

Bolton Conservation Commission
Monday, September 21, 2015
Bolton Town Office

Present: Lars Botzjorns (chair), Ali Kosiba, Steve McLeod, Amy Ludwin, Virginia Haviland

Absent: Jerry Mullen

Guests: Luke Ingram, Judy Rosovsky (Richmond Conservation Commission), Ian Stokes (Richmond Trails Committee)

The meeting came to order at 6:07 p.m.

1. Public comment - None.

2. Minutes of August 3, 2015 meeting - Approved as written.

3. Fiddlehead overharvesting

Ian and Judy informed the BCC that the pressure in Richmond is primarily along the Winooski River where the Richmond Land Trust owns land. Signs have been posted on both Land Trust land as well as on private land. Signage indicates that harvest is limited to 1 pound/person/season. Ian's understanding is that VT state law protects landowners who have people harvest without their consent (similar to harvesting someone's crops or trees).

He reports that people have seen harvesters with trash bags along the Winooski, but unsure extent or pressure. The Richmond police have been helpful in providing information on the legalities of foraging as well as patrolling Cochran Road. Enforcement is challenging (beyond the police happening to intercept harvesters) and would involve mainly education about the issue.

Ideas that were discussed included contacting restaurants and health food stores about issue, post information on FPF and in local papers, post more signs. Restaurants and stores buying fiddleheads would be limited in identifying where the fiddleheads come from. There were reservations expressed about publicizing the issue, which may serve to advertise the location of fiddleheads, and signage, which may implicitly encourage harvesting.

Judy suggested that the Richmond CC could author a letter to stores that buy fiddleheads to understand the issue. The BCC would be happy to sign onto the letter,

and we could seek broader support from statewide organizations such as the Assoc. of Vermont Conservation Commissions.

Amy has a list of all floodplain property owners in Bolton. We could send them information about the issue.

Questions asked included: how resilient are the ostrich ferns to harvesting? Could we study how overharvesting affects fern health? And relative to possible invasive species increase? Is this an issue state-wide? Who are the experts? (Bob Popp of VT Nongame and Natural Heritage and Liz Thompson of the VLT were mentioned).

To do list:

- 1) Letter to restaurants/stores -- Judy will draft
- 2) Letter to floodplain property owners -- Judy and Amy will draft.
- 3) Contact someone in the state (e.g. Bob Popp, Liz Thompson) to get a sense of other fiddlehead harvest pressure. -- Ali will do this
- 4) Alert State Police about the possible issue. Richmond Police are patrolling the Winooski in Richmond.

4. Preston Pond Management Plan / Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management subplan / EPZ adjustments.

Ecological Protection Zones (EPZs) have been remapped to better characterize the actual ecological zones. There are other sensitive areas, including the alder swamp between Preston Pond and the cellar holes, many of which have been identified by Keith Thompson in the Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan (FWHMP), that are not included in the EPZs but will have to be managed as sensitive areas.

How will the EPZs affected VAST trail maintenance? Same as for foot trails, as long as maintenance is done in existing trail, work is allowed. The VAST does cross through a second of the north part of the Preston Pond EPZ. The redrawn EPZs actually makes it easier for any possible major tread work or relocations of the VAST trail in the future.

The BCC unanimously approved of the revised EPZs boundaries. These changes will be incorporated into the draft management plan to be approved eventually by the Select Board.

The BCC quickly reviewed the management philosophy of the overall Preston Pond Management Plan as a context for the FWHMP and confirmed approval of the main plan.

In terms of the Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management (sub)Plan, last week many of us met to walk the PPCA with Keith Thomson, Chittenden County Forester.

The bulk of the discussion was about the extent to which the property should be managed for early successional habitat (i.e. patch cuts of two acres or more, compared to the currently proposed forest openings of one acre or less) and the use of mechanized logging. It was recognized that the following challenges and constraints apply on the PPCA: sensitive habitats and soils, public use and enjoyment of the scenic and primitive landscape, logging access (on trails within the PPCA as well as from adjacent private lands), the amount and value of merchantable lumber to make a logging job worthwhile, and education of the public should management activities take place.

Discussion focused on the potentially more valuable (in terms of timber) on stands 5 and 6. These areas could be logged more intensively due to the lack of recreational trails and more direct access from adjacent landowners, and we may look to team up with those landowners on a logging job in order to make it worthwhile. Horse logging would probably not work, according to Keith, due to the long hauling distances and hilly terrain.

It was noted that early successional habitat can increase forage and cover for many species and overall structural diversity, although it can also adversely affect other species. It was also noted that the PPCA may not be the best place to manage for early successional habitat and that other areas in Bolton (e.g., state lands) could serve this purpose. Bolton was noted for its important role in the state in providing large blocks of unbroken interior forest habitat by conservation planner Jens Hilke during our past discussions of the tiered ecological priorities map.

Next steps:

1. Ask Keith to flesh out management activities in stands 5 and 6 (contingent on access via adjacent private lands) that would entail mechanized logging and the provision for some early successional habitat. (Lars will do this.)
2. An update to the Select Board on the process and current issues related to forest management. We feel this is important before the draft plan is finalized for their approval. (Lars will draft.)

5. Floodplain forest inventory plan: scope, request for UVM field naturalist (summer '16), landowner contacts, funding options; also related discussion on F.O.W. restoration program.

Ali talked to Jeff Hughes at UVM about hiring a Field Naturalist for next summer. He thought it would be a great project for a FN, and the funding needed would be \$5000. Lars suggested support could be requested from the Bolton Conservation Fund. Amy

noted that other sources could be sought, such as a state Watershed Grant (application due in November) and funding from The Lake Champlain Basin Program.

Next steps:

- 1. Virginia will get details about the Watershed Grant and LCBP.
- 2. Ali will find out the deadline for making an official request to the Field Naturalist Program at UVM.

6. Old Business

a. Smilie School stormwater project with Friends of the Winooski River

Amy wrote a letter of support on behalf of the BCC to the Friends of the Winooski River for a grant to implement storm water prevention project at Smilie Memorial School.

7. Next meeting agenda.

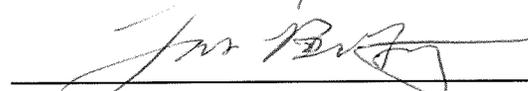
- 1. PPCA Forest and Wildlife Habitat Management Plan, trail management
- 2. Winooski Floodplain Forest inventory planning

The meeting adjourned at 8:08 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Ali Kosiba and Lars Botzjorns

These minutes were read and approved by the Bolton Conservation Commission on:

November 16, 2015,



Lars Botzjorns, Chair, For the Board