

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Friday April 22, 2022
(Zoom Meeting) 12:30-2:00 pm

Present: Katherine Branch, Don Burns, Mary Dodge, Andrea Landsberg, Kristina Sargent

Recording Secretary: Katherine Branch

Old Business:

Reports:

CCC Blog: Andrea reported on the CCC blog. She has discussed the final changes to the blog with Max, the Middlebury College student helping with the blog, and Kristina. Andrea will schedule a separate meeting to have anyone on the CCC interested to review the blog. Kristina is working on Instagram and Facebook pages for the CCC and they will link directly to the blog site. Max is working on those linkages.

Amphibian Road Rescue. Mary said that the amphibians have essentially finished their road crossings. Almost 200 amphibians were crossed, mostly peepers and salamanders. There were a number of new people involved, which is gratifying. Approximately 15 people total were involved, including a number of children.

Cornwall Rocks! Online Presentation by Will Amidon on March 22nd attracted over 80 attendees. There is a recorded video of the presentation at:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUs_TDUmxvA&ab_channel=MiddleburyEnvironmentalGeology

CCC website: Emily May will start working on the web site and has the logon from Peter McCormick so she can update the web site.

Land Conservation FAQ. This document will be posted on the web site. The CCC will reach out to Cornwall citizens who have already conserved their land and explore their motivations for conserving their land. The CCC will also write brief narratives about these conserved properties, to be included in the Town Newsletter, the CCC blog and the CCC website.

Planning Commission Update: Forest Integrity Revisions to the Town Plan. The Planning Commission still needs to review the comments from the information meeting. Marc Lapin also submitted a lengthy document focusing on some of the more technical aspects of the Forest Integrity section. Katie Raycroft-Meyer of the Regional Planning Commission (RPC) suggested bringing Marc Lapin's comments into the PC's public hearing. The State of Vermont Municipal Planning Grant that is funding this update to the Town Plan needs to be completed by the end of May. The goal of the Planning Commission is to have a draft Town Plan and technical updates on the rest of the sections by the end of May, in preparation for Planning Commission public hearing. The Planning Commission will hold this public hearing, then incorporate public comments as appropriate, then send the draft to the Select Board (SB). The SB has an opportunity to make

changes, then holds its own Select Board public meeting. Based on that public meeting, the SB may make changes and has the final approval over the Plan.

Potential CCC sponsored guided walks and other activities. Kristina is going to reach out to Will Amidon as a follow-up to his Cornwall Rocks presentation. In the summer, Erin Eggelston, assistant professor of biology at Middlebury College, is interested in doing a session in the Swamp to capture small amounts of methane—her accompanying remarks could be tied to climate change and ecology of the Swamp. Katherine will compose an email about cleaning up the Swamp Bridge parking area on Green-Up day (the email will ask for a volunteer with a pickup truck who is willing to drive the debris to Town Hall). The CCC will ask Sue Johnson to post to the Town email list and the Town web page about the cleanup. Mary has an acquaintance whose property extends over the edges of the Ledges, so this might be a potential location for a walk. Andrea proposed having activities on how to identify invasive species and/or how to identify trees from their bark. Tim Parsons, Landscape Horticulturist at Middlebury College, is a possibility to do a walk or presentation on trees. A walk on a conserved property in Cornwall, such as Mary Dodge's, is another idea.

Other possible CCC events: Don suggested a possible tour of the Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, since the site emphasizes historic stewardship of the land and has a strong narrative about the history of conservation. Don said that the park ranger seemed open to a Conservation Commission sponsored event. One idea is to subsidize attendees' admission tickets, possibly via a private donation. Katherine and Don will work on a preliminary outline of how a trip may be scheduled.

New Business:

Emerald Ash Borer (EAB)/ Asian Longhorned Beetle. Andrea took a Forest First Pest Detector workshop (<https://extension.umn.edu/natural-resources-volunteers/forest-pest-first-detector>) and found it extremely useful. As far as the CCC knows, the Town of Cornwall has not done an ash tree survey. This could be a first step to take, especially on the lands where the Town has responsibility for the roads. EAB makes the trees very brittle and it costs a lot of money once they are diseased to cut them down. Trees can be treated prophylactically to reduce damage from EAB. Good resources from the State are available about how to conduct an ash tree survey and about how recognize the signs of the infestation. The Town of Middlebury made the decision to cut down all of their ash trees. May is emerald ash borer month so this might be an opportunity to raise awareness about the problem. Asian Longhorned Beetle (ALB) has been spotted in New York and is very dangerous to maples and beeches—the beetle is especially attracted to hardwood trees. If detected early, it is much easier to eradicate than EAB. August is Asian Longhorned Beetle Month, so another opportunity to raise awareness. Mary reminded the CCC that several years ago Stuart Johnson, former Cornwall Road Commissioner, did include an article in the Town Newsletter (http://cornwallvt.com/newsletter/summer_2011.pdf), and said

that Stu might have also already done a survey. Andrea thinks that the State will assist in this effort. Trees can be tagged as ash trees. Katherine made a motion that the Conservation Commission recommend that the Select Board conduct a survey of ash trees along Town roads and Town properties., Kristina seconded. Motion passed. Andrea will reach out to Stu to see if a survey was already done, and offered to attend a Select Board meeting to update the SB on the issue.

CC Notes:

Swamp Trail: Kristina and Mary, with Brian Howlett, have discussed the possibility of a trail in the Swamp. Mary has contacted the State about this idea.

Turkey Vultures: A resident contacted Mary about turkey vultures and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, which states that once migratory birds start nesting, it is against the law to disturb the nests without a permit issued by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The turkey vultures are in the two barns on the Beaver Brook development and the owners were notified.

CRF donation. The Town received a very generous donation to the Conservation Reserve Fund. Katherine will contact Sue Johnson to see what the current balance is in the Fund.

Road Discussion: There is a plunge pool of good size on the north side of the culvert where Beaver Brook flows under Route 74. Mary has asked Brian Kemp for his assistance in bringing this to the attention of VTrans, because Town Road Commissioners have an opportunity to provide input on state road improvements that run through their town when a state highway is slated for future work. She also contacted VTrans directly about future work on Route 125 in Cornwall. When and if the State does work on this highway, she raised the possibility of having a short stretch of elevated roadway just east of the intersection of Cider Mill and James Road. This would allow wildlife to safely cross underneath the highway in this stretch that has been identified as a priority riparian crossing area.

Knotweed: The knotweed is located at the northwest corner of Route 125 and West Street. Andrea volunteered to help Mary with knotweed identification and removal.

DRB application. There is a subdivision proposal, located off of Route 30, between Andrus Pitch and Bardon Drive. The CCC will want to weigh in on this. The sketch plan is up first.

Tabled until a future meeting. AVCC Handbook; Factors for outside Funding Requests

Meeting adjourned 1:54 p.m.

Next Meeting: May 25, 2022 (12:30-1:45): In-person!

Newsletter: July '22 (June), October '22 (September), January '23 (December), April '23 (March)