

# *MUNICIPAL CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS*

## **TAKING ACTION - MAKING A DIFFERENCE**

by the

**Connecticut Association of Conservation and  
Inland Wetland Commissions**



**- Ann Letendre 5/18/02**

# *CACTIWC*

## *WHO WE ARE · WHAT WE DO*

- We provide education and information to Connecticut's municipal CCs and IWCs, and their staff
- We are the only continuous education and information source available to CCs & IWCs
- Our members are municipal CC and IWC commissions

# *WHO YOU ARE • WHAT YOU DO*

- Community volunteers that care about the lands in your community
- Almost all decisions on how lands are to be utilized in CT are made at the local level.

**YOU influence those decisions. YOU make a difference in your community!**

# *WHAT YOU ARE ENABLED TO DO*

- Powers & duties set forth in Section 7-131a of the CT General Statutes
- CT Conservation Commissions 'shall'
  - conduct research into the utilization of land areas of the municipality
  - keep an index of all open areas, public or private, including wetlands, for the purpose of obtaining information on the proper use of such areas
  - approve all grants submitted by any agency of the town for programs that preserve open space, or restrict it for conservation or recreation purpose.
  - keep records of meetings, activities; do an annual report

# ***WHAT YOU ARE ENABLED TO DO***

- **CT Conservation Commissions ‘may’**
  - **propose a greenways plan for inclusion in the municipal POCD**
  - **inventory natural resources**
  - **formulate watershed management and drought management plans**
  - **if the municipality so provides, apply for state grants for programs that preserve open space, or restrict it for conservation or recreation purpose.**
  - **recommend plans and programs to the planning commission for the development and use of open space areas**
  - **make recommendations on proposed land use changes to P&Z commissions and IWCs and other municipal agencies**

# ***WHAT YOU ARE ENABLED TO DO***

- **CT Conservation Commissions ‘may’ (cont)**
  - **advertise, prepare, distribute books, maps, charts, plans and pamphlets as necessary for CC purpose**
  - **supervise and manage municipal parks and open space, provided the authority has been so delegated**
  - **with the approval of the legislative body, establish rules and regulations to serve the CC purpose, including establishing charges for the use of land and easements**
  - **receive gifts in the name of the municipality for any of its purposes, and must administer such gifts for those purposes subject to the terms of the gift**
  - **acquire land and easements in the name of the municipality**

# *WHAT YOU ARE DOING....*

- We asked you to tell us about your projects
  - Objectives *how project fits into long range town or commission plan; what did the project intend to change; path to project acceptance by the town*
  - Issues *resources used; technical expertise involved; regulatory issues solved; problems or constraints encountered; any funding issues*
  - Results *what were they; how was the project implemented; what might be done differently*

# *WHAT YOU ARE DOING...*

The resulting story is compiled in

*“Celebrating Connecticut’s Conservation Commissions: A Guide for Local Action”*

- 58 commissions submitted a total of 150 projects
- 57 categories of projects
  - OPEN SPACE (ACQUISITION, FRAGMENTATION, FUNDING, INVENTORY, MANAGEMENT) - 57 projects
  - PUBLIC EDUCATION - 25 projects
  - TRAILS, PARKS, GREENWAYS - 23 projects
  - POCD - 15 projects
  - NATURAL RESOURCE INVENTORY & GIS - 16 projects
  - TOWN REGULATIONS - 10 projects



# *CC's ARE TAKING ACTION*

- Conclusion - Conservation Commissions are indeed achieving their purpose
- CCs are raising the environmental consciousness of their communities
- CCs are achieving the respect of community leaders
- CCs are becoming a more effective research and advisory commission

# *CC POWERS & DUTIES EXPAND*

- Over time CC responsibility has increased - as well as opportunity for greater impact
  - 1961 NR protection (must conduct research, index open lands)
  - 1963 may apply for OS grants; must approve any town applications
  - 1972 inland wetlands regulation.....
  - 1993 right to inventory open land, formulate water & drought mgt plans, make land use recommendations, manage town open space
  - 1995 plan greenways for inclusion in POCD
  - 1997 funds available for open space acquisition opens a big door

# *COMBINED COMMISSIONS - CAN THEY DO IT ALL?*

## **CACIWC's POSITION**

**“ CACIWC believes that every CT town should establish a separate, single-agency Conservation Commission, and that the duties and responsibilities of that commission should not be combined with another town board or agency.”**

# *SUMMARY...ACTION TODAY ...AND TOMORROW*

- EXPANDING POWERS AND DUTIES OF CONSERVATION COMMISSIONS
- CCs ARE STEPPING UP TO THE NEW ROLE, GAINING COMMUNITY RESPECT (CELEBRATE!)
- 1997 OPEN SPACE LEGISLATION - A MAJOR IMPACT ON LOCAL CC s
- CACIWC's CONCERN: THE ABILITY OF COMBINED COMMISSIONS TO TAKE ON CURRENT AND FUTURE CC RESPONSIBILITIES

# *Celebration...inspiration...action*

- **Connecting to the natural world is an important part of human existence**
- **CELEBRATE** all you do to make those connections possible
- **BE INSPIRED** by the good works that other CCs do to enable those connections
- **TAKE ACTIONS** that assure that the natural world is in the future of your town