

Craftsbury Municipal Forest Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
August 5, 2022, 6:30 pm, Coburn Hill Lot

Members in attendance: Barbara Alexander, Ann Ingerson, Jim Jones, Robert Linck, Stuart LaPoint, Jim Moffatt, Jane Solomon

Members not attending: Ben Alexander, Logan Jones, Rob Libby, Chris Sanville

Other attendees: Susan Houston

Guest: Sarah Damsell, Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District

#### Follow-up to August Coburn Hill Lot Visit

During our last site visit, committee members walking the northern boundary of the Coburn Hill lot discovered that an adjoining neighbor's hunting blind is on the town forest side of the property boundary. The Select Board proposes to offer to let the structure stand, but have the landowner sign an agreement to remove the structure if it collapses or if the land is sold. The agreement would be filed with the deed. The landowner would also have the option to move the blind rather than sign the agreement.

The sense of the committee is not to reconstruct the Coburn Hill foot trail at this time, but wait to see if community interest in trails justifies the work to construct and maintain the trail. Meanwhile, we may re-flag the route just to avoid losing the location.

#### Tree planting along the Black River

Sarah Damsell, Orleans County Natural Resources Conservation District, presented information about programs to support river restoration, with a particular focus on tree planting. Funds are currently available through the Vermont Clean Water Act (2015) and other sources related to the phosphorous TMDLs for both Lake Champlain and Lake Memphremagog. Lake Memphremagog is also now considered part of the Great Lakes Fisheries which provides additional funds. Three main programs offer assistance:

1. Vermont's Trees for Streams program has a minimum planted buffer width of 35 feet from the top of the streambank. It is administered by the Conservation Districts, and staff will offer support such as developing a planting plan with locations and species. The program can support work on any type of land, not just agricultural. The Orleans NRCDC has a new staff member, Ted Sedell, who will focus on river restoration. Recommendations may be guided by geomorphic assessments that identify places in need of restoration. Rates are sufficient to pay for trees, planting costs, and some maintenance.
2. The federal Conservation Reserve Enhancement Program (CREP) is somewhat more restrictive since it requires a 15-year contract to maintain plantings. Only agricultural land would be eligible and landowners receive annual payments to compensate for lost production. The program will pay for fencing to exclude livestock if needed. This

Craftsbury Municipal Forest Committee  
Meeting Minutes  
August 5, 2022, 6:30 pm, Coburn Hill Lot

program is encouraging wider buffers up to 50 feet, or even covering the entire river corridor (the area where rivers are likely to meander over time).

3. The Natural Resources Conservation Service has cost-share programs for tree planting and other forest management practices. The payments are enough to cover tree costs, but the landowner or volunteers must do the planting and maintenance. There is no staff support for project design.
4. Other options to consider combining with these programs:
  - a. US Fish and Wildlife Service has funding for follow-up (usually spot herbicide treatments) to improve tree survival.
  - b. State funding is available to purchase river corridor easements, which would partially compensate landowners for lost production. These generally favor natural migration of river channels and prohibit any straightening or rip-rapping.

The first step for our committee would be to approach some key landowners to see if they are interested. Stuart Lapoint and Jim Jones will take this on. Once we confirm landowner interest, Sarah and/or Ted would visit with the landowner and match their interests with the programs available. We could also consider land higher in the watershed that lacks forest cover.

Meanwhile, Sarah will share materials about the available programs.

#### Signage options for town forests

Ann will order some plastic signs (lower cost than the metal option) and we'll start with posting boundaries at the Coburn Hill Lot. Depending on results there, we have the option of adding signs on Hatch Brook.

#### Next Meeting

Thursday, **February 9 at 6:30 pm at the Town Hall.**

Agenda: Tree planting possibilities. Update on landowner interest.

Meeting was adjourned at about 8:00 pm.