

Dummerston Conservation Commission Minutes - January 12, 2016

Members Present: Ed Anthes, Mary Ellen Copeland, Bill Johnson, John Anderson, Deborah Ayer, Bill Schmidt.

Financial Statement

The financial statement from the Town Treasurer was accepted and approved. Commissioners discussed upcoming expenditures including possible educational efforts targeted for young people including resources at local libraries and programs at the school.

Educational Programs

- Betsy Whitaker and Mary Ellen Copeland are working with BEEC and Dummerston School on educational initiatives.
- There is a public astronomy program on January 17 with Claudio Veliz (this was postponed until Jan. 24).
- *The Nature of Windham County: Past Present and Future* will be held Wednesday mornings in February from 10-12.
- The Commission will ask Deb Luskin to do a presentation on hiking in May to encourage people to hike Dummerston Trails.
- Author/naturalist Bern Heinrich responded with interest to our invitation to be a presenter at an educational event. DCC is pursuing the possibility of co-sponsoring such an event with local libraries and BEEC in order to attract a larger audience and to share expenses.
- David Foster and his colleagues at Harvard Forest have done an assessment of New England Forests. They are willing to present at an educational event in September. It was suggested that this program should be co-sponsored with other organizations and advertised to a larger audience.
- At the request of Arthur Westing, the DCC will co-sponsor an event with Windham Woodlands and BEEC which will encourage parents to engage children with nature. The DCC agrees to support this program by advertising this event on the e-list and the website.
- The December Wolf/Coyote program went very well, with high engagement at presentations at Dummerston School (about 60 students, with teachers) and at the Learning Collaborative (about 50 attendees).
- There was discussion of inviting Stephen Long, author of "Thirty Eight: The Hurricane that Transformed New England" to be a presenter in a possible future forestry series.
- Patti Smith will be invited to do an event or a series on Dummerston Wetlands, including how to define and maintain healthy wetlands.
- Bill Schmidt is working on setting up a meeting or a series of meetings on the effects of drought.

Town Meeting:

The Commission will provide information on invasive species and suggested reading

on local ecology at a display table. Betsy Whitaker will be asked to work on this and Deb Ayer said she would assist. Mary Ellen Copeland will speak briefly at the meeting about Commission activities and concerns.

Dutton Pines:

DCC will sponsor a gathering at Dutton Pines in June. They will make further plans about this event at the next meeting.

Prospect Hill:

Commissioner Jonathan Royce will be asked to contact the Career Center to ask them if they would be willing to use students in the forestry program to control invasive species on Prospect Hill.

Regional Conservation Commissions:

The upcoming regional potluck dinner/meeting of conservation commissions is on 3/16 in Dummerston in the church basement. There will be two parts to the meeting. 1. Each commission will speak about their efforts, challenges, and successes. 2. Groups will be asked to submit problems to Mary Ellen Copeland and the commission will work with her to choose several of these problems for a problem solving activity and discussion with the group.

Farmland Conservation:

The chair will write a letter to Joan Weir, Southeast Regional Director of VT Land Trust, and the Dummerston Select Board to let them know that the Dummerston Conservation Commission supports conservation of the former Moore Farm on Station Rd., "Easy Moo Acres."

Sightings:

Thirty turkeys were seen moving through fields on East Orchard Road in Dummerston. Gray fox and raccoon (at suet feeders) were seen at John Anderson's property, along with lots of blue birds near grape vines, a yellow-bellied sap sucker, and lots of coyote tracks (guessing made by just two or three animals, but very active). Over the years and recently, John Anderson has spotted worms on top of snowpack after heavy rains (they don't survive) and is curious about why they do that. An American tree sparrow has been seen at the Anthes-Copeland feeders. A gray fox was hit by a vehicle and killed on Camp Arden Rd.