

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, May 24, 2022, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

Regular (voting) members: **Jon Campbell**, Dale Chayes, **Zanna Gruber** (Vice-Chair), Aaron Moore, **Bruce Rachman**, Laurie Ullmann, **John Watlington** (Chair), **Joe Will** (Minutes)

Associate (nonvoting) members: Josh Haines, Everett Kenerson, Philip Keyes, Gary Kilpatrick, Mel Lima, Bob Mackin, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Todd Tsakiris, **Tom Wolf**

Others:

Bettina Abe (Acton Natural Resources), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Alex Kozlov** (ABRHS student), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Bob Walton** (Acton citizen)

Opening

John opened the meeting at 7 p.m.

Regular Business

Review and approval of March 15 and April 19 minutes

Both accepted as submitted.

Concerns from the public

None

Membership update, including 06/30 expirations

Last night's Select Board (SB) agenda included discussion of tenures of LSC Associates: Why not allow Associates to have three-year tenures instead of just one-year tenures, as renewing every year places a burden on the large number of LSC Associates whom the LSC needs very much? Per Susan, SB member Jim Snyder-Grant likes the idea of a one-year term for the first year and three-year terms after that, and she believes that is what the SB chose to allow. Bettina will check with Dean Charter, the SB's LSC Liaison. She will also get clarification on whether the three-year term would apply this year to Associates who have already been stewards through at least their second year. Would they now have another two years remaining on their terms?

– Another concern was whether an LSC member, Associate or Regular, could be from outside Acton. Bettina thinks that the SB feels this is acceptable, but she will also check on this. A Maynard resident, Pat Cavanaugh, has in the past expressed interest in overseeing the Canoe Launch but now has a new job. Bettina will follow up with him as to whether he would still be interested in joining the LSC as the Canoe Launch steward. Susan recalled that Ken Appel, a former Acton resident who has moved to Maynard, had wanted to be on the LSC a couple years ago. He helped build the 180-ft boardwalk on the Assabet River Blue and Green Trail.

– The Town Clerk has sent out notices to LSC members whose terms expire June 30. Bettina will double check with everyone on the Clerk's list so that they will know for sure what they need to do.

– The LSC should be prepared to nominate and elect officers for the coming year at next month's meeting.

Invasive plants 2022, Part 3

John shared information using the PowerPoint slides shown below.

– Glossy Buckthorn

Glossy Buckthorn ([Frangula alnus](#))

A small tree which can create thickets.

Spreads mostly by seeds (birds).

Regrows from root fragments.

Pull small saplings (< 3/4" stem diameter)

Cut larger saplings (< 3" diameter)

Gird trees (>3" diameter)



Check: Red root, smooth bark w. lenticels, pink center in older wood

Right now, the berries are just starting to form, but the plants have fully leafed out and glossy buckthorn is easy to identify. The leaf has a smooth edge while most similar native plants have jagged edges. Its purple berries will come later. Since it spreads by seeds, the time to get the berry-carrying plants is before the birds start eating from them. How you “get” the plant depends on its size. The following slide describes the technique that John has found most useful for eliminating glossy buckthorn:

Technique: “Deadheading” an Invasive Plant

My expression for removing most of the plant, but retaining a single (tall) stem for new growth to favor. Smaller stems are cut at the base.

This drains the energy out of the root system, instead of breaking it up and then having to deal with root fragments re-sprouting. It is similar to girding.

Minimizes the “Hydra” problem, by focusing the plant’s regrowth on the single high stem instead of numerous growths at the base (which still happen, but aren’t vigorous).

Makes re-clearing an area easy (clear differentiation between saplings to pull and regrowth from old roots to cut)

Eventually, the dead tall stems can be broken off or chainsawed down

Used for Glossy Buckthorn, Winged Euonymus, and Bush Honeysuckle



John cuts glossy buckthorn high up to avoid it becoming a tripping hazard. Doing so directs the plant’s regrowth into its highest node. Deadheading also helps to identify plants with big roots that need to be cut. Girding works on larger, older glossy buckthorn:

Technique: Girdling a Tree or large Shrub

This is a useful technique for larger Glossy Buckthorn and Norway Maples. Great when the tree is covered w. Grapevine. This should never be used near a trail --- it creates a falling dead tree hazard.

But away from a trail, it adds to the standing dead wood --- BONUS!

Cut through the bark completely around the trunk in two circles, at least 6 inches apart. Then remove the bark between the cuts.

The tree will die over the next couple of years. You will need to cut off new shoots appearing below the gird for the first year or two.

Girding seems like a great technique to use with the burning bush invasive. Because burning bush grows out so much, John cuts lower branches as close to the base as is comfortable for girding — generally about a foot off the ground. From the bottom of the cut to the top should be about 4 to 6 inches to not allow the plant to heal itself. What type of tool to use for girding? It depends on the plant. For a Norway maple, John uses a pair of hand cutters to run around the trunk and cut through the bark; then uses the tip to pry off the bark. Sometimes a bow saw works better with thicker bark.

Once cut, there is need for dealing with the debris created:

Technique: Disposing of the debris from cutting invasives

The recommendation is to form brush piles, away from trails, in locations which don't have invasive plants already growing there. Create multiple brush piles instead of one large one.

A number of invasives will stay alive if their cut remnants are placed in water or muddy soil. But if kept out of water/soil, they can be left where removed.

Most piles will disappear in a couple of years.

Garlic Mustard is an exception, as it may still produce seed if placed in a brush pile. It should be disposed of in dark trash bags w. "Do not compost" stickers. Ask the town for those, or use masking tape and a permanent marker.

The brush piles should be about 4-6 ft long and not too tall.

04/19 Senior Community Service Day redux; 05/01 ACT Wright Hill Spring Service Day redux; 05/10 chainsaw training redux; 05/16 Town Meeting redux

– Tom had seven AB High School seniors join him at Nashoba Brook's Wheeler Lane trailhead where they laid cardboard and bark mulch around the stone foundation to keep the weeds from encroaching. They ran out of cardboard, so they didn't cover all that they intended, but Tom intends to complete the job himself with some left-over bark mulch.

– Jon had eight seniors, including seven members of the high school Alpine ski team, at Guggins Brook. On the trail in from Mass Avenue, they put down some gravel and then bark mulch on top. Further in on the blue trail in the northeast part of Guggins, they corduroyed and then topped with bark mulch a 20-ft muddy gap between two relatively new Eagle Scout projects.

– ACT hosted 31 people at Wright Hill, including several enrolled in Advanced Placement Environmental Science at ABRHS. They worked two hours and cleared both sides of the stone all. A week later, Jody and Jim Salem wrapped the stone wall in black plastic.

– Jon, Aaron Moore, Dale Chayes, and Jim Salem attended a "good" chainsaw training session, so we have three new sawyers, Jon, Aaron, and Jim. The training is run by MIIA, the insurance people, and the MIIA representative mentioned something to the effect that the insurance did not cover volunteers. Jon thought she was talking about workers' compensation, but he wanted to double check. Bettina assured the LSC that it was not about liability as LSC members are covered the same as Town employees by the Town's liability insurance. That's the reason Town committee members are Town employees and not simply volunteers.

– At Town Meeting, CPA funding for the Heath Hen Meadow Boardwalk was approved. Bettina will follow up with RDS Foundry to see if it is still in business and that it hasn't raised its prices beyond what has been budgeted for the project. The Open Space funding (\$600K) also was approved.

Parcel issues

– Spring Hill long boardwalk

Bob shared his concerns about the depressed area in the yellow trail near its junction with the red trail from Jay Lane. The approximately 30-ft section tends to collect and retain water and thus is quite muddy. He and the Committee suggested some possible reasons for this and possible solutions to consider, including that the LSC add a 15-20 ft extension to the present boardwalk, or use bog bridges, to complete a span of the entire depression. Also, any improvements that are made must be able to accommodate bicyclers. Ways to access and complete the span were discussed, including the possibility of this being a well-supervised Eagle Scout project. (At present, Bettina has no Eagle Scout candidates so such an Eagle project likely would not be possible before this fall, if we “get lucky” and get a candidate even then.) Bob shared some other possibilities for mitigating the water problem there that included adjusting the surrounding landscape, but such efforts would require approval by the Town’s conservation agent, or by the Conservation Commission. John suggested that we table this topic for now, have folks look at the site to familiarize themselves with Bob’s concerns, and include the topic in the June agenda.

– Bulette Arlington Street kiosk

Bettina does have an Eagle Scout candidate interested in building a kiosk at the new Arlington Street parking lot for the expanded Bulette parcel. Bettina showed the site of the parking. She also showed a photo of the parking and superimposed a kiosk at possible sites therein.



The gravel in the parking is quite compacted so digging the kiosk leg holes could be the hardest part of the project. Also, it could be steep from the parking area into the woods so it might be necessary to build steps down to the forest floor. A lot of bushwhacking also needs to be done. John observed that a kiosk is normally at a trailhead. Bettina showed two possible trailheads, one off the northeast corner of the parking area (where it is not so steep) and another across from the church driveway where Joe Holmes had done some trial trail blazing. In addition to having folks visit Spring Hill, it would be good to have a visit here so that we could “brainstorm together” about this site. John will visit it before the June meeting, and the LSC can continue the discussion then. Bruce said that there are enough shingles in the shed at Morrison Farm to make the kiosk in case there would be issues about raising funds. Ditto for shingles in John’s garage.

– Grassy Pond (West) trail move

Bettina was notified by Town Planning that the current trail goes across a small corner of private land. Bettina and Susan (ACT holds the Conservation Restriction) walked it and found a way “around” the private piece. It would involve making a “teeny” hole in a stone wall, closing a current hole in another stone wall, placing some deadwood, clearing the new path, and adjusting the trail blazing and arrow. It

appears not a difficult thing to do. Next step would be to verify the trail with Susan and make sure that ACT agrees with the change. John suggests flagging the proposed reroute so the exact trail is clear to anyone interested. Bettina will flag it and will let John know when that has happened.

– Other parcel issues:

A Nagog Hill dog-walking couple expressed concern to Bettina about a poorly-behaved dog whose owner didn't seem to understand the meaning of "effective voice control" — enough to make the couple's dog quite uncomfortable. They asked if the Town bylaw sign could be posted at Nagog. Bettina will order such a sign and install it as suggested. According to the couple, there have been lots of dog problems at Nagog. This has not yet been apparent to the LSC, and Dale Schayes should weigh in on this. It seems that most dog owners worry more about coyotes and keep their dogs close. John described a recent encounter with coyotes at Great Hill, the first report he's heard of a pack in that parcel. It was mating and birthing season when coyotes are hungry, aggressive, and protective of their young.

Updates

– Acton's Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP)

None

– Website

None

– Maps

None

Next month's agenda

Spring Hill

Bulette

Elections (critical because of the pending change in Town management)

Send any other items to Joe or John.

Adjournment

At 8:03 pm, John declared the meeting "closed".

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, June 21, at 7 p.m.