

HINESBURG CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Rob Farley, Dave Hirth, Charles Kogge, Melissa Levy, Gerry Livingston (Chair),
Bill Marks, Nancy Plunkett, Matthew Probasco, Kristen Sharpless

MINUTES of November 24, 2008

Opening

The regular meeting of the Conservation Commission was called to order at 7:15 pm on November 24, 2008 at Bill Marks' residence by Gerry Livingston.

Present: Dave Hirth, Gerry Livingston, Bill Marks, Kristen Sharpless

Absent: Melissa Levy, Nancy Plunkett, Charles Kogge, Matthew Probasco

Greenspace and Cultural Resources Plan

Discussion centered around the Wildlife section of the plan the entire evening. Specifics are as follows:

- The value and usefulness of the Significant Natural Areas map (possibly to be refocused as a *Critical Habitat map*) drafted in collaboration with J. Hilke (VT FWD), P. Harris (Stantec), and N. Steen (LandWorks, Inc.) was discussed. The consensus was that a map addressing this objective has value and that the approach taken which links map objects and attributes is the approach we should pursue even though hard data regarding wildlife movement is very limited. It was agreed we should revisit what information went into delineating the current draft map and refine the rules as needed to better fit available data and to ensure they are defensible as best as possible.
- Recommendations: identify the features/habitats that are important to wildlife and initiate action to inventory, map and protect these areas across the Town (see list in *Conserving Vermont's Natural Heritage*). Candidate topics for consideration:
 - Core forest areas/Contiguous habitat
 - Mature/closed canopy forest habitat
 - Deleterious effects of habitat fragmentation
 - Road crossings and travel corridors (mammals, amphibians, reptiles)
 - Value of connected small habitat fragments/features
 - Riparian areas, waterways and wetlands
 - Recommendation: Amphibian road crossings
 - Mast stands
 - Early successional habitat – birds
 - Mention different successional stages
 - Significant natural communities
 - RTEs
 - Indiana Bat – endangered
 - Consult the NGNH Program GIS layer and attributes
 - Vernal pools
 - Recommendation: community/schools could take on mapping of these pools
 - Deer wintering areas
 - Grasslands – for birds and other spp.
 - “Enduring features” – cliffs, ridges, talus
- It was noted that obscure organisms – i.e., mole salamanders – can be tricky to rally people around because they don't know about them. The importance of public outreach to identify and educate people about such species and their role in local ecosystems was discussed.
- Species that people will most readily respond to includes birds, bats and other mammals.

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- Recommend and identify species of conservation need – VT Wildlife Action Plan AND keep common species common (protect native species diversity)
- Emphasis should be given to noting that Hinesburg is unusual in its habitat diversity (eastern foothills and western valley) and in its vulnerability to urban/suburban development.
- Dave H. will assume responsibility to draft the *Wildlife* section and seek Commission review.

Respectfully submitted by: Kristen Sharpless