

**Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, February 21, 2023, 7 P.M., Hybrid**

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: Jon Campbell, **Dale Chayes**, **Zanna Gruber** (Vice-Chair), **Aaron Moore** (Chair), **Bruce Rachman**, **John Watlington**, **Joe Will** (Minutes), **Tom Wolf**

Associate (nonvoting) members: Ken Appel, Josh Haines, **Rebecca Harvey**, Everett Kenerson, Gary Kilpatrick, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, **Hilary Reid**, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris

Others: **Bettina Abe** (Acton Conservation), **Mike Gendron** (Acton Conservation Agent), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Patrick Hearn** (Acton Agricultural Commission), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Reed Pugh** (Winchester resident), **Bob Walton** (Acton resident)

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:03 p.m.

Review and approval of January 17 minutes

The minutes were approved as presented.

Concerns from the public

Reed Pugh, a member of Winchester's Conservation Commission, is attending this meeting to "listen and learn" about Acton's LSC as Winchester is just starting a stewardship program.

Upcoming events

Per Joe, this is on the agenda to call attention to the March 3 project proposal deadline for Senior Service Day at the High School. Joe also mentioned an event not listed in the "Upcoming Events" as e-notice of the event was received too late to be included on the agenda page. To wit, it is a May program by Freedom's Way out of Devens inviting the LSC to participate by the LSC offering some appropriate program for the public. Bettina offered details as she participated in a similar Freedom's Way project previously.

Invasive plants 2023, Part 1

John first presented Asian bittersweet using this slide:

Asian Bittersweet ([Celastrus orbiculatis](#))

THE dominant invasive species

A ropy vine which can will grow up and over anything. It will bring down most trees.

Spreads mostly by seeds (birds)

Regrows from root fragments or buried stems.
Root removal (by pulling) is critical.

"Cut low and high" around trees, in order to stop damage to tree and allow detection of regrowth. Not too low, as regrowth will happen!

Check: Orange root, smooth bark



This is a good time of year to work on Asian bittersweet because you can get into any part of your parcel relatively easily. Bittersweet can bring down most hardwoods, and even pine. Saving trees from bittersweet in itself helps prevent the spread of bittersweet as shade from the trees slows its growth. Places where you find bittersweet get a lot of sun, e.g., edges of fields. Bittersweet is a ropey vine that does not attach itself to the tree bark. It can be confused with Boston ivy, but the latter has little tendrils about every 6 inches. And bittersweet is not grapevine. Grapevine has a flaky outer bark to distinguish it from bittersweet. Most of bittersweet's red-berry seeds get dropped within 200 ft of the source. If cut you cut the bittersweet vine, it will take about two years to reseed, which is one way to slow its spread. It has a bright orange root that must be removed completely. Any small root fragment left behind will likely lead to regrowth, sometimes along the whole length of the root remnant. If you can't pull out a root completely, do not cut it at ground level so that it will be easier to spot on regrowth. Cut high as well as low as new sprouts will try to attach to remnants of old vines.

John also addressed glossy buckthorn using this slide. Right now, glossy buckthorn is dormant, no leaves,

Glossy Buckthorn ([Frangula alnus](#))

A small tree which can create thickets.

Spreads mostly by seeds (birds).


Regrows from root fragments.

Pull small saplings (< 3/4" stem diameter)

Cut larger saplings (< 3" diameter)

Gird trees (>3" diameter)

Check: Red root, smooth bark w. lenticels, pink center in older wood



no berries. This is one of the dominant invasives in Acton. It has a very distinctive bark that is easy to identify even at this time of year. Normally this time of year (if freezing outside) would allow easier access to the buckthorn trees in frozen swamps. Instead of trying to pull out larger saplings, gird the tree or deadhead it, i.e., cut off the top. In the latter case, regrowth will occur only from the top instead of hydra-like growth that could occur if you were to detach the sapling at ground level. Although (as a check) older wood will have a pink center, regrowth might not show pink for the first year or two. Plants that look like buckthorn will have jagged leaf edges; buckthorn does not.

Questions: Does glossy buckthorn have white sap? No, that's the Norway maple. What's the long, green-stemmed vine with the nasty thorns? Common green briar, and it's a native plant so, while we try to keep it off our trails, we are not trying to get rid of it.

Cooperative Invasive Species Management Areas (CISMAs) Small Grant possibility

Mike is looking for ideas for such a grant. Bettina will be applying for a grant of \$600-\$700 to cover the cost of replacement plants for an Eagle Scout Arboretum project. Whereas CISMA prefers that its grants be watershed related, Bettina will propose to have Scouts working along Mary's Brook at the Arboretum, replacing multiflora rose and honeysuckle with native highbush blueberry and witch hazel. Let Mike or Bettina know of any other possible ideas for a CISMA grant.

Stonefield Farm Woodland Trail

ACT's Spring Service Day project, Saturday, May 6, will be to establish a trail on a small upland portion of woods at Stonefield Farm because of ACT securing a \$35K Fields Pond grant. In the map, Stonefield Farm extends from the top left (intersection of Liberty and Martin Streets) to the Maynard town line (slanted at bottom left). The curved (orange) boundary on the east side abuts the Assabet River Rail Trail (ARRT). (Route 27 is the "near-vertical" road further to the east.) The trail, shown in red, will link to the ARRT and is about a third of a mile long. Someday there will be a connector trail (blue) through a stone wall to some of the farm's wetlands. For the workday, parking is available in the 20 Main Street lot of The Paper Store headquarters. The work will likely involve clearing of buckthorn and require a sawyer in a couple of instances. It would be helpful if John could have a look at the site soon, and advise on the buckthorn and a need for a sawyer.

Parcel issues

– Nashoba Brook

Tom is thinking of a possible Senior Service Day project at Wheeler Lane, either spreading more bark mulch there or some controlling of the mugwort.

Bettina or Mike will be available to assist Tom however he would want.

– Bulette

Tom is also speaking with a Scout, Lina Lawande, from Troop 12 who is interested in building a kiosk at the Genevieve Lane trailhead for the expanded Bulette parcel.

Updates

– Morrison Farm Conservation Restriction (CR)

The Select Board (SB) took no action on this proposal from the Agricultural Committee. Per Bettina, the SB members seemed to think that there should be a designated use for the house otherwise the proposal would run into difficulty at Town Meeting. There seemed to be no issue with the DPW using the other farm buildings. Another SB concern was that one reason for the purchase of the property was to use it for active recreation. Per Joe, Acton Youth Soccer was a significant advocate for its purchase with the possibility of having a soccer field in the large meadow. That need faded quickly 1) when it was determined that the land was not supportive of a playing field because of its slope, and 2) the building of the artificial-turf, all-weather lower fields at the high school. The SB also said that there is no hurry on this (although it's been over 25 years since the acquisition). On the other, some public believe that Morrison Farm's existence remains at risk since it is municipal property. After the SB presentation, Patrick did present the proposal to the Recreation Commission which resulted in its letter of support to the SB. So, it's "back to the drawing board" for the Ag Comm in its efforts to establish permanent protection for the fields and woods of Morrison Farm. One thought was to write the CR to cover everything except a building envelope.



– Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

Mike and Bettina are working on ways to prioritize lands in Acton that may someday be available for purchase for open space or recreation. One difference in the prioritization process for this OSRP (vis-à-vis the previous OSRP) will be to involve the public in the process.

– Community Preservation Act

The most recent meeting of the Community Preservation Committee (CPC) included the Open Space set-aside proposal for \$600K and Mike's Open Space Preservation Plan for \$150K. The next CPC meeting is February 28 at which it will begin deliberations on the presented projects. The sense is that deliberations could be concluded in just this one meeting as the total amount requested exceeds the total amount available by about \$90K, which is not a great amount to trim in this circumstance. One project at risk could be Mike's as it covers four years. The CPC could feel that funding for, say, two years would be adequate for now and Mike could resubmit later for the final two years. Mike presented some details to the LSC about his proposal regarding 1) CRs on seven town parcels, and 2) the need for an additional mower that would be dedicated to Conservation (particularly meadow mowing) and not for use by the DPW. Bettina reminded all that they can send letters of support for CPA projects to the CPC.

– Bridges, Boardwalks, Maps, Mowing, Chain sawing, Website

Tom wondered about the trimmers and fuel in the LSC shed at Morrison Farm. The trimmers are available for stewards to use, but if a steward is unfamiliar with a trimmer's use, it is advisable to get an introduction from someone with experience. Not all the trimmers are working. Bettina suggests that she and John determine which, if any, of the trimmers should be taken to Shawn O'Malley for disposal. Bettina also feels that it would be a good idea for she and John to collaborate on a CISMA grant application to get new trimmers. There was brief discussion on the fuels that are in the shed.

There was discussion on wayfinding in a parcel using QR codes, URLs, PURLs, cell phones, paper maps, interactive maps, the Acton Trails website, etc., one point being that "You are Here" maps in parcels could be replaced since they occasionally must be physically updated. Per Bettina, in general people seem quite pleased with current wayfinding practices.

– LSC membership

Ken Appel has been confirmed. Steve Trimble and Adam Nolde are "in process". Steve is Chair of the newly formed Acton 250 Committee that will be planning Acton's 2025 and 2026 events to commemorate events that occurred in 1775 and 1776.

Next month's (03/21/23) agenda

No suggestions.

Evaluate meeting

Awesome! Reed expressed his appreciation for the opportunity to participate in this meeting. Bettina will send Reed information that should be of interest and helpful to his efforts in Winchester.

Adjournment

At 8 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, March 21, at 7 p.m.