

Tamworth Conservation Commission - Conservation Lands Review Committee
Meeting Minutes of March 27, 2007 - 7:00 pm, Town Office

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Present: Chris Conrod, Margaret Rieser, John Mersfelder, David Little, Chele Miller, Scott Aspinall.

- 1) **Minutes of 02/21/07 meeting** were reviewed and accepted.
- 2) **Co-occurrence Scoring (Phase I):** David presented a co-occurrence score map of all resource data compiled to date. Overall, the areas scored highest are generally consistent with the GMCG/SPNHF map of 2000 and the TLPC inventory overlay map of 1988. The most notable exception was due to inclusion of the NHF&G WAP tier I and II habitat scores, which gave a higher score to the Ossipee Mountains and the western half of the town. After discussion, it was agreed to accept the natural resource data and scoring system as presented. There are a few additional categories, listed below, to be added. These categories are not expected to appreciably change the overall relative scores.
 - a) **Agricultural Use:** Chris will make shape files of productive crops, productive hay, and mown fields, and get them to David.
 - b) **Contaminants:** David will get the latest files from NHDES.
 - c) **Uncommon & Exemplary Plant Communities:** Chris will try to make shape files of old-growth/old forest and bogs, and get them to David.
 - d) **Special Features:** Chris will see if there's any usable data.
- 3) **Phase II Conservation Land Evaluations:** It was discussed that the co-occurrence scores deal with tangible natural resources and are intended to be used as a tool to identify general areas of town or specific locations of high natural value and therefore likely places to investigate for land protection. A second evaluation phase is needed to consider social values (e.g. scenic, recreation, future growth) and other general land trust methods of identifying potential conservation land. Chris will write up drafts of issues discussed during the meeting. The following categories were discussed:
 - a) **Scenic/Aesthetic:** The entire town is scenic (every town road is classified as scenic under RSA 231:157) and all areas offer some qualities identified by townspeople as defining the rural/natural essence of Tamworth (e.g. sights, sounds, scents). These qualities might be evident at a landscape scale or perceptible in the tiniest natural component. They can be substantial or ethereal. Scenic/aesthetic qualities should be identified when evaluating individual parcels for conservation protection. These qualities should also be addressed in town land-use ordinances.
 - b) **Proximity to Existing Conservation Land:** This is a universal consideration in land trust evaluation methodology (e.g. Trust for Public Lands, TNC, SPNHF, NH-OSP) and in biotic reserve/sanctuary design (an off-shoot of island biogeography theory). Larger is better, either for expanding the protected area of a resource or for providing a buffer to a protected resource. Any opportunity to protect parcels abutting existing conservation land should be given due consideration.
 - c) **Corridors:** This issue ties in with (b) above, and can include both wildlife movement/habitat corridors and greenways. Biotic connectivity between the Ossipees and the Sandwich Range is dependent on providing a connecting

corridor (this issue was raised by David, a non-Bearcamp Tracker). Focus areas for corridors were discussed:

- i) An OM-SR connecting corridor taking advantage of on-going land protection efforts along Mill Brook (see [3.i] below) and existing conservation land in the west side of town.
 - ii) Further protection along the existing string of conservation land between Alt/Aspinall/BBCA and White Lake, with possible connector or stepping stone toward the Ossipees.
- d) **Guiding Future Growth:** Consideration of where future development is likely to or is best to occur should be made when planning a land conservation strategy. Two approaches:
- i) Seek guidance from town land-use ordinances or, in the absence of definitive ordinances, seek guidance from the latest Master Plan. In the later case (our only viable option at this time) CLRC has an excellent opportunity to guide Master Plan revision recommendations.
 - ii) Work conservation development approaches into TCC's land conservation strategy. With the proper town development ordinances providing incentives, TCC and the Planning Board could work with developers to provide for future growth and land protection.
- e) **Level of Threat:** Procedural and financial limitations of TCC make it difficult to act quickly when an important parcel is in eminent threat of development. (This may change slightly depending on the outcome of the Capital Plan Committee.) However, TCC can weigh the likelihood of incompatible land use based on existing land use ordinances. This could work both ways; i.e. a lot solely comprised of unbuildable land may not need protection but a lot containing important wetlands and adjacent uplands might be a high priority for protection.
- f) **Public Access & Recreation:** It is the current town policy to accept conservation easements only for land allowing public access. 80% (49 out of 61) of those answering the question in the public survey responded that public access is very important when considering accepting a conservation easement. It was also pointed out that allowing public access is financially beneficial tax-wise to the grantor.
- g) **Parcel Size:** Size matters. That doesn't preclude consideration of a small piece containing high conservation value.
- h) **Conservation Compatibility - Hazard Liabilities:** Compatibility includes land use issues on the candidate lot and on abutting lots. Hazard liabilities can include refuse dumps and contamination. These issues should be checked prior to accepting an easement.
- i) **Prior/Ongoing Conservation Efforts:** TCC has been engaged in lake and river shoreland protection. Mill Brook has been a project for the past 20-30 years. Much Bearcamp River shoreland has been protected by the town and others. Seven of eight great ponds in Tamworth are completely or mostly protected. This effort should continue. The remaining unprotected riparian corridor along Mill Brook is critical to enhancing both corridors listed in 3.c above. Beaver Pond and the no-official-name pond north of Moore's Pond would be good candidates.
- 4) **Next Meeting:** Thursday, April 12, 2007; 7:00pm; Scott Aspinall's.
- 5) **Meeting Adjourned:** 9:40pm.

Submitted by: Chris Conrod