

**TOWN OF JAFFREY
Jaffrey, New Hampshire**

**Ad hoc Open Space Committee
Meeting Minutes
March 31, 2010**

Present: Chairman Kresge, Members Graf, Doane

Absent: Garretson

WORKING SESSION

Chairman Kresge called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

Names of potential contacts for upcoming natural resources focus group were discussed. After consideration of the interests of pond associations, it was agreed that they were a better fit for the water sports/activities focus group rather than the natural resources group. Diffuse interests in the remaining groups looking at natural resources, conservation, rural character, etc. will be harder to define, and will probably require more concerted effort by committee in order to encourage attendees.

The Monadnock Conservancy Conservation Leadership Training program in Keene was discussed. Member Graf indicated that he had the training materials from last year's session, and could share them with the committee.

The committee reviewed some of the discussion items from last meeting, noting in particular the issues of having to remove land from Current Use in order to build agricultural structures, encouragement of cooperative uses where lands are shared/rented by landowners for various activities, and the importance of corridors to provide linkages between protected lands.

HUNTING FOCUS GROUP 7:30 p.m.

Citizens involved with hunting activities attended the meeting. Chairman Kresge provided a brief introduction on the objectives for the committee and described the process being used for the focus group sessions. The remainder of the meeting was devoted to conversation regarding the natural resource values important for hunting in Jaffrey and general issues and concerns for hunters. Specific discussion items are summarized below.

Focus Group Discussion Topics:

1. What are the land values most important to your group?

Larger contiguous areas of forested land. Hardwood forests, especially oaks – acorns provide a food source for game.

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“Hunters are the real conservationists, that’s what we’re all about. I never got my money’s worth out of a hunting license, that’s not why you do it. I go out there for the experience of being out in the woods. You just go out there and you’re a part of Nature ... and get to watch bobcats running around after squirrels.”

2. What is the current availability/adequacy of resources for your activity?

Primary hunting activities in Jaffrey are deer and wild turkey, with smaller amounts of upland game and waterfowl. Several large landowners in town are supportive of hunting, including Sawyer’s fields, which are stocked with pheasants by the state.

Access to the land is one of the primary issues. Partially this is physical access – a place to park when heading into the woods, not having to cross house lots in order to get to back woodlots – but also is an issue of landowner support, not posting their land against hunting. Maintaining access to the land often comes down to an issue of respect – although not required, it’s nice to ask permission of landowner, treat the land properly, be courteous.

3. Are there any particular areas of vulnerability for resources required for your activity?

Availability of land for hunting has decreased over the years due to a combination of people posting their land, and new construction. Shooting is not allowed within 300 ft. of a structure or a road, so new construction limits the area available for hunting.

Upland game has decreased over the years, probably due to a combination of loss of habitat, increasing coyote population, and competition for resources from increasing wild turkey population.

4. Where are the lands in Jaffrey most suitable for your activity?

Mt. Monadnock area is open for hunting as long as you’re not shooting near any trails. Several parcels off Great Road. Basically any sizable parcel of undeveloped land.

5. Does your activity lend itself to a multiple use scenario?

Most farmers are supportive of hunting on their land, as long as hunters are considerate, don’t leave trash etc.

Observation was made that since hunting is a relatively short season (~ 6 weeks), it doesn’t necessarily overlap with other competing uses such as snowmobiling, skiing, etc. Also, hikers usually stick to

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trails while hunters are going further into the woods, so not necessarily a conflict. Also depends upon type of hunting, due to limited range, bowhunters aren't really a threat to other users of the land.

Clashes of interests are often more due to philosophical differences, rather than physical conflicts.

6. *Are there other uses that are incompatible with your activity?*

Housing development.

7. *What is the general sense of future participation in your activity? Expanding? Contracting?*

Strong sales of hunting licenses, overall participation staying more or less steady. Active state programs to encourage hunting among young people.

In addition to above items, there was a discussion on whether or not putting land into tax-favored Current Use status imposes a moral obligation to leave the land open to public use. Suggestion was made that it should be a quid pro quo – if you're asking the rest of the town to shoulder a heavier tax burden in order to leave your land in Current Use, then there should be a public benefit, and access should be granted for hiking, hunting, etc.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 8:25 p.m. Next meeting will be on April 7.

Submitted:

Mark W. Kresge
Chairman, Ad hoc Open Space Committee