

OFFICIAL CONSERVATION COMMISSION MEETING MINUTES

July 9, 2015

S. Couture called the meeting to order at 4:00 p.m.

Attendance: Steve Couture, Chair; JoCarol Woodburn, member; Phil Fitanides, member; Deborah Miville, Alternate; David Ross, Town Council Rep.

Excused: David Hess, member; Cindy Robertson Vice-Chair

Public Input

None.

Meeting Minutes

J. Woodburn motioned to approve the meeting minutes for June 8, 2015. Seconded by P. Fitanides. Motion passed. D. Miville and D. Ross abstained.

a. Merrimack Riverfront Trail System Project

R. LaBranche: I'm here for Dan Tatem. I'm Rene LaBranche from Stantec here with Mike Leach. We have a list of what we've accomplished to date on the Merrimack Riverfront Trail Design project. We've made good progress. The Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species (RTE) Survey is completed. There were no rare plants and no eagle nesting sites found in the project area. There were no Blanding's turtles or Hog Nosed snakes found, but we did determine a prime habitat for Blanding's turtles.

M. Leach: Northern long eared bat is a concern. That's a new listing as of May 4th.

R. LaBranche: The restriction means cutting in fall and winter instead of spring. The project weaves through wetlands so that's when construction would be anyway. We got comments from Mike Marchand relative to Fish and Game not to build the waterfront section of trail. Today Dan talked to him possibly about doing a walking trail to access it, not the full wide trail that ATVs and snowmobiles could access. Mike was receptive to that.

D. Ross: Even if a walking trail is there, someone could use a two-wheeled vehicle so that's a concern.

R. LaBranche: We've talked a lot about signage that would help deter that. There's a culvert that needs to be replaced. Fish and Game proposed RCP pipe (concrete) rather than HDPE (plastic).

M. Leach: The concrete is better in moist conditions and it's easier for the turtles to hang onto.

R. LaBranche: Wetland delineation and GPS flag locations have been completed. We tweaked some of the trail locations to minimize wetland impacts. We've shown that change on a revised map. The Phase 1A Archaeological Survey is complete. They didn't identify any actual artifacts but determined it needed a Phase 1B. They did a series of small test pits but didn't find anything. A report will be issued by July 13th. A topographic survey has been completed, which we just got back today. The next step is to look at that and calculate the impacts. The DES Shoreland permit is drafted.

M. Leach: There are two waivers we discussed. One has to do with the Prime Wetland. Under the trail application you are allowed to ask for a waiver from that. The trail notification permit process is about 14-21 days. There are two caveats. One is the Prime Wetland and the other is under the trail notification, we will have to ask for a waiver from the trail crossing centerlines because they are wider than what is allowed. If they aren't receptive to the waiver, we would seek an expedited review. The issue is that the method of construction we recommend (the mats) is a temporary impact, but they still consider that a "fill." Either way, timing will be similar it will just be more paperwork. We will meet with them next week on that.

R. LaBranche: We have a scheduled meeting with DES on July 14th at 10:00am in Concord. If anyone is available to come, please let us know. In reviewing the conservation easement, it says that if there's timber cutting it needs a forestry plan.

S. Couture: I believe if it's for trails it's not an issue.

R. LaBranche: I think we need to get SPNHF engaged as soon as possible so we can touch base on those issues.

M. Leach: There are caveats in the deed we need to make sure are not issues, so we need SPNHF in the loop.

S. Couture: The way that I understand it is that if it's relative to the trails and we follow the baseline documentation, as long as we get our permits, we need to notify them before we start.

R. LaBranche: We will get in touch with them either tomorrow or Monday.

S. Couture: Is the Geotech for the primary bridge?

R. LaBranche: Yes, we will be making two types of borings for the bridge and boardwalks. Do you have any questions?

P. Fitantes: I have a list that I received from Carolyn at the beginning when you gave us a price quote on materials. For the amount of money we are allotting for materials on this project, I want to avoid vagueness. I want to clarify the pricing on materials.

S. Couture: We aren't quite at that stage yet. We will have a bid process and handle those details at that time.

P. Fitanides: I just want to know the types of gravel, concrete, soils, and the type of materials on everything. I want to see complete details on the materials and costs.

R. LaBranche: We will have detailed drawings that show that. We will have a complete design for all those things. When we get the bids back we will give them to you to review and you will be able to look at all that.

D. Miville: Will you come back and give us updates every so often?

R. LaBranche: Yes, we will come back and update regularly with plans for everyone to get your feedback. We will be giving a status report and financial report to show how much has been spent.

D. Miville: The meeting on July 14th that you mentioned, what would the Conservation Commission member be expected to do?

R. LaBranche: Just listening, but I like to have someone there because it shows DES that there are real people involved in this that care. And then you could report back to the Conservation Commission about the meeting. As far as I know, DES is supportive of this project.

i. Proposed Trails Layout

S. Couture: This walking trail connection, parallel to the island, was originally going to be a 12' gravel trail. Fish and Game raised a red flag on it because of potential eagle impacts. They did mention a hiking trail which we didn't give much thought at that time, but since the easement is for conservation and recreation, this seems like a good balance.

R. LaBranche: There would be a meandering walking trail, avoiding the trees, along the shoreline into the field.

S. Couture: Are people comfortable with that being an alternative?

D. Ross: I don't know if it puts any kind of hesitation on Fish and Game's part. It could be seen as a separate project down the road. We could completely avoid it altogether to err on the side of caution if they are particularly concerned about eagle habitat.

R. LaBranche: In talking to Mike Marchand, he was receptive and supportive of the idea so it didn't seem like it would hold it up.

M. Leach: The only caveat is that Mike wants to do a site walk on whatever hiking trail is selected and make sure it's suitable.

S. Couture: If that happens would we be informed on when that walk is?

R. LaBranche: Yes.

S. Couture: Are there any other questions?

P. Fitanides: These maps are nice but when you present them to us, could you have them in more explicit detail?

R. LaBranche: We will have actual plans and drawing that will be more detailed. This is just an overview now. We could set up a FTP site for you to access the info online.

S. Couture: I imagine a landscape architect will get involved and be able to work with us?

R. LaBranche: Yes, of course. We will be back here in 2-3 weeks with some discussion and some ideas. We can look at our project schedule to see how much info we can put together so we have a productive meeting. We will send out a link to the FTP link when we have it up.

S. Couture: Between now and our next meeting, will you need the Conservation Commission to sign off on anything?

M. Leach: I can't think of anything right now.

S. Couture: thanks for the update and for pushing things through. You've only been at this ten days and have done incredible work.

ii. Robie's Open House Table – July 25th

S. Couture: They are opening Robie's on Saturday July 25th from 8am-2pm, but from 9am-12pm we are advertised as being available to talk about this project. I'm willing to be there some or all of the time. If people are comfortable answering questions, they could volunteer as well.

J. Woodburn: Where do we plan to be by the end of the year with this?

S. Couture: At the very least, we will have the DRED grant portion complete to build the trail head. We will get it all approved and permitted this year.

J. Woodburn: We need to direct people to the website to get more information.

S. Couture: For Robie's, we could do a display board with a map and a fact sheet to hand out. There was a front page article in the Banner today about the Merrimack Riverfront project. Green Gold Farm has the right to farm the corn field there. For our LCHIP grant, we want to make a pitch that there is agricultural use there. We need to figure out what category to apply for under LCHIP.

C. Cronin: Green Gold has been farming the corn field since May. We asked if they would be interested in haying the fields and they said yes, they would be interested in whatever farming we wanted. I called them again this week and left a voicemail to let them know we would be interested in them haying the fields and they are welcome to go out there and see what might

look suitable. I asked them if we could have some kind of agreement written up to say that they are farming because it would be beneficial for the LCHIP grant to have that.

P. Fitanides: Since that's a farm, what would be the possibility of having someone from the Town or food bank grow food there?

S. Couture: It's possible. We do want continued agricultural use.

iii. Schedule Public Informational Meeting on Merrimack Riverfront

S. Couture: At some point we should have a public informational meeting about what we are proposing for work out there, similar to the Clay Pond meeting. We can notify abutters. I'm thinking about August or September to do that. Hopefully by then we will have some final plans.

b. Update on Conservation Easement Internship

i. Status Report

M. Paul: My name is Mila and I'm the conservation easement monitoring intern. Thank you for wanting to find out what's going on with the easement monitoring. It's good to see you again.

M. Paul presented a PowerPoint presentation discussing the easements she needs to visit, the tree medallions she designed, Public Works equipment that would be suitable for conservation trail work, information on gates and locks for Clay Pond, and a report on the easements she has monitored and her recommendations for the properties.

S. Couture: Thank you for presenting that. Clearly you've identified a lot of work we need to do in detail.

ii. Easement Monitoring Report

S. Couture: We have you for three more weeks so I want to discuss the priorities. One priority is making sure the easement monitoring forms are compatible with the GRANIT GIS system. The fields should match. Other priorities are finishing up monitoring properties and the Clay Pond gates.

C. Cronin: Also, working on the Excel database of the easements for our file.

M. Paul: And I'm looking at finding survey maps and boundary descriptions.

S. Couture: Another project is making sure the boundaries are marked. We should tentatively plan for another meeting on July 27th. We could get a final report and you could give us an estimate of number and cost of medallions.

M. Paul: Is there a process for developing a procedure for what to do about breaches?

D. Ross: A list of what needs to be addressed would be a good start.

D. Miville: Who has the responsibility for addressing breaches?

S. Couture: We do, but I don't know how we would go about that. I would imagine we could work with Code Enforcement. I think the next step would be sitting down with Dean and other town staff to figure out how to address this.

D. Ross: If we have that list we could show them how much work there is and it's something we need to be working on before it accumulates.

C. Cronin: We could ask other Towns and other active Conservation Commissions how they deal with it or reach out to the NHACC.

D. Miville: With all the work Mila did on the Dalton Brook property, would it be possible for her to either send her paperwork or come to a Parks and Rec Advisory Board meeting? They always say they need to talk about that property but they don't have a lot of information.

M. Paul: I would be happy to do that.

S. Couture: If she has the time, of course. I think there's a lot of unfinished business. Carolyn can check with Dean to see if there's a way to extend the internship. She will look into that and the Town hiring rules. Thank you so much for the presentation. We have learned so much about our properties.

c. Annual Town Report

S. Couture: JoCarol and Cindy volunteered to work on this and the deadline is the end of the month. Maybe Carolyn can follow up with them.

d. Other business: Invoices, Correspondences, Etc.

i. Reimbursement for flagging tape for easement monitoring

D. Ross motioned to approve reimbursement for flagging tape in the amount of \$9.94 to Carolyn. Seconded by P. Fitanides. Motion passed.

S. Couture: That can come out of our operating budget.

P. Fitanides motioned to adjourn at 6:10pm. Seconded by D. Ross. Motion passed.

Respectfully submitted,

Carolyn Cronin

Assistant Planner/Conservation Commission Staff Support

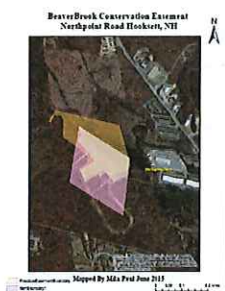
Easement monitoring review:
By Mila Paul, Easement Monitoring
Intern for Hooksett Conservation
Commission. **Yet to be monitored:**

- Carriage Hill
 - Glencrest
 - Pike Industries
 - Beaver Brook (2016)
- Easement boundary descriptions will need to be located for each easement, in addition to the survey maps.
 - Easements ideally will have boundaries carefully located and marked with capped metal pipe and boundary pipe, as well as medallions.

Beaver Brook Easement

- Beaver Brook will not be monitored this year due to construction.
- The easement boundary there can be confirmed for mapping and monitoring purposes soon.
- It would be good to do the habitat management referred to in the easement as soon as possible, since there is already a managed shrub zone near the easement.
- If the site is as it appears in the most recent aerial, **there would be an opportunity to apply the habitat management** described in the easement and connect it to the shrub site nearby.

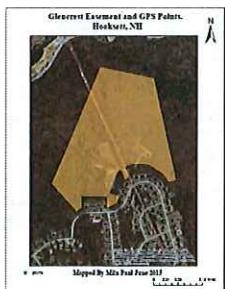
Beaver Brook with possible boundary areas noted.



Carriage Hill easement is near an area of University Heights and Head's Pond. This one will be an easy monitoring visit.



Glencrest will be monitored this July.



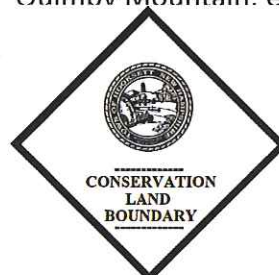
Pike Industries easement will be monitored this July.



Medallions For Conservation Easements



Non-easement Conservation Lands: Heads Pond, Pinnacle, Clay Pond, Ouimbv Mountain. etc.



Town lands not designated as conservation, still in need of boundary



The company recommended for medallions used locally:



Recommendations:

- Approve medallion design: dark green on white field?
- Acquire aluminum nails, battery-powered hand drill, 200-foot surveyor's tape
- Once boundaries are documented for each property, surveyed locations can be determined for use.
- Volunteers from the commission, easement monitors, etc, anyone involved in management of the lands indicated can help to add the medallions.
- Boundary paint and metal rebar with caps can be used for marking boundaries.

One of many tractors at Public



Listed on town website for Public Works

- Tractor/trailer
- Excavator
- Front end loader
- Bobcat
- Backhoe
- Trash truck/parker
- Doter
- Ute
- Hand tools
- Light construction equip
- Publicly parker controls
- Light utility vehicles
- Pickup trucks
- Sander
- Motor vehicles
- Siewalk plow
- Mowers
- Trimmers
- Chain saw
- Hand and power tools
- Two way radio

Parks and Recreation's John Deere Excavator: backhoe, bucket loader, auger and brush attachments. A brush hog can be added.



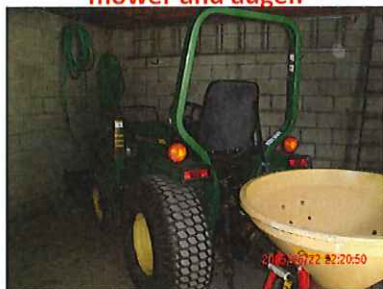
One of a few brush hogs at Parks and Recreation.



Chipper at Public Works



The Kubota at Parks and Recreation can have many attachments, including rotary mower and auger.

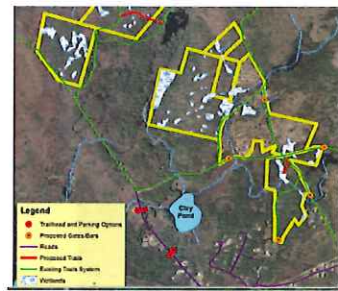
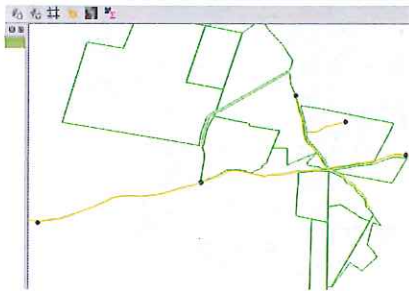


Public Works' Bucket loader.



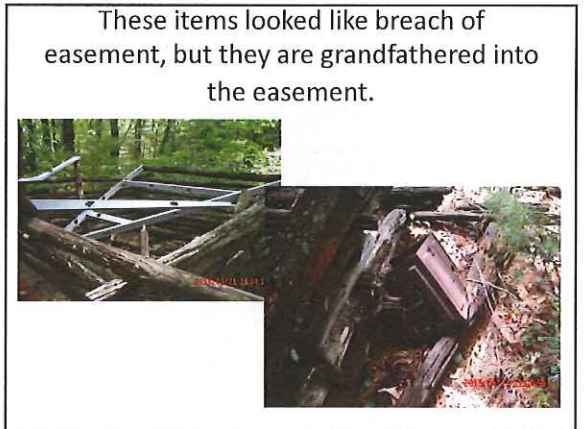
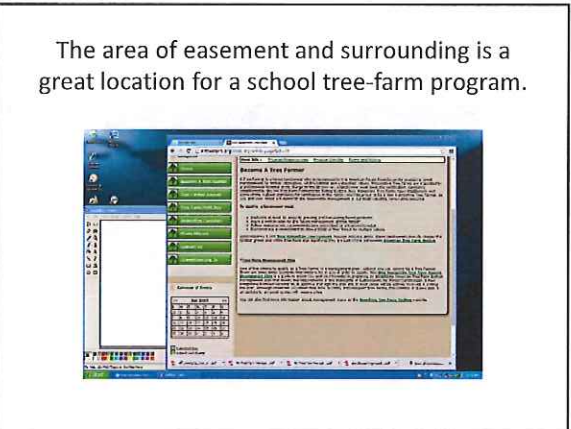
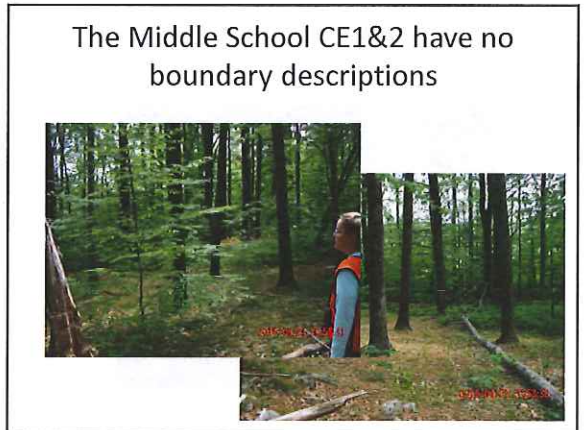
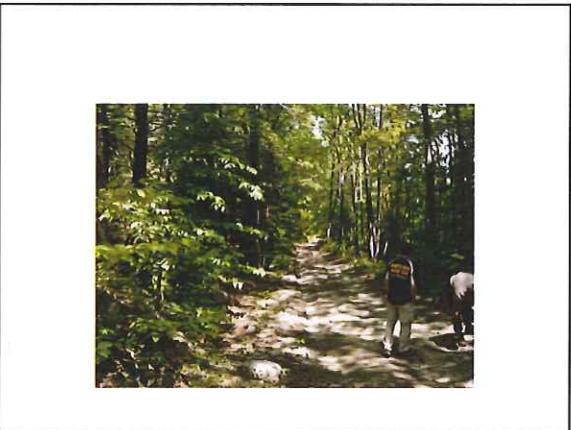
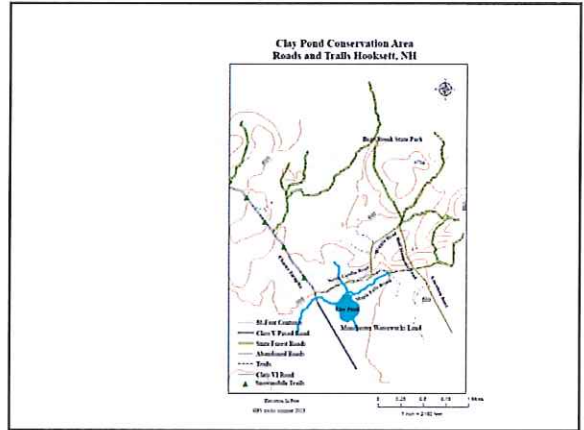
Recommendations

- Use equipment to remove debris and trash in easements when needed.
- Use equipment to smooth rutted roads, add gravel, manage vegetation, and other areas of management on easements and conservation lands.
- As much as possible, try to incorporate these activities into regular duties of Parks and Recreation and Public Works, rather than outside contract.



Pipe gates locks





Plenty of confusing flagging, and some nice stone walls.



The edge of the CE1 is in a big wetland, so only part of the boundary can actually be monitored on foot.



There are some medallions near CE2, but they belong to another easement.

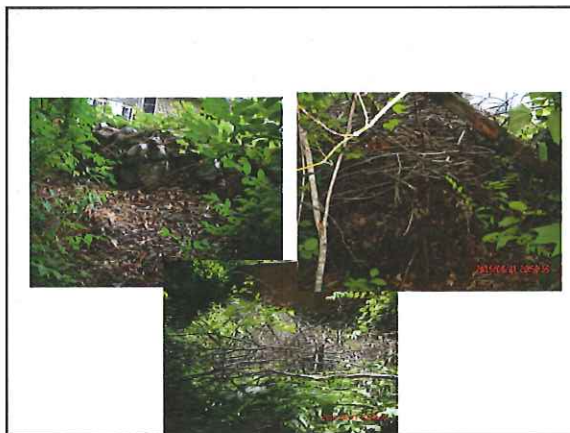
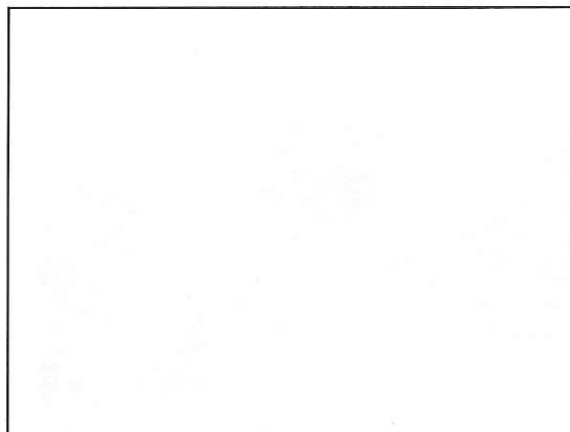


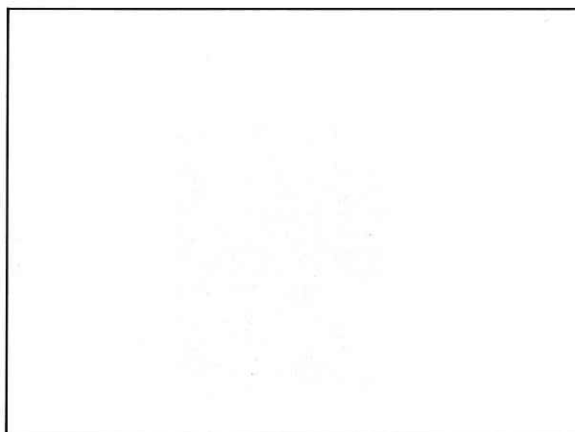
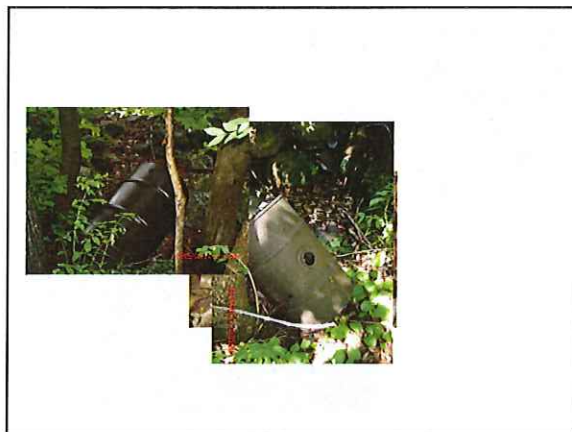
CE2 has a trail from SAU 15 connecting to CE1



Recommendations for Middle School Easements

- Attain survey maps and any associated documents for both middle school easements **and any other easements** that will be monitored: Holden Surveying? DES? Anywhere else?
- Map trails
- Management plan for easements, referring to any management templates for the rest of the forested area between the two.
- Medallions





Dube's Pond:

- The description for this easement is very confusing.
- The town could resurvey.

Dube's Pond Easements

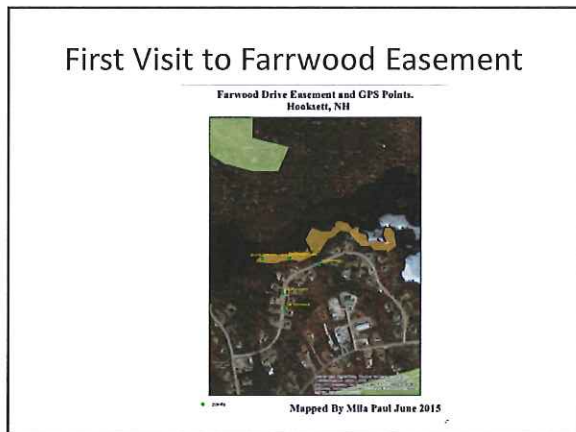
- The pond is a site for recreation such as fishing and paddling. A trail goes along the 30-foot easement.
- There are three easements described in the easement deed.





Recommendations for Dube's Pond

- Survey of easements to see so that they can be described more accurately on the easement deed.
- Breach: Communicate with landowner further.
- Harvest and sale of girdled timber, with appropriate payments to landowner and possible seedling replanting Spring 2016.
- Trails map and management plan for the easements? Discuss with landowner?
- Medallions.



Clear access, granite bounds to start with from survey.

One landowner has marked part of the easement.

Wildlife active on the edge of Dube's Pond on Farrwood side.



Blueberries everywhere, still not ripe.



JoCarol agrees to monitor next year.



Recommendations

- The orange markers were set out by one Farrwood landowner Dan Beaudet, who agreed to work with JoCarrol. Markers can be adjusted or replaced with medallions and monuments once the easement boundary is determined for sure.
- Medallions can be added at that point, with one near the monument at Allen Kessler's back yard.
- Entry to land bridge could be included in annual monitoring.

Dalton Brook Easement



Dalton Brook Easement

- The area is easy to access via the gated, railed and paved walkway behind the Goodwill.
- There is a grassy trail around the pond that was at one time maintained with a wheeled vehicle.
- Some tile drainage or other management of marshy areas is still evident.
- The sites across the brook include a forested area with some trails in the woods.

Some drainage materials were added.
Permits must be on file.



Trail around the pond was managed by
a 2-wheeled vehicle.



Marsh surrounds the brook.



Trail overlooking marsh and brook.



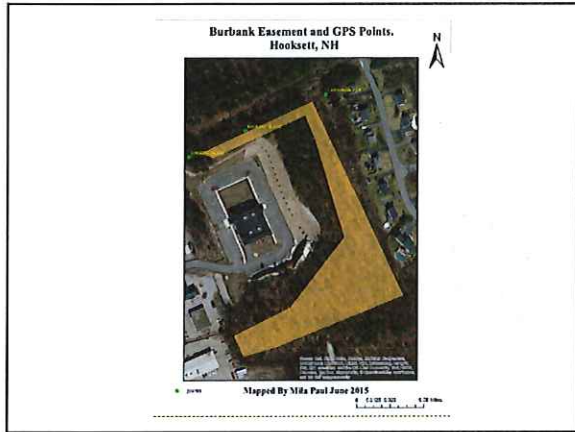
Trails near or within easement.



**Recommendations: Use for education
and recreation.**

- One side of the property monitoring will be completed in a second visit to the NW corner.

The Dalton Brook
easement can be used as
a great relaxation and
educational resource.
Wildlife signs found close
to pond trail: beaver
lodge, turtles, fish, birds,
deer.



Recommendations

- Verify with surveyor about logging debris within easement.
- Have any breach material removed.
- Map trails.
- Medallions.

Logging debris found across the easement.

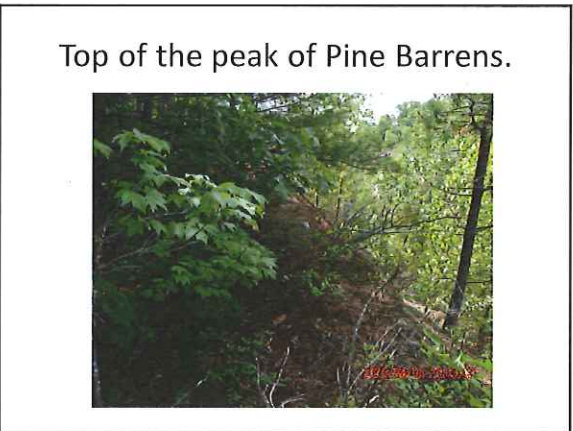
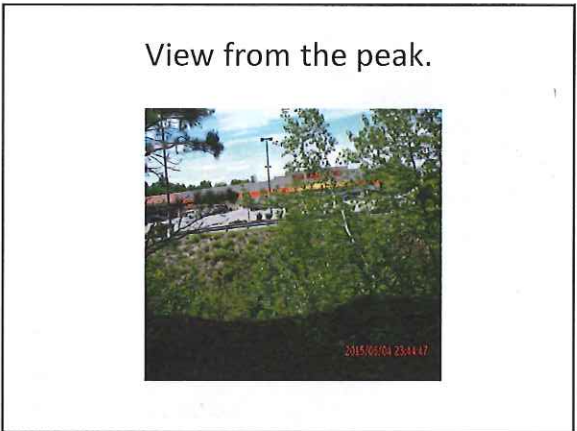
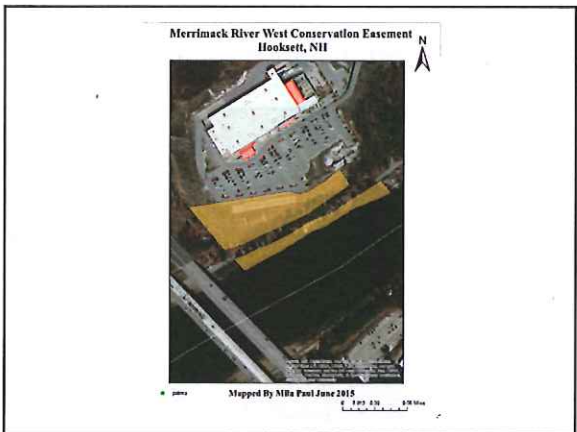
Grandfathered bench.

Road to abutter's land.

Terraced stone walls.



- Recommendations:
- Re-monitor the logging slash, confirm location within/without the easement boundary.
 - Inquire with the powerline company and any other likely party about responsibility of slash left in the easement.
 - Removal of slash from easement if appropriate.



**Recommendations for
Merrimack River West**

- Inquire about timeline for drainage installment, permits.
- Medallions.
- Include in a pine barrens study with the schools?

**Final monitoring program
recommendations:**

- Determine first level process of dealing with breach of easement.
- Begin marking easement boundaries with survey and materials.
- Involve the schools in use of the easements as much as possible.
- Consider management plans and Tree Farm status for woodlots and wooded areas in and around easements.
- Monitor annually, review monitoring forms separately from the commission meetings.

