

Strafford Conservation Commission

Minutes

November 18, 2025

Strafford Town Office 7:00 PM

Courtney Potter, Micki Colbeck, Kate Bass, Mike Hebb, JT Erbaugh, Elizabeth Howland

- Approved minutes from October 28, 2025, meeting.
- Update on the David (Red) Taplin Conservation Trust Fund. Nature Conservancy “The Southern Greens to the Whites” project to preserve a corridor for species to migrate northward and upward due to climate changes. Peg Merrens thinks that the Nature Conservancy may help fund the remaining costs for conserving David’s land. Peg will update us when she hears back. We will still do some fundraising in David’s name for possible other fees or for future conservation projects in Strafford. Kate and Micki will talk to Lisa and clarify how our current funds are being used and how much we have in the accounts. Possibly set up a separate conservation fund account that the town’s people could donate to.
- The Hemenway lands are being purchased by Donna Golbberg - Sandbhreagh Wildlands Sanctuary. It is expected that the trust will be the largest landowner in the area. Mostly in Orange County, but one parcel is in Lyme. The management and public use of the land will change. How will this affect our trails, the deer population, and the control of aggressive non-native species? Part of the Hemenway land is conserved by UVLT so the trails are possibly safe. The section with the

Hemenway Ledges Trail is under a different trust. Mike reached out to explain the history of the trail and the trail system but had not heard back from her.

- Steve Faccio, Mike, and Micki hiked the Cobb Forest with Charlie Honn, State wetland biologist to see about reclassifying it to a class one wetland. He did a bioassessment with them. Charlie said that it would take a proposal and approved by legislature. He also did an assessment at Miller Pond. The two assessments are on record with the state.
- Micki attended the Planning Commission meeting with TRORC representative, Kyle Hansen. They looked at a proposed map for larger village zones with more places for housing, and increased protections for rural conservation. They proposed “recreational classification” for Miller Pond which has less protection than the Forest and Agriculture protection. She protested and they changed it back.
- Trails and guided hikes update: We will plan an Ompompanoosuc River cleanup for next year, tackling a different section every year. Maybe Micki and Erin will organize.
- Daisy and Micki are taking over management of Whitcomb Hill. Sean has agreed to mow later in the year, after the frost, to help the pollinators. Andy Milne has agreed to help Daisy and Micki with keeping an eye on things since he goes there daily.
- Loon report from Miller Pond. The parents had one chick this year who is now healthy and strong and taking test flights. It survived frequent attacks by the eagle thanks to ever-vigilant parents. Both parents have already left for the coast. The juvenile will follow soon. Jason Hill has created a new Loon Watch app. Coming soon.

- Regretfully accepted the resignation from the board of Elizabeth Howland who is moving to a neighboring town.
- Governor Phil Scott has signed an executive order allowing housing projects to be built on unmapped class II wetlands. The order has not yet become law. Mapped Class II wetlands will also suffer reduced buffers if the law is enacted. All of Strafford's wetlands are class II. The proposed rules are found here: <https://dec.vermont.gov/watershed/wetlands/wetlands-rulemaking>

We feel this goes against all the State's efforts to mitigate flooding and encourage people to write an email to the Agency of Natural Resources to express your thoughts during this feedback period.

[WetlandsRulemakingComment@vermont.gov](mailto:WetlandsRulemakingComment@vermont.gov)

There will be two public comment meetings:

Monday, December 15<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 5pm, 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, 100 Mineral Street, Springfield, VT or Virtual. [Register Here](#).

Tuesday December 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025 at 1pm, Dewey 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Conference Room, 1 National Life Drive, Montpelier, VT or Virtual. [Register Here](#).

- Next meeting, December 23, 2025.
- Vote to adjourn

