

Bolton Conservation Commission

November 18, 2013

Bolton Town Office, 6:00 – 8:00 p.m.

All motions for a vote were made and seconded.

1. Minutes of July 15, 2013 meeting – approved.

2. Science to Action Project update

Project is coming to a close. Presentation of maps By Arrowwood Environmental to be made on January 9, 2014 at a public meeting of the CC, SB, PC and DRB at the Smilie School. BCC is hosting; Amy needs help with setup. Lars will follow up with Amy to determine needs; Kathy will also help with logistics. Anyone who has worked on STA needs to submit hours to Amy by the end of December.

Another STA event is on December 2, 2013 at the Richmond Library (6-7:30 pm); the topic is Stream Management and Shoreline Erosion.

3. Discussion of forest management and wildlife habitat stewardship

This discussion is to inform future efforts managing town lands (including Preston Pond), state lands in Bolton, and planning using the STA data. It is a chance to air out question and concerns regarding how our forests are managed and help develop a set of principles that guide our stewardship of habitat and forestlands in Bolton.

The CC reviewed the Bolton zoning map. A concern is the limits on wildlife movement posed by development along roads, which may limit or eliminate wildlife corridors between core blocks of habitat. In some years some species (e.g., bears) must roam large areas in search of food sources while other species (e.g. salamanders, moose) move in seasonal cycles which may be restricted by roads and development. Steve shared the importance of clear cut areas and natural disturbance for early successional habitat; VT allows 40 acres swatches to be clear cut. With much of Bolton already in public ownership or under conservation easement, we should consider cooperative agreements with private land owners with an understanding that some parcels are managed for income from timber. All land owners who participate in the current use program must work with the County Forester.

The CC will look at those areas in Bolton that can support more intensive forest management. The Preston Pond Management Plan will be proposing small/rotating patch cuts to increase

habitat diversity. In terms of the role of the BCC, we can provide Information and awareness about sensitive habitats, ecological context and management options (e.g., cooperative agreements) to landowners. Management of town land should take into account a landscape-level consideration of habitat diversity. We should pay close attention to connectivity of habitat blocks and natural heritage elements that need special protection and management.

4. State Lands planning

Gary Sawyer will inform Larissa (BCC) of public meetings regarding the Bolton Nordic block of the Mount Mansfield State Forest. The Camel's Hump Park and State Forest in Bolton are under the purview of the Barre district office of VTDFP&R (Diane Frederick). Science to Action info will provide useful information that could be brought to the conversations around management of newly acquired land in Bolton. Each year (June?) the Department conducts a stewardship review of state lands which is open to public review

5. Possible Sue Morse program

The Commission is interested in co-hosting later in the winter a talk by Sue Morse on the impacts of climate change on VT wildlife. The presentation will be free. Larissa will connect with Amy about coordinating the event with Brad Elliott from the Richmond Conservation Commission.

6. FY 2015 budget

Current budget (FY2014) is \$500, which was reduced from prior years (\$1,600). Without major costs on the horizon, the BCC will ask for \$500 for FY2015. The BCC will also apply to the Vermont Recreational Trails Grant Program in February for funds to pay for improvements to the trail system at Preston Pond. Ray Atwood has offered to help with the grant process.

7. Old Business

A draft of the Wildlife Habitat and Forest Management Plan for the **Preston Pond Conservation Area** will be prepared by County Forester Keith Thompson in the spring of 2014. Lars will bring the main body of the draft Plan, including the trail management plan, to the Commission for review at the January 2014 meeting. The BCC will wait until all the parts are completed to present the draft Preston Plan Management Plan to the Select Board.

Kathy reported that there was a noticeable change in use of the **Bolton Potholes** when the college students returned: more drinking and behavior issues; not out of control, but different than summer use. There has been local stewardship of the site including trash pick-up.

The Long Trail Bridge project has begun with a temporary gravel road in place across the town's Sara Holbrook property. Meanwhile, the GMC has begun cutting the new route of the LT to Stimson Mtn. Lars will keep tabs on the project for the BCC.

Lars will talk to DRB to see if they have any concerns that would be helpful for BCC to look into in terms of making decisions for expansion of the **4X4 Center** at Bolton Valley. Lars feels the trail plan looks reasonable.

8. New Business

2014 Green Up Day Coordinator - Kathy may be willing to co-coordinate. She will contact Green Up Vermont to get info on the coordinator's role/responsibilities.

Friends of Storm Water Grant Program – Amy is willing to be a point person for BCC since STA duties are almost finished. Grant proposal has been submitted on behalf of the four towns in the STA project area.

Fisher Property – Lars stated that there is interest in developing a small scale solar farm on the property. Jamie Ervin, of the Huntington Energy Commission and a state wide consultant, has approached the BCC to investigate the concept. Lars will contact Jamie to set up a site visit.

9. Next meeting agenda

1) Jens Hilke of VTF&W will talk to BCC to follow up the STA project. 2) Preston Pond Management Plan review. 3) VT Recreational Trails Grant (invite Ray Atwood).

Respectfully submitted,

Larissa Urban and Lars Botzjorns