

Cornwall Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, August 24, 2022 (12:30-1:45 pm)

Members present: Katherine Branch, Don Burns, Mary Dodge, Kristina Sargent, and Michael Sheridan

Recording Secretary: Katherine Branch

Old Business

Reports:

“Get Wild!” Blog. Some changes have been made with blog based on feedback from the July CCC meeting. The advertising launch is expected in early to mid-September.

Land Conservation interviews. Katherine reviewed the status of the interviews. Three interviews have been completed, and four additional landowners have either been contacted or will be soon. This discussion led to a broader conversation about the introductory letters that the CCC has sent in the past year to new landowners in Cornwall. We decided to expand the mailing to owners who moved to Cornwall in the two years prior as well.

Swamp Activities:

Bug Workshop (September 6th, after dark). Town-wide email has been sent, and Front Porch Forum notice will be posted shortly.

Swamp Walk (September 8th, 5:30-7:00 pm). Publicity will also include a town-wide email and Front Porch Forum. Amy Alfieri from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources will guide a walk through the route on the pending brochure, along with two other naturalists, Bob Zaino (Vermont Fish & Wildlife’s Natural Community Ecologist) and John Austin (F&W’s Lands and Habitat Program Manager). There is a limit of 30 attendees.

Swamp brochure. Rose wanted more geocoordinates for points of interest in the brochure, so these will be added.

Marsh Billings Rockefeller National Historic Park Visit (October 1st). In preparation for discussing how the \$8.00 group tour fee for this visit would be covered, Mary reviewed the funds that the CCC uses to support its work. One fund is the Conservation Reserve Fund which is earmarked for town conservation projects, with very specific guidelines. A second fund is annual funding of \$200 from the Town to pay for membership in the Association of Vermont Conservation Commissions and attendance at conservation-related conferences by CCC members. A third source of funds, used for Conservation Commission programming, has primarily been raised in a “pay-as-you-go” manner from various organizations such as the Cornwall Trust for Public Funds, Otter Creek Audubon, Cornwall School, and Vermont Coverts. After discussion by the group, it was decided that a voluntary contribution would be requested from attendees, and any amount not covered by these donations could be covered from the fund used to cover CCC programming.

Invasive Plant Workshop and Tool Lending Library. The expense breakdown for the tools is: tool cost \$429 + 40 + 255=\$724; funds received were: \$400 + 40 +190=\$630; amount yet to be raised=\$100. At the workshop itself, the main methods covered to handle invasive plant management were herbicides, biological and manual tools. The timetable for tools in the Library is in fall 2022. Katherine will contact Laura Fetterolf to see if she is still willing to catalog the items, with Sue Johnson and Patty McCormick copied on the email. Katherine will also follow up on other details of getting the tools into the Cornwall Library to be borrowed. One suggestion to follow up on the workshop and the tool lending was to disseminate stories of success that residents have had in managing invasive plants. Borrowers will indicate on the tool sign out form, if they would be willing to describe their experience with the tools.

Trail Camera Project & Connectivity Habitat discussion with Jens Hilke (September 29th CCC meeting). One of Jens' responsibilities is community work and working with Conservation Commissions in Vermont. The objective of this session with Jens is to help determine what is possible to assess in terms of habitat connectivity and what are Cornwall's options to improve its data about habitat connectivity. The information available from the State is based on GIS remote mapping tools and is limited in its scope. A more extensive mapping of potential connectivity habitat is found in Cornwall Ecological Inventory. To assist with development planning, further analysis and field verification is needed for the Town to adequately identify important connectivity habitat and map their boundaries. Some Vermont towns have documented the usage patterns of specific wildlife species at specific times. Mary will draft a list of questions and areas of interest for this meeting with Jens, and distribute to other CCC members for review.

AVCC Annual Summit (October 15, 2022). No further information has been received from AVCC about Summit details.

Updates from the Planning Commission and Select Board. The most recent Select Board meeting focused on the placement of the solar panels and the most recent Planning Commission meeting dealt with an intensive review of public comments about the Draft Town Plan from the public information meetings, and written correspondence.

New Business

CC Notes: Website updates. Emily May has updated the web site. She has offered to update the site at intervals of every three-four months in the future.

Next Meetings: Thursday, September 29, 2022 (7:00-8:30 p.m.); Thursday, October 27, 2022 (7:00 – 8:30 p.m.)

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