

**TO:** Ms. Meghan Lally, Chair, Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Commission  
Town of Andover, 17 School Road, Andover, CT 06232

**FROM:** Hank Gruner, Herpetologist

**RE:** IWWC20-21, 12 Webster Lane - Subdivision and new residential construction

**DATE:** June 21, 2020

At the request of the Andover Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission, on June 13, 2020 in the company of acting Wetlands Agent Jim Hallisey, I conducted a field inspection of the parcel at 12 Webster Lane that straddles the Andover/Bolton town line. The focus of this inspection was to determine if there were any probable ecological impacts from the proposed project on nearby wetlands or watercourses. This report presents my assessment and also discusses modifications to the project that would avoid or mitigate potential ecological impacts.

A narrow, intermittent watercourse runs along the eastern portion of the parcel. The watercourse is forested with a shrub and skunk cabbage understory and is bordered by residential development. Hydrology appears to be quite ephemeral with the watercourse at the time of inspection being dry with areas of mucky soil. A small, temporary pool (dry) was observed along the watercourse just over the southeastern property line. This pool, and the watercourse in general, do not appear to hold water for a duration long enough to support breeding amphibians. Due to its small size, narrow configuration, and ephemeral hydrology, I do not believe that the watercourse provides high value habitat for wildlife.

The watercourse falls within the Burnap Brook subregional drainage basin and is associated with the Warner Swamp system which drains into Burnap Brook via Baker Brook. Although residential development has significantly encroached on the Warner Swamp system since the mid-1980's, habitat associated with this system has supported a rich biological diversity, including at least two state-listed species<sup>1</sup>, the smooth greensnake (*Opheodrys vernalis*), and the spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*). Populations of breeding amphibians<sup>2</sup> including wood frogs (*Lithobates sylvaticus*), spring peepers (*Pseudacris crucifer*), gray treefrogs (*Hyla versicolor*), spotted salamanders (*Ambystoma maculatum*) and four-toed salamanders (*Hemidactylium scutatum*), have been documented within this system.

The primary ecological value associated with the watercourse on the parcel is likely it's potential role as an ecological corridor. Although narrow, this forested corridor may play a role in facilitating the dispersal of animals across the larger landscape, providing connectivity between Warner Swamp, Burnap Brook and the Daly Swamp system to the south of the parcel.

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<sup>1</sup> Gruner field notes with specimens in the collection of the American Museum of Natural History, New York

<sup>2</sup> Gruner field notes

The proposed new residential construction is located in the southeast corner of the property adjacent to the watercourse (*preliminary plan dated August 26, 2019*). Shifting the location of the new house further to the southwest of the parcel would provide additional buffering for the watercourse corridor. Maintaining a strip of un-mown or annually mown grass, similar to the existing condition, and/or planting native shrubs along the periphery of the tree line adjacent to the watercourse, would provide habitat structure as well as buffering capacity. The buffer should extend the length of the tree line from the road (Webster Lane) to the rear of the lot.