

Champlain Valley Conservation Partnership Meeting
Wednesday, November 20, 2019; 2:30 PM
Champlain Room, City of South Burlington City Hall

Attendees: Ashley Parker, SB Project Manager; Dean Pierce, Shelburne Director of Planning & Zoning ; Dave Crawford, South Burlington Natural Resources Committee; Melinda Scott, Williston Conservation Planner; Alex Weinhagen, Hinesburg Director of Planning & Zoning; Sarah Dopp, President South Burlington Land Trust; Bob Hyams, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Gail Albert, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Kaylie Haberstroh, UVM NR206; Kylie Hanley, UVM NR206; Sydney Pleasic, UVM NR206; Jillian Scannell, UVM NR206; Alison Adams, UVM NR206 Project Mentor

Absent: Sarah Gentry Tischler, St. George Selectboard; Don Rendall, Shelburne Natural Resources & Conservation Committee; Melanie Needle, Senior Planner, Chittenden County Regional Planning Commission; Lisa Kingsbury, UVM Planning Services; Kevin Dorn, City Manager, City of South Burlington; Kate Kelly, Hinesburg Conservation Commission; Jens Hilke, Conservation Planning Biologist, VT Fish & Wildlife Department; Holly Rees, Director of Recreation & Parks, South Burlington

Meeting began at 2:35 PM.

Welcome and Round of introductions.

Changes or additions to Agenda –

There were no changes or additions to the agenda.

Consideration of Minutes from Previous Meeting –

The minutes from the October 23rd meeting were reviewed. There were some spelling corrections suggested. The changes were made and the minutes were approved as amended.

Presentation: UVM NR206 Project – “Rent-a-Goat” –

The UVM NR206 group gave a presentation on the “Rent-a-Goat” project they worked on for the partnership this fall.

One of the goals of this effort was to determine the feasibility of the partnership engaging in a program similar to this for the management of invasive plants. The students interviewed several entities involved in programs like this.

Mutton Mowers in Boulder, CO: about \$175/day, 20-30 goats; They install fences around the invasives to protect the natives, and they do work with municipalities in this work. There is a difference with the groups that work with individuals vs those that work with municipalities. Gap Mountain Goats in New Hampshire operate between Memorial Day and October. Eco-Goats in Maryland uses electric fencing mostly due to the presence of dogs. They charge by the acre, when other groups tend to charge by the day.

The start up costs for a program like this are pretty minimal. Goats generally need a livestock guardian (i.e.: 20-30 goats with 1 guardian like a llama, donkey, etc.). There are also fencing costs (usually around \$1,000). There is prolonged maintenance costs for lodging, food, and medicine. In our case, this

program would likely be more successful with an existing farmer/individual that already owns the land for the goats. The largest cost is the insurance (both vehicle and liability). The coverage is often around ~\$2 million. This may be more of an issue if there are lots of predators in the area, or if there is a possibility the goats could disappear.

It is a great education strategy. Goats are loved by communities, and there are lots of event opportunities and education signage that could be used to target kids. Using them is a great way to connect and engage with a community.

A couple challenges were that there is a lack of programs like this in our area, and it may be difficult in establishing a long-term program. There is program coming to the Burlington area, called Goats on the Go.

To be successful at managing invasives, the goats really only need to hit a site 1-2 times a year. This can be reduced to 1 time a year as the invasive plant population decreases. It will be important to know when the best times are to get goats on the land to eat invasives (targeted browsing). The price for this program is variable mainly because each farm has a monopoly for this service in their area. There is no competition right now. One of the challenges for sustaining goats through the winter is the cost to feed them. It can cost \$400/week for hay during the winter.

Goats on the Go has branches across the country as it is a nation-wide program. It is coming in 2020, and will be run by Earl and Becca Shrader in Montpelier. The students suggested that the next steps for the partnership would be to connect with this program and discuss any opportunities to try a pilot project in the partnership's region.

The students haven't completed the feasibility plan yet, and hope to get it to the partners by December 12th. They will share all of their research and interviews via a google drive folder. They are also putting together a contingency plan for the next round of NR206, in the hopes that a new group will take up the work they've already started.

Bob asked how the plant community responds to this process? And how are goats better than other removal methods? It was suggested that goats can access areas that machinery can't, and the regrowth is estimated at about 10%. This method also reduces the amount of pesticides/herbicides that are used. The students did emphasize that goats should be considered one of the tools in our land management toolbox.

The students do have additional interviews set up to get more ideas about program costs. The goats do fully digest and break down the seeds. It takes the goats about 3 days to cover an acre. The group said they can create a contact list with project leads to share with the partnership.

Other resulting questions – Are there established goat farms in the area? What role could the New American farmers play and could they be persuaded to become involved in something like this?

Discussion: Joining the Regional Conservation Partnership Network –

The group discussed the opportunity to join the Regional Conservation Partnership network. Ashley stated that it is a group in the New England area that acts as a conduit for resources to assist RCPs in doing their work. The network has already connected with Ashley to ask if the CVCP would be

interested in joining. A map of the region covered by this partnership would be added to the overall map of those in the New England area.

The group indicated an interest in connecting with the network. Ashley will reach out to Bill Labich, who coordinates the network, to see what the next steps are. Bill communicated with Ashley about coming to the partnership's next meeting in January to provide more information about the network, ask how the network can assist the partnership, and learn more about the work the partnership is doing.

A member mentioned a book of interest to the partnership – Wetland, Woodland, and Wildland: A Guide to Natural Communities in Vermont (new edition is out).

Mapping Project –

The group briefly reviewed any questions that folks had regarding this project. Dean asked whether there were overlapping layers? And if the group wanted to consider doing that? Should we be mapping parcels with open space agreements as well as conservation easements? Do we need to get down to the granularity level at the regional level?

Grant Opportunity: Lake Champlain Basin Program Education & Outreach Grants –

The partnership discussed whether there were any project opportunities that would work for these grants. It was decided that there aren't at this time, but that it would be good to be aware of for next year. Perhaps the partnership can begin tracking funding opportunities. Melinda will connect with the group if she comes up with any project ideas for this grant opportunity.

Reminder: Share Community Engagement Events with Ashley –

In August (a Saturday), Shelburne will have Shelburne Day. Last year, their Conservation Commission had a booth. Perhaps the CVCP could table the event this year.

South Burlington will have tabling opportunities at their SoBu Night Out events in the summer.

Partner News and/or Updates –

Shelburne is talking about their budget and proposing numbers for their Open Space Fund.

The South Burlington Land Trust has a proposal to Council requesting a ballot item for March that will add 2 cents to the City's existing Open Space Fund for a temporary time period.

The next meeting will be: January 22nd 2:30 PM.

The meeting was adjourned.