

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting
August 10, 2021
Via teleconference - 7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Present: Tom Brownrigg, Debby Geltner, Warren Lyman, Rhonda Michaud, and Nick Ognibene. Dwight DeMay was absent. Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard was present.

Guest: Judy Asarkof

This meeting was conducted by Zoom teleconference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with all participants at home. The meeting was opened at 7:05 PM by Chair Lyman.

The July 13 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

New Business

1. Revisions to Towle Field Mowing Protocol (prepared for meeting with ConsCom 8/26/21)

Lyman said that he has been working with Mary Hopkins, ConsCom Assistant, to put photos of various conservation land fields in other towns on the Town website; the photos might be on the website by the end of the week.

Lyman asked for comments or questions regarding the proposal. He mentioned ConsCom member Lee Tatistcheff's comment during the July 15 ConsCom meeting was "Why Towle?" [regarding the new mowing protocol]. Lyman said that Towle Field is very visible to the public, and if we think the new protocol is important, we should allow the public to see the results. Ognibene said: "Why not Towle? He thought Towle was a good candidate for a new mowing protocol, and should be tried there.

Geltner said that, for ecological reasons, the size of the field is important. Large fields have greater biodiversity, and a small field can be biological "sink" in that it is attractive to wildlife but insufficient to support that wildlife or their offspring. Small fields are also more at risk from natural or manmade disturbances since they have less biodiversity and therefore less resilience. Willard noted that she recently visited a field that had not been mowed in 20 years, and has been overrun with invasive plants; fields need to be managed to keep invasive plants in check.

DeMay earlier sent Lyman his question: "How do we know if this will be successful?" Lyman's reply was that we really don't know, although he had talked with the Acton Conservation Administrator about Acton's mowing protocols and was told that a new protocol would probably take several years to evaluate. Lyman said that LSC members do not have the expertise to evaluate the field on a yearly basis. He said that in our proposal, LSC followed recommendations by Sudbury Valley Trustees and Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation, which were based upon substantial prior research.

Willard thought that good field management methods should also be applied to small fields in town, such as Fox Hill west field and at Garrison Place (Russell Land). She thought the Carlisle Garden Club might be interested in maintaining and publicizing a small field with native plants.

Asarkof said that she liked the idea of leaving a shrub border along the edge of Towle Field, and suggested trying this in a small section of the main field. The problem would be keeping the border mostly native versus non-native shrubs. She also suggested providing a brief synopsis of the report at the beginning, since ConsCom members have little time to read lengthy reports.

Lyman asked whether LSC should give ConsCom several choices of management and let them decide, or should recommend a specific protocol as being favored by LSC. Brownrigg thought LSC should recommend a specific protocol, which could be modified if there were problems with implementation or cost. Ognibene said he agreed with this approach. Lyman asked Brownrigg to write a preferred protocol with input from Geltner. The final recommended protocol will be sent to Lyman by August 17 for inclusion in the proposal.

Lyman will also include in the proposal a list of questions and answers such as those noted above regarding mowing that might help ConsCom make decisions.

2. Assignments for visitations of "orphan" properties (including Davis Corridor)

Prior to the meeting Michaud had distributed Lyman's list of visitation scores for Town-owned conservation lands, with the names of LSC members who volunteered to monitor the properties once or twice a year. There were a few changes in the assignments: Michaud will visit Russell Land, and Lyman/Ognibene will visit Davis Corridor. Willard noted that the Macone Property is accessible (by boat?), but has no trail. Willard also said that the list should include the new 32 acre Woodward parcel that will transferred to the Town, possibly by the end of August.

3. Towle Field stone wall: LSC visitation date [Marc Wey]

The date for LSC's visit to Towle Land, regarding Wey's proposal to remove vegetation from the stone wall near Westford Rd., is September 11 at 10 AM, with rain date September 18. Lyman will send a reminder prior to the visit.

4. Woodward report from Judy Asarkof

Asarkof said that she mows the trails at the Woodward fields, and asked for comments on the width of the trail, noting that Steve Tobin of the Trails Committee likes the current width. She has also flagged Black Swallow-wort in the fields for possible herbicide treatment. She is preparing a list of plant species at Woodward using data from iNaturalist that can be included in the Baseline Assessment.

Old Business

1. Date for visit to Woodward Land?

A specific date was not set, but will be in the fall, by which time the new Woodward parcel should be owned by the Town. Asarkof and Willard will lead the walk.

2. Understanding LSC-related responsibilities from Municipal Vulnerability Plan (MVP)

Willard said the MVP is on the Town website, and encouraged people to read it. She said that the MVP does not deal specifically with conservation land.

3. Bog House inspection (with Fire Chief?)

The inspection was postponed due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Lyman will contact Mark Duffy and the Fire Chief in September and set a date for the inspection.

4. Target date for next joint meeting with ConsCom?

Lyman suggested setting a date for the next joint meeting in spring, 2022.

5. Greenough Dam repair

Work on repairing the Greenough dam began on August 10, and is expected to continue for about three months. Willard is the project manager, and will visit the dam weekly (?). Bill Risso, Carlisle resident and engineer, will be on-site one or two days a week. Willard said the contractors have been in business since 1919, and have built many dams.

Documents discussed:

- "Towle Field Mowing Protocols: Recommendations to the Carlisle Conservation Commission by the Land Stewardship Committee (draft)", August 2021
- Table 2: Town-owned Conservation Lands Ranked by LSC's Overall Visitation Score (June 2021)", W. Lyman

Next Meetings:

September 14, 2021 @ 7 PM

October 12, 2021 @ 7 PM

The meeting adjourned at 8:40 PM.

Submitted by Tom Brownrigg

Minutes approved: 9/14/21