

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, October 15, 2024, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: Stuart Amir-Lin, Ken Appel, Josh Haines, **Jody Harris**, **Rebecca Harvey**, Everett Kenerson, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, **Adam Nolde**, David Pinsky, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, Todd Tsakiris, **Bob Walton**

Others: **Ian Bergemann** (Community Conservation Specialist), **Jim Snyder-Grant** (Select Board (SB) LSC liaison)

Tom opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

Review & acceptance of July 16 and September 17 Minutes

July minutes accepted as presented. September minutes not yet ready.

Concerns from the public

None.

Invasive plants, October 2024

Autumn Olive — John presented from the Acton Invasives Wiki Autumn Olive page:

http://ec2-44-218-8-154.compute-1.amazonaws.com/aiw/index.php?title=Autumn_Olive

Probably 20-30 years ago, the land stewards got really aggressive about removing autumn olive. Supposedly, Pratts Brook and Wetherbee had some large infestations. At present, it seems somewhat under control. However, a fair amount of regrowth exists, a good example being in a Pratts Brook parking lot where there is a fair amount of regrowth after the lot had been cleared of the invasive within the past year. At Great Hill, above the large playing field on the eastern side of the meadow, there is a large growth of autumn olive that doesn't seem to be spreading and John keeps "as an example".

Questions/answers:

- When do the berries appear? Early September. Right now, they should be ripe and ready for picking. Unfortunately, the berries are too good for us to want to completely remove this invasive (John).
- It looks like the leaves have a little curl to them? Yes. In terms of misidentifications, it almost looks like a black cherry leaf, but the edge is smooth, whereas a black cherry leaf edge is slightly serrated, and the leaf underside is not as light and fuzzy.
- Do other conservation lands have it? John has directly addressed autumn olive at Pratts Brook, Wetherbee, and Wills Hole/Town Forest. It also exists at Wright Hill (kept in the middle of a meadow as long as it doesn't spread — Jim) and Nashoba Brook (west side of trail just uphill from the Davis Road parking lot, two of three remain — Bob.)

Ian's updates

- Scoutland: Ian still not able to get in touch with Bill Klauer, Scoutland Trustee. Bob suggests that he and Ian write Bill a letter outlining their ideas. Ian is amenable to that.
- Pratts Brook bridge: Done! Nathaniel Standley and crew completed this as his Eagle Scout project. Ian and Josh Haines, Scoutmaster, made some last-minute changes in the bridge plan to address some safety

concerns. Also, finding a utility pole for the project proved to be more difficult than anticipated. The result was a different kind of bridge than planned. Some stewards asked if they could see the plans ultimately used. Ian will pursue this. Also, stewards are encouraged to visit Pratts Brook and have a look.

A discussion ensued about the bridge construct. Bruce identified a beam (25 feet long and made by putting together shorter pieces) used in the bridge as a “glulam beam” which is supposed to use a construction adhesive and it’s unclear whether that happened. Ian will check on this with Nathaniel.

- Geocaching: Tabled to a future meeting so we have more time to review the interim policy, and then decide how to move forward with geocaches currently on our conservation lands.

- Grants: MassTrails Grant applications are due Monday, 02/03/25. (Clerk’s note: This date was not known at the time of this meeting.) In 2024, grant awards totaled \$12M. Ian thinks we should apply for 2025. To prep for this, Ian plans to share with stewards some possible grant ideas as well as information on previously-funded projects to help identify priorities — and proposals that he could write.

Ian will try to keep stewards informed on other grant possibilities; for examples, 1) for work that’s related to what we would like to do with the pitch pine population at Pratts Brook, 2) to buy tools we need, 3) to purchase plants to replace invasive species.

Per Joe, any proposal for Community Preservation Act funding is due November 12.

- Land Steward check-ins: Ian began this last year and would like to continue doing a “check-in” with each steward, possibly with a more formal questionnaire to fill out together, a joint visit at the steward’s parcel, making a list of problems/projects, framing a priority list, and setting an annual goal to help the steward solve “one problem at a time” on their parcel.

- Groton School volunteering: The students helped plant “a ton” of meadow plants today at Acton’s Red House (next door to Town Hall) and “did a great job”.

- Board member requirements: If a land steward wants to be Chair, Vice-Chair, or Clerk of the LSC, they must be a regular (voting) member of the LSC.

Spring Hill Boardwalk

Bob described his work and shared 9 visuals of this project. He is aiming to be done with the boardwalk by the end of October. (Rebecca shared a tenth visual — the rocks that have been placed by Rebecca, Tom, and John at the other end of the boardwalk to deal with flooding.) Bob’s concerns:

- The Boardwalk Construction Guide (by Bob Guba)

https://cdnsm5-hosted.civiclive.com/UserFiles/Servers/Server_15207780/File/Departments/Conservation/Scouting%20Guides/bd.pdf

very much needs updating.

- What is an unacceptable tread? Bob says there are a lot of existing treads mounted “hardside up” (such as on the ramps to the southernmost bridge in the Nashoba Brook parcel) and they should be mounted “greenside up” or, to Bettina, “smiley face down”; to John, “curvature down”. Per Bruce, “The damage from water accumulating on a hardside-up boardwalk is a far greater problem than the damage that occurs to boards with scallops (more common in boards greenside up) facing up.”

Other parcel issues

Pratts Brook: Per Adam, the kiosk at the Brewster Lane entrance is no longer standing. It should be reinstalled, but probably closer to the parking lot. It will need some leg replacement and maybe new roofing material. Other than that, it seems pretty sturdy. Bruce will look at it. Maybe it should go on Ian’s list of possible Scout projects.

Updates

– Mowing: The Arboretum meadows in the upper grounds are beautifully mowed and look fantastic. Also, the wet meadows close to Main Street (one of the worst infestations of Japanese knotweed; also, a lot of multiflora rose) were mowed for the first time in a few years . . . more accessible now because of the drought. Mowing has also happened at Jenks, Nagog Hill (smaller meadow), and Guggins Brook. Sam Bell, contractor, should start mowing meadows for which he's responsible within the next two weeks.

– Trash: Questions from Bob: 1) Bob has used all the treadboards in the shed. Do we need to restock the shed? John: Yes! We need to replace the treadboards in the shed completely. For examples, the Ice House Pond picnic table needs at least one long board; one of the Nagog Hill boardwalks has at least a dozen boards that are rotten or have big holes. 2) There's some "curious non-dimensional" wood at the shed. Bob gave some examples and wondered if he should use them for, say, some bog bridge projects. John: No objection to using them, but we shouldn't simply dispose of them because some of our builds require odd-sized pieces of lumber. Bob will leave them in the shed to use for "odd repairs". 3) In his work in the shed, Bob pulled several pieces of wood that should be trashed. How should we deal with trash at the shed? Per John, add the wood to the trash pile near the trailer (the one with the pieces of a wheelbarrow). Ian and Bruce will look for a day that both are available after mowing has ended. On that day, Ian will fill the trailer in the morning (there is more than one pile of trash) and Bruce will tow it to the transfer station.

– More Trash: There's still a good amount near the Heath Hen Meadow bridge, including three 4-ft sections of boardwalk. The trail to the bridge on the south side may not be drivable but the Town is willing to allow us truck access from the cemetery side. We should take care of this trash as things quiet down into November. Ian will coordinate with everyone to find a day when we can all get together and bring the trash from the south side of the bridge across to the north side.

– Community Service Day: Acton Conservation Trust (ACT) is sponsoring a Community Service Day this Sunday on the Conservation Land next to the west edge of Mt. Hope Cemetery. It would like LSC approval to borrow tools from the shed on Saturday or Sunday morning. ACT would return them later Sunday afternoon. Approval given.

– Scouts: There are three projects "in the works" right now, 1) At Great Hill, still being worked out; 2) At Great Hill re the stream that crosses the blue trail near the grinding stone, and floods significantly in the spring, and 3) At Heath Hen Meadow, a boardwalk that comes in from Prescott Road and replaces one improvised from pallets. Ian has other scouts reaching out for projects. Stewards should let him know of any good Scout project ideas they may have.

Next month's (11/19/24) agenda

Geocaching, Boardwalk Construction Guide

Evaluate meeting

Great job, Mr. Chair! Thumbs galore, all up!!

Adjournment

At 8 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, November 19, at 7 p.m.