

HARVARD CONSERVATION COMMISSION - Land Stewardship Subcommittee

MINUTES OF MEETING

July 28, 2020

Present: Wendy Sisson, Jim Adelson, Brian McClain, Peter von Conta, John Lee, Pam Durrant, Rob Traver

Guest: Adam Meier

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

Minutes from the 2/25/20 meeting, as drafted by Jim A., were approved

Property Reports

- Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary – Brian and Rick High blocked off trails that had been cut in the field
- Holy Hill
 - o a couple trees look like challenges; Wendy to ask Jim Burns to take a look
 - o Star pack to be used on the wet section where the trail goes behind Babbitt Lane headed for the white birch field
- Prospect Hill
 - o A big pine tree is down, though not on the trail
 - o Scouts did a workday of bringing fill in to the area behind the transfer station; we need to look at what more can be done
- Willard – white pines are down, as reported by Brian; John Lee to take a look
- Clapp-Scorgie – Mary Traphagan reported trees down, but Jim Burns looked and thinks they don't represent a major or difficult thing to get around

Jim A to add Rob and Adam to the Trail Status Log (attempted 7/29, but no confirmation of access)

Old Mill Rerouting

- Jim Adelson presented a plan to deal with the frequently wet and overgrown section found when going left at the fork approximately 100+ yards from the trail entrance
- The plan was based on previous inspection, assuming it was not feasible to relocate this section of trail to higher and drier ground
- In that event, that section of the trail would be discontinued, with access discouraged with logs/branches blocking off that section, and signage before reaching it to indicate that section was discontinued
- General agreement from the group to this plan; Jim A to confirm that there isn't a good relocation possibility
- Wendy to look to see if she can get a dead end sign for a side trail
- Ideally, somebody with significant plant knowledge could look to make sure we're not losing access to any particularly interesting plants with the discontinuation
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Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary Boardwalk

- A lower section always gets muddy
- A scout group is interested in doing a boardwalk
- Brian, Wendy, Carl Sciple, and one or two scout parents looked together at the site
- The scouts are considering using cinderblocks for the footings
- Wendy and Brian are not sure how well cinderblocks will work out, but they've been used successfully at other sites

Chestnut Grove

- Update from Brian who is leading the project
- There have been three volunteer work sessions, and all sites have been prepped and planted, with a 5' white pipe to prevent deer browse
- Some seedlings are just starting to grow out of their tubes
- Brian to add mesh to the tops of the pipes, to provide some support to the seedlings to keep the high tops of the seedlings from being blown over in the wind
- Brian wants to use Liquid Fence as a deer repellent, and wants to make sure that it would have approval from the Conservation Commission, which Wendy felt it would; Rob added the personal experience that the product had worked well on his property
- Jim Lee has been mowing monthly or more, to keep the poison ivy and invasives at bay

Invasives Efforts

- Work by the invasives intern this summer
 - o She worked on Clapp-Scorgie, Williams Land, very energetically and efficiently
 - o She also worked on Holy Hill, in the causeway towards Bennetts Brook, and removed a lot of barberry
- For an infestation of privet and other invasives on Williams, including multiflora rose in the butterfly habitat Wendy is potentially going to hire a contractor (Oxbow) to treat it
- Another potential engagement for Oxbow is to attack bittersweet and poison ivy within trees in Bare Hill Wildlife Sanctuary
- More work on the entry to Prospect Hill behind the transfer station, and the invasives there will be needed

We need an effort to refresh blazes, and have a good supply now to do it with

Mapping – Wendy would like to do mapping of invasives on conservation properties

Rob indicated that he could conceivably get teams of WPI students for work, which was well received

We discussed mapping roadside Japanese knotweed, so DPW can clear or spray

- Adam asked about where the boundary was between town land and private land, to know what could be tackled; unfortunately, it's not consistent between older and newer roads, state roads, etc.
- Consensus was we have our hands full with conservation land and can't take this on
- Pam felt particularly if we're going to use herbicide on roadsides, we use it selectively rather than all over town

Norway Maples on Clapp-Scorgie

- Wendy flagged ~12 along north field edge and woods road west of cemetery
- Looking to get them removed

Swallowwort – We have had challenges treating effectively with herbicide, but early mowing hasn't worked either, will need to treat again with years of follow-up.

Deer Management

- Clapp-Scorgie, Willard/Poitras pellet count was done
- Did cover areas outside of conservation properties, as well as within
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- Great Elms transects indicated fewer deer than Clapp-Scorgie, but also not sure of accuracy
- Harvard is not overrun like some towns further east – Plan is to permit enough hunting to keep population from growing and becoming a serious problem
- Hunters
 - o Deer Management subcommittee is working on how many hunters to certify
 - o According to Wendy, they are looking at 25-30 people for the five areas, which Wendy thought was too many
 - o Wendy also felt there should be hunters assigned to properties, rather than allowed to go to any property they want
 - o Wendy will talk to Laura at SVT about how they handle it

Open Space Committee -- Wendy, John, and Pam didn't know what they've been doing, but they've only recently begun to hold meetings.

The Capobianco property is still on the market, and John said not likely to move

Our next meeting will be 8/25

Meeting adjourned at 9:20 pm.