

Conservation Commission

Written by Conservation Commission Admin

Wednesday, April 30 2008 09:27 - Last Updated Thursday, April 07 2011 13:30

City of Holyoke Conservation Commission

City Hall Annex- Room 412

Holyoke MA 01040

413-322-5615 ☎ Phone 413-322-5616 Fax

The City of Holyoke Conservation Commission is responsible for protecting Holyoke's natural resources.

The Conservation Commission administers and enforces the Massachusetts Wetlands Protection Act, the Massachusetts Rivers Protection Act and the City of Holyoke Wetlands Protection Ordinance and associated Regulations. These laws protect ponds, rivers, streams, wetlands, floodplains, vernal pools, and other sensitive environmental resources. Projects near these resources require review and approval by the Commission.

The Commission is also responsible for other special projects including management of 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan, the water chestnut control project at Log Pond Cove, open space protection, and HUD environmental reviews.

Although one of the first industrial planned cities in the United States, the City of Holyoke boasts a rich diversity of natural resources. The land area of the City of Holyoke is approximately 12,000 acres. Of that, 6200 acres are classified as open space, 7000 acres are forest, and 605 acres are bordering vegetated wetlands. The City has twelve miles of riverfront along the Connecticut River- An American Heritage River.

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Staff:

Andrew Smith, Conservation Director

Current Commissioners:

Gordon Alexander, Chairman

Bernice Bowler, Vice-Chairman

Sue Ellen Panitch

Eileen B. Leahy, Esquire

Josh Knox

Rory Casey

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Mary Moriarty

Learn more about wetlands...

- [Rivers Protection](#)
- [Protecting Wetlands in Holyoke](#)
- [Wetlands and Residential Landscaping](#)
- [Snow Handling and Guidance](#)
- [Wetlands Science](#) from the Environmental Protection Agency

Who are the Conservation Commissioners?

The Conservation Commission consists of seven unpaid volunteers— all residents of Holyoke— appointed by the Mayor. The current Commission provides the City of Holyoke with close to 100 years of wetlands permitting experience! Each Commissioner brings unique talents and interests to the board. Some bring decades of permitting experience; some bring a love of public service; all bring a commitment to the protection of natural resources in Holyoke

. The day-to-day affairs of the Commission are managed by a full-time paid director.

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When does the Commission meet?

The Commission meets on the second and fourth Thursdays of each month except in November and December. Meetings are held at either 5:30 p.m. or 7:00 p.m.. Meeting agendas are posted at least forty-eight hours in advance with the City Clerk and outside the Conservation Commission office. Generally meetings are held in the fourth floor conference room of City Hall Annex. The door closest to the District Court is available for entry during meeting hours. During the warmer months, the Commission meets at the Jones Ferry River Access Center, 8 Oscar Street. All members of the public are invited to attend. Meetings are governed by the Commissions' [Bylaws](#) .

Meeting Agendas -

Meeting agendas for the Conservation Commission and other municipal boards can be found [here](#) at the City of Holyoke Public Meetings and Hearings Calendar.

Project Applications and Information- If digitally available and compatible, permit applications and decisions may be reviewed here.

Do I have wetlands on or near my property?

Send your name, address, telephone number and the address or map-block-parcel of the site that you are inquiring about to the [Conservation Commission](#) . The Conservation Director will do preliminary research and contact you. A site visit and additional permit filings may be necessary to receive a legally binding response.

Does my project or activity require a permit?

If your project or activity is within 100' of a wetlands, pond, lake or other resource area or within 200' of a perennial stream, a permit will most likely be required. A few minor projects and certain maintenance projects may be exempt from permitting. Contact the [Conservation Commission](#) for additional guidance prior to performing any work.

Where can I obtain Wetlands Protection Act Application Forms? What are the filing requirements?

Typically, projects require a WPA Form 1- Request for Determination of Applicability or a WPA Form 3- Notice of Intent. All Wetlands Protection Act forms can be retrieved from <http://www.mass.gov/de/p/>

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[water/approvals/
wwforms](#)

[.
htm](#)

[Conservation Commission 2011 Meeting and Filing Schedule](#)

[City of Holyoke Local Filing Fees](#)

[City of Holyoke Wetlands Protection Regulations](#)

[MA Wetlands Protection Regulations- June 2009 \(Includes revisions to stormwater management\)](#)

[MA Wetlands Protection Regulations Appendices- June 2009](#)

City of Holyoke Open Space and Recreation Plan

The City of Holyoke has extraordinary natural resources. The 2005 *Open Space and Recreation Plan* inventories natural and recreational resources throughout the City, identifies recreational opportunities, and outlines strategies and actions for providing recreational

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opportunities and protecting natural resources throughout Holyoke. Beginning in 2011, the City of Holyoke will be working on an update to the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan. To review the 2005 Open Space and Recreation Plan, please click on the documents below (please wait for the maps to load, as they are large):

[City of Holyoke Open Space Plan - 2005](#)

What is the Riverfront Resource Area in the City of Holyoke?

All perennial streams and the Connecticut River in the City of Holyoke are protected by the 200' Riverfront Resource Area pursuant to 310 CMR 10.58. There are no areas designated as *densely developed*

in Holyoke. The CT River riverfront from the Holyoke Dam south to Berkshire Street has been designated as

Historic Mill District

and is subject to a 25' Riverfront Resource Area.

What are the "*DEP File Number*" Signs that I see around Holyoke?

You may see signs at construction sites which have DEP File No. 186-xxx on them. These signs indicate that the project has been approved by the Conservation Commission and DEP and an Order of Conditions has been issued. 186 indicates that the project is in Holyoke and the last 3 digits indicate the file number. For a listing of recent applications, [click here](#).

Water Chestnut Control Project- Have you seen this [plant](#) ?

The City of Holyoke Conservation Commission has been instrumental in coordinating control and removal of the 16-acre water chestnut infestation at Log Pond Cove on the Connecticut River since 1998. The project is an example of the value of partnerships in achieving environmental goals. In 2004, the project was presented at the [13th International Conference on Aquatic Invasive Species](#) in Ireland.

The 2008 control season was funded by grants from United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. The 2009 season was funded by Holyoke Gas and Electric.

What unique resources must be considered when planning development in Holyoke?

Several tracts of land in Holyoke have been designated by the Commonwealth of MA as ***Habitat of Potential Regional or Statewide Importance*** and ***Land of High Ecological Integrity***.

For maps of these areas and additional information on permitting requirements in these areas, please see the [Mass CAPS](#) website and [DEP](#). (New as of June 2008)

The MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program is responsible for protection and

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conservation of rare and endangered plants and animals in the Commonwealth of MA. Nearly 47% of Holyoke is designated as Priority Habitat for Rare Species or Estimated Habitat of Rare Wetlands Wildlife and is therefore subject to additional permitting by NHESP. For additional information, use this link [Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program](#)

Beavers- Nature's Engineers

[Living with Wildlife- Beavers in Massachusetts](#)

[Citizen's Guide to Beaver Permitting](#)

Guidance for [Conservation Commissions](#) and [Boards of Health](#) .

Most Holyoke human-beaver conflicts have been successfully resolved by the installation of water flow devices- also known as Beaver Deceivers made by [Beaver Solutions, Inc](#) . Read more about water flow devices.

[Resolving Human-Beaver Conflicts- Water Flow Devices](#)

[MassWildlife](#) offers additional resources including information on how [Massachusetts law](#) prohibits the dismantling or disturbance of beaver dams and beaver lodges. Note that wildlife in Massachusetts may not be trapped and relocated.

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Additional Internet Resources:

[2010-2015 Army Corps of Engineers Massachusetts Programmatic General Permit](#)

The U.S Army Corps of Engineers authorizes state and local governments to issue permits for work within the waters of the United States in lieu direct Corp's issuance of a permit, provided the terms of the PGP are met. Permits are valid for five years.

[United States Fish and Wildlife Service- Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge](#)

The Conte Refuge works to conserve the biodiversity of the CT River watershed. USF&W is a project partner with the City of Holyoke on the protection of Mt. Tom and the Log Pond Cove water chestnut removal project.

[Massachusetts Association of Conservation Commissions](#) (MACC)

MACC offers training and materials for Commissions and the general public.

[Massachusetts Department of Environmental Protection](#)

MA DEP is the environmental agency for the Commonwealth of MA.

[Invasive Plant Atlas of New England](#)

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IPANE provides a search-able database of invasive species in New England and quality links to invasive species topics.

[United States Environmental Protection Agency- American Heritage River Program](#) For additional information on the status of the Connecticut River as an American Heritage River.

[A link to the oldest land conservation organization in Massachusetts](#)

View The Trustees of Reservations property locations including [Little Mt. Tom](#) and [Dinosaur Tracks Park](#)

in
Holyoke
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[A link to the City's Stormwater Regulations](#)

A Review Holyoke's Stormwater Regulations and their relationship with the City's Ordinance.

[River and Stream Continuity Project](#)

Information from the UMass Extension Service about the ecology of stream fragmentation.

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[Contact Webmaster](#)