

Land Stewardship Committee Meeting Minutes
Thursday, January 21, 2010
Acton Town Hall

Present: Tom Arnold, Joan Cirillo, Bob Guba, Philip Keyes, Peggy Liversidge (minute-taker), Nan Towle Millett, Heidi Sikina, Jim Snyder-Grant (chair), Tom Tidman

Minutes: The December minutes were approved.

Pacy map: Jim reported that a basic map of the Pacy Land is now up on the website, though it is not yet in the finalized form of the trail guide maps. Tom T. is planning to draw the map in this form.

Kiosk box maps: Tom A. suggested that all maps intended for kiosk map boxes include wording such as "PLEASE RETURN THIS MAP TO MAP BOX." It was agreed that it would be a good idea to add this to all of the map masters that Andrea has or to maps that stewards make on their own.

"You-are-here" maps: Jim reported that Boxborough has "you-are-here" maps on their conservation lands that might be a good model for similar maps on our lands, especially on larger tracts. These are maps of the conservation area that are placed at strategic points within the conservation area with an arrow pointing to the place where the map and the hiker are. It was agreed that this is a good idea and that the Camp Acton/Nashoba Brook/Spring Hill area would be a good place to start (with perhaps 4 to 6 maps). Bob recommended that mini-kiosks be made for the maps (backing plus a small roof), that these be placed on posts rather than on trees, and that the maps themselves be laminated and then be placed behind plexiglass. Jim will take a photograph of one of the Boxborough signs on its mini-kiosk to serve as a model. Philip offered to propose possible locations for signs at CA/NB/SH and will develop a draft sign for the area. It was also suggested, and agreed, that this would make a good Eagle project.

Quail Ridge: Concerning the permitting that is required from the Conservation Commission for cutting the new Quail Ridge trail and for building its boardwalk, Tom T. suggested that the paperwork for both be done at the same time, although the trail cutting needs to be done during the winter while the boardwalk work will need to wait until spring. There was a brief discussion of the boardwalk, including Philip's assessment that we probably will not make it either handicapped accessible or strong enough to accommodate horse traffic and his question about whether a railing will be needed (required if the boardwalk is 3 feet or more off the ground).

Hybid Farm issues: Tom A. wondered if we could request of the McConnons that horses from Hybid not use the portion of the Nagog Hill loop trail beside the farm until after the Eagle Scout builds his boardwalk, because of the damage they do to the trail, especially in warmer weather. Although it was noted that many of the horses using the trail may not, in fact, be from the farm, Jim agreed to check in with the McConnons about this, as well as about their lease agreement.

It was also noted that the sign on the access trail requesting that horses keep to the left is potentially confusing because of its placement just before the loop trail goes to the left. Tom A. and Heidi agreed to move the sign so that it

clearly refers to the portion of the loop trail that goes straight ahead, alongside the farm.

Steward Expectations document: This document was reviewed and, with one clarification to the section about committee communications, was accepted in its present form. Concerning the expectation that every steward will "file a monthly report on the condition of your parcel either via e-mail or at the monthly meeting," it was clarified that reports that are made via e-mail will be sent to the entire committee (at lsc@acton-ma.gov) and that reports can be as brief as simply saying that there is nothing to report about the parcel.

In relation to the expectation that stewards will remove trash found on their properties, Heidi questioned whether trash barrels should be placed in parking lots, such as is the case at the Great Hill field. Bob responded that we have opted not to have trash barrels on conservation properties in the hope that this will encourage people to take responsibility for removing their own trash, although this is clearly not always successful. He also clarified that the trash barrels at Great Hill are on the Recreation Dept. part of the property, not conservation land property.

Education/outreach ideas: Tom A. suggested that we plan several events throughout the year on conservation lands and post these on our website; these might include bird inventories, photography contests, dog walks that could include basic instruction about appropriate owner behavior, and wildflower walks. Tom A. offered to host a photography event. Other suggestions were that Andy Magee might be asked if he could help with a bird count event and Pam Resor might lead a fern walk. Jim stated that he could do the website postings.

Another suggestion was that the purpose of our volunteer list be expanded to include events notification. It was noted that we are, in fact, already using the list in this way, so it was suggested that the name and stated explanation for the list be changed to reflect that.

Philip stated that he is still willing to help with lecture publicity and set-up.

Next meeting: The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, February 17, at 4:00 PM.