

Meeting Minutes: Dummerston Conservation Commission

September 8, 2016, 7:00pm

Dummerston Town Office

Members Present: Bill Johnson, John Anderson, Betsy Whittaker, Lynn Levine, Ed Anthes, Mary Ellen Copeland,

Guest: Deborah Ayer took today's minutes, as a volunteer.

Minutes Review/Financial Report: Minutes accepted. No changes or new business regarding finances.

Grant Possibilities: Vermont Community Foundation has grant money available; wetlands assessment is one idea for a possible grant.

Reminder of upcoming event: "Time Money & Knowledge: Conservation Resources at the state, regional, and local levels. September 20th 6:00-8:00pm at Newfane Union Hall (sponsored by The Association of VT Conservation Commissions, VT Fish & Wildlife Dpt., and Windham Regional Commission). This is an opportunity to network with other conservation commissions (Guilford, Putney); all DCC members are encouraged to attend. Meriah Major will be the representative from Windham Regional Commission.

Educational Programs:

Invasives Panel event on 9/13/2016

- John Anderson will also speak on Putney Mountain goat and sheep grazing impact on invasive plants. Mary Ellen will invite Marion Major (from Windham Regional), who took sheep up Putney Mountain for weed control.
- Deb Ayer to man door at 9-13 event.
- Add to email update on this event - John A. bringing sample of Black Swallow wart. Will speak on using animal grazing to control invasive plants.

Soils Meeting:

Elizabeth Rudegeair, a new member of the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts (who specializes in outreach and community engagement) will contact Chuck Armstrong with the Soil Conservation Service (they work with landowners). Tuesday October 11, 2016 is set for the meeting on soils.

Eastern Wolf Program:

Chris Shadler, who does the Eastern Wolf program, has agreed to do a program for us in November. We will not video tape this presentation.

Porcupines:

The week after Thanksgiving, Patti Smith doing a porcupine program, which we can co-sponsor with BEEC. The event is currently scheduled at the Brooks Memorial Library, though we'll try to reserve the Learning Collaborative, a larger space.

Hike Event:

Invite Johnathan Royce to lead a Prospect Hike. Timing is good for early October (foliage season), aiming for Oct. 8, or 15.

Returning Presenters:

Discussion of January for returning popular presenters: Tom Wessles, Richard Little or Roger Haydock, Bob Engle, Patti Smith. Would like to take a “Dummerston landscape over time topic: 200 years ago, today, and 200 years from now. Perhaps a panel, touching on animals, insects, plants, geology, etc. A fluid order of topics for returning presenters: geology, plants, forests, wildlife.

Winter Animal Tracking:

Lynne Levine will do a tracking program this winter, date to be determined.

Potential New Presenters:

We will contact biologist Bern Heinrich to see how much he would charge for a presentation. Dummerston has an astronomy club; Betsy Whitaker will investigate possible astronomy presenters.

Publication: Commission would like to put resources and topic summaries of our educational meetings into a booklet (to be published in advance of each meeting), which will be available to the public at each event.

Regional Commissions Meeting:

Reminder of upcoming meeting on November 17, 2016 – locals John Wier and Jeff Neugent will be presenting.

Invasive Plants:

No Emerald Ash Borer or Longhorn Beetle have been reported in VT yet. They are being reported in the west (specifically Nebraska and Texas).

Trails:

- DCC coordination with the WRTA: John Anderson has composed letter, on behalf of the Dummerston Conservation Commission, to the West River Trail Association, regarding our support of rare plant protection/preservation along the trail. Letter was read aloud and approved by commission members. A copy will be sent to Chair Mary Ellen Copeland for formalization and mailing.
- Prospect Mountain – We need to put up new blazes marking the trail. Betsy and Lynne will put them up before October foliage hike. A new route for end/loop has been identified to keep the trail exclusively on town land.
- Dutton Pines State Park – committee members have been noting that cars are present in the parking lot whenever they pass; the park is being used.
- Rain Garden – Dummerston Conservation Commission will pay for mulching in the spring.

Hawk Watch:

300 hawks counted by John A. so far this September. John has spotted about 12 – 14 Monarch Butterflies on Putney Mountain. Dummerston residents have seen one or two passing through over time. Compare to prior counts of 140 at a time. Many bats spotted flying along Orchard Road in Brattleboro this week. Dummerston residents have spotted bats roosting in their barns.

Wildlife Connectivity:

VT A&R working on language to include this issue. National news recently on connecting adjacent parks between US and Canadian border.

E-mail Outreach:

Deborah Ayer will redesign our email newsletter template, for a more fluid visual presentation.

Sightings:

Coyotes heard at the end of Camp Arden Rd, near the West River. Bats roosting in 2 commissioners' barns. Turkey flocks spotted on Black Mountain and East Orchard Rd. Woodchuck hole spotted on trail to Prospect Mountain. On a trail off Camp Arden Rd., a medium-sized black bear was seen. On the boarder of Dummerston and Putney, a fox was seen. Deer are a regular in the woods/field behind Scott Farm, at end on East Orchard Road. Hummingbirds projected to be present through Sept. 20, with a stray or two into October – a few dozen have been seen going over Putney Mountain. A flock of Canadian Geese were spotted overhead, heading south; a few hundred were spotted in Brattleboro on Meadow-brook Road. A baby snapping turtle was seen top of the Orchard Street loop above Brattleboro's golf course. Skunks and raccoon seen on John Anderson's property.