

## MINUTES

### Meeting of the West Suburban Conservation Council

7 November 2012

3-5PM

**Attending Members:** Hank Rauch (Westborough CLT), Bruce Osterling (SVT and Trout Unlimited), John Sklenak (Sudbury Cons. Comm.), Michele Grzenda (Weston Con. Agent), Emily Silver (Researcher with Brandeis and Weston), Jonathan Keyes (Concord LCT), Brian Donahue (Brandeis professor, Weston Cons. Comm.), Laurie Bent (Weston Cons. Comm.), Don MacIver (Littleton CT), Whit Beals (NE Forestry Foundation, SVT and SOLF), Laura Mattei (SVT), Ashley Davies (SVT), Beth Gula (SVT)

#### Revisit WSCC mission

- Group began to work regionally on issues and to be a part of the Wildlands and Woodlands Vision. AmeriCorps has helped the group to survive by providing facilitation capacity.
- The mission, generally, pertains to collaboration on land protection and management and support of sustainable forestry, protecting biodiversity and local economies.
  - Being a member:
    - Requires no cost/financial obligation
    - Can be a group or individual landowner with a genuine interest in one or more of the issues the WSCC focuses on.
    - Can be a resource providing information to the group and/or members can use WSCC partners as resources on a particular issue.
    - Members are listed on the website with a link to their own website or information.
    - Allows for more funding opportunities.
    - Allows for the opportunity to do joint outreach through newsletters, press releases and exposure on the website.
  - The WSCC focus area is generally SVT's region, the Sudbury-Assabet-Concord watershed, and includes some towns outside of SVT's region.

- Meeting frequency: Spring 2012 survey decided on biannual large group meetings with additional workshops in between. To maximize attendance, meeting dates will be in spring/fall and ideally will not conflict with town meetings and conferences. End of the month in late October/early November and early April are best. Potential for meetings to have capacity for phone/online linking in.
- Similar examples of regional conservation partnerships:
  - The SuAsCo Collaborative Invasive Species Management Area (CISMA). CISMA has a website. Members share resources (ex. tools) and information. Collaboration as a larger group can lead to better funding opportunities, networking, and publicity.
  - MassConn Sustainable Forest Partnership - <http://www.opacumlt.org/massconn/>

#### **Discussion of website format**

- Sudburyvalleytrustees.org will host the site, WSCC could have an independent site in the future.
- Centralized communication through the website is important for issues like deer management where action is already happening and can expand.
- An information library can be a part of the website where members can post projects, case studies, contractors that they have had success or lack of success with. This can also be a place for students to gain information on projects and members and a way for them to contribute to members work.
- Choices to make: Free or closed editing? Wordpress? Blog-style posting? Website style can evolve over time. Members decided that at this time there would be closed editing of the general website done by an SVT group facilitator with the ability for members to post to a blog section that would require administrator approval.

#### **Coldwater Fishery Resources (CFR) stream presentation - Bruce Osterling and John Sklenak**

- Through partnerships, the state wants to inventory all coldwater streams
- First priority is to ID as many streams as possible using characteristics detailed in the "Looking for a CFR in Eastern Massachusetts – A Layman's Guide" document. Winter is a

good time to survey stream character because of decreased foliage and firmer soils in wet areas. May is a good time to take temperature readings.

- Tips: talk to people that used to fish in the area to guide your search. Take multiple measurements over time and along the length of the stream. Use a straightforward protocol that does not require extensive training.
  - Protection and improving stream quality can follow
- Identifying and inventorying coldwater resources can lead to projects exploring the ecology of the entire stream

\*\*get permission when crossing private land, and let people know what you are doing to prevent conflicts!

### **Whole Group Discussion of Issues**

#### 1. Regional Agricultural Land Protection

- a. What are the current difficulties?
  - i. Affordability of land for farmers
  - ii. Land trusts can't afford to purchase farms for conservation to turn them around. Need a brokerage entity specifically for this.
  - iii. Capacity to "beat the clock" on land projects
- b. What is needed:
  - i. Community farms
  - ii. Including agriculture in LT mission statements
  - iii. Farmland broker in MA
  - iv. Money to meet high cost of land
  - v. Legislative change to allow for greater flexibility in protection of working farms
- c. ACTION: Distribute information about Maine brokerage firm = [Maine Farms Realty](#), and try to create a focus group of land trusts to see if we can make this happen in Massachusetts.

## 2. Cooperative Land Projects

- a. A benefit of aggregated land projects is lower costs for legal fees BUT a drawback is that they can be seen as devaluing individual properties.
- b. A more acceptable definition of “aggregation” for a land project could be to identify priority areas with a common thread: location, land use, or some other common characteristic
- c. ACTION: ID priority contiguous areas and find voids. Revisit SVT’s past analyses.

## 3. Open Field Management

- a. ACTION: Follow up with Hank. Post case studies; for example, SVT’s Green Way project. Post list of partners, contractors, etc. that you have worked with as suggestions for other groups to utilize.

## 4. Deer Management

- a. There is potential to use a standard approach across towns and avoid making similar mistakes.
- b. Find support in multiple areas of the community (ex. Board of Health, bow hunters association)
- c. ACTION: use WSCC to put together post-season deer meeting and compile quantitative results (what towns were involved, # permits give, # deer take, #deer-car collisions), invite other towns that don’t yet have a program. Weston to provide “toolkit”.