

Jaffrey Conservation Commission

Minutes

Meeting Held at Town Offices February 25, 2015

Present: Carolyn D. Garretson, Chairman, Elizabeth Webster, Recorder, Matthew Amadon, Pamela Armstrong, Nora Barton Bryant, Michael George, William Graf, Francis McBride, Michael Soleau, Patricia T. Weiner, Tom Rothermel, Select Board Representative

Regrets: Nancy Beiter

Guests: Brooke Smart, USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and Sean Sweeney, Headwaters Hydrology PLLC - Engineer & Environmental Consultant

I. The meeting convened at 7:00 p.m.

II. Brooke Smart of USDA introduced Sean Sweeney of Headwaters Hydrology. Mr. Sweeney presented a proposal to remove the earthen dam on Stony Brook, which creates Ainsworth Pond. The pond is on the property held by the Frederick W. Greene Estate, and lies within a USDA Conservation Easement. Constructed in 1963, the dam created a pond of approximately 15 acres. With the deterioration of the outflow pipe over time, the level of the pond has fallen, and it now covers approximately 4 acres. Because of its size and depth, the water in the pond is relatively warm, and has low dissolved oxygen levels. The culvert through the dam now hovers approximately six inches above the current water level, preventing the free passage of fish and amphibians down Stony Brook. The dam itself is considered by NHDES to be deficient, with an outflow too low to meet current regulatory requirements, and is judged to pose a safety risk to the downstream road culvert and particularly in the event of a hundred-year flood. Options for remediation include: repair of the outlet pipe, partial removal of the dam to a height of six feet, or total removal of the dam. Repair of the outflow pipe or reduction of the dam height would require continued maintenance and do not address the safety concern of the overtopping of the dam in the event of a major flood.

The Wetlands Reserve Program of the USDA is prepared to fund the removal of the Ainsworth Pond dam, and the restoration of wetlands to their natural state. The earthen dam, outflow pipe, and culvert would all be removed. The spillway would be filled; the original stream channel and floodplain would be restored and planted with appropriate vegetation. It is believed that doing so will eliminate the safety risk of dam failure, while improving the water quality and the benefit to wildlife.

Removal of the dam would result in a reduction of potential flooding above the dam site and would remove the possibility of a wave resulting from a dam breach, but, in the event of a hundred-year flood, would increase the flood water levels at the two points where Gilmore Pond Road crosses Stony Brook, and at the three residences adjacent to Stony Brook. Removal of the dam would have no impact on FEMA flood maps or flood insurance rates for those homeowners.

The proposed timeline would have the work underway in July, with planting completing the job in November. Permits need to be obtained from NHDES for Wetland, Shoreland, and Alteration of Terrain, as well as authorization from the Army Corps of Engineers. A recommendation for an Expedited Permit is sought from the Jaffrey Conservation Commission. Public Comment forms are available, and may be submitted until March 30, 2015.

Questions from those attending:

Will the construction in July adversely affect the nesting Osprey? Letters from Christian Martin of NH Audubon Society, and Kim Tuttle of NH Dept. of Fish and Wildlife expressed the view that the nestlings would have hatched by the time construction began, and that the success or failure of the parents would depend upon their toleration of noise and human proximity. It was their opinion that the ospreys may continue to use the nest site in the long term.

Is the funding of this project through the USDA using Federal tax dollars? Yes; the Wetlands Reserve Program seeks to return conserved wetlands to their original condition whenever possible.

Will this proposal and the bid documents be available online? Four copies of the proposal have been provided to the Town. Chairman Garretson agreed to provide access to the proposal and other documents. Bid documents are available as hard copies.

III. The minutes of the meeting held January 28, 2015, were approved as presented.

IV. A motion to adjourn was approved at 8:42 p.m. The next meeting is set for March 25, 2015 at the Town Offices at 7:00 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Elizabeth Webster