

Readfield Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 11, 2023

Present: Bruce Hunter, Greg Durgin, Jerry Bley, Jaaron Shaw, Marty Hanish, Linnea Koons, Andy Walsh

Absent:

Review of the June 13, 2023 RCC meeting minutes postponed until the minutes are received and reviewed by RCC members.

New Business

Habitat Management, Town properties – Bruce H. informed RCC that Joe Roy, MaineIFW Private Lands Wildlife Biologist, cannot attend the next meeting (September 12). IFW to assist RCC in identifying strategies for field management to promote wildlife and pollinator diversity.

Milkweed Propagation – Linnea K. mentioned MonarchWatch.org as a good resource for information regarding propagation of common milkweed for the benefit of monarch butterflies, including when to plant, preparing the seedbed, and growing and transplanting milkweed plants. Bruce H. is planning to visit the pollinator garden at Mahoosuc Land Trust's Valentine Farm this summer.

Old Business

Open Space Inventory – Jaaron S. and Linnea K. discussed the list of OS properties compiled to date. Some changes were made based on comments from RCC. Properties on the list that are not in Readfield (e.g., State Picnic Area) will be deleted. The estimated acreage of Readfield OS is currently 2,800 acres with approximately 1,400 acres conserved (via easement and/or ownership). Carleton Pond is open to public access but is not formally protected as the owners (GAUD) could sell the property for uses other than conservation. Jerry B. indicated that if public access at Carleton Pond is guaranteed, then this property can remain on the OS list.

RCC discussed the definition and distinction between Open Space and "Open Areas." Open Areas are lands protected with formal restrictions for their natural resource values (e.g., wetlands, a stream, or a beach, etc.). Open Space protects a broader range of values, including undeveloped land with natural resource values and land used for other purposes (e.g., cemetery). RCC is responsible for managing Open Areas in town.

The July issue of the Readfield Messenger has an article by Linnea K. entitled "What is Open Space? Part 1," which defines OS (per Comp Plan) and clarifies the differences between public and restricted access. Linnea is soliciting ideas for other articles.

Jaaron S. recommends updating the Town's Outdoor Recreation and Conservation Map to include the Draper property and removing the Kents Hill School property since it's not formally open to public access. Jerry B. recommended having links to larger properties with trail maps (e.g., Torsey Pond Nature Preserve, Town Forest).

Maranacook School Mowing and Ag Allies Grassland Bird Habitat Signs – RCC is working with Maranacook School to adjust the mowing schedule to protect grassland birds (mowing after July 15). Linnea K. talked to Shaun Drinkwater (Operations/Maintenance Dir.) regarding placing Ag Allies signs on the school property to inform visitors that the fields are managed for grassland wildlife.

Fairgrounds Working Group – The upcoming FWG meeting and cookout will be July 13 at Readfield Town Beach. Discussion will include the public meeting (May 16), town vote (June 13), whether the siting of a basketball court should be done by the FWG, and review of potential sites for a basketball court (Fairgrounds, Town Beach, Maranacook School).

Town Forest Invasive Species Plan – Andy W. will check in with Harold Burnett (Town Forester) on the status of the invasive species plan.

Note: next RCC meeting is scheduled for September 12, 2023

Meeting adjourned at 8:30 p.m.

Submitted by Andy Walsh on April 6, 2024