

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Advisory Committee Meeting

February 11, 2015

Berkshire East Ski Lodge, 66 Thunder Mountain Road, Charlemont, MA

Staff: P. Sloan, A. Larose, T. Matuszko, B. Domina, B. O'Connor, D. Raimo, A. Peteroy

1. Introductions:

T. Matuszko commenced the meeting at 6:01 PM with a round of introductions by Advisory Committee members.

2. Review and Approval of January 6, 2015 Meeting Notes:

Mark Phelps made a motion to approve the meeting notes of January 6, 2015. The motion to approve was seconded by Kyle Hanlon. A request was made to amend the meeting notes (Section 7) to reflect that Tom Brule also attended the tour of the New England Wood Company in Jaffrey, NH. A request was made to strike the word "trust" from the last paragraph of page 3 of the meeting notes. The Advisory Committee unanimously approved the meeting notes as amended.

3. Review and Discussion of Draft Chapter 2 – Study Area & Draft Chapter 3 – Public Participation Process:

A. Larose reviewed chapter 2 with the Advisory Committee members. A. Larose reviewed the study area, its demographics and natural resources. The Advisory Committee members had several questions and comments as follows:

Question: Do the population projections for the study area include the impact of outmigration of older folks to be closer to their children?

Response: Yes, the projections include outmigration of older folks and at least for Berkshire County there is an in-migration of older folks.

Comment: It would be good to document invasive species in the study area as they relate to biodiversity. Staff will try to incorporate.

Comment: A summary statement for each section would assist readers with understanding the relevance of the information in the context of the larger project. Staff will try to incorporate.

Question: What is a habitat reserve?

Response: A habitat reserve is defined in note 7 on page 5. A habitat reserve is a designation used by the state to prioritize the spending of its conservation funds. The designation has no regulatory impact. Staff will include a map showing the habitat

reserve areas overlaid with a map showing what areas are currently protected if such information is readily available.

Comment: The description of the study area is too negative. The Advisory Committee members requested that the chapter focus on both the positive aspects of the study area in addition to its needs. Staff will modify the chapter; however, the assistance of the Advisory Committee members are needed to identify the positive aspects of the study area that make a compelling argument for this region to be designated.

Comment: One unique aspect of the study area is its ecological diversity in terms of the number of different forest types in a small geographic area.

Comment: Another unique aspect of the study area is that the area has not lost its rural character like so many other areas in the country have (e.g. central Massachusetts).

To summarize the comments for chapter 2, T. Matuszko indicated that staff will revise the chapter to project a more positive tone about the area and to focus on the diversity of the area.

T. Matuszko provided the Advisory Committee with a brief overview of chapter 3. The Advisory Committee members had several questions and comments as follows:

Comment: On page 4 the word “Health” should be changed to Heath.

Comment: A suggestion was made to put the information on public participation in the appendix and not as a chapter of the report. The Advisory Committee members discussed the comment and requested staff to leave the chapter in the report, but to condense the information.

Comment: In order to keep the towns updated of the process, it would be good to have a regular briefing statement provided to the Advisory Committee members. A briefing statement will allow the Advisory Committee members to pass along the information to local media organizations. Staff will continue to provide updates.

4. Discussion of Survey Results for National Significance of 20-town Region:

P. Sloan provided a brief update about the results of the survey. Only seven of the twenty-eight Advisory Committee members responded to the survey. P. Sloan asked the Advisory Committee members to please complete the survey and staff will send out reminders. Advisory Committee members were asked to provide a statement or quote about the significance of the twenty town region (i.e. provide a quote about the significance of this region).

5. Finalize Key Framework Elements & Model Conservation Restriction (CR)

P. Sloan informed the Advisory Committee that the subcommittee continues to work on the model CR and that a draft of the model CR will be distributed for comment at the next meeting. The Advisory Committee members had several questions and comments as follows:

Comment: The CR needs to be flexible and should allow certain uses within a designated envelope. The CR notification process also needs to be streamlined.

Comment: Each state developed its own Forest Legacy conservation restriction so Massachusetts developed its own.

Comment: The model CR should contain a provision that allows owners to take actions in emergency situations.

The Advisory Committee then reviewed changes to the Key Framework Elements and had several comments as follows:

Comment: The Advisory Committee members agreed with the change that prohibits federal ownership of land for the technical resource center. The Advisory Committee also agreed with the change that removed the five acre limit on the size of the federal resource center.

Comment: The Advisory Committee members agreed that the adoption of the Weeks Act is not favored, but that a special designation is preferred instead.

Comment: In # 11 a request was made to change the term “lease” to “lease or other arrangement.”

T. Matuszko informed the Advisory Committee that a subcommittee is working on the municipal payment issue. The preliminary thoughts of the subcommittee are to setup a simple payment system with municipalities that opt-in receiving a set base payment and having a second incentive based payment based upon some yet to be determined variable. The justification for the payment is the additional impacts on the community due to the new CRs.

Comment: One of the Advisory Committee members challenged the notion that CRs increase the need for emergency services.

T. Matuszko asked the Advisory Committee members specifically if the money received by the towns should have limitations on what it can be used for.

Comment: Several Advisory Committee members felt that the money should be tied closely to what is trying to be accomplished with the CRs. Several other Advisory Committee members suggested that the limitations would cause the need for reporting requirements and this would impose a burden on some municipalities.

The Advisory Committee discussed where the money would come from to fund the endowment. T. Matuszko suggested that as part of the accompanying legislation there should be a request to the state legislature to establish and fund a trust fund.

6. Review and Discussion of Draft Chapter 5 – Municipal Services and Tax Impacts of Forest Conservation and Federal Designation:

P. Sloan informed the Advisory Committee that this chapter is still being developed by staff and will be provided to them for comment in the near future.

7. Spring Forums & Select Board Meetings, Update on NRCS Grant, Next Meeting Date & Other Topics not Reasonably Anticipated 48 Hours in Advance of the Meeting/Adjourn

T. Matuszko asked the Advisory Committee for input on the next steps, specifically relating to whether Advisory Committee members felt that their respective Board of Selectmen would be willing to bring this initiative to town meeting this year. The consensus of the Advisory Committee members was that they would not be ready to bring this back to the towns for the upcoming annual town meetings. Some members expressed concerns about rushing the initiative to a vote without public outreach and others felt that the Wired West bonding issue will dominate the town meeting and little time will be left for other matters such as this one.

P. Sloan indicated that the current grant funds will expire on June 30, 2015. Additional grant funds may be pursued to continue this work.

T. Matuszko reiterated the next steps moving forward. (1) Schedule and hold sub-regional meetings, (2) schedule meetings to meet with the Boards of Selectmen, and (3) prepare information material for Advisory Committee members to distribute at the upcoming annual town meetings.

Next meeting: Tuesday, March 24, 2015 with a snow date of March 31, 2015.

The meeting adjourned at 8:07 pm.

SIGN IN SHEET

Mohawk Trail Woodlands Partnership Project February 11, 2015

First Name	Last Name	Town/ Organization	E-mail Address	Initial Here
Hank	Art	Williamstown		HWK
Doug	Bruce	Berkshire Natural Resource Council		DB
Tom	Brule	Florida		TFB
Greg	Cox	Hawley		JDC
Dicken	Crane	Windsor		CD
Cheryl	Dukes	Buckland		CD
Larry	Flaccus	Shelburne		LF
Kyle	Hanlon	BRPC North Adams		KH
Jay	Healy	Charlemont		JH
Jeff	Hutchins	MFA		JH
Fred	Jajko	Cheshire		FJ
Drew	Jones	HooRwa		DJ
Stacy	Kontrabecki	Buckland - Alternate		
Dan	LaBonte	Savoy		
Carl	McKinney	Clarksburg		
Jim	Moore	Conway		
Jeff	Neipp	Leyden		
Joe	Nowak	Adams		
Arthur	Pantermehl, Jr	Ashfield		AP
Jim	Perry	Deerfield River Watershed Association		JP
Mark	Phelps	New Ashford		MP
Walt	Quist	Rowe		WQ
Keith	Ross	MA Society of Foresters		KR
Whit	Sanford	Shelburne - Alternate		
Art	Schwenger	Heath		
Scott	Sylvester	Colrain		SR
Mary	Vilbon	Shelburne Falls Areas Business Association		
Gisela	Walker	Franklin Regional Planning Board		GW
		Berkshire County Business Representative		
		Monroe Select Board		
Alyssa	Larose	FRCOG		AL
Kimberly	MacPhee	FRCOG		
Peggy	Sloan	FRCOG		
Thomas	Matuszko	BRPC		TM
Jaclyn	Pacejo	BRPC		
Wendy	Ferris	Franklin Land Trust		
Rich	Hubbard	Franklin Land Trust		
Alain	Peteroy	Franklin Land Trust		
Robert	O'Connor	EOEEA		
Stephanie	Cooper	EOEEA		ROC
Deirdre	Raimo	Forest Service Liaison		DR
PHIL	OWEN	CITIZEN: WMPLA		
Ryan	Aylesworth	WMPLA		

Brian Doming BRPC