

APPROVED CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES

January 29, 2018  
Town Hall, 7:00 p.m.

**PRESENT:** John Brodhead, June Cook, Joe Houston, Susie Houston, Carol Maroni, Diane Morgan, Elinor Osborn, Emily Thompson, Steve Wright

**ABSENT:** Farley Brown

**GUESTS:** Kiley Briggs, Ned Houston

**ORIANNE SOCIETY:** Kiley Briggs of the Orianne Society summarized the organization's interest in the Northeast Kingdom with a focus on the Black River habitat potential for wood turtles. Their focus is twofold: (1) inventory and study distribution of wood turtles (2) survey watersheds and streams that support wood turtle habitats. Currently, wood turtle sightings are anecdotal reports from communities where a biologist might live and observe presence of wood turtles.

The Orianne Society is interested in identifying specific areas that are critical to conserve and have an interest in the Black River and riparian habitats. Wood turtles are a flagship species in the great northern forest ecosystems. The organization is working with existing conservation organizations, i.e., NRCS (Natural Resources Conservation Service) and Fish & Wildlife. Although entities are interested in restoration, they don't have "boots on the ground" programs. OS (Orianne Society) hopes to have private funding to do their own work and/or share conservation work. They currently have a private donor.

Wood turtles are small to medium size, like small sand bars for nesting and laying eggs. Wood turtles overwinter in small streams and travel on land up to 3,000 feet foraging. They are sensitive to adult mortality from road crossings, hay field mowings. Females travel further afield than males. Live up to 50 or 60 years, but 30 years is more usual. Don't lay eggs until they are about 10 years old. Sexual maturity may be dependent on habitat. They emerge when ice breaks up, like small bubbling brooks, and stay close to rivers because of predators and potential cold snaps in early Spring.

Briggs would like the conservation commission to help in outreach and education, host public talks, and introduction to landowners. Briggs indicated the OS might set up offices in the NE Kingdom.

**MINUTES:** Minutes of November 28, 2017 were approved.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:** Diane reported a \$200 private donation raised the balance in the Craftsbury Conservation Fund to \$975.85. The balance in the commission account on town books is uncertain: \$83 or \$383. Funds on town books

are from the initial \$1,000 appropriation when commission was voted and money from efforts of commission members. Diane will investigate to determine the correct balance. The additional \$300 may be unused money from a grant received earlier for work on the Black River.

**LITTLE HOSMER MILFOIL:** Diane reported John Mulholland of DEC (Department of Environmental Conservation) offered to extend deadline on grant. The commission wants to use this year to study usage of the lake and hopes to collect data by providing sign-in notebook at kiosk. She reported Mulholland would help getting signage from Fish & Wildlife.

Regarding some type of filter for dam at Big Hosmer, Diane explained the wetlands capture small bits of milfoil. State continues to monitor Little Hosmer and uses volunteers Amelia Fritz and Judy Davis. State has 3-hour training program for volunteers; more are needed. Placing mesh or something at the dam was not deemed doable as it would have to be extremely fine and would need continual upkeep.

In February, goal is to firm up plans for kiosk information and have in place before ice melts.

**CONSERVATION FUND:** The Sub-committee met and presented the Craftsbury Conservation Fund mission statement as follows: “The Craftsbury Conservation Fund is intended to provide funding, in whole or in part, for conservation opportunities serving the public good. Allocation of funds should be prioritized to target the most critical threats to the town’s natural heritage.”

The mission statement for the Craftsbury Conservation Fund was voted unanimously. Carol moved the motion; June and Diane seconded.

Joe indicated the sub-committee felt the 9-member commission should be able to determine if a project meets the goal of conserving the natural heritage. Without predicting the future, leaving Fund open and creating guidelines of how to look at projects seems most viable. For example, issues to consider: Projects may have a one-time cost or require future upkeep and maintenance or projects could straddle two towns. In some communities, funds are used towards easements. In determining public good, a guideline is how much public good comes from each dollar spent. Having a one-year, 5-year plan as the Fund is developed is imperative. Need to revisit idea of developing a long-range plan and what the commission is trying to accomplish.

Next step is to design an application form.

Discussion centered on need to coordinate with Land Task Force and Planning Commission to determine critical issues facing the town and developing a long-term plan. No long-term conservation plan has been created.

Joe will investigate the tax status of charitable contributions to the Fund.

**KNOTWEED PROJECT:** Elinor reported adjacent landowners Linda Ramsdell and Carolyn Ryan are on board with using chemical control for knotweed. State wants a detailed plan for the knotweed demonstration plot, establish a timeline, have all steps outlined, including what to do with cut stems, how to transport, and where to dispose. Using injection method may not eliminate all knotweed, and young plants are too small to inject. Nature Conservancy says injection is best method for control. Knotweed can be disposed of as garbage Smothering may work but may be unsightly. Glyphosate is less harmful than other herbicides. Injection work is done in the fall.

A sub-committee to help Elinor was chosen: June and John will work with Elinor.

**OTHER BUSINESS:** Joe indicated Pavel Cenkl asked for a letter of support for a Sterling College grant application to improve and revitalize trails on their woodlot and property. Questions on which trails and locations were not answerable. Joe indicated the application is basically for planning purposes and to improve ski trails and proper stream crossings.

Motion made by Diane and seconded by John: The Conservation Commission supports Sterling College's grant to create and improve recreational trails on the Sterling College property of which such trails may be open to the public."

Motion amended to add words: "support the concept"....

Amended motion passed unanimously: The Conservation Commission supports the concept of the Sterling College's grant to create and improve recreational trails on the Sterling College property, of which such trails may be open to the public.

Joe was authorized to forward a letter of support to Pavel for the grant application.

**PUBLIC COMMENT:** None

The commission will hold its next meeting on Monday, February 26, at 7:00 p.m. in the Town Hall.

Meeting adjourned 8:35 p.m.