

To: Town of Andover Inland Wetlands and Watercourses Commission

From: Town of Andover Conservation Commission

Re: IWWC Application #20-34 110 Cone Road

Date: January 12, 2021

The Conservation Commission wishes to submit the following advisory recommendations regarding the pending application IWWC #20-34 for a planned timber harvest located at 110 Cone Road.

The proposed timber harvest is a selective cut treatment that is part of an on-going forest management plan for the parcel. Some timber will be harvested within the 100-foot upland review areas surrounding wetlands/watercourses, and access for the forestry operation will require the establishment of two temporary stream/wetland crossings.

In late 2020 the Conservation Commission initiated a natural resource inventory and mapping project. The first phase of this project has focused on mapping resources associated with parcels located within open space corridors designated within the Town's 2015 Plan of Conservation and Development. The parcel at 110 Cone Road falls within the Western Highlands Open Space Corridor, which spans from the town's southern border with Hebron, north to Bolton. The corridor features several large, inter-connected parcels of land that support a diversity of forest and wetland habitats, including the State-owned Bishop's Swamp Wildlife Management Area. The natural resource inventory identified potential vernal pools within the parcel located at 110 Cone Road.

Vernal pools and the forests surrounding them provide critical habitat for a diversity of wildlife species and they are designated as a "most important habitat" in Connecticut's 2015 Wildlife Conservation Action Plan. Three species of amphibians that require vernal pool habitat for breeding are also recognized as "important" in this plan.

The Conservation Commission is supportive of land use and management projects that promote biological diversity and other natural resource values, including forest management. Although the Commission recognizes that timber harvests are permitted as a "right of activity" under Connecticut's General Statutes, the Commission wishes to submit the following recommendations to encourage the application of best management practices associated with vernal pools that may occur on the parcel.

1. Conduct a field inspection to determine if vernal pools are present. Any suspected vernal pools should be flagged for identification in the field. The natural resource inventory identified the presence of potential pools based on aerial photo-interpretation. However, the presence of an obligate vernal pool-breeding biological community is required to confirm a vernal pool. Although this is typically accomplished during the spring-summer activity seasons for the majority of these species, examination of potential pools during the winter when there is no snow cover can often be a reliable indicator. Timing is also critical in order to complete timber harvesting prior to the onset of the spring breeding season which is typically early to mid-March.
2. The following best practices are recommended where vernal pools are confirmed or suspected. The recommendations are based on deMaynadier and Houlahan 2008, and Mitchell et al 2006.

- Forestry operations should ideally occur during the period November-February outside of the activity season for vernal pool-breeding species, and when the ground is typically frozen. Dry periods in July and August provide a secondary option outside of the winter season. Operations during the period March-June should be avoided.
- Ideally, leave forest habitat, including ground cover, intact within a 100-foot zone surrounding any pools. If selective cuts are planned in this zone, they should avoid the use of heavy machinery, and a minimum of 75% canopy cover should remain. Avoid any disturbance within the basin of the pool, including dropping trees within the basin.
- Minimize soil disturbance and avoid the creation of ruts throughout the area. Depressions or ruts created along access roads can fill with water and often act as decoys for breeding amphibians. If depressions/ruts are created that may hold water, they should be filled at the completion of the operation.
- Use existing access roads and avoid locating any new roads near pools. Graveling of access roads should be avoided to prevent the creation of barriers for migrating amphibians.
- Employ erosion and sediment controls as necessary in areas of disturbance around pools, however, it is critical to remove any silt fencing or other barriers used once the operation is complete and the site is stabilized.
- Maintain coarse woody debris, such as logs, throughout the area to provide cover and consider leaving limbs and tops where felled.

References Cited

deMaynadier, P.G. and J.E. Houlahan. 2008. Conserving vernal pool amphibians in managed forests. In A.J.K. Calhoun and P.G. deMaynadier (eds.) *Science and Conservation of Vernal Pools in Northeastern North America*, Pp. 253-80. CRC Press. Boca Raton, FL.

Mitchell, J.C., A.R. Breisch, and K.A. Buhlmann. 2006. *Habitat Management Guide-lines for Amphibians and Reptiles of the Northeastern United States*. Partners in Amphibian and Reptile Conservation, Technical Publication HMG-3, Montgomery, AL.