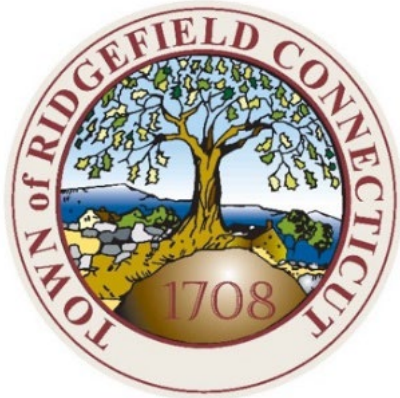


Ridgefield Conservation Commission



WINTER 2022 NEWSLETTER

The Ridgefield Conservation Commission (RCC) serves the Town by devoting its efforts to the sound development, conservation, supervision, and regulation of the Town's natural resources.



Conservation Tip!

Use Ice Melt Carefully: A wide variety of chemicals are used to melt ice. Magnesium chloride is considered the least harmful deicing salt while calcium magnesium acetate (CMA) is considered the safest deicer overall for the environment. These choices are more expensive than the more toxic sodium chloride (rock salt), which also contains cyanide.

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(203) 431-2713

A Lovely Day for a Swim

RCC commissioner Matt Sharp captures these images of a pair of river otters swimming and fishing in Bennett's Pond. Though the rest of us may think it a bit cold to be diving in December, these aquatic mammals are active all year. They often live in abandoned beaver or woodchuck dens but in a pinch will setup residence in a hollow stump.



Over 1,000 Acres Protected

A multi-year effort by the RCC has led to over 1,000 acres of Town land being formally protected as open space in perpetuity. The RCC discovered over 90 deeds that had been considered open space had no formal protection and could be developed in the future theoretically. This included parcels that made up major portions of Hemlock Hills and Pine Mountain. Town residents voted unanimously to protect these spaces. The deeds for these parcels have now been amended to officially protect these open spaces.

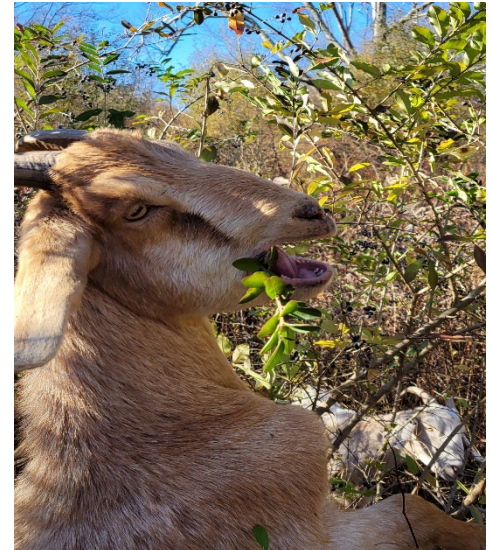
Parking Enhanced at McKeon Farm

Just before it becomes consumed with plowing and sanding our streets, the Ridgefield Highway Department finished grading and placing gravel on the parking area for McKeon Farm adjacent to Old Stagecoach Road. This improvement comes none too soon as increased visits were creating a potentially muddy quagmire in the newly enlarged parking space.



Goats Gone Wild

The RCC has retained Fat & Sassy Goats in an experiment to control invasive plant species at McKeon Farm. This Autumn, over 30 goats were brought to McKeon for over a week to munch their way through a variety of invasive species such as the European privet as shown in the photo. This process will be repeated in the Spring and Fall and then evaluated as to its success.



Take a Walk with Woodcock

The RCC in cooperation with the Woodcock Nature Center is funding monthly walks and lectures throughout Ridgefield in 2023. The talks and walks will explore a variety of topics; the first is January 28, at Richardson Park. Events will be announced on the Woodcock Nature Web site www.woodcocknaturecenter.org and Ridgefield Conservation Commission's Facebook page www.facebook.com/RidgefieldConservationCommission.

Home Screech Home

With help from a grant from the Ridgefield Thrift Shop, the RCC installed 10 screech-owl boxes in open spaces throughout Ridgefield. The boxes are oriented with openings facing 135 degrees southeast. An owl will sit at the opening in the morning to catch the warm sunlight (northwest facing openings almost always fail). The boxes are also positioned near woodland edges, also the preferred location for a screech owl roost.



Walk Cameron's Line

Mostly unknown, a fault called Cameron's Line (starting in Manhattan) runs smack through downtown Ridgefield through the Great Swamp eventually terminating in Litchfield County. This fault divides the North American continent from ocean floor sediment and the microcontinent Avalonia. Thus, while the northern two-thirds of the Town sit on rock typical to North America, the lower third closely matches that of today's western Africa. The RCC hopes to map a few of its crossings on open space in 2023.

Feed the Birdies

In addition to providing homes for screech owls, a grant from the Ridgefield Thift Shop has allowed the RCC to install a bird feeding station at Richardson Park adjacent to the parking area. So, from the comfort of your car (please shut off your engines while watching) you should be able to spot a variety of hungry, local birds including woodpeckers, cardinals, sparrows, snowbirds, finches, nuthatches, bluebirds and many more. The station will be filled through the early Spring and then removed so as not to attract mammals emerging from hibernation.



Meet the Commissioners

The RCC consists of 11 volunteer Ridgefield residents (nine commissioners and two alternates) who serve the Town for staggered three-year terms. Commissioners are appointed by the Board of Selectmen to devote their efforts to the sound development, conservation, supervision, and regulation of the Town's natural resources. Our commissioners hold a wide range of strengths and skills that enhance the RCC's mission. Meet three of the members:

Roberta Barbieri has 30 years of experience in corporate environmental sustainability and is currently Vice President of Global Sustainability for PepsiCo. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Environmental Conservation from the University of New Hampshire and two Master's degrees, both from the University of New Haven, in Environmental Engineering and in Environmental Science. Roberta is an avid hiker and gardener and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Woodcock Nature Center. She joined the Commission in July 2021.

Pete Nichols grew up in Ridgefield and graduated from RHS in 1975. He then went to the University of Rhode Island and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in Natural Resources and Environmental Studies. He received his Connecticut teaching certification from Western Connecticut University and taught Biology and Earth Science at RHS for 35 years. He is currently a member of the Land Conservancy of Ridgefield, the Ridgefield Parks and Recreation Commission, the Ives Trail and Greenway committee, and the Community Emergency Response Team among other groups. He joined the commission in 2022.

Ben Nissim has been a Ridgefield resident since 2018. He is Senior Counsel to The Hartford in its coverage litigation group. Prior to joining The Hartford, he worked as an attorney in private practice and for an environmental non-profit for a number of years. He attended Wesleyan University and Notre Dame Law School. In addition to his work with the RCC, he is currently a member of the Board of Trustees of the Harriet Beecher Stowe Center in Hartford, Connecticut and a board member of Lawyers for Children America, an organization dedicated to protecting the rights of children in the legal system. He was appointed to the RCC in 2022.

