

Conservation Corner

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This issue of Conservation Corner introduces the topic of shoreland protection and the Shoreland Water Quality Protection Act (SWQPA).

The State of New Hampshire recognized early on the importance of our lakes, rivers and seacoast to not only our quality of life, but also the economic health of our state, and has adopted regulations to protect our waters. These regulations are intended to protect sediments and plant nutrients from entering lakes and streams from shoreland properties through erosion and stormwater runoff. Leaving a vegetative buffer along the shoreline and directing runoff to areas where the water can be filtered to remove sediment and pollutants before entering waterways goes a long way toward protecting water quality.

The SWQPA, originally named the Comprehensive Shoreland Protection Act (CSPA), was enacted by the 1991 session of the NH Legislature under State of NH Revised Statutes Annotated (RSA) 483-B, which may be viewed online at <https://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/rsa/html/l/483-b/483-b-mrg.htm>. The initial act established minimum standards for the subdivision, use and development of the state's shorelands along larger water bodies (lakes over ten acres in size and other water bodies).

The act has been amended over the years, first in 2008, where several changes took effect, including limitations on impervious surfaces, revised vegetation maintenance requirements and the establishment of a permit requirement for many construction, excavation and filling activities within the protected shoreland. During the 2011 legislative session, the CSPA was renamed the SWQPA, and additional changes were made to vegetation requirements within the natural woodland, waterfront buffers, and impervious surface limitations in order to protect the water quality of the state's waterbodies.

The shorelands protected under the SWQPA are generally those lands that are located within 250 feet of the shore reference line. The reference line is the point from which setbacks are determined, and its location varies depending on the type of water body. For lakes, ponds and impoundments larger than ten acres the reference line is defined by the surface elevation listed on the Consolidated List of Water Bodies kept by the NH Department of Environmental Services (NHDES) which may be found at https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/divisions/water/wetlands/cspa/water_bodies.htm.

All lakes, ponds and impoundments larger than ten acres, all 4th order (medium-size, such as Great Brook) and greater streams and rivers, all designated rivers and river segments under RSA 483 (the Rivers Management & Protection Act) and all waters subject to the ebb and flow of the tide are



Peter Beblowski, Keith Wolsiefer, Ron Cheetham and Frank Gorga celebrate the re-opening of the Lily Pond Trail. Photo by Joan Gorga.

covered under the act. Water bodies protected under the SWQPA are also located on the Consolidated List of Water Bodies. The SWQPA is administered by NHDES under a comprehensive set of administrative rules identified as Env-Wq 1400 Shoreland Protection Rules, which may be found at <https://www.des.nh.gov/organization/commissioner/legal/rules/index.htm#envwq1400>.

Of special note, the Antrim Conservation Commission, along with the Antrim 2020 Trails Group, is proud to announce that the trail to one of our smaller water bodies, Lily Pond, has been fully rehabilitated this past summer and fall. The Lily Pond Trail starts at the back (west) side of the Antrim Center Cemetery and traverses westerly along a stone wall nearly 1,000 feet to the Lily Pond across private property over a trail right-of-way that was given to the Antrim Conservation Commission. The Lily Pond is a former glacial kettle hole that has filled with water (glacial kettle-pond) and has been enlarged by a series of beaver dams. Over the years, it has been well known as a productive heron rookery and productive habitat for other waterfowl as well. It is a relatively short hike (0.25 miles round trip) to a very beautiful, quiet place. Please note: the terrain is rough in spots so care should be taken when hiking. Short bog bridges have been installed over traditionally wet or boggy areas to protect wetlands. Finally, it should be noted that the Center Cemetery is fronted on NH Route 31 by private property. Please do not interfere, and respect the private property of others. ❁