

## MINUTES

### Meeting of the West Suburban Conservation Council

4 April 2013

4-6PM

**In attendance:** Chris Pryor(New England Forestry Foundation), Don MacIver(Littleton Conservation Trust), Michelle Grzenda(Weston Conservation Commission), Laurie Bent(Weston Conservation Commission), Christa Collins (Sudbury Valley Trustees), Bruce Scherer(Heritage Fields Farm), Joan Ferguson(Concord Land Conservation Trust), Gordon Shaw(Concord Land Conservation Trust), Rick Findlay(Littleton conservation Trust), Bill Taylor(Upton Open Space Committee), Marcella Stasa(Upton Open Space Committee), Hank Rauch(Westborough Community Land Trust), Bob O'Connor(Mass Energy & Environmental Affairs), Whit Beals(New England Forestry Foundation/Sudbury Valley Trustees).

Minutes from November 2012 meeting were reviewed briefly. The newly-designed WSCC section of svtweb.org was shown: <http://www.svtweb.org/west-suburban-conservation-council>. It was suggested that our mission reflect why we are different from the MA Land Trust Coalition and why there is a need for our group. There will be follow-up contacts to members to confirm whether or not they want to be listed on the website. SVT will look into making Agenda's and Minutes available on the website.

#### Member Announcements:

- Laura Mattei, SVT, updated the group about the status of the burn preparation at Memorial Forest. The area was recently cleared.
- Ashley Davies, Americorps at SVT, announced an Open Space Conference aimed at town and local land trust volunteers. The conference will be held on Saturday, June 8<sup>th</sup> from 10AM – 3PM at the Oakmont Regional High School, Ashburnham, MA.
- Michele Grzenda and Laurie Bent discussed the most recent challenge to the deer bowhunting program in Weston, a citizen petition to have bowhunting banned in Weston.
  - In the first annual Weston hunting season, 18 deer were killed by permitted hunters, 18 were killed on private land, and 24 were killed by cars.
  - Follow-up questions were asked about the town conflict. Laurie said that there is agreement that the deer population needs to be managed, but the conflict is focused on whether the deer should be killed. The conservation commission is aware that although the local media has reported on the issue often, many people in town are unaware of the deer management controversy.
  - It was mentioned that this is exactly the type of issue that the WSCC was formed to rally around, a regional issue. A regional outreach campaign, with informational pamphlets and an information website, could help.

- There will be a Deer Forum held in Weston on April 23<sup>rd</sup> from 7:30-9PM. More information here: <http://medfield02052.wordpress.com/2013/04/08/lyme-disease-talk-423-in-weston/>
- Bob O'Connor from the MA Department of Energy & Environmental Affairs announced a variety of grant/funding opportunities:
  - [Working Forest Initiative](#) – Estate Planning Outreach Services – managed by UMass - Amherst . For more information: Call Paul Catanzaro at UMass Amherst at: (413) 545-4839; E-mail [cat@umext.umass.edu](mailto:cat@umext.umass.edu); or view the website.
  - [DCR Grants](#)
  - [DCS Grants](#)
    - [Land & Water Conservation Fund](#)
      - This year the grant funding is for assistance with constructing trails on existing conservation land.
    - [Landscape Partnership Grant](#)
    - [LAND Grant](#)
    - [PARC Grant](#)
    - [Conservation Partnership Grant](#)

#### Discussion:

- Suggestions for a new group name were discussed, with one being to keep the name as is. A poll will be sent out to choose one of the new suggestions or keep the name as is.
- Beth Gula gave an update of Sudbury Valley Trustees' 2013 local conservation poll:
  - Response rate was over 50% from town land trusts and conservation commissions/municipal groups. Most respondents said their priority is to train volunteers/members to perform necessary services rather than contract out for services. An overview of survey results will be available on the WSCC website soon.
- Discussion of spring/summer workshops. Potential training opportunities in the coming months include baseline report, property monitoring, basic trail maintenance workshops. Contact [bgula@svtweb.org](mailto:bgula@svtweb.org) to inquire about these topics or with other ideas for workshop topics.
- Ashley Davies reviewed recent studies related to agricultural conservation, food security, and land trusts roles. These studies will be available on the WSCC website.
  - Studies all point to land trusts conserving land for agriculture and looking at non-traditional properties as potential agricultural conservation parcels.
    - [Conway School, Franklin County Study](#): Found that 53% of prime farmland soils in Franklin County were not currently being farmed or prioritized for conservation.
    - [New Entry Farmland GIS Mapping Project](#): Going to different counties and town agricultural commissions to map potential farmland and educate landowners on how to lease land to a farmer.

- [Pioneer Valley Planning Commission Food Security Plan](#): Compiled a list of action items for food security. One that land trusts could fulfill is “Preserve farmland and work to convert available land that may not currently be used as farmland, to agricultural purposes.”
- MA Food Policy Council is planning on creating a food security plan for Massachusetts.
- Discussion of whether there is a need for a statewide agricultural land trust in Massachusetts and how it could benefit existing land trusts and farmers by providing a more focused effort on agricultural conservation and additional funding for land trusts working on agricultural conservation projects.

**Field Management Presentation** (Slides will be available on the WSCC website)

- Laura Mattei - Concepts for Field Management Planning and Case Study (Greenways, Wayland).
- Bruce Scherer - Practical Strategies and Tools for Field Management, case studies of field conversion with discussion of challenges and techniques.
- Tim Simmons – Discussion on the use of prescribed burns, and Q&A about field management in general.