



TOWN OF OLD SAYBROOK
SELECTMEN'S OFFICE

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**CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE MINUTES
HYBRID MEETING**

Wednesday, August 31, 2022

9:00 A.M.

Old Saybrook Town Hall – First Floor Conference Room

- I. CALL TO ORDER** – All members present. Also present, Alex Amendola, Alex Sokolow, Ray Allen, Chris Cryder, Kathy Connolly, Ann Termine, Bob Lorenz and the Landry's. Howard Kilpatrick from State of Connecticut Wildlife was also present.
- II. COMMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC** Ms. Landry asked about signage for the Ingham Hill Road parking area and suggested this might be helpful to keep cars out of the turnaround. Mr. Sokolow said the sign is being painted and will be installed this fall. Further discussion about signage from the parking lot to the trails also occurred. Kathy Connolly submitted her comments (see attachment 1). Susan Esty asked about when moving some of the trails from sensitive areas could take place. There was discussion about reviewing the current trails and even trails not on the map that have been created and are on private websites. Ray Allen commented that people are getting lost. Dr. Klemens proposal has not been funded yet and until it is, and all sensitive areas can be marked out, trail work may have to wait until 2023. In the meantime, there was discussion about better marking because there are so many offshoots that look like good trails that are not. "Confidence" markers and better signage discussed.
- III. COMMENTS FROM THE AD HOC COMMITTEE** - A letter was received from the ad hoc committee (See attachment 2). Much of the discussion centered on hunting in the Preserve. Mr. Kilpatrick stated the Preserve is plenty big enough for this so there really should be no limit on the type of hunting, which occurs mostly in September and October. With poachers already in the area, regulating hunting pro-actively is better. Discussion of Attorney Cronin's opinion ensued with the clear distinction that the Preserve is a forest not a park and not subject to the town's park regulations. Mr. Cryder thought that this topic should more fully involve the public; perhaps signage at the entrances informing people that they are entering an area of hunting. Connecticut is a top 5 safety state for hunting; last fatality 30 years ago and there are half the hunters now than there was then. The Preserve is in a wildlife zone that authorizes aggressively managing the deer population. Further discussion on culling the deer herd and much damage

Conservation Management Committee
Minutes
August 31, 2022

can be done to native species by deer. The idea of holding a sub-group meeting for hunting was discussed.

IV. COMMENTS FROM THE COMMITTEE – Mr. Fortuna promised the group that the distribution list has been corrected.

V. APPROVAL OF MINUTES- MOTION to approve the March 23, 2022 minutes.

HOCHOLZER/ALLEN

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

VI. BUSINESS BEFORE THE BOARD

A. Update on the Preserve Parking Lots: Route 153 and Ingham Hill Road parking lot and turnaround.

B. GEI Preserve Forest Stewardship Plan

Because we have missed the season, Dr. Klemens report will have to be implemented next spring. There was recently some work in the Preserve handling stilt grass. Mr. Fortuna noted that the town is considering its own funding to battle invasives. Invasive management costs have gone from \$500/acre to \$900/acre. Mr. Hochholzer noted there is a new policy on removal of hazard trees. Stressed trees give off signals to invasive pests. Mr. Cryder stated that someone needs to move forward on the core conservation area proposal with Dr. Klemens. Outreach to Honor Lawler and Alexander Navarro will be made by Mr. Fortuna to see if they can make a meeting on the 20th to discuss.

C. Update on the monitoring and control efforts for invasive weeds

VII. OTHER BUSINESS

VIII. NEXT MEETING DATE – Potentially September 20, 2022

IX. ADJOURNMENT – MOTION to adjourn at 10:30 a.m.

HOCHOLZER/ALLEN

MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

Respectfully submitted,



Carl P. Fortuna Jr., First Selectman

To: Ray Allen, Will Hochholzer, Carl Fortuna, Alex Sokolow

From: Kathy Connolly

8/31/2022

Re: Discussion of forest management plan

I have read the questions and concerns raised by the Ad hoc committee regarding the February 2022 draft of the forest management plan. I have also read many sections of the forest management plan, although I need to mention there is no current online version available and I have been unable to finish reading it.

As a longtime volunteer in The Preserve, there are a few topics I hope to see addressed in the final management plan:

- Invasive plant management. What is the priority and what will be the established path for reporting, targeting, funding, and addressing invasive plants?
- The aftermath of major storm. What is the precedent for handling these events in other state forests? Will a policy be written regarding state and local responsibility in this event? Who is responsible for tree clearing?
- Fire? There are two aspects to this topic.
 - The most obvious and alarming one is that 300+ homes that border or nearly border the areas around the forest.
 - There is a second aspect to fire management, which is that contained fire can be a positive force in forest management. This is not addressed in the plan as far as I can tell. Does the state have a default fire management policy?
- What is the policy regarding volunteers with chainsaws? There has been a great deal of trail clearing by "volunteers," most of whom are unknown to any state or municipal authorities. Some of their work is questionable, such as the logs they've placed across the Ingham Hill Road ending. This would impede entry by emergency vehicles, as well as work trucks.

In my opinion, fire, storms, and invasive plants should be more explicitly considered in the forest management plan.

Regards,

Kathy Connolly

60 North Cove Road, Old Saybrook

860-510-2136

To: CMC

From : Ad – Hoc Committee

RE: Preserve Next Steps

Date: July 2022

We look forward to participating in the next steps towards taking the GEI public recreational use and forest management documents and developing them further to become improved management plans. We support the creation of Core Conservation Areas following the completion of a joint project between the State's herpetologist and Dr. Michael Klemen's to identify and map these areas. Also, we agree with the proposed plan to implement a robust public and stakeholder education and participation process. Now that the prime vernal pool observation window has passed, the field work for this Core Conservation Areas study will likely need to occur in the spring of 2023.

We agree with the premise that the key natural and wildlife resource areas should be identified and protected first, around which, public recreational uses can be better identified and planned. This process, along with the expected public and stakeholder workshops, will likely take us well into 2024 to complete.

It appears to us, however, that we can get the stakeholder involvement process started now and begin with the issue of hunting. Some of the points raised by the ad-hoc committee are:

- Town attorney Michael Cronin's opinion regarding the permissibility of hunting on town property was inconclusive. (See Attached !) We agree with the attorney's assertion that the existing wording in the town's regulations leaves room for multiple interpretations and should be amended. This then leaves the question whether revisions to either allow or disallow hunting in The Preserve should be made prior to, or following, public and stakeholder input. What is the town's process to revise existing hunting language in its regulations if need be.
- The Ad-Hoc committee believes strongly that the public presentations be balanced, and consider the following:
 1. The State should make its case as done in the February 24, 2022, Ad-Hoc committee meeting.

2. The state should also invite participants from the 3 towns that allow hunting on their state forest property and have similar community characteristics to The Preserve.
3. The state's HRT study and hunting accident data should be shared with the public in advance.
4. The results of the GEI public survey study should be shared.
5. The Ad-Hoc committee's mission (See attached 2) and its current position and thought process regarding hunting should be shared. The opinions of Bill Moorehead and Dr. Klemens, as well as other experts, should be presented.
6. The public and other stakeholders should be able to ask questions in some manner, and also be invited to participate in a post workshop survey.
7. Extensive publicity of the workshop should be done in advance, including sending out letters to abutters. At this moment in time, it appears that the workshop should be both in-person and virtual.

There is still much to be done in The Preserve, we look forward to the next steps to make the Preserve the best it can be.

Ad- Committee

Mission Statement of the
Ad-Hoc Committee
For the Preserve
Old Saybrook

Mission:

To maintain the overall rural character of the town, while protecting and maintaining our water systems, flora, fauna and wildlife of the Preserve

Responsibilities:

1. Assist the CMC in decision making of tasks of the Preserve property
2. Provide information to the general public about the preserve
3. To assist in the general maintenance of the property

Section 402 of the Parks & Recreation regulations are as follows:

"402-7. Hunting and Firearms. Hunting or carrying firearms or bow and arrows in any park, beach or facility is prohibited."

The first legal question is whether or not the Preserve is a "park" or "facility". I think arguments probably could be made, both pro and con, on this issue because of the wording of the ordinance. In any event, for the purpose of clarity, my first recommendation is that the ordinance be modified to make it clear that "hunting" is an approved activity in the Preserve.

A review of the conditions upon which the Town entered into the co-ownership of the property with the State of Connecticut, it is clear that hunting specifically is a permitted activity in the Preserve. The reason for this is that a portion of the money which was used to purchase the property came from a federal program which requires that properties purchased with the federal funds specifically allow hunting as a recreational activity within that property. I recall reviewing the original analysis of the property which was made when it was purchased. Certain parts of the Preserve are not suitable for hunting activity because of the proximity of private homes and other types of improvements which would create a safety hazard. However, as I recall that analysis, a very high percentage of the total property would seem to be suitable and safe for hunting activity. Obviously, there should be a concern about the interaction of hunters with other uses of the property. Any plan that is put together to allow hunting on the property should, in my opinion, be prepared by an entity or entities who are fully qualified for this purpose. The obvious starting point would be the Ct. DEEP.

If you have any further questions or if I can be of any further help, please call.

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