commission before removing any tree that is located on town conservation land, including trees that may be dead, dying or posing a hazard to private property. You are permitted to cut any tree limb that is overhanging your property but only back to the property line. Please do not remove dead trees or limbs from conservation land, as they have value to wildlife for food and shelter. Residents are not permitted to clear trails or operate chainsaws on conservation land.

What about invasive plants?

Invasive species are non-native plants that tend to crowd out native plants – common “invaders” in Massachusetts include European Buckthorn, Japanese Barberry, Japanese Knotweed, Garlic Mustard, oriental Bittersweet, and Phragmites (Common Reed). Homeowners interested in helping manage such plants on conservation land should contact the Conservation Commission in advance to discuss these projects. A careful and coordinated approach is required to avoid damage to native plant communities and to avoid encouraging further spread of invasive plants.

Where can I put leaves and brush?

Homeowners seeking to dispose of leaves and brush are encouraged to make room in their yards for a small composting bin or area. The town disposal area accepts compostable yard waste and is free to all Yarmouth residents bringing materials themselves. Alternatively, lawn and landscaping services can be contacted to remove these materials. It is unlawful to dispose of these materials along roadsides, on town land, or within wetland resource areas. While these materials are natural, piles of them decompose slowly and destroy the underlying vegetation.

How does the commission address encroachments on town land?

When the Conservation Commission becomes aware of encroachments (activities occurring on conservation land in violation of the commission’s regulations) it will contact the landowner(s) and work with them to address the situation. The commission will require the removal of encroachments and re-naturalization or restoration of the land with appropriate native species. The commission may impose fines when a landowner refuses to respond, or fails to meet agreed-upon deadlines, and will address serious encroachments through litigation. The commission does not sell or exchange land to address an encroachment.

What should I do if there are illegal activities occurring on conservation land?

Contact the Division of Natural Resources (508-760-4800) if you witness illegal activity or vandalism on conservation land. For more routine issues like trees down across trails, please call or email the Division of Natural Resources or the Conservation Office (508-398-2231 ext. 1288) with information about the location and severity of the problem.

How else can I help?

The Conservation Commission appoints volunteer property stewards to help monitor properties and to serve as our “eyes and “ears” in the field. Stewards agree to walk properties regularly, familiarize themselves with the commission’s regulations, and report management needs such as overgrown trails or downed trees. Please contact us if you are interested in serving as a volunteer property steward.

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Approved by the Yarmouth Conservation Commission November 17th, 2016