

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, April 19, 2022, 7 P.M., Hybrid and Zoom

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Jon Campbell, Dale Chayes**, Zanna Gruber (Vice-Chair), **Aaron Moore, Bruce Rachman, Laurie Ullmann, John Watlington** (Chair), **Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Mel Lima, **Bob Mackin**, Bethany Nichols, Jim Salem, **Bill Smith**, Todd Tsakiris, **Tom Wolf**

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources, briefly), **Carol Doblewski** (Acton citizen), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **David Kleinschmidt** (Acton citizen), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

John opened the meeting at 7:15 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of March 15 minutes

March minutes are not yet available.

Membership update

- We have lost our Great Hill steward, Bethany Nichols (who would have become our first chainsaw woman). She has moved to Maine. Until there is a new Great Hill steward, John will keep an eye on the parcel. Bettina will have Peg Sestrich restore the Great Hill need to the LSC website.
- Bob M has been approved by the Select Board as an Associate member of the LSC.
- David Kleinschmidt, Half Moon Hill resident, is attending this meeting (and perhaps some others) with the idea that he may want to join the Committee.

Concerns from the public

- Jody wondered whether we will wrap up the conversation we’ve been having about invasives. John summarized: It was agreed that Jody’s crew will put down black plastic on Wright Hill in the areas where there is Asian bittersweet, the plastic to be in place for about a year (or maybe a little bit longer), and then replant with natives once the bittersweet has died. The black plastic suggested to John that it is time to deal with Japanese knotweed. There is a bad infestation at Great Hill between the little playing field and Mill Corner. The Mill Corner Board has approved a plan that would place 3-4 inches of wood chips, covered by 7 mils of black plastic, then 3-4 more inches of wood chips, and leave everything in place for a minimum of 5 years.

Invasive plants 2022, Part 2

John shared information using the PowerPoint slides shown below. The first slide lists invasives that land stewards should be able to recognize and are encouraged to remove on sight. The second slide features the invasive garlic mustard. The third slide shows the invasive Asian bittersweet. John will send a link to the slides he uses.

- It’s “garlic mustard pickin’ season”. Right now, the plant is small and doesn’t require too many bags to clear a plot. It takes several years to remove garlic mustard, but after three or four years, the space it covers diminishes and removal takes a lot less time. Garlic mustard is one of the few invasive plants that must be

removed from its site. Do not leave it in a pile. Do not compost it. Put it in a bag, seal the bag, and put the bag in the trash. Jim Snyder-Grant keeps a list of garlic mustard locations in Acton. See slide for website.

As a Land Steward, you should recognize and remove:

Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria petiolata*)

Asian Bittersweet (*Celastrus orbiculatus*)

Glossy Buckthorn (*Frangula alnus*)

Multiflora Rose (*Rosa multiflora*)

Japanese Barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*)

Bush Honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowii*)

Norway Maple (*Acer platanoides*)

Winged Euonymus (*Euonymus Alatus*)

Japanese Knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica*) (Wetherbee, Pratt's Brook, Great Hill, Wills Hole)

Mile a Minute (*Persicaria perfoliata*) (Not seen yet in Acton)

Garlic Mustard ([*Alliaria petiolata*](#))

A non-woody plant, with a two year maturity: it doesn't produce seed until its second year.

Spreads by seed, and regrows from root fragments

Repeated pulling of second year plants (shown) required.

Remove pulled plants --- **do not compost**

See <https://bit.ly/2QiPFU6> for Jim's list of Garlic Mustard in Acton Conservation lands



Check: Garlic smell, S-shaped root stem

April

Asian Bittersweet ([*Celastrus orbiculatis*](#))

THE dominant invasive species

A ropy vine which can will grow up and over anything. It will bring down most trees.

Spreads mostly by seeds (birds)

Regrows from root fragments or buried stems. Root removal (by pulling) is critical.

"Cut low and high" around trees, in order to stop damage to tree and allow detection of regrowth. Not too low, as regrowth will happen!



Check: Orange root, smooth bark

May

- Asian bittersweet is the other invasive that is good to get hold of now before the trees start budding out. Right now, there is plenty of it off the Davis Road parking at Nashoba if you can't find any on other parcels. At the very least, one should cut the thick vine so that it doesn't bush out high in a tree and eventually kill the tree. A characteristic of Asian bittersweet is its smooth bark, but there are native vines that have smooth bark, so a check for an orange root is important.
- Re invasives, Bettina has set up an invasives-removal project at the Arboretum that may possibly be used as an Eagle Scout project — at the request of the scout.

New/Special Business

Map/message boards

Bob Walton described the new 16-inch map boards (Bettina's design), how he built them, and how they can be attached to a tree. One problem: Tree growth. For map boards, three ways to deal with tree growth are 1) ignore it, 2) leave an air gap of at least an eighth of an inch, and 3) put a spring in the air gap. If a board is nailed flush to the tree with nail heads flush to the board, tree growth eventually forces the flat nail head through the board, the board will fall off the tree, and you have to make new holes. You could use longer finish nails. It would take the head of a finish nail over 10 years to pass through a pointer. One feature of Bob's boards is the use of lock washers as springs, not as lock washers, to deal with tree growth. A lock washer provides for an air gap of at least an eighth of an inch that will allow for a year of tree growth with no stress on the board.

- Bob has written a set of "preliminary" instructions that could be posted on the LSC web page.
- John is more comfortable using a lag bolt instead of a nail and backing out the bolt instead of letting the tree consume the nail.
- Bettina gave two boards to Tom that he's put up at Nashoba Brook. She may have three more that she'll seek out.
- Do we need more? Bettina will ask stewards if they need any "You are here" boards.

Chainsaw training May 10 in Andover

It's one day 8 am to 2 pm. Dale, Aaron and Jim Salem have signed up. Bettina thinks there still is some room for others. Dale reminds Bettina that no details have yet been shared about where this will be, what's going to be covered, and what to bring. There may be another chainsaw training session in October.

Additional Regular Business

Parcel issues

- Guggins/Jenks

Bettina received an email complaining about what the LSC knows is the normal state of Guggins. Jon suggests that this is a reminder of creating the bypass trail that was discussed at a previous LSC meeting. Hopefully the bypass can be done with the help of high school seniors next Friday, April 29.

- Nagog Hill/Grassy Pond orienteering; Order of the Arrow Workday 03/26

Nothing on orienteering. The Workday was "awesome". There were at least 20 scouts and leaders. John was there, as was Jon as part of the scout group. A "ton of stuff" was done, and there's still plenty more to do. Dale took down the huge dying oak branch hanging out over the Grassy Pond parking lot before anyone else arrived. A lot of trash was picked up, vines and tree debris cleared, and the area around the field that Hybrid Farm was using along Nagog Hill Road was cleaned up. John orchestrated the trail re-route out of the Nagog Hill parking lot. "Tons of progress!"

– With Hybrid gone, the LSC should investigate the possibility of another blue trail east of the farm in the woods that Hybrid used for its horses.

– Bettina would like Dale to chop up some “ginormous” logs at Grassy Pond West to make it easier for a project that Linda McElroy is working on with the Friends of Pine Hawk. Called the Nashobah Project, it will attempt to determine whether some of the ceremonial stone piles on the parcel pre-date the arrival of Europeans.

– Bulette

Last winter, Bettina, Bob M, and Jon walked the Anderson parcel that is becoming part of Bulette. Does Jon have any data yet to use for making a map of the expanded Bulette? Yes, but Jon urges caution about the first step in fixing the LSC map, namely putting things on OpenStreetMap. The contractor of the nearby PCRC development has built a small parking lot on Arlington Street and will build a boardwalk over Grassy Pond Brook. Susan affirms that the Town now owns the Anderson parcel but does not yet own the 12 acres from the PCRC, as acceptance of that land as a gift to the Town is a warrant article for the upcoming Town Meeting. While waiting for that to happen Jon will send the data to Bettina so that Bettina can get it into the queue that has formed for the services of Town IT.

– Nashoba Brook

Tom raised concern over the (downstream) bridge, sharing some photos of rotted supports. While the bridge is not likely in danger of collapsing, the problem might need to be addressed within a year or two. Perhaps a bridge expert should assess the current condition and make a recommendation on what needs to be done. Bruce and Laurie had recognized these problems when they worked on the ramps for this bridge about a year ago and they agree that these problems need fixing. Next steps: List exactly what lumber will be needed and requisition it from the town through Bettina, and she will get the materials; also, to assess how much work will be required.

Tom also voiced concern about the mud on the Trail Through Time (TTT) between the Pest House and the Princess Pine kiosk. He did scope out a path that might be a little bit drier and is letting the LSC know that he could possibly work on it later this summer. Bettina suggests that the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC), inactive due to Covid for a couple years now, may be starting its volunteer work parties again. If Tom formalizes a plan, Bettina would be willing to reach out to the AMC. Per Laurie, the AMC has a new person in charge of the Bay Circuit Trail (which traverses part of the TTT).

Tom’s project, with high school students, at Wheeler Lane (cardboarding and mulching an area around the cellar hole) should happen in about a week and a half. He has a “pretty good” amount of cardboard now and intends to add cardboard from Laurie to the mix.

Jody’s husband has been making a couple of signs asking people not to disturb the rocks at the site. Bettina will install one at the cellar hole (into which people have been chucking rocks) and the other at the Stone Chamber.

Laurie wrote a report re the Pencil Factory for the Massachusetts Society of Genealogists that expands on and extends the information that Phil Keyes and Laurie had prepared for the four-sided kiosk at the Pencil Factory site. “Ebenezer Wood, Pencil Maker of Acton, Massachusetts” has been published in the Association’s MASSOG journal, Volume 46, a copy of which can be found in both the Acton Library and the Jenks Library.

– Other

Re the Piper Lane and Caouette parcels, Bettina will be meeting in the next couple weeks with various folks to establish bounds for those conservation lands.

Per John, while a parking lot for Great Hill on Piper Lane will be written into the Piper Lane Conservation Restriction, the Town is suggesting that another parking lot for Great Hill is not needed at that site.

Updates

– Community Preservation Act (CPA)

CPA items of interest to the LSC: The Community Preservation Committee (CPC) has approved funding requested for the Heath Hen Meadow bridge. It has also approved \$600K for Open Space, \$100K more than the amount requested. The amounts have yet to be approved at the two-day Town Meeting beginning May 16.

– Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Nothing significant to report on it right now. There has not been much time available for Town employees to work on it. Bettina has to update OSRP information on the Town's public lands. She believes the Town has acquired 90 protected acres since the last OSRP. She would like to also provide mileage of the public trails. The previous OSRP may be found on the Town website:

<http://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-50377/2015%20Acton%20OpenSpace.pdf>

– Website

Peg Sestrich is moving to Seattle but will continue as Manager of the LSC website. Bettina will email Peg to have her put up information on the Great Hill Steward vacancy. Any current steward-at-large who would be interested in becoming Great Hill Steward should let John know. The minimal need is to have someone walk the trails about once a month. John is still doing invasives work there. David K may be interested

– Maps

The new trail reroute at Nagog Hill should be reflected on the map. Also, possibly some arrows and additional signage may be needed at the site. However, the Nagog Hill steward is swamped for at least another week.

Next month's meeting date

To avoid a conflict with the second night of Town Meeting on Tuesday, May 17, the next LSC meeting will be Tuesday, May 24.

Next month's agenda

Nashoba Brook bridge repair
Report on chainsaw training
Send any other items to Joe.

Adjournment

At 8:20 pm, John declared the meeting "closed".

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, May 24, at 7 p.m.