

# TOWN OF CANANDAIGUA

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION BOARD 2019 ANNUAL REPORT

December 5, 2019

**Purpose:** Town Code (Chapter 18-6) and New York State General Municipal Law (GMU Article 12F Section 239-X Paragraph 1 Subparagraph f) both require that the Environmental Conservation Board (ECB) submit to the Town Board a year end annual report on the work and activities of the ECB. The State law additionally requires that the Town Board forward a copy of the annual report to the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation.

**Open Space Preservation:** Nine(9) applications for the NYS Department of Ag and Markets Farmland Protection Implementation Grant (PDR) program were submitted to the Agricultural Advisory Committee and the Environmental Conservation Board in November for their review and rating of parcels. Selected parcels will be submitted to the PDR program in the spring of 2020. The adopted Open Space, Conservation and Scenic View Master Plan's unique rating feature provided assistance in the review process for this year's PDR applications.

The Parcel Rating system in the Plan is intended to guide the Town in prioritizing land for preservation and conservation. The system assigns a score for all parcels of five acres or more with at least one acre of open space using natural features as categories for the rating. This is specifically useful for the ECB as we participate in ratings for farmland and open space protection and as we review referrals from the PRC and others.

**Open Space Index:** With the adoption Open Space, Conservation and Scenic Views Master Plan by the Town in late 2018, the resulting Implementation Strategies and Actions of the Plan provided the driving force for public education and outreach for the ECB. We formulated our 2020 Projects Plan to include public programming for a number of the Actions indicated in the Implementation Strategies section. Impressive progress was made in 2019 in achieving the goals of the Strategies.

**Natural Resource Protection Referrals:** And as last year, dozens of site plan applications and others were referred to the ECB. The ECB Advisory Report used in response to selected referrals is predicated on a checklist which documents the natural resource affected by development and the corresponding Town policy that relates to the resource. The checklist also includes listings of all maps in the Plan and provides pertinent information for the report. This uniform approach to our reviews provides valuable information to referring boards and the public.

**Natural Resources Inventory:** The Natural Resource Inventory was adopted by the Town in 2011. This Inventory is now being updated and is expected to be complete in early 2020. Already progress is being made to incorporate map data into a reporting tool for any parcel being reviewed. The Planning Exploratory app was just completed by OCPB and available to county municipalities. It provides categories of natural resources on a parcel with an accompanying report. In cooperation with the Ontario County Information Services Department map data layers for the Town of Canandaigua will be included in this OnCor application. In addition to basic information, the Town of Canandaigua will be able to select reports for all of the mapped data that we will provide. The ECB is looking forward to this advanced technology that will provide such a comprehensive reporting document. We are grateful to the County Information Services Department for working with us on this project.

**Public Education and Outreach:** The ECB continues its mandate in public education and outreach to inform our residents of natural resource protection issues. And as was mentioned earlier in this report, we have concentrated on achieving the Strategies and Recommended Actions items of the Open Space, Conservation and Scenic Views Master Plan. Using this section as our guide for 2019, we offered the following programming to our residents:

**Strategy 1 – Encourage land stewardship by landowners.**

In partnership with Finger Lakes Land Trust, the NYSDEC, and Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District we held a forum for landowners which encouraged the benefits of: their participation in a Conservation Easement Program; the value of trees as a hydrologic feature; enhancing wildlife habitat; information on sources of technical assistance and financial incentives for conserving land.

**Strategy 2 – Enhance wildlife habitat.**

We partnered with Finger Lakes PRISM to provide information to identify and control invasive species; participation with Ontario County Soil and Water Conservation District in a tree giveaway program; encourage landowners to plant native species; provide forest management and technical assistance information.

**Strategy 3 - Conserve open space through land use regulations.**

We continue to review stream corridor, steep slope, lakeshore and other regulations pertaining to open space protection as they appear on site plan review; develop recommendations to the Ordinance Committee and other boards regarding natural resource protections.

**Strategy 4 – Acquire land and/or conservation easements for land with exceptional conservation value.**

We plan to participate with Finger Lakes Land Trust to develop a list of top priority parcels of conservation value during 2020; made recommendation to the Town Board for Open Space Capital Fund Reserve;

**Strategy 5 – Increase understanding among government officials and the general public about the benefits of open space.**

We conducted periodic workshops and other educational events and programs to celebrate the Town’s open space; newsletter articles on open space topics throughout the year.

It is noted that many Strategies have overlapping goals. A workshop intended to accomplish a specific goal may well accomplish several goals under several Strategies. The ECB is committed to furthering the educational intent of Open Space Master Plan’s Implementation Strategies & Actions into 2020.

**ECB Involvement:** ECB members continue to serve on other committees in the Town to ensure that the intent of the many resource protection policies in the Town will be represented. ECB members have committed to serving the Town on: the Citizens Implementation Committee (CIC), the Open Space Master Plan Committee, the Planning Review Committee (PRC), the Town Board’s Environmental Committee, the Local History Team, and the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee. Members also participated in the NRI Committee to revise the Natural Resource Inventory. A consultant was selected to guide this process. The update is nearing its completion and should be available for review in early 2020.

Our members share their experience and information with each other at every meeting. This exchange enables the ECB to be aware of critical issues that may have environmental consequences.

In addition to our outreach and public education efforts, the ECB continues to provide articles to the Town’s monthly newsletter with topical/seasonal environmental content. We also provide content on the Town’s Mailchimp, Facebook, other media, and our own Board page on the Town website.

**Proposed ECB Projects for 2020:** The following projects and others are being considered by the ECB and will be submitted to the Town Board for approval in January 2020: Rain Barrel Workshop; Water & Energy Conservation in the Home; Litter Control media program; Dark Sky at Miller Park; Fossil Walk for Children; Invasive Species, the Emerald Ash Borer; Arbor Day Ceremonial planting.

Respectfully submitted,

Joyce Marthaller, Chairperson  
Environmental Conservation Board  
Town of Canandaigua