

Johnson Conservation Commission, December 17, 2013...6:30 PM at the Library

Present: Lois Frey, Eric Nuse, Jeanne Engel, Sue Lovering, Carley Coolidge, AnnMarie Bahr. Absent: Noel Dodge, Jackie Stanton, Julia Stanton.

Guests: Doug Molde, Gary Nolan

ISSUES WITH ATVS ON GOMO

The Green Mountain Club's president, Gary Nolan, who is also the treasurer for VASA, met with us to discuss the control of unlawful ATV activity in the Gomo Town Forest. Eric shared pictures of the damage done there and the warning was gently given that the Gomo will be closed to ATVs if this problem can't be resolved. The club doesn't want to lose the use of the property. Gary's suggestions:

- Begin repairs to the trails/roads with the VAST excavator as soon as possible in the spring. The CC is invited to accompany the work.
- VASA can hire law enforcement. They have their own ATVs for the purpose.
- They will get more young people involved who might help rein in the few offending "cowboy riders". The club is affiliated with the Waterville club, who could become actively involved in that side of the land.
- 4 wheel trucks do more damage and should be kept off entirely. The club has plans for a gate that allows hikers and ATVs in but not trucks; this could be placed in strategic areas.
- Gary states that the goal of the club is to have the use of state and federal land and would like to use more private land.

The Conservation Commission has suggestions, too:

- The CC and the Selectboard will visit the site in the spring, as most selectboard members have not seen it. Lois suggested that the Board come up with a process to establish the use of town roads.
- We need to patrol there. Perhaps game cameras can be used to establish dates and times of infractions and we may be able to enlist the help of neighbors who have an interest. Game wardens are also interested.
- The club can make use of their own safety courses, as well as those given by 4H.
- Communication should be kept open between the club and the CC. Gary plans to be in touch with Lois and/or Eric.
- Doug suggested that a letter of cooperation be sent to the Green Mountain Club stating our intention to work together to solve the present problems and to avoid any use of the adjoining state land.
- This matter must be settled before the new loop trail to Laraway Mountain can be planned. ATV use of that trail will be strictly prohibited.

Spring of 2014 ought to be real interesting!

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT

It'll happen on Sunday, Dec. 29. Noel will make available information about protocols and feeder counts and will organize sector leaders and tally sheets. An end of day get -together will be planned.

EAB PREPAREDNESS

We discussed outreach methods, including a doorknob hanger that delivers specific information to landowners who have potential hazardous trees in the ROW on their land. This approach could be extended to any hazardous ROW tree; this will become a Tree Board agenda.

It was agreed that more outreach is necessary to build a base of public support by emphasizing the nearly one million dollars we are facing in removal/disposal costs. Until that happens the EAB issue probably won't appear in the budget.

The December meeting of the Preparedness Team was skipped because everybody was busy.

BUDGET

The requested budget will be larger than the usual \$300 this year due to upcoming projects at Journey's End and at Gomo. Greenup Day will also be covered. Eric will put together estimates for these projects but at this point he feels that the Journey's End trail and bridge will cost about \$1000 to \$2000.

On the Journey's End budget agenda are the parking area, for which the town will be donating gravel, revamping the trail opening, wood planking or metal grating in fragile areas, one bridge built over the S curve in the brook, marking the trail and the parcel boundaries, and signage at the swimming hole and on Plot Rd. We need a survey map.

At Gomo, restoring the eroded areas and trail development will be necessary but building materials won't be needed until next year.

MISC.:

The Vermont River Conservancy's Lydia Menendez will join us in January to discuss their expectations for the project.

Ingrid Nuse once again presented us with a spectacular array of cookies which made it quite the yum yum meeting. (Those ginger things are to die for!) The Library's beautiful Christmas tree gave us festive spirit all the way around.

Jeanne reports "no news" on the grant front.

Sympathies go out to Cynthia, who's suffering from a sprained ankle.

We may be able to use UVM student teams to work on trail marking/building in the spring semester.

Adjourned at 9:00. Next meeting is on Jan. 21 at the Library at 6:30.

Submitted by Sue Lovering, Secretary.

