

## Meeting Minutes: Dummerston Conservation Commission

July 14, 2016, 7:00pm

Dummerston Town Office

Members Present: John Anderson, Betsy Whittaker, Ed Anthes, Mary Ellen Copeland, Bill Schmidt,  
Guest: Erin Rodgers, Project Coordinator for Trout Unlimited re: Culverts (Western New England  
Project Coordinator, working in Brattleboro); Deborah Ayer took today's minutes, as a volunteer.

### ***Trout Unlimited, Culverts Presentation:***

Trout Unlimited (TU) builds road/street crossings, doing assessment through construction/restoration. TU is active in MA, NH, VT, southern ME, and does some Adirondack and Catskills work. Vermont is in the best shape of these states, which 80% of culverts assessed (with other states having 30-40% of their culverts assessed). Aquatic organism passage sets the priority for TU culvert work. Animals don't like to use tight, constricted culverts, thus a high arch, natural bottom culvert design.

TU assesses:

- **Geomorphic Compatibility:** Erosion, sedimentation from undersized culverts, flooding damage due to undersized culverts. Replace culverts and low dams to bring them up to bridge passage quality.
- **Hydraulic Capacity:** Culverts designs include larger arches and natural bottoms that provide continuity in stream structure and increased water passage capacity. Restoration and addition to habitats, bank stabilization.

What's good for the fish turns out to be good for the roads. Undersized culverts are costly over their life-time with repair and maintenance work required after flooding and clogging. Currently there are 1,000 un-assessed culverts in Windham County. Lots of small streams that flow into CT river are overlooked.

The West River has many sites being assessed this summer: 39 structures, including 31 culverts (other structures are healthy and of no concern). Just 1 culvert is fully passable by all species. 18 are impassable to all fish species. ½ or more of the stream is unable to pass through 19 existing culverts. Standards suggest 120% of full capacity to accommodate stream and flood loads.

Erin and TU will return after this summer's assessment with recommendations.

***Tiny Grant from VCF:*** Lynn Levine has received a tiny grant from the Vermont Community Foundation, funding Dummerston School project the "Art of Seeing." If anyone else wants to do some grant work, we have projects in mind: vernal pools, invasives. Grants are \$500 - \$2,500.

***Invasives:*** Deb Ayer, a photographer, plans to do a photo-essay on Dummerston resident's remediation of barberry on his property, for educational purposes. Mary Ellen suggests we could get that in the Commons, as well. How should we go forward with invasive programs. Mary Ellen has contacted Elizabeth Spinney (who heads a State-wide invasive initiatives) for guidance. John noticed tall White Clover choking road-side habitats; 6' tall, leans out over roads. Discussion of Wild Parsnip (a toxic plant) and reports of its presence on Dummerston residents' property.

***West River Trail Organization (WRTO):*** John A. met with them to voice concerns about

environmental impact. If and when they get up into Dummerston, they will do work to “nature conservancy standards.” DCC will mark rare plant species for preservation. John Anderson met with Lester Humphreys of WRTO regarding preservation of rare plants. Will go out to mark Dogwoods before next scheduled trail work day.

***Town Plan:*** Ed and Mary Ellen went to last planning commission meeting to discuss the update to the Town Plan. There'll be a town forum on November 1, 2016 regarding Town Plan. Important for us to be represented.

***Trails:*** Ed reported on the Prospect Hill Trust meeting. Roger, Bill Johnson and Ed went up Prospect Hill to re-plan trail to avoid private land. Trustees were open to that idea, looking for workers to do that. Discussion of mowing trail from Park Laughton Rd to bridge. A little work that needs to be done putting up trail markers, especially at the corner past the cellar hole, as it's been overgrown with raspberries. May need to do some clearing to make trail obvious.

***Inventory and Biodiversity:*** John A. found a patch of Mimulus on Nature Conservancy land. Will notify them of its presence. John has found 45 new plants to be added to list of rare plants.

***Education Programs:*** A coyote talk which was co-sponsored with BEEC was very successful. Mary Ellen would like to offer her another presentation on wolves and it was noted that people like programs on big animals. We continue to plan monthly evening educational events, and also plan to do a 4 week educational course mid-minter. We are exploring options regarding educational programs on soils. MaryEllen, wants to do fall program to encourage citizen pull-up work.

***Sightings:*** John saw Loon chicks on Sunset Lake. Betsy saw bald eagle.