

Concord Conservation Commission Trails Subcommittee Meeting
November 8, 2023
City Hall, 2nd Floor Conference Room, 41 Green Street

Members Present: Fran Philippe (Acting Chair), Aaron Monier (Secretary), Gail Page, Rik Van Riel (alternate)

Staff Present: Ron Klemarczyk (Consultant City Forester), Carl Matson (Trail Ranger), AnneMarie Skinner (Assistant City Planner)

Guests: Jim Owers (Conservation Commission Liaison), Matt Bowser (NEMBA), Mark Redman

1. Motion to approve minutes of October 13, 2023 meeting. Approved.
2. AnneMarie Skinner, new Concord Assistant City Planner and in charge of the meetings, was officially welcomed and introduced to the subcommittee.
3. Proposed Trail: Broken Ground NEMBA Trail.
 - a. Jim Owers introduced a modified version of the trail proposal that only includes the western portion of the original plan given the biology and wildlife concerns on the open eastern portion. Total trail construction would be approximately 0.6 mile of trail. The site has been looked at by two foresters, five biologists, and the minutes of Trails Subcommittee meetings have been submitted to the Concord Conservation Commission. There was a public hearing on October 11, 2023, and approximately 10 community members testified. No adverse comments other than concerns over trail construction near emergency access trails based on bare soil and sunning area for snakes and turtles.
 - b. Open discussion from Trails Subcommittee.
 - i. Aaron Monier commented that he sees the trail as an opportunity to give under-privileged youth access to outdoor recreation and appreciates the efforts of the CHS Mountain Bike Club and NEMBA to introduce mountain biking in the schools.

- ii. Gail Page commented that her vote will be dependent on the long-term plan of the property and would like to ensure that this will be the last mountain bike trail built. Jim Owers noted that there is no conservation easement on that property.
 - iii. Rik van Riel stated that he supports Ms. Page's goal of conservation but doesn't believe a trail-building prohibition is the proper means of accomplishing that goal.
 - iv. Fran Philippe said she understands the vision of the trail proposal but doesn't feel that a 0.6-mile mountain bike trail will open many outdoor recreation opportunities for underprivileged youth. Matt Bowser of NEMBA interjected that Project Outride just received 30 specialized bikes for Abbot-Downing School and the gym class plans on taking students to Broken Ground for riding. Project Story has also organized group rides aimed at getting new Americans on mountain bikes and outside. Ms. Philippe commented that she's not convinced this trail will spread the load and may have the opposite effect of bringing more mountain bikers into other trails and sensitive wildlife areas.
 - v. Suggestions were made to place signage at: 1) the open emergency access that it should not be used due to nesting turtles and snakes; and 2) the eastern leg of the Marsh Loop for seasonal closures. Discussion at a later date.
- c. Rik van Riel made a motion to vote on the new trail proposal for the western portion only. The motion was seconded by Aaron Monier and the Trails Subcommittee voted 4-0 to approve the Broken Ground NEMBA trail proposal.

4. Report from Ron Klemarczyk:

- a. Removed two trees from Swope/West End Farm Trail connector.
- b. Broken decking on a bridge on the Pond Loop was replaced.
- c. Bittersweet removal work day had approximately 12 CHS ROPE students. Ron used the opportunity for education on invasive species and the proper removal method. Japanese barberry was also present and removed.
- d. No new updates on Richards' Community Forest. Unitil will be in the area working. The CHS Rope Class that participated in the bittersweet

removal work day expressed interest with the Richards' Community Forest trail construction.

5. Report from Carl Matson:
 - a. Carl has been focused on conservation easements. He has about 50 properties he needs to monitor for encroachment.
 - b. Batchelder Mills parking lot has stayed clear of illegal dumping since clean up happened.
 - c. Mr. Matson was informed about suitcases and other large items on the Marsh Loop by Adam Clark. All have been removed.

6. Rik van Riel has received seven trail reports from trail stewards. Inquired if we ever found the document that has expectations for trail stewards. AnneMarie Skinner responded that she would search the computer folders and forward to Mr. van Riel any documents she finds.
 - a. The steward for the Mast Yard Trail, Mark Redman, reported that the trail segment on the western leg is in bad condition after logging in the area. Mr. Redman asked if he should be stewarding the section of trail in Hopkinton. Ron Klemarczyk replied that we are only responsible for Concord trails and issues on the rest are reported to the state.

7. Guided Hikes – The October 28th group hike was not attended by anybody. Fran Philippe noted that this highlights the importance of advertising group hikes through the email list, social media, and potentially the Concord Monitor. AnneMarie Skinner has the email list and will send out a notice one week prior to group hikes. The Nowell Trail hike with Ms. Philippe was rescheduled for November 25, 2023, at 10:00 AM.

Next Meeting: January 10, 2024