

DRAFT Notes
September 1, 2015 Greenwoods Stakeholders Meeting
Barkhamsted Town Garage

Attendees: Debbie Brydon (IWC Barkhamsted), Alesia Kennerson (BOS NH), Don Stein (1st Selectman Bark), Denton Butler (NH WPCA), Dan Jerram (1st Selectman NH), Steven Sadlowski (NH Land use), Joe Toro (NH WPCA), Evelyn Duffy (Public), Scott Johnstone (Chairman BCC), David Childs (NH EDC), Jain Sorrell (FV TU), Deborah Simon (Wildlife Biologist), Mike Hoffnagle (Resident Barkhamsted), Tom S (??) (Resident Barkhamsted), Alicea Charamut (Farmington Valley TU), Eileen Fielding (FRWA), Peter Tabuka (Resident Barkhamsted), Kim Fiducia (Resident Barkhamsted), Tony Mitchell (NH Resident/Rivers Alliance of CT), John Noelke (Barkhamsted Resident /Landowner), Lisa Candels (Barkhamsted Resident), Ginny Apple (BCC), Katherine ?? (Water bury Republican), Liz Lacy (FRCC/NPS)

Introductions – Don Stein welcomed everyone and went over the goals of the meeting. Don stated that at this point in the process everything is conceptual ideas – nothing is firm. He said he was hoping to get a more solid conceptual plan that could be used to bring to agencies and town boards. He stated that there is still no funding for any Greenwoods project and that would have to be pursued and then approved by the citizens of each town. Dan Jerram said he would like to see the map of the points captured using a GPS during the last couple of site walks and that could help give any idea of where a possible path could go. Liz Lacy who had recorded the GPS points reported that the mapping of the points had not yet been completed.

Don Stein stated that this group had indicated that this project would not be a paved trail – not a rails to trails sort of path.

Guest Speaker – Laura Saucier CT DEEP wildlife biologist – Laura stated that she had been invited by Don Stein to provide guidance regarding the turtle and non-game species habitat at Greenwoods and possible issues and impacts that could result from having a trail there. She stated that linear features such as trails have impacts on wildlife. Trails can cause wildlife responses such as avoidance of the area (this is an important turtle nesting area); less pairing and nesting; loss of function of the habitat area (much of the turtle habitat in CT is shrinking due to development). Laura said that maintaining habitat areas requires good land use planning.

Laura stated that there are generally 12 species of turtle found in CT – 5 of those are of special concern/endangered in CT. The Greenwoods area provides habitat for 4 of those 5 species. She said that the reason for the concern for these turtles is habitat loss and collection by people. She stated that the current turtle populations in Greenwoods are stable and healthy – reflected by a spectrum of ages found. Making improvements to trails can have a variety of impacts - depends on where and the quality of usage – the character of the area can change – more trash, lights, possible increase of use by predators.

Discussion – There was a discussion regarding the benefits of a trail – and Saucier stated that there are definitely upsides for humans, but not for wildlife.

There was a discussion about the types of habitat areas at Greenwoods – including the sandy areas for turtle nesting, in general for migrating species. There was a suggestion to have trail closures during important breeding times. Laura said DEEP does close other trails or natural areas during important breeding times but gets a lot of push back from the public. There was a question about how much use the area gets now without a formal trail? Currently hikers, birders, anglers and hunters use the area. Improvements would likely bring more people to area – that’s the purpose of improving the trail. There was a question as to how users would accommodate each other – for instance during hunting season. It was suggested that the current informal trail be moved to avoid sensitive habitat areas. There was a suggestion to look at other side of the river where turtle habitat has not been identified.

Other comments included looking at national diversity database, recognizing the importance of the area for migrating species including birds.

There was a question about the purpose of the trail – Don Stein responded that it is important goal for tourism, connecting eventually to Riverton, reviving the empty General Store – making connections between communities and different areas in the communities. Dan Jerram stated that he saw it as an improvement to the human experience of the area – improving the relationship between New Hartford and Barkhamsted, increasing the vitality of the towns/ downtowns, connecting to other improvements like the pavilion being developed behind New Hartford town hall. He said it could also be an educational and experiential improvement – information about respecting natural characteristic of the area.

There was a suggestion that the group continue to seek input from experts and see if a viable route can be determined. It was also stated that it is the responsibility of leaders to help communities thrive – they do need to help the business community as well as everyone else.

It was suggested that the GPS points be mapped and compared with important habitat areas. Get experts to review and suggest changes to where a viable path may be located.

Another suggestion was to develop a website or Facebook page to provide information to the public about the project and progress and timeline. Pros and Cons need to be shown. Don Stein mentioned he would put information on the Barkhamsted town website.

Concerns were raised about increased traffic on East River Road, trails causing erosion on river banks, areas being ruined by overuse, “sometimes less is more – i.e. nature is spiritual”. Some say there is increased river use and abuse – increased trash. Some said that there are already amenities out there that need more attention and improvement before new ones are developed.