

Marlboro Conservation Commission Minutes

24-Jul-17

Attendance Kevin Kennedy, Adam Gebb, Mike Purcell, Ashley Bies

Update on Proposed Wildlife Zoning Process

- Substantial public concern was expressed at the Planning Commission hearing in June, apparently in association with a letter the PC sent out to notify landowners within the proposed wildlife overlay districts. Most of the large PC hearing turnout was made up of potentially affected landowners who had just heard of the wildlife zoning proposals for the first time. Concerns centered on the perception of the proposed wildlife overlay provisions as being too weak to be effective, as too strong to be appropriate, and as presenting a potential legal risk to the Town.
- The Vermont Natural Resources Council's review concluded that Marlboro's proposed wildlife zoning is within the statutory authority of the PC, and does not constitute a legal risk to the Town.
- The contrasting concerns of the proposal being either too strong or too weak may be an indication that the proposed measures are at a central point of public opinion.
- The Vermont Community Wildlife Program's review concluded that the proposed wildlife zoning is both ecologically and legally appropriate, and comparable to that which has been implemented in Hartford, Shrewsbury and Williston, and that which is currently being considered in Salisbury.
- Public commentary also included a recommendation for the State to post wildlife crossing signage along the most critical proposed road crossing on Rt. 9 (#s 13 and 14). Ashley has been in touch with the Windham Regional Commission's Transportation Planner Erica Roper, and she recently confirmed that the Vermont Agency of Transportation will be reviewing this request.

Review of Wildlife Movement Habitat and Connections Between Conservation Areas

- Though not proposed as part of a potential wildlife road crossing, the Rt 9 bridge over the Whetstone Brook just East of MacArthur Road is long enough that it includes a sufficient area of streambank to allow terrestrial wildlife passage underneath the road. However, as part of installing the bridge, the banks were covered by large angular chunks of rock that impede passage of most mammals. If the streambanks were made passable beneath the bridge, they could provide the only terrestrial wildlife underpass along Rt 9 in Marlboro, and help connect northern and southern forest areas in eastern Marlboro (including protected areas surrounding Sunset Lake and South Pond). Ashley has been in touch with the WRC to request that the State cover these rocks with a passable surface (e.g. gravel), and Erica confirmed that VTTrans will consider this proposal as well.

Formation of the Green River Watershed Alliance

- Emily Davis, Watershed and Natural Resources Planner of the Windham Regional Commission, is organizing a Green River Watershed Alliance to connect southern Marlboro, eastern Halifax and western Guilford in planning and organizational projects beyond Town boundaries to encompass the watershed. Emily has submitted a large grant proposal that has been provisionally approved, pending an interview with the the GRWA Steering Committee on July 31st. Ashley is representing Marlboro and the CC on the Steering Committee, and Patti Smith will also be representing Marlboro, the PC and the Select Board as part of a wider advisory group.

Next Meeting

- Monday August 7th, 6:30p.