

Open Space Committee / Minutes of May 12, 2011 Meeting

7 p.m. Peterborough Town House

Present: Debby Kaiser, Francie Von Mertens

Lacking a quorum, April's minutes were not approved.

Debby Kaiser and Francie Von Mertens discussed workshops they attended at the annual Saving Special Places workshop. Below are their notes from those sessions, written with the goal of passing along relevant information that would benefit OSC members.

Saving Special Places – Kaiser notes

As luck would have it, the rest of the crew took on the legal and philosophical stuff, leaving me free to follow my particular passions of the moment—which are: the importance of wetlands and the preservation of farmable land.

The Ecology and Stewardship of NH Wetlands turned out to put more emphasis on describing the flora and fauna of wetlands and less on strategies both legal and “marketing” for protecting them. We did finally learn the difference between the wetland types: bog/peat lands (no in- or egress, sphagnum mosses gradually fill in, permanent and maintained primarily by rain water, hence acidic soils favoring pitcher plants, cranberry, blueberry...), marsh (wet meadows, slow moving water, with emergent grasses and shrubs...), fen (bog lands that are fed by ground water, so less acidic than bogs) and () swamps (here usually forested-maple, spruce with seasonal changes in water level) They mentioned the educational importance of building trails (board walks) into these areas. And I did glean one nugget. Did you know that bogs are magnificent carbon capture machines and that harvesting the peat in Canada for sale in US garden centers releases enormous amounts of methane? There were also some questions about wetlands buffers. We are apparently way below par here—duh!

Session 2- **Farmlands as Wildlife Habitat**- also used most of the time and the entire slide show describing habitat, with an emphasis on the important edges of fields but even the areas between planted rows. The “old fields” grown in after farms were abandoned now host trees between 70 and 100 years old; NH doesn't have enough open fields or young mixed growth forest for many species. The policy conclusion he didn't draw underlines the serendipity of preserving and creating open farm land: the human species will also need room to forage in the future. He did mention useful strategies: late mowing, not mowing around edges or select cutting just outside fields to create staggered, various habitat, leaving portions of field uncut, using sickle bar mower (raised slightly) rather than brush hog.

Jeanie McIntyre based her talk on **What's Different about Working Farms?** on her work with the Upper Valley Land Trust to create **farm easements**, a subset of the conservation easements that we generally deal with which **do** allow for agricultural practices (including tree farms, nurseries) and the necessary structures. The specific problems of farm easements arise when non- of “iffy” agricultural practices, such as farm stands, or enterprises to generate necessary alternate sources of income are undertaken within the easement area—something that farmers increasingly depend on. Also housing for farm workers or managers is also a problem but is allowed within the easement area. Since we don't have many working farms here, I assume that our work would involve preserving **potential** farmlands and maintaining enough low cost housing to attract new farmers. The same generational issues applying to working farmers wanting to retire or pass on to family, do apply to a lot of large parcels in our area, where there will be a huge generational shift in the coming years. Whereas working farmers are motivated to sell easements to generate capital or pay off debts, our landowners might be more interested in avoiding inheritance tax and finding mixed models, allowing for some farming (leased?) and some development but leaving the “look” of the land they cherish.

Saving Special Places – Von Mertens notes

Cons easements and climate change

Andy Pitts, Natural Lands Trust, PA. See LTA web: "climate change"

Main Coast Heritage Trust easement language has most detailed mention of potential impacts of climate change.

"Unknowns" / "Known unknowns" = periodic extreme events

Best to make reference to future amendment schedule to adjust to unforeseen impacts

Alternative energy use

Wind turbines

Options when drafting easement language: prohibit outright; be silent; limit energy produced to owner's needs (not primarily for econ. gain); or allow as ordinary permitted use.

Biomass as fuel

Best when replacing coal (cost/benefit analysis)

Sustainable forestry practices essential to maximize carbon sequestration

CE should reference carbon credits / CE purposes section should address carbon seq. benefits.

Sale of carbon credits / ban? or don't mention? or allow carbon trade outright?

Need to understand carbon market (it's complex)

Joel Harrington says TNC put some of its lands in carbon market

Corn/soy biodiesel requires too much fertilizer. Cost/benefit not favorable.

Biochar retains nutrients, stores carbon.

Judy Anderson says wind farm when replacing mountain top removal in W. Va. for coal is a plus in cost/benefit analysis, but carbon footprint of wind turbines (50 tons steel per KW produced) is high.

Mark Anderson TNC - ecological impacts of wind farms built on ridgelines

Ridgeline species richness of different ecol'l types: summit, calcareous substrate etc.

Geophysical features of landscape more important than current approach of analyzing biological occupants (species list).

Federal Forest Legacy grants exclude wind farms on land protected

Groton NH wind farm → 6,500 Ac conserved with the Forest Society as mitigation for environmental impacts (wetlands included)

Lempster win farm No mitigation / required buried lines. Iberdrola (developer) donated land to town voluntarily.

One landowner leasing to Iberdrola agreed to donate CE on 278 Ac (in Q2C priority area) Andorra Forest, Stoddard. Forest Socy says CE prohibits wind farm

Will Congress amend purposes section on CEs to add renewables as public benefit that entitles landowner donating easement to claim IRS deduction?

Trustees of Reservations MA want to offset the organization's 1,891 metric tons carbon footprint.

They put small wind turbines on their fee lands: Cohasset/Turkey Hill. Boston Harbor.

www.massland.org

Stonyfield Yogurt Gary Hirshbery / keynote speaker. Excellent+++

Global water use doubling every 21 years.

Food miles less important than how it's grown. Organic milk from Ireland lower footprint than NY milk.

GMO myth of higher yield. Failure to yield instead. Superweed explosion tolerant of glyphosphates Organic corn outperforms conventional.

Grass fed cows live 2x longer / omega 3s up / 12% enteric emissions reduction

LCHIP Lynch wants 50% for land

House comm. says 0%.

Class VI roads / Landlocked properties Steve Nix Guilford NH <snix@metrocast.net>

Access easement does not have to be in deed. (Law does not like landlocked parcels.)

Can be an "implied easement" to access landlocked property – if landowner sells back portion it's implied there's access to that parcel over his front parcel.

By prescription. Adverse possession. If used for 20 years.

Susan Slack, private attorney now (formerly state)

Class VI road can become "municipal trail" by vote of legis. body (select board). Class A or B trail.

Can close off to vehicles.