

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Minutes 26 August 2014

Present at the Morrill Education Building at 7:10 p.m., were commission members John Hemenway, Jared Janisch, Mike Hebb, Matt Perry, Steve Willbanks (Chair), Tii McLane, and Amy Metz.

MAPLE HILL CULVERT REPLACEMENT:

This summer we will perform the Engineering Design for the Maple Hill Road culvert project. Milone and MacBroom will perform the design and the cost is estimated at about \$12K. The design will be funded by an US Fish and Wildlife grant awarded to the CT River Watershed Council and the remaining MEF Phase III grant funds that was awarded to the SCC in 2008.

The estimated construction will costs around \$80K but we will know more after the the design is complete. The construction will also be funded by grants applied/awarded to the CT River Watershed Council. Ron Rhodes (River Steward of the CT River Watershed Council) is applying for the various grant funding.

WEST BRANCH OMPOMPANOSUC RIVER CLEANUP:

On Friday August 15, 2014 a group of volunteers from TomTom and the Strafford Conservation Commission helped clean up a stretch of the West Branch Ompompanosuc River next to Roz Finn's property. This event was part of the Annual "Source To Sea Clean-up" sponsored by the Connecticut River Watershed Council. This is a four-state effort to remove trash and debris from the Connecticut River and its tributaries with over 80,000 volunteers.

We were able to remove the following from a local Strafford VT Resident's stream bank:

- 12 Tires
- 12 bags of trash/recycling
- 2 pick-up trucks full of metal
- 2 hot water tanks
- 3 pieces of metal railroad tracks

TOWN FOREST AND TRAILS UPDATE:

Town Forest Boardwalk: Mike Hebb raised \$850 to construct a boardwalk in the Town Forest to alleviate foot traffic around the sensitive species. The boardwalk was built the following week and is now ready for all to enjoy. We would like to thank everyone who helped make this project possible.

Horse not permitted on trail network: Mike noticed some horse tracks on the trail near Podunk. The trail system is not designed for horses and this type of use damages the trails and the horse could potentially spread invasives.

Volunteers needed for trail maintenance: There are about 5 volunteers that help maintain sections of the trail but there are many sections that are not covered. Steve proposes that we write a Strafford news article or make a post to the list serve to promote the recreational use of our Town Forest and trail network and request for volunteers to help clean up sections of the trail.

Whitcomb Hill: Mike had a clean up day on Whitcomb Hill at the beginning of August. The clean up included brush removal, cutting of tree stumps, and brushhogging the clearing. Also signage was updated with mileage and a new parking sign was added.

OLD CITY FALLS:

Matt met with Kelly Hull to look at the outhouse to discuss ideas for covering the outhouse. The idea is to use shiplap over the particleboard and update the railing. Matt will work with Kelly to arrange a time for the updates and inform Tim McCormick. Matt will go up in the fall to do a leaf cleanup.

INVASIVES:

The campaign is going very well and motivating landowners to clean up their properties. Janet C. suggested a forum in late September to regroup. There is noticeable on Pennock Rd due to the groups effort to remove buckthorn. We recommended contacting Dummerston VT because they have a very active invasive group and it would be great to get some ideas for engagement.

DRAFT BYLAWS:

Draft bylaws were discussed but are not yet approved. Most of the members are in agreement with the current draft.

OTHER BUSINESS:

Meeting minutes approved for 6/17/'14 and 7/22/'14 meetings.

We have been awarded a grant from the New England Grass Roots Environment Fund to cover our costs for the Wetlands training.

Land opportunities: 1.) Town land at the Top of Rt 132. 2.) 5 acres right along side Old City Falls, north of Freeman Road, (a former greenbelt).

Reminder- August 30th 9am-2pm "Walk in the Woods" with Dave Paganelli. Dave will give a forest management talk on his 200-acre Tree Farm at the end of Blanchard Road.

Next meeting: September 23, 2014

Respectfully submitted,

Amy Metz, acting recording secretary