

HANOVER CONSERVATION COMMISSION
SITE VISIT, JANUARY 9, 2012
Bear Hill Conservancy, Grafton Turnpike

The Commission visited a prospective site for a bridge across Marshall Brook. Present were Commission members Ruth Bleyler, Ed Chamberlain, Jim Kennedy, Doug McIlroy and John Trummel. Representing Bear Hill Conservancy were Elizabeth Kilmarx, Ben Kilham (manager), and Bill Wanner (contractor).

The site is on a wide, easily passable, woods road that at one time was used as a snowmobile trail (#37 on the Hanover trails map). We were told that an old snowmobile bridge had been removed and the road widened during logging operations some years before Bear Hill acquired the property. The only remnants of the bridge are two steel beams lying beside the road. For logging, the stream had been forded in the west “lane” of the road; several large boulders were subsequently placed on one bank to bar continued fording there. High boulder piles backed by fill line both banks of the stream in the east lane. We surmised that these piles supported the old bridge—a span of some 20 feet.

Bear Hill does not itself intend to build a bridge. However, they are receptive to a request from Ken Milkie, who hopes to revive the trail so snowmobilers on Goose Pond can reach the state trail network. Milkie and/or a snowmobile club would have to pay for and build the bridge, perhaps with a grant from a source such as the state Recreational Trails Program. A wetlands permit would obviously be required; Kennedy said it would have to be at least a “Minimal” application, definitely not an “Expedited” application.

The view upstream from the bridge is quite pretty—a mountain stream with a small waterfall and mossy banks in pleasant woods. The crossing itself has a raw appearance, heavily impacted by the road and boulder piles. One potential issue was raised: to assure that a bridge would not be vulnerable to flood water. Otherwise the site appears to present no special problems.

No plans for the bridge are currently available, nor has any wetlands application been filed, so no Commission action is required. However, Milkie has asked whether there is any preference for type of bridge: steel, wood, or culvert. The Bear Hill representatives believed that the company did not have any specifications in mind—not even whether the bridge should be usable by motor vehicles. They did say, though, that this opinion should be checked with the principal, David Roby.

It should be noted that the bridge in the Town's Marshall Brook Natural Area, which the Commission endorsed at its December 2011 meeting, would be of little or no use to snowmobiles were this larger bridge not built.