

Randolph Conservation Commission 8.19.14

Present: Sid McLam, Erica Young, Annette Higby, Brendan Barden, Gus Howe Johnson, Gerry Reymore, Jay Lackey.

Meeting agenda continued from June 17 and July 15, 2014. Sid made a motion to accept the minutes as presented, Annette moved the motion, Brendan seconded, motion passed.

Treasurer's Report

Conservation Fund balance stands as \$21,090.56, but recent approved grant requests may not have been paid yet (ie \$2500 Pinello).

White River Partnership

Emily Miller, WRP monitoring coordinator, is facilitating monitoring water quality on the White River tributaries, particularly the Second Branch (the Randolph/Royalton/Brookfield area, but the bulk is Randolph) because its levels more often exceed quality standards. At the May 2014 RCC meeting the conservation commission voted to recommend funding of \$2000 to the WRP for water quality testing and analysis on the Second branch of the White River. Emily will update the RCC when more information is available, after the Randolph Selectboard has approved the funding request.

Vermont Open Meeting Law

Passed in the 2014 VT legislative session, it was declared that the agenda for open meetings must be posted a week prior to the meeting, and minutes need to be posted within a week of the meeting held. In addition, meetings need to be warned at least one week in advance.

Sheep Pasturing/Ellis property

A neighbor of the Ellis property, Jenn Colby, is interested and willing to move her small flock of sheep, with net fencing, to assist with biological control of invasives in the brushy part of the property, in particular, wild chervil and bedstraw in the lower pasture. At the moment the property management deed says "no new agricultural uses" but we are actively pursuing a contact with the Ellis family to see if they would consider approving this proposal. When and if family approval is gained, the RCC recommends this proposal to progress to consideration by the Selectboard. Gerry suggested we could take before and after photos of the undergrowth to be able to measure the potential advantages. Dave Paginelli thinks this management plan is a great idea and is willing to speak to the selectboard about the environment advantages.

Tree Pest Update

Jay Lackey updated us on pests of concern in our area. Emerald Ash Borer is the #1 concern, a federally regulated pest (quarantine wise) but it is well beyond eradication. It feeds on all 16 species of Ash that are known to exist. When it gets into a tree, the tree

will die in two to four years, with 100% mortality. This insect has the potential to eliminate ash as a tree species in North America. Biological control is probably the only saving grace against an insect like this. It will take one or two decades for the biological controls to get ahead of this pest. Grants are available to high risk areas wanting to develop a plan. Girdling ash trees in areas where populations of emerald ash borer are known to exist are effective in attracting the pest into areas that can be controlled, this effort is called "SLow Ash Mortality" (SLAM project). One plan could include identifying and removing the ash trees now, when the wood can be sold, to reduce the threat in future. Jay is a technical resource for our area. A planning team can be established to oversee the work to fight this threat in our municipality.

Erica will oversee compiling a list of names of interested foresters and/or forest property owners to start with, then embark on a public campaign to educate townspeople about identifying ash and threats to ash trees.

Members present started brainstorming a list of people to invite to an education/workshop session. More work to continue on this agenda item at next meeting of the Randolph Conservation Commission. The Braintree Conservation Commission is very interested in teaming with the RCC on this.

Fall is an optimal time to do an ash tree inventory of our local area. Erica will write a grant request for funds to potentially hire a forester to train townspeople to identify and report ash trees.

Sayward Harvest Proposal

Dave Paginelli marked the forest and has negotiated with a contractor. The actual thinning was expected to take place winter 2013-14 by logger Tony Chaloux of Barre but has not been started yet. It will likely be rescheduled for winter 2014-15.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.

The Randolph Conservation Commission regularly meets the third Tuesday of each month at 6pm at the Randolph Town Hall.

Next meeting will be 6pm on September 16, 2014. Public is welcome to attend.

Potluck snacks will be served, please bring a dish to share!