

**Minutes**  
**Hogback Preservation Commission**  
**Marlboro, Vermont**

The January 14, 2013 Regular Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission was called to order at 5:04 p.m. at the Marlboro Town Office by Hal Himmelstein, Chair.

***Members Present:*** Christine Colella, Bob Engel, Hal Himmelstein, Lauren MacArthur, Ed Metcalfe, Mike Purcell

***Members Absent:*** Jim Tober

***Also Attending:*** Staley McDermet, President, HMCA

The minutes of the November 12, 2012 Regular Meeting were approved as distributed.

***Officer, Committee and Liaison Reports***

***Chair's Report:***

The Conservation Area's 2013 budget totaling \$3,950 was approved by the Select Board. Hal and the Selectboard discussed moving \$14,000 from the money market account to the government CD to get a higher rate of interest. The Select Board does not object to this. The Commission will consider the possible transfer at its March 2013 meeting.

The Commission has submitted a summary of work accomplished during the past year to the Town of Marlboro for inclusion in the Town's 2012 Annual report.

Work commenced in November on the Commission's Historical Structure Stabilization and Maintenance Program. This included the partial clearing of the former Hogback Ski Area's First Aid building and a warming hut. More work on these buildings, including additional debris removal, clean-up, and securing of the buildings' roofs will resume in Spring 2013.

Conservation Area prohibitory signage--small plastic 6X6 signs—was purchased and installed on selected trail posts and trailhead post-and-chain barriers. Signs include: no snowmobiles, 4X4s, ATVs, campfires, and camping.

The Commission supported the chair's making a telephone call the Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers VAST club asking the club to continue to stress to its members that the Bishop and Tower Trails are not open to snowmobiles. Snowmobile tracks were

evident in early January traversing the posted Habitat Restoration Area branching off the Tower Trail leading directly to the Mt. Olga summit.

Ed Metcalfe and Lauren MacArthur indicated their desire to be reappointed in March for 3-year (2013-2016) terms.

### ***Conservation Commission Report:***

Mike Purcell reiterated that the Conservation Commission continues its habitat and wildlife assessment/count. Wildlife “signs” and tracks should be reported to the Conservation Commission.

### ***Planning Commission Report:***

Jim Tober was not available to update the Commission on the status of the Marlboro Town Plan review, especially regarding possible inclusion of language related to zoning for wildlife. We await an update at the March meeting.

### ***Southern Vermont Natural History Museum Report:***

Ed Metcalfe indicated that the bald eagle soon to be resident at the museum is an adult female eagle from Wyoming. The bird is docile. Ed is convinced that the eagle will work well for education. The eagle’s cage is now ready. The museum is awaiting the eagle’s health certificate and hopes to have it by the end of January.

Posts for interpretative signage have been installed in the Conservation Area and the signage will be attached in the spring.

## ***Old Business***

### **Assessment of HMCA’s “Conserving Habitat Variety” project.**

HMCA’s proposal was reviewed in a conference call facilitated by Bob Engel with Marlboro College biology faculty Jenny Ramstetter and Jamie Tanner and wildlife biologist George Leoniak. The group expressed support for the proposal. General recommendations include overlaying as many taxa as possible, thus ensuring that we are not just focusing on one population but taking into consideration the overall ecology of the area and populations thriving within it. We should also think about the larger landscape perspective including Molly Stark State Park. Connectivity and size matter. Larger patches are better than smaller ones. Within the larger landscape, corridors for big mammals are a critical concern. A major goal is the creation of a heterogeneous landscape that is cut back in a manner that will encourage species of migratory song birds to return and nest. This effort will ideally have the participation of professional biologists/ornithologists who can supervise the taping and selective cutting.

The overall plan calls for a phasing strategy with the Meadow Ski Run as the first targeted area. Demarcation of the cut will commence in spring 2013 and harvest will begin in late summer and early fall. The debris from the harvest should mimic a natural disturbance, creating an environment that is harder to penetrate, thus reducing the ease with which deer raid a regenerating wood lot.

There is concern that hay-scented fern, especially prolific on the Sugar Slope Ski Run, may be very difficult to eradicate. Ultimately this may be of greater concern than the presence of invasive exotic species as the hay-scented fern creates an impenetrable barrier for the sprouting of seedlings.

Overall the reviewers found the HMCA report to be very solid. They concluded that the area being preserved in early successional habitat should be continually assessed as the work proceeds, with the goal of developing greater precision in the treatment methodology. The reviewers noted that a 20-year clearing cycle (i.e., “intermediate disturbance”) generates greater biodiversity than a shorter 10-year cycle.

A motion to accept the HMCA proposal with rotation frequency and patch size dynamics subject to ongoing review and adjustment was M/S/P (6-0).

### **Revised Conservation Area signage guidelines.**

A separate section on interpretive signage will be added to Bob Engel’s draft of the Conservation Area Signage Guidelines. Bob and Ed Metcalfe will collaborate on the wording, to be presented at the March meeting.

## ***New Business***

### **Development of a list of potential volunteers for future Conservation Area projects.**

Lauren MacArthur offered some great ideas on how this can best be accomplished. The key question is how to get volunteers to engage in various activities. Lauren stressed the need to be specific about the work that needs to be done and offer potential volunteers enough lead time to arrange their schedules so they can participate. Such organization and public outreach will ultimately demand the appointment of a volunteer coordinator. The consensus was that the volunteer coordinator should be a stipend position.

HMCA president Staley McDermet presented HMCA’s perspective on the question of recruiting volunteers for Conservation Area projects. He noted that HMCA is undergoing a transition from its original highly focused fundraising effort to its present pursuit of discrete projects associated with conservation education and habitat preservation. He stressed that the HMCA board of directors want to channel their energy into those projects they find most engaging.

A consensus developed around the idea that participation of volunteers is ultimately driven by the nature of particular projects. Thus, it does not make sense to posit “theoretical” volunteers.

The Commissioners expressed the need, going forward, to clarify the respective roles of HPC and HMCA in coordinating volunteers for discrete projects. This should be considered within the broader context of Conservation Area management objectives.

Ed Metcalfe proposed that Conservation Area activities should be centered on different interest groups, i.e., different committees for different activities, and that ideally everything should “live under one roof.”

In an attempt to increase public awareness of the various Conservation Area initiatives currently underway or being proposed, Lauren agreed to set up a Hogback Mountain Conservation Area Facebook Page.

The meeting was adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Christine Colella  
Secretary pro tempore