

Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes - May 11, 2021

Present: Gregg T., Mark G., Jim J. and Jennifer B. were all present. Absent – Beverly B. **Action:** Jen to contact Beverly.

Minutes of April 14, 2021 –We removed reference to “approval” in the intents to cut section. No other issues or changes were noted. Minutes were approved.

Forest Maintenance Fund: \$3,904.47 (+\$.04 interest only changes)
Conservation Land Use Fund: \$3,962.01 (+\$.02 interest only changes)

Intents to Cut

- Commission completed their review of one (1) intent to cut. The form was incomplete. It did not state the # of acres to be cut. **Action:** Jim to follow up and obtain the #. We found no other issues with this intent.
 - Map 250 Lot 5.1, Deborah Kuffel; Rt 123A., Responsible for cut: Kenneth Wheeler; 28 acres; acres to cut: UNK; approx. 15,500 MBF pine; 3,000 MBF of hemlock

Complaints and Concerns

- Crescent Lake Map 201 Lot 43 – Removed 6 large hemlock trees. **Action:** Gregg to submit complaint with DES.
- Keyes Hollow Road – Cameras; **Action:** Gregg & Jen to place cameras

New Conservation Easement Opportunity

- Kristian Fenderson; – No change; pending Kristian’s discussion with a conservation lawyer. Gregg will continue to monitor.

Town Owned Land Recommendations

- We continued our review of the properties. We now recommend 6 properties for sale.
 1. Map 210 lot 27 - Augustinowicz 12.9 acres
 2. Map 229 lot 17 - Wunsch 0.86 acres
 3. Map 229 lot 30 - Onofrio 5 acres
 4. Map 229 lot 36 - Paige Wilson 5.23 acres
 5. Map 229 lot 36.1 - Paige Wilson 2.8 acres
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- We will continue reviewing and approving recommendations for all the town owned lands. Our focus will be on the properties that did not have any recommendation from previous reviews.
- **Action:** Gregg to bring in larger map and tax maps to aid in our reviews.
- **Action:** Someone (TBD) on our commission needs to review, consolidate, update our list with the other historical lists.

2021 Monitoring

- Property Monitoring; **Action:** Jen to confirm Beverly’s assignments.
- Crescent Lake Monitoring – Improved slightly over 2019; **Action:** Gregg to attend the June 2021 monitoring exercise.

Conservation Plan

- **Goal:** Develop an Acworth Conservation Plan, using the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) recommendations as a start.
- Commission began the review the NRI recommendations on 12 May. See attached NRI extracted next action items.
- Here is a starting list of topics to be covered in this plan:
 1. Strategy, mission, goals, 3-5-10 year plan
 2. Crescent Lake, Cold River & associated wetlands
 3. Other watersheds if applicable

4. Town Forest & Other Conservation Lands
5. Wildlife corridors
6. Easement Monitoring
7. Permits
8. Evasive Species (plant, insect, animal)
9. Historical preservation topic – should we consider putting a section in our conservation plan for preservation of beehives, mica/beryl mines, grist mill foundations and other historical foundations

For all of the above topics we will determine current state, in-progress actions and other agencies that may be assisting, and any additional actions required.

ACTION: Jen to contact Beverly to see if she will work with the Cold River Association

Communications, Events, Recruiting

- The posted “recruiting flyer” in the May Newsletter did not display well.
 - **ACTION:** Jen to print and post in the local bulletin boards.
 - **ACTION:** Gregg to repost to Facebook and add some words of encouragement.
- **ACTION:** Jen to follow up with a potential candidate for our commission.

Other business

- None

Next Meeting: June 9th. **Topics:** NRI recommendations review & plan the work on the Conservation Plan; continue review of town owned lands if required.

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co-occurrences of 9 out of the 10 significant natural resources listed above, excluding only rare species. At this time, priorities include:

1. Cold River Corridor
2. Wetlands and Riparian areas
3. Prime Farmlands and other soils of state significance
4. Large Unfragmented Forests
5. Connecting Conserved Lands
6. Preserving Wintering Deeryards
7. Rare Species

ACTION STEPS FOR NRI PHASE II

Action Step 1 – Develop a Basic Natural Resources Inventory

The next step is to develop a Basic Natural Resources Inventory for the whole town. This is vital since a portion of town exists outside of the Cold River watershed. Presently, little mapping has been completed regarding the natural resources for this area. By incorporating this part of town into an inventory, Acworth can create a more comprehensive plan.

The following is a list of overlays needed to complete a baseline inventory. These overlays were determined, in part, because of the existing data available for the town. Maps for the Cold River Watershed were produced by the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), in conjunction with the Southwest Regional Planning Commission, and are stored in a GIS database. This allows the UVLSRPC to create maps for the whole town with relative ease. Upon personal conversation with Tara Bamford, UVLSRPC GIS specialist, Debby Hinman stated that the cost of these maps would be minimal. This is a direct advantage for Acworth and should be acted upon immediately. Maps should include:

- Base Map of Acworth
- Conserved Lands

- Surface and Groundwater Resources
- Wetlands including Hydric Soils
- Soils Map demonstrating Prime Farmlands and Soils of Statewide Importance (a list is available in Appendix G) and slopes >15%
- Unfragmented Lands
- Floodplains
- Historic and Recreational Sites
- Rare Species
- Geology

Your GIS specialist will arrange the maps with the appropriate layers of information. However, it is highly suggested that your GIS specialist applies a buffer of at least 1 mile around the town. This will provide an opportunity for the community to see that natural resources are not confined to political boundaries and how these resources can be properly recognized between towns. Furthermore, this provides a better understanding of how these resources can be managed more effectively once the larger picture has been made available.

Two other important pieces of data will greatly enhance the Basic Natural Resources Inventory. While town tax maps exist in paper form, translating these maps onto a GIS (digitizing) will provide a great deal of knowledge for conservation planning. This can be a lengthy and expensive process, but has been undertaken by a number of towns in southwestern New Hampshire. Questions about digitizing tax maps should be addressed to the Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission. Secondly, information about parcels enrolled in Current Use or registered in the Tree Farm program will provide some insight into land that has some temporary conservation status in the town.

Action Step 2 – Document and Analyze the Inventory

As a compliment and equally important companion to the set of Basic Natural Resources Inventory maps it is crucial to prepare a descriptive summary documenting its findings. An analysis should also accompany the summary. This process is a critical

stepping stone in developing a conservation plan. The descriptive summary will supply members of the Board of Selectmen, Planning Board, Zoning Board of Adjustment, Conservation Commission, and other members of the community with a description of the natural resources in Acworth. It also provides a written record to update new members of the community.

Step 3 – Involve the Community

After the maps and descriptive summary have been completed, it is important to seek input from the community again. This can be in the form of a public survey or town meeting. This will provide the chance for the members of the community to voice their opinions, concerns, and interests relating to prioritizing conservation efforts. Also, this will address directions for future study of natural resources such as significant wildlife resources or the designation of prime wetlands.

The collective knowledge of town residents is invaluable to a natural resources inventory. Residents who have spent a great deal of time on the land and have an historical recollection of places/events or who have a working knowledge of present resources should be tapped for inclusion in the process.

Much of the information obtained from residents will be useful in the comprehensive inventory increasing the detail of resources maps and helping to prioritize locations for further study. A variety of existing resources can be documented with the help of residents, and this information can be collected in numerous ways.

Historical/event information

Scientific methods will probably never match the ability for local residents to locate historic cultural locations. The old cellar hole or foundation, the recollection of a fire that burned in a particular location, and the knowledge of an old gravel pit are examples of information that can be obtained from landowners who have lived in Acworth a long time. These pieces of information are not only helpful for locating and mapping cultural resources, but can be important for improving access to sources of funding such as the NH Land and Community Heritage Investment Program.

Natural resource locations

Town residents can be helpful for locating important wildlife habitat and resources. Some of these include:

- Deer yards
- Mast areas
- Wetlands/vernal pools
- Uncommon geological features (i.e. talus slopes, cliffs)
- Heron rookeries (or raptor nests)
- Locations of invasive species
- Listed species (endangered, threatened, special concern species)

Collecting data

Utilizing the knowledge of residents can be effectively done in a number of simple ways. Simple maps of the town of Acworth can be created, copied, and distributed to residents for the purpose of filling-in important locations such as those mentioned above. It would be most helpful if these maps were in a small format such as 8.5" x 11" and included only a portion of the town of Acworth so that location accuracy is improved. The map would essentially contain the same data layers as the Acworth basemap: Town boundaries, roads, surface water, and contours.

A letter of explanation could be sent to each resident, explaining the town's efforts to record natural resources. Residents would be asked to use the maps to locate these important features and to add any details they could about the resource, its location, and/or the date last seen. A list of these resources could be included. Maps could be enclosed in the mailing or kept at the town hall and other locations for pickup. In addition, residents could be given a number to call if they are not prepared to work with a map but instead would like to describe the locations or show them in person. This method of data collection would be a large task but could provide invaluable information for new locations and for ground-truthing of predicted locations of natural and cultural resources.

Organized field research

Gathering resource data can also become an organized town event. With some established data collection protocol and a bit of education, interested residents can be given maps with marked locations of potential unique features and asked to ground truth

those locations. This process can be taken a step further and applied to local students who can ground truth locations as part of a science or geography class.

Step 4 – Develop a Conservation Plan

After the community has reviewed and commented on the results of the Inventory, a conservation plan should be devised. This plan will help identify priorities set within the community and provides a means of developing resource protection goals. The conservation plan should be made available to public and incorporated into Acworth's Master Plan.