

HARVARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION - Land Stewardship Subcommittee
MINUTES OF MEETING

October 24, 2023

Virtual Meeting called to order @ 7:24pm

Present: Wendy Sisson, Brian McClain, Pam Durrant Jim Gorss, Petri Flint

1. Minutes of LSS meeting on 9/26 approved unanimously, with one amendment in the text on the proposed Rodriguez land snowmobile trail, to clarify that we acknowledge that the private land has a Conservation Restriction that expressly prohibits snowmobiles. Wendy will draft a sentence to be added and send it around for approval of the LSS members.
2. Report on mowing:
 - Hermann Orchard was mowed on both sides to prevent growth of invasive plants
 - Mowing also done in other town lands, except where wet conditions limited access.
 - Williams land perimeter was mowed.
3. Lands and trails updates:
 - Wendy and John Lee discussed a possible project for an Eagle Scout troop to build a boardwalk over a wet area on the blue trail in Prospect Hill. In the event that the Eagle Scouts need a second project, Wendy suggested an additional possible project in wet trail areas in Clapps Cove.
 - Pam reported that the trail in Willard Poitras land, on the wetland side of Poitras, could use some clearing.
4. TrailCare app and the new collaboration with HCT chainsaw crew:
 - Jim and Petri reported that a Google group email has been set up and tested to facilitate communications, and that people in the group were encouraged to set themselves up in the TrailCare app.
 - In the 9/26 meeting of LSS, we had discussed keeping the Trail Status Log as the main space in which to note collaborative efforts with the HCT trail crew, and the question was raised today about whether that was still the plan. Since Peter was not able to attend tonight's meeting, he can fill us in on his discussions with John Lee about how to manage the collaboration at the next LSS meeting.
5. Online trail map monitoring and new trail maps

- Wendy noted that there are instances, such as the “Alternate” Great Elms trail, where the trail that appears on online trail maps is not in fact an official trail that we are responsible for maintaining, but is an “add-on” trail that was privately cleared. She noted that the issue needs to be considered in collaborating with HCT on trail work, so that everyone is clear which trails are official trails that should be maintained, and which are not.
6. Hunting season has begun and runs through the end of December. The following are some relevant issues in need of further consideration with respect to hunting and the DMS:
- 75’ setback from existing trails is required of hunters, but that information is not posted on the relevant town web page.
 - Also, the 75’ setback only applies to official trails, not for any add-on trails, which underlines the need for clarity about official versus unofficial trails.
 - Wendy mentioned the possibility of creating deer exclosures to monitor how excluding deer from grazing in a specific area would impact the habitat. Possible motivations for such an exclosure could also include protection of desirable native plants. One possible site to explore might be in the Mass. Ave. land.
7. Wendy had received a query about the possibility of placing memorials on town lands, and the LSS discussed whether it would be appropriate to have a policy in place about this question. There was a consensus that we don’t feel it is a good idea to allow additional signage to be placed on these public lands, beyond the signage needed to mark trails and entrances or for educational purposes.
8. Invasive plant control:
- Stow Road and Mass Ave. Knotweed was sprayed with a foliar spray.
 - Phragmites was treated on Barton by the dam.
 - Autumn Olive was cut and treated on Stone.
 - Glossy Buckthorn on Powell needs to be treated, and Brian will assist the hired professional in addressing the Buckthorn with the cut-stump method, so that they can cover more of the area.
9. Fall walk planning:
- Discussed the need to communicate with HCT about using the loop at the end of Murray Lane for parking for the walk.
 - Discussed trails needing maintenance before November 4; Wendy has been trying to reach Peter Basile about clearing the easement from Murray Lane, which is overgrown with brambles. If he is not available to clear the trail, Wendy will try to find a time to do it with Jim and/or Petri.

10. Forest Health Walk on October 14 - report from Brian:

- 50-60 people attended.
- 5 stations were set up to discuss various aspects of the habitat.
- Brian spoke about the Chestnut trees there, as well as the impact of beavers on the ecosystem.

11. Next LSS meeting scheduled for Tuesday, November 28 @ 7:15pm

Meeting adjourned at 9:15pm

Petri Flint