

HARVARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION - Land Stewardship Subcommittee

MINUTES OF MEETING

May 30, 2023

Present: Wendy Sisson, Jim Adelson, Brian McClain, Peter von Conta, Jim Gorss

Guests: Petri Flint, Bob Douglas

Wendy Sisson called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM as a virtual meeting; the meeting was recorded

Minutes from the 4/25/23 meeting, as drafted by Jim A, were approved unanimously.

Wendy met Petri Flint on the Powell Land, and Petri was interested in getting involved in LSS activities, and attended as a guest.

Invasives

- Wendy pulled garlic mustard, at Holy Hill, in the so-called “poison ivy field”
- Wendy requested help from DPW and Concom with a dense patch of garlic mustard on Willard, just off Willard Lane. Don Ritchie cut it with a trimmer and a 6” layer of wood chips will be put on top of the cut area, to try to suppress the garlic mustard’s return
- The freeze that occurred on 5/18, while sadly affecting peaches and other fruit, also killed or retarded some patches of Japanese knotweed
- There is a group mapping the locations of Japanese knotweed on HND
- Black swallowwort is very difficult to pull, and hard to kill even with herbicide, which must be repeated every year; our primary technique will probably be early mowing
- On Haskell, we had planned to have it seeded with winter rye last fall, but unfortunately the seed rotted, so we’re going to plant buckwheat

Chestnuts

- Only a couple trees were affected, but not killed, with the May 18th frost
- Brian said that based on the flower count this year, he expects that we should get about 30 trees with nuts next year

Pollinator Garden

- Brian is working on clearing land on Powell for the garden
- Brian has also put up the first four feet of the deer fence, and still needs to add wire above that
- We will get the starter plants in June
- We have a list of suggested plants from professor Bob Gegear
- Jim G mentioned the work of the native plant group of Southborough, and perhaps we’ll take a visit to talk with them

- Christiane Turnheim offered some native plants from her abutting land, including willows

Bob Douglas of the Deer Management Committee joined for discussion of recommendations for hunting

- The gravel pit is used by DPW, and Bob will need to talk to them
- Warilla is not controlled by Conservation/Land Stewardship, but by Town of Harvard; this would nevertheless be endorsed by LSS, because there are no trails or activity on the property
- Old Mill – this might be a possibility, but we’d have to see how much is left once you exclude all space within 500 feet of adjacent houses
- Powell – there might also be a place here, though once again we’d need to see a map to see what area would be available
- Clapp-Scorgie – this property is very popular and gets a lot of use; once again, it would be critical to see a map to determine if there is a suitable area within this property
- Tripp
 - o This might be a possibility, because of a good amount of space
 - o Tom Cotton had some concerns about hunting here because of the CR held by the Harvard Conservation Trust
 - o The Conservation Restriction limits to management hunting, not recreational
- The new bylaw may make it impossible to enforce owner’s permission for hunting, because of the added requirement for land to be posted, as it is not practical or desirable to post signs 50 to 100 feet apart along all property boundaries
- The Deer Management Committee will get maps created for the properties selected above

Kaufman

- Jim Adelson had revisited the property 5/22, based on a note from Alex Smith received by Liz Allard, with some questions and concerns
- Jim A presented his recommendations, which the group agreed with
 - o The blue trail encountered from the Poor Farm Road/ White Lane entry does indeed cross a wet spot – it had been wet 5/22, and also on a previous trip Jim had made on Kaufman in February 2023; however, there are multiple ways to cross the wet area on stones, and it is a blue trail, with it being possible to avoid the area entirely by sticking with the primary (yellow) trail, so Jim recommended no change here
 - o Alex had asked about a lightly-marked additional blue trail in the Russo section of the property, and possibly marking it more extensively; Jim didn’t recommend it for several reasons a) a portion of the trail appears to be on private property, b) there is already a blue trail nearby, and a second parallel blue trail could be confusing to those hiking there, and c) while the additional trail is pleasant enough, it doesn’t really have outstanding features to warrant encouraging more travel there versus the existing trails

- Alex had also asked about a large rock pile found on the blue trail in the Russo section; the group thought that most likely it was the product of clearing for Rt. 2, since it is only about 100 – 150 yards from the highway
- Jim A will send a note to Alex Smith with the information

Prospect Hill

- At the entry from Prospect Hill Road, the yellow trail crosses a corner of private land, and needs to be rerouted to stay within conservation land
- A much larger part of the blue trail in this area is also on the same private land, and the blazes on this trail section need to be removed
- Jim A said he would work on these items, and will invite Wendy and Jim G to join him

Scout Troop trail clearing; LSS came up with possibilities for specific projects on Clapp-Scorgie

- Bring in lumber for a new boardwalk in a wet section of the blue trail heading to Clapp Cove; Peter has a drawing and specs for the lumber needed for the boardwalk
- Wendy will talk with the scoutmaster
- There is a “widow maker” on the trail that perhaps the adults associated with the scout troop might help to remove
- A continued effort for removing or reducing the graffiti remaining at Hoskins Point is another potential project
- Possible removal of some pine that obscures the view at Hoskins Point
- Possible removal of coals from the fire pit

Site Walk to Rodriguez

- Planned for Sat, 6/10 at 10 AM
- Meet at Littleton Road, at the entry to Cruft Lane, as there is not really enough parking on Cruft Lane for more than one car

Holy Hill

- Wendy to talk to Mark Shaw about a boardwalk off of Ann Lees
- Shaen to take a look at the Holy Hill Dancing Ground low fence, and possibly doing some maintenance work

Guest Petri Flint

- Petri lives very near Great Elms, and will prospectively monitor Great Elms, and also work on some trail clearing (tree removal) on the easement from Stow Rd
- We reviewed the requirements for chain saw use, including the release form
- Jim A will set up Petri with access to the Trail Status Log (done 5/31)

Next meeting 6/20

The meeting was adjourned at 9:25 PM