

Ripton Conservation Commission meeting - Minutes – Aug. 13, 2014

Mark and Barbara Nelson's house

Attending: Warren King (chair), Mark Nelson, Becky Purdum, Ned Horning, Nola Kevra, Zapata Courage, Martha McCaughin, Barry King (minutes taker)

1. Approved minutes of May 21, 2104

2. Welcomed Zapata to the Conservation Commission

3. Project Updates

a. Visit with USFS historian Dave Lacey to the CCC site in May – combined with RHistorical Society and RPlanning Commission. Excellent visit, had about 15 people, learned a lot.

b. RCC hosted a bird walk in May for the Ripton public. Great turnout of about 15 people. Everyone enjoyed it.

c. Chervil Pull with VYCC and USFS. None of us knew the exact date so we didn't participate. However, our combined help over the years seems to be making a big difference.

d. RCC field trip to Abbey Pond area. 4 of us had a great time and monitored one population of Jacob's Ladder.

e. Becky and Mark have the Ripton Map ready for us to collect data about Wildlife Crossings. We may also want to get info about vernal pools, mast stands and deer winter yards. Becky will buy some pins; Mark will take the map and pins to Recycling on Aug. 16, along with Barry. Maybe should have a written handout and also a way of recording names and/or other info of people who put in the pins.

f. Conservation Commission page on the Town Website. Part of it could be about Invasive Species. Martha's idea is that if the information were readily available and clear, then residents could act more quickly to take care of the ones on their property. Poison parsnip was a case in point – it's easier to prevent an infestation when there are very few plants.

g. Suggest to USFS that they have info on invasive species at the Robert Frost Trail. There are so many invasives there and so many visitors, that it seems inevitable that visitors are accidentally spreading the seeds to other locations. Perhaps a boot scrubbing station would be useful. Warren will bring this up when he talks to Chris Mattrick.

4. Town Plan Revision work

a. Each person/group will write language for the section(s) they have taken on. We'll discuss these as a group at a later meeting.

b. Wetlands - Mark and Becky haven't made much headway on tackling the mapping/delineation so we'll defer discussion until later. Zapata will provide help as needed.

c. Surficial Water – Warren. Warren mentioned rivers and vegetated banks both re erosion control and wildlife corridors. He had some draft language for rivers. The

current plan has some language on p. 16 but Warren says is too general to be useful in Act 250 hearings. Warren suggests the new language become a policy. It will be included with the minutes. He feels specificity of language is good so numbers/distances/acreage should be included. The Green Book has more specific language on p. 72. In general, we thought that restrictions could be turned around and couched in reasons why the large buffer is good for landowners, wildlife corridors/connectivity, fishing and reducing pollution. On the RCC webpage, we could suggest native species that would be good for planting in buffers.

d. Vernal Pools – Warren discussed the VCE workshop that we hosted a number of years ago and the VCE Vernal Pool Atlas. We think we'll generate our own map of vernal pools (which are automatic Class 2 wetlands) and a list of them with gps locations. There is an unmapped vernal pool near Mark and Becky's mutual property line. Inconclusive discussion re whether we need to include language about Vernal Pools in the Town Plan since they are automatic Class 2 wetlands. Probably it would be good to have specific language about them since they have functions that other wetlands don't. The VT Wetlands division has good website language about them, as does the Green Book. Maybe next spring, we'll take a field trip to a vernal pool.

e. Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species – Warren suggests we read the whole chapter in the Green Book, esp. p. 83: Goal 1, Strategy c. He proposes an overlay district for a known R/T/E species in Ripton, Jacob's Ladder. The purpose of the overlay zone would be to try to protect the JL sites because they aren't included in the wetlands inventory. In order to develop within it, a landowner would need a conditional use permit from the Ripton Planning Commission and confirmation of Jacob's ladder absence by a state biologist. This gives protection to the plant without shutting out development entirely. Ripton has only a couple of other R/T/E species – a couple of grasses and aquatic plants. Warren's idea is to have general language in the Town Plan and then more specific language in the Zoning Bylaw (updated at an unspecified time in the future.) He handed out drafts of two sections he wrote and requests we read them. He thinks the shorter one might be part of the Town Plan.

5. Announcements/Other

a. Nola is concerned about the mowing at Steam Mill Clearing. It was done recently and killed the milkweed that is potential Monarch Butterfly habitat. Also, concerns about the "Wildlife Clearing" sign that has been removed. Will it be returned? There's also a fire ring that some people built. Mark suggested that we should remove it – soon - since no one else will. Warren will mention the mowing and sign to Chris Mattrick.

b. Wilderness 50th – Sept. 28 at Bread Loaf. Mark is involved with the Vermont Sierra Club in the planning for a big celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act. There will be music, food, exhibits, workshops, hikes and kids' activities. Both Nola and Zapata are involved with workshops/hikes. Mark gave us flyers and can give us the link for more so we can post them.

c. People's Climate March in NYC - Sept. 21. Mark gave us postcards with the info. There will be buses from Midd to NYC and back.

d. USFS Open House on Comprehensive Trail Strategy – Sept. 2, Ilsley Library, Midd. Mark will email all of us the document he received.

6. Next Meeting – no date was set
- Nola requests that her section re gravel pits be on the agenda

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07

Barry King,
Minutes Taker