

**CONSERVING AND PROTECTING WETLANDS
AT WINDSOR'S MILL POND (KENNEDY'S POND):**

THE 2008 MILL POND WETLANDS INITIATIVE

Although largely out of public view, a valuable and sensitive area of wetlands is located behind the southern end of Mill Pond (also known as Kennedy's Pond). The wetlands complex consists of marshes in the back of the pond, as well as floodplain forest, which covers both sides of Mill Brook near Rt.44, extending close to the I-91 overpass. As part of the 2008 Mill Pond Wetlands Initiative, funded by a Vermont Watershed Grant, a study and survey of these wetlands was conducted by Jan Lambert, a naturalist and consultant for the Town of Windsor. As a critical natural resource, these wetlands help protect the water quality of the area, provide habitat for a wide variety of fish, mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians, provide a buffering effect from flooding, and are of high recreational value to the users of Mill Pond. There are also some rare plants and significant plant communities. Unfortunately, this area has been subject to human abuse, including dumping of trash, illegal commercial plant harvesting (fiddlehead ferns), and unauthorized use of motorized vehicles. The project explored possible options in order to reduce negative human impacts in the wetlands.

Motorized vehicles cause deep ruts and erosion of the wetlands soils, which in turn pollutes Mill Brook and Mill Pond with phosphorus-laden sediments. Vehicles also disturb and destroy wildlife breeding and nesting areas. Research of the existing restrictions on these wetlands reveals that unauthorized motorized traffic is not allowed, according to a Wildlife and Forest Management Plan, written by the Vt. Department of Fish and Wildlife. The plan specifically calls for access points to be closed off to motorized traffic. Furthermore, motorized traffic is not an allowed use under Vermont Wetlands Rules.

In reference to exploitation of plants, any harvesting of wild plants in the area is prohibited, under both the Wildlife and Forest Management Plan and the Wetlands Rules. Widespread cutting and digging of ferns in the floodplain area along Rt. 44 has been noted, as part of the information gathering of this year's project. Dumping near the I-91 overpass is also a problem.

Public comments are welcome from any residents or regular visitors who are interested in protecting these wetlands. If adequate resources can be found, much could be done to install barriers and/or signs to curtail human abuses. Education on the value of wetlands is needed to instill a respect for this valuable and precious part of Windsor's natural environment, and those who watch for wildlife in the wetlands at Mill Pond are encouraged to share reports of sightings. Public awareness and the scrutiny of citizens and town and state officials are an important component in discouraging prohibited activities. For more information, or to offer helpful comments or suggestions, contact Jan Lambert at 603-477-9947 or at jan@ClaremontCycle.com.



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