

Lee Conservation Commission

Minutes of August 31, 2021

Members present: Catherine Fisher (Secretary), Amanda Gourgue (Treasurer), Dawn Genes (Chair), Bill Humm, Dave Shay, Deb Sugerman, Anne Tappan

Alternate Member: Mimi Winder

Select Board Representative: Scott Bugbee

Approval of Minutes of August 2, 2021: D. Shay moved to accept the minutes as written, and A Tappan seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by members of the Lee Conservation Commission (LCC).

REPORTS:

Treasurer's Report: A. Gourgue reported a single transaction for the month of August - a \$100.00 donation to the LCC from Ginger Johnson.

The LCC's account balance remains at \$11,304.37 and is comprised of:

David Allan Fund Account Balance: \$2,686.69

LCC Account Balance: \$8,617.68

D. Genes asked if there were any restrictions on how the David Allen Fund monies were spent.

The consensus was that these funds were to be used at the LCC's discretion.

Easement Monitoring: Properties Monitored in August: Ellis Oyster River (8/4); Old Mill Reserve (8/18); and Claridge/Woodall (8/25). D. Sugerman and Martin Castle monitored the Powder Major's Forest. Nothing of concern was noted on any of these properties.

Monitoring visits scheduled for September/October: Schulz-Friedlaner (9/1); Humphrey (9/8); Brissard (9/15); Noble Farm (9/22); Chisholm (9/29); Verette (10/6); Schultz (10/13).

LCC members briefly discussed the need to begin planning next year's schedule, considerations such as, but not limited to, whether to start earlier (March), which properties are easier to monitor after leaf-off, and which properties have wet areas that best done either before or after mud season.

Education/Outreach:

Social Media: From August 2 through August 29, A. Gourgue reported the following figures for the LCC's Facebook page:

People reached: 5,553 (down 8%)

Post Engagements 564 (down 30%)

Page Likes 7 (same as last month)

The most popular post was from August 26th, which was about bees and had 4,400 reached, 82 post clicks, and 146 reactions, comments, and shares.

Monitoring Articles: C. Fisher reported that written three articles, one for each of the properties listed above. These have appeared in the E-Crier, and A. Gourgue has been posting them on the LCC and NeighborLee Facebook pages.

Geology Walk: C. Fisher reported that she hopes to meet with Wally Bother in September to do a preliminary walk at Little River Park (LRP) in preparation for a walk in October or November.

Insect I.D. Educational Workshop at LRP, September 18: A. Tappan encouraged members to attend. She reported that she had helped USFS Entomologist, Marc DiGirolomo, set up insect traps at LRP and assisted with collecting. They captured 44 species and found a rare weevil, about which M. DiGirolomo has contacted the Smithsonian.

OLD BUSINESS

Conservation Projects Underway

Lee Trails Committee (LTC): D. Sugerman reported on the following developments and activities:

Trails Tales: Collaborating with the Lee Public Library, LTC members worked to remove debris and widen the Woods Trail at LRP in preparation for story boards that will be placed along the trail. Another Trail Tale is in the works for the Town Forest Complex (TFC).

Reach Program: In collaboration with staff members from Durham Parks and Recreation and with Oyster River Middle School student participants, LTC members worked to improve trails and made two Aldo Leopold benches for use along the Yellow Trail in the TFC. One bench was placed overlooking the bog and the other along the small dam.

Planning for Fall Work Days:

Bridges: Work on bridges can't begin until the permits come through. The LRP permit is still pending. The permit for the TFC is currently being reviewed by the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB). Once it comes back, D. Shay will submit it to the Department of Environmental Services (DES).

Future Projects - D. Sugerman asked what areas will be focused on once the work in LRP, TFC, and Maud Jones Memorial Forest (MJMF) is completed. She asked about whether the LTC should begin to plan to work at Old Mill Reserve (OMR) or Lee Five Corners (L5C).

OMR: D. Genes noted that the LCC has a compatible use agreement (CUA) given by Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) which is good for five years. D. Sugerman will report this to the LTC.

L5C: C. Fisher suggested that, as Lee Five Corners is slated to be the release area for the New England cottontail rabbit rehabilitation project, members of the LCC had, in the past, decided to leave this conserved property largely unimproved. B. Humm noted that there has been a rough trail around the perimeter, but there was a possibility that part of it encroached on an abutter's property. There is a management plan for L5C prepared by the US Fish and Wildlife Service, but there is no digital copy.

LRP River Trail Project:

Kiosk: C. Fisher reported that the final edits to the kiosk panel have been made and once the designer, Cathay Arakelian, has finished incorporating them, she will forward it to the printer.

QR Codes for Trail Markers: D. Sugerman reported that A. Gourgue's design crew is putting the final touches on the QR codes for the markers. C. Fisher will work on a list of some of the plant and animal species associated with each of the four habitats and a link to these will be added to the QR code information.

Budget: D. Sugerman reported that she had submitted an invoice to the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC). LRAC approved the invoice and will be sending a check for the remaining grant money. D. Sugerman moved to approve up to \$265.00 to pay outstanding project bills, and D. Shay seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by members of the LCC.

Recreational Trails Program Grant: D. Sugerman reported that news of her grant application should arrive within a week.

LCC Website: D. Sugerman spoke about the need to improve/redesign the LCC's website. A. Tappan noted that the Buildout Analysis map needs updating, as does the link providing information on invasives. D. Genes suggested that LCC members visit other CC websites for ideas and recommendations. S. Bugbee noted that Lee's system may not be compatible with the type of website setups used by other municipalities.

Invasive Species Control:

2021 Biospray Treatment of Town-Owned Conserved Properties: D. Genes reported that Biospray had not got a permit from DES for this year's treatment. A better time to schedule treatment and apply for a permit is in January. A review of the areas usually treated (TFC, Joe Ford Wildlife Sanctuary (JFWS), and Rothwell Reserve (RR)) resulted in a consensus that, as the areas usually treated are in fairly good shape, 2021 isn't a bad year to forgo treatment. She reported that Steve Bullek Bullek (Dept. of Public Works (DPW) Director) suggested that the LCC look into having some of the municipal work done by other contractors. She will get a list from him and get quotes.

Identifying Properties Where Treatment is Needed: A. Tappan reported that she and M. Winder have been working on identifying properties where invasive species need to be treated. She posed the possibility of having the LTC identifying areas within the properties under their purview and informing the LCC. She and M. Winder could train any interested LTC members.

Wadleigh Falls: A. Tappan and M. Winder proposed a project to control invasive glossy buckthorn along the Lamprey on Rt. 152. The buckthorn is growing in a .6 acre Town-owned parcel across from RW, and she noted that Ellen Snyder's management plan for the Reserve identified this area along the Lamprey as being the source for buckthorn growing in the Reserve. The treatment method involves no use of pesticides. DES allows manual removal of invasive plants in the shoreline zone. Large donor plants will be cut down to six inches from ground level and a black plastic "Buckthorn Baggie" put over them. This method prevents the plant from resprouting and kills it. A. Tappan reported that the cost for each black plastic covering is between \$1.00-\$1.50/each and that she is purchasing the materials herself. D. Genes advised that LRAC be kept informed and that the public should also be made aware of the project.

JFWS: A. Tappan reported that the DPW has again rented "mowing" equipment and has offered its use to the LCC. The opening to the south of the homestead, formerly vegetated with coneflower, is now infested with oriental bittersweet and other invasives. At least one tree has fallen across the opening, and the "lane" is now impassable and too choked to mow. SouthEast Land Trust (SELT) has been informed and a request has been made for approval to mow the "lane", from the fence to the powerline right of way. DPW has seen the area and considers the project doable.

Celebration for Bill Humm: The meeting ended with a celebration honoring Bill Humm's fifteen years as Chair of the Lee Conservation Commission. To thank him for his years of providing excellent direction, Commission members and Select Board Representative Scott Bugbee presented Bill with a nifty engraved compass. Following the presentation, Commission members past and present celebrated with cake. Thank you, Bill, for guiding this Commission for so long and so well.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, September 28, 2021

Submitted by:

Catherine Fisher