

Lee Conservation Commission Minutes of Meeting of April 19, 2022

Present members: Catherine Fisher (Secretary), Dawn Genes (Chair), Deb Sugerman (Chair, LTC), Anne Tappan

Lee Trails Committee (LTC) Members: Chris Regan and Dennis Regan

Purpose of Meeting: Site visit to the Lee Town Forest (LTF) to review improvements to the trail system, proposed improvements to the ballpark trailhead, and proposed trail rerouting.

Trailhead Near Ballpark: There are a number of cut logs as well as fallen branches that lie Northeast of the trailhead (between the trail and the transfer station road). Removing this coarse woody material to improve the looks of the entrance to the LTC has been suggested as a possible project for Oyster River Middle School students taking part in this summer's Recreation Education & Adventure Close to Home (REACH) camp. C. Fisher and A. Tappan explained that these materials had been lying in place for some years, had become habitat, and that as they decay and become mossy they will become more attractive. An educational QR code might be useful in this area, explaining the importance of coarse woody debris to forest health. C. Fisher also suggested that the area in question may not be part of the LTC, but rather part of the Transfer Station property. Similarly, the property southwest of the trailhead (on the Mast Way School side of the trail) may be Mast Way property. D. Sugerman suggested the need to look at a LTF map and review the boundaries in this area. A. Tappan will provide an aerial photo with overlays showing the Transfer Station, Highway Dept., and Mast Way School boundaries.

Bridge Improvements: LCC members noted the much improved conditions of the bridges, which are now numbered. Several that had been in serious disrepair have been replaced; others that are in better shape have had minor repairs made and on a scheduled replacement list. In areas where bridges have been replaced, components of the old bridges had been stacked nearby and slated for removal. C. Fisher and A. Tappan suggested that, as these boards were not pressure-treated, it will do no harm to leave them *in situ* to become habitat as they decay.

Japanese Barberry: This invasive species was found growing on the stream bank near bridge #6. These were pulled and hung in trees to desiccate. Though this species can tolerate a range of habitats and conditions, it is partial to wetlands and stream banks, and C. Fisher pointed to other specimens growing downstream. A. Tappan mentioned EDRR (early detection rapid response) when dealing with invasives. A work day with the LCC and LTC was suggested to clear this patch. C. Fisher pointed out that, with the exception of the early succession area of the old orchard, invasive species are relatively sparse in the TF, and EDRR can help to keep it in this condition.

Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA): C. Fisher called attention to the fact that, because dense hemlock stands on the ridges border much of the trail system in the LTC, it is important to be aware of the likelihood that these stands could, within the next decade, succumb to the predations of HWA. It may be decided to leave dead trees *in situ*, to become habitat, and remove only those trees that pose a hazard, but it is important to begin to think of a course of action. A. Tappan showed C. Regan and D. Regan a hemlock twig infested with HWA, gave a brief summary of the life cycle of this insect, and spoke about the importance of removing branches intruding into the trail so as not to further spread HWA, and leaving them well off-trail to dry.

No Hunting Signs: D. Sugerman inquired about the correct way to post "No Hunting" signs along the TF boundaries and reported that more signs were needed. D. Genes noted that additional signs were

available in the LCC office. A. Tappan will share information about how to post property according to NH Fish & Game regulations.

Dog Waste: The problem of increased waste both trailside and off-trail was discussed. C. Fisher asked if there was a protocol for dealing with this issue during trail cleanup days. C. Regan reported that she bags and removes any found during these events. The need for articles to be posted on the LCC Facebook page and the E-Crier was discussed. D. Sugarmen reported that a LTC member will post a dog waste article on April 26.

Proposed Trail Reroute: To avoid approaching the steep edge of the southwest ravine (located in the forest northwest of Mast Way School), a short slightly upslope reroute through a hemlock stand has been flagged. While LCC members found no immediate difficulty with this proposed reroute, it was agreed that approving any trail reroutes in the LTF, or any other trail system on Town-owned conservation lands, should occur only after consulting a GranitView heatmap showing where high value wildlife habitats are located. D. Sugerman reported that Martin Thornton is working on creating maps for the LTF and will share with LCC and LTC members when they are completed.

The tremendous amount of work done to improve the trail system in the LTF should be underlined. With the ridges and ravines and the corresponding steep areas they present, this is not an easy trail system to maintain and amend, and the LTC is to be commended for the hours of hard work that has gone into improving the TF trail system.

Submitted by: _____
Catherine Fisher