

CONSERVATION COMMISSION**December 10, 2020****7:00 PM****Virtual Meeting**

Members Present: Patrick Reynolds (Chair), Melissa Sharples (Vice Chair), Ellen Snyder (Treasurer), David Bell, Cris Blackstone, Megan Brabec (Town Council Rep), Sarah Finch (Planning Board Rep), and Sam Kenney

Members Absent: Drew Kiefaber (Alternate)

Guest Presenter: Matt DiBona

1. Pledge of Allegiance

2. Roll Call

3. Public Comments

There were no public comments this evening.

4. Guest Presentation- Welcome!

Matt DiBona, New England District Wildlife Biologist with the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTF).

Before working for NWTF, Matt was the Waterfowl and Upland Game Bird Biologist for the Fish & Game in Delaware. He holds a B.S. in Environmental Science from the University of VT and an M.S. in Wildlife Ecology from the University of DE. His expertise in wild turkey habitat will help the ConCom work toward keeping our conservation properties in the best shape possible to encourage wild turkeys and other game birds. Matt reviewed the beginnings of the NWTF: "When the National Wild Turkey Federation (a non-profit conservation group) was founded in 1973, there were about 1.3 million wild turkeys in North America. After decades of dedicated work, that number hit a historic high of almost 7 million turkeys thanks to the tremendous efforts of our dedicated volunteers, professional staff and committed partners. The mission of the National Wild Turkey Federation is no less urgent today than when it was founded in 1973. What we do in the coming decades will be instrumental in not only enhancing wild turkey populations but also in the continuation of hunting and quality wildlife habitat for countless species. <https://www.nwtf.org/about>".

In the 1960's, new tracking methods were available to help in the restoration of wild turkey populations. With years of conservation efforts, the current wild turkey population in NH is approximately 40,000.

Turkeys have a social hierarchy: males are most dominant and hens do everything else. The hens are very particular about their nesting site, not too thick, not too thin, but just right. They lay one egg per day to a clutch size of 8-14 (an average of 11). They possess phenomenal eyesight. They roost for approximately 28 days on the ground and the poults hatch in approximately 26 days. Poults are extremely susceptible to weather and predators in the first four weeks after they hatch. Good brooding habitats include grasses, forbs or phorbs- which are herbaceous flowering plants that are not a graminoid (grass, sedge, or rush), and meadows. Nothing too thick. The poults need a good source of protein to thrive. He reviewed survival statistics on poults. Turkeys have become habitat generalists- they thrive in habitats for other species like woodcock, rabbits, and turtles. Habitat may be created by feathering edges, make forest openings, create grain plots with lots of grasses and legumes like clover, creating good pollinator habitat, old apples orchards can be cleaned up and become a great source of food, and dogwoods and viburnums can be planted for berries. The spring turkey season is set for the beginning of May after the nesting. The hunt does focus on toms because the hens are more important. The largest flocks are usually seen in the winter and then they go

through a break-up into different social groups. The average lifespan of a wild turkey is 3 years. There is a local chapter of the National Wild Turkey Federation (NWTf) called the Seacoast Strutters (<https://www.facebook.com/SeacoastStrutters/>). The hunting season in NH may be found at: <https://wildlife.state.nh.us/hunting/turkey.html>. Matt may be contacted at mdibona@NWTf.net (302-943-3239) if anyone has any questions. Thank you Matt for generous time and for all of your helpful information!!

Cris Blackstone announced that next month we will host Chris Nash, Program Director with NHDES, who will speak on the topic of shellfish and the restoration projects where the Lamprey River meets Great Bay.

5. Approval of Minutes November 12, 2020

Action

Motion: **Ellen Snyder** made a motion to approve the minutes as written for November 12, 2020.
Second: **Melissa Sharples**
Vote: 6-0-1 (Sam Kenney abstained)

6. Treasurer's Report

Ellen Snyder reports that the Conservation Fund currently has \$245,778.86. The account earned \$67.50 in interest and there were no expenses this month. The annual dues for the NHACC were confirmed as coming from the Conservation Fund. The General Fund has a balance of \$1,816.99. Last month, we paid \$280.38 for the notice of public meeting on the Clarke Farm Easement.

7. Committee and Subcommittee Reports

Town Council: We are pleased to welcome **Megan Brabec** as the new Town Council Rep to the ConCom! There was no report for this meeting. **Patrick Reynolds** mentioned that the TC will be voting on the easement at their next meeting. The Recording Secretary will send **Megan** all the information regarding the Clarke Farm Easement, so that she is up-to-date on the Commission's progress.

Planning Board: **Sarah Finch** reported about the PB work underway on new FEMA maps of the flood plain in Newmarket and possible changes to ordinances and regulations which may ensue. **Patrick Reynolds** received a copy of a letter from LRAC to the Planning Board commenting on the Alteration of Terrain (AoT) Permit requested by the developer of 77 Hersey Lane. **Sarah Finch** noted that this was an older project, just now resurfacing, for 11 single family homes in a subdivision. LRAC did not recommend the AoT on this very steeply graded land. The 3 page letter is attached to the minutes as an addendum. More detailed information may be found in the PB minutes of September 15, 2020 <https://www.newmarketnh.gov/node/2003/minutes/2020>.

8. Chairman's Report

19 Moody Point: The Chair received a copy of the NHDES Shoreland Permit Request for the property at 19 Moody Point. There is nothing for the ConCom to review or comment upon.

Great Bay Steward Trustees Appeal: The Chair received an appeal for funding from the Great Bay Steward Trustees. Annual membership contribution is \$35.00. "The mission of the Great Bay Stewards is the long-term protection and conservation of the Great Bay estuarine ecosystem by supporting education, land protection, research and stewardship of Great Bay, in partnership with the Great Bay National Estuarine Research Reserve and other like-minded organizations. As part of its mission to promote stewardship of the Great Bay

estuary, the Stewards have a natural interest in preserving its unique ecology and play an integral role in a variety of programs associated with the Great Bay Research Reserve. As the friends group of the Reserve, the biggest need is to provide funding to support a wide-range of critical programs.” There are many wonderful programs which they involved with and more information may be found at <https://greatbaystewards.org/programs/> . **Ellen Snyder** believes that they provide the outreach for the Great Bay Research Reserve and deserve our support for the work that they perform.

Action

Motion: **Chris Blackstone** moved that the Conservation Commission expend funds for annual membership to the Great Bay Stewards. This year Community Membership is \$35.00.

Second: **Patrick Reynolds**

Vote: Unanimously approved

9. Old/New Business

Clarke Farm Easement: The Chair reported that the only remaining ‘box to tick’ is the suspending of the rules by the Town Council to approve the purchase at their next meeting. The Town Manager is aware of the urgency and important deadline to close by the end of the year.

Projects for 2021: The Chair began with several ideas. 1) We currently have the management plan for Wiggin Farm where **Ellen Snyder** (who prepared the document) suggested several avenues for improvements to the property including clearing some areas to allow for new growth and clearing invasives which have subsumed the apple tree area. **Ellen** mentioned that there are NH Fish & Game small grants which could help with the funding for such projects. 2) The Chair also mentioned culverts which could be helpful along Ash Swamp Road near our turtle crossing signs. He found a seminar which is being help online to assist communities in acquiring funding for restoration and enhancement projects. It will be held on December 17 from 4-6 pm. The notice came from the Executive Director of the NHACC, Barbara Richter. You may subscribe to the NHACC e-newsletter by going to:

<https://us8.list-manage.com/subscribe?u=f8bbe90ad64317a23a57683c4&id=ca4e08d7b1> .

Easement Monitoring Update:

Ellen Snyder: **Ellen** completed the Silverman Easements out on Neal Mill Road. She met with the current owner. There are 3 tracks which cover 25 acres. She also monitored the Schneer property, which is separate piece on 5 acres. She will be preparing a new GPS map of the boundaries because of the exclusionary areas on two of the Silverman properties. Thank you Ellen!

Sam Kenney: **Sam** visited Piscassic River –Loiselle Conservation Land in November when it was 60 degrees out! He found two things of concern: 1) He found an archery stand on the NE corner of the property and could not discern if it was on our property or the abutters. **Patrick** went to check on the stand and could not find a name of the owner. He will follow up with the abutters who are most close to the area. He is fairly confident that the stand is on conservation property. 2) One abutter has been dumping tree debris over the stone wall (mostly young saplings). **Patrick** will send a letter, again, this year to the abutters, as it is difficult to determine who did the dumping. He will volunteer to meet with the abutter(s) to show them the boundary marker if there is any confusion.

David Bell: **David** completed the monitoring of Smith Sisters-Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary. He found the property in good conditions. However, there were 2 or 3 deer stands which were not marked with owner names. **Patrick** has agreed to contact Phil Brown at Audubon to check on this matter. **David** also mentioned that he could not cross Follett’s Brook because of the thick brush. **David** will add this concern to his report to demonstrate the difficulty of walking the boundary. Beaver dam flooding is making it more difficult to access areas of the property. Phil Brown wrote a great article in 2010 about this property:

http://nhbirdrecords.org/all-articles/NHBR_Vol_29_No_1_2010.pdf .

Patrick Reynolds: Patrick monitored New Roots Farm. He met with the owner. Part of this farm borders on the Clarke Farm, Nature Conservancy property by Tuttle Swamp, and Wiggin Farm. The owner is sub-leasing some areas to other entities which require plastic greenhouses. He is growing organic corn and working on rotational crops for grazing. He supplies a local Mexican restaurant with corn for their tortillas. The owner would appreciate a better map of his boundaries. He allows, with permission only, hunting on the property. Recently hunters drift over the boundary onto his land without knowing they are doing so. A hunter cut some small trees down on his property (probably for a better shot). The new address for the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) is: 273 Locust St #2d, Dover, NH 03820.

Patrick Reynolds reported that the Eagle Scout working on the Schoppmeyer Park will be putting down bog bridges. Bog bridge anatomy consists of two base logs, or sills and large boards or half logs called stringers. The stringers rest on top of the sills and are held together by spikes or long screws. Bog bridges can pass over short muddy spots or link together to extend deep into wild marshes. They are not permanent. Information about bog bridges may be found on Nature Groupie: <https://naturegroupie.org/story/stewardship-tip-biology-bog-bridges> .

10. Adjourn

Action

Motion: **Ellen Snyder** moved that the meeting be adjourned.
Second: **Melissa Sharples**
Vote: Unanimously Approved

The meeting was adjourned at 8:28 PM.
 The next meeting will be held on January 14, 2021

Respectfully submitted,

Sue Frick, Recording Secretary

Addendum

Lamprey River Advisory Committee

c/o 88 Hedding Road
Epping, NH 03042
www.lampreyriver.org



RECEIVED

DEC - 7 2020

TOWN OF NEWMARKET
MANAGERS OFFICE

*Protecting the Lamprey, Little, North, North Branch, Pawtuckaway, and Piscassic rivers
that connect our fourteen communities*

Barrington, Brentwood, Candia, Deerfield, Durham, Epping, Exeter, Fremont,
Lee, Newfields, Newmarket, Northwood, Nottingham, Raymond

November 18, 2020

Mr. Ridgely Mauck
NHDES
PO Box 95
Concord, NH 03302-0095

Re: Milltown Green
77 Hersey Lane
Newmarket, NH
File Number: 201109-153

Dear Mr. Mauck:

The above-referenced project is within the quarter mile corridor of the Piscassic River and is, therefore, subject to review by the Lamprey River Advisory Committee (LRAC) in accordance with NHRSA 483. The project application was received by the LRAC and sent to the Project Review Subcommittee for review. Upon final review, we offer the following comments:

1. Documents reviewed were Alteration of Terrain Permit Application dated 11-2-2020 and plans dated 10-20-2020, as well as supplemental materials.
2. The proponent desires to construct a 10-lot, 11-unit conservation subdivision on existing forestland. Water and sewer will be provided by the Town of Newmarket. New impervious surface will be 58,060 square feet.
3. The Natural Heritage Bureau report indicates several species of concern in an area featuring low-gradient silty-sandy riverbank system that is rare in New Hampshire. The riverbank system is noted to be of "good quality, condition, and landscape context" and "large, diverse, and under very active land conservation efforts."
 - NH State-endangered Blanding's turtles: Multiple reports over many years including 2019 and 2015 when a female laying eggs was seen. A report from 2013 lists nine individuals.

Addendum

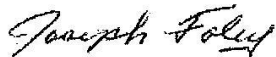
- NH threatened spotted turtles: Multiple reports over many years covering a large area, with most recent reports from 2019.
 - Jefferson/blue-spotted salamanders: One report from 2013.
 - NH State-threatened great bur-reed: One report from 2001. Report specifically requested that landowners be educated about the status of rare and threatened species and that permanent land protection would be ideal.
4. Photos from the wildlife biologist indicate prime wetlands, vernal pools, and wetland fingers are on site. Also shown were dead, standing trees "common throughout the parcel." All of these indicators offer a picture of habitat diversity and high ecological value.
 5. The site is sandwiched between two conserved parcels, Tax Map 4 lot 24 and Tax Map 4 lot 134. The southwest portion of the lot is labeled as prime wetlands. No work is proposed within the 150 foot buffer zone around this prime wetland. The western boundary of the proposed development is approximately 50 feet from the adjacent conserved lot, R4 lot 24.
 6. The application states that this is a conservation subdivision. In our understanding of the way this works, the developer must identify the main natural resources of the property that are worthy of conservation and design the subdivision around them. Although there is a comprehensive wetlands evaluation and data from the Natural Heritage Bureau, we could not find where it explicitly stated what was being protected and what was being impacted.
 7. How exactly will the open space area of the property be conserved? Will there be a conservation easement? A deed restriction? Ownership by a conservation organization? Does "open space" mean "unaltered and off-limits to people", or does it mean "community recreational space"? This should be specified.
 8. We take issue to some incorrect and/or misleading information provided on page 2 of the wetland scientist's report that Per Town Regulation Sec 32-196 3, number 3 "Connectivity to regional open space and adjoining parcels; No open space parcels are located adjacent to the proposed parcel." This is not true; according to the land protection map recently produced by SRPC for the LRAC, two adjacent lots have been conserved, Tax Map 4, lot 24 and Tax Map 4, Lot 134. On number 4, "Identification of wildlife corridors and rare and/or endangered species and supporting habitats: No wildlife corridors are found on site nor are there any rare of endangered species found on site." Again, this is not true as noted by abundant data from the NHB. Even if all the noted species are not on the exact site, the area is, at a minimum, supporting habitat.
 9. Reports from the NHB were included in the package we reviewed, but no correspondence was included from the NH Fish and Game Department attesting that the project has been designed in a manner that will not jeopardize the continued existence of state- or federally-listed threatened or endangered species or

Addendum

result in the destruction or modification of habitat critical to those species.

10. This property is ecologically sensitive and is contiguous with two conservation properties. Rare and endangered species are clearly using this site as reported on multiple NHB reports. Development, even as a "conservation subdivision", will result in further challenges to wildlife that will lose access to needed resources and space. We request that NHDES deny this permit.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this project.



Joseph Foley, chair

cc: Tracie Sales, NHDES
Newmarket Conservation Commission, Planning Board
Christian Smith, PE, Beals Associates