

**Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Calais Town Office**  
**May 17, 2018, 7:00 pm**

**Present:** Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Maddy Morgan, Drew Lamb

**Guests:** Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes), Scott Bassage, Pat Johnson, Denise Wheeler

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7 pm.  
The Chair introduced guest Pat Johnson, who is a naturalist living in Calais and has a background in education and environmental education. Pat Johnson said that she is attending the meeting to learn more about the Commission's work and scope. The Chair announced that former member Lou Cherry resigned, and that member Drew Lamb will be living out of state for six months beginning in August.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: The Chair announced that yesterday there was a meeting of the Roadside Vegetation Assessment Project; much of the meeting was regarding invasives, specifically Emerald Ash Bore and Chervil, and this will be a significant meeting item for the evening. She advised that item 9 will be a discussion regarding contributing information to the Selectboard's discussing of optimal timing for mowing invasives.
3. Approve minutes: The Commission tabled this item until a subsequent meeting. The Chair asked the recording secretary to send each month's minutes to each member of the Commission.
4. Conservation Fund Balance: The Commission decided to ask the Town Treasurer to provide the financials in advance each month's meeting.
5. Identifying sand & gravel deposits: The Commission discussed some history of their work when creating the Town Plan and conversations from that time regarding Calais' natural resource in sand and gravel and the issues raised when a house is in close proximity to a gravel pit (noise, truck traffic, dust, etc.). These considerations resulted in the Commission's interest to identify natural gravel sources in Calais and consider how to protect the area around them to prevent homes from being built in an area that can potentially become developed as a gravel pit.

Neal Maker shared maps he created that identify locations of sand and gravel in Calais, and the Commission discussed use of existing types of maps (soil, geological, remote, etc.) and the differences of their contributions. The Commission discussed types of sands and locations in Calais, and how soil maps and geological maps codify sand types; sands have been mapped at the federal level for decades.

Scott Bassage commented on the reasons for the Town to have its own source of gravel and sand: the quality of gravel able to be procured is only as good as is locally

available; the source of gravel diminishes in the future as it becomes scarcer; the distance and effort of travelling further to get gravel requires more trucks and expenses. He pointed out that this year's budgeted amount for sand and gravel is \$150,000, and half of it is transportation expense.

The Commission and Scott Bassage discussed the Town's past effort to acquire a Town operated gravel pit and having pursued the McCullough pit as a possibility. Benefits of the McCullough pit identified include that it surrounds the Town garage, there is a lot of sand there, as well as gravel, and the Town already paid for an engineering report; if owned and operated by the Town, there could be enough gravel for 30 years; if it is run commercially, it could be exhausted in three years. Permitting and the Act 250 process was discussed, including obstacles posed in the past.

The Commission discussed locations of sand within the Town and the need to understand an ideal distance between houses and gravel pits. Neal Maker shared maps that he created that visualize buffers of varied sizes around identified Town sand and gravel locations. The Commission intends to move forward with identifying the areas, identify the houses, and consider different barrier sizes, and Scott Bassage will move forward speaking with landowners who have potential sites. Scott Bassage will report back to the Commission at a subsequent meeting. The Chair pointed out the advantages of a Town-run operations and over a commercial operation in terms of noise, time used, and length of resources.

6. Mapping wildlife habitat blocks: Neal Maker reported on last year's passage of Act 171, regarding wildlife habitat blocks and corridors, and the Town's obligation to have a map identifying them and acting on them in some way, in advance of the next Town Plan. The State has created maps identifying interior forest habitats and connectivity blocks (about how animals move through the landscape). The Commission reviewed maps and discussed two high priority areas in Calais, as well as the factors involved in the state's identification of blocks in terms of quality of habitat, road sizes, water, etc. The Commission discussed the unique characteristics of Calais that may contribute to the discussion on further identifying habitat blocks locally. Neal Maker had created and shared documents "Calais Habitat Blocks By State Weighted Block Scores" and "Calais Habitat Blocks as Ranked by Matt Peters." Neal built on the work of Matt Peters in personalizing the maps for Calais to reflect the unique characteristics of the local area.

The Commission discussed potential action to take to share this information and guide Calais's understanding and protection of these areas. The Chair will contact the Chair of the Planning Commission to talk about coordination of the two commissions working on this. The CC discussed hiring Matt Peters to work with the CC on this project. Julie Hand moved to ask the Selectboard to authorize an amount, not to exceed \$500, to hire Matt Peters to come to help prioritize habitat blocks in accordance with Act 171. Neal Maker seconded, and the motion passed unanimously.

They discussed starting the next meeting at 6PM to continue work on mapping wild-life habitat blocks.

7. NRI follow-up with landowners: Former member Richard Maizell sent out fifty letters to land owners regarding protecting natural resources that had been identified on their properties; there was only one response and it was from Pat Johnson and her husband. The follow-up involves Matt Peters being hired to create the detailed inventory work, and the Commission discussed the benefit to both the property owner and the town to learn more about the natural resources inventory. The Commission agreed it would be fair to split Matt's fees with landowners as long as the landowners agreed to share the information with the Town.

Larry Bush moved that the Commission request the Selectboard approve payment of Matt Peters' professional fees (from the Conservation Commission funds if necessary) for meetings with landowners to investigate areas of special natural resources as identified in the Natural Resources Inventory, with the understanding that if the Town commits resources, all the information learned from Matt Peters's report will be shared with the Town. Stephanie Kaplan seconded; the motion passed unanimously.

8. Update on Roadside Vegetation Assessment project & mowing: Joanne Garton (Special Projects Coordinator at VT Dept. of Forests, Parks and Recreation) met with her Advisory Committee consisting of Stephanie, Neal, Jamie Moorby, the Road Commissioner, Operations Manager, Selectboard Chair Denise Wheeler, Barbara Weedon (landscape architect), the state Watershed Forester and ANR's Municipal Roads General Permit person yesterday. Joanne Garton is doing an assessment of roadside vegetation in Calais with the goal of a work plan that identifies areas where there are hazard trees, roads that could use tree canopy, and tree work that promotes water health. Denise commented that Joanne Garton has been responsive to integrating the needs of tree work, invasives, water erosion and runoff. The Commission discussed seeding edges of the roadways, the width of roadways and the effect of a tree canopy above. Denise commented on the road crew's need of truck space. The Commission announced a June 7 training at the Town Garage.

The Commission discussed details on controlling Wild Chervil. The Commission discussed Peter Harvey's effort pulling Chervil last year. The Chair suggested members ask neighbors to go pull Chervil on their roads. The Commission discussed optimal soils for Chervil habitat and where it proliferates in town.

9. Emerald Ash Borers: Stephanie intends to coordinate with the Selectboard to organize a town-wide forum so that residents know what to look for and are educated about best practice. She discussed best practice for managing trees with the Borers, including having a Town Emerald Ash Borer dump where people can take them, non-flight season and flight season and what to do in each, and planting and thin-

ning trees. The Commission plans to share postings on Front Porch Forum regarding the Emerald Ash Borers and discussed holding workshops in Calais.

10. Town Plan action items: Commission members reviewed the discussion from the previous meeting around prioritizing areas and aligning the Town Plan work with existing Commission work.
11. Other business: The Commission discussed possible recruits for new members.
12. Public comment: None.
13. Adjournment: Larry Bush moved to adjourn at 9:14 pm; Neal Maker seconded. The motion passed unanimously.

Date: 5/18/2018 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas  
*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 6/12/2018 meeting*