

Mohawk Trails Woodland Partnership

<http://www.mohawktrailwoodlandpartnership.org/>

Forest Conservation Standing Committee Minutes

Meeting date: March 17, 2021, Zoom, 10-11 am, Notetaker: Alain Peteroy

Committee Members: Chair Kate Lindroos Conlin, Alain Peteroy, Bob O'Connor, Shelia Kelliher, Larry Flaccus

Other MTWP Board/Staff: Board Chair Hank Art, Admin. Agent Lisa Hayden

Public: Lindsay Nystrom, Glen Ayers, Janet Sinclair, Patrick Conlin

1. Forest Legacy (FL) Program Review:

- Guest L. Nystrom, Forest Legacy Program Coordinator at the Dept. of Conservation & Recreation, reviewed the components and requirements of the program and the current actions being taken to incorporate the MTWP region into the MA Forest Legacy (FL) region which currently covers 156 towns but not MTWP towns. She is currently in touch with the USFS to update the FL map and include the MTWP regional description into the Assessment of Need.
- FL projects are: competitive projects, commonly multiple ownership, multiple parcels, themes such as watershed conservation, climate resilience, cold water stream protection, high elevation species habitat protection, conservation restriction or fee projects are eligible.
- L. Flaccus inquired as to how the MTWP and representative towns can support this review and proposed update. It was suggested each town, conservation organization and the MTWP send letters in support of the FL update. H. Art confirmed that the full MTWP board already voted to support this proposal and suggested this vote be confirmed by the executive committee at the upcoming meeting in order to expedite a support letter.
- Public input (J. Sinclair) inquired why the MTWP was not included into the FL region earlier. B. O'Connor explained that the MTWP was kept out while the Partnership was being created and L. Nystrom explained that MA joined FL in 1993, at that time there were only a few small focus areas covering a small # of towns in MA.
- The committee discussed encouraging letters of support from land trusts, other conservation organizations, state agencies, towns and other community organizations.

2. House Bills reviewed: The committee reviewed in general terms several pending bills (referenced on agenda) including one related to proposed chapter 61 law revisions that suggest removing the right of first refusal from the law. Discussion focused on concern that revisions would weaken the law to a degree that would threaten forest conservation, result in an increase in subdivisions and the permanent loss of forest to conversion. During discussion, consensus was that testimony on legislation would likely not be a prime focus of the Committee, but it may be important to track key forest-related bills that move toward passage.
3. Committee focus: Members discussed the importance of the group staying focused on MTWP mission and vision and opportunities to further work in the region, utilizing the \$20,000 state Implementation grants available to towns, consider supporting a cold-water resource and climate resiliency study of the region.
4. Administrative Agent update: L. Hayden reviewed some of NEFF's past work with the MassConn partnership including landowner outreach, forester/landowner education, conservation options, and estate planning workshops supported by direct mailings.

5. Suggestion for Committee Review: A. Peteroy suggested that the committee review the conservation restriction template that was developed by the MTWP several years ago and should now be updated to reflect the recent updated template. It was agreed the CR will be shared with the committee ahead of next meeting.
6. Tasks for upcoming meeting: Review CR before next meeting. Interface with other committees. FL support letters. Next meeting date proposed for May 19th at 3:30.
7. Public Comments:
 - J. Sinclair spoke about concerns that Forest Legacy properties be kept forever wild.
 - G. Ayers spoke about a presentation he could give concerning the carbon markets and topics related to the partnership's mission.

Respectfully submitted, *Alain Peteroy*