

Conservation Commission Meeting 6/11/18

Present: Ashley Bies, Kevin Kennedy, Dante Corsano, Jaime Tanner, Cherrie Corey

– Minutes –

No minutes from last meeting –ask Pieter?

– Nordic Ski Trail –

Jaime still needs to talk with folks to find out the current status and to see if we can add chunks on to the reserve closer to the wildlife crossings

– Knotweed and general invasive plant monitoring project –

Ryan is beginning his project recording GPS points and general size of knotweed along Marlboro roads, the next stage is to look at presence along streams – talk with him about walking the streams

Cherrie – education program for invasives for landowners to get people to pull up patches – importance of knowing what they are and getting them out when the patches are small and manageable

Buckthorn, bittersweet vine, multiflora rose, yellow iris

We have previous MCC data for barberry, multiflora rose, knotweed, honeysuckle, bittersweet, winter creeper, it would be good to pass these along to Jaime and Ryan.

Maybe photograph the plants and organize by location?

– VTrans site visit along Rt 9 –

VTrans biologist did a site visit with Ashley and Erica Roper (the Windham Regional Commission Transportation Planner who organized the meeting) to discuss wildlife underpass site and overall road crossings facilitation planning along Rt 9 in Marlboro.

Speed re-zoning to a lower speed limit will only happen after a safety study but signage could go up highlighting wildlife crossing areas. Maybe the area on Rt 9 West of Butterfield and Hughes Rd.s (and perhaps also to the East of MacArthur Rd) would be important for such a study, both for safety (site of many accidents) and for wildlife (important crossing areas) considerations?

Three sites could be suited for riparian wildlife underpass planning, in preparation to restore their wildlife underpassability or advise their eventual re-construction to attain potential wildlife underpassability, along Rt 9 in Marlboro:

- The new bridge over Whetstone Brook, near MacArthur Rd;
- The old bridge over upper Whetstone Brook, near the former “Sweeties” convenience store, and;
- The culvert connecting wetlands at the head of the Whetstone watershed, between Church Hollow and Town Hill Rds. (draining down from behind the Town Garage).

Could restore wildlife underpassability by covering large jagged rocks with gravel to provide a walkable substrate under the new (lower Whetstone) bridge, while also restoring stream bank conditions and native plant cover for wildlife movement. Could work with Windham Regional Commission to try to get a grant for VYCC to come in and work on this project but might not cover the cost of plantings.

Could apply for grant funding to plan the eventual re-construction of the Sweeties (upper Whetstone) bridge and Town Garage-Church Hollow (Whetstone headwaters) cuvert, to be built wide enough to become underpassable for wildlife. Two federal grants administered by the state could be worth exploring:

- Better Connections is a planning grant to realize idealized wildlife crossings but towns need to commit to move beyond the planning process but if it was part of a town economic development project (i.e. Sweeties) it might have more success.
- Transportation Alternatives Federal grant – difficult to get but might be appropriate for the site near the Town Garage.

Do we want to consider drafting a resolution in support of Vermont Deer Overpopulation Management? –

We should find more out about what their recommendations are, beyond more doe hunting, and explore whether there may be a way to advocate for predator conservation as part of deer overpopulation management (particularly in terms of coyote hunting).

– Update on collaborative discussion on other towns in linkage –

Ashley heard back from two state biologists and other folks that are excited about this collaboration and want to fully support fall event we have discussed. Jens, state community wildlife biologist had a series of suggestions – one of which is to organize ourselves into a regional conservation partnership similar to one in northern VT and Canada (Cold Hollow-to-Canada). There is an RCP network that administers grant funding to support work plans for these kinds of groups.

Maybe we should try to accomplish a few smaller goals first before considering whether to formally organize ourselves as a RCP?

Jens also suggested talking to groups in Massachusetts working on similar efforts.

The community wildlife program would like to be involved in any mapping efforts we engage in.

Monica state community wildlife program would like to co-organize the event and be involved in the planning process and has ideas for potential funding.