

Appendix 9

Transcription of the Public Meeting on the Long-Range Management Plan for the Krusch Nature Preserve held 5/1/2022 at Cambridge Elementary School Gym

*Responding to requests that the transcript of the Public Meeting be included in these Appendices, the Steering Committee attaches it with many thanks to all who were involved. **Following the accepted protocol for presenting transcripts, it has not been edited or changed or rewritten.** It represents the spoken word, and reproduces the oral exchange that day.*

Thanks to the Lamoille County Planning Commission staff for recording the meeting and to Elizabeth Spier for transcribing it.

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

preserve, wildlife, trails, Cambridge, talk, questions, management, comments, discussion, outdoor classroom, sightings, forest, conservation commission, cemetery, invasive species, impacts, white pines

SPEAKERS

Welcome, George Putnam, Selectboard Chair

Justin Marsh, Chair, Cambridge Conservation Commission,

Sally Laughlin, Chair, Krusch Preserve Steering Committee,

Jonathan Wood (Woody), Moderator

Station Exhibits/ Presentations

Jonathan Wood, Forest Inventory and Analysis

Cambridge Trails, Liam Kearney and Laird MacDowell

Sara Lourie, Conservation Commission (Old Forests and Passive Forest Management)

Holly Ferris and Sophie Mazowita, Wildlife of the Preserve

Mary Fiedler, Environmental Education & Nature Walks

Rebecca Roman, Vermont Land Trust, Conservation Easements & VLT's Role

Public Meeting for the Krusch Nature Preserve on May 1, 2022 George Putnam's Introductory Remarks

Good afternoon and welcome. This public meeting is about the Peter A. Krusch Nature Preserve. This is an opportunity for you to learn more about the Preserve. More importantly, it is an opportunity for you to provide input for the Long-Term Management Plan for the Preserve. The Preserve is presently subject to an Interim Management Plan, which needs to be replaced by a Long-Term Management Plan.

The Krusch Preserve Steering Committee is drafting the Long-Term Management Plan. It will be reviewed by the Cambridge Conservation Commission and presented to the Cambridge Selectboard. The Long-Term Management Plan must be adopted by the Cambridge Selectboard, and it must be approved by the Vermont Land Trust which holds conservation easements on the Preserve. I am George Putnam, this year's chair of the Cambridge Selectboard.

The facilitator for today's meeting is Jonathan Wood, known as Woody. But before I introduce Woody, I want to introduce two other people:

Sally Laughlin is the primary mover and shaker behind the Peter A. Krusch Nature Preserve. She is the chair of the Steering Committee, and she is the widow of Peter Krusch, about whom you will hear more later. It was because of Sally's efforts, including a generous donation and active fundraising, that the Town of Cambridge acquired the Krusch Nature Preserve in December of 2020.

Sally is a lifelong conservationist. She was a co-founder of the Vermont Institute of Natural Science (VINS), then in Woodstock, in 1972, and she served as its executive director for 18 years. Sally served on the Endangered Species Committee for the State of Vermont for more than 30 years, and was its chair for 25 years.

Justin Marsh represents the Cambridge Conservation Commission, having served as its chair since 2013. It was the Cambridge Conservation Commission that engaged in conversations with Peter Krusch and Sally

DISCUSSION AFTER EVERYONE VISITS THE STATIONS

Woody 00:00

We're going to try to have somebody jot this stuff down if there's any specific comments. But we'll capture what you're saying to us for comments. And please be respectful of everybody. So, there's no such thing as a stupid question. And there's no such thing as an out of bounds. Comments, we're going to collect it all comments. We're a small town here, and want everyone's opinion, no matter how we do this, the subject matter how comfortable you are, let us know what you think. And I hope you learned something, at least at one of the stations, so that you know a little bit more about the property. And you're a little more familiar. And now you can give us kind of informed information and comments.

SUMMARY OF THE STATIONS

Woody

So, I'll start. Mine was the forest inventory and analysis, and there were a lot of questions on why the property was broken up into different stands, and how that was done. And a lot of questions actually,

that we should have been given to Sally in the state forest questions, which were, where are the pines? how old they are? How are they associated? Now that we have access to that state forest, which really wasn't good before. And how, for 10 years, we're kind of really thinking that no tampering with the forest should be done, that it should be passively managed on the whole property for 10 years, people have to know it, figure it out, and that the Conservation Commission believes that should probably carry on well beyond that, and have passive management is a long-term goal as well. But we want your input on what you think.

One of my strongest recommendations was invasive species management to get rid of the invasive Asian honeysuckle. Keep the trails maintained, those type of things. So that was the general tenor of people that visited my station. Who wants to go next? Mary,

Mary 01:57

I didn't have a lot of questions but there was a comment about who would use the outdoor classroom? And I said, student groups, school groups, guided walks, church groups. We could sit down for an introduction to the property or an introduction to a program there in the outdoor classroom. Also, what kind of guided walks do we want? Ones on nature, birding, plants, etc. That was pretty much it.

Woody 02:29

Great. Thank you, Mary.

Trails -Liam Kearney & Laird MacDowell

We got a lot of questions. The main questions asked, because we're involved with all the trails in Cambridge, had to do with the completion of the Lamoille Valley rail trail. I know that's not tied to the Krusch preserve. But it does bring a lot of people in the town if you drove by the burger barn this afternoon, to get an idea of the crowds. I was just out there working on the playground. Good thing, we put a parking lot across the bridge, and it's starting to fill up too this is just the first nice weekend in the whole summer.

So, I do want to mention that I worked with Liam and we put the Krusch Preserve on Google Maps, and specifically the parking lot and took a picture of it and loaded on to Google Maps. And I get a report every month on how many people looked at it and it is up to 500. (Wow), 500 people looked at that, you know, searching for Krusch Preserve. That's excellent. That's an excellent way to get there. We were going to put it on a business map that's called the Cambridge discovery maps. You see it in all the stores. It is a fold out map that shows all the businesses in town of Jeff. . But it doesn't include Cambridge, we're going to put it on that. Cambridge is not on that map, because there's not much business at Cambridge village. So that's why we decided to put it on Google Maps. So other than that, there wasn't any real questions about the trails. So, how will we support maintenance of the nature trail once it's completed? By that I mean have people go up there, walk in, Volunteers can help.

Anything else? Liam? No. Right. Thanks. Was it Justin or Sara on the Conservation Commission?

Justin 04:22

I did not entertain any questions,

Woody 04:24

Sara?

Sara 04:25

I was covering the Conservation Commission and talking about old forests. Basic old forest ecology and the idea that the idea that there's not going to be anything really happening in the way of management. We talked. There was some discussion about the idea of managing to actually increase some of the old growth characteristics of a forest and the idea of doing some management to improve wildlife quality for wildlife. So that was interesting. We also there was also questions about invasive species, and specifically Norway spruce. And I didn't know I didn't know too much about that. So those are the main, those are the main things that I think were discussed.

Woody 05:31

Thank you. Sally? you have things on the state pines?

Sally 05:38

Mostly people talked about being pleased to be able to get to the state forest pines easily without having to climb down that steep sandy bank from the cemetery. They appreciate the access from our Nature Trail. And on the statistics on how large the trees are - some of the largest white pines in Vermont. And of course, several people asked about how they happen to be preserved. And I love that story and how Harold Putnam in 1944 arranged for The State of Vermont's new Forestry Department to purchase the land from the Cemetery Association, for what the timber would have sold for. So, he was looking way ahead then, and are we grateful now almost 100 years later. We should also look ahead that far for the Krusch Preserve, which can become old trees too.

Woody 06:09

Okay, Rebecca?

Rebecca 06:09

Hi, folks, I'm Rebecca Roman. I'm from Vermont, Land Trust. Project Director for Cambridge and also Chittenden County. Big swath, I'm not going to list all the towns. My area, we talked about different user groups and user conflicts and thinking about management at a landscape level, talks about the easement and restrictions and requirements a little bit. The general overview of the conversation at my station, I'm happy to answer any questions. Also, afterwards if you have questions contact me.

Woody 06:59

education, or wildlife,

Sophie 07:02

Wildlife and education. Much of the discussion was wildlife have you seen on the Preserve, and discussion of how to report wildlife sightings. There are some great tools like iNaturalist, which is both a website and an app, a smartphone app where you can report your wildlife sightings. And thanks to some effort from Sally, the Krusch Preserve now is delineated on that app. So, you can actually see the borders of the preserve and what's been sighted within there.

And discussion of how this is an area that seems rich in wildlife, bird and mammal sightings. We have lists of various species that are known on the Preserve, if you haven't had a chance to take a look at them. They are on the website. And it's a really a great diversity of species. And there's also discussion around well, as more people come to visit the Preserve, there is potential that some of that wildlife might get disturbed, even if the primary goal is to protect this natural area, and people are coming because they love the wildlife, whether it's just the presence of people, the presence of dogs or off leash dogs, there's potential for impact. So just some discussion around, you know, how do we mitigate that? How do we continue to manage and respond to any impacts that there may be some kind of gets into questions of the long-term governance of the Preserve, and, and also that this seems like a really ripe opportunity for us to really study and get to know who's on the land who besides humans, and how they're using it? And there's still a lot more to learn. There were some questions around status of amphibians, frogs, for instance, and, you know, maybe Sally or other members of the committee know, but personally, I'm not sure if they're vernal pools at all on the preserve. (*note – no there are not any on this land*). So, now's an opportunity to really increase our awareness of all of that. And just monitor for impacts to wildlife into the future. Anything else? Holly?

Holly 08:57

No, I think everyone came to chat with you.

Woody 09:06

Great, thank you very much.

On any general questions from anyone on anything that wasn't captured, you didn't get answered that you need to know before you can give us any comments. You have anything burning that they didn't really get answered? And you can think about it and pop up at any time. So, what we'd like to do now is get some comments on what you think, you know, where should we go for the next 10 years or beyond?

GENERAL DISCUSSION

SUMMARY KEYWORDS

trees, trail, property, foraging, forest, trapping, area, people, habitat, management, land, species, pines, plan, asparagus, songbirds, pretty, state, years, hemlock

SPEAKERS

Woody 00:00

A lot has happened on the land. And that's a reflection of what our town and even beyond think should happen there. It's an incredible resource that a lot of people have put a lot of time into managing, making it happen. And we've got this wonderful thing in our town now. And we really need to steward it long term as a town. So, the management plan is important to have, it really reflects what we're going to do with the property as a group, and how that property is going to be protected and managed for the long term. So, we really appreciate you being here and shoot your comments. We will record them – we have an active recording going on. And we're also going to try to write down stuff in here as we go. And don't be shy. George, I missed you on the middle table. I'm sorry, Was anybody at yours? Lonely over there.

George 00:53

I was wandering, okay, no one came to the table for asking questions.

Woody 01:00

No one felt the need to do a secret message for us. Obviously, we tried to provide that opportunity. If we'd had more people here, there might have been someone a hero felt intimidated, they really didn't want to stand up and say, hey, I think such obstruction could have captured that light. So, there's a nice intimate group. And obviously people feel comfortable. I'd love to hear what people think. Ernest?

Ernest Krusch 01:25

I was born on that property. So, I have seen 62 years' worth of change. And also witnessed what my father did to basically bring that piece of property, while along with the whole farm at the time, back to what he thought was appropriate. The erosion in the picture, or in relative to that picture, that picture is taken from the clump of like, eight or 10 pine trees, on what was completely sand. And to the right. Those are red pines. I have a picture of my mother carrying me in a backpack and she's planting red pine trees. It was bare sand. Before Peter owned it, they took sand from there, they brought it down onto the Pumpkin Harbor Road to build up above the clay bank between Bill Morey's and the brick house. Okay, the story was the scraper pans didn't have traction on that clay that go up there to get sand bring it down anyway, it's getting off topic.

Woody 02:44

No, that's good history.

Ernest 02:47

So, I remember going up there as a kid blackberrying. So, I guess what I'm saying is the property has changed over the years, in 60 years that I can see it. And we're all in awe of the state forest, the size of the trees and all that kind of thing.

So, I'm if you want my opinion, we have a head start. You have some concerns with invasive species. I have a better understanding of that, I think everybody does now, and we have a head start to connect to a piece of property that has been untouched in more years than this one. But

Why mess with it? My opinion. I think my father completed what he had in mind. As a young man when he moved there, he wanted to basically take care of the erosion. And his goal was to graze cattle up there. And he did for several years. And then it was like, well, we better stop. And he got to an age where he didn't want the animals and all that kind of thing. But it was a it was a goal.

He told me when he moved there, there wasn't a tree on the property big enough to get a two by six out of. I mean they (the previous owners) cut pulp, they cut everything. And I remember that there was not much there. And so, the regeneration and the regrowth and what it looks like now is such a change. And I suspect then in another 60 years or 100 years, it will change even more. So, I'm professing that, we leave it alone, aside from maybe taking care of some invasives, obviously being careful with erosion, trail placement. You know, obviously we put a parking lot in so it's disturbing the soil. But we're hopefully doing it in a responsible manner. There's bridges put in gives the access. So, I guess that's essentially what I'm saying. Leave it alone.

Woody 04:58

Wonderful. Thank you for remarks, great to have that historical perspective and to get your, your real feelings on what should happen. And there is sand under there.

Ernest 05:08

Oh, yeah,

Woody 05:08

Some of it is taken off. But that's the parent soil. It has real erosion potential wind, both wind and water. And so, maintaining vegetation there is very important although, my inventory shows that that area should be managed and kept open for wildlife. I don't mean right down the sand, you know, keeping a strong vegetative presence on that property is very important for those protective reasons that you talked about,

Ernest 05:34

Right. Well, in amongst the red pine seedlings was beach grass. That was I don't know where it came from. But I remember rows of it, there was like wind rows, just like these chairs, just like these chairs planted on contour. And now that's pretty much gone, because it got shaded out. But it did hold that soil.

Woody 05:56

And my recommendation on that section that's got the planted red pine and some other species must be kept to act as a windbreak. And I'm hearing from you is anything we hear from many people that maybe the entire property, long term really has the opportunity to complement the older forest state land and become very similarly managed. So, it's good to hear.

Ernest 06:20

The other the other thing not only with this property, but from what I've seen from my experience, and I suspect you have also the soil quality, the land, the exposure is going to dictate what takes over and what grows the strongest. You clear land, as this was, this for pasture. It was marginal grass. But what has taken over- there's lots of briar bushes and your trees are coming in what's coming in. Sumac popple, some pines, okay, the sumac and the popple are not going to last, they are not going to last, they get so big, and then something else takes over. So, this is an evolution of the forest and man screwed all that up. It's gone and turned into sand. So now nature is taking over. And it takes generations of trees, generations of grass and whatever else to then it'll get to a point where it pretty much is stagnant as the pines are in the state forests, the soil, the land, the topography, whatever was conducive to white pine and hemlock.

Woody 07:44

So let me tease out a little more detail from you. Because this is really good stuff back and forth. We need the area around the sandblow in that area that's now in succession, but has been open once pastured that is kind of starting to regrow. One of my recommendations for habitat purposes is to mow that every seven to 10 years to try to keep that in that successional stand status. Are you more interested in seeing even that section grow eventually in the forest and just really leaving that to nature didn't recover to a full mature climax community like the rest of the forest? Or do you believe we can integrate some of the openings and keep some of that for habitat value or other values that might have?

Ernest 08:35

What I'm looking at what I know, I'm spanning 60 years, okay? And we basically have stopped erosion, we haven't reforested What do you call it two acres, on four acres

Woody 08:50

I think the total is five acres, but that's including the upper area that's up on the leg goes towards the parking lot, there's an open area there, there's a small two or three open area. But I think we're just going to let grow back over by the Cambridge pines. But that's probably three or four acres there. That's around them the circle pines and on the sandblow itself. And my general recommendation in the inventory analysis is subject to change based on input is to keep that for kind of habitat, get the really invasive species but after those are gone, don't let it grow up all the way to forest keep it cut back every 10 years or so. There's that habitat component for ground nesting birds and songbirds, there are some values to having some diversity on the property, but it would be a perfectly legitimate approach management-wise to let that go.

Ernest 09:41

See, I guess I would be I'd have a real strong feeling either way, the erosion end of it is the most important. Keeping that base.

Woody

Yes, you have to even if it's managed for early successional habitat on that small piece. Keeping groundcover permanent there is very important.

Ernest 10:00

So if there was a risk of erosion, you're not going to say mow the steepest sections you might mow down low or in a patchwork or something to accommodate all the requirements. On a personal level, I don't have a problem with that. I guess a lot of it is I'm not that privy to what wildlife is going to be, you know, what you're improving for sure. You know, is it rabbit? Is it partridge, I don't really know,

Woody 10:31

Mostly, I think for songbirds. So, there's different nesting niches that are put together by birds. And some of the wildlife people know this better than I, well, you have a lot of mature forest or almost mature forest, yes. And that has a certain number of species that like it, then there are species that really need that old, more open, ground nesting, brush, thick, thick regeneration, that are very specific to those habitat needs of those birds, it's nice to be able to balance that to a certain set of properties to have not everything all in one. So that was my recommendation generally on the inventory analysis is, this is a little different than the rest of it, maybe there's some value to keep that different. Same with the upper one is really great, you know, insect and butterfly habitat there right now. It's unique. I mean, we could let that grow up. There's going to be winners and losers. It's not good or bad, right? That's just where do you want to focus as a wide property wide level on how much diversity we keep?

Ernest 11:29

I guess I'm not that educated, nor am I really focused in on one specific thing I would be open to this if this is going to improve pollinators. If this is going to improve the songbird, our wildlife in general, I don't have a problem with it. So, I will ask one question in the picture that's his asparagus patch. Now that's an invasive species, you're going to dig them up?

Woody 11:56

It's not invasive.

Ernest 11:59

Well, okay, non native.

Woody 12:01

We're not going to have a giant asparagus patch up there okay, much as it would be nice. The honeysuckle, will take that the whole thing over. Asparagus won't out compete the blackberries.

Ernest 12:12

Okay, so you're gonna let it go. Just let them let them succumb to the blackberries.

Woody 12:18

That's another idea there could be the heirloom asparagus patch.

Ernest 12:22

Well, you know how deep they're planted

Woody 12:26

Anybody else have comments or comments built off of earnestness or over your hunger on?

Keith 12:36

This may be way off base. But I know that like in the West, there used to be forest fires would be part of the natural cycle. Is that ever the case for Eastern forests or this?

Woody 12:47

On a totally different scale. Okay, the West is a whole different and very different ecology, different tree species, different climate. We don't have a forest fire problem in Vermont. You don't have widespread conditions that could cause large scale fires. It does still have an important ecological role in some habitats. This isn't necessarily one of them. There are habitats in the Burlington area, sandplain forests, with similar soils that have some Jackpine. And some other species that are rare in Vermont, that are dependent upon fire as a component This ecosystem, this isn't really one of them. This time of year, you can have fire issues in Vermont. They're small scale, they're half an acre, an acre, two acres, a three-acre fire in Vermont is huge. That's a big problem. And they're really associated with this time of year when either now or in the fall there are drought conditions. Dry duff layers, and they actually do more good than harm. As long as they're not risking human life or property. We tend to let them burn a little bit. Although there's a whole infrastructure of firefighters that jump on it, as soon as anything happens. So, the fires don't have much chance. I don't really think there's a necessity to integrate fire intentionally, in this small ecosystem that will be beneficial for any specific species. But that's a great question.

Liam 14:15

I just say how much I appreciate hearing a little bit of the stories of the history. And I would love to get that captured somehow somewhere. If you're a party to that. Certainly, we digressed to wild asparagus there for a minute.

Does anybody have any thoughts about foraging on the Preserve, whether it's fiddlehead, ferns or fungi, or asparagus, or insects these days or anything else?

14:39

Woody

That's a great one to pick up on that should be addressed in a comprehensive management plan. I didn't find any Ginseng nor do I believe that soil types and habitats support ginseng, which is a commonly forged thing. Ramps or leeks, same species, are commonly foraged. I didn't see much of any of that, here we don't have that rich, highly nutrient soil or outwash coves that really lend themselves to growing out and seeing habitats for that.

There was some Obliquus, which is basically Chaga. So Chaga is a mushroom, a fungus really, that grows on white and yellow birch and is collected to grind into a powder for medicinal purposes. There is some of it there, I did notice some of that, not huge amounts, and a lot of it is above foraging level. You would have to climb the tree and break it off with an axe, and I hope nobody's doing that. I don't think that's a big issue. We used to try to get rid of it. It's contagious. It's an it's a pathogen in the forest. And we used to drop trees to make sure it didn't spread in the woods. Now, when people like it, we don't do that anymore. People will break off and keep it

Liam 16:00

Is there a role for encouraging or fostering or educating people around the forest? Around foraging?

Woody 16:07

I think so. I don't know. What I'm saying is I don't really feel I saw any resources there that were either threatened or necessarily advantageous for that incoming a problem. But a comprehensive management plan should incorporate what's the town's opinion on board. (Okay, so) you shouldn't be discouraged. Encourage, it can cause issues. There's an origin that occurs. That's detrimental ecologically. Yes,

Elizabeth Spier 16:31

So, I just want to bring up one of the things that people are foraging for now is ghost pipes. And this is a property that has a large amount of them.

Woody 16:38

There are.

Elizabeth Spier 16:40

They're all pretty much off the trail. So, it's definitely something I would discourage. It's going to create some issues as far as how that land is managed. But this is something that's coming up. And I see a lot of people getting excited about it. And that's great. But this property, particularly, you don't want to damage those systems that are below the surface. So, we want to discourage that as much as possible, or that would, in my opinion, we don't want to damage these systems that are (threatened)

Woody 17:09

So there's, there's a lobbying for a position that we probably incorporate a statement on foraging and discourage it here. It has become more popular just in the last couple of years, and can produce populations that and that has an important relationship with fungi. The relationships of Mycorrhizae

and trees, it's got some values, we really don't want to compromise. There are some fiddleheads. They're associated with the forest and wetland near the second bridge, at the southern end of the property back that's a forested off the fern section. So those are fiddleheads. And those can be forged pretty heavily and can cause detriment if heavily foraged. So, I'm liking this really this theme of developing -steering committee take note- some sort of a policy on foraging that can be encompassing to many different species, and should be incorporated in the management plan. And then part of a public information process, just putting it in a management plan and sticking it in the drawer of the town clerk's office doesn't get it done. But taking these things that are developed in the management plan and making sure they're understood by the using public, with something on the kiosk or something on a webpage that says, or please, we want to have educational opportunities, I'm just I'm not creating apology, but foraging is discouraged or prohibited within nothing.

Liam 17:35

Are there fiddleheads?

Rebecca 18:41

Yeah, I'll just say that when Rebecca 18:41 it comes to foraging most often, it's, its folks don't have the knowledge of how to do it sustainably and appropriately. And it's very often a method for folks that are excited to connect with nature in a new way. Because foraging can be really beautiful and fun. And so adding and doing this education process or having like a foraging hike, where you talk about how to do it sustainably in your community, you're more likely to transfer that knowledge within the community. And even if foraging happens, it ends up happening appropriately because, like doing things like Must check in with the steering committee before foraging, the folks who are foraging incorrectly aren't even going to know that that policy exists, and they're going to not do it. So having more of a proactive education approach is often more effective than having a policy where you're requiring permission from folks. Just as a suggestion,

Woody 19:45

Wonderful.

Rebecca 19:46

Actually, is there knotweed on the property? Knotweed is a great thing to forage.

Woody 19:51

Is there not knotweed?

Sally 19:52

You warned us some might be where that area of sand was dumped at the trailhead.

Woody 20:01

That is the place to watch. Watch part of dragon brook, just off the Preserve off by Sally's house and coming up with soil is covering it.

Rebecca 20:06

Yeah, I know, that's why I was wondering

Woody 20:08

It usually goes downstream rather than up, but

Rebecca 20:11

Sometimes, not all the time.

Woody 20:15

And that's really bad invasive

Rebecca 20:18

But it's a really great thing forage.

Ernest 20:22

In your opinion. So, if the steering committee says we're not going to do anything with that property, you mentioned that it's likely we're going to lose habitat or lose species or whatever, at the same time, would that property be gaining?

Woody 20:38

Yeah, there's winners and losers. in how you make those decisions. So as the forest matures, there are species that benefit tremendously. There's other species that don't use it as much. So, if you're referring to that the areas that might be kept open, that's a pretty small component. But as that forest goes from what now is kind of like you say, sumac, popple, blackberry, raspberry, the rider species, as that starts come into early successional, like the trees come up through there, that creates a number of that. That's the one thing to look at in that context is what do we have around us? So, I always encourage landowners that are interested in producing wildlife habitat, look at a landscape context, what's in your neighborhood. What can I do in my property that might be increasing benefits that don't aren't found around me?

Ernest 21:31

So, diversification,

Woody 21:32

I think there's quite a bit of early successional habitat, and kind of almost suburban habitat around us. There's a less amount of mature habitat that's there. And I think to a certain extent, there's less of the that really early stage old field habitat. So, we would look around, I hadn't really done that myself, to look more broadly in a landscape context. What can this small parcel that's probably beyond do and complement what's missing? On the broader landscape?

Ernest 22:06

I guess is an appropriate term that makes sense. Yep. Because, yeah, so you like you said there's winners, there's losers, you gain and but this, there is some control.

Woody 22:22

We've got, we can we can we can understand basically what's happening on statewide level with land. So, by looking at the landscape, we can make predictions on what might happen on those properties, and how this might stand alone as a way to add things that are missing. Otherwise. That's a great way to look at it.

Ernest 22:43

Well, it changes my focus on what I think might be appropriate, so you're broadening my horizons and my thought process too initially leave it alone? And then okay, well,

Woody 22:57

One of the things I tried to get give out there, when I did my analysis to the steering committee, when we walked the land, is because you have that kind of large tree, pushing mature habitat. The one thing that was missing, which as a forester I tried to encourage is that young, early successional, (travel) baby trees, young trees, seedlings, saplings, pole timber, that small stuff, you don't have that on that property, (right) Because it's been left alone substantially. For many years, there's some places where your father went in and cut a tree here. And there, we got a little bit of regeneration, but generally staying light, it's missing (right). Now, that's okay. It doesn't have to be everywhere, and it's going to come back. What'll happen is it'll come back under natural disturbance terms, (right) So you will have eventually, wind pockets, small gaps created through a storm when storms a tree falling over. And that's where you're going to get that natural regeneration to come in. It'll be on smaller scale, than you're familiar. We do commercial forestry. We do that with the hand of humans on the landscape to try to get that out there to get the next crop of trees to get that variation of habitat for songbirds. There are many reasons we do that. It's going to happen on your Krusch preserve, but it happens at its own pace. It's a very different way of doing it doesn't mean there'll be missing. It's going to be a longer scale timeframe.

Ernest 24:24

Well, that patch of hemlock up from North Cambridge Road, across the brook, after the first bridge, that area in there, I kind of daresay in the next 20 years, it's all going to fall over.

Woody 24:36

That's ripe for disturbances.

Ernest 24:38

Those trees are hollow and well past their maturity. They have no timber value; they're hanging on to dear life. And it's not going to take much wind.

Woody 24:47

Oh, there's already examples of that,

Ernest 24:49

Right.

Woody 24:49

And we're going to get some gaps in there and ...

Ernest 24:51

Then it's going to be dominos. You'll get some young hemlock or some white pine back there. So, there will be natural disturbance- just as we were deciding to have passive management doesn't mean things aren't going to happen.

Ernest 25:04

Oh, right, and it's not going to stay the same for all the time. It's not going to.

Woody 25:11

But that's an opportunity for education as well. (Absolutely.) interpretation as well.

Oh, Sara

Sara 25:21

Just taking from what Ernest was saying that whole that I mean, that stand is pretty much all hemlock, similar age hemlock, would there be any benefit from maybe pushing a couple of trees over to help get some younger growth in there, because there is there's nothing underneath. So, you know, if there's this domino effect, and all the trees come down there's going to be nothing.

Woody 25:50

So, there's a lot of work that's been done on overall characteristic restoration. And it has included pushing trees over. I don't think personally and professionally, because I'm pretty up on this stuff, that this property has the scale that makes that necessary.

I've already seen as Ernest has talked, some natural disturbance pockets, a couple of broken trees, couple of blow overs, those are going to continue to happen. And they're going to happen in a more aggressive state. Now, in terms of reaching that, that more mature state, I would give it 10 years anyway, and see what happens. If we don't get that real response. It's possible that might be a management technique to use. It's been used on some of the experimental forests over Underhill, by the University of Vermont, I've toured those areas and looked at some of their techniques they use to try to restore old growth characteristics. Some of it works and some of it doesn't. There again, it's early-stage research. I don't think is necessary on a 50-acre parcel, or would necessarily be beneficial on that scale. There's a lot of science around that right now. Folks are working on it pretty hard. I don't why over in Underhill, they pushed over all a really nice (veneer) trees and left the junky one standing.

Speaker 3 27:17

what's your opinion on whether or not the state should put walking paths in the Cambridge Pines Forest?

Woody 27:25

I can give you some history, having worked with the state on that while Commissioner of Forests & Parks, and head of ANR.

Speaker 3 27:28

What is your opinion on that?

Woody 27:30

My personal opinion. I don't know if I decided on that one. There are real benefits to having a managed trail system - you get interpretation use; it's got a lot of value. But there is also value in having areas where there isn't a trail system, where you have to find your own way. I think that personally would be the way I would lean. That has been discussed for many years at Forests & Parks. VT FPR manages the state land system under what's called a stewardship team approach. So, this group of biologists, foresters, biologists, recreational specialists, meet on a team basis. There's input from all the different levels of expertise. And when a project comes forward, they look at that project, and they determine what are the benefits? What are the negative things, whether this should move forward on state land? There have been proposals for trails, and because there's a lot of school kids, they want to have interpretation. These are big old trees. Let's get people in there.

And for many years, the answer from that stewardship team was no, we want this a natural area. It's a fragile area on the fragile area registry. We don't want trails; we don't want paint on trees. We don't want bare ground trails in here. We want to leave it to the hand of nature. And that's a common thing for many types of wilderness designations natural areas, you don't see actual managed trails in natural areas very often. If so, they're done very carefully, specifically for interpretation and education. They can be done and integrated into the management. But there's a lot of argument out there that no, we're trying to leave this alone. If you want to wander around, fine. We're not going to inject people in here on an organized basis. It might be nice to have the dichotomy of the 22 acres of state land where there's no trails, but the opportunity to wander. And a town Nature Preserve where there's a dedicated well marked trail system, young children and educational people can use as a resource, maybe having both. Maybe the best win for everyone. That's just personal opinion.

Keith 28:36

My second visit to Muir Woods in California, they have an asphalt path. But it keeps everybody on one path. When the trees fall now, they don't do anything.

Woody 30:02

I've been to remote forest in Alaska where they've got built platforms to keep you off the ground, because it's being loved to death. So, there's really there's impacts erosion and overuse. And a lot of

that you have to manage and monitor if it's used pretty regularly, it's not a problem. But if everybody finds out and there's 400 people a day walk in, there are more, we might have to amend the management plan and say, well, we need to put some punching down, we need to manage trail system are meant for use, or limit the number of trails, and those are adaptive mathematics techniques that somehow need to be built into the plan, and you can't without farther than what you got in front of you. So having everything that's going to happen in the future, is not, not something you can plan for, it doesn't work, you have to just deal with that stuff. When it comes up. We talked about having a potential policy for a catastrophic event. There have been catastrophic events, where you got big, tall timber on sandy soil. It's not a secret that that stuff could all blow over I mean everything in a dead band is on a trapped horizontal? What are we going to do about it? And there's a lot of different schools of thought - leave it alone as nature or interpretation cut the trails back down. It's a more likely scenario, you're going to have individual trees and small gaps coming down. What's the policy and the management plan going to be for maintaining the trail system? Are we going to cut out sections of trees, so you can still walk? Are we going to go around those, I think it's another thing we could overthink as well. And it's probably better just to handle that on a case by case basis. As it comes up. It's really already there as a trail system probably should be managed and kept open with as minimal disturbance on those natural processes as possible. But case-by-case allowing those to be cut open and maintained while you still don't clean up the whole area. I think you can balance those things pretty carefully in a small property. Yes?

Speaker 4 32:18

What is the – I don't want to be the state mandate- but the accessibility for handicapped?

Woody 32:25

Yeah, that's a big issue. And it's been brought up already in the property here. And it's a mixed thing. Generally, it's determined by the money you have. If you provide something for everyone, you're supposed to provide stuff for ADA accessibility, but it has to be within the context of what you're doing. So, we're not going to have an ADA handicap trail to the top of Mount Mansfield to Hell Brook. It's just cost too much money, and it's silly. But there's other ways we can do that. So, it's been talked about the parking lot provides a certain amount of access. Some of the trails are there, I think it's something that should be addressed in the management plan. But you're not required to make every inch of it available to ADA specifications. If you're using some federal funds for trail development, sometimes they do - it's very site specific between your funding mechanism and what's required.

There are grants out there should the town pursue making a portion of it available as ADA access. And that might be a really good thing to do is to say, Okay, where can we accommodate this? Is there a section is there an area between the parking lot and the outdoor pulling example out between maybe the parking lot and the outdoor classroom? So maybe there's a way to put a little switchback trail in there. Surely trying to accommodate that population of folks, would be a very good thing to do. But it's not required to have every edge of every trail, ADA compliant.

Liam 34:06

I think what we've done is we've built a trail where we have an opportunity to meet access, we did. But there are places where we cannot do it at the moment. Too steep. So, we have an eye on it. There's just something that can't fulfill right now.

Woody 34:24

Long term funding and planning on that will be very, very good to think about.

Liam 34:28

The bridges will accommodate the handicapped. If it ever happened, we wouldn't have to replace the bridges. The bridges are already there.

Woody 34:35

I missed another hand here somewhere. Ernest, again,

Ernest 34:38

In the management plan as it's going to be written is there going to be a provision for the eventualities? Like oh my god, we're getting 500 people a day and the trails that were three feet wide now are six feet wide and we are being overrun.

Woody 34:54

I think what I what I said was...

Ernest 34:56

not specifically everything but like in the in the management plans like, there, there's an issue. We need to reconvene and re address such a such an issue that was not specifically addressed.

Woody 35:11

I think that's the way to do it. I think that's a great suggestion is that there should be a provision there for unforeseen, unforeseen circumstance. (There you go) Overuse, we can list them or not, but you can't, you can't really foresee all that (no you can't), it should be a process for amending a management plan. For unforeseen circumstances, if we find another invasive species.

Ernest 35:32

So, it's one of these don't (it suddenly,) It's flexible.

Woody 35:37

All management plans are flexible. But there should be a provision in there that lets people know that. So that there's a mechanism and a process, the steering committee will be convened to look at and then make a recommendation to the Conservation Commission. And then the conservation easements and the VLT, the land trust should be involved. Go ahead.

Rebecca 35:56

Well, I was going to say having reviewed many management plans for conserved lands, oftentimes, it's the very end or at the beginning, somewhere thrown in, there's a paragraph that says, this is our recommended recommendations at the time that we developed this management plan, it will be updated, you all decided every 10 years, if something occurs, and we need to react to it, we will revisit the plan and amend it.

And the amendment will then also need to be approved by VLT and then re approved by the Select Board and go through all the proper channels. But also, even if you don't have that paragraph in there, you can always revisit your management plan before your 10 years and just create an amendment.

Woody 36:39

They have to be dynamic living document. Things change. But I like the idea of having both of you on the same page there that there's at least a framework in there. But this is how we do perceive things change. People often don't notice, right? We catch that after that. Excellent. Super! Good ideas. I like it.

Speaker 4 37:02

What about hunting and fishing? Is it an area that just doesn't support that at all?

Woody 37:11

Yes, and yes. So that's been talked about at the steering committee level and discussed. And we talked, Sally went and specifically talked to the local game warden. And I looked at things when I did my inventory analysis, I'm an active hunter, I know how to track for hunting and things like that. So together, that determination made was, well, really, I didn't see a lot of evidence of active hunting, or no tree stands or heavy stuff, I didn't see a lot of deer activity, I didn't see a lot of grouse activity, I didn't see a lot of turkey activity. Those are the big few that are that are pursued.

Generally, the land trust, and other public land managers like to leave land that's public land open to hunting and fishing, the general standard public land, that's traditional, heavily used public attribute. Conflicts can be managed, if there are conflicts that come up. But in general, it's nice to leave public land open for the public to do when the public does. And in a rural setting like this hunting is very common. What I suggested and what I think Land Trust can probably suggest is some sort of interpretive process.

So maybe there's a thing on the kiosk that says, hey, in November, there's deer season, and hikers should be aware to wear bright colors were orange, and be aware that hunting might happen. hunters should be aware that there's hiking trails on this property, that there may be people hiking, so that there's a public awareness on both user groups, so they can interface with each other in the most safe, profitable, possible manner.

So right now, it's not envisioned to for any regulatory manner, and hasn't been brought up as a big concern by anybody. I personally don't think it's going to be a huge conflict on this property. I don't

see it as a hunting property. The hiking trails are pretty concise, managed, well-marked. Most people in Vermont know when it comes to rifle season, you put your orange vest on even in your backyard. It's just something most folks know to do. And we don't have a lot of incidences of hunter/recreationalists accidents and they just don't happen. Hunters shoot themselves or each other. and even that is rare when that happens. So, I don't think it's a huge issue. We were hoping today that somebody might bring up one thing or another. I'm glad you asked the question. That's generally where things are leaning towards now. No restrictions, no real promotion on it. But educational opportunities for hunters to learn this as an active hiking area. And for hikers to learn that there are safety precautions to be taken during hunting season.

Ernest 39:51

That includes trapping?

Woody 39:53

Trapping is also included as open to all, so hunting, fishing, trapping and the big three, and those are generally open on all woodlands unless restricted for specific reasons. There are some areas the Nature Conservancy owns where they restrict trapping for specific species. The federal lands on the Missisquoi have some restrictions on hounding for protecting ground nesting birds. But that's really unusual. Those are kind of some real outlines. And generally, that's allowed. I doubt there's any trapping whatsoever going on. I think the number of trappers in the entire state right now is under 50. Right?

Ernest 40:35

There has been otter activity on that Brook. You know, I don't have anything really against trapping, but it'd be a shame somebody trap it for a pelt this long and put it on Facebook. It's like, Come on, guys.

Woody 40:49

I mean somebody trapping and otters are down in the river valley.

Ernest 40:54

Well, I mean, we've seen them right.

Sally 40:56

There are otters in the brook.

Woody 40:57

Oh, I'm sure there are otters up there, they're going where they can really, there's a lot of otters out there.

Sally 41:05

They come up the stream in winter

Woody 41:08

There's a lot of them. And then not a lot of otter trapping. But my guess knowing trappers and trapping activities is not really happening. It could it could happen the trappers are required to get landowner permission, except when it's public land. With public land, they're not required to reach out to get permission.

Ernest 41:33

So, it'd be a long way in for them.

Woody 41:35

It would be a long ways in to set a trap up. I think it's pretty farfetched.

Ernest 41:40

Well, as far as we have in the management plan. If it becomes an issue, it gets addressed. (

Woody 41:48

If somebody's dog is off leash and gets in a trap. we're going to hear about it.

Liam 41:53

you can get into the dog from the pound

Woody 42:00

But another good point to bring up thank you. Really appreciate it. Well, I think we've covered everything we're getting there. I don't I don't know who my timekeeper is.

General 42:13

(unrest)

Sally 42:13

One thing though, that I need to say because Bob Burnette wanted it said at the public meeting on the planning. I don't know, how many of you knew Bob Burnette. He passed away this past winter, in his high eighties. He was a close friend of my husband, Peter's. Bob ran a sawmill in Fletcher for what 30 years or so. And when we were having this discussion, he was part of our steering committee. We had this discussion about a year ago, he said that he thought that the forest should be allowed to grow back and there should be no logging there. He and his friend Peter talked about how someday, the Preserve would become the New Cambridge Pines. Several times afterwards. he told me "Now if I'm not there when that meeting comes, you need to say this." So, I'm saying it for him.

Woody 43:09

Well, done, thank you. Excellent. Well, once it has any last thoughts, it's awful nice day out there to be sitting inside you don't want to keep people it's been very, very nice that you all taking the time to be here. Really appreciate it.

Ernest 43:26

Well thank you Woody for facilitating.

Woody 43:34

If anyone has questions later, I'm sure you can find an email address for the conservation commission or the steering committee. Or call Selectboard members, you guys love to be called. Thank you to all the volunteers who made this happen and George, the chair of the Select Board to be here all day and that's really great stuff for our small town. Thanks again.

Thank you, Woody! (applause).

Attached: Sign In List of Attendees

1 May 2022

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