

Community Forest Management Plan Committee Meeting Minutes January 23, 2023

The Town of Barre Community Forest Management Plan Committee held its sixth meeting on Monday, January 23, 2023, starting at 6:30pm. The meeting was held in Conference Room #3 in the Municipal Building at 149 Websterville Road. Committee members present included: Patty Meriam, David Rouleau, Lori Bernier (remotely), Josh Howard, Larry Rogacki, and Jim West. Also present at the meeting: Town Manager Carl Rogers, Washington County Forester Robert Nelson, Millstone Trails Association Representative Mark Martin and Caroline Earle, Facilitator.

1. **Call to Order:** Chair Larry Rogacki called the meeting to order at 6:32pm.
2. **Consider Approving Agenda:** Josh Howard made a motion to approve the agenda as is. David Rouleau seconded the motion. Committee approved 6-0.
3. **Consider Approving January 16th Meeting Minutes:** Jim West made an amendment to the Meeting Minutes. Josh Howard made a motion to approve the minutes with Jim's amendment. Patty Meriam seconded the motion. Committee approved 6-0.
4. **Receive Public Input:** There was no public input shared at this time.
5. **Committee Discussion on Public Input:** There was no public input to discuss.
6. **Continue Reviewing Community Forest Management Plan:** In-between last meeting and this one, Recreation Director Crossley located and emailed the Committee the updated *Vermont State Wildlife Action Plan (2015)*. Caroline Earle acknowledged, in the interest of time, the plan is very long and detailed. 1502 pages to be exact. Robert Nelson offered to reach out to a colleague to see if they could offer insights on how the updated plan may affect the CFMP. Committee consensus to put this section on hold for the time being. The Committee moved on to paragraphs "Vermont Town Forest Project" and "The Trust for Public Land's Community Forest Program" with minimal edits. The Committee then spent time discussing the next paragraph on page 10, "Summary of the Conservation Easement." Much of the discussion revolved around Forest users and allowed users based on the Conservation Easement's language. Caroline Earle suggested bringing back Caitlin Cusack from the Vermont Land Trust to discuss the Conservation Easement. Jim West suggested moving the "Summary of Conservation Easement" ~~ahead~~ ^{after} of the "History" section at the beginning of the CFMP. Josh Howard suggested sending an email to Caitlin rather than having her for an in person meeting. Lori Bernier suggested changing the wording of "the forest industry." The Committee further discussed the wording. "Sustainable Forest Economy" was a suggested replacement term.
7. **Develop Community Group Invitation Process:** Next week Recreation Director Johnny Crossley will allot an Agenda item, roughly 10 minutes, to a professor from UVM who reached out about student involvement with the Committee. The Agenda item will allow her to speak on how the student(s) may assist the Committee and gain educational, hands on experience. Town Manager Carl Rogers and Recreation Director Johnny

Crossley will compile a list of Recreation Groups to solicit input from for the purposes of the Committee.

8. **Develop Tentative Agenda for January 30th Meeting:** For next meeting, the Committee will invite the professor from UVM, plan for requesting and receiving recreation group's input, and continue the review process.
9. **'Round the Table:** No notes.
10. **Adjourn**

L. Rogacki

Dea a Row

James A. West

J. West

Dean Preston

Vermont State Wildlife Action Plan Priorities

Conservation of the majority of this Property will address multiple threats to Species of Greatest Conservation Need, as outlined in the Vermont Wildlife Action Plan (2015).

- *Habitat Loss:* The 355 acres of this Property protected by the easement will never be converted for development, and will remain as habitat for forest-dwelling species in perpetuity. As a stepping stone between Groton State Forest and forestland in Williamstown, Brookfield and the Northfield Range, it serves as a wildlife linkage and additional habitat to species that travel widely through Washington and Caledonia County.
- *Impacts of Roads:* By conserving and consolidating ownership of 5 separately owned properties, further fragmentation and development of these parcels are prevented. Excluding temporary logging roads, no additional permanent roads will be created on the property.
- *Pollutants and Sedimentation:* The creation of a sustainable forestry plan for the Property, which will include appropriate buffers around streams and wetlands and will mandate best management practices, will protect water quality and decrease sedimentation in streams. The restrictions put in place by these Easements will restrict or control recreational off-road vehicle use on the property, which could cause erosion and sedimentation at stream crossings.

Conservation of the Property supports the following Conservation Strategies outlined in the Vermont Wildlife Action Plan:

Strategies for conserving Vermont's Birds of Greatest Conservation Need

- Slow the rate of fragmentation and development and maintain blocks of contiguous forest, grasslands, and early and late-successional habitats. (Chapter 4, page 14)
- (Encouraging) forestry practices that can enhance habitat suitability such as maintaining or increasing aspen stands or the retention of coarse woody debris and snags. (Chapter 4, page 14)
- Identify, prioritize and maintain existing contiguous forest blocks and associated linkages that allow for upward and northward movement in response to climate change (Chapter 4, page 14)

Strategies for conserving Vermont's Mammals of Greatest Conservation Need

- Maintain large blocks of undeveloped forests linked together by habitat corridors in order to provide a network of interconnected habitats throughout northeastern New England (Chapter 4, page 28)
- Maintain riparian buffers along streams (Chapter 4, page 28)
- Maintain and restore habitat connectivity and minimize fragmentation of forest blocks. (Chapter 4, page 28)

Strategies for conserving Vermont's Reptiles and Amphibians of Greatest Conservation Need

- Maintain habitat through appropriate management, direct habitat disturbance and site roadways away from sensitive sites such as breeding pools (Chapter 4, page 33)
- Work cooperatively with landowners, habitat management agencies, towns and communities to protect habitat and maintain connectivity. (Chapter 4, page 33)

Vermont Town Forest Project

In 2004, the Northern Forest Alliance and a wide ranging team of twenty public and private partners, including the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, The Trust for Public Land, and the University of Vermont, launched the Vermont Town Forest Project designed to create new town forests and improve stewardship of existing town forests. The Barre Town Forest is another successful example of land conservation through local control and ownership.

The Trust for Public Land's Community Forest Program

The Barre Town Forest project is an important component of TPL's Community Forest Program, and serves as a model for other "assemblage/defragmentation" projects that will become more and more important as large parcels of land become scarcer throughout New England.

Summary of the Conservation Easement

Please see appendix A for the full recorded copy of the Conservation Easement

355 acres of the 381-acre Barre Town Forest is protected by a Conservation Easement co-held by Vermont Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. The Barre Town Selectboard chose to leave the two parcels originally owned by the Town unrestricted, but still part of the Town Forest with regards to management. The Easement seeks to conserve managed forest, wildlife habitat, and scenic beauty, protect water quality, encourage sustainable management of soil resources, and provide recreational opportunities to the public. This protection will serve the natural communities of the forest, the sustainable forest economy, , wildlife, and the people of Vermont.

The following is a summary of the terms of the Conservation Easement. Note that "Protected Property" in the summary below refers only to the 355 acres shown as conserved on Map B, not the entire Barre Town Forest.

I. Purposes

1. As primary purposes, to conserve and provide perpetual public access to the Protected Property for noncommercial recreational purposes, including but not limited to, bicycling, bird watching, cross-country skiing, fishing, hiking, hunting and trapping, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, walking and wildlife observation and other recreational uses which are compatible with the foregoing uses and with the other Purposes of the Easement. . Dispersed pedestrian public access will be provided throughout the Property while some recreational activities may be confined to mapped recreation corridors.
2. As secondary purposes:
 - a) To conserve forestry values, wildlife habitats, biological diversity, natural communities, riparian buffers, aquatic habitats, wetlands, soil productivity, water quality, and native flora and fauna on the Protected Property;
 - b) To conserve the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource values; and

- c) To conserve complementary, non-commercial recreational opportunities, open space values, and scenic resources associated with the Protected Property for present and future generations.