

CRJC Headwaters Subcommittee

Thursday, July 20, 2017

Colebrook Town Office

Draft Minutes

Present:

Jamie Sayen, Stratford

Ed Mellett, Chair, Northumberland

Tom Caron, Canaan

Brendan Whittaker, Brunswick

Tara Bamford, CRJC, staff

Jan McClure, guest, TNC

Pete Steckler, guest, TNC

Clayton MacDonald, guest, Stratford Selectboard

1. The meeting was called to order at 7:05 PM and introductions made.
2. Jan McClure and Pete Steckler presented an update on The Nature Conservancy's conservation activities in the northern portion of the watershed. Jan explained that she works mainly on land protection deals with landowners. One focus right now is on restoration of floodplain forests as part of a watershed-wide Connecticut River project. The goal is to keep both farmland and floodplain forest intact and restore floodplain forests as buffers. Wildlife connectivity is also an objective. The work is based on the 2007 plan. There are 4 projects in the Maidstone Bends. There are 2 projects on the Upper Ammonoosuc. She showed some examples including the Potter Farm, Northumberland Forest, Cape Horn Connectivity, and Brunault. Some of their work is funded by the Upper Connecticut Mitigation and Enhancement Fund and some by the Aquatic Resource Mitigation Funds. Other points:
  - When land is cut off by a new channel, it becomes part of the other state if it joins the mainland on the other side.
  - We don't know yet how well the riparian buffers will work to protect farmland.
  - As part of the floodplain forest restoration they use herbicides and tilling on invasives or other unwanted vegetation.
  - They plant elm, silver maple, and wetland shrub species.
  - Typical leaseback arrangements to farmers are a minimum of 5 years so the farmer has incentive to improve the soil.

Pete presented the projects he has been working on- Staying Connected and the Roadside Wildlife Camera Study. The Staying Connected initiative began in 2009 with a group of 25+ organizations in Atlantic Canada, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and the Adirondacks who recognized that the region had one of the most intact temperate broadleaf habitats. His work with TNC focuses on how to connect large tracts of conservation land in northern NH and the Northeast Kingdom. They used NH F & G and NH Audubon models to identify factors. Focal species are identified from wildlife camera studies ("camera trapping") and on-the-ground information from local experts.

Game cameras were also used to identify locations where the roads are barriers to connectivity. Pete reported that one location of concern was where Bissell Brook crosses Rte 3. The model showed the habitat as good but the game camera did not show use. The culvert is perched; the Brook overtopped and closed Rte 3 in the past. Charlie Goulet and others had raised concern about the habitat in the brook when the stream jumped the channel. Pete has recommended replacement of the crossing. there is also another perched culvert under the active railbed. The possibility of adding boulders to make the drop easier for aquatic organisms to navigate if the RR gave permission. Pete is also working with NHDOT on a redlisted culvert south of Washburn Road in Stratford on Rte 3. It is currently perched 54".

3. The minutes of April 20, 2017 were approved by motion of Caron/Whittaker with the correction of one typo.
4. Permit Reviews – A letter was submitted to NHDES stating the Subcommittee's position that permits shouldn't be approved for work on Northern Pass until or unless the SEC approves the project. Wetland impacts may occur for no reason otherwise.
5. Other Business – Clayton reported on the meeting in Stratford about the possibility of removal of a town-owned dam that is no longer used. There was also discussion about the ownership of Wyoming Dam. It appears to be kind of a leftover property not purchased with others at the time of the paper company sale.

The next meeting was planned for October 19.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 PM.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Tara Bamford.