

CONCORD CONSERVATION COMMISSION
TRAILS SUBCOMMITTEE MINUTES
March 8, 2017

Present: Beth Fenstermacher, Greg Mannesto, Rob Knight, Tim Pifer, Fran Philippe, Chris Northrop, Anne Gwynne, Ron Rayner, Rob Talmadge, Audra Klumb, Hilary Thomson, Ron Klemarczyk, David Ross, Mike Schowalter, Gail Page

Conservation Commission members: Kris Tardiff, Rick Chormann, Chris Kane

Visitors: Leslie Talmadge, Deb Follansbee, David Degler

1. Minutes from February accepted with spelling correction.

2. Jim Oehler, Habitat Biologist and guest speaker from NH Fish and Game Department, presented an illustrated talk on the impact of trail usage on wildlife. To summarize, while we may assume our quiet presence in nature is harmless, numerous studies show that birds and animals are keenly aware of us and act to avoid us, abandoning areas where we go. The more we create ways for humans to be in the field and forest, the more the birds and animals change their foraging locations, their nest-building, their wintering grounds. Reproduction rates decrease. For birds and animals to survive and thrive, they need substantial, unfragmented and undisturbed areas. Jim shared "A Handbook for Trail Planners: Planning Trails with Wildlife in Mind". A section of it called "Trail Planning Principles" lists 9 principles to keep in mind when deciding whether and where to place a trail. See attached Handbook.

3. The Trails Committee received another compliment from a member of the Concord NH Trail Runners expressing gratitude for our work on the trails, particularly for the Winant, Connector and West Farm trails. Mike Schowalter commented that good trails attract young people to the community.

4. Chris Kane informed us that the Conservation Commission is working on a new Open Space Plan. The CC recognizes that the "highest and best use" for some open space is to leave it undisturbed, without trails. Per Chris Kane, we currently have 82 miles of official trails in an area of 64 square miles. Chris says the plan is not a static document, rather it is to be more of a living document whose purpose is to inform the public. There was a request that the Trails Committee members be allowed to comment on the Open Space Plan before it goes to public hearing.

5. Trail Criteria: Prior to this meeting Rob Knight distributed a draft list of Trail Criteria for this committee to review. At the meeting it was suggested that our committee also obtain the manual produced by Colorado that Jim Oehler referenced so as to not "reinvent the wheel" of trail criteria (see attached handbook). There was some discussion on how best to use criteria. This topic will be revisited at a future meeting.

4. Community Trail Walks – Rob Knight lead a successful hike February 25 from Swope to the old city winter recreation area. 6 members of the public and 3 Trails Committee members were in attendance. The Insider announcement was a good source of publicity for the hike. How to get more people to attend these monthly hikes was discussed. We should be inviting our friends to participate and putting up a few poster. Beth notes that the Capital Area Wellness Coalition is working on a trail passport program that will offer discount cards at several local businesses to people who complete 20 of 30 trail hikes. Perhaps we could participate in this?

Upcoming hikes are: March 25th 10:00 AM at WeirRd/Boscawen Town Forest lead by Gail Page.

April 15th 10:00 AM Winant Park to Swope via connector trail lead by
Hillary Thomson
May 27 Sewalls Falls and Moreno trails led by Fran Philippe

5. Follow-up Items –

- a) Trail Committee T-shirts: We reviewed some alternative logos for the back of the shirts provided by Fran Philippe. Beth will put up a Survey Monkey on the internet for members to vote for their favorite design.
- b) Signs: Phil Donovan, whose land abuts the Swope to Winant trail provided a sample of the wooden signs he offered to create for that trail. They might not match signs elsewhere in the system, but the committee gratefully accepts his offer. Tim Pifer has not received sample signs from the prison workshop, but when he gets them he will leave samples in the office. Broken Ground and the Connector trails are priorities for permanent signs. Fran and Rob will provide Beth a list of what signs are needed and what they should say. “You are here” signs showing the map of the trail at intersections was suggested for the trail systems. An alternative would be numbers at intersections corresponding to numbers on the map.

6. Trail Maintenance and Reporting -

Audra Klumb reported on the Spears trails and Ron Klemarczyk reported on removal of downed pines.

Beth noted that she has had 6 emails in 10 days from persons wanting to volunteer on the trail network. We will contact them when there are projects to accomplish. Beth is holding their contact information.

All trail stewards have now responded and plan to continue maintaining their trails with the exception of the steward for Contoocook River Park. That person has resigned and Chris Northrop will take over.

Beth shared that the New London Conservation Commission has a reporting form for Stewards that we might look at for our stewards to use. The form would serve to instruct the stewards on expectations. Beth will share the information with David Ross, who is drafting trail steward guidelines.

Rob Knight will provide the text for the trail guide for the Swope to Winant trail.

Meeting adjourned at 6:30pm

Respectfully submitted,
Gail Page, recording secretary