

Acworth Conservation Commission
Monthly Meeting Notes – August 13th

Present: Jennifer Bland, Kathi Bradt, Gregg Thibodeau, Rob Traver

Not Available: Mark Girard, Lisa Hyatt, Janet Slocum, Robin Ungeheuer

Public Attendance: Cliff Dutton, Geoffrey T. Jones, Katie Walsh, Jack Walsh, Kurt Shaffert, Lindley Hanson

The meeting was called to Order at 7:04 pm.

Review/approve minutes of July 09th. A quorum from the attendees of the July meeting was not present to approve the minutes. July minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting. Rob identified one change and will provide the change via email.

Public:

- **Dodge Brook Class A Trail – (Public)**

- **Incident Description:** On Saturday, August 9th, 2025, Clifford Dutton was riding his mountain bike on Dodge Brook Trail when he heard a lot of noise. He encountered two four-wheelers (ATVs) with straight exhaust pipes that were 6 feet high and lit up with lights. The vehicles were very loud due to the straight pipe exhausts, and loud music was blaring over the noise of the straight pipes. One of the drivers of the OHRV was smoking a cigarette, and they did not appear to have a spark arrestor on the exhaust. They had to ride their vehicles on a Class V road to get to the Class VI portion of River Road (Lempster) and/or Dodge Brook Road (Acworth).
- **Violations:** These ATVs violated state and municipal regulations and should not have been on the Class VI or Class A portions of this trail. Dodge Brook (DB) Road (Class VI) and DB Trail (Class A) are located off of River Road (Class V). DB Road begins as a Class VI road for 900 feet, and then it continues as a Class A trail to the Lempster border. At the Lempster border, the road becomes River Road and is a Class VI road again. Class VI roads in Acworth are allowed to be ridden by OHRVs except where noted. OHRVs are not permitted on Class VI roads in Lempster, only with specific permission. The state only allows OHRVs on Class A trails for abutting landowners, for agriculture, logging, or farming. Essentially, this incident is a traffic violation of state and municipal regulations. These types of violations can be enforced by the state police and Fish and Game. The State Police advised that this is a matter for Fish and Game.
- **Recommendations:**
 - There is a consensus to have the Class A trail area marked with metal signs at both ends with a camera on both ends, along with a new Dodge Brook road sign marking the Class VI portion of the start of the road.

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- In the past, Acworth placed boulders at the entrance of the Class A trail to prevent ATV traffic; however, one of the stones was moved presumably by one of the abutters. There was a suggestion to hold an in-person, on-site meeting with the abutters and Fish and Game to facilitate a conversation aimed at stopping the 4-wheel drive traffic on the trail and installing the appropriate signs. A suggestion was made to place a kiosk that describes the trail and the dos and don'ts. Signs would include a road sign for Dodge Brook Road, where it connects to River Road (State Road) in Acworth, and a Class A trail sign on the Acworth and Lempster sides of the trail. Class A signs would state that vehicular traffic is not permitted. Kurt is willing to work with abutters and the town to move forward with some of these actions. The town's involvement would be limited because the town is not authorized to perform work on a Class VI road; however, a group was formed, "Friends of the Dodge Brook Trail," that could also include some of the abutters and volunteers to help with work on the trail. It was suggested that we start with the goal of reestablishing the road signs first, and that a letter be drafted from Emergency Management stating that a road sign needs to be placed. Road designations and signs are essential for 911 and emergency management (ambulance, fire, police, etc.) The letter would be provided to all abutters.
 - Jen (Acworth Emergency Management) will draft the letter for members of the Concom to review. This will also need to be reviewed by the Select Board.
- Gregg will contact Lynda Perry (Lempster Concom Chair) to coordinate the signs and the sign messages.
- Kathi and Gregg will bring this topic up at the next Select Board meeting for their input. Traffic violations, state and municipal violations of highways, including Class A designated trails, should involve the Select Board and Fish and Game.

Organizational

- **Funds/Budget**
 - Forest Maintenance Fund \$3,915.20 -> \$3,915.51; (+) \$0.31 interest
 - Conservation Land Use Fund \$16,317.31 -> \$16,318.60 (+) \$1.46 interest.
- **Conservation Plan and By-Laws** – No changes

Land Protection

- **Intents to cut** – _25-001-09 Map 200 Lot 2; Charlestown Road; Bascom, Bascom; 35 of 70 acres; 214.5 MBF; 400 tons of pulp; 100 cords cordwood; board approved 21 July 25. This was approved by the Select Board. This property is located at the bottom of Luther Hill and is a part of the Roy Easement.

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- Geoffrey Jones provided the text and photographs for a 1993 book, "[A Guide to Logging Aesthetics – Practical Tips for Loggers, Foresters and Landowners](#)".

- Geoff advised that he could provide us with an overview of these best practices (including slash/coarse woody material and other topics). Geoffrey offered to create a PowerPoint presentation for the Commission. Geoff will coordinate with Gregg to schedule a 20-30 minute overview session in one of our upcoming monthly meetings.

- **Conserving Land** – Options and town responsibilities - working to determine what this means for the town.
 - Currently, the town holds one conservation easement – Pan North, and the deed puts the Commission in charge of approving any changes to the property. This is a tremendous resource commitment for our volunteer commission. Before we agree to hold any other conservation easements, we need to know what the duties and responsibilities are, and we should understand how this might impact future Conservation Commissions. We also should confer with the Select Board before taking on these responsibilities. The Pan North conservation easement was worked on with the Conservation Committee. Gregg will go through our Concom files to see if the process they followed is outlined and could be an example for our review.
- Acworth Forest (map 249, lot 9) – Mark G. is seeking another logger's opinion to help with our decision.
- Easement Monitoring – Jen to follow up with SPNHF to ensure they have a copy of our PAN Northern 2024 monitoring report
- 3 Possible Land Conservation Opportunities of Private Properties
 - Sirkin Gove Road Conservation effort – Gregg met with the Sirkin's and they have conservation requirements built into their trust.
 - Gates Mountain & Hill Road Conservation – Gregg to ask David Heacock to make maps of these three properties to determine their conservation value.
- **Lindley – Pollinator Pathways** – managing your lawn, planting, clover, allowing for more flowers. Lindley recommended that Concom provide this information to our landowners. Recommendation was made to hold a public information session on pollinators about this in the wintertime, and also put it in a newsletter. Janet was attending another session similar to the one that Lindley attended. Recommendation was made to identify outcomes or goals from this or any effort like this that we advocate. It was generally agreed that individual pollinator actions that landowners can take are beneficial even without a pollinator corridor or pathway strategy. The recommendation was made to include pollinator pathways or corridors could be built into our wildlife corridors strategy when we begin that effort. We can distribute a survey next year to help identify what some of the conservation priorities are for our residents. Some of the conservation topics also create some conflicts, e.g.,

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Japanese knotweed is loved by bees, but it is an invasive non-native species. Lindley also volunteered to put together a presentation in the winter months.

- **Keyes Hollow Wet Land Assessment** was assessed by NH Fish & Game, CT River Conservancy, a biologist, Mark Girard, Lempster Concom, Acworth Concom, and Acworth's representative for Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Committee. Tracy Brook no longer flows under Keyes Hollow Road and into a wetland area. This is causing a portion of the wetland area to dry up. A stream is now flowing down the road. There was unanimous agreement that the water going down the road is detrimental to the wetland and should be directed back into the wetland. Rob is working on an application to obtain a Davis Conservation grant. CT River Conservancy is willing to project manage this and help with the identification of funding sources. There are several places that we can apply for grants and funding. CT River Conservancy is working with NCRS to get funding for any work on private landowners, and they are working [with NH DES Aquatic Resource Mitigation](#) team for funding that could be used for this effort.

Water Protection

- **Crescent Lake Watershed Assessment Highlights**
 - Current Status
 - The lake is at a tipping point with levels of phosphorus, water temperature, and the level of dissolved oxygen
 - It is estimated that we could experience 7 days/chances of a cyanobacteria bloom at the current levels, and in the next 30 years, we could see a 5x increase in the number of days/chances.
 - Blooms can last a week or 2 or as long as a month
 - If a bloom occurs, that area of the lake would be closed to all swimming, boating, and fishing activities. A bloom can be life-threatening to animals.
 - #1 contributing source is privately developed shoreline properties, which are estimated to contribute 39 lbs of phosphorus annually; in comparison, culverts, ditches, and road surface are estimated to contribute 19 lbs annually. Failing, outdated, or undersized septic systems are also a significant source.
 - The recommendation from Stone Environmental is to reduce the annual phosphorus loading by 10% in the next 5 years.
 - Road improvements are the most expensive per kilogram of phosphorus removal. Developed properties are the most cost-efficient to address, but they require a significant change management effort and adoption by a majority of the lake population.
 - 5 most cost-efficient road efforts are:
 - 146 Crescent Lake Road culvert
 - Gove Road erosion effort (possible community effort)
 - Cold Pond Road double culvert
 - East Shore Drive (private) erosion
 - Potato Hill (Unity) erosion

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- It's important to note that ALL property owners on the lake can help, but 55 properties are contributing more than the others.

**** Individual property results of the assessment will be provided directly to the landowners upon request.**

- Next steps
 - Advocate Lake Smart program
 - Create a prioritized water quality list for road work for CLR
 - Advocate budget allocations for CLR work in 2026 and beyond
- Stone Report - [Crescent Lake WBMP_FINAL.pdf](#)
- Additional meeting comments:
 - The lake is monitored 3 times a year to see if there is a change in the phosphorus level in the lake. Sediment at the bottom of a lake collects phosphorus, and once the sediment is saturated, the sediment begins to release phosphorus. That is a worst-case scenario for any lake, and Crescent Lake is not in this position at this time. Lakes that have this issue have to obtain funds for an alum treatment, which for a lake of the size of Crescent, could cost over 1 million dollars, and it may have to be repeated several times.
 - The 55 properties that we identified as problems were visually identified. It was asked how these properties are to be managed. The Crescent Lake Association and our Water Quality Team are working on a multi-prong outreach approach. The key prong has already started, which leverages the NH Lakes, Lake Smart program. Already, 17 properties have started the work to make their properties Lake Smart. Through that program's certification and our NH Lakes representative (Terry Mattson), we will monitor the progress and encourage folks to participate. Another effort is investigating funding options for native plants to assist landowners in creating riparian buffer zones of native plants.

Communications, Training, and Outreach

- **Community Outreach**

- Newsletter – next topics and next writer(s); draft due the 20th of the prior month
 - Rob ONHOLD Land Conservation Options
 - Gregg Aug Endangered and or invasive
 - Mark Oct Black bear practices
 - Janet TBD Pollinator
 - TBD Apr TBD

- **Communications, Training, and Outreach (continued)**

- Other possible educational topics include seasonally relevant topics, climate change impacts, water quality issues, invasive species, and endangered species.
- Sharpen your Trails Skills with NHACC and AMC – 3 Oct 9:30-4 pm
- NH Lakes: Lake Lifelines: The Role of New Hampshire's Lakes in Bird Migration; Webinar, 20 Aug 7-8 pm.
- NHACC Fall Wetlands Training Program – 3 separate sessions, 2 Zoom, 1 hands-on; Sep 12, 19, 26th
 - Lindley to attend. Motion made and seconded to pay for this course's cost. Motion passed.
- NHACC Collaborative Land Management on a Large scale – 17 Sep Zoom

- **Volunteer Field Events**

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- Keyes Hollow Nature Trail – Gregg will touch base with David Heacock to create maps for his trail.
- Gove Road Stream Erosion Effort – Gregg will work with the Water Quality Group, residents of Crescent Lake, and Gove Road to conduct a community effort. Gregg will contact the Sirkin's to obtain their permission to do this work.

Next Meeting – 10 Sep 2025 at 7 pm in the Town Hall.

Conservation Commission Members

- Jennifer Bland (co-chair)
- Gregg Thibodeau (co-chair)
- Kathi Bradt (Select Board rep.)
- Mark Girard
- Janet Slocum
- Rob Traver
- Robin Ungeheuer (alt)
- Lisa Hyatt (alt)

Contact information:

- Webpage <https://www.acworthnh.net/conservation-commission>
- E-mail acworthconservation@gmail.com
- Meeting 7:00 p.m. every 2nd Wednesday of the month at the Town Hall
- Mail 13 Town Hall Rd., P.O. Box 37, Acworth, NH 03601,
Attention: Conservation Commission
- Phone 603-835-6879 (town office)