

MINUTES (APPROVED)
Casco Conservation Committee
March 5, 2009

The forty-third meeting of the CCC was held in the library at 1 PM.

Present: Pixie Williams, Chair Pro tem; Nadia Hermos, Secretary; Georgette Burgess, Bev White and invited speakers Jean Hankins, TLEA Chair from Otisfield; Jeff Stern, TLEA consultant from Harrison; and Carrie Walia, Executive Director of Loon Echo Land Trust.

Minutes of February 5 were amended and approved.

Pixie introduced the guests and noted that CCC needs more than the current four members, for example someone to be in charge of the CCC link on the Library site. Bev suggested a student might be put in charge of uploading information CCC would give him.

REPORTS:

WATERSHED SURVEY ON THOMPSON LAKE: **Jean Hankins** explained the survey is being done in three stages: Otisfield section in 2008, Casco and Poland in 2009 and Oxford in 2010 to locate sources of erosion in the watershed and hopefully clean up milfoil within seven years.

Jeff Stern said that erosion is a main concern for Maine lakes: phosphorus from soils and fertilizers carried into the lake from the watershed acts like “junk food” to algae, which ultimately can spread to cover the lake. It can take decades to correct. Jeff heads a steering committee and is looking for volunteers to set up the TLEA survey. The first steering committee meeting to oversee the project will be March 26 in Casco at the fire station (actually held in the library). Jean said mailing notification of the survey to landowners is one of the big jobs. Three hundred letters went out last year for Otisfield.

Bev: Crescent lake is forming a lake association which will address erosion and the depth of the lake.

Jean is looking for volunteers to participate in the watershed examination on May 2, conducted for TLEA by the Androscoggin and Cumberland County Soil and Water Conservation Districts.

Pixie: We can ask for volunteers on the CCC website to call **583-2723** or email: **sternjm@hotmail.com**. **Jean:** Maybe on the Otisfield website, too. We had 20 volunteers for the Otisfield survey. **Carrie:** Casco residents can call **583-2723** at Loon Echo.

NEW PROGRAM TO PRESERVE WILDLIFE HABITAT: **Pixie** read an announcement from the Mar-Apr issue of Audubon’s publication *Habitat* about a new program to preserve “significant wildlife habitat, supported by the **Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund Trust.**” The State has new protection guidelines for vulnerable habitat for shore, wading, and vernal-pool birds.” Audubon offers to cohost a talk on the spectrum of bird habitat. Pixie suggested CCC host a meeting for the area. **Decided:** CCC will try to get time for a lecture in April or May at the Firehouse or Library. (Update from Pixie: Contact for a lecture is **Becca Wilson at bwilson@maineaudubon.org**.)

ISSUES:

RECRUITING ADDITIONAL CCC MEMBERS: **Pixie** asked if there were any members of TLEA who might join CCC, which would help keep both informed of mutual issues. **Jean Hankins** will ask this in a newsletter. **Carrie Walia** will ask the board of Loon Echo, which has two members from Casco. **Other possible resources:** **1.** Announcements in Church bulletins? **2.** Special program “This is What We Do.” for the public. **3.** Friends and neighbors, then ask BOS to invite interested people to serve. **4.** Announcement at town meeting. **5.** A contact list to be drawn up.

CROOKED RIVER INITIATIVE: **Carrie:** The Portland Water District biologists became interested in the river 10 years ago. In a new initiative, five land trusts have formed a coalition during the past year. The PWD got back onto the issue. All work as a team to conserve open space around the river. With **76,000 acres and 270 square miles in the watershed**, land conservation is important to keep the water clean. There are 7000 parcels in the watershed. They try to prioritize where they can get the most value from land conservation. A presentation of the issue last October (at Bolster’s Mills) drew 50 people. Crooked River is the largest tributary to Sebago lake, providing 30% of the inflow, and is valuable for drinking water and as a spawning ground for one of four healthy State populations of indigenous landlocked salmon. The group hopes to have two initiatives per year to

create excitement and improve river stewardship.

Jeff: Maine River Keepers is a voice in reclassification. It has a grant from ME Community Foundation of \$5000* to do outreach. (*Note: This corrects \$5050 misprinted in Feb 5 CCC minutes.)

Ideas for Crooked River outreach: **1.** Presentation of issue to Selectmen. **2.** Initiate a public forum. **3.** Have an educational tour. Co-host something in summer with Loon Echo. **4.** Voluntary cleanup. **5.** Maine Association of Conservation Commissions.

JUGTOWN PLAINS is an ecologically important glacial outwash preserve next to the river. (Pixie contributed a map, showing the position of the plains in relation to the river.) Pixie will pre-walk the plains to assess access routes and features. **Georgette said:** Casco is lucky to have so much conserved acreage and working woodland. What is the best way of addressing the pitch pine section? At least it's conserved. An unusual ecosystem. **Carrie:** Would Pixie talk about it? Paul Hunt of PWD did a superb talk (on the river). Jugtown Plains has a **few rare or endangered species** within the watershed. We need to know more about the forest biology, geology, history. Hancock Lumber has a working forest there. The DOC has the easement. There has been no money to look at the biology. We need to raise awareness on this. The idea of a walk-and-talk about it was discussed.

DECISIONS:

1. Present the Crooked River Initiative at a Selectmen's meeting. Open to public. To be scheduled by Carrie

2. Try to have a Walk-and-Talk for the Jugtown Plains and Crooked River at the end of June. Need a speaker. Objective forest ecologist.

Bev said: Conservation is perfect in Hilton Head. Illumination has been carefully chosen to minimize light pollution.

Nadia will be revolving chair for next CCC meeting in April.