

Pemigewasset River Local Advisory Committee
June 26, 2012 at Boyd Hall
Plymouth, New Hampshire

Minutes

Members Present:

Max Stamp (Bristol); Dan Paradis (Bristol); Carl Lehner (Holderness); Mike O'Donnell (Holderness); Marty Riehs (Holderness); Barry Draper (New Hampton).

Also Present:

Dave Jeffers (LRPC); Sally Davis (Thornton Conservation Commission); Cindy Schofield (Thornton CIP Committee).

Call to Order:

Chairman Max Stamp called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

Introductions:

The Chairman asked Sally Davis and Cindy Schofield to introduce themselves and then introduced the PRLAC members and Dave Jeffers to them.

Approval of Minutes:

Carl Lehner made a motion seconded by Barry Draper to approve the minutes of April 24, 2012. The motion carried unanimously.

Review of Water Monitoring Activities:

Max reviewed this year's water quality monitoring efforts. So far, the VRAP program is going well despite the reduced staffing at DES. The broken pH meter has been replaced at no cost to us by DES, and a DES intern is entering our data. Routine testing is being done twice a month as scheduled, but a request for increased testing for E. coli was denied due to lack of funds.

Review of NH Association of Conservation Districts Workshop:

This workshop took place on June 21st at Jellystone Park in New Hampton. It was held under the auspices of several conservation districts in coordination with the EPA and the Forest Service. The purpose of the workshop was to highlight a USDA-Forest Service study of the implications of increasing population on privately owned forests. Nationwide, more than 57 million acres of rural forestland are projected to experience a substantial increase in housing density from 2000 to 2030. Development pressures will be concentrated in Eastern US. The report listed 15 watersheds where the conversion of privately owned forests/open space will likely occur, ranked in terms of total acreage of private forest projected to experience increased housing density. The Merrimack River watershed, which includes the Pemi, has the largest area, which gave it a Number 1 ranking. The Piscataqua-Salmon Falls watershed in Maine, Massachusetts and New Hampshire ranked third.

The workshop consisted of several presentations and a panel discussion. Barry Draper and Dave Jeffers were on the panel, and Dave made a Power Point presentation on the scope of PRLAC's Management Plan and some of its key components. Max Stamp was also in attendance and was able to answer a few questions on buffer rules and Wild and Scenic designation. A representative of the Forest Service described some of the threats to the watershed. A representative from the EPA explained that much of the watershed consists of forested land which is privately owned, and therefore makes a good candidate for development. The speaker from the Forest Society (SPNHF) addressed some of the issues regarding the use of conservation easements to protect the land. Finally, a speaker from the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) discussed programs for funding the use of best management practices.

Max said he was impressed by the implications of population growth on the Upper Merrimack and Piscataqua watersheds. PRLAC members were given a copy of the section of the USDA document "*Private Forests, Public Benefits*" which deals with the implications of housing density increases. Max further reported that there seemed to be several attendees who expressed an interest in the conservation easement process. Barry pointed out that population growth is much higher in some towns than others, with Thornton showing a 30% increase in ten years.

Applications:

As indicated on the agenda, three applications have been received by PRLAC for review. The first of these is for Recreational Vehicle Park in Thornton. Sally Davis and Cindy Schofield expressed concern about the impacts of this potential development, particularly in terms of the possible lowering of the water table and thought PRLAC might be able to offer some insight into this question. At this point, the Site Plan Review application has been accepted as complete by the Thornton Planning Board, but the plan has yet to be evaluated. Since the project is similar to one which occurred in Bristol a few years ago (Blueberry Shores), Dan Paradis was able to share some of the experience of the Bristol Planning Board with that application. However, Max explained that PRLAC does not have the expertise to evaluate questions regarding the impact of water withdrawals. It was suggested that as a starting point, they might look to the GRANIT website to provide information on aquifers. Max said that Fred Gunter currently has the application PRLAC has received and Max suggested they contact him if they want to see it.

The second application was for a private residence on River Road in Bridgewater. Max said he had visited the site and saw no particular problems. The last issue under this topic was a reminder that landowner permission should be sought out before visiting project sites. This led into an extended discussion of misuse of riverfront property, particularly at Livermore Falls. Several YouTube videos have encouraged more use of the area and the problems with drinking and litter are worse than ever. Mike O'Donnell reported that 40% of the Thornton police activity involves Livermore Falls. The Fish and Game Department is also involved and has issued several \$300 fines for littering, sometimes offering to reduce this by half if the offender helps with area clean-up. The parking limitations at the site do not deter users, as they apparently can park a short distance away in Campton and walk to the area. There was general agreement that the revised management plan needs to address this issue.

Management Plan Workshop:

Prior to the meeting Dave Jeffers had mailed out a very rough draft consisting of sections of the existing plan, some new material and some questions. Dave went over the proposed Table of Contents emphasizing the "Resources" section and the need for volunteers to help with the update. Carl Lehner has written a new and expanded section on Geology. Dave is working on Water Resources and Land Use and Development. Barry Draper is working on Plant and Wildlife Resources and Dan Paradis agreed to take on Recreational Resources. A volunteer is still needed to update the Historical and Cultural Resources section.

The group then began the process of a page-by-page review of the draft. While only minor edits were needed on the first few pages, all agreed that the material on water quality had too much redundancy and contradictions. Max agreed to take on the task of combining and streamlining this material, some of which might be moved to the appendix. Overall, time only allowed for a review of the first seven pages of the draft.

Response to Northern Pass Letter:

Max reported that two responses have been received, one of which is from the Governor's Office. Max read part of the letter thanking us for our interest, but making no commitments.

Adjournment:

Mike O'Donnell made a motion seconded by Barry Walker to adjourn. The motion passed unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 9:14 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Daniel A. Paradis
Secretary