

A Proposal to Establish a Conservation Commission for the Town of Hardwick

There are just over 100 Towns in Vermont that currently have Conservation Commissions. We don't yet have one in Hardwick, even though our Town Plan has strongly recommended the formation of one since 1990. State law explains what Conservation Commissions can do and requires that they be made up of 3 to 9 members (to start with, we hope to have at least 5). Once a Conservation Commission is established, the Hardwick Select Board would appoint the members.

The major goal of Conservation Commissions is to establish community responsibility for its natural resources, and they have **no regulatory power**, but may advise the town, the Planning Commission, and residents and undertake diverse activities to foster wise use of the town's natural resources. We intend that this new commission will be a complement to existing town boards.

Some examples of work a new Conservation Commission in Hardwick could do:

- Apply for state grants available to Conservation Commissions
- Host community educational events on environmental issues
- Support the completion of a natural resource inventory for Hardwick
- Engage in activities to improve the health of the Lamoille River (monitoring, clean-up, etc.) including restoration plantings along the river to control erosion and bolster fish habitat.
- Work on mapping and removal of invasive species
- Organize street-tree planting for our streetscapes.
- Promote the establishment and maintenance of pollinator habitat

In our area, there are Conservation Commissions in Greensboro, Craftsbury, Cabot, Woodbury and Elmore. In nearby towns they have undertaken such projects as working on an Emerald Ash Borer Preparedness Plan (Danville); conducting a natural resource inventory (Calais); organizing a speaker series, tree and shrub sale and street tree plantings (Plainfield); drafting a pamphlet to educate the public on the needs of various wildlife species (Marshfield); and monitoring for invasive plants and insects (Peacham).

Forming a Conservation Commission in Hardwick would help maintain the special natural resources that we all care about. It would bring community members together to learn new things and participate in projects that will benefit the Town. We are eager to get to work, and ask for your support in establishing a Conservation Commission in Hardwick.

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