

Swanзей Conservation Commission Minutes

January 12, 2010

7:00 p.m. at Police Station

[Note: Minutes are not final until approved by the Commission, usually at its next meeting.]

Call to order by chair at 7:08 p.m.

SCC members present: Michael Day [chair], Deb Crowder, Paul Daniello, Bob Goodrich, Mike Morrison, Steve Stepenuck

Excused: Gary Colburn

Absent: Jane Johnson

1. Correspondence from Grace Lilly: Grace is concerned about ATVs impacting wetlands, and has apparently seen evidence of stone wall and/or tree damage on town-owned land. She was told that the NH Trails Bureau is in charge of OHRV enforcement. Free signs are available for posting by landowners. There was also concern about someone's having created a trail and nailed signs [arrows] to trees. One such trail led to a heron rookery.

Grace also wrote to the Meadows End timber company, notifying them that the former Canyon Springs Estates land is apparently not being developed at this time. She said that there appears to be some interest on their part.

She went to the town-owned land near Sawmill Drive, and found three [climbing-type?] deer stands. She called Fish and Game Dept., a representative of which asked her if any limbs had been cut. She replied that they had.

Discussion followed relative to what might be done. It is not legal to change any town-owned land without permission of the Board of Selectmen [BOS]. Consensus was that we are very willing to advise the BOS with respect to possible negative environmental effects associated with any proposed activities. Perhaps SCC can come up with a letter to the BOS suggesting some activities that are not environmentally friendly, ill-advised, or illegal, e.g. encouraging vehicular traffic through wetlands, feeding deer in winter, stocking fish, crowding herons, etc. Public education seems to be in order. We could put such a statement of policy, dos and don'ts, etc. on a page on the town website. Deb will draft a letter to the BOS for SCC review.

2. Bobcat research in Cheshire County: Mike Morrison is heavily involved in this project, which is sponsored by UNH, in cooperation with the Fish and Game Department. It is planned to live-trap 12 bobcats for the purpose of equipping them with radio collars, so that their winter behavior and movements can be learned. An area thirty miles across is involved, with one bobcat caught so far. This could yield very valuable information for towns, by identifying critical habitat areas used by these "species of concern." These critical areas could then be included in town planning and Wildlife Action Plan activities.

3. Ash Swamp Brook Cutting: Steve presented for comments the letter he had drafted and sent via email. Motions were made and voted to change the City of Keene contact person from Thomas Dutton to Larry Crowder, who is now the assistant City engineer; also to send a copy of the letter to the Keene Conservation Commission.

4. Mt. Cresson Trail Work: Due to possible dangers of working in slippery conditions, it was decided to postpone consideration of this until the February meeting.

5. a. Permits and Applications: None. ☺

However, there was a notice of violation from the NH-DES to a party on 93 Matthews Rd. alleging filling of a jurisdictional wetland.

b. Complaints: Michael Day will write a letter asking DES to investigate apparent encroachment on wetlands on Base Hill Road and on Route 12.

6. Reports of Related Committees:

a. ARLAC: Steve reported on the December minutes, including implementation of the Corridor Management Plan, planning for which is underway. He will present a summary of the 2009 monitoring results next Tuesday, January 19, in the Keene Public Library auditorium at 7:00 p.m. As shared by email, there is now some concern whether the proposed boat launch at the new Route 10 bridge over the Ashuelot River will be included in the plans. "Archeological concerns" are cited. At least nine different plans are shown on the NHDOT website.

Stepenuck reported on some of the 2009 ARLAC/VRAP monitoring results. The highest value found for *E. coli* was 160 colonies/dL, at Gilsum in September. The reach from upstream of the Keene Waste Water Treatment Facility [WWTF] to the Cresson Bridge showed the most consistently high counts for the entire river, often running >100. Also in Swanzey, the South Branch of the Ashuelot River showed high counts, both at Rte 32 and upstream of the High School. The highest counts were upstream of MRHS, but sampling in September showed counts nearly as high further upstream of MRHS, and at the Carlton Road. Results for total phosphorus, also a sign of fecal pollution, were also shown. The highest value for the entire summer was from the South Branch, upstream of MRHS; that was >0.05 mg/L, the concentration considered "excessive" by NH DES. The second highest on the whole river was at the mouth of the South Branch, in June. Thus, once again, the most polluted section of the Ashuelot River lies in Swanzey.

b. Open Space Committee[OSC]: Deb reported that the committee's grant application to the Quabbin-to-Cardigan [Q2C] organization for \$4400 to help with transaction costs of the Hughes Hill section of the Domina easements was funded. Further, LCHIP awarded the town a grant of \$88,680 for part of the easement costs for the Tipping Rock Farm part of the easements. She also reported that Sara Carbonneau, town planner, had calculated that since the beginning of the OSC, land appraised at >\$600,000 had been placed into conservation at a cost to the town of \$93,000—a highly leveraged series of investments, as well as major gains for the town's environment and people.

The annual Easement Celebration party will be held at the Keene State College camp on April 20, starting at 4 p.m.

c. Treasury report: None.

6. Reports of Related Committees, cont.:

d. South West Regional Planning Natural Resources committee: No meeting.

7. Mail and upcoming conferences, etc.: The invoice for dues of \$275 from the NH Association of Conservation Commissions has been received. It was voted unanimously to approve payment.

8. Other business:

a. Mike Morrison talked with Pete Davison, coordinator of the NH Hunter Education program, relative to SCC's hosting a Hunter Safety course in the town. Davison seemed supportive of the idea.

b. Ten minutes of the February meeting is requested for a presentation by Dan Zeh about his wood turtle research.

9. Minutes: The minutes of the November and December 2009 meetings were approved.

10. A motion to adjourn was approved by acclamation at 9:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephen Stepenuck, secretary pro-tem