

Natural Resources Committee

DRAFT Minutes

April 29, 2015

Committee Members: Diana Carter, Nick Causton, Colin Davis, Peter Grant, Stan Grzyb, David Hamilton, Wendy Sue Harper (Chair), Arabella Holzpfel, David Ludwig, Andrea Ochs, Ed Payne, Mark Pumiglia, David Raphael, Paul Wagner, Kent Wright

Present: Diana Carter, Nick Causton, Wendy Sue Harper, Ed Payne

Staff: Kevin Behm

Guest:

Wendy Sue opened the meeting at 7:10. The January minutes were approved (Nick motion, Ed 2nd, Diana abstained). The March minutes were approved (Nick motion, Ed 2nd, Diana abstained).

Nick asked whether the siting guidelines that had been emailed was current or an earlier draft. After discussion, it was determined that an early draft had been sent and a more recent version was handed-out.

- Review of the Regionally Significant Resource Map

Wendy Sue stated that we had received additional responses to our question of updating the Regionally Significant Resource Map from Salisbury. The Salisbury Conservation Commission provided 4 resources for consideration; vernal pools, migratory waterfowl habitat, town forests and kame terraces.

The Salisbury CC noted that a large portion of the vernal pools in the state had recently been mapped and the information is available to the RPC. The pools provide breeding habitat for many amphibians and invertebrates and are not included on the existing wetland maps. Ed noted that since they are so small and scattered they would not be impacted by most development. Kevin used the ANR Atlas to display the identified pools in Addison County. It appeared that less than 50 confirmed or unconfirmed pools had been mapped in the county, although the Salisbury CC had stated that not all the existing pools had been mapped. Wendy Sue asked what would be affected if the vernal pool habitat was lost? Diana stated that a recent workshop she attended noted that vernal pools provide habitat for many insects that are food for multiple bird and dragonfly species. Ed said that they don't seem to be very prevalent in the county – most seem to be mapped in the Northeast Kingdom. If they are rare in Addison County, he would be concerned about people trespassing on private property to access the pools. Diana said they are already mapped on the state web site but probably most landowners don't use this tool so adding them to the regional plan and reinforcing the need for landowner permission in the plan text would be helpful. Wendy Sue asked if there was a motion – Ed motioned to add

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vernal pools to the Regionally Significant Resource Map with additional landowner permission text in the body of the document. Diana 2nd - all in favor.

The committee began discussion of the next item, migratory waterfowl habitat. Kevin said that there is not very much discussion of waterfowl in the plan except in context with the Dead Creek Natural Area. He also mentioned that there really isn't a map of a migration swath through the county. Nick mentioned that the Salisbury description does mention floodplains as habitat for waterfowl. Wendy Sue asked if floodplains were on the map already and they are not. Diana motioned to add floodplains to the Regionally Significant Resource Map for flood safety and waterfowl habitat. Nick 2nd, all in favor.

Town Forests were the next suggested resource to add to the map. The members noted that the regional plan shows Federal and State land but omits town forests. They all considered it valuable to include town forests as regionally significant for the functions they serve in their communities and to encourage those towns without a town forest to consider their importance for species habitat and citizen use. Diana motioned to add Town Forests to the Regionally Significant Resource Map. Nick 2nd, 3 in favor – 1 opposed, passed.

Escarpment and Kame Terraces were the last item on Salisbury's list. Wendy Sue explained that these were depositional features of sand and gravel that formed as glacier's retreated. They were mounds or horizontal deposits adjacent to streambeds from glacial outwash. Kevin identified their locations using a landform layer in the online atlas. The members noted that since these features are comprised mainly of sand and gravel they align closely with the sand and gravel resource already mapped on the regional map. Kevin stated that the sand and gravel resource layer was considered a regional resource for its usefulness for road building and construction. Wendy Sue added that if the Salisbury CC will help to categorize the likely significant habitat information, that should be added to the text discussion of sand and gravel's value as a resource. Wendy Sue motioned to add 'kame terrace' to the legend title for 'sand and gravel' on the Regionally Significant Resource Map and to include additional language to the text on the habitat value. Diana 2nd, all in favor.

Diana asked why are only large wetlands over 20 acres identified on the Regionally Significant Resource Map? Ed stated that the larger ones are more significant from a regional perspective and that most town plans identify all the state regulated wetlands even the smaller ones.

- Forest Stewardship internet map demo

Kevin directed the members back to the internet mapping tool and demonstrated the Forest Stewardship part of ANR's Atlas. Kevin identified the different theme groups; productivity, ecological resources, water resources, scenic & recreational, human & environmental constraints and stewardship potential. Some of these themes contain layers that are also in the main ANR Atlas, but here they are presented with a forest focus. The tool has the ability to create a report based on a designated boundary or an arbitrary

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polygon. Wendy Sue mentioned that she had her Hogback Community College class use the web map to identify the amount of conserved land in a town. The members were very receptive to the functionality since the earlier portions of the meeting had used the Atlas to identify vernal pools and kame terraces.

Wendy Sue said the next meeting will be on July 8th before the Commission meeting. The Committee will be reviewing the scenic section of the plan and considering its role in siting solar arrays. Act 250 9L guidance may also be discussed.

The Committee adjourned at 9:15.