

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 20, 2025, 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: 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)

Tom opened the meeting at 7 p.m. There was not a quorum of regular (voting) members, so David was promoted to voting member.

Review & acceptance of March 18 and April 15 Minutes

Accepted as presented.

Concerns from the public

None.

Invasive plants, May 2025

Glossy buckthorn — Much of the information John shared can be found on the Acton Invasives Wiki glossy buckthorn page:

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

Even better is the Google slide deck “Invasive Plants in Acton, Acton LSC Meetings and Public Presentations, Revised Spring 2025” that John created and used for his presentation, and for which he submitted the following url: <http://bit.ly/42ByCPB>. (Clerk’s note: highly recommended!)

Glossy buckthorn is sprouting flowers right now. It’s a tall, deciduous shrub which really wants to take over the world. Compared to native species, it leafs out earlier in the spring, tends to grow faster and taller, and keeps its leaves later in the fall. It was introduced from Eurasia in the early 1800s for use in growing a thick hedge. Not only do glossy buckthorn roots spread a poison that hurts other plants (allelopathy), but that poison is harmful to amphibians, and frequently we see glossy buckthorn growing where we would hope to have amphibians living.

Glossy buckthorn is notable for a branching pattern where the branch is pretty much horizontal, and it spreads by seed which are spread by birds. Its leaves have a fishbone pattern to the veins and a very distinctive smooth edge. Several native plants that may be confused with glossy buckthorn have a little ridging, a little rough edge, to their leaves. Its bark is smooth, brown the first year, but then it turns gray, and it has notable lenticels (white marks) along the side. Although flowering right now, its little white flowers are easy to miss. Berry production starts in June and berries turn shiny black by July.

To deal with glossy buckthorn, concentrate on removing the seed-bearing trees first (not all the trees produce seed). You should be able to pull up small seedlings (stem diameter less than a half inch). However, if you pull larger plants, several root tips can break off, then resprout and grow into new plants. One of the worst things you can do is cut or mow glossy buckthorn at ground level. Do this and you will get lots of different sprouts. Cut those — repeat — a “hydra behavior”. You should cut or gird larger saplings. Only gird (no cutting) if tree size is greater than 2 inches. You need to revisit both cut and girded trees in about 6 months to kill any regrowth. Be aware that glossy buckthorn will try to grow back across a gird.

To check that you've dealt with glossy buckthorn, you should see dark red roots or pink heartwood.

Question about knotweed (not buckthorn): In Acton, some has been identified along a rail trail and nearby. Are there regulations about poisoning (spraying) it? John: If it's not on Conservation Land where there are restrictions, that would be the best approach. We should make sure that the Town is aware of and addresses the knotweed.

Boardwalk Design Guide project

This is Bob's ongoing project. Monthly, Bob leads a technical discussion on the Design Guide contents. You can find his latest information on his website:

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1vqgZpeE5wAlpT0Fd2Fy7jKuWsIBtPfm1gZYLssWVOc/edit?tab=t.0#heading=h.wzmt52hjwbe>

At this meeting Bob presented components [2] through [5] for consideration and possible adoption by consensus.

- [2]: Wane (i.e., Wood missing from the edge of the board) on the green side of a tread is not a reason to mount the tread heart-wood-side up. Only significant surface defects other than wane justify mounting a tread heart-wood-side up.

The ensuing discussion resulted in no change and acceptance of [2].

- [3]: Stringers should be 2x's Southern Yellow Pine and have spans no longer than the following for boardwalks with either 3 foot or 4-foot-long treads.

Accompanying table:

Number of Stringers						
Size	Bearing	2	3	4	5	6
2x6	1.5 in	6 ft	7 ft	8 ft	8 ft	9 ft
2x8	1.5 in	8 ft	9 ft	10 ft	11 ft	12 ft
2x10	2.0 in	10 ft	12 ft	13 ft	14 ft	15 ft
2x12	2.5 in	12 ft	14 ft	16 ft	17 ft	18 ft

The ensuing discussion resulted in one change (use "wide", not "long" to describe the width of a boardwalk) to [3] (in red below) and its acceptance:

[3]: Stringers should be 2x's Southern Yellow Pine and have spans no longer than the following for boardwalks with either 3-foot or 4-foot-**wide** treads.

- [4]: Tread screws are #9, T-25, exterior, 3-inch. Each tread should have at least one tread screw into each stringer. This helps distribute the load evenly among the stringers.

The ensuing discussion was minimal, resulting in acceptance of [4] as presented.

- [5]: When 4 or more stringers are used, stringers should be paired (for 5 stringers there will be two pairs and one unpaired stringer). Paired stringers should be screwed together and also glued together with polyurethane construction adhesive. A bead of polyurethane construction adhesive should be applied along the top joint of the pair to seal the joint. Pairing helps distribute the load evenly among the stringers.

The ensuing discussion on [5] resulted in a bit more detail on gluing stringers together (in red below — a very common practice; also called “screwing and gluing”) and its acceptance:

[5]: When 4 or more stringers are used, stringers should be paired (for 5 stringers there will be two pairs and one unpaired stringer). Paired stringers should be screwed together and also glued together with a wavy line of polyurethane construction adhesive. A bead of polyurethane construction adhesive should be applied along the top joint of the pair to seal the joint. Pairing helps distribute load evenly among the stringers.


On Bob’s recommendation, Ian will post copies of Bob’s two “Boardwalk Design Guide Project” files in DocuShare on the Town server.

Conservation updates

• Heath Hen Meadow (HHM) Flooding –
Ian shared the slide shown at the right. For about the past 4 weeks, beavers have been active, and significantly expanded the dam below the bridge to make the bridge almost inaccessible. Ian did some small opening-up at the dam site which decreased the water level a little bit, but the beavers came back aggressively. Because it's a beaver dam, there are some difficulties dealing with it. The biggest thing right now is being able to get in there, and we'll probably need to file a permit.

Heath Hen Meadow Flooding

- Beaver dam expanded to historic size
- Access to new bridge is limited from some to none
- Water is still flowing
- Solution:
 - Ian will file dam breaching permit with BOH & ConCom – short term
 - 1) Need to evaluate raising current boardwalks above water level
 - 2) Rebuild beaver dam so it curves away from trail
 - 3) Build and install new pond-leveler device



Discussion points:

– John: From personal experience, breaching the beaver dam will work for at most 3 days. What’s happening is that the beaver deceiver that is in place is not working, and it's not in the right location. Suggest we knock down the beaver dam, try to relocate the beaver deceiver, and get a pipe under the dam. The water is plenty deep at the dam to allow this. John is willing to come in and help. What we need to do is break the dam, and then overnight the water level will drop. This will let us come in and work the next day.

– Dam breaching will not work for more than a few days, but as long as we have a permit we won't get yelled at from any direction, and we likely could operate with the permit for 30 days and be granted extensions if necessary.

– One problem is how to anchor a beaver deceiver pipe underwater because it must be held down at the bottom while the beavers build their dam back over it.

– We also must make sure that the beaver deceiver is in place below the dam far enough so that even in the lowest water level time of the year, it stays submerged. If beavers hear any gurgling noise, either upstream or downstream, it’s just their natural habit to stop the sound of moving water and they will block it up.

– Towards the Robbins Street end of the bridge, the beavers curved the current dam under the bridge so that the pathway does not get heavily flooded. Ian is thinking that there might be a way (a “huge feat” in fact) to prompt the beavers to build the entire dam upstream from the bridge. Ian has a high school intern with whom he might work on this after the deceiver is built.

– Good luck with that. After we take apart their dam, we might understand a little more about why the beavers built (most of) it downstream from the bridge.

– Let’s schedule this!

– Do we have money for a new beaver deceiver? They're a couple thousand dollars. Yes, if we do this in the next fiscal year.

– Ian: After June 16, we'll probably meet on site and start developing a plan. We can see where the current beaver deceiver is located and how it looks like right now.

On another HHM concern: Ian had sent an email to everyone about a 20-sign Story Walk he had set up in HHM. On the same day, all 20 signs disappeared. The signs were laminated paper on 3-ft stakes. Each had the Town seal. One sign identified this as a Town project, included an email contact, and information that the Story Walk was going to be up for only a month. Nothing re the signs has been found. A year ago, Rainbow Trail markers were put up in HHM. They were bashed off all the trees and taken.

- 19 & 35 Wetherbee St.

A couple weeks ago, the Town closed on the property. Everything is really preliminary right now. Still being worked on: A formal trail and trail map, a parking site, installation of signs—one that gives the legal name, “The Clement and Elizabeth H. Moritz Forest” and one that says the purchase was funded by the land grants—elimination of hazardous elements (e.g., broken glass), the Conservation Restriction, and some sort of grand opening ceremony (possibly in late June). The signs will be installed at the parking site. Todd Tsakiris, steward of the present Wetherbee parcel, has volunteered to also steward what probably will be referred to as the Moritz Forest Conservation Land. The property has plenty of invasive species.

- Piper Road Invasive Species Management

The residents of 6 Piper Road have offered to handle the burning bush (winged euonymus) that is growing on Great Hill Conservation Land around the outside of their property. Ian has provided some instruction on making woodpiles and John's PowerPoint about girding. He will also give them 2 black cherry saplings to plant. Ian expects to eventually discuss plants they could install and care for in place of the burning bush.

Updating policies, and miscellany

- Geocache & Bench policies: Aiming to get these done this summer.
- Kiosk Inventory: It's in Google Drive. It has “a ton” of photos of the kiosks. Just keep adding to it.
- Boardwalk/Bog Bridge Inventory: It has been started but we'll talk about it later—what we want to have in the inventory, e.g., what needs repairs; maybe shifting Scout activity from building boardwalks to repairing them.
- Supplies: Ian has a couple of chainsaw things for John. He is still working on getting some chainsaw protective pants. Bruce has mentioned the need for some wood for a picnic table. If there are things you need, let Ian know and he'll try to order them as soon as possible.
- Land Steward Check Ins: A couple of them have been completed. Ian will reschedule several for the Summer and Fall.
- Land Steward Logs: Stewards should continue to keep logging in, or send Ian their hours in a different format.
- Upcoming programs & volunteer opportunities: June 28 is the annual Water Chestnut Pull at Ice House Pond (with OARS), beginning at 9 a.m.
- Pitch Pine Management: We'll revisit that conversation this summer. Ian has some good advice from Mass Audubon to share.
- Scoutland: Bob found the license agreement that Bill Klauer had agreed to and was willing to sign, but the other Scoutland trustee (now deceased) was not:

<https://doc.acton-ma.gov/dsweb/Get/Document-40218/050%20-%20LSC%20License%20Agreement-%20Scoutlands.pdf>

This might be a good starting point for an Ian follow-up conversation with Bill.

- Future activity: Ian plans to partner with Acton Public Health this summer for a summer-long campaign on how one can go outside and into the woods and be safe from ticks and mosquitoes. Activities will include a couple presentations and some new graphics.

There followed a 4-minute conversation about ticks, the problems they cause, and how to deal with them.

- Monthly themes: May is American Wetlands month. June will target trails, trail etiquette, how to use some of our trail technology, and how to be a good person on the trail. At our June meeting, or over the summer, it might be good to revisit some ideas about dog owner guidelines for trails.

There followed a 10-minute conversation about dogs on conservation lands. Points made:

- Maybe require people to bring a leash for each dog, and poop bags. They would not necessarily have to leash each dog, but have a leash on their person for each dog.
- Don't leave poop bags on the trail.
- We already have that regulation. One is not allowed to leave dog waste on trails in conservation land.
- Where is this rule written? It's in Conservation Rules and Regulations. You have to pick up after your dog on our conservation lands.
- Picking up after your dog is not the same thing as picking up, putting the waste in a dog bag, and then putting the dog bag in the trash.
- It's an Acton Arboretum rule.
- The Arboretum is different. It has its own rules.
- The Arboretum is still Conservation Land, so it operates under Conservation Land rules, but it has added its own non-binding rules.
- I don't recall any rules on the standard rule sheet that we have on all our kiosks that says anything about not leaving bags along the trails.
- Taking it literally, you know your dog shouldn't be pooping on the trail, but if it's pooping 5 feet off to the side of the trail . . . everything else poops over there too.
- What I particularly dislike is people bagging poop from the trail and then throwing the bag into the trees.
- “Rules and Regulations for Acton Conservation Land” says, “. . . Dog waste must be removed at the Arboretum and the Great Hill recreation field and on trails on all other conservation land.”
- “On trails” is the key idea. Basically, this means that you can “chopstick” dog waste off a trail if you wish.
- Reviewing this rule seems a really good thing to do, including the ideas of requiring one to bring a bag and have a leash on hand (not necessarily on the dog).
- Also, the idea that each dog has to have an up-to-date rabies vaccination and corresponding tag . . . or that the vaccination certificate be carried by the responsible party.
- Rabies vaccination is already a Town requirement, but we get people from out of town, and not everyone is very careful about rabies.
- Add to the rules, “please pick up all dog poop in campsites.”
- It may be easiest just to copy the Town bylaws regarding dogs, post them on the kiosks, and then add any additional rules that we have for specific properties.
- A standard act that causes poop to appear in places is not that dog owners are trying to disregard the rules, it's because they start talking to other dog owners and the dog puts one over on them. One way to deal with that is to ask dog owners to pick up *any* poop they find.

Per Ian: This is a good topic for us to discuss. It seems like there's a lot of interest in trying to update these rules, including from the Recreation Department which has had challenging experiences with dog waste at NARA.

- 187 Main Street Encroachment: In response to the letter the LSC sent to the Conservation Commission, the Cons Comm did a site walk, and they're working with the owner's representative to clean up the site

and possibly move boulders to delineate it. It will be on a future Cons Comm agenda, possibly for tomorrow night's meeting.

Other parcel issues

- Bob described a problem he found with one of the pipes supporting the long boardwalk at Wills Hole. He found a similar problem re the long boardwalk at Spring Hill. He is not sure that he can fix the problem and suggests that Bruce try. Bruce agreed to give it a try.
- What should Rebecca do with all the geocaching paraphernalia she removed from Conservation Land? Conservation rules say that if something's been in the woods for more than 24 hours, it becomes Town property. Rebecca will throw it away.

Next month's (06/17/25) agenda

We have a new fiscal year coming. When will the LSC have election of officers? In July when, hopefully we'll have greater attendance than tonight.

Evaluate meeting

- Thumbs up!

Adjournment

At 8:05 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 17, 2025, at 7 p.m.