

## MACC REMEMBERS ALEXANDRA DAWSON



MACC's longtime friend and colleague, Alexandra Dawson, 80, passed away peacefully at her home on December 30, 2011. Alexandra was respected and loved for a long career of distinguished service as a lawyer, educator and advocate on behalf of the New England environment.

Born and raised on a farm in Maryland, Alexandra graduated from Barnard College and obtained her J.D. from Harvard University in 1966. She was a leader and trailblazer. Starting her career with the Conservation Law Foundation, their first paid employee, she responded to inquiries about environmental and land use law. In 1971 she worked for the Boston Metropolitan Area Planning Council as their first General Counsel and Director of Land Use Regulation. In 1980 she Co-Directed the Water Supply Citizens Advisory Committee and later became Executive Director. She was superb and practical writer who authored the first comprehensive text for attorneys on *Massachusetts Environmental Law* in 1971 and wrote and published *Land Use Planning and the Law* in 1982.

Alexandra was a brilliant and distinguished educator. In 1981 she was instrumental in the creation of the environmental program at Antioch University Graduate School where she served as Director of the Resource Management and Administration Program for more than a decade. Alexandra became Emeritus Professor at Antioch, and was a master teacher at Tufts University, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University and the Rhode Island School of Design. Her mentorship inspired countless students year after year; many are committed environmental professionals throughout New England today.

Sandra, as we know her, was dedicated to MACC and to serving the needs of Conservation Commissioners across Massachusetts. She remained active with MACC for over 34 years, right through December 2011. She was President of MACC from 1985-1988, served on our Board of Directors from 1977 to 2003 and as Director of Legal Affairs until 2010. For several years Sandra served as Coordinator of the MACC Western

Outreach Office and promptly responded to inquiries made via MACC's Helpline, answering critical wetland and open space protection legal questions. During her tenure at MACC, she spent thousands of hours authoring or co-authoring eight editions of the definitive MACC *Environmental Handbook for Massachusetts Conservation Commissioners* between 1973 through 2006, wrote numerous advocacy letters and newsletter articles, taught annual workshops and conferences, reviewed and critiqued proposed laws and regulations and prepared influential amicus briefs. We loved talking with Sandra; discussions would always be pragmatic yet spirited and humorous! Sandra was a woman of many talents; she created beautiful handmade quilts and generously donated them to be auctioned at several MACC Annual Environmental Conferences.

In 2001 MACC was very proud to establish the *Alexandra Dawson Legal Education and Action Fund*. Sandra was excited and honored to help create this new Fund, designed to advocate on behalf of Conservation Commissioners across Massachusetts to defend environmental laws (see [http://maccweb.org/support\\_dawson.html](http://maccweb.org/support_dawson.html)).

Sandra enthusiastically joined the Hadley Conservation Commission in 1985 and served as Chair from 1993 until her death. She authored the Hadley wetlands bylaw and regulations and expanded her focus to include Hadley farmland protection. During her tenure on the Conservation Commission she actively supported farmers in their applications to the state Agricultural Protection Restriction program, resulting in over 2,500 acres of permanently protected farmland. Because of Sandra's hard work and tenacity, Hadley now has the highest number of acres of APR farmland anywhere in the state.

Sandra also served on the Board of the Kestrel Trust for nearly 20 years and was active in many environmental organizations, including the Thoreau and then Pioneer Valley Chapters of the Sierra Club.

Sandra's achievements did not go unnoticed. In 1998, Hadley dedicated a permanent conservation area in her name. September 9, 2001 was declared by Governor Swift to be "Sandra Dawson Day." And in 2006 the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency presented her with its Environmental Merit Award for Lifetime Achievement.

She hiked, camped, biked, canoed and kayaked with family and friends locally and across the United States and Canada. Until a year ago, she was frequently seen bicycling around town, and as recently as this fall she was kayaking with a friend. She and her husband canoed the entire Connecticut River and kayaked all the perennial streams in Hadley.

MACC will forever be indebted to Sandra for her enormous contributions to supporting Conservation Commissioners and in protecting Massachusetts' wetlands, forests, rivers, streams and wildlife. MACC will dedicate our March 3, 2012 Annual Environmental Conference to Alexandra Dawson. We hope you will join us for a special presentation on Sandra, her life and achievements during Opening Session at 8am that morning. We will miss Sandra's leadership, tenacity, brilliance and passion for environmental protection and we will miss our friend.