

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting
August 11, 2020
Via teleconference - 7:00 PM

Meeting Minutes

Present: Tom Brownrigg, Dwight DeMay, Debby Geltner, Warren Lyman, Rhonda Michaud, Andrew Wilmot, and Conservation Administrator Sylvia Willard

Guests: John Ballantine and Thomas Coloian

This meeting was conducted by Zoom teleconference due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with all participants at home. The meeting was opened at 7:10 PM by Chairman DeMay.

The June 16, 2020 meeting minutes were approved as amended.

Old Business

1. Discussion on Cranberry Bog

a. Proposal by John Ballantine on maintenance and summary of CBWG meeting

Ballantine in earlier emails had suggested the formation of a Cranberry Bog Stewardship Committee, whose primary responsibility would be maintenance of the bog. The question arose as to what kinds of maintenance would be needed. Lyman and Willard reported on a meeting of the Cranberry Bog Working Group (CBWG) on August 3. The CBWG hopes to obtain \$5000 through a warrant article at the spring 2021 Town Meeting in order to file a Notice of Intent to develop a maintenance plan for the bog. The funds would include hiring of a wetlands scientist, who would prepare a maintenance plan including costs for tree/shrub removal, clearing debris from flumes, repairing dikes, and other tasks. When the plan is complete, ConsCom would place a warrant article to approve the plan and funding at a fall 2021 Town Meeting.

Willard said that bog maintenance for this fiscal year will continue as it had in the past, with \$12,000 allocated for work by Mark Duffy. ConsCom member Alex Parra and Susan Provanzano (former member of the Cranberry Bog Alternatives Committee) have been discussing maintenance issues and costs with Duffy for 2021 and thereafter.

b. Proposal by John Ballantine on pedestrian circulation

Ballantine and his neighbor Chris Spinney had previously sent a diagram of the bog fields suggesting one-way pedestrian circulation around the fields. They thought that this would help prevent close encounters with other people during the Covid-19 pandemic. They later dropped this proposal, but the CBWG suggested that posting a safety-related sign would be appropriate; Lyman volunteered to make a sign which he distributed prior to the LSC meeting:

FOR COVID SAFETY, PLEASE:

KEEP YOUR DISTANCE: [followed by illustration showing people well separated]

AND IF YOU CAN'T, PUT ON YOUR MASK: [followed by illustration of a face mask]

LSC members thought it was a good sign, and suggested a few minor changes. Lyman asked members to send any other changes to Willard, who will prepare laminated signs.

c. Parking at the Cranberry Bog

Following discussions with the Carlisle Police, parking is allowed on only one side of Curve St. near the bog. Since parking problems have not been reported, DeMay suggested waiting until Fall to review parking issues.

2. Evaluation of signs on Town-owned conservation lands: Foss Farm, Town Forest, Gage Woodlot, and Heidke Land

a. Foss Farm

Rhonda Michaud inspected these signs and distributed photos and a table listing sign conditions. The surface of a Primary Conservation Sign at the parking lot is crazing and the writing is partly illegible. The kiosk condition is "fair or poor". Brownrigg said that the kiosk once had a plastic cover but this is now missing. There are a few relatively new signs on the kiosk that are laminated. If the kiosk does not have a cover, Brownrigg suggested any signs should be laminated, or install a new plastic cover. A sign along the road to the Community Gardens that says "Last One Out Please Lock Gate" needs repair, but this sign is the responsibility of the Community Garden users.

b. Town Forest, Gage Woodlot, and Heidke Parcel

Debbie Geltner inspected these signs and sent photos and comments for review. Geltner said the Town Forest sign is in fair condition, and is dirty and chipped on the upper surface. Willard said that this sign was installed while Roy Watson (an abutter) served on ConsCom, and the design is similar to the original sign dating to the 1920's when the Town purchased the land. She will try to find the name of the company that made the sign.

There is no sign at the Gage Woodlot, and the property boundaries are not well defined. There is a trail leading from Ember Land which has blaze marks. Geltner thought that small round conservation land signs should be placed along the boundaries with Ember Lane property and Great Brook Farm State Park, if these boundaries can be established.

There are no signs on the Heidke Parcel, but this land is mostly wetland and there are no trails. No signs are anticipated.

c. Other conservation parcels

Lyman noted that there are several other conservation lands that will need signs, including Woodward Land, Hartwell Woods, Russell Conservation Land, and the parcel near Arrowhead Lane. Regarding Russell Land, Willard recommended that LSC inspect an area off Russell St. that is part of this property but is being mowed by a neighbor; property bounds are present.

Lyman distributed a list of action items for Primary and Routed Conservation signs. Lyman will also review information on kiosks as part of future maintenance.

3. Fox Hill nursery plants

Willard said that John Bakewell is in the process of selling his house. She will contact him again regarding the status of the trees Bakewell planted at Fox Hill.

4. Opportunities on the LSC 7-year action plan

DeMay suggested that people consider volunteering for activities mentioned in the plan.

5. “Burma-Shave” dog signs at the Cranberry Bog

Geltner reported that the signs are still there. The original set of signs installed two years ago was vandalized, but the current signs are in a location more visible from the Bog House.

6. Further discussion with Board of Selectmen (BOS) on deer hunting issues

There was no discussion, since the BOS voted to suspend hunting on town-owned lands this year. Willard said that there will be a warrant article calling for a vote at the spring 2021 Town Meeting to allow deer hunting on town-owned lands.

New Business

1. Thomas Coloian: Eagle Scout Service Project Proposal

Coloian joined the meeting at about 8 PM. His proposed project is the construction of 10 bat houses to be installed by Boy Scouts on conservation lands. Coloian said that he has been researching this project since the pandemic started in March. He submitted his proposal via email to DeMay, who sent it to LSC members the day before the meeting. Since some members might not have had time to read the proposal, DeMay invited Coloian to attend the meeting and provide an overview.

At the meeting, Coloian said that he had already received inputs from some members of the Trails Committee, and that he has decided to install fewer boxes, and include some lands owned

by Carlisle Conservation Foundation (CCF). He plans to install up to five boxes at Spencer Brook Reservation. He thought the Cranberry Bog was too heavily used by people, which could disturb the bats. Brownrigg suggested he also consider the Benfield Land, which borders Spencer Brook. Several LSC members asked questions and made suggestions.

Wilmot asked how he would keep the boxes in good condition. Geltner thought that wasps might nest in the boxes, and that these should be removed. Coloian said the scouts would inspect the boxes once a year, which would require using a ladder to access the box, since they should be installed 12-20 feet above ground. He said wasps should not be a problem, since bats would likely eat them. Lyman suggested constructing the boxes so that they are easy to clean and repair, making the analogy with bird nest boxes.

Willard asked what kinds of bats, and how many, would use the boxes. Coloian said that both Big Brown Bats and Little Brown Bats use boxes, but Little Brown Bats are more likely to use them. He said that 10-100 bats would fit in a single box.

Coloian hopes to obtain approval from CCF and ConsCom so that installation can start in October. He would like to attend the September 10 ConsCom meeting to give a presentation. DeMay thought it would be helpful if LSC reviewed the proposal before September 10, and suggested that the next LSC meeting be September 9. All members agreed to this date.

Willard suggested that Coloian decide upon the conservation lands that will have bat boxes before September 10. Coloian will contact DeMay regarding times that he can walk with LSC members on conservation lands under consideration.

LSC members thanked Coloian for his proposal and his interest in bat conservation.

2. Discussion on field mowing frequency

The discussion related to mowing of Towle Field. Brownrigg mentioned that he attended a ConsCom meeting in May, 2018 at which Jack O'Connor, field mower, was present. Since there had been no bobolinks nesting at Towle Field since 2012, Brownrigg asked that the part of the field used by bobolinks, the north-central part of the main field, be left unmowed until the end of the growing season, e.g. early October. O'Connor said that if ConsCom agreed to this, he was "not interested" in mowing the field; he said that if the grass gets too long he can't mow it. After some discussion, ConsCom agreed to set aside a small portion of the field to be left unmowed as test area. The reason Brownrigg requested less mowing was to allow summer wildflowers such as goldenrod and milkweed to produce flowers for pollinating insects.

Willard said that the reason the field was mowed late this year (July) was because Jack's mower had mechanical problems. She also said that field mowing has been coordinated with John Bakewell's ongoing herbicide treatments since 2015.

Several people asked Brownrigg if bobolinks might return to Towle Field. He said that he does not know why they left. It could be due to loss of habitat on their winter grounds in South America, and it could also be due to predators, since bobolinks are ground-nesting birds. Jon Atwood of

MassAudubon, who studies bobolinks and their habitats, visited Towle Field several years ago at Brownrigg's request and thought it was good bobolink habitat. Bobolink fields in Wayland are much larger, and appear to have a greater variety of grasses and forbs. Brownrigg thinks that less mowing would result in a greater diversity of plants, although this might not result in return of bobolinks.

DeMay said that this discussion will be continued at the next meeting.

3. Long term maintenance planning

This topic was not discussed.

Next Meetings:

September 9, 2020 @ 7 PM (note that this is a Wednesday)

October 6, 2020 @ 7 PM

Documents discussed at meeting:

- Eagle Scout Service Project Proposal, by Thomas Coloian
- Proposed Covid-19 safety sign for pedestrians at the Cranberry Bog
- Table of recommended actions for primary & routed conservation land signs
- Tables for recording conditions & recommendations for signs at Foss Farm, Town Forest, Gage Woodlot, and Heidke Parcel

The meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM.

Submitted by Tom Brownrigg

Minutes approved: 9/09/20