

Swanзей Conservation Commission [SCC] Minutes

August 1, 2011

4:00 p.m. at town hall

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

Call to order by chair pro-tem Crowder at 4:05 p.m.

SCC members present: Gary Coburn, Deb Crowder, Theresa DiLuzio, Mike Morrison, Steve Stepenuck

Absent: Michael Day, Bob Goodrich, Jane Johnson

1. Update concerning the mowing of Mill K/Ash Swamp Brook land: Results of site walk on July 27 with Cooperative Extension Service forester Steve Roberge. Present: Coburn, Crowder, DiLuzio, Morrison, Stepenuck, and Swanзей DPW director Lee Dunham.

Members present toured the site with Mr. Roberge and reviewed its history, including the unauthorized mowing last year. [SCC is responsible for management of this property, and was never consulted or informed of the mowing until after-the-fact. Many of the plants bought and planted to begin rehabilitation of the area had been mowed, opposing the expenditure of hundreds of dollars and many hours of volunteer work.]

He agreed that a wildlife corridor along the river is highly desirable. He said that three options were possible: 1) do nothing and let the land revert to forest; 2) allow it to move to a scrub/shrub wetland or 3) mow the area in an attempt to keep it as a grassland. He then explained that while option 1 would require no expenditure of resources, there was more than enough forest habitat in the area. Option 3 would require active maintenance, but the area was probably not big enough to attract grassland species of birds and animals, and the amount of hay that might be obtained would not be that great. Option 2 would require removal of trees in order to encourage development of a scrub/shrub area, a habitat type that has become rare, and thus especially valuable. Ordinary good practice would require the removal of invasive species of plants, viz. the Japanese knotweed, glossy buckthorn, and honeysuckle observed. All of those would be spread, rather than eliminated, by mowing. His judgment was that option 2, encouragement of a shrub environment, would be the best use of the land. All members of the Commission present agreed with that assessment.

Mr. Roberge said that he would put his recommendations and rationale in writing. Formal action was scheduled for the September meeting, when the plan would have been received.

2. Reclamation: natural vs. planned after gravel operations:

Discussion of the site walk on June 6 revealed a consensus that there had not been replacement of topsoil and replanting after operations at the South Road site to date, though the company representative said that topsoil would be replaced when the site was closed. That might not happen until 2016, the end of the revised permit period. In the meantime, natural reseeding appears to have occurred over most of the site.

3. Committees:

a. ARLAC: The VRAP coordinator position has been eliminated. A program manager position will remain, but coordination, support, training, etc. will be assigned to an intern.

Implementation of the river management plan is difficult at best, due to already-overextended volunteers.

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

4. SCC letter to NH-DES (c. to Winchester Planning Board) relative to HMA batch plant: It was voted to approve the draft letter [copy attached] written by Deb Crowder, asking DES to ensure that more adequate compliance monitoring be required at the plant, particularly with respect to air quality concerns.

5. Treasury report: No.

6. Permits and Applications: No new ones. ☺
A forestry notification for logging at M32 L 20-2 was received.

7. Projects:

a. South Branch monitoring: July monitoring results were inconclusive relative to the high bacterial counts observed in this stream. It was moved [?], seconded [Morrison] to authorize necessary expenditure to do 6 more samples on the next VRAP sampling day, to include sites from Sawmill Drive to Old Richmond Rd, and one replicate for quality assurance [QA] purposes. Vote: 5-0-0-3, i.e. passed.

b. Mt. Cresson Trail Work: It was decided to call the previously existing trail that goes directly to the summit from the Matthews Rd. the "Beacon trail" to help with less ambiguous signage. After some further discussion it was decided to approve the manufacture of signs by "Joe the signmaker" [hired by Deb] to inform users of the [new] Loop Trail relative to the trailhead, the intersection with the Beacon Trail, the spur to the summit from there, etc. Signs will be wooden, with gold lettering for contrast/visibility. They will be finished with linseed oil. Vote: 5-0-0-3.

Theresa and Steve walked the Loop Trail with GPSs to fix its exact route. Steve made some progress with transcribing that information onto

7. Projects, continued:

a section of topo map. The Hewes Hill/Tippin' Rock Farm maps can be used as models.

More trail work—clearing and blazing—is needed.

8. Minutes: Those of June and July were approved as presented.

9. Other business: A Thank-you letter from our sponsored Barry Conservation Camp camper, Patrick Pedro Goodell, was read.

10. A motion to adjourn was approved by acclamation at 5:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Stephen Stepenuck".

Stephen Stepenuck, secretary pro-tem

Swanзей Conservation Commission

Town of Swanзей COPY

P.O. Box 10009
Swanзей, NH 03446 - 0009

July 12, 2011

To: The New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services, Air Resources Division
From: The Swanзей Conservation Commission

The Swanзей Conservation Commission has voted to provide support to our fellow residents from the Swanзей village of Westport in regards to the Temporary Permit issued by the NHDES to Mitchell Sand and Gravel, LLC to construct a HMA Batch Plant on Payne Rd. in Winchester, NH.

As the property abuts the town of Swanзей and is upwind and in close proximity to the Westport Village, the SCC states at this time that our members share the concerns of the Westport residents about potential health hazards from harmful airborne and possibly waterborne compounds associated with asphalt batch mixing plants (fugitive organic emissions that could affect air quality, specifically). We are also naturally concerned about potential effects on the nearby state protected Ashuelot River, and support concerns expressed by the Ashuelot River Local Advisory Commission.

We understand that NHDES had little choice but to grant a permit for the Mitchell plant, as NHDES is operating on standards outlined by the EPA and previous NHDES guidelines (NAAQS, RTAPS and AALs). We understand that if the asphalt plant operates as the application implies, that those standards with potential for toxic environmental hazards would be considered to be low by those standards.

Our concern is how compliance will be determined. Because of concerns that the operations may not be monitored adequately enough to determine if the AAL standards are being met, we initially appreciated the NHDES' decision to grant a permit with temporary status, as we had the understanding that that status will require more frequent testing of RTAPS emissions from the asphalt plant after it begins operations, during the time span of the temporary permit. After reviewing the Finding of Fact and Director's Decision document, we are not assured that monitoring of compliance issues will be adequately met.

We request that NHDES reconsider its decision to only oversee one stack test, and also reconsider its decision to not require testing for fugitive organic emissions at the property's perimeter. We are wondering how frequently the "periodic" testing for compliance to AALs will be conducted, and if the plant operators themselves are those conducting the testing, or if DES representatives will be present to oversee the testing procedures. We hope that DES will have an active role in ensuring that testing methods are properly executed, recorded and evaluated, preferably by the NHDES agency itself, rather than plant operators.

We also request that air quality testing expand to include RTAPS emissions, not only particulates, to ensure compliance for AALs. We request that testing be expanded to include the area within the Westport Village as well, to determine if impacts on air quality are present, and could be considered a health risk to our residents in the immediate vicinity.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns.

Respectfully submitted,
Deb Crowder, representative
Swanзей Conservation Commission