

October 29, 2020

To the South Hadley Community,

In June of this year, Christian Cooper, a Black science writer and bird watching enthusiast, was in Central Park birding when he was threatened by a White woman. Unfortunately, encounters such as these between people of color and White people are not uncommon. People of color often encounter unjustified criticism, suspicion, confrontation or worse, while accessing recreational outdoor spaces. Now more than ever, it is important that everyone has access to clean, safe, and inspiring wild and outdoor spaces.

The South Hadley Conservation Commission explicitly supports the use of Town-owned Conservation Areas as safe spaces for Black, Brown, Indigenous, and all people of color. Furthermore, the South Hadley Conservation Commission condemns racism and racist behavior in the outdoor spaces that we manage and beyond. Our town is uniquely positioned along the Connecticut River and the Holyoke Mountain Range, offering extraordinary opportunities to connect people to nature. Our goal is to ensure that everyone, particularly people of color, feel welcome while pursuing their personal connection to nature.

We acknowledge that this work is not solely that of the public communities that use these outdoor spaces, and as the Commission that manages these lands, we commit to actively working to increase the diversity of people that use and manage our conservation properties.

Take good care of each other,

The South Hadley Conservation Commission:

Bill DeLuca, Chair
James Canning, Vice-Chair
Bill Bacis
Steph Clymer
Tom Dennis
Neva Tolopko
Garth Schwellenbach
Mary Zawatski, Associate Commissioner