

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, June 17, 2025, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

Full (voting) members: **Bettina Abe**, **Jon Campbell** (Vice-Chair), Dale Chayes, **Aaron Moore**, Bruce Rachman, **John Watlington**, **Joe Will** (Minutes), **Tom Wolf** (Chair)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Ken Appel, Josh Haines, **Jody Harris**, **Rebecca Harvey**, Everett Kenerson, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, Adam Nolde, David Pinsky, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris, **Bob Walton**

Others: **Ian Bergemann** (Community Conservation Specialist), **Jonathan Wurtz** (Acton resident)

Tom opened the meeting at 7:09 p.m.

Review & acceptance of May 20 Minutes

May 20 minutes not ready yet.

Concerns from the public

Jonathan Wurtz, whose house abuts Heath Hen Meadow, is attending to find out if and how he could be of help.

Invasive plants, June 2025

Multiflora Rose (Rambler Rose) — Much of the information John shared can be found on the Acton Invasives Wiki Multiflora Rose page:

http://ec2-44-218-8-154.compute-1.amazonaws.com/aiw/index.php?title=Multiflora_Rose

Even better is John's "Invasive Plants in Acton, Acton LSC Meetings and Public Presentations, Revised Spring 2025", found at

<http://bit.ly/42ByCPB>

and features multiflora rose at

<https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Qdc6kGhXJJt->

[https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Qdc6kGhXJJt-Ysk2ur7vsB5nWtp61v2osP29GydaT28/edit?slide=id.gc802792aaa_0_28](https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1Qdc6kGhXJJt-Ysk2ur7vsB5nWtp61v2osP29GydaT28/edit?slide=id.gc802792aaa_0_28#slide=id.gc802792aaa_0_28) which John used with his presentation.

Multiflora rose is blooming right now — clusters of white flowers. It was introduced to North America in 1866 as a rose cultivar, but it really took off in the 1930s because the U.S. Soil Conservation Service decided that it was ideal for erosion control, and the Conservation Service started giving it to farmers everywhere. You normally see it in bush form, but each stem will continue growing like a vine. Sometimes you'll see this growing 15 feet up into a tree.

It is easy to definitively identify multiflora rose by its curved thorns. They don't stick straight out (as do thorns of native roses and various berries) but hook backwards, and they love to catch your skin, break off from the stem, and then just stay in your skin. To work with multiflora rose, John recommends wearing PPE gloves and safety goggles at a minimum. The stems have a way of whipping around and hitting you in the face when you're not expecting it. An even more definitive way to identify multiflora rose is by the hairy petioles at the base of a leaf stem. Native roses have just a smooth edge at that point on the stem.

Later in the year, multiflora rose will have red hips (fruit) that will remain after the plant loses its leaves. Each hip will contain 1 to 20 seeds, and they're eaten by birds which then spreads multiflora rose all over. But not only does multiflora rose spread by seed, it also spreads by a stem or a vine getting pushed into the ground. That stem will put out roots while it's still attached to the main plant and will basically

become yet another multiflora rose. When working on a multiflora rose stem, give it a yank to pull it loose from the ground because it's not too uncommon for a stem that's simply cut to be already rooted at the far end. You can eliminate multiflora rose by repeated cuttings, preferably at ground level because the more stem that you leave, the more regrowth that you'll have to cut again later. "Critical period cutting" is the expression for cutting it, then cutting it again in 6 months, then again in a year, and again in 2 years. By then it should be "very dead" — hopefully!

Just checking on how to deal with mugwort: Per John, pull it up, pulling up the root ball. Also watch for any runner — a root segment heading off to another plant. Be sure to pull those too. Come back 2 or 3 months later and do another pass on roots that survived and have resprouted. Do this early as in the fall, they get woody and are very difficult to pull.

There was further (rambling) discussion on mint, Japanese knotweed, and Japanese snowball (viburnum plicatum)

Boardwalk Design Guide project

This is Bob's ongoing project. Monthly, Bob leads a technical discussion on the Design Guide contents. You can find his latest information on his website:

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vqgZpeE5wAlpT0Fd2Fy7jKuWsIBtPfjM1gZYLssWVOc/edit?tab=t_0#heading=h.wzmt52hjqwbe

At this meeting Bob presented components [6] through [8] for consideration and possible adoption by consensus.

[6] Boardwalks and bridges should be level, except for ramps which should be short. In the length direction, slopes of up to 3 degrees (5 inches height change in 8 feet of length) may be considered level. In the width direction, treads should be completely level as measured by a spirit level.

Clarification: A "spirit level" is a very short, 6- to 8-inch, level.

Component [6] was accepted as presented.

[7 proposed, two paragraphs] Wood sills should be 6x6's. 2x6's can be screwed to the top to increase height.

Wood sills need to be stable over time. A common problem is soil underneath the sill subsiding. To prevent this, push a thin metal rod as far as you can into the soil that will be under the sill, and dig a hole as deep as the bottom of the rod. Then build a sill foundation up from there with rocks (do not take rocks from stone walls), gravel, or wood laid crosswise to the sill. If the hole would be too deep, consider using a high-density polyethylene corrugated pipe sill, perhaps partly in a hole.

Ensuing discussion resulted in this (with changes in red):

[7 final, three paragraphs] Wood sills should be 6x6's **or 4x6's with wide edge horizontal**. 2x6's can be screwed to the top **of 6x6's** to increase height.

Wood sills need to be stable over time. A common problem is soil underneath the sill subsiding. To prevent this, push a thin metal rod as far as you can into the soil that will be under the sill, and dig a hole as deep as the bottom of the rod. Then build a sill foundation up from there with rocks (do not take rocks from stone walls), gravel, or wood laid crosswise to the sill. If the hole would be too deep, consider using a high-density polyethylene corrugated pipe sill, perhaps partly in a hole.

If you dig a hole for foundation materials, be sure to fill any part of the hole not containing foundation with dirt, so as not to create a puddle depression.

[8 proposed, two paragraphs and table] Corrugated pipe sills should use pipes of inside diameter at least 10 inches. The pad on top of a pipe should be a 2x6 as long as the pipe. Pipe sizes are:

Inside Diameter	Outside Diameter	Height with Pad
10 in	11.4 in	12.9 in
12 in	14.5 in	16 in
15 in	18 in	19.5 in
18 in	22 in	23.5 in

Common problems with pipes are one end sinking as soil underneath subsides or the whole pipe rotating and slipping along the length of the boardwalk so the pad tilts and only properly supports one of the two sections joined at the top of the pipe. Use a shallow trench, rocks, gravel, or pieces of wood underneath the pipe to prevent these problems.

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Conservation Updates

• 19 & 35 Wetherbee Street

– We are in the process of getting the \$500,000 LAND (Local Acquisitions for Natural Diversity) grant from the State through the Sudbury Valley Trustees (SVT). We put up a legally-required sign with the full name of the parcel, and citing funding from Acton's Community Preservation Act (CPA), the LAND grant, and the Acton Conservation Trust (ACT).

– That sign is in the woods at the parking area. At the entrance will be a sign "Moritz Forest Conservation Land", similar to signs at the other conservation lands.

– The parcel is a bit of a mess right now with a house and all the radio towers having been removed.

– There are a "ton" of trails made by deer, old farm trails, or roads made when the towers were removed; some of which go nowhere.



- Ian is mapping and flagging the official trails that will be there. One he has completed is a loop that goes back to the parking. Another one to come is a link to the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail. He is organizing trail workdays, like every 4 days for the next 3 or 4 weeks. He will notify the LSC, and others re the workdays.
- There are hazards on the land, like wire from the towers, ruts and holes from the work done there, and, in general, lots of stuff to pick up.
- A Scout is building a kiosk right now.
- There may be Native American things on the parcel.
- For parking, there is a huge opening where you can drive in from Wetherbee Street. It's where the house used to be. It may hold about 8 cars. The DPW will grade the parking lot which currently is being taken over by invasive species. Parking is also possible on the side of Wetherbee Street.
- Under consideration is a ribbon-cutting Grand Opening, probably the second or third week in July.
- Susan Mitchell-Hart may talk to Natalie and Norm Delorey, former owners of the property, about having their pair of Randall oxen, “Phil” and “Kent”, at such an event.

- Land Steward Check Ins

We have done 9 out of the 22 conservation lands. Ian will add more possible check-in dates for stewards who have not yet done so. The goal is to create a complete inventory of conservation lands so we can prioritize different projects.

- Mosquito & Tick Awareness Campaign Inventory

Ian is working with the Health Department to promote awareness re ticks and mosquitoes. He shared with the Committee two “all-encompassing” posters — one for ticks and one for mosquitoes — for stewards’ thoughts on posting either/both on our trails. Both are consistent with what the State puts out. Both will be posted in Town Hall, Acton Memorial Library, the Recreation Center, and NARA. They could go on conservation lands, or Ian can make ones that are more conservation specific if so desired.

Discussion points:

- The tick poster seems a little bit more applicable to our trails because it relates well to what one does in the woods.
- The mosquito one is good too because it's educational. It doesn't tell you to spray poison all over your yard.
- These shouldn't scare people away from going outside.
- If there would be enough room, Ian could add something like, “If you find an attached tick, remove it promptly and get it tested locally” given that there is a tick lab in town.
- It's good that the poster doesn't say to hire a company to spray chemicals all over your yard to prevent ticks.
- There was a general discussion on the use of deet or permethrin, but it probably isn't a good idea to recommend a treatment in general, nor to use terms that are difficult to translate into other languages. The posters will give websites that will provide more information.

Per Ian: I will refine the tick poster and make it a little smaller than our standard flyer size so it can fit on kiosks — similar to the size of our current tick card. What I am working on right now is a flyer that we could put on our kiosks that would show life-size ticks because the State no longer provides the little tick cards.

Ian will be able to talk a bit about ticks at a presentation next week at the Acton Library that will basically be an introduction to our Conservation Lands.

- FY25 ending soon – any purchases need to be before June 20th

If there is anything needed soon, Ian must know by tomorrow as he will be unavailable Thursday or Friday. Otherwise, we can look forward to July for anything needed from the Town. Stewards immediately suggested that if \$ remain in the budget, buy lumber, voicing their recommendations. Ian will submit a purchase order tomorrow.

Other parcel issues

- Bulette: Vultures are nesting near a blue trail. Rebecca notes what seems to be a “substantial” increase in the number of visitors on that trail, including children climbing around on some rocks that could be dangerous, or they could be surprised by a bird that is surprised by them. She suggests that we place a respectful sign at each end of that trail that says, “Closed for nesting wildlife”, or simply “Closed”.

Discussion points:

- Sounds good. We also need a plan on when to remove the signage.
- The signage could say something like “until September”, or whenever.
- The blue trail cited is the one that goes along the rock ledge, not the one that runs along Route 2.
- Rebecca described the location of the nest and what likely would happen if the nesting would be successful, including the fact that any chicks would be fed in place by their parents for about two months. Rebecca has set up a trail camera there. Unlike most of her camera placements, this one is in very plain sight because of the location.
- Right now, that trail is overgrown. If we're going to keep it as a trail it needs to be cut back. For now, put up the signs and don't cut back the overgrowth.
- Heath Hen Meadow (HHM): Per Ian, if you are free tomorrow at 3 pm, we're meeting at HHM to look at the old and only HHM beaver deceiver to see if it is working or if it's jammed. I have reached out to Beaver Solutions to do an assessment on HHM and Guggins, and potentially other beaver dams in town. I will build an inventory of beaver dams, including how much it would cost per dam for a custom solution by a group that would say, “Money back guarantee”. The inventory will help build an operational budget. If the beaver deceiver at HHM is not working and we need a new one, we will have to file with the Conservation Commission. For that, it is recommended that we file for all our beaver receivers. That will give us 3 years to do whatever work is needed without having to file again. Also, if there's a group (e.g., Beaver Solutions) that says that we will literally be beaver-deceiver insured — if it doesn't work, then we'll fix it, then that may be the way to go instead of doing it ourselves.
- Guggins Brook: Re the beaver situation at the 284 bridge, John has been exploring a trapezoid-shaped culvert protection fence that beavers essentially can't get over. So they just build around it and the water can still flow through. There's very minimal maintenance to it — moving leaves one to two times a year — something Beaver Solutions (or we) could do. But Beaver Solutions is not available for another 3 weeks, so we need to do something obviously very urgently, for both HHM and Guggins.
- Spring Hill: Per Rebecca, the Spring Hill dam is back but so far there are no apparent problems. Rebecca can give a weekend tour if anyone is interested.

Updates

- Blazing: Jody built a new blazing template that she and Adam Nolde used successfully at Pratts Brook, especially compared to some blazing work that she and Ian had done at Wright Hill that took a long time. Procedurally, Jody and Adam identified the problem areas, talked about solutions, and then blazed . . . also did some refreshing of blazes. The latter was not the goal, so they will schedule another refreshing date. Jody is suggesting that this could be done with other parcels, maybe 6 h per week (all on the same decent-weather day). Jody asks any steward interested in this to email her with their needs. Ian asks that Jody keep him informed and he'll try to make an Excel file to try to keep track of the blazing.

- LSC membership: Bob initiated a lengthy discussion on LSC responsibilities and membership.

Points made:

- In the same way as we have sawyers who specialize in tree work, could we have people who specialize in removal of invasives and other brush?
- Getting volunteers is difficult.
- Volunteers can't use anything other than hand tools (no power equipment) unless they're on the Committee.

- An Associate is a sworn member of the LSC. We should add several stewards as Associates.
- Ian is trying to figure out a good volunteer-recruiting system. One possibility would be a newsletter as it seems that people never see his flyers.
- A big problem with recruiting land stewards seems to be that they've got to walk all the blazed trails once a month. And unless they have a dog, they're not really into that. There are some people who don't have dogs who are into walking all over the place. But they're all old.
- The best way to recruit is with a sign in the kiosk of a parcel for which a steward is needed.
- An invasive species task force is a great idea. But how to do it? We're already a subcommittee. It seems hard to say, "a subcommittee subcommittee".
- We would have to ask the Town to increase the number of land stewards.
- For the LSC, there really is little difference between an Associate member and a Voting member other than the Voting member is more likely to show up for a meeting so that we can have a quorum. But we set a precedent a few years ago when John moved from being a land steward for a parcel to being a land steward "at large", working in particular on invasives. So given this precedent, it shouldn't be too hard to find and invite people to join the land stewards just to work on invasives. John would be willing to work with them to help train them.
- John is a rare bird!
- It's not easy to find people who have the time to be that dedicated. It's easier to find people, or a corporate group, to come for a workday, say once a year.
- It sounds like we have a larger goal — maybe for the next several months — talking about recruiting, changing our strategies, etc.
- We currently don't have land stewards for some of our lands — making sure that we get land stewards a huge priority. At the same time, we have land stewards who are just "at large", who don't necessarily want to be stewarding a parcel, and they don't do invasive species. This begs a question.
- It might be of value for us to update our Mission Statement to include something like, "If you join the LSC as an at-large member, you have a goal: being dedicated to invasive species or being a sawyer. We should put at-large candidates into those categories before bringing them on board.
- We should revisit this topic . . . maybe next month, and probably in other future months,

Next month's (07/15/25) agenda

Possibly an ongoing conversation about LSC recruiting in general and setting expectations for LSC membership.

Evaluate meeting

– Nice!

Adjournment

At 8:28 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, July 15, 2025, at 7 p.m.