

Bolton Conservation Commission
Monday, January 20, 2014
Bolton Town Office

Present: Lars Botzjorns (Chair), Amy Ludwin, Larissa Urban, Kathy Costello. **Guests:** Jens Hilke, Sharon Murray.

Meeting came to order at 6:05 p.m.

1. Minutes of November 18, 2013 meeting – approved.

2. 2014 meeting schedule was confirmed: 1/20, 3/17, 5/19, 7/21, 9/15, 11/17

3. Science to Action Project: Jens Hilke, VT Dep't. of Fish and Wildlife, reviewed the inventory data and maps and helped the BCC consider next steps, including how best to disseminate the data to other town boards and Bolton residents. He focused our attention on contiguous habitat units (CHU's), including patterns of constituent habitat features that increase diversity (e.g., forested riparian corridors, mast stands, bear wetlands). Jens noted the high conservation value of the remnant forested riparian corridors along the Winooski River. Patterns will be of most interest to the Planning Commission as it reviews land use regulations and the town plan. Specific habitat information will inform the Conservation Commission's land management and education activities. Habitat connectivity between CHU's is an indication only; the BCC can get a better handle on wildlife movement by doing regular track and sign counts along roads.

The state's Habitat Blocks Data set has a statewide priority ranking within it which is a good resource as well, however the town will need to determine what habitat is of local significance through the process of creating a 'tiered ecological priorities' map of the kind done in the Mad River Valley. [See the case study written described on pp. 112~113 in *Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage*, a guide produced by the VT Dep't. of Fish and Wildlife.] The Commission agreed that we should produce such a map using the Mad River Valley version as a template and adjusting certain criteria based on local priorities. Lars will work with Jens to produce a draft tiered ecological priorities map for review at our March meeting.

Jens suggested the Conservation Commission develop straight-forward talking points as a way to promote the use of the inventory by the Planning Commission and the community. The talking points would be illustrated by 3 maps that focus on certain attributes of the entire data set: (1) Contiguous habitat units and connectivity, (2) natural communities that are rare or are in exceptionally good condition if more common, and (3) special habitat features. Jens offered ongoing consultation and map-making. Lars will follow up with Jens to produce the three maps in time for town meeting and to review a draft of the talking points.

Amy will follow up with Amy Grover and Steve Barner about having the inventory data linked to the town website.

4. Preston Pond Conservation Area Management Plan preliminary review: Tabled until the next meeting.

5. Proposal to form a Forest Management subcommittee: The Commission approved the formation of a subcommittee to continue work on a white paper that will guide the BCC's and Town's review of state land management plans, direct management of town lands, and information to private landowners. Lars

will ask Steve McLeod, Joss Besse, and County Forester Keith Thompson to join him on the subcommittee, which will try to meet within the next month or so.

6. Update on VT Recreational Trails Grant proposal

The next deadline for applications is February 28, for projects to be funded in the fall of 2014. Quinn Keating has developed a scope of work and preliminary costs for improvements to the trail system in the Preston Pond Conservation Area. Quinn and Lars will continue to working on the grant application with help from Ray Atwood.

7. Old Business:

Green-Up Day Coordinator: Kathy agreed to be the local contact person for Green Up Day. She will connect with Amy Grover.

Keeping Track Program – Larissa has been in contact with Sue Morse about a possible weeknight evening in March for a program on climate change and wildlife in Chittenden County Uplands. Sue is connecting with local contacts in pursuit of funding. The BCC will contribute \$50 toward the cost of the program, which would also be hosted by Richmond, Huntington and Jericho. Larissa will follow up with Sue.

Next meeting agenda (March 17th): review draft tiered ecological priorities map, review draft Preston Pond management plan.

Adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kathy Costello and Lars Botzjorns

Approved on March 31, 2014.