

RYE CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Site Walk Minutes

Tuesday, May 9, 2017

Meeting was called to order by Chair King at 4:00 pm

Present at site walks: Sally King, Chair; Members Heather Reed, Mike Garvan, Susan Shepcaro, Jim Raynes and Suzanne McFarland. Charles Moreno, Moreno Forestry, and Danna Truslow.

4:00 pm: Rye Town Forest

The meeting was called to order in the parking lot of Rye Recreation. The purpose of the meeting was to meet with Charlie Moreno who is updating the Rye Town Forest Management Plan. Mr. Moreno gave a brief history of his involvement in the town forest which included preparing the 2003 Forest Management Plan and supervising a forest harvest operation in the forest after a blowdown event.

Member McFarland asked if the plan was a forestry plan or a forest use plan. Mr. Moreno replied that it was both and that it would look at the health of the forest and how to maintain it in a healthy condition as well as look at ways of managing public use in the forest. Member Garvan gave Mr. Moreno a copy of an email letter from Rye resident Shawn Joyce that expressed his concerns about managing public use of the forest in accordance with the Town Forest easement.

Members McFarland and Raynes left at 4:15 pm due to prior commitments.

The RCC then walked the trails in the forest as Mr. Moreno pointed out tree species and densities on either side of the trails. He commented that invasive species such as bittersweet and buckthorn were growing in the area near the Rec area entrance and that they pose a grave threat to a healthy forest. He also noted that there was good tree and shrub diversity throughout the town forest. The forest as a whole is uneven aged with many tree species represented. There are both open areas and areas with denser canopies with different forest succession scenarios occurring in the forest. He informed the commission that forest management could be a challenge since removal of invasives costs money. A timber harvest would also be difficult since current harvesting equipment is large and would have a major impact on the existing trails, roads and forested areas.

Mr. Moreno said that allowing natural dynamic events such as windstorms to effect a change in the forest is an accepted and practical approach to forest management in a situation such as exists in the Rye forest. Such dynamic events can create openings to promote greater species diversity.

When the group walked the yellow trail, the large wet area spanned in part by bog bridges prompted an extensive discussion of how to deal with the wettest trails in the forest. The bog bridges have helped to protect the wet areas but there are other large wet areas on that trail which have been made wider by foot traffic attempting to go around the wet areas. This is an unhealthy result that is harming the resource. The Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) was consulted in the past and their recommendation to use bog bridges in some places and to relocate trails to higher ground in others was followed to a large extent by the RCC. Last year the RCC

voted to defer adding any more bog bridges and to instead favor trail rerouting until the forest management plan could be updated. Mr. Moreno suggested the AMC be called in to reassess the situations in the wettest trails.

Member Garvan suggested that the public be educated about the ways that the town forest and its trails could be managed. Mr. Moreno agreed that public understanding and input was important and suggested that public trail walks be offered to help involve concerned Rye citizens.

At 6:15 pm Member Reed and Ms. Truslow left due to prior commitments.

Mr. Moreno commented at several locations that there was good species diversity and that the encroachment of invasives was mostly restricted to a few areas at the outer edge of the town forest. He noted that controlling the invasives before they became established throughout the forest should be a priority in the management plan. Another priority should be to address how to manage increased use of the forest and to address what uses are most appropriate.

At 6:50 pm Chair King and Member Garvan left due to prior commitments.

Mr. Moreno will be in touch with the RCC as he continues to work on the forest management plan.

Meeting adjourned at 7:10 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Francis P. (Mike) Garvan II, Clerk