

Town of Hollis Conservation Commission and Guests
Minutes of Site Walk
Saturday, June 23, 2018
Approved July 18, 2018

Date: Saturday June 23, 2018 – 9:00 am to 12:30pm

Location: Siergiewicz Property on Mooar Hill Rd., Hollis

Attendees: Tom Dufresne, Jonathan Bruneau, LeeAnn Wolfe, Laura Bianco, Paul Edmunds, Peter Band, BoS

Guests: Ethan Belair, UNH Cooperative Extension, Field Specialist, Natural Resources,
Jim Oehler, NH Fish & Game/Wildlife Consultant

Recorded by: J. Bruneau

HCC chair Tom Dufresne began by introducing Jim and Ethan to the other attendees and led introductions made by each of the other attendees. A color map of the parcel was distributed (showing the forest stand ID #s and other features), and lastly an assessment of appropriate gear for the conditions was made.

Tom explained that he wanted to walk portions of the parcel with Jim and Ethan to better understand the site variables and potential as described in the parcel's Management Plan report written by Jim in 2015. Jim described some of the broad points of the report and suggested that with first hand inspection of the various environmental conditions, growth patterns, habitat, historic stone culvert and walls, and other unique characteristics of the parcel, the HCC could better stewards of this conservation area for the Town of Hollis.

Jim then led the group first to field 7 where bittersweet had overtaken much of each field. Bittersweet is an invasive vine plant species that has spread rapidly throughout New Hampshire and the region. Though originally meant as a suggested use to control erosion and other practical but unintended applications, its ability to regenerate and spread its roots soon became a maintenance issue and general nuisance plant as it climbs and eventually kills adjacent trees and other vegetation. Field 5 showed similar invasive conditions as field 7. On the road between stands 5 & 6 we passed over a perennial stream on an embankment made with granite stone walls with a stone box culvert below that was about 3'x3', in good shape and clear through.



Jim noted that reclamation of fields 5 & 7 could be done per the recommendations in the report, beginning with autumn removal by rotating mechanical cutter heads (referred to as a *brontosaurus*) mounted to a tracked machine; see photo below and video of one here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JVEVsXzTSIc>



Jim added that subsequent targeted, licensed application of herbicide would follow on all sprouts in the spring, with regular monitoring and follow-up maintenance yearly or as necessary to help ensure there's no invasive resurgence. Discussion on potential costs assumed the range would be \$5-10 thousand after offsets from NH F&G grants and/or revenue from a timber harvest on the parcel.

Ethan described for the group bittersweet's invasive growth pattern and life cycle, as well as understanding how other adjacent plants and animal habitat coexist or cope with the invasive plant. Abundant sunlight is not necessarily a guaranteed recipe for its emergence. Bittersweet will not automatically sprout in a newly cleared forested area due only to abundant sunlight, but instead is selectively found reaching its roots from fields and sprouting into woodland edges (as evidenced in adjacent forest stand 4).

Next we ventured deeper into stand 4 where mature pine and an old rock pile were found, and then into stand 8 where a marginal stand of mostly immature pine with select pole sized pine hardwoods were found. Jim suggested that this area was also an old field and could be cleared of small scrub pine and oak within about $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ acres, with the small stumps removed and windrowed against a nearby stone wall. Pole sized pine and oak would remain and Ethan added that the clearing size could vary in size. Large mature trees including a declining oak as found in stand 8, would be left.

A discussion about harvesting methods and appropriateness of the harvest regarding extent, pattern, grouping, impact and benefit (long and short term) ensued. Jim and Tom noted that the knowledge of the town's management plans and its goals and intent were shared by and implemented regularly by forester Craig Birch. The group asked questions about logging around streams and habitat loss or relocation stemming from logging operations. Suggested oversight and/or coordinated marking of stands and/or individual trees was noted, especially given the recent 'old growth' tree discussions at HCC meetings. The group decided to return to the parking lot and rain began to fall. All members then departed the parking area.