

Meeting Minutes
Addison County Regional Planning Commission
Wednesday, June 10, 2009

The ACRPC June Meeting was held at the ACRPC offices on June 10, 2009 with Bob McNary, Vice-Chair, presiding.

ROLL CALL:

<i>Addison:</i>		<i>Orwell:</i>	Clyde Park
<i>Bridport:</i>	Ed Payne Andrew Manning Mike Gamache Mark Pumiglia	<i>Panton:</i>	
<i>Bristol:</i>		<i>Ripton:</i>	Jeremy Grip
<i>Cornwall:</i>	Mary Dodge Ralph Teitscheid	<i>Salisbury:</i>	
<i>Ferrisburgh</i>	Bob McNary	<i>Shoreham:</i>	
<i>Goshen:</i>	Jeffrey Cathcart	<i>Starksboro:</i>	
<i>Leicester:</i>	Charles Makovec	<i>Waltham:</i>	
<i>Lincoln:</i>	Steve Revell	<i>Weybridge:</i>	
<i>Middlebury:</i>		<i>Whiting:</i>	Ellen Kurrelmeyer
<i>Monkton:</i>		<i>Vergennes:</i>	
<i>New Haven:</i>	Harvey Smith Milo Schaefer		

CITIZEN INTEREST REPRESENTATIVES:

Addison County Farm Bureau:
Addison County Economic Development Corp:
Otter Creek Audubon Society:
Otter Creek Natural Resources: Marcia Parker
Addison County Chamber of Commerce:

ACRPC EXECUTIVE BOARD

Chair: Fred Dunnington
Vice-Chair: Bob McNary
Secretary: William Sayre
Treasurer: Thea Gaudette
At Large: Jeremy Grip
Bruce Webster
Ellen Kurrelmeyer

STAFF

Executive Director: Adam Lougee
Assistant Director/GIS Manager: Kevin Behm
EM/Senior Planner: Tim Bouton
Transportation/Senior Planner: Richard Kehne
Land Use/Environmental Planner: Elizabeth Golden
Office Manager/Bookkeeper: Pauline Cousino

Program: Bob called the meeting to order at 7:37 pm and introduced the speakers: Lewis Creek Association (LCA) President Andrea Morgante and Executive Director Marty Illick, Jens Hilke, Conservation Planner with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife (VTFW), Ethan Swift, Basin Planner for the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and Kevin Behm, ACRPC GIS Specialist. Marty thanked ACRPC for their time and support of their project, wherein they collaboratively identified priority conservation lands at a watershed scale, integrating local and state goals and policies. She identified the Lewis Creek Watershed on a map and spoke about planning at a watershed scale, using maps that Kevin produced. Marty explained that in the mid-90's mapping and planning for wildlife habitat was difficult, due to a lack of technical support, data gaps and lack of prioritization tools. As a private, non-profit group, LCA had the liberty to experiment and do some research. Initially, they were doing a lot of riparian work and later tree planting. A lot of the trees failed, as they were planted in very small buffers, and, as the river changed course, the trees would be consumed by the river's flow. Today they understand this much better. The VT Biodiversity project, the Fish and Wildlife Planning Manual and the VT Wildlife Action Plan emerged from 1995 to the present. All levels of government had aspired to enable long term biodiversity, cohesiveness of natural areas, and science-based planning tools LCA's watershed-scale maps took these State initiatives to the local level. They are getting a more cohesive town-level scale of planning. Between state and local planners, an ecosystem-based planning approach has emerged. Consistency between towns is more possible.

Common conservation principles emerged: regional biotic variability, expressed by representativeness; proportionate landforms; known rare, unique special, communities; landscape elements expressed by significant element occurrences; gene interchange; movement corridors; core habitat, aquatic systems, connectivity, wide ranging species, expressed by natural land cover and landform cohesiveness. A multi-disciplinary partnership approach merged social, science and planning concerns. LCA worked with ANR departments, academia, ACRPC staff, conservation organizations, and LCA consultants Lapin, Engstrom, and Underwood. Each provided data. The map components considered our government framework. The components of mapping include contiguous habitat, water influences, habitat, and significant forested landform habitat - correlated with the government framework. Contiguous habitat map: FWD mapped foundation landscape elements. The preferred areas are larger areas of natural vegetation, clusters of natural vegetation patches, connection between patches that enhance movement for wide ranging species, riparian corridors, and potential for conservation stewardships based on lot size, landowner interest, conserved lands, and site quality.

Kevin reported that this took six years of tracking from many towns. Fish and Wildlife validated the patterns of local groups' observations. Andrea added that UVM did bobcat research. In fact, the two maps were well aligned. Local hunters and trappers told us about animal movement. Everyone in the communities started getting interested in it. The Lewis Creek and LaPlatte River Watersheds map shows the landscape level identification of contiguous wildlife habitat and connecting corridors. The water influenced habitat map – VEC aquatic map – had a different angle. Biota information from DEC used physical

and biotic features that comprise complete wetland and elevations. Ethan Swift noted that how these elements relate to each other allowed them to see the relationship between the biological and physical conditions. They could see the influence of the river instability on the river reach. This helped determine the highest priorities of the parts of the watershed that were more degraded as well as those which were better preserved. This is meaningful information for the towns. Andrea noted that these are good ready reference maps for towns to decide if they should do conservation work in particular areas of their town. She added that DEC does the most detailed in-stream water quality analysis. Ethan said that this shows river corridor protection details. Marty added that it also poses questions, when the ranking of different sections differ. Ethan replied that allows us to tease out, if the physical habitat isn't the stressor, maybe other issues are stressors.

Kevin went on to say that by focusing on the watershed, DEC and LCA could work together to see how the information related. For the significant landform habitat map, LCA's consultant helped (as this was the most difficult part) to develop a landform classification system with 11 landform types relevant to our region. Ecology, soil groups, bedrock geology, elevation, slope, physiography, aspect and landforms were considered. This helped them to select the best representative areas. Andrew noted that there has been a lot of emphasis on protecting biodiversity, but what was missing was a way of understanding that there is lots of land in the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) that supports wildlife. Marty said that recently they understand that there are different bedrock that support different ecosystems. By looking at the soil types, they can identify what areas are unique and worthy of protection within the Champlain alley. They identified landform level ecosystem class component layers. Kevin noted that maps showing the major landforms, aspects (slope facing north, east south or west), slope class, steepness, physiography (curvature), soil classifications, elevation, and bedrock geology, were combined to develop a landform map that Marc Lapin felt was representative of the ecology of the areas. A report goes along with this map to illustrate the classes.

The significant forested landforms map is the result of using this classification system. Dotted lines indicate the best examples of the landforms. Kevin reported that the LCA invited 40 professionals to a charette to pour over these maps to see how each of these landform elements related to upland habitat, lower land wetlands, etc. using their knowledge of their Lewis Creek areas. Their task was to identify the high value areas, so that the LCA could prioritize their potential purchases, backed up by a rationale. Marty added that they considered social considerations such as the potential for conservation and the value of not developing the land. They did outreach to the region and towns. This was a collaborative effort between Conservation Commissions, ANR, VLCTA, USFWS NRCS, AC Riverwatch Collaborative, town land trusts, the NE Association of Environmental Biologists, and the Addison and Chittenden County Regional Planning Commissions. The Town of Charlotte used their work to identify significant wildlife habitat in their town. The Hinesburg Land Trust did a landscape assessment report, using the information at the parcel level, of the known conservation values of the French property in Hinesburg and Charlotte, to inform their planning and development review process, long term management and stewardship planning for this region. It's still in process. A housing development planned for the area got denied for many reasons,

including the fact that the LCA maps indicated the conservation value of the land, but also because it was too large-scale a project for the neighborhood. Significant wildlife habitat is defined largely by the quality of and potential to support key ecological functions . This is at landscape scale . One still needs to do a site assessment when doing development review to look more closely, to either validate or not.

Jens Hilke, Conservation Biologist at FW, works with all 251 towns in Vermont. He noted that every town is different. He spoke about how this model was used across the state. Some options in conservation planning are a simpler planning process. He is working with the ten towns that make up the Linking Lands Alliance, mapping and planning wildlife habitat connectivity. The ten towns are West Fairlee, Vershire, Strafford, Thetford, Sharon, Norwich, Pomfret, Hartford, Woodstock and Hartland. The strategy was to integrate the model in the town level planning process. Habitat blocks of contiguous forests, with meadows and other natural communities are bounded by agricultural lands, roads and development, which define the areas at the coarse scale of conservation planning. This map tells a town what they have of value. Towns need the best available science, mixed with what the town wants, and integrated together. We can talk about working forests, skiing, and ATV paths –all potential community values. Farmland is excluded from habitat blocks. They did a representativeness map showing ecological landforms, and the most unique or under-represented landforms, such as the high elevation in Vershire. Looking at things at different scale really helps to discover what is important to the region. Road crossings (shown on the map) are the pinch points where local wildlife travel. This identifies area where human safety is a concern, such as moose collisions for example, as well as supporting wildlife movement across these roads. Linkages and habitat blocks show likely crossing points, which shows which of the roads are most important. They used the ecological planning grid from the LCA Conservation Planning to show what things are more important than another.

Towns need to explain those decision using databases. Area, location, significant attributes or elements, conservation, the significance of elements, and threats to elements are critical factors in the corridor when reviewing proposed development in the area, current information sources, and information needed. They merges community values with the science. Community values forums were held as part of their inventory work because none of our science matters unless people care about it. At their community input gatherings, they ask “What do you love about living in your town”. Participants draw the values, such as fishing and water quality, town forests recreation, farmland and aesthetics, views, etc. They are taking community values information and overlaying it with scientific prioritization, to come up with the areas that overlap for values with ecological priorities. They use science to find the “low hanging fruit”. They map the community values with wildlife habitat, to show the overlap. But how do you incorporate into local and regional planning? Towns look outside their boundaries, for connectivity, and for representativeness. It is important that town use the same language and plan with common principles. They create town-level mass that can consider all scales – watershed/landscape, community and species levels. Ethan then opened up the presentation for comments.

Jeremy Grip asked how the towns identify with each other. Ethan responded that ten Conservation Commission members got together to think at a greater scale. Jeremy asked: Vershire is unique for that rectangle, but isn't it arbitrary in picking the project area? Ethan responded that there are statewide data sets that give us the concept of representativeness, such as ecological land units. Kevin noted that the group of Conservation Commissioners wanted to look within their boundaries, whereas the Lewis Creek group came from people who were advocating for the watershed; thus they were each starting from a different place. Milo Schafer asked "How will you measure the extent to which the physical world is getting better because of what you are doing? How do you balance preservation of species with other community growth goals? Jens responded that the towns need to decide on what they want, and then wildlife diversity will be only as important as the towns desire. The state does not prescribe how important habitat is. Working landscape can be great habitat, for example. The same goes for recreation lands being fantastic habitat. This makes defining the measures difficult, but the important thing is whether the community is happy with the results. They decide the priorities. Andrea noted that LCA's goal was internal to the organization – to develop a tool to prioritize what areas were most important to conserved, and share that info with the Planning Commission; not be regulatory or preserve every acre, so that when landowners approach them, they could understand the property's value. Milo comments that it would be interesting to know what the towns' highest priorities are for the parcels. Habitat is only one aspect of the community's values.

Milo asked if Fish and Wildlife are trying to change the values of the towns. Kevin responded that it is more like informing the communities, as wildlife habitat is usually undervalued. Ethan also noted that this information gives FW a robust data set to be able to make good decisions. Kevin noted that there should be performance measures as well. Marty added that they didn't get to that yet. It would be valuable to look back and evaluate how they are doing. Mary Dodge commented that Addison County is very diverse. She asked for suggestions about what we might be thinking about county-wide. Marty responded that we could apply the same approach to a county scale. Kevin added that this is a model we could use on the analytical side. They could do watershed maps and distribute them widely, and go through the value process. They could go to the communities to ask them what they feel about it. Mary asked what Jens sees in Addison County that is special. Jens responded that there is a tremendous amount of ecological diversity such as the clay plain forests that set Addison County apart. AC also has tremendous habitat fragmentation because we value farming so highly. There are compromises that we need to make here to find the right mix for us. In a different vein, the conservation manual offers a spectrum of scale, from the species scale and community scale, to the landscape scale, all of which give a community a place to plug into in terms of conservation planning. Marsha asked if the species identification done in their work is mostly about game animals and if there is any emphasis on bird habitat. Jens replied that he works with nongame natural heritage programs, but the focus is on what the communities want to focus on. He said whatever does it for you, let's start there. Andrea went on to say that one of the things that draw us to this is that at the state level, we protect game animals, deer and bear yards. But at the local level, nongame is very important. The genesis for their project was that at the local level, where there was a

much greater diversity of interest in nongame species. Wildlife enthusiasts began the process and engaged people who didn't necessarily know their landscape. This was a way to engage people to know about their landscape, especially for newcomers. It brought people together on a social are level. Marsha recommended that the VT Breeding Bird Atlas be added to the project. Over time we can get people to recognize each scale. Marty warned that the rare and endangered species areas are not comprehensive. This biodiversity project used landform diversity to get at biodiversity. It's more reliable to get down into the landform. Jens offered his help to the Commissioners who wish to work with their towns on conservation planning. His services are free services and he would love to do more work in Addison County.

Business Meeting:

Call to Order: Bob called the business meeting to order at 9:02 p.m.

- I. **Approval of Minutes:** April 8, 2009 - Ellen Kurrelmeyer moved to accept the minutes; Clyde Park seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted as written; with Jeffrey Cathcart abstaining. May 13, 2009 – Steve Revell moved to accept the minutes; Ellen Kurrelmeyer seconded. The minutes were unanimously accepted as written; with Jeffrey Cathcart abstaining.
- II. **Executive Board Minutes:** April 22, 2009 – Bob noted that the minutes are for the information of the Commission and that no vote was needed. He asked for questions and there were none.
- III. **Treasurer's Report:** The report was distributed. Adam reported that our balances are in good order. We are almost to the end of our fiscal year. Total revenues are at 80%, and we are a little over in our expenditures, only because we have paid our expenses through the month of May, but we have about \$20-30,000 in billings coming in this month. We expect to be ahead at the end of our fiscal year. Mary Dodge removes to accept the Treasurer's Report as presented; Steve Revell seconds. The report is unanimously accepted; with Jeffrey Cathcart abstaining.
- IV. **Committee Reports:**

Act 250/248 – Ellen Kurrelmeyer reported that we have three new applications:

1. On April 22, 2009, the Middlebury Ambulance Association and Middlebury College applied for a permit to build an ambulance emergency center off Collins Drive in Middlebury near Porter Hospital. The District Commission intends to treat the application as a minor application and has issued a draft permit.
2. On April 24, 2009, Mothership, LLC filed an application to subdivide a 68 acre parcel of land into two parcels, one to house a single family home and the other to house a single family o home and 6 cottages that will serve as a summer camp for disabled campers. The project is located off of Zeno Road

3. On May 28, 2009, CVPS filed an application to construct 3,140 feet of new electrical service off of Hardscrabble Road in Bristol. The District Commission intends to treat the application as a minor application and has issued a draft permit.

Approvals or Denials:

1. On April 27, 2009 the Vergennes Union High School received a permit retroactively approving the previously constructed challenge course at the high school.
2. On April 16, 2009 the District 9 Commission issued a permit to AgriMark to expand its existing manufacturing facility on Exchange Street.

Brownfields – Jeremy Grip reported that the committee did not meet recently. The project under review found petroleum present in the groundwater, and they are expecting an expert report shortly. There will be a meeting this month to look at the results. Andrew Manning asked if the project will move ahead. Jeremy did not know if it would. Adam said that the owners are still doing an assessment of the materials on this site and that the groundwater contamination results will influence the development.

Energy – Bob McNary reported that the committee held its regular monthly meetings on May 8 and June 5 and continues to work on projects such as the Biofuels Research Project, monthly outreach programs and grants to support our work. After discussions with MAGWAC, the committee has decided to retain responsibility and ownership of the Energy Solutions Directory and will continue to update, improve and distribute it. Due to Elizabeth’s hard work, there is now a dedicated “Energy Corner” in the front lobby, so please visit it and help yourself to the handouts. The committee offered a program in April on Energy Technologies for Agriculture with Harvey Smith as one of our presenters. Bob thanked Harvey for his skillful work. In May, our program was on Community Wind. Both of these programs were very informative, well done, and worthy of attention. They are available on the Middlebury Community TV website, or you can ask Elizabeth to borrow a copy of the video.

The committee has had two requests for letters of support for methane digesters from Addison County dairy farms: Monument Farms in Weybridge and Dubois Farms in Addison. The committee reviewed each application and determined that both comply with the Energy Section of our Regional Plan which supports renewable energy production in Addison County. The committee is requesting authorization from the Full Commission to issue letters of support which will be composed by staff and signed by Adam, which we will take up later this evening under New Business. Ralph Teitscheid recommended that the commissioners look at the requests prior to voting on possibly supporting the applications. Adam

responded that we could rely on the recommendation of the Energy Committee or look at the information this evening. Bob asked who on the commission would like to review the application prior to the vote. Ralph Teitscheid and Milo Schaefer requested a copy, and Elizabeth gave copies to them. Jeremy Grip asked if the power is sold back to the grid. Harvey Smith answered that it would be. There are six methane digesters doing the same in Vermont. Jeremy asked if it is net metered. Harvey replied that they are selling 100% of their electrical power generated by the methane back to the grid. Audette's Farm just added a second generator, in fact. Jeremy asked if this was the Cow Power program. Adam noted that it must be a commercial farm, not a residence, to be permitted to sell all of their electricity to the grid through the Cow Power program. Harvey reminded the commissioners that years ago, when we developed our Regional Energy Plan, we put some meat into it so we could offer support for local energy generation projects. Such projects are no longer required to be reviewed under Act 250. Ed Payne moved we support the recommendation of the Energy Committee to write a letter of support to both parties' applications for methane digesters; Harvey seconded. Harvey moved that we table the motion until later in the evening to allow commissioners who wish to review the applications to do so; Ralph seconded. Mary Dodge agreed with the need for commissioners to have the opportunity to review applications in advance of voting. The motion to table the discussion until later this evening passed unanimously. Bob noted that we will table further discussion on the issue until later.

Natural Resources – Ed Payne reported that the committee met to continue its work in updating the Natural Resources section of the Regional Plan.

TAC – Andrew reported that there was a hearing on the Western Corridor Plan that was well attended. Mary added that she also attended. Bob asked if rail was being considered. Andrew said that it was and that there was agreement not to build any new highways, but rather improve existing ones.

V. **Joint Partners Report** – nothing to report.

VI. **Delegate/Staff Recognition** – nothing to report.

VII. **Old Business:**

Strategic Planning – The Executive Board Draft was distributed to all Commissioners in their Meeting packet. Adam said that we did a fair amount of work on strategic planning earlier this year and it boiled down to this list of what we can do better. It follows the Work plan that the Commissioners passed at Annual Meeting last month. It highlights the things we and outside people think we should focus on. Adam would like to set up a Committee in September to fulfill the Strategic Plan elements. He will ask in July for the Commission to formally adopt the Plan. Milo noted that certain words, such as “promote” lack outcomes, such as greater use of GIS services. He suggested that our action words

include measurable goals. Adam suggested that we use language that defines the outcomes. Bob noted that the Strategic Plan supports moving forward, seeing projects, and becoming more proactive. Mary recommends we include how we will implement the tasks; that we lay out the steps for staff and the committees to take, for how we will do these items.

Annual Meeting – Adam noted that this is our last meeting of the fiscal year, which starts July 1. He asked if anyone had any reflections on the past year. Ellen said that she really enjoyed hearing the staff talk about their work at Annual Meeting. Jeremy agreed and suggested that staff do this annually. Milo thought the potluck was wonderful, in spite of his original skepticism.

VIII. New Business:

Town Selection of Delegates and Alternates – Adam reported that only ten towns have responded to our requested; eleven have not appointed anyone to the Commission. He read the list of towns that have not appointed anyone and asked representatives to please contact their Selectboard to appoint someone. Several people said they know they were appointed; that perhaps the Clerk just hasn't sent in the forms. Adam suggested that towns who have been underrepresented need delegates and suggested the Commissioners recommend someone to him. Bob suggested we get new people on the Commission to give them a history so that some of our delegates can move on.

Committee Assignments – Adam suggested that the Commissioners think about what committees they would like to serve on. Commissioners are expected to serve on at least one committee, but they are encouraged to serve on more than one if they are interested and want to participate. We will send out a form with the July packet asking for committee requests, and the Executive Board will make committee and chairman assignments. New committee assignments will begin in September. Ellen asked if there is a new committee being formed for 'outreach' and Adam said there would be.

Programs for Next Year – Adam reported that we have our July program set up – Manomet Conservation Organization on agricultural use in Addison County, but are looking for suggestions for future meeting programs. We will be inviting other farmers to attend. Milo suggested we offer a program on large scale wind farms. Elizabeth suggested that wind farms would be a good Energy Program; she will take the idea to the Energy Committee.

Support for Methane Digesters – Bob reopened the discussion on the Commissions support for methane digesters at Monument Farms and Dubois Farms. Mark Pumiglia asked for a summary of the economics on the two projects and wondered how it is that the public will be paying for some of the project. Harvey responded that the utility company supports the project, and funding also comes from the Clean Energy Development Fund, USDA grants and other

sources for capital only, not for operations. The farmers usually get compost from neighbor farmers as well. About 25% of the start-up costs are covered by grants. Some funds come from the Rural Development Program, but it is difficult to work with them because the money comes after the project is complete, not up front. It's still worth working with them, however. Milo asked if it is our role to analyze the cost and the funding of these projects. Isn't the question whether the project aligns with our Regional Plan? Elizabeth confirmed that the projects are supported by our Regional Plan. Ellen noted that one of the goals of our Energy Plan calls for Addison County to produce all of its electrical needs. Mark asked if that is a good goal. Milo answered that we can revisit that question again when we review the Energy Plan in the future, but for now, it is our goal. Much effort went into writing the Energy Plan. Harvey noted that burning methane gas is a way to keep the gases from escaping into the atmosphere and that it also reduces the odor and truck traffic. Debois purchased bedding from Blue Spruce and it can be expensive. Bob added that bedding is difficult to get, as well. Ed noted that sawdust from lumber mills is hard to get, since the forestry industry is almost gone in Vermont. Bob called for a vote on the motion. The motion to support the methane digesters passed unanimously.

IX. **Member Concerns** – there were none.

X. **Adjournment:** Ellen moved to adjourn. The Meeting was adjourned at 9:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Elizabeth Golden