

Franconia Conservation Commission (FCC) - draft

Meeting: Feb 6, 2024, 3 pm at Town Hall.

Members present: Chris Nicodemus (Chair), Ginny Jeffryes, Jill Brewer, Julie Weisman, Michelle Sauque, Red McCarthy, Mark Ober, Mary Grote

Guests: Margaret Gale, Bethlehem CC; Peter Grote

Chris: Elise Lawson (of Watershed to Wildlife) mentioned she is now doing a new NRI for Bethlehem Conservation Commission (BCC). Margaret Gale is here today representing them because there is probably overlap of concerns, and because we're developing the themes for our NRI. He thinks it's particularly important because of water runoff from Casella's landfill into both a tributary of the Gale River, and into the Ammonoosuc. Franconia's town wells are along the Gale River farther downstream. The far upstream portion of the Gale River is pristine. Downstream, this runoff from Casella enters our aquifer system. He thinks this concern is important to highlight in our NRI. Both towns are impacted by any water contamination from there.

Chris: Hydrology subcommittee (Michelle, Red, Chris) continues to work on our water resources. Red has been working on some aspects of septic systems and glacial till. Michelle is interested in developing ARC GIS skills, as mentioned last week. Ginny mentions that UNH Extension has 2 trainings this month on how to use ARC GIS. They offer frequent inexpensive trainings, some online. Charlie Wolcott of Sugar Hill CC and Linda Hanson of Easton CC got together with Chris and PSU team last week to decide what the focus should be of the tri-town collaboration with the Plymouth State University students' Environmental Science and Policy seminar this semester. They decided to have them focus on hydrology and water resources. We have 2 students.

Chris: NRI and hydrology: Elise is starting to plan where to do her field work here, and she has been doing some already for Bethlehem along the old rail corridor that is by Trudeau Road, which is near the Beaver Brook tributary of the Gale that runs by Casella landfill. So her field work in Bethlehem may help us with our NRI. And that work may help inform the PSU student project. Our 2 students are interested in public communication and GIS mapping. They are working on a proposal for us. Chris thinks the story of hydrology can be scientific and be told in an interesting way. He says the goal is focused education for the broader community and for policy decision-makers. He will be more involved this year with the students than last year. Ginny asks Margaret how BCC is dealing with the contaminants around Casella landfill, including the PFAS and other chemicals in the runoff samples into the Ammonoosuc, which were collected last fall by Jon Swan. Jon has been investigating the Casella test wells reports and other Casella-related contamination issues. The test wells on that property are tested by a Casella contractor. Ginny mentions that she is aware that the Bethlehem Select Board can't do much based on their 2012 agreement with Casella. Margaret replies that BCC has been concerned about "the seep" for years, and are concerned about Jon's recent seep PFAS findings. They are talking about how to get an objective third party to do some testing of the Casella test wells. Not sure if that will be successful though. There seems to be some concern on the NH House Environmental Affairs Committee about the trustworthiness of results coming from Casella-hired firms. It's complex due to Casella's past agreement with the Bethlehem Select Board. Margaret says that complicating things further, they are also dealing with the proposed Granite State Landfill because part of that driveway is in Bethlehem.

Chris says for petroleum-contaminated sites, like the former Hunt's junkyard, there are funds to help monitor test wells. But there are no funds available to help monitor PFAS. That testing is very expensive – hundreds of dollars per test sample. Ginny says DES has some funding to reimburse testing and costs of in-home water purification systems but only if a private home well tests positive for PFAS

and there is no known third party responsible for the contamination. Chris comments that even doing laundry of clothes treated with PFAS puts it into septic systems, so can eventually contaminate wells; DES doesn't have a handle on how extensive the problem is.

More Hydrology: Chris says that hydrology studies are very expensive. He's found out that the interaction between the glacial aquifers and the fractured bedrock aquifers have never been studied in our valley. There have been studies in other valleys so they are supposing that it applies here, but we don't know. And USGS needs a compelling case to study that here, such as showing increasing levels of some contaminant that is threatening the community. Then one might be able to get USGS to do a study to better understand the motion of the water in our aquifer system. There was a study by Flanagan in 1994, looking at the glacial aquifers, including in our valley. The purpose was to look for water sources that municipalities could tap quickly. But it didn't look at the bedrock water, which is where most of our wells are.

Ore Hill and Mountain View Road update:

Red: The actual violation is by an individual in Sugar Hill who changed the terrain of over 100,000 square feet without an alteration of terrain permit. Anytime you change terrain, you change the water runoff drainage, and this has had consequences downhill in Franconia on Philip Lange's property and on Mountain View Road. There was an old iron mine farther uphill in Sugar Hill. Mountain View Road has been significantly affected and is sometimes impassable with snowmelt and rain now. We don't have the infrastructure to handle the altered drainage patterns. So far, the alteration of terrain permit after-the-fact hasn't been applied for, though an engineering firm was hired by Sabado to look at what has to be done. There hasn't been anything done to mitigate it. It's only ideas on paper from the engineering firms – Headwater Hydrology and Horizon Engineering. Red talked with Philip Lange briefly. Lange has requested a meeting with the state DES. If the SB wants Red to go, he will.

Headwater Hydrology has mapped the problem. Red's concern is that Lafayette Road did have the infrastructure to take that 30% slope water drainage that was formerly captured by interceptive ditches. But those were damaged, and Mountain View Rd doesn't have that drainage infrastructure. Whoever changes the drainage is responsible for it. There's a threat of a lawsuit, and likely Franconia would get called in to talk about how it's affecting us. The SB did send Red's recommended letter requesting action to DES about 3 weeks ago. As mentioned in the past, heavy metal contaminants were documented being washed onto Lange's property along with mud and sediment.

Proposed Lawrence Forest Trail: Chris: No new information since the 12/29/23 letter from Northern Forest that was discussed in our January 2 meeting. Ginny asks that any communications about town properties be routinely forwarded to all members. Chris will. There will be field work done. Ginny says that the last map of the Forest of ACT still has the old Pebble Beach trail on Schmidt's land because it is a 2017 map, rather than showing it being where it is on Lawrence Forest land since it was moved a few years ago. She thinks we should pay to have the ACT map updated, partly because the ACT map is the most detailed and accurate one which shows the Town property. Julie says the NEMBA map of the trail network shows the current Pebble Beach location. Chris will mention to ACT that their map needs updating.

Minutes 1-2-2024: Julie moves to approve the minutes. Jill seconds. All vote in favor.

NRI process: Elise sent a list of NRI goals based on our previous discussions. If there are additional themes we want included, now is the time to add these to her list. She is planning her field work locations for mid-May to mid-June. She will let us know dates for anyone who wants to us to get permission to go on private lands in areas she wants to survey. Chris has suggested near Echo Lake in

vicinity of Cannon's base lodge. She has did some work last fall in the Meadowbrook watershed in Lawrence forest and Town Forest and will do more. Gaia GPS area map reviewed. Chris would like permission from the Schmidts to look at Meadowbrook on their property. And maybe look at land upstream near Wells Road and Tuckerbrook Road. Discussion that much of that is private land. John Mallery's large piece of land there may be helpful. Ginny will reach out to him. Julie will ask the Schmidts. Elise will require written consent. Margaret says Elise probably has a standard form for permission. We may want her to look at Grote land. She wants to focus on wetlands. Ginny remembers that there was some discussion of looking at the Crocker property by Rte 142, which feeds into Wiseman Brook.

Red makes a motion to adjourn. Mary seconds. All vote in favor.

Next meeting: Tuesday March 5, 2024, 3 pm.

Minutes by Ginny Jeffryes