

**Calais Conservation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Calais Town Office**  
**Wednesday, September 4, 2019, 7:00 pm**

**Present:** Stephanie Kaplan, Larry Bush, Neal Maker, Julie Hand, Drew Lamb  
Mark Brown, Pat Johnson (arriving by phone at 7:27 pm)

**Guests:** Peter Harvey, Katie Lane-Karnas (recording minutes)

1. The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.
2. Agenda revisions or additions: Stephanie reminded the group that Joanne Garton, Denise Wheeler, the Road Commissioner, Jamie Moorby, the Operations Manager, Barbara Wheedon, and representatives from the Conservation Commission will be at the Rural Roadside Inventory meeting on 9/5/19 (the inventory is a result of federal funds that support studying the effects of rural roadside practices and runoff, vegetation, etc.).
3. Approve minutes: Approval of minutes was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
4. Conservation Fund Balance: The balance as of August 31 is \$69,846.31. The North Calais Memorial Hall Association had inquired about how the Association obtains the \$50,000 pledged from the Conservation Fund. The Selectboard and Association are in communication, including reviewing the written letter of agreement (which included requirements defined by the Selectboard, such as providing a maintenance plan).
5. Roadside Invasive Plants: Resident Peter Harvey attended and discussed how he came to be aware of information about roadside invasives, including wild chervil. His first efforts were to pull. Last year, the Selectboard agreed to his request to not mow either side of three miles of roadside; he spent a few hours a week pulling the plants. This third year, the Board directed him to communicate and coordinate with the thirty or so neighbors along the three miles of roadside; he spent several days speaking with them.

Wild chervil is a member of the parsnip family, which spreads by putting up small plants near an initial plant. If a piece of the root is left in the soil, it will create a new plant. Simply pulling a plant and its root still results in a group of baby plants growing around the original plant that was pulled. Peter identified the most infested town road as Lightning Ridge Road. Wild chervil in Vermont was identified as early as the mid-1990s in Bethel and Randolph Center areas; it wasn't identified by the state until a farmer brought plants in around 1997. The fastest way to spread it a distance is by roadside mowing after the plant has gone to seed (approximately the beginning of June). The

seeds are dense, like small grains of rice, and are primarily spread by roadside mowing equipment, not by wind. Peter discussed how most brush hogs travel counterclockwise around fields; particularly along Adamant Road, between Fowler and Lightning Ridge, one can observe how it is spreading in a perimeter around the field, counterclockwise from the road. Peter observed that in the last 25 years, the state has spread it everywhere on state roads, due to mowing. He also observed that the town brings it from Route 14 up local roads, and it is obvious that the spread of wild chervil follows the movement of roadside mowing patterns. His understanding is that the State does not have any plans for changing road maintenance patterns to slow wild chervil spread. Peter described his efforts and upcoming plans for disseminating information at the local citizen level, including a website, written interviews, and video. Stephanie questioned whether this enormous investment of time (spread over many residents) makes a significant impact on this problem. Peter believes it can be avoided by individual efforts. He shared that the only reasons for roadside mowing are to keep the brush back from the road (which he stated can be done any time of the year—preferably as soon as the snow melts, while the seed is in the ground), or for visual appeal. It is also believed that the seeds can be moved by snowplowing. Peter described his visits to Selectboard meetings this summer.

Stephanie reviewed a list of invasive species currently in Calais (from the roadside inventory) and the group considered what impact the Commission's efforts can be expected to make in the face of so many species and continued lack of leadership from the State. They discussed Japanese knotweed and its quick spread following a hurricane (it gets broken and floated down riverways). Peter reported on three farmers' handling of wild chervil: one who chopped and mixed it with hay for cattle so that cattle could not avoid it; one who hired an herbicide sprayer to keep his field clear of chervil; and one who was trying to get contained cattle to eat it. The group was reminded that wild chervil completely blocks out all native plants until none remain and grows densely up to six feet tall. The herb is native to Asia, and likely arrived from Canadian hay. The Commission invited Peter to let them know of suggestions for 2020-2021 mowing.

Peter described the research of Victoria Weber, an expert on wild chervil, who has kept a plant in her garden for 18 years (she continues to clip the flowers to contain it), proving that it is not a biennial. Peter planned to pass his field notes on to Stephanie and welcomes them to be shared. He reiterated that only mowing once, as soon as the snow melted, would eliminate spread of the seeds.

6. Fall Foliage Walk: The Commission talked about getting people involved with the Town Forest by hosting the Fall Foliage Walk there. The walk could facilitate public awareness around the future uses for the Bliss Town Forest (this is an ongoing project of the Commission). Larry commented that after the June meeting (which included discussion of future uses of the Town Forest), he has been reaching out to residents with interest in this issue and was met with positive response. The walk would be an opportunity for interested parties to become more familiar with the Town Forest ahead of a future public meeting to define uses of the forest. They noted that parking/shuttle should be at the Old West Church parking lot, and the walk may end with a discussion at the Old West Church. An idea was raised to share a map of town forest locations, to increase public awareness and use of the forests. They considered a kiosk location at trail heads to include maps. They decided to check with a naturalist to see if he would be available to lead the walk with Neal Maker, and to focus attention in terms of the future of Calais's town forests.
7. Ash Tree Inventory and Emerald Ash Borer: The Regional Planning Commission (RPC) grant obtained by the Commission requires matching hours (this item has been completed) and creation of an ash management plan by the end of September. The RPC is creating town-specific maps with ash tree analysis and offers to create maps based on Calais's specific data needs. Other towns have created plans that are available for referencing in creating Calais's plan. The group planned to speak with Joanne Garton about the timeline for preparation of the plan, and if possible, to use the October 2 meeting to create the plan.
8. Town Forest: This item was tabled for a subsequent meeting.
9. Other business: Stephanie commented that the Four Winds program desperately needs volunteers in order to continue functioning. (The Four Winds Nature Institute is a non-profit organization advancing the understanding, appreciation and protection of the environment through community-based natural science education and research.) The volunteer commitment involves a training with local ecologist Susan Sawyer one Monday morning per month; once a month, volunteers and teachers arrange a convenient time for the volunteer to provide classroom implementation of the program). The theme for this year's program is "Earth."

Richard Maizell brought to the Commission's attention the legislature's consideration of creating a bill that would initiate a study regarding membership of the Fish and Wildlife Board. There have been concerns about the Board lacking responsiveness to conservation (the Board has historically been overrepresented by hunting and fishing interests). The group discussed making connections to

other towns' conservation commissions regarding advocacy for this legislation. The group acknowledged the controversial nature of the Fish and Wildlife Board membership (members are appointed by the Governor). They discussed bringing the item up at a future meeting and coordinating with Richard Maizell.

10. Public comment: None.

11. Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 8:45 pm.

Date: 9/4/2019 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas

*Approved by the Conservation Commission at the 10/2/2019 meeting*