

Nash Stream Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting (NSFCC)

May 2, 2017 Lancaster, N.H. 6:02pm – 8:16pm

NSFCC members present: John Lanier, David Govatski, Mike Waddell, Kevin Evans, David Scanlan, Jeff Lougee, Ted Burns, Rita Goumillout, Bill Noons, Norman Cloutier, Albert Cloutier, Mike Lynch

NSFCC members not present: Jim Herbert

Staff members present: Commissioner Rose, Director Brad Simpkins, Maggie Machinist, Todd Caron, Sabrina Stanwood, Jon Accardi, Will Guinn, Chris Gamache, Clint Savage

Chairman John Lanier called the meeting to order at 6:02pm. He welcomed everyone, reviewed the agenda and then asked for introductions from the Committee members.

Commissioner Rose thanked Chairman Lanier and the Committee and the public. He stated that we received many public comments and he recognizes what a special place Nash Stream is.

Update on timber sale and road activities: Maggie Machinist provided an update on a timber sale this past winter near 14 ½ mile road. The sale went well and the weather was cooperative. It was supposed to be a 2 year harvest but the contractor was able to complete it in one year. The location of the timber sale required a slight re-route of a snowmobile trail which went smoothly.

Unsure about any upcoming road work to road at Nash Stream because haven't been up the road so we don't know the condition of the road.

There is one upcoming scheduled project this field season, as part of a stream restoration project, which consists of a culvert replacement. There will also be some in-stream work in the main stem as well as some tributaries.

Ted Burns asked how much money was made on the timber harvest this past winter? Maggie responded that the numbers were not final yet, but approximately \$115,000.

Summary and review of public comments: Director Simpkins gave a powerpoint presentation summarizing the public comments received. There were around 170 separate commentators and 430 pages of comments submitted. We identified 10 primary topics to review and get your feedback on so we can move forward. After each slide, Brad asked the committee if they had feedback on the planning process or involvement.

Planning Process slide: John Lanier addressed the public comments received regarding scrapping the current draft management plan and starting all over. He said that concerning restarting the whole thing over again, if we did that, it would set the whole planning process back 3-4 years. I think the Committee would recommend to continue with the process as it is now.

Dave Govatski stated that there is a need for more time due to the amount of comments received. Other Committee members agreed to keep going on the path of the current planning process.

Vision State and Management Principles slide: Mike Lynch stated to keep the wording in the 2002 management plan, not the wording in the current draft management plan.

John Lanier asked Brad to make sure that the changes to the management principles in the current draft management plan haven't changed the impact on management of Nash Stream (NS).

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Brad stated it was our intention when adding the new wording in this section was to keep the same management principles and vision statement, the wording changes was just for clarification purposes. We will make sure to review the language.

Control areas slide: Mike Lynch asked if the intent of the original management plan was to establish the control areas?

Brad replied yes and that we will review the early GIS map with preliminary control areas. Also, an inventory of all of the natural community systems must be completed first.

Dave Govatski asked if the plan is to have the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) conduct that inventory and the intent in the current draft management plan is to establish areas?

Brad replied yes and that we contacted Bill Leak who was referenced in the section on Control areas in the 1995 plan about the intent of establishing control areas.

Mike Waddell asked if we don't have the funds to do it then why put it in the current draft management plan?

Brad stated that there was some inventory work a long time ago, but it was preliminary.

John Lanier stated that he was involved with the original inventory and part of the goal was to monitor adverse effects to the critters and vegetation. Even high elevation areas— and recreational activities, so the critters that are sensitive to that could see what's going on, if any of the critters were adversely impacted. He stated that monitoring is always the last to get funded, and difficult to find funding for monitoring.

Kevin Evans asked if the acreage of the control areas have been taken out of the land that we are now timbering.

Brad stated that those acres have been taken out by that we haven't ground truthed them and the acreage may change. Several years ago, Continuous Forest Inventory (CFI) plots were established in areas of Nash Stream, although not called for in the original plan, it was part of the thought process. CFI plots involve fairly in-depth monitoring and inventory. We are considering could we combine this with some academic institution to form a partnership.

Jeff Lougee said that the easement and the draft management plan speak to the need to protect natural communities and rare species. He encourages NHB to do that.

Timber Management slides: Mike Lynch asked how much of the area that can be managed has been inventoried? Maggie responded approximately half.

There was a question regarding how long the inventory cycle is? Will Guinn replied that it is 15 years, but that it typically is stretched out to 20 years.

Brad reviewed the second timber management slide and stated that even if we doubled our output of timber sales, that we would still be significantly below what the draft plan says.

A discussion between committee and DRED staff about even age and uneven age management and the term area regulation occurred.

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Maggie clarified that the Nash Stream forest (NSF) uses uneven age management. There are tending acres and regeneration acres and there are goals for each.

Will Guinn stated that the area of regulation was used in the original plan. It's the scale—same principle as even aged management but at a smaller scale

Maggie stated that the reason why not using growth and yield for management was that the original NSF management plan in 1995 used area regulation so we are sticking with what was in the original plan. The second part is that we don't have a good handle on growth because we don't have the amount of inventory data and CFI plot data.

Kevin Evans said that in order to reduce the confusion about area regulation, they could make a recommendation for growth and yield where we "grow this much and cut this much."

Last Timber Management slide: John Lanier said that it sounds like 2 things that the Committee needs to see happen: 1) Clarify the definition between even and uneven age management and 2) definite need for a full inventory in order to point where we are planning our timber harvests. What tells us to pick one compartment compared to another one? Need to inventory all of NSF.

Dave Govatski added a need for inventory to benefit wildlife too.

Riparian buffers: Dave Govatski asked for a clarification on the buffer wording in the conservation easement? Maggie stated that the easement wording is that from a certain point of Nash Stream and down there is a 150 ft. no-cut buffer and around all of the ponds.

Jeff Lougee asked how would a 100 ft no-cut buffer on 2nd order and higher streams impact management?

Brad stated that analysis has not been conducted, and that public comments recommended 100ft no-cut buffer on perennial streams. That would significantly reduce the harvestable area.

Dave Govatski asked for a definition of intermittent, perennial streams in the draft management plan.

Invasive Species slide: After Brad reviewed this slide, Dave Govatski asked if there were studies about ATVs bringing in invasive species? Chris Gamache responded that there are no studies east of the Mississippi, and there are some out west.

Dave Govatski asked if there is an inventory of problem areas in NSF?

Maggie said that there are few invasive plant species at NSF and we do have a handle on them. They are mainly concentrated at the edges of the property and are visible when driving around. There are 3 known patches of Japanese knotweed and a patch of phragmites next to a road (not the main road in NSF).

John Lanier stated the need to pick our fight and make sure we win it. He said that we need to care of the knotweed patches out there. He also stated that he didn't have a preference on where to locate the information about invasives in the draft management plan.

Brad stated that most of the public comments about Invasives were geared toward plants, and there is language about Invasive insects in the plan as well in the Forest Protection chapter.

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Climate Change slides: John Lanier stated that we should not start the plan over again and that DRED should incorporate into the draft management plan the additional input from the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science that they recently contacted and are working with.

Kevin Evans stated that DRED is probably managing this forest more resistance style than resilience stage. That DRED's management is geared toward resisting climate change. There is no research on how to keep maple there in forest given increasing temperatures and changing precipitation patterns and beech would do well.

Brad stated that recommendations/what to do for forest management do not have a set plan for us to reference/implement. For example, assisted migration (of species) style is often referenced and the importance of inter plantings after management. Another example is increasing culverts is recommended. We are looking at what is the best way to address it in the plan.

John said that can address best way possible when updating this plan every 10 years.

Dave Govatski asked that due to the public comments received, that to address climate change in the draft management plan by adding a new chapter with information from the person that we are working with from the Northern Institute of Applied Climate Science.

Mike Waddell stated that this land is very lightly used now, and he is of a different opinion because we are working with a limited amount of resources. Funding things without a source of revenue coming off of NS. Struggling with a grey area because it takes away from the little resources we have with what we have to do. There is gauge data in this county that goes back 115 years. I am concerned about increasing infrastructure and cost.

Member of public asked a clarifying question about the topic of climate change and the public comments received. Were the public comments based on the proposed expansion of recreational uses (e.g. ATV's) and climate change or on increasing infrastructure because of climate change?

Committee responded that public comments were received about both.

Access for Disabilities Slide: John Lanier said that he didn't recall that the current (2002) or the 1995 NSF management plan having a lot of discussion about access for people with disabilities.

Ted Burns stated that it was totally inadequate and irresponsible to brush aside because people with severe handicaps are using ATVs as a tool.

ATV/UTV trails slides: Ted Burns asked if the East/West ATV trail proposal is going to be considered separately from the Southern Connector ATV Trail proposal? He also asked why the new Southern Connector ATV trail is off Nash Stream road?

Brad Simpkins replied yes and the new Southern Connector ATV trail proposal is included. The reason why it was moved from the road to a snowmobile trail was to mitigate the concerns about enforcement issues. When an ATV was on the road, they could easily turn left and access the heart of Nash Stream.

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Ted Burns stated that ATV riders follow the signs, and if there is proper signage and that a gate was added it would meet the coarse and fine filter because it was on the road.

Rita Goumillout said that they have had ATV's and they asked the ATV rider and the ATV rider said that they didn't see the signs. Some people don't follow the rules.

Ted Burns agreed and said that is why we have law enforcement.

Chris Gamache gave a summary of a new scoping project that the Bureau of Trails helped fund. The North Country Council is working on a Coos County scoping project. They are putting together stakeholder interviews and looking at all recreational uses, parking issues, etc... They are meeting with 150 organizations or individuals around the state. They will go over the findings in the fall and submit a report by early next year. Brad Simpkins added that there are a lot of issues regarding trail usage (enforcement capacity, etc..) and it is an effort to look at the trails use in totality in Coos County and to look at the overall trails plan. Member of the public asked what the definition of "stakeholder" is. Brad Simpkins responded that it is a person or organization who has interest in a topic and look to reach out to organizations that represents a group of people.

Discussion by the committee regarding the ATV slides. John Lanier said that this committee has already recommended that the Southern Connector ATV trail proposal be part of the plan and be reviewed by the Council on Resources and Development (CORD) independently from the East/West Connector. As far as Kelsey Notch is concerned, CORD already made that decision and CORD will review the annual reports make a judgment. CORD has a say first if the ATV trail complies with the law (RSAs). Then the question is if the NS Citizens Advisory Committee wants to include it in draft.

Al Cloutier said that the biggest concern is the decision about the E/W connector ATV trail because ATVs are using town roads. Hopes to get something done to get ATVs off of the roads, with this new plan, they use Town of Stark roads until Stark shuts the roads down to ATVs.

Ted Burns stated that the Southern Connector ATV trail is a no brainer and put signage on the roads. People break laws, but will have minimal people on the parts of the roads they aren't allowed on. It ought to be up to us and DRED to promote recreation. If there are issues, don't put obstacles in the way of volunteer clubs, get the technical team together to figure it out. It should promoted on a state level. No one wants ATVs on roads and the state forest belongs to everyone.

John Lanier stated that the committee already voted to put the proposed Southern Connector ATV trail in the draft plan for review. CORD has to evaluate it.

Mike Waddell stated that regarding the Kelsey Notch trail, CORD should know that this Committee supports the Kelsey Notch trail.

Mike Lynch stated that the Town of Stratford Selectmen have an issue with increased ATVs traffic.

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Brad Simpkins summarized that it sounds like the committee is giving us feedback to leave the Southern Connector ATV trail proposal in the draft management plan and it will go through the full review process. The East/West Connector will stay out of the draft management plan based on what CORD has already voted on. And we will maintain the Kelsey Notch ATV trail pending on what CORD says.

Plan Progress going Forward slide: Dave Govatski asked if there will be a second public hearing? Brad felt the second public comment period was adequate and did not necessitate a second public hearing, but that he was open to ideas.

Mike Waddell asked about the timing on the review process of Kelsey Notch and Southern Connector ATV trails? Brad Simpkins replied that CORD wants to see 3 seasons of reports on the Kelsey Notch ATV trail before making a decision. The Southern Connector ATV trail will follow the review process through the life of the NS management plan.

John Lanier said that a lot of effort and time is going into the draft management plan and appreciates DRED going out for a second round of public comments.

John Lanier then asked if there were comments from the public. He stated the importance of new public comments, not to rehash comments already made during the public comment period.

Several members of the public spoke about control areas, timber management, invasives, climate change, area regulation, cost of monitoring, ATV enforcement concerns, East/West Connector ATV trail.

John Lanier stated that his term as Chair of the Committee is over and that the Vice Chair is also vacant. He asked for nominations. Mike Waddell was nominated as Vice Chair and Dave Govatski was nominated as Chair. The Committee confirmed those nominations.

Other Business: none

Next Meeting date: To be determined (tbd)

Chairman Lanier adjourned the meeting at 8:16pm, Ted Burns made the motion and was seconded by Al Cloutier.