

# Minutes, Atkinson Conservation Commission Workshop September 19, 2005 Atkinson Town Hall

Workshop convened by Chairman Tim Dziechowski at 7:30

## Attending:

Tim Dziechowski	Michelle Veasey
Scott Kukshel	Paul Wainwright
Pete McVay	

## Internal Business

It was agreed that the workshop would stop at 10:00.

**Correspondence review:** Tim received notice of the Route 93 mitigation review meeting, which is to be held in Windham Town Hall on September 28<sup>th</sup> at 7:00. Pete will try to attend.

A notice was received of a possible grant for watershed-related conservation activities. Michelle will review the grant prospectus.

**Finances update:** the final grant award of \$2,557.18 was received from the Moose Plate trail and map grant. Michelle reviewed the selectmen minutes: the grant was discussed on March 31, 2003, but no approval was noted in the minutes. Also, there is no selectman's signature on the initial Moose Plate grant.

## Guest Business:

**Charlie Moreno**, licensed state forester presented forestry management possibilities for Atkinson Conservation lands. Charlie was invited as a guest speaker by the Conservation Commission.

Charlie is a licensed forester in New Hampshire, and did some forest management on Atkinson conservation lands starting in 1984. He reviewed the results of those first cuts and also reviewed a land management plan done for Atkinson in September 1989.

During a question-and-answer session, Charlie noted that a forester is hired by the town and the Commission, and is working in the interest of the town, not a forestry company. Cutting is done based on the interests of the town and conservation commission. Several individual questions were:

- Was wildlife habitat management included in the 1989 plan (Michelle)? Wildlife management becomes vegetation, meaning tree, management. (Charlie).
- What about protected/endangered species (Pete)? Each one is managed independently, and harvesting is low key and minimal disturbance. Greenway connection is important (Charlie).
- "Improvement cut" usually means improvement for production. Who gets to the final objective of land management. Is there an individual plan for each lot with separate objectives for each lot (Dan)? Not solely economically based. The overall objective of wildlife management is for what the land will grow, and is as close as possible to natural conditions. Forestry has changed to management of the forest, rather than simple harvesting or single-growth forest.
- Who decides what changes will be made in favor of one species, plant or animal? (Pete) Do not focus on just habitat management, but do a broad-based approach with minimal disturbance (Charlie). Should be on a 12-15 year rotational cycle (Tim).

The September 1989 town forestry plan was briefly reviewed. Pete asked if the Commission could really schedule resource inventory, update plan, produce individual plot plans, and set up a management plan, and start it this winter? From discussion, the answer was that portions of the plan could be reviewed and updated, and some actual cut and management done on selected parcels. The Conservation Commission is authorized under RSAs to do this management.

Other considerations in forest management are: economic (the value of different wood supplies has fluctuated due to market conditions and need), recreational use vs. forestry considerations, abatement tax and other fees and who pays for what. The Marshall network shows how the stone walls and trails had to be laid out, and it was difficult. Urban populations also do not like to see trees cut. When the first plan was done in the 80s, there were more farms and people understood land management. Charlie suggested bringing the wood out to cordwood piles, or similar, for public relations. Allocate part of it to the elderly and disabled (Dan). Could cut out with portable mill and use in the town.

**Where do we go from here?** Discussed possibility of updating 1989 plan, and need funding. Possibly start with the Stickney lot. Given our budget situation, needs to be financed by Planning Board. Could possibly expend conservation fund money on the grounds that it was returned. Possibly the Marshall lands and access. Pete will investigate the cost of having the 1989 plan scanned for electronic editing. What will it cost to update the plan, with field work, and first candidates for management logging? Could be updated with rough updates based on history. Could we use the old timber cruise records and sub sample the property (Dan)? It's possible. (Charlie)

Charlie will come up with a new management proposal. Michelle will look in the town library for old copies. Charlie is also working on a general presentation for citizen education of forestry management whys and wherefores, and would be willing to visit and give a seminar on the topic.

## Special Projects

**Open Space Zoning Amendment:** Tim mentioned that the current Atkinson zoning ordinance penalizes townwide open space, encouraging developers to produce "gated communities" and restrict land access. New Hampshire has "Alternative Village Development Zoning", which, if adopted, 80% of the space in a development must be open space, and the lot size buffers and setbacks disappear. This ordinance is aimed toward "self-contained" communities, with their own stores and essential services. There is no development in Atkinson that is large enough for such zoning to work, but modifying the current zoning ordinance could encourage tighter clustering, more open space, and more access for citizens. More investigation will be done on this possibility.

**Wetlands Ordinance:** last year's amendment and possible amendments for this year were discussed, especially in simplification of the amendment. More study will be done on the amendment.

**Scenic Road warrant article:** more study is needed, since declaring a scenic area on a state road requires the town to assume more maintenance costs. Alternative ways of declaring a scenic area will be investigated.

**Parking lot buffer warrant article:** The current ordinance causes difficulties both in defining "parking lot" and what the buffer distance should be. Proposed changes will be studied further.

**Rules for conservation lands / town forests:** Hampstead and Londonderry both have land and trail use rules, that were put in effect by Selectmen approval. These will be reviewed to formulate a proposal for Atkinson land use rules.

The boy scouts requested permission to use the Trinity Trail area for a campout in October. The request was approved informally.

The next meeting of the Commission will be Monday, October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2005, at 7:30.

The meeting adjourned at 9:51.

Respectfully submitted,

Pete McVay