

APPENDIX D

Description of a conservation commission

From *Grassroots Conservation: A Manual for Maine Conservation Commissions*, referenced below.

“What is a conservation commission?”

“There are as many answers to this question as there are towns, cities, and plantations in Maine. Basically, a conservation commission is a municipal advisory board that is created by a town, city, or plantation through its legislative body (i.e., town meeting or municipal council). The commission has a few duties that are required by state law.

“But most of what commissions do in the real world it to undertake voluntarily a variety of environmental, recreational, and land use activities. Commissions build trails, monitor development, protect the special wild places, and generally work to keep Maine communities attractive places to live, work, and raise our families. Commissions watchdog and maintain the natural resources of a community, working with town officials, planning boards, and private organizations.

“The conservation commission has been called ‘the environmental conscience of the community.’ In many municipalities this may be the role that provides commission members with their greatest sense of accomplishment.

“Conservation commissions exist ‘to identify problems, to lay the issues before the people, to organize public support and then to take the initiative to solve the problem,’ as Steward Udall, the former Secretary of the Department of the Interior, once wrote.”

Establishing a conservation committee in Wiscasset would involve the proposal of such a committee, the drafting of an ordinance to create it, and a vote by the townspeople to accept it. Municipal officers would appoint members who represent a variety of backgrounds and skills but share a strong commitment to conservation and an interest in local conservation issues. Meetings would be public and take place at set times in public places. For complete information, see *Grassroots Conservation: A Manual for Maine Conservation Commissions* published in 2001 by the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions. This is available in the town planner’s office.