

5/5/14

## WSSC Meeting

**Attendance: Laura Mattei, Nick Olson, Ashley Davies, Laurie Bent, John Keyes, Russell Hopping, Michele Grzenda, Freddie Gillespie, Marcella Stasa, Bill Taylor, Rob McArthur, Bob O'Connor, David Stainbrook, Christa Collins, Joan Ferguson, Gordon Shaw, Priscilla Ryder, Gary Dufresne, Lisa Vernegaard**

- 1) Laura Mattei: Called attention. Briefs on agenda. Stated that last meeting made more progress on stewardship issues, specifically on deer management. Asked that everyone introduce themselves with name, affiliation, and any current projects that may be of interest to the group.
- 2) Nick Olson: SVT and AmeriCorps
  - a) SVT is holding its annual Trail-a-thon at its Baiting Brook Reservation bordering Callahan State Park. Invited everyone to attend.
- 3) Jim Snyder-Grant: Acton
  - a) Need help with data on Japanese barberry and the tick invasion
  - b) Laura reminds that the CISMA is good for invasive issues
- 4) Ashley Davies: SVT and Northborough
  - a) SVT was awarded a Landscape Partnership Grant for the Tri-town area (Boylston, Berlin, and Northborough)
  - b) One of problems is that were supposed to have town partners but Boylston is not interested in collaborating. Looking to NEFF to take a role in Boylston
- 5) Laurien Bent: Weston conservation commission
  - a) Deer issues are pressing issue that Weston continues to manage
- 6) John Keyes: Concord land Conservation Trust
- 7) Russ Hopping: TTOR
- 8) Michele Grzenda: Town of Weston
  - a) Using town funding for field preservation (field edges, rock walls)
    - i) looking at restoring a field on Church St. (Pushing back edges but specifically clearing because its overrun with invasives)

b) Historic aerials.com good resource for finding past land uses

9) Freddie Gillespie: Southborough

a) Interested in restoration of conservation land, specifically for grassland birds. Bringing back nesting bobolinks and woodcocks. Looking at how management of invasives impacts native species. Interested in knowing how a town could provide funding to keep farming land in use

10) Marcella Stasa: Upton

a) Has questions about the possibilities of leasing town land for farming.

11) Bill Taylor: Upton

a) interested in learning how to run trails over wet areas

12) Bob O'Connor: EEA

a) New land report: 100,000 acres and 150 parks on EEA website. A look at what could happen if we continue up with this pace for a while. Have a working forest initiative out of DCR funding forest management plan for individuals and towns. 75-90 town parcels funded through program

b) Foresters for the birds: working with mass and Vermont Audubon to come up with forestry practices to promote a dozen selected birds. Definitely available for private landowners. Not sure if it's open for town lands

c) New environmental bond working its way through the legislature that includes a trust fund for CR stewardship that would be populated with 20 million dollars.

13) Rob McArthur: Conservation Administrator for town of Framingham

a) Working on Nyanza grant money for parcel along Sudbury River

14) David Stainbrook: Fish and Wildlife

a) Available to answer questions on deer management

15) Christa Collins: SVT

a) Tri-town along with Ashley

16) Joan Ferguson: Concord

a) Last year after WSCC spring meeting, the speaker came out and looked at a couple of fields for improving management. May have field with lots of (Yellow Flap). Looking for ways to manage it

17) Gordon Shaw: Concord Land Conservation Trust

- a) Working on pushing back buckthorn from a number of fields among other invasives.

18) Priscilla Ryder: Marlborough City

- a) Working on a field that they are hoping to push back to the edges and also working with Laura and SVT on a prescribed burn.

19) Gary Dufresne: Westborough

- a) Volunteer hunting instructor and bow instructor, brings experience from deer management programs and specifically bow only hunting programs

20) Lisa Vernegaard: SVT

21) Gordon added: Water chesnut harvest between town of Concord and Town of Lincoln

22) Laura Mattei:

- a) Working on Deer Management in Wayland with National Forest and Wildlife??
- b) Knocking back field edges and treating for invasives (CISMA very active on this)
- c) SVT did informational presentation to its board to incorporate hunting on select SVT properties
- d) Was passed meaning SVT can now consider hunting on a few properties
- e) Drew up a draft for deer management

23) Russ Presentation: (See attached powerpoint)

- a) Considerations
  - i) Size
  - ii) Environmental Conditions
    - (1) Topography
    - (2) Soil Type
  - iii) Land Use
    - (1) Existing management?

- iv) Wildlife
  - (1) What do we mean about wildlife
- b) Size is important: bigger's better
  - i) Can break up fields to incorporate different management strategies
- c) Smaller patches still important and require management
- d) Environmental considerations
  - i) Wet Meadows- disappearing faster than uplands
    - (1) Higher ratio of biodiversity than uplands, better when they're side by side
  - ii) Dry Outwash (other extreme)
    - (1) Main difference: water nowhere near surface
    - (2) (Hard to get tractor on wet meadows to mow)
- e) Land Use considerations
  - (1) Is the goal haying or grazing?
    - (a) How often? When?
      - (i) Once after July is best for grassland birds
      - (ii) Is the goal 2 or 3 after July?
  - (2) Grazing adds a degree of complexity
    - (a) Stocking rights? Duration?
    - (b) What's on the ground after animals are done?
  - (3) Wildlife
    - (a) Bobolinks least choosy out of grassland birds, most popular to manage for
    - (b) Other birds require larger spaces
  - (4) Not all about birds

- (a) Pollinators also important. Birds great indicators, but invertebrates (butterflies), at least for some part of their life require grassland/open conditions (abundant source of nectar and pollen)

**(5) No field can be all these things**

- (a) Identify conservation targets
- (b) Identify threats
- (c) Consider Management Options and plan accordingly
  - (i) Haying
  - (ii) Grazing
  - (iii) Mowing
  - (iv) Smaller scale
    - 1. Prescribed Fire
    - 2. Herbicide
      - a. More of a spot method, not for ubiquitous use
    - 3. These are generally not options for field habitat

**(d) 3 Real World examples**

- (i) 40 acres that are island among development (all total with connections about 100 acres)
  - 1. Primarily open and wet
  - 2. TTOR and neighbors would mow at the same time.
  - 3. Started staggering mowing
  - 4. First week in July bobolinks should be full fledged
  - 5. Mowed a new field each week to maintain habitat for pollinators.
    - a. All get mowed once a year but stagger them from July through September approximately every 2 weeks

b. Butterfly at this spot is Baltimore Checker Spot

(ii) Smaller field

1. State listed orchids, other butterflies
2. Uses a late mow
3. Buckthorn real problem , especially in wet fields
4. Used a spot application of herbicide late august before plants go dormant
5. Warton Reservation: Complex of about 40 acres, mainted for view and haying
  - a. Always tension between farmer to get a good hay crop and management for birds/pollinators
  - b. Used LIP grant to clear 15 acres that was not good forestland to augment field and allow for more management options to appease more stakeholders (more diversity)

(e) Laura: Why are you staggering as opposed to rotating on an annual basis

(i) Russ: 2 reasons- all mowing in house, limited time

1. Rotating by not mowing some years doesn't do enough to suppress woody growth. That being said late season mowing doesn't do much to compromise the health of woody plants

(f) Laurie: Do you mow the same time each year?

(i) Russ: Approximately...

(g) Michele: About restoration: with wetlands did they have to go through conservation commission

(i) Russ: Yes because we had to go over land to get to wetland, but cons com was involved all the way through

(h) Next to Laura: Scope of effort of restoration

(i) Russ: On Warton project: clearing was easy, it's the maintaingin we had to think about. All wood was sold as lumber, firewood, or chipped and remove. Stumps ground. Per acre cost is difficult to say, every contractor is different. \$2k per

acre w/o stump grinding. Add \$1-2k if include stump grinding. Biggest trees  
~60 yrs old

1. LIP is 25% match through Division of Fisheries and Wildlife

- (i) Priscilla: What's the smallest size isolated field
  - (i) About 10 acres. If its part of a greater open area, down to 4 or 5 acres if near wetlands, etc.
- (j) Lisa: About hedgerows?
  - (i) Removing hedges is important for creating line of sight for grassland birds. Very important to remove to attract more grassland birds. Shrubs are as much of an obstacle, but 1 or 2 rows of trees becomes a barrier (more an issue with birds than pollinators)
- (k) Christa: Working with landowner that grazes and hays for beef. Wonders why he needs to worry about bobolinks here when there are so many in Maine. Is looking at staggered mowing at a town level possible?
  - (i) Would be great to do more at a larger cooperative scale. Where they have late season mowing, sudden bump in June to July because of mowing occurring elsewhere.
- (l) Marcela: With limited resources, what is the priority that requires minimal resources (time, money, etc.)
  - (i) 1<sup>st</sup>: Understand the field, do you have grassland birds? Invertabrates?
- (m) Marcela: If they can mow only ever other year, is it worth it? Wetland Mitigation?
  - (i) Even if you can only do it every other year, still worth it. Not sure about the wetland mitigation. For smaller area, could complicate management, larger would offer more options.
- (n) Priscilla: under grassland reserve so they can't mow until Aug 1<sup>st</sup>. Makes hay not valuable. Mow every year.
  - (i) If the hay itself is not attractive enough for farmers, they sometimes pay farmers and they get to keep the hay regardless of quality.
  - (ii) Bob O'Connor: Community Innovation Grants- Ways for multiple communities to share things (assets). Might be possible for tractor. Probably just town

specific (no private parties) (Massachusetts Department of Innovation and Finance. CIC) Community Innovation Challenge Grant.

1. Michele got one for tick task force

(6) Summary:

- (a) Funding for grassland management is difficult to come by
- (b) Washing machinery used for mowing to ensure it doesn't bring invasives from other sources