

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Thursday, August 29, 2019; 2:00 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department

Absent: Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning ; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Meeting began at 2:05 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

The minutes from the July meeting were accepted.

Partner News and/or Updates –

South Burlington held two very successful Community Hike events at Red Rocks Park. They are a part of the City's efforts to review and revise the existing management plan for the park. One hike was held with Ethan Tapper, the Chittenden County Forester, and the other was held with Eric Sorenson, an ecologist with the State Department of Fish & Wildlife. At the end of the hike, participants were provided a survey aimed at collecting public input related to management efforts at the park. This survey will be put online for others to take soon.

Melinda noted that there is a parcel in Williston located at the mouth of the Muddy Brook is going up for sale. It is owned by Shelburne Shipyard and is a high priority parcel for the Williston Conservation Commission. Williston recently spent most of their conservation funds on another parcel. Melinda thought that this is the kind of parcel the partnership could assist municipalities with strategizing for acquisition and/or conservation. Suggestions from the meeting included: maybe paying landowners in stages, look at state funding, wetland money is currently available, and VHCB. There is restoration potential on the parcel.

Mapping Project (Melanie, CCRPC) –

Melanie went through the background of this project, including the reason for the project being that there are different classification of conservation parcels across boundaries. At a previous meeting, the partnership reviewed the state's standardized language guide (Vermont Protected Lands Geospatial Data Standard). Melanie noted that the map she has been working on still may be missing data from municipalities. The next step is to develop an inventory of conservation parcels.

Melanie has created a map viewer. Municipalities might need to do some research to further flesh out some parcel details to complete the inventory. The map viewer currently has all of the parcel layers in the map. Melanie gathered some information from Town Plans as well. The Town Plan layers in the map viewer are not editable.

Melanie then went through an overview of how to use the mapping site (tools, layers, basemap, etc.). One question that was raised, was what happens if more than one person is working on the map at the same time. Melanie indicated that she had thought about this issue and will be looking into it. Melanie is going to be emailing instructions around to the group. There is a link on the main map that takes users to these instructions, but at the meeting, it was not working. Melanie will correct this.

Each user will have three tasks:

1. Code attributes that are colored yellow according to the data standards (attribute editing).
2. Delineate and trace parcels in order to add a polygon (or add a missing conservation parcel), and then complete the attribute table.
3. Verify existing data and edit the attribute tables where appropriate.

Users should refer to the VT Protection Lands Geospatial Data Standards when completing these tasks, specifically Page 6. Ashley will make sure that all users have access to this document.

Melanie review the process for adding attributes. The group also discussed how to assign hierarchy to parcels that have more than one protection type (p-type). There may need to be a follow-up discussion about how the partnership wants to prioritize p-types. The map viewer currently only includes the highest level of p-types, and the p-type field(s) are currently populated with information that currently exists in each municipality's data. Gail asked if there was a good source for helping to define and understand p-types. IUCN has something called gap status which is a way to sort conservation parcels without worrying about ownership. For this project, a future goal as discussed was to consider three maps: level of protection, gap status, and ownership. It was suggested that folks look at the gap status and understand what different levels mean.

Melanie then reviewed how to create a polygon. She will be working to clean up the map, once all of the information is added and edited. It was suggested that we use the notes box in the attribute table to add information that might be useful to Melanie when she gets to the point of reviewing and editing the map.

Once Melanie completes her revisions to the current map viewer, she will be sending out the link. It was also suggested that folks who are editing attributes, add the date of the edit in UPDNOTES so that Melanie can sort out recent updates. Melanie requested another week to fine tune the map. Once she sends the link out, Ashley will send a deadline for the municipal partners with a link to the map. It's possible there will be an October deadline associated with the editing. Municipal partners will individually decide on who should edit/revise the map.

Jens discussed potential next steps with the partnership. He mentioned that the term conservation opportunity is a different language and way to approach this project. He suggested that partners may want to maximize those opportunities with community values and goals. He also asked whether there

would be any reason to pursue different visions than conservation commissions. He suggested eventually creating a spectrum of opportunity datasets, add the Biofinder layers, and add regulatory layers (rural residential and conservation districts). Jens is offering to help the partnership work through these issues.

Melinda wants the group to consider how to ensure that actual protection layers are doing what they're supposed to do (i.e.: significant wildlife habitat being identified for entire Towns). Jens relayed that the idea of what's most critical is looking at where resources overlap, and then identifying those areas as the hot spots for conservation. He suggested it's important to look at the bigger picture of what's most critical. Value judgements are best worked out at the Town level.

Jens suggested that the partnership should review the final product of this first mapping exercise, consider the state's goals for conservation, the individual Town Plans, and then see where things overlap. This should help initiate the identification of conservation opportunities.

Next Steps: The partnership will be working to complete the inventory, and maintain this prioritization at the CCRPC level for a while and take the time to plan and strategize.

Update NR206 Submission –

Ashley relayed that she went to the first meeting of the NR206 class to propose the partnership's projects. She will be hearing whether any projects were selected over the next week or so.

The group discussed the goal of the Story Map. It's an opportunity to create an overview of the partnership's conserved lands now, with the potential to identify gaps and opportunities for the future (including potential connections). The group discussed that it might be better to use this project in a celebratory angle to show the positive that is already in place today.

This will be further discussed once Ashley hears back from the class to see if anyone selected this project. It was suggested that other partners possibly sign on to assist in co-leading with Ashley on the project(s) that are selected. Ashley will reach out to partners to let them know which project is selected to determine whether there is any interest in helping out with the class.

Update: PR/engagement event –

Ashley noted that the planning of this event is still in process as UVM has taken over ownership of the property, and a meeting needs to be scheduled with the individual in charge of overseeing that parcel. She will update the group as more information is gathered.

Discuss: Updates re: Funding of a Fall 2021 Regional Vermont Master Naturalist Class –

Ashley had just wanted to check in with partners to see if anyone had come across potential obstacles in chipping in for the match required to for this class. South Burlington will be funding this year's class in South Burlington.

Ashley also relayed that Alicia had indicated that some of the projects presented to the NR206 class might be a good fit for program participants. Ashley will connect with her once the class selects which projects they are interested in for the semester.

Discuss: Additional Partners –

Ashley will send the partner list around again. She went through the exercise of placing different partners in various “buckets” to assist the partnership in determining who might be more helpful on different projects.

The group wants to discuss which groups to target at the upcoming October/November meetings. Once a press release is completed, that can be sent with a clear ask to potential partners. The partnership should discuss partner invites and dates (who we are and what the ask is).

Discuss Next Meeting –

Ashley will add a topic to the September agenda to discuss November and December meetings and make sure they don't need to be changed due to Holidays.

Jens and Don both asked to be added to the invite list for upcoming meetings, and Ashley said she would check on that.

The next meeting will be: September 25th, 2:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.