

## **MEMORANDUM**

TO: Readfield Select Board  
Readfield Planning Board

FROM: Jerry Bley, Member, Readfield Conservation Commission

RE: Vernal Pools Mapping Update

DATE: September 28, 2017

On behalf of the Readfield Conservation Commission (RCC), I offer this update to the Select Board and Planning Board on our efforts to map significant vernal pools in the town. As you are probably aware from our past briefings on the subject, vernal pools are small seasonal water bodies that are important breeding habitat to certain amphibians and other invertebrates (because there are no fish present to eat their eggs), and are also valuable to other wildlife. A few years ago, the Maine Legislature passed a new law regulating development around significant vernal pools (as determined by the number of egg masses and other indicators), but did not create a program to map them. The responsibility for identifying the presence of vernal pools was left to the landowner. RCC decided that it would be beneficial to the community to identify significant vernal pools in the town.

The history of the vernal pools mapping effort is as follows:

- In the spring of 2008, the towns of Readfield and Wayne decided to embark upon an effort to map vernal pools in the two towns with the assistance of Maine Audubon which had received grant funding to assist towns.
- At its 2008 town meeting, Readfield residents approved the expenditure of \$2,500 for the project.
- In the fall of 2008, RCC along with its Wayne counterpart successfully raised the additional funds necessary to complete the mapping project (about \$25,000).
- In the spring of 2009, the Sewall Company, under contract with the two towns took infra-red aerial photos of the two towns.
- In the summer and fall of 2009, Stantec, an environmental consulting firm, analyzed the aerial photography to identify potential vernal pools.

Stantec identified approximately 312 potential vernal pools in the Town of Readfield located on lands of approximately 100 landowners. Over the past month, RCC has taken the maps provided by Stantec and identified the owners of the lots on which the potential pools are located. Our plans for the coming months are as follows:

- Over the next two weeks, we will be sending a mailing to all landowners with a potential vernal pool on their property. The mailing will include an explanatory letter, information about the ecological importance of vernal pools and a form asking permission to have a

vernal pools volunteer conduct an inspection of the potential vernal pool(s) on their property. The letter invites the landowner to attend an informational meeting that has been scheduled at the town office.

- RCC will also be sending out letters and information to individuals who it believes might be interested in becoming a vernal pools volunteer. They too will be encouraged to attend the informational session.
- At 7:00 on February 24, the vernal pools informational meeting will be held at the town hall for both Readfield and Wayne residents. Dr. Aram Calhoun, a vernal pools expert from the University of Maine will make a presentation about vernal pools and the mapping effort.
- Landowners will be asked to return their permission forms by March 15. Follow-up reminders will be sent to those that have not responded.
- On April 13, 2010, from 5-8pm, there will be a training program offered in Wayne for vernal pools volunteers including an indoor session and a field trip to a vernal pool.
- In April and May, vernal pools volunteers will conduct inspections of all vernal pools where landowners have granted permission.
- This summer and fall, RCC will compile the information collected into a final map and report.

Please feel free to contact me or other RCC members if you have any questions regarding this project. We would also encourage you to sign up as a vernal pools volunteer.