

CONSERVATION COMMISSION

REGULAR MEETING

MARCH 14, 2024 – 6:00PM (VIA ZOOM)

1. Call to Order. The meeting was called to order at 6:01pm by Susan Rand, Acting Chair.
2. Roll Call. Present: Tom Blagden, Susan Rand, Steve Fitch (Alternate), Sarah Webb (Alternate), Miles Todaro (Land Use Tech Specialist) and Georgia Petry (Recording Secretary). Absent: Lee Potter, Maria Grace, Zach Sadow and Abby Conroy (Land Use Director).
3. **Approval of Minutes of 2/01/2024. So Moved** by S. Webb, seconded by T. Blagden and unanimously **Approved**.
4. Public Comment – None
5. Vernal Pools Study Discussion – Michael W. Klemens, PhD, Senior Land Use Consultant  
The [Link to Video Recording](https://www.salisburyct.us/conservation-commission/) of this presentation can be viewed under **Minutes** at:  
<https://www.salisburyct.us/conservation-commission/>  
M. Todaro asked if anyone present was planning on volunteering to help with the site visits; S. Rand replied yes and T. Blagden will help with the photography. S. Rand asked about the insurance issue, regarding volunteers. Mr. Klemens and M. Todaro indicated that they have to be officially registered as “Town Volunteers”, but do not have to be members of other Commissions; Joe Cleaveland wants a list of the names.  
T. Blagden asked about any local impacts from a recent Supreme Court decision, reversing some wetlands protections; Mr. Klemens replied that thing should be status quo here, because of CT local home rule, wetlands administration is deferred to the towns. M. Todaro pointed out that the CT definition of wetlands is stricter than the Federal one. Mr. Klemens mentioned that the concept of nexus has changed over the years, regarding vernal pools and Army Corps protection; filling of wetlands has not been an issue in Salisbury. Knowing more about the vernal pools here and which are the important ones is being proactive.  
Mr. Klemens began his presentation by indicating that in Salisbury, we are the sole managers of the wetlands, reporting to DEEP, and the importance of knowing the resources. He referred to the draft Wetlands & Watercourse Regulations, which are looking at larger Upland Review Areas (URA) for certain critical habitats, such as vernal pools, fens and high gradient streams. The important thing about vernal pools and why they are doing this study, is that vernal pools are associated with the upland habitat to at least 750’ around them. The condition of the landscape figures very importantly into the assessment of the vernal pools; the goal is to rank the vernal pools in town, using citizen science, photographs, biological data and landscape analysis. Standards used for vernal pools assessment come from the Army Corps of Engineers website:

<https://www.nae.usace.army.mil/Portals/74/docs/regulatory/VernalPools/BestDevelopmentPractices20Oct2014.pdf>

**Best Development Practices** was authored by Calhoun & Klemens in 2002. The Vernal Pools Assessment Sheet is on page 9; the “citizen scientists” will use Section A., Biological Value of the Vernal Pool, using a simple analysis. The Salisbury Vernal Pool Study Datasheet can be found at: <https://www.salisburyct.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Vernal-Pool-Datasheet.pdf>

It is very important to take photographs in order to verify the identifications. The list of species is on the back of the Datasheet. The very detailed explanation of the Vernal Pool Datasheet can be heard on the Zoom recording, using the link mentioned at the start of this presentation.

Photos of the species, spermatophores and larvae can be found on page #38 of the **Best Development Practices** / Calhoun & Klemens study listed above. The next subject covered was about egg masses. Drawings and detailed explanations can be viewed at:

<https://www.salisburyct.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/Vernal-Pool-Northern-Woodlands-Article-1.pdf>

Additional information can be found at: <https://www.salisburyct.us/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/VernalPool-EggMassID-2017-HiRes.pdf>

Mr. Klemens talked about the 3 most common vernal pool species in Salisbury: wood frogs, spotted salamanders and Jefferson salamanders; there are some blue-spotted salamanders also. The materials used in this presentation were specifically selected for their relevance to Salisbury.

Regarding vernal pool site visits, each pair of volunteers will be asked to make a minimum of 2 visits to their assigned pools; take photo documentation, note the time and identify the photos. Mr. Klemens suggested making up an index card to use at each vernal pool and trying to get the card into the picture of all species and egg masses sighted, to avoid confusion.

M. Todaro and Mr. Klemens went over a list of specific pools that are targeted for this year; some are on Town-owned land and others on private properties, for which permissions are being obtained. They went over the Fact Sheet for Landowners and the FAQ's. They noted the importance of making multiple visits to approve the actual presence of vernal pools and eliminate the ones that are not. S. Rand asked when to start the visits; Mr. Klemens answered to start quickly. The field training will be on Thursday, March 21<sup>st</sup>, in the afternoon. M. Todaro will notify all who have volunteered. Printed pdfs will be supplied by the Land Use office, possibly in color and laminated, including the 4 pages of the Harris Center study, for handouts. Everyone is encouraged to look at the link to the Zoom recording, for all of the details:

<https://www.salisburyct.us/conservation-commission/conservation-commission-meeting-documents/>

**Adjournment. So Moved** by T. Blagden, seconded by S. Fitch and unanimously **Approved**.