

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting

Wednesday, June 23, 2021; 1:30 PM

Remote GotoMeeting

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Abel Russ, St. George Development Review Board; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Alicia Daniel, VT Master Naturalist Program; Nick Warner, Winooski Valley Park District

Absent: Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Larry Lewack, Charlotte Town Planner; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington; Larry Kupferman, South Burlington Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Kate Kelly, Hinesburg Conservation Commission

Meeting began at approximately 1:35 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

Changes or additions to Agenda –

Russ asked if we could discuss the gypsy moth outbreak briefly. The group decided to move the topic after the Vermont Master Naturalist Program Update (#5 on the agenda).

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

There were no changes to the May 26th minutes, and the minutes were accepted as-is.

Partner News and/or Updates –

The Williston Master Naturalists have planned a series of conservation events this summer, and Melinda will share a flyer with dates and events.

Ashley said that Bryan Davis from CCRPC would like to attend a future meeting to share information about the Regional Active Transportation Plan.

South Burlington is also having a Weed Warrior event this weekend and an insect community hike in July. Ashley will work on sending event information out to the group.

Vermont Master Naturalist Program Update (Regional Class) –

Alicia Daniel stated she would like to conduct a Vermont Master Naturalist Class for the Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership, a “Muddy Brook” program. She brought up the idea previously and the partnership seemed supportive of sponsoring a class for the region. Alicia stated the class would run from Fall 2022 to Spring 2023. She is requesting funding of \$5,000 total from the partnership. Melinda and Ashley spoke to how the class has benefited their communities. Alicia would need to know whether funding can be committed by late next winter. Alicia mentioned that another VMN class is being run in

Charlotte. Alicia is considering ways to get the word out about the classes, perhaps starting with Conservation Boards and networking from there through word of mouth. Nick Warner offered assistance from Winooski Valley Park District to help get the word out, use of facilities. Nick stated that during the pandemic there has been a heightened interest in the outdoors, so he would expect a high level of interest in the VMN programs. Nick also stated that there is a lot of funding now through ARPA and other sources that may not be available in the future.

The group indicated a continued interest in moving forward with the fall 2022 class. Alicia noted that it would make sense to check back in over the winter to discuss a strategy for promoting the class so that all partnering municipalities had an equal opportunity to get residents to apply. The goal would be to launch this program in early 2022. It might make sense to initially beginning promoting this class through partner committees and commissions.

Gypsy Moth Outbreak

The group briefly discussed the gypsy moth outbreak in the region. Abel was wondering what other partners were experiencing and what information was being shared by partners, as the infestation has been severe in his area.

Structure & Organization of the Partnership –

The partnership discussed some next steps to begin strategizing the structure and organization of the group. Ashley shared a document where she has three groupings based on the vision, including: land protection, stewardship/management, and education/outreach. This could potentially form the foundation of work groups that would report back to the steering committee (or the whole group). Ashley came up with a list of tasks under each grouping. The group could decide to focus on one area or a specific task. Abel stated he is most interested in land protection, and Gail concurred. Ashley sees overlap between land protection and stewardship. Melanie asked about “regional dog recreation” and whether it should be more inclusive. Ashley spoke about the problems South Burlington has been experiencing related to dog walking, which is why she listed it, Melinda stated she sees those problems as part of a larger issue of a general stewardship ethic. Ashley stated that even before conserving a parcel, you need to think about appropriate uses for that parcel based on its conservation values. Ashley said she spoke to Mark Labarr about leading a land stewardship workshop for landowners, which would be another way to approach land protection. Ashley asked the group whether or not to take a vote on focus topics. There was a general consensus that it would be best to put this off until more people were in attendance.

Melinda brought up that this group had previously been working on mapping conserved land and lands of high ecological priority, but then had set that effort aside. She stated that prioritization should be the first step in determining what areas to focus on. Melanie was under the impression that the mapping effort had been put on hold, but she can put some work into furthering the mapping if the group would like.

The group decided to cancel the July meeting due to vacation conflicts, etc. Ashley will set up a Google Drive folder with materials for the group to review during the next couple of months. The next meeting is currently scheduled for: August 25th at 1:30 PM. Ashley will send along those details as it gets closer.

The meeting was adjourned.