

MINUTES

The Education, Outreach, & Research Committee virtual meeting of the Woodlands Partnership of Northwest Massachusetts – September 17, 2024

Committee Members in attendance: Marybeth Chichester – FRCOG, Committee Chair; Rick Peltier – UMass, Public Health; Hannah Poplawski – Rowe, Notetaker; Hank Art – Williamstown; Rhonda Anderson – Ohketeau Cultural Center; Greg Cox – Hawley

Committee Members absent: Alice Houghtaling – Monroe

Staff/Board in attendance: Lisa Hayden, NEFF/Admin Agent; Kate Conlin, NEFF/Coordinator; Dicken Crane, Board Chair

Public: Lori Bradley; Glen Ayers; Doone Mackay

Call to order and welcome: 4:05 p.m., M. Chichester proposes to move public comment up, all agreed.

Public comment: Lori Bradley: She is concerned that the Notch Reservoir project will change the residential classification of the neighborhood. She is concerned about erosion from logging that has occurred in the region. Asks how the plan was developed with the town and if other projects have been in a residential neighborhood.

L. Hayden references the City's public forum on September 12 and that recording is available. She clarifies that the original grant funding was to pay for two Forest Stewardship Climate Plans and that it was a match making process, which is how the Partnership connected with North Adams.

Glen Ayers: Expresses thanks for moving public comment to the beginning of the meeting. Has been following the Partnership for many years and was very involved in having the biomass component removed from the enabling legislation. He believes targeting public lands for commercial logging is a huge mistake. Drawing a lot of unnecessary attention to your organization. Watershed protection land should be the most highly protected land in the world. He states that "timber speak" and euphemisms will result in a black eye for the organization. He shares that the community is organizing now to contact our state representatives and senators across the Commonwealth asking them to make sure that no more funding goes to the Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership.

Doone MacKay: Feels the proposed project adjacent to state reserved lands is "egregious."

Approval of April 2, 2024 minutes (July 16, 2024 meeting did not reach quorum) motion H. Art, seconded by H. Poplawski, all in favor. Abstained: Rhonda Anderson, Greg Cox.

Upcoming events: September 21, 10 a.m. [Savoy woods walk](#); October 11, 7:00-8:30 p.m. Ethan Tapper's [How to Love a Forest](#) at Raven Used Books in Shelburne Falls – K. Conlin shares the events and invites the Committee to attend.

Committee Charter / review of [Ten-Year Plan](#) for both direction and suggested updates - send K. Conlin and L. Hayden suggestions and comments.

Spreadsheet/calendar of annual plan for events: Working on a master tracker and a form that will be used to organize committee involvement and organize committee requests.

Status of newsletter sign-ups and plan to develop newsletter: Newsletter draft through MailChimp is ready for review and consideration. The process by which content is gathered and shared should be considered by the committee at a future meeting.

Equipment proposal for recording low-budget videos ([example](#)) and professional videography pursuit

Examples of content that could be captured by such an initiative:

H. Art – better public education about sustainable forestry principles is needed given the Notch Reservoir public response. What logging looks like, the fact that wood stores carbon even after harvest, dealing with those issues in a way that is proactive so that the immediate knee jerk reaction isn't logging = bad.

K. Conlin – responsibility to include precolonial history of humans on the landscape. The various forests in the WP region in terms of ecology and history, overview and spotlight on EEA WP grants. The people and the land; profiles of people in the community.

R. Anderson – Suggestions for speakers at future events: Kristen Wyman from Eastern Woodlands Rematriation Partnership; Dr. Keshia DeFreece Lawrence; Atty. Pam Ellis on Indigenous Rights, Dr. Jess Dolan would be an amazing person to have on a forest walk as an ethnobotanist. R. Anderson offers to host a book club on *Becoming Kin: An Indigenous Call to Unforgetting the Past and Reimagining Our Future* by Patty Krawec. Isaac Larkin-Harmon does excellent video editing.

D. Crane – Start with a storyboard for video ideas: oak regeneration, white pine needle cast, benefits of early successional habitat, great to see a video of white pines in June, some specific little videos to include that would also help identify locations. Fire scar on a healed scar which means that same site has burned more than once in the lifetime of those trees. Importance to include Indigenous Peoples.

Agent update: Submitted IRA USFS underserved landowner grant application; Catalyst Fund grant awarded, Collins Center municipal study update; North Adams Q&A on September 12

- IRA USFS funding opportunity specifically to undeserved deedholders submitted in August, opportunity to reach out to new partners;
- \$25,000 from Catalyst Fund will enable work with a fundraising/development planner and activities for the future beyond the Agent contract and long-term sustainability goals;
- This year's EEA grant awarded to the Partnership is a study on public safety, inspired and informed by Board member Liz Kidder's work in Leyden, in light of underfunded municipalities and strained services from tourism and state land conservation and resulting diminished tax base;
- North Adams info session was a good opportunity for the public to share their concerns and learn specifics about the plan as developed between the deedholder (the City) and their forester.

Scheduling next Committee meeting(s)

December 17, 4-5pm or December 10 – K. Conlin will follow up by email to confirm the best date.

Any item(s) not anticipated within 48 hours: D. Crane: Tom Brule (DCR) called yesterday about providing lumber to schools like McCann Tech and others who have programs for kids to get into the trades. There's an opportunity for the state to provide part of the money they receive from timber sales on state-owned land—to connect that in a more direct way to forest management, health, and benefits. H. Art, we should we look at this in light of updating the Ten-Year Plan. We've had some discussions as to the need for secondary schools and beyond to include education on sustainable forestry practices,

(local forest products to schools rather than securing supplies from Home Depot that was cut in B.C. or, even worst, cut here, sent to Canada, and sent back).

M. Chichester, apprenticeships in the wood products industry are needed in the region. This could help inspire kids and continue the trend of home-based businesses. As for updates to the Plan, she suggests including in the appendix a detailed map of each town with woodlands shown.

Adjourn

H. Art moved, seconded R. Peltier, all in favor. 5:11 p.m.