

Durham Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) - Meeting Notes, 4/17/2014

Attendees: Ann Welsh (Chair), Diane Moore, Todd Selig, Mike Lynch, Malin Clyde, David Potter

Meeting called to order by Ann at 8:10 a.m.

Management Plans – We moved this discussion to earlier in the meeting due to Mike Lynch needing to depart early.

Conservation Commission approved \$8000 worth of consultant work for stewardship plans on town lands; work can commence, as no public hearing required due to no land interest (Cons Comm. has approved expenditure from Conservation Fund); the DPW will determine the order for property plans being conducted. The town is committed to this being a long-term effort, with items in the budget for continuing stewardship plans. Committee mentioned a desire for inclusion of the following topics/issues by consultant (Ellen Snyder, Ibis Environmental Consultants):

- Want some public involvement in the process (site walks, public meetings, etc.)
- Figure out which property boundaries are most important to maintain and/or have surveyed
- Everything will be online on the Conservation Comm/Land Stewardship pages of the Town's website
- Stephanie produced a 1-page list of lands for which the Town has some stewardship responsibility (ownership or easement); Mike will send digital file to committee; Malin agreed to post on LSC page of website.
- Trails and parking recommendations

Hunting – continued the discussion from the last meeting, agreed that the LSC has consensus that the status quo works well for most properties (not open to hunting, but town won't rigorously post most lands)

- Agreed we need to better educate people on town lands that are absolutely not appropriate for hunting, for example Wagon Hill Farm, due to heavy public use. Suggest that DPW consider a larger "No Hunting" sign at the entrance of the property. Mike will check into the legal issue of whether the Town owns the small island in the Oyster River where ducks were hunted last year.
- Ann will look into whether LCHIP funds pose any restrictions re: hunting use of Oyster River Forest; It was suggested Ann contact Dijit Taylor

Cottontail Rabbit Habitat Project – Todd reported that the idea for solar panels on this hasn't come up again – can put this aside; no negative feedback about the idea for rabbit habitat so far; invasives work is helpful; the concern about maintenance was investigated and Ann reported that the habitat may require 10-15 year cycle of over-story removal, but that this maintenance would be by NHF&G, not the town. The project doesn't require signing of a contract, nor does it prevent the Town from doing anything (trails, etc.) in the future. The committee agreed that there isn't much to see on this part of the property anyway, so a desire for trails seems unlikely at this time.

- Next step is to bring project to Town Council – Todd suggested the 1st or 2nd meeting in May; Ann will contact Don Kearstadt at NRCS to find the best date for him to attend meeting

Oyster River Forest – Ellen Snyder will be conducting a stewardship planning process for ORF as soon as possible. Todd suggested the Town Council could vote to accept the donation to pay for the plan at the May 5th meeting (he'll get it on the agenda). Once it's approved, Todd can sign the contract. Ideas for the stewardship plan were discussed, including:

- Consultant should address best places for parking, new gates (NRCS will construct these), signs.
- Trails and bridge are key elements of the plan; it was suggested that we consider grant applications to locate and build high-quality trail connecting ORF to College Woods (e.g.

Mooseplant grant program). Malin suggested that working with Student Conservation Association crews next summer could be a great way to get good work done but also involve the community (they work with volunteers too).

Longmarsh Trail Improvements – Malin brought up an inquiry by other landowners near our Longmarsh trail about fixing bog bridges located on Town property. Joanne Glode of The Nature Conservancy asked about doing a small (+/- \$2000) fund-raising campaign to pay for materials. Expertise will be supplied by TNC and other staff. Suggested using QR codes at trailheads to ask users for donations. Todd said okay as long as the Town is a partner with TNC, and make this clear on write-up for donations. Can advertise on trails and Friday Update, etc. Diane suggested talking to Stephanie about the bridges as she's investigating stewardship projects needs and has given thought to property maintenance issues. Malin will follow up with Stephanie and get in touch with Joanne Glode for next steps.

Wagon Hill Farm - 5th grade teacher Chris Hall has proposed a large school project to do experiential learning project to connect school and town; wants to plan an interpretive trail in Wagon Hill Farm to identify key features. Students are doing research now – historical and natural features. Plan to use QR codes with non-obstrusive signs that take viewer to ORMS website; plan to build on this spring's effort for the next few years. Committee agreed it sounds like a good project that will draw attention to stewardship efforts at WHF. It was suggested that the Rec. Dept. and the Stewardship section of website link to the ORMS webpages.

Land Conservation – Committee members gave an update about how the town has been hearing from land conservation groups about possible upcoming conservation projects (specifics are confidential at this time as negotiations with landowner are ongoing); the Conservation Commission and/or the town may be approached about contributing to some of these. Possible partners include the Great Bay Resource Protection Partnership and the Lamprey River Advisory Committee.

Next Meeting – agreed to discuss management issues at Wagon Hill Farm at length – e.g. erosion, maintenance goals dogs, garden, solar power, parking, building uses, wind power, etc. Ann will send around a Doodle Poll to arrange for next meeting.

Meeting adjourned at 9:45 a.m.