

STRAFFORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

March 28, 2023

Morrill Education Center

6:30-8:00PM

Board members in attendance: Steve Faccio, Greg McHugo, Micki Colbeck, J.T. (James) Erbaugh, Kate Bass, Chuck Sherman, Courtney Potter, Anne Fayen, and Mike Hebb.

1) **Minutes:**

Voted to approve the minutes of December 6, 2022, meeting.

1) **Presentation:**

- a. Zoom presentation by Kiley Briggs, Director of Conservation for the Orianne Society, on Wood Turtle habitat along the Ompomponoosuc. Kiley has grant funding to reach out to locate landowners along the river who might be willing to enhance riparian turtle habitat.
- b. We helped find phone numbers for people whom he wanted to contact.
- c. Participating landowners are then connected with NRCS, which provides cost-share funding for Riparian buffer work (planting trees and shrubs) and invasive species control.

2) **SCC led hikes:**

- a. **Easter Sunday, April 9th** Dee Gish and Micki will be hosting second Sunday hikes at the Ashley Community Forest, at 4PM. The first one is Easter Sunday, April 9th. Meet at the parking area on Nutting Road.
- b. **Sunday, April 23rd** - Courtney will lead a wild leek - ramp walk in late spring, teaching about sustainable harvesting of *Allium tricoccum*.
- c. **Fri, Apr 28 at 2pm** – Steve will lead a vernal pool walk in Hanover. The Howe Library is organizing this. Here's the link: (<https://www.thehowe.org/events/events-programs/>)
- d. **Tuesday, May 2nd** at 6PM, Chick has arranged for Rush Herschler from the Upper Valley Trails Alliance to give a short tutorial on using trail finder. This will be at the Morrill Education Center and is open to the public. Our SCC meeting will follow immediately after the presentation.

- e. **Friday, May 5, 1-4pm** – Steve will lead a vernal pool walk at Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historical Park in Woodstock.
- f. **Sunday, May 14th**- Second Sunday Ashley Forest hike with Dee Gish and Micki. 4PM
- g. **Sunday, May 7th**- Kate, Micki, and Beth Seckinger will lead a Spring ephemeral hike along the Taylor Valley trail towards Cobb Hill.
- h. **Sunday, May 28th** – Mike will lead an Orchid walk at Cobb Town Forest.
- i. **Saturday, June 3rd** - Mike will lead a long hike on our trails for National Trails Day.
- j. **Sunday, June 11th** – Micki and Dee hike at Ashley Forest. 4PM.
- k. **Sunday, June 25th**- Greg, Mike, and Micki will lead a hike at Cobb Town Forest to see the pink lady-slipper orchids.
- l. **Sunday, July 9th** – Dee and Micki hike at Ashley Forest. 4PM.
- m. **Saturday, July 15, (rain date July 16)** - Anne will lead an educational kid-friendly walk at the Strafford Pocket Park.
- n. **Saturday, August 5th**- J.T. and Mike will lead the 10-mile town trail hike.
- o. **Sunday, August 13th** - Dee and Micki hike at Ashley Forest. 4PM.
- p. **Sunday, September 10th** – Dee and Micki hike at Ashley Forest. 4PM
- q. **Fall**- Courtney, Anne, and Kate will lead a series of educational programs on invasive plants—identifying, finding, and eradicating them. They will organize a *Pull-Fest* workday for the community.

3) **Mallard population on the Ompomponoosuc:**

- a. A local resident has raised a small flock of mallards on the river which has grown, due to wild mallards joining and due to hatchlings from the original flock. There are from 10 to 50 mallards being fed. Is this a problem due to transmission of Avian Flu? Is this a problem due to possible overfertilization of the river and algae bloom? Should we try to intervene?
Steve will talk to a waterfowl specialist to see if it is a problem. If there is a problem, Kate said she will talk to her about not feeding them.

4) **Jonathan Nedeau** bought the house across from Barrett Hall and would like advice on being on the river. Anne and Micki will work with him if he wants information on river health and invasive species.

5) **Change of officers:**

- a. We informally agreed that a one- or two-year term as revolving chair would be beneficial for the organization for a variety of reasons. This is a non-binding agreement.

- b. Micki and Kate stated that they are happy in their present positions. J.T. said he is stepping down as chair.
- c. Mike nominated Micki as the new chair. Chuck seconded. Unanimous vote to approve. Micki accepted.
- d. J.T. nominated Courtney for recording secretary. Kate seconded. Unanimous vote to approve Courtney for recording secretary. Courtney accepted.
- e. Kate will stay on as vice-chair.
- f. Kate expressed our sincere gratitude to J.T. for guiding us through this last year.

6) Trails:

- a. Mike reported that he would like to begin phasing out his responsibilities looking after two of the town properties, Whitcomb Hill and Cobb Town Forest. The third property, Old City Falls, is looked after by Tim McCormick, who is paid.
- b. Steve Faccio volunteered to look after Whitcomb Hill.
- c. J.T. Erbaugh volunteered to look after Cobb Town Forest.

7) Other items:

- a. Mike led two very successful apple tree pruning and grafting workshops last weekend at the Homestead. He is thinking of leading plant propagation classes.
- b. Face book profiles. Here is the link to our Facebook page managed by Courtney: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087148153943&mibextid=LQQJ4d>
- c. Anne and Courtney will do a bio together. JT and Kate will each also do a profile. The minutes will also be up on Facebook.
- d. Chuck would like to organize an event to thank the people who maintain the trails and those who own the land the trails run through. We will discuss it at the next meeting.
- e. Invasive education ideas for next meeting.
- f. Goals for the coming year for next meeting.

8) Next meeting:

- a. May 2, 2023, 6PM presentation by the Upper Valley Trails Alliance, followed by SCC meeting at 7 or 7:30 PM, Morrill Education Center.

9) Voted to adjourn.

Micki Colbeck, recording secretary.