

EATON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

May 23, 2024

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Members present were Marnie Cobbs, Dick Fortin, Paul Nuccio, Robin Nuccio, Holly Fortin and Tom Head. Also present were Dagmar von Schwerin, Dennis Sullivan, and Kevin Conklin.

2. **ADMINISTRATION** – Minutes of the April 15 meeting were accepted.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Land Conservation Fund	\$ 9,421.25		
Forest Management Fund	\$18,221.18	CD \$30,751.18	
Foss Mountain Fund	\$16,337.54	CD \$10,250.39	
Conservation Fund	\$15,625.63	CD \$10,250.39	
TOTALS	\$59,605.60	CD \$51,251.96	\$110,857.56
Donation box at trailhead	\$7.00		
Website Donation Income	\$0		

Treasurer's report was accepted.

4. **SELECTMEN'S REPORT** – met with Beach Attendants and decided they will not monitor boaters at the put-in – it's not possible to oversee both the beach and the launch. Robin discussed the idea of organizing volunteers to talk to boaters. NH Lakes group and the Conway Lake Conservation Association (CLCA) could advise how best to train volunteers if we have enough to make an impact. Note: large HP motorboats have been seen on Crystal Lake but if they use their trolling motor only (under 10 HP), they are allowed.

5. **PLANNING BOARD** – A joint meeting of the PB and ECC will be held in June or July to discuss the Natural Resource Inventory (NRI) as pertains to the questionnaire and input to the Town Master Plan. The Conway Planning Board is working on their master plan and it would be a good idea to coordinate with the Conway Lake Conservation Association as well.

6. **FOSS MANAGEMENT** – Dick and Marnie will discuss the blueberries lease with Ryan Bushnell, hoping to get more money per pint as the ECC does all the work on the fields. They may also discuss the NRCS mulching project with Ryan (as it has to go through him). There are standards to be met for this grant funding, and a manure spreader would have to get into the fields, so it was decided to wait until after the next burn to attempt this, if at all. Trail repairs will take place on Tuesday May 21st with Ryan Harvey and volunteers.

7. **TOWN LAND MANAGEMENT** – The next Conservation Conversation on "Invasive Species" will be led by Wendy Scribner, UNH Cooperative Extension Forester on Thursday, May 23 from 6:30 - 8:00 PM at Eaton Town Hall. She plans on making her presentation outside as a field trip to study invasives, weather and black flies permitting.

NRI Report - Dennis presented the NRI report – two key issues of concern are protection of watersheds and maintaining large unfragmented blocks.

Wetlands, Water, Buffers – Dennis - Extremely important for multiple reasons including use by people, for recreation and infrastructure, also essential for wildlife sustenance and corridors. Recommends working with the Planning Board on language protecting important bodies of water along with more conversations with landowners and education for all Eaton residents.

Unfragmented Blocks - Kevin & Dennis – The Map at the end of the NRI report prioritizes geographical areas of concern. Many acres are already protected as Town Land, steep slopes or ridgeline protection areas, but many important parcels are in private hands. The NRI group recommends starting with conversations with key landowners to see where they stand on conservation issues. At the same time, work on regulations should continue. One approach does not preclude the other as both are likely needed to protect Eaton's resources. Education and one-on-one conversations, will be key to acceptance of both formal and informal protections.

Priorities on Potter Road & Route 153 Ponds - Paul – These two areas represent extensive watersheds hosting cold water fish, amphibians and reptiles, birds and mammals. They store stormwaters, reduce erosion, enhance water quality, and are a scenic asset. The Snow Brook Inlet is fed by 5 brooks and 10 watershed catchments originating in Eaton and is an extremely sensitive area of high natural resource value, particularly where Potter Road meets Conway Lake. This confluence creates a highly sensitive shallow cove zone for aquatic plants that enrich water and trap sediment. Rental companies bring large groups of kayakers and canoeists to South Cove, launching them into Conway Lake with little or no monitoring or control. Paul recommends increasing ECC's focus on Potter Road and Conway Lake due to high use and the clear danger of introduction of invasive species.

Wildlife Corridors- Paul – Animals often follow watersheds and corridors / routes often connect particularly when crossing barriers. Route 153 is the most significant barrier with game cams recording crossings on Long Pond Rd, by Thurston Pond and from Lyman Mountain across 153 through to the Maine border. In general, protecting major watersheds will also protect wildlife corridors as animals use waterways to move through Town lands.

Water monitoring – Paul - Water quality is good so far. Monitoring of several lakes was done by ECC and numerous volunteers in the late 90s and Paul has re-started monitoring of Long Pond and Thurston Pond in 2024. Ideally all Eaton's water should be monitored but it is labor intensive and more people would be needed. It will be important to identify which water bodies feed aquifers - an example being the chain of ponds along 153 - and run conductivity measurements to monitor the impact of run off and road salt on water quality. Paul recommends pushing for the use of brine rather than salt. The Selectmen are scheduled to talk with NHDOT in June and Dick will bring this up to see what ECC can do to make this happen. ECC should also investigate whether thru trucks carrying toxic materials can be restricted from traveling on 153 and develop an emergency plan with equipment / materials in place to control any spills that do occur. An emergency plan should also be in place in the event of the introduction of any invasive species. Dick recommends starting with NHDOT and then if not successful, proceeding to talk to our State representative.

Beaver Management – Kevin & Dagmar - Beaver are a keystone species (disproportionately large effect on their environment) and government programs are re-introducing beaver to solve water problems brought on by development and climate change. Beaver help with increased water retention, aquifer replenishment, reducing effect of floods by slowing water, water quality w/ sediment retention and nutrient cycling, creating wetlands habitats, increasing biodiversity, and leaving behind beaver meadows when they move on. They also create problems when their

dams cause damage to infrastructure. The NRI group recommends investigating mitigation options (relocation, protection and proper design of culverts to discourage beaver, protecting trees, dam water levelers) and having plans in place for the Selectmen and Stubby to use to deal with problem beaver.

Educational Outreach – Dagmar – Education came up when discussing all NRI topics. Townspeople need to know why ECC initiatives are important and beneficial to them specifically. One-on-one conversations with large landholders will be important. Conservation Conversations about Eaton's water and unfragmented land can continue (although reach is not typically large) as can the posting of info and maps in Town Hall, distribution of flyers on Town election days and updates in the bi-annual Tatler. Literature from Taking Action for Wildlife, USFWS and others about Beaver, wildlife corridors, aquifers, etc can be displayed in Town Hall. Kevin volunteered to help ECC create short videos to be hosted on the Town and Foss Mountain websites (w/ QR code links) and Bruce McBrien would like to help develop regular news items about ECC efforts thru social media and EatonEars. Signage and kiosks should be located at key watercraft put-ins and trails with links to the NRI and further information. The Town will need to have emergency plans on hand for toxic spills or invasive species introductions. Approaches can be devised by collaborating with GMCG, Conway Lake Conservation Assoc, USVLT and Audubon, among others.

Conservation Priorities Map - Dennis – The last page of the NRI report is a map showing the areas deemed the most important to protect. When asked how the NRI is kept current, Dennis explained that its maps are updated when various not for profit, state and federal sources including USFWS, USVLT, UNH etc update their information. The orgs' criteria may differ slightly, but comparisons are useful.

Discussion - The NRI group will continue to meet and be available for actions like education and input to the next draft of the PB Wetlands Protection ordinance.

We want to first get input from people through outreach rather than telling them what we propose – find out what is likely to succeed – explain trade-offs - losing some rights for the common good. It all works hand in hand. The NRI is a good tool for conversations with individuals and townspeople in general. The questionnaire will also be important to assess how the community feels about recent ordinances and what they want to see next.

Community projects were discussed as a good way to bring people together around issues of concern. Since water seems to be the most important topic, a water-related project should be organized first, perhaps in collaboration with CLCA and GMCG who have experience organizing events.

Streams - ECC and numerous volunteers tested waters in the 90s. The general consensus at the time was that Eaton did not need regulations related to streams. That may be changing with increasing population and climate change.

Marnie proposed setting up a subcommittee for all water issues to study buffers at important locations, working with NHDOT on mowing and salting and talking to landowners as well as developing kiosks and signage at boat launching sites and monitoring those locations for invasive species.

8. FOREST MANAGEMENT – no issues

9. WATER MANAGEMENT – see discussion of NRI report above. Conway Lake Conservation Assoc has an excellent website with lots of info. The August meeting is particularly interesting. Steve Kafka of CLCA wants to come to ECC to listen and possibly participate in ECC in future.

The NH Lakes Conference is taking place on June 6 and may be available to Zoom at attendees' convenience. All ECC members are encouraged to participate.

10. OTHER BUSINESS –

Check “no picking” signs on Foss and run a string around Brooks Pasture. Marnie has 10 bags of Sulphur left which we can use after the next burn – probably every five years

Marnie will continue with bird ID walks Wednesday mornings. It would be good to monitor pollinators also if someone is interested.

Tin Mountain summer camp grants will need to be processed soon. Dagmar will contact Judy Fowler to learn how to manage this.

Marnie will send letters to all summer Camps reminding them of Eaton's policies

Marnie will ask the Watsons to check Willis bean Road and touch up the water bars, noting that they should be rounded to make the dip less dangerous to mountain bikers.

Next meeting: June 10, 2024 at 6 pm

Meeting was adjourned at 8:11 pm

Respectfully submitted by Dagmar von Schwerin, Recording Secretary