

WSCC Fall Meeting Minutes
December 1, 2016 4:00 PM – 6:00 PM

Attendees: attendance on record at SVT office

4:15 PM: Laura Mattei called the meeting to order and led introductions around the room

Updates – Laura Mattei

- Laura attended a workshop on the UNH Stewardship Network of New England. We recommend that all WSCC members check out this web site. It provides a free calendar and volunteer event registration tool as well as training guides. If all members use this service for posting volunteer opportunities, it will make it easier for us to share volunteers and to share our activities and events.

<http://newengland.stewardshipnetwork.org/>

- The Ashland Town Forest Committee, MassAudubon, DCR and SVT co-hosted a Forest Stewardship Workshop on November 12th. Presentations included Shaping the Future of Your Community, Forest Stewardship Planning, Deer Management and Foresters for the Birds. The presentations were followed by a field outing to the town forest with the forester. A video of the proceedings will be available.

Helpful links related to this workshop:

<http://www.massaudubon.org/our-conservation-work/advocacy/shaping-the-future-sustainable-planning>

<http://www.massaudubon.org/our-conservation-work/wildlife-research-conservation/forest-birds>

- Cornell University has launched a new web site; Community Deer Advisor - provides decision support to communities managing deer.

<https://deeradvisor.dnr.cornell.edu/>

Concerns about the upcoming Federal leadership changes – how might it impact conservation? – Lisa Vernegaard

- Most immediate concern is the implications of the Climate Change Act
- Funding sources – what can we do? There's a substantial risk to all nonprofits, as President-Elect Trump may decrease the cap on charitable donations. If there's a blanket cap on charitable giving, it could very much impact the financial structure of our deals.
- Gun sales have increased in the past 8 years – could there be a similar reaction/push back from the grassroots movement?
- Mass Audubon is soon releasing a 5-part fact sheet about greening your communities. Look for it online.

Renewable energy on conservation land – Kurt Gaertner, Heidi Ricci, and Cynthia Henshaw

- The EEA desires an increase in renewable energy; however, they don't want that energy to come at the cost of natural resources/conservation. What can we do?
- To encourage solar siting, the EEA is offering tax benefits. SREC 1 had no siting criteria whatsoever. Because SREC 1 was inconsistent, they added criteria that encouraged solar siting in better areas in SREC 2. Currently, EEA is drafting SREC 3. They took suggestions presented by Mass Audubon, MLTC, TNC, and TTOR (a letter sent to Secretary Beaton). Energy companies will be prohibited from qualifying for benefits if siting on: wetlands, forest land under Chapter 61, etc. EOEEA also wants municipalities to adopt zoning and, in general, be smarter about where they site solar.
- Mass Audubon is leading by example – they are installing solar on their rooftops and more. Mass Audubon received many phone calls/emails from concerned citizens about what to do when large solar companies infiltrate their towns. Communities where land values are low have been particularly vulnerable (i.e. along Route 495 and near power lines).
- Only one of the communities in the East Quabbin Land Trust service area has a solar bylaw, and all other communities are getting hit hard. For example, Barry,

MA already has nine large solar fields. It happens often on prime agricultural soils. It's difficult to know what to do from a small land trust's perspective.

- Open discussion with all WSCC attendees:
 - Communities **need** to adopt bylaws.
 - Aside from rooftops, we should explore the idea of solar siting on parking lots.
 - Concerns about wildlife connectivity – are there SREC restrictions on flood plains? The DEP is working on guidance for solar on wetlands.
 - Another concern is the maintenance of vegetation.
 - The new SREC 3 rules will not apply retroactively. Current sites are grandfathered in.
 - Is there a way to install solar on prime soils lightly/with a small footprint so that in 30 years when the solar panels are obsolete, we can remove them and there won't be much harm done?
 - New technology - roofing tiles with PV. Technology is advancing quickly, and large solar panels may be obsolete soon. Also, some communities in CA **require** solar on new homes. Can we take their lead?
 - There's a possibility that agricultural land may become just as (or more) important than energy in the future.
 - So much of our infrastructure (roads, etc.) needs upgrades. Our electrical grid is no different.
 - What are some ACTIONABLE steps we can take as conservationists?
 - There are publicly available zoning documents on the EEA website
 - Adopt criteria to become a green community
 - Use schools to site solar
 - Proactively, we can perform **education** and **outreach**. We should create guidelines that developers can familiarize themselves with *before* they start work.
 - Solar energy belongs closer to where people need the energy. People should take responsibility and cover their own energy usage.

- Next appropriate venue for strategizing: create a sustainability committee, work with communities, be proactive and let them know about bylaws, give examples.
- Land trusts should have internal discussions – what should we do? What is *our* stance? What is *our* approach?
- SREC 3 will soon go out for public comment – we need to share our voice because there will be push-back from solar companies.