

Craftsbury Municipal Forest Committee  
Meeting Minutes July 29, 2021

Members in attendance: Jim Moffatt, Jim Jones, Robert Linck, Ann Ingerson, Rob Libby, Stuart LaPoint

Members not attending: Barbara Alexander, Logan Jones, Chris Sanville, Ben Alexander

Invited guest: Jared Nunery, Orleans County Forester

Hatch Brook Management Plan

The main agenda item for this meeting was to discuss the Forest Management Plan that Jared Nunery is developing for the Hatch Brook lots (Webster, Baker, Blueberry lots). Jared has completed the inventory and needed input on Management Goals and Objectives for these properties.

The committee generally agreed that the main uses for these parcels should be wildlife habitat, hunting and other dispersed recreation.

Jared mentioned abundant moose (including intense browse and winter use of a hemlock stand), bobcat sign, an expanding network of beaver ponds, and other wildlife sign. Jim M. mentioned that these lots and the Coburn Hill lot are part of an important east-west wildlife habitat linkage.

Given limited use of the trail originally developed on the Coburn Hill lot, the popularity of the Academy Woodlot on Wylie Hill, and the challenging terrain on the Hatch Brook lots, we agreed that trail development and maintenance would not be appropriate at this time. Jim M. mentioned that the woods roads on his land, leading to an old homestead at the top of the hill, are available and more suited to public use.

As far as silvicultural management, Jared explained that most of the property is still at low stocking after the salvage operation conducted in 2000-2001. A small volume of balsam fir at the west edge of the Blueberry lot may be ready for harvest, but given nonexistent pulp markets only large sound trees would be marketable. The committee agreed this was low priority, given minimal stumpage revenue and lack of a landing site. Jim Jones offered to investigate what is required to offer a small timber contract, and whether it would need to be open to public bidding or could be offered to a local party with small equipment. Insurance would be required.

Robert mentioned that there are some wood duck boxes on the beaver ponds at the back side of the Blueberry lot, and with beaver expansion there might be room for more.

Some roadside dumping has occurred near the junction with Paquette Road, and Jim J. mentioned that the town is investigating whether some state funding for road improvements might be used to clean some of that up.

There is one instance of honeysuckle near the old Will Baker homestead on the Blueberry lot, and Jared offered to remove that.

Jared will complete a draft of the management plan within a few weeks and leave a copy with the Town Clerk for committee members to review and sign. He will also send an electronic copy to those using email.

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Public Use and Awareness

The committee discussed how to increase public awareness of town land. Stuart suggested posting signs to let hunters and others know this is town land and open to hunting. Others agreed that a public walk would be a good option. Stuart volunteered to organize and publicize, with a tentative date of Saturday October 23.

Roadside Ash Inventory

The Craftsbury Conservation Commission has asked the Municipal Forest Committee to assist with an inventory of ash trees in town road rights-of-way that may create hazards if killed by ash borer. Jim M. already conducted a quick drive-by survey but he included all sizes so more work is needed. The Committee has several questions including:

- What is the minimum size to be considered a hazard tree?
- What are the widths of road rights-of-way on various town roads?
- What would be done with this information? Committee questioned whether removing all ash is warranted before the ash borer has been documented locally.
- Roadside trees in the town right-of-way belong to the landowner, and many of these trees are also under power lines, so who is ultimately responsible for removing risky trees?

Rob offered to find out more about state recommendations for road-side ash trees.

Meeting was adjourned at about 8:00 pm.