

**MINUTES OF MEETING
CONWAY CONSERVATION COMMISSION
February 9, 2011**

A meeting of the Conway Conservation Commission convened at 6:32 p.m. at the Whitaker Homesite in North Conway, NH. Members present were: Paul Pinkham, David Weathers, Rob Adair, Dan Lucy, and Karla Allan. Also present were Daryl Mazzaglia and Nancy Oleson of the Bartlett Conservation Commission, and Larry Garland and Tom Gross of Upper Saco Valley Land Trust.

USVLT Update - Messrs. Garland and Gross wished to make a presentation on USVLT Strategic Conservation Planning Resource Inventory Criteria, acknowledging both Bartlett and Conway Conservation Commissions for having contributed to this effort, financially, making it possible to hire some top notch ecologists. It is expected the final report will be out within the next month. Mr. Garland stated USVLT started in 2009 securing funds to hire consultants. USVLT has been in existence for eleven years, having protected over 4400 acres of land in their service region of eleven towns (Jackson, Hart's Location, Bartlett, Conway, Albany, Madison, Eaton, Chatham, Fryeburg, Denmark and Brownfield). He stated that of that 4400 acres protected, over 3000 are between Conway and Bartlett.

A Resource Inventory Criteria sheet was provided listing Natural Landscapes: Water resources, unfragmented blocks, wildlife habitat; under Agriculture: Prime farmland soils, farmland of state/local importance, and cropland and pasture. Mr. Garland stated they were trying to get a handle on the types of resources they wanted to look at. To help out, they had two professional ecologists plus additional expertise – three people who could help advise, and have discussions about how to quantify aquifer or riparian zones.

Mr. Garland provided a draft map showing plotting of aquifer, riparian zones, streams, etc., noting a lot of thought and detail had gone into what the resources were, how they behaved, and how they were accounted for. After water resources, they looked at large pieces of land that were not already fragmented by development. He provided a working map of unfragmented land, including a big chunk of national forest, noting they were interested in those lands that *abut* the national forest as well. He said they looked at wildlife habitat (map provided), categorizing rare, threatened, and endangered – they wanted to be able to plot all of the rare species listed by the State. He explained they obtain data for both the federal level and state level as to the plants and animals they listed, and their classification.

A Natural Community Group map was provided, built by their ecologist consultants based on their particular knowledge, and reflecting classifications of natural heritage sites that describe very particular ecosystems and the kinds of plants, trees, etc. that might grow there. Mr. Gross stated they will issue a report by their ecologist in the spring which will be available to the public in full detail. Also shown are important bird areas and indicator species, for example, brown trout in a stream indicates you have a healthy stream. He added they are in just about every stream in the valley. They are also interested in eagles, loons, peregrine falcons.

Agriculture – because this is an important aspect in this valley they plotted agriculture soils. He noted it was an interesting exercise taking the data collected and putting it together, that as a Land Trust they are trying to evaluate its importance relative to their mission. Noting the importance can vary with different conservation groups, Mr. Garland said when they move forward in their second phase is where they will want to work directly with the towns in getting specific information on what they think is important.

Mr. Gross said they questioned categories left out – there are some they were aware of, but felt they would be better addressed at the local level – recreation, historic resources, cultural values. Question of how important things like scenic views and ridge lines are. Mr. Gross said local knowledge in general is important. Mr. Garland said they did some sample plots of scenic views, but decided that was more of a local interest.

Mr. Garland said when they stacked all the layers on top of each other they got to a co-occurrence map, showing the number of different resources that exist in the same place. They went one step further from this map, overlaying on top of the ecological integrity map, showing development patterns. This gives them a sense of where resource values are that they could potentially be interested in for priority for land or resource protection. The ecological integrity map gives a good picture of what's out there. He said the next step is what can they do about pursuing conservation identity – protect resources by protecting the land where they are found. He said they can protect ski slopes, erosion, protect in the way people are permitted to build. Also there are things towns can do in the ordinances they put in place.

Phase II – Mr. Gross said they looked at where they could go with this in terms of helping the towns. In the spring they will transition to Phase II and share this data with local groups who would like to participate in the conservation. He said they have received easement donations voluntarily by people living in the communities. Through the Land and Heritage Investment Program they were able to get the Foss Mountain Blueberry area – the land came up for sale, the Board was interested in acquiring it, they raised the money. Mr. Garland noted they also purchased two easements on West Side Road – Hussey and Kennett properties.

It was noted in Phase II they would like to invite people from the communities to let them know what is important to them - it has to be a shared decision making process. Mr. Garland said they hope to hire a professional conservation planner; however, conservation can be controversial, so they are addressing these issues with important data to make good decisions together that would lead to some commitment in preserving this beautiful resource we share here.

Ms. Mazzaglia questioned what Phase II will look like. Mr. Gross said they thought they would speak with the Conservation Commissions then would explore whether they would be interested in meeting with USVLT, looking at the maps and discussing more specifically about the data and what local knowledge has to say. Ms. Mazzaglia stated they do not have maps in Bartlett, they need a natural resources inventory, and they feel their contribution was well spent. Mr. Garland said they are exploring the possibility of raising some funds to work with towns to go in the right direction to get that done.

Mr. Adair questioned what the result of Phase I will be. Mr. Garland said there will be a written report explaining the methodology, describing the product, they will make available with the report a digital template with the ability for people to call up the map data and look at it.

Mr. Weathers questioned whether it might be an easier sell if they do it on a landowner-by-landowner basis, noting they would not run into a lot of opposition, for instance, Conway has ordinances banning certain things. He feels it would be easier to work with individual landowners rather than putting out a new ordinance that the town would have to vote on. Mr. Garland said when he said they want to meet with towns, they were saying at first it would be more a general open public meeting – they would first meet with the planners. Mr. Weathers said he would rather take the money the Town of Conway has and put it into easements than to buy more land. Mr. Gross said he agrees the point is well taken.

Mr. Garland said each town will have a different sense of what they want to protect and there will be questions like “what’s the difference between fee ownership and easement;” it will be looked at differently within different towns. Ms. Allan commented that ordinances have always created an “us against them” mentality and there are a lot of things that have gone to court. She feels staying away from that as much as possible is best. Mr. Garland stated the USVLT monitors each of its properties every year. Mr. Gross added if not monitored, it loses its value. Ms. Mazzaglia said when she asked who would be at the meeting, she was thinking that how this hits initially is where it is going to go - if it is not handled or presented well initially, we may as well not bother. She felt how you approach it is very important, and suggested asking the Conservation Commissions about who they think should be at that meeting.

The USVLT presentation ended at 7:30 p.m. and the Commission proceeded with its regular meeting.

1. Approval of Minutes: 1/19/11 – Notation was made by Mr. Weathers that on Pg. 2, 10th line, reference to floodplain “footage” should have read *floodplain shortage*. **Motion was made by Mr. Adair, seconded by Ms. Allan and carried by unanimous vote, that the Minutes of the Jan. 19th meeting be approved as amended.**

2. Public Comment: None.

3. Reports:

a. Don Johnson was not present.

b. Wink Lees – The Nature Conservancy – Mr. Lees was not present. Mr. Pinkham made note that a bill has been received from TNC; however, the books are closed for last year and this will come out of this year’s budget.

d. Selectmen’s Report - Mr. Weathers reported he had met with Earl Sires who has agreed to meet with Mr. Pinkham and Ms. Philbrick in regard to budgets and easements. Mr.

Pinkham noted Mr. Sires has been pressed for where he is in the process of getting easements. Mr. Sires wanted to go to the town's law firm and Mr. Pinkham took exception to that, noting that between the USVLT as well as the Society for Protection of NH Forests, we need to be sitting down with those people to be certain that the town understands what it needs to do before acquiring those easements. We need to know so that we can properly instruct counsel on what they need to do for us. Mr. Pinkham will contact Mr. Sires.

5. Other Business:

a. 2011 Budget – Mr. Pinkham noted CCC was not invited to sit in on the Budget Committee meetings, probably due to its small budget.

b. Members and reappointments – Mr. Pinkham noted there is a vacancy in Alternate position.

c. USVLT Update – See Pg. 1

d. Whitaker Trail Plan - Mr. Pinkham stated we are using the trail plan we did last summer. Mr. Adair stated the work they did this fall has made a big difference. Mr. Pinkham noted Mr. Johnson was complaining about the rocks placed there because the groomer was having difficulty. Mr. Adair stated they were placed in wet spots, they intended to cover it and got caught by the weather. It was Mr. Pinkham's opinion that the Commission needs to take a little harder line with people – we do not want others doing things like that to the trails. Mr. Adair stated where they put the stone was in good locations, sometimes they put pallets down so they can cross. Mr. Weathers stated we need to be made aware of people doing those things, we cannot have people going in and doing as they please.

f. Wetlands Applications – Mr. Weathers reported no new applications. He stated MWVEC did receive a permit for the Tech Village for alteration of terrain, all necessary information was provided.

6. Next Meeting – Since the next regularly scheduled meeting would fall on March 9th which is the date of the deliberative portion for the School budget, it was agreed to not have a meeting in March. The next meeting will be April 13, 2011.

7. Adjourn: Motion was made by Ms. Allan, seconded by Mr. Weathers and carried, that the meeting be adjourned at 7:50 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Gail T. Currier
Recording Secretary