

CONSERVATION COMMISSION
July 9, 2014 at 5:00 PM
Wilson's Landing

In attendance:

Members: Ed Chamberlain (Chair), Doug McIlroy, Peter Christie (Selectmen's Representative), Alan Saucier, Jim Kennedy, John Trummel

Staff: Vicki Smith

Others: Jeff Good, Judy Reeve, Nancy Carter, Carol Weingeist, Jan Lawrence, Barbara McIlroy

1. MANAGEMENT PLAN DISCUSSION WILSON'S LANDING

Jim Kennedy reported that he has met with NH DES to gather information about improvements that might be possible under previous permitting for Wilson's Landing since the project built was only a portion of what was approved. The Commission is informed by the comments at the last meeting, and written comments submitted by Carol Weingeist and John and Alice Creagh. The discussion followed an outline that had been developed for the meeting.

Uses Water-based: The landing was developed to support primarily recreational uses, boating and rowing. The Fire Department also relies on the Landing for access to the River for water and for aquatic rescue.

Nancy Carter was able to answer questions regarding the rowing daily schedule and regatta start and finish points. For some regattas, the launch takes place at Wilson's Landing, the athletes warm up on their way to the Chieftain and race back to Wilson's Landing. Dartmouth College boats will warm up on their way to Wilson's Landing and race back to the Chieftain or the Dartmouth boat house. Given the depth and width of the Connecticut River, conditions are not conducive to racing north of Wilson's Landing.

Weekday dual meets are usually with prep schools. Not many parents attend. No spectators are allowed on the dock. Spectators must park at Richmond School or Garipay Field. A rented bus makes the rounds. Most athletes are bused to FoHC. There are usually two bus loads out and two back. Students are also encouraged to carpool given the limited parking. The College has parking at their riverfront boat house and have room for spectators at their boat house. Some stand on the bridge. The Upper Valley Rowing Foundation expects four eights with one adult for every two boats to be using Wilson's Landing in the Fall. There will be usage 4-6:30 pm until Halloween. A small portable bleacher system for big races with lots of spectators was suggested.

The College retains the right to use some space at Fullington Farm for 20-30 canoes or kayaks. These will be stored in the barn. The owners of these boats are bound by the rights and uses in the operations plan and license. There are no canoe/kayak classes and no rentals taking place at Fullington Farm. Parking is on the FoHC property. Interactions between boaters and rowers are cordial. Races occur on weekdays for the most part so do not inconvenience many boaters.

Conditions of flow and flow amount many affect practices or races.

There appear to be no cartop boating issues.

The Commission would like to allow swimming “at a person’s own risk”. A ladder should be installed on the old dock. The Creaghs have suggested a safety ring for emergency use.

Land-based Uses-Sitting, bird watching, picnics, dogs: Picnic tables near the dock and also in the shade were suggested. Rather than having a dumpster, a carry in/carry out policy will be implemented. A kiosk with suggestions about use including picking up after your pet is planned. A shade structure was also suggested.

Access-pedestrian, bicycle, handicapped: ADA access to the old dock is not practical. A bike rack was suggested to encourage bike access. The trail along the edge of the river should be kept mowed and the northernmost section fixed so the subsidence holes are not so dangerous. It may be that shuttle service will extend to the Organic Farm when the College starts holding classes there, so public transit might be available to that point. An overflow parking area needs to be designated. The existing parking area is not adequate for the number of boat trailers on a busy day. Parking occurs along the access road. NH DES will not permit a board walk on the peninsula. Installation of a few benches was suggested for those visitors who wish to appreciate the marsh and enjoy the activity at the docks.

Amenities to support uses, emergency response: In addition to benches, kiosk, picnic tables, ladder for old dock, a blue phone or land line for emergency use was suggested. The location of the portable toilet could be changed and the fence removed to allow more visual access to the marsh.

Parking and Traffic: To accommodate boat trailers and cars, the parking lot will need better organization. Expansion of the “green” area is contemplated to create a shaded picnic area. A low fence could separate the parking from picnic area and maybe serve as seating.

Traffic calming on access road might be accomplished by narrowing the road at the causeway and installing a bridge or culvert to allow water and wildlife to pass through. This may serve as mitigation for any improvements suggested. In order for two eights to pass, 16' width on the access road is needed. "Caution pedestrian" signs might also be posted on the access road.

Entry visibility especially from the north needs to be addressed. A brown sign with a boat launch symbol was suggested for Route 10.

Natural Features:

Wilson's Landing is a flood plain and is regulated by the Army Corps of Engineers, as well as NH DES and the Town.

Drainage and shoreline stability/erosion are not major issues at Wilson's Landing. There is some gulying of the road and gravel does get washed down into the River, so work on the causeway should address the gulying.

Wetland enhancement/restoration could occur with creation of the aquatic passage through the causeway.

Natural vegetation/invasive plants: Barbara McIlroy showed the Commission a piece of purple loose strife with a Galerucella beetle munching it. She reminded the Commission of the effort to raise beetles and release them at Wilson's Landing. She concluded that the successful beetle population was keeping the loosestrife under control. The idea of "respecting native vegetation" needs to be communicated. There is honeysuckle which should be removed.

Improvements and Implementation: Elements of the improved Wilson's Landing Plan will be added to a map. The maintenance responsibilities and costs must be considered before the improvements are implemented.

2. OTHER BUSINESS

Barbara McIlroy outlined the Deer Herd Management session she is trying to organize for September 8. She has interacted with Todd Bittner from the Cornell Plantation. She would like to hold two events, one for large landowners and one for the general public. The Mayer Room has been reserved.

Ed offered to help organize the event. Barbara would like suggestions for panelists.

3. ADJOURNMENT: The meeting adjourned at 6:45 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,
Vicki Smith, Scribe