

Energy & Natural Resources Advisory Committee

MINUTES

June 22, 2022

Present: Camilla Lockwood, Chair, *Town of Temple*; Jane Johnson, *Town of Swanzey*; Matt Kelly, *UNH Cooperative Extension* (remote); Amanda Littleton, *Cheshire County Conservation District* (remote); Richard Mellor, *Town of Rindge*; Francie Von Mertens, *Town of Peterborough*; Ruth Ward, *Town of Stoddard*.

Staff members present: Lisa Murphy, *Senior Planner*; Rich Clough, *Office Support Specialist*.

Guests present: Barbara Richter, *Taking Action for Wildlife*.

I. Call to Order and Introductions

Chair Lockwood called the meeting to order at 3:31 p.m. and introductions were made.

II. Minutes of March 2, 2022

Chair Lockwood called for a motion to approve the minutes of March 2, 2022.

Motion: To approve the minutes of March 2, 2022.

Motion by Richard Mellor, seconded by Jane Johnson. Approved by unanimous roll call vote.

III. Presentation: Taking Action for Wildlife

Lisa Murphy introduced Barbara Richter of Taking Action for Wildlife who gave a presentation outlining 27 key habitat types that represent a suite of broad conditions that occur in NH, from alpine mountaintops to open ocean (marine), as well as the species groups associated with these habitats. She described the need for Wildlife Action Plans (WAP) that towns could utilize or include in documents like a master plan. She showed examples of maps developed by the Nature Conservancy having an accuracy of ¼ acre, with eco-regional subsections based on land formations, topography, regional climate, and dominant natural vegetation. She noted that some habitats cannot be mapped; such as shrubland, vernal pools, caves, mines and other subterranean spaces. She stated that maps can also be used to look at diversity of wildlife in a community, and help detect high profile wildlife that could be promoted and protected. She stated that a key element in finding wildlife of that description was determining what adds diversity. She noted that a habitat condition map, with condition being the key word, helps determine where the “best” habitat exists in the state, and that there are only 3 tiers of conditions.

Barbara Richter stated that the determining factors are:

1. Least fragmentation
2. Most species
3. Least roadways/human impact.

She stated that these criteria help to provide wildlife with the best chance to live and thrive. She walked the Committee through some map examples, pointing out the depictions and coding on the map that designated different regions. She pointed-out that non-contiguous habitats will limit movement of wildlife

and that it is important to identify wildlife and riparian corridors that allow wildlife to migrate and adapt to climate change. She also noted that co-benefits are very important and help to create more support for conservation. She stated that protecting wildlife and water sources are common concerns and provide a good example of co-benefits. She told the Committee that maps can be found at the NH Fish & Game website and Granite View GIS.

Barbara Richter explained some of the features that could be found on the statewide WAP map. She noted that a new feature is water resources, which often overlap the highest ranked habitat. She noted that water resources were often easy to connect and that aquifers were important for protection of drinking water as well as habitat.

Barbara Richter explained that the WAP also lists major threats for species and habitats. An example that she used was the primary threat to shrubland is lack of management or natural disturbance. She noted other threats to shrubland are development, invasive species and a public preference for scenic views with fields. She stated that the public doesn't necessarily understand the value and importance of shrublands and forest management and that education was necessary to excite people. She stated that the WAP focuses on actions and helping communities. She described the creation of a conservation cohort program that does training in the fall. She provided examples of community programs in Claremont and Durham. She gave examples of actions that could be tied to a WPA such as natural resources inventories, master plans, conservation plans, wildlife friendly zoning, habitat management, and education.

Barbara Richter summarized some results of a WPA:

1. Prioritize areas for habitat protection
2. Incorporate climate adaptation and wildlife into town documents
3. Restore habitats with adaptation in mind
4. Reconnect watershed through watershed plans
5. Update town regulations

Chair Lockwood asked what are important, cost-effective items that could be included in a Conservation Commission inventory. Barbara Richter replied that usually water features coupled with wildlife provide higher visibility and more agreement and it is important to gain as much consensus and broad support as possible. Francie Von Mertens noted that insects, more specifically pollinators, are critical and overlooked in inventories and that getting native plants to assist the pollinator system would be a good objective. Barbara Richter agreed that insects were often overlooked. Ruth Ward inquired if the County Forester would assist landowners in creating an inventory. Matt Kelly replied in the affirmative and added that to get a bigger picture of the ecology of an area multiple people with smaller lots can get together to have inventory. He noted that it is advantageous to get more diversity of structure and habitat and stated that as part of the process it is important to acknowledge what property owners have control over, what features are adjacent to the inventoried area and to keep a broad view of the Ecosystem. He stated that scale is very important as well as knowing where critical habitats are. Barbara Richter noted that it is important to look at the action plan for the town to get a feel for what types of habitats exist within the town boundaries. Francie Von Mertens noted that it is important to incorporate these resources into a master plan, be able to simply summarize them, and keep it active and not sitting unused on a shelf.

IV. Update on Watershed Projects

Lisa Murphy provided the Committee with updates on the Spofford Lake and Lake Warren implementation phases. She noted that the current Lake Warren phase focused on creating BMPs on four different sites and looking at options for remediation on Pine Cliff Road with the intention to submit one more application, possibly by September 2023. She also stated that both grants end in December 2022, and NH DES has been very receptive to SWRPC applications. She explained that SWRPC was currently administering two 319 grants, and two 604b grants. She reported that this was the third grant round for Spofford Lake which is just getting started, the major portion being a BMP project at the town-owned boat ramp and the state-

owned parking lot with an additional three homeowner sites. She stated that work at Swanzey Lake, for which there is currently no management plan, would be starting later this year. She noted that the State is still processing the application so it hasn't been approved by Governor and Council yet. She added there are plans to submit an application for Laurel Lake, which currently doesn't have a management plan.

V. Committee Leadership

Lisa Murphy announced that Chair Lockwood would be stepping down at the end of the year, having served on the Advisory Committee since 2016 and chair since 2019. She announced that Vice-Chairman Janis Manwaring from Keene has also stepped down and that the Committee would be nominating both a Chairman and Vice-Chairman at the next meeting for consideration by the SWRPC Board of Directors. She added that she is checking with inactive members. Francie Von Mertens noted that the members of the committee could be more active in getting town participation, and help with priorities and topics for future meetings. Lisa Murphy also asked for input from the Committee about towns that should have representation on the Committee.

VI. Next Meeting September 22, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 22, 2022 at 3:30 p.m.

VII. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 4:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Rich Clough
Office Support Specialist