

Acton
Land Stewardship Committee (LSC) Meeting Minutes
Tuesday, July 18, 2023, 7 P.M., Hybrid

Attendees (in bold)

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

Associate (nonvoting) members: **Ken Appel**, Josh Haines, **Rebecca Harvey**, Everett Kenerson, Gary Kilpatrick, **Mel Lima**, **Bob Mackin**, **Adam Nolde**, Jim Salem, Bill Smith, Jason Temple, **Steve Trimble**, Todd Tsakiris

Others: **Bettina Abe** (Acton Conservation), **Ian Bergemann** (Acton Land Stewardship Coordinator), **Mike Gendron** (Acton Conservation Agent), **Jody Harris** (Acton Conservation Trust (ACT)), **Susan Mitchell-Hardt** (ACT), **Alissa Nicol** (Select Board Liaison), **Bob Walton** (Acton resident)

Aaron opened the meeting at 7:02 p.m.

Review and acceptance of June 20 minutes

The minutes were accepted as presented.

Concerns from the public

Bettina introduced Ian Bergemann, newly employed by the Town as Land Stewardship Coordinator. Bruce brought hot-out-of-the-oven brownies for the in-person attendees.

Invasive plants 2023, Part 5

John presented on **bush honeysuckle**. Multiple variants of it are growing all over the place right now. It usually has a white flower, occasionally a purple or yellow flower — more-invasive variants of it. Right now, it's starting to show nice bright red berries that will get a little brighter as the season goes on. To help recognize it: The larger stems are hollow and it has smooth leaf edges. It tends to regrow from any root fragment, so we try to remove the roots as well. Although the roots tend

to be shallow, you can't rock the plant back and forth and expect to pull out all its roots as there are probably five roots that grow in different directions. It spreads mostly by seed, via birds. If you see it regrowing in space from which it's been removed, it's probably from root fragments.

Bush Honeysuckle (e.g. [Lonicera morrowii](#))

A low bush (although it may grow up to 8' tall)

Spreads mostly by seed, but also by buried stems.

Regrows from root fragments and buried stems.

Repeated cuttings at ground level and/or pulling of roots required to kill

Watch for non-white flowers, possibly indicating a more invasive variety



Check: larger stems are hollow, smooth leaf edges

"Rooted in Mass" volunteers

Michael Zhang and Eric Cai, seniors at ABRHS, informed Bettina that they would like to be a "clearinghouse" of information for fellow students who want to get involved with environmental issues. Bettina provided them with information on ACT, Sudbury Valley Trustees, the LSC, and any other like organization she could think of. She shared additional information about LSC (e.g., the shed at Morrison Farm) and procedural concerns (e.g., safety issues), and the LSC has provided some volunteer actions that

they could address (e.g., tackling the mugwort at Wheeler Lane). Over the coming school year, committee members should let Bettina know of projects on LSC parcels that could be possible for ABRHS students. She will share appropriate information with the students.

Parcel issues

– Nashoba Brook

The problem of inappropriate access to the small meadow above the Davis Road parking is still with us. There were deep car tracks on the meadow around July 4 when it was very wet. What could be done about this, e.g., signage “No more vehicles beyond this point”, restore the gate that used to be there (one gate post remains), install a second gate post and use a chain w/padlock that could be opened for Town mowing? John is willing to work on a second post and, when done, will seek a chain and padlock (possibly one already on the existing post) from the Town. This would be in addition to a sign that Bettina will pursue with the Town.

– Great Hill

A lot of trees came down during the recent storm. Four trees came down on the trail to the little playing field. One smushed the boardwalk, but that appears to be a relatively easy repair. John suggests that Bettina and Ian order wood for the repair now without needing a list specific to this repair as there will always be future need for additional wood repair.

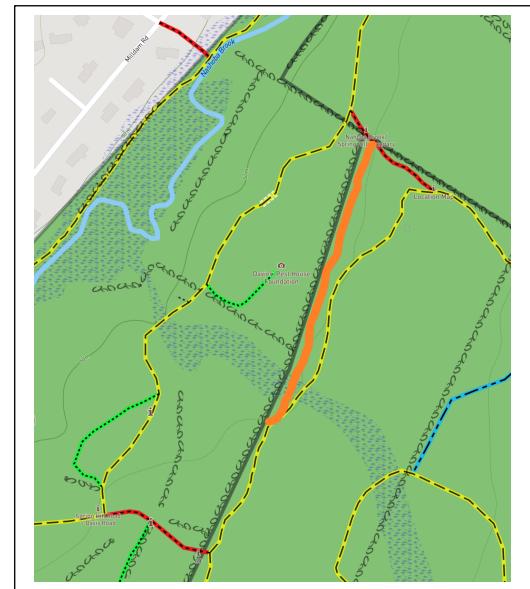
In the same vicinity, a large oak tree plus some tree-debris fell onto adjacent private property. Dale will be taking care of it, probably requiring more than a day to accomplish. The private-land owners are privy to this service from the LSC and have asked to keep the wood.

Also, there is a cluster of trees down on the Piper Road northern red-trail entrance that John will try to address later this week.

Also, per Bruce, there are at least two other Great Hill trees down.

– Spring Hill

Bruce is proposing a yellow-trail trail reroute as shown in orange at the right. Per Bruce, the nearby portion of the yellow trail is rocky and always wet — awful enough that he always has to walk, not ride, his mountain bike there. The proposed trail along the stone wall is flat and dry. Part of the red trail at the northern end would become yellow. The other part — into Robbins Mill and Nashoba Brook — would shorten. Bruce and Rebecca will coordinate a reroute walk with Ian (and let others know should there be any interest). They could bring along flags for marking. There was also discussion about the yellow trail just south of the orange reroute, which is also a difficult walk. It would be good if it could be made more “passable”. If the (orange) rerouting doesn’t happen, mountain bikers could fairly easily circumvent this section of the yellow trail via the nearby Nashoba Brook yellow trail.



– Robbins Mill . . .

. . . still needs a steward. Mel will have a look next week and let Bettina know if he’s the one. Another possibility: Mel could be steward of Nagog Hill and Dale would become a “floater.”

Updates

– 549 Main Street: Per Jody: The parties involved are still waiting for the Conservation Restriction to be completed, but the process seems to be “well on track.” Joe voiced his concern that while the parcel includes a significant portion of the Isaac Davis Trail (IDT), there is a small portion of the IDT that crosses private land just north of the Bruce Freeman Rail Trail (BFRT) and includes an interesting bridge over Nashoba Brook. He believes that the Town should seek some sort of easement that would allow both 549 Main Street visitors and Rail Trail visitors legal access to that private portion of the IDT. (An existing easement allows such public access two times a year.) Any promotion of the 549 Main Street parcel and its IDT, such as a kiosk next to the BFRT, would likely make a visit to that private portion of the IDT quite compelling.

– Wetherbee land adjacent to the Wetherbee CL: As best known there has been no movement re the sale of the land. The owners are highly motivated toward conservation and want to preserve the land. Their attorney, Ray Lyons, has led several groups, including Acton Select Board members, on tours of the property. It is beautiful land next to the BFRT, but it contains a lot of ham radio equipment. Any Town purchase offer should include provisions for its removal, or same would have to be done at great expense to the Town. Does the radio paraphernalia have any historical value (to perhaps allow for Community Preservation funds)? Doubtful, but this should be researched. Dale is willing to contact Attorney Lyons to discuss the property and its contents. Susan will send Dale the attorney’s contact information.

– Morrison Farm Conservation Restriction: Nothing new. It’s still in the hands of the Historical Commission, the Historic District Commission, and the Agricultural Commission.

– Bridges, Board/Bogwalks, Maps, Mowing, Chain sawing, Website:

Maps: Bob engaged Jon in a technical conversation on mapping that was difficult for some (!) to follow. Has the availability of the Interactive Trail Map spurred its use? Not clear that it has, but maybe. Bob may try to do some work on Open Street maps that he’ll send to Jon to use for a Mapbox update of the Acton Trails Spring Hill map, although Jon will not likely be able to do his part until September.

Bulette (web-based) map: There is a (yellow) loop trail in the current Bulette. There is another loop trail in the Anderson land (that will become part of Bulette). That trail, as will the long trail connecting the two loops, will also be yellow. The portions that are unblazed will need to be blazed. Jon will try to have a color version of the trails at the August LSC meeting. There is a new bridge (in the new part of Bulette) that is “awesome”. There is another one that is rather simple.

Heath Hen Meadow bridge: Bettina described recent railing work at the bridge, and declared that there will be no more workdays there in 90°+ weather. Next effort might be the installation of two sections, work that would take a full day; two sections instead of just one in order to avoid an unnatural jog in connecting with the existing boardwalk. There is also some low-energy board-cutting that might require a couple hours to do. Bruce can help with the cutting.

– Open Space and Recreation Plan (OSRP): In process with the OSRP group is the drafting of the subgoals and associated tasks of the Five-Year Plan (Section 9). The subgoals to date:

- Manage and control invasive and nuisance species
- Develop and extend trail networks
- Improve access to and use of managed conservation areas
- Protect existing open fields, meadows and agricultural parcels

Does the LSC think there should be any other subgoals? What specific tasks should there be to accomplish these subgoals? Ideas can be sent directly to Mike, and these can be discussed at the next meeting. One thought so far: Should “and nuisance” be deleted from the first subgoal?

– LSC membership:

Joe sent out an updated roster but needs to update it again with the correct spelling of Ian's last name, and therefore Ian's email address as well. A roster with this correction will be sent soon.

– Other:

Mike has heard a rumor that the Town will be able to fund the purchase of the brush hog that Mike had included in his Community Preservation Act proposal but was denied by the Community Preservation Committee. Mike will let the LSC know if it's fact.

Ian and Bettina can make "Interactive Trail Map" signs as needed. Let them know.

Next month's (08/15/23) agenda

OSRP discussion



Evaluate meeting

"Well done, Mr. Chair!"

Adjournment

At 8:10 pm.

The next meeting is tentatively scheduled for Tuesday, August 15, at 7 p.m.