

Montague Conservation Commission

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MEETING MINUTES

Thursday, March 8, 2018

Upstairs Meeting Room, Town Hall, One Avenue A, Turners Falls, MA

Commissioners Present: Mark Fairbrother - Chair, Justin Fermann, Donna Francis, Sean Werle and Addie Rose Holland

Commissioners Absent: Alex Peterkin and Deb Henson

Staff: Walter Ramsey – Agent

Also Present: Laurie Reid, resident

Mark Fairbrother called the meeting to order at 6:30 PM.

6:30 PM Approval of Minutes:

Motion** made by Justin Fermann to approve the January 25, 2018 minutes as amended. Seconded by Sean Werle. **Motion passed.

6:31 PM Public Hearing NOI #2018-01 filed by Firstlight Power Resources to conduct a scientific research experiment on land under the Connecticut River in the vicinity of 15 Cabot Street.

Guest: Tracy Maynard – Fisheries Scientist from Kleinsmidt- contractor for FirstLight

The project is in support of federal relicensing where Firstlight is planning to conduct a research experiment to evaluate the use of floating hydro acoustic transducers to deter migrating American Shad from entering the Cabot Station fish ladder. The evaluation will take place for approximately one month from May 1 through May 31, 2018 with equipment mobilization commencing in mid April 2018.

The experiment seeks to act on the most recent scientific findings. It has been demonstrated that American Shad are able to detect sounds up to 180 kHz. The experiment is to use the ultrasound array to deter adult shad from the Cabot Station and facilitate their upstream movement through the Turners Falls Dam.

A total of 250 early migrating adult shad are proposed to be radio tagged. These radio tagged fish will be monitored with receivers. The monitoring equipment will be deployed and calibrated to inform on the effects of the ultrasound array on migration routes and behaviors.

The goal of the study is to determine if an ultrasound array barrier could be used to repel adult shad from the Cabot Station and guide them into the bypass reach to use the spillway ladder.

The study objectives are:

- To establish a high frequency sound array across the edge of Cabot Station tailrace
- To determine if migrating adult shad that experience the ultrasound array continue migrating upstream further up the bypass using radio telemetry
- To investigate if the magnitude of the bypass flow and magnitude of Cabot Station discharges affect how adult shad respond and specifically whether they migrate further up the bypass
- To observe adult shad behavior as they approach the ultrasound array field using a DIDSON camera.

Agent: The actual resource area impact is 4 square feet of Land Under Water- where the anchors sit on the riverbed. Justin Fermann asked if recreational use will be impacted or impact the study. The response was no from both Tracy and Walter.

Mark Fairbrother brought up the short-nosed sturgeon and if they have been considered. Tracy has consulted with NHESP and Julie Crocker from MA Fisheries and Wildlife and they were informed that the Sturgeon can not detect the sound at the frequency.

Agent: A letter from NHESP has been received and it was stated that this was a “no-take” and can be done with their approval. DEP had issued a file number. Agent does not recommend any special conditions beyond the standard order for this proposed work.

Motion made by Addie Rose Holland to issue an Order of Conditions for NOI #2018-01 filed by Firstlight Power Resources. Seconded by Sean Werle. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Conservation Agent Updates:

- a. Removal of trees at 414 Old Greenfield Road.

Guest: Ron Rodden, owner

This property is owned by Ron & Marilyn Rodden. In 2007, an Order of Conditions was issued by Conservation Commission for a single family home at this location. A Certificate of Compliance was subsequently issued by the Commission once construction was complete.

The situation: On or around February 12, 2018 approximately 5-20 trees were removed in a delineated wetlands area at 414 Old Greenfield Rd. A large tree outside the resource area (5 feet diameter and over 100 feet tall) fell in November. That tree had to be taken down for safety. While machinery was present, Mr. Rodden directed a cleanup of addition dead/dying trees, some of which were in mapped wetlands. The work was done by a family friend- not a contractor. Work was done on frozen ground in February. Walter asked the Commission how they would like to address the damage that has been done. Mr. Rodden shared a concern that the culvert on the road size has changed over the years from a 4 inch to 12 inch to now an 18 inch culvert. In enlarging the culvert the volume draining off the hill has increased greatly onto his property creating additional wetlands, along with bringing silt onto his driveway and down the entire road.

It was understood by the Commission that at least one, but possible most of the trees were dead or dying. The trees were removed while the ground was frozen, resulting in minimal ground disturbance. The area has been cleared of slash.

In the future Mr. Rodden will have to file a Request for Determination of Applicability prior to removal of any trees within 200 feet of Sawmill River or within 100 feet of any stream or wetlands. These resource areas are clearly delineated in the 2007 plans filed with the Commission. The Commission also reminded Mr. Rodden that the mowing on the property can only be done in accordance with the approved 2007 plan. Failure to follow the proper permitting and maintenance will necessitate enforcement action by the Commission.

At the suggestion of Justin F., the Commission strongly recommended a 1:1 planting of new saplings in the location of the recent cuts in order to help absorb groundwater and stabilize the soils on your property. They asked Walter to send Mr. Rodden a letter to this effect and to place it in the file for NOI 2007-04.

- b. Department of Conservation and Recreation’s Recreational Trail Grant Program for Newton Street River Access project in Millers Falls.

Walter shared with the Commission that he prepared a grant for an access point off of Newton Street in Millers Falls, MA. It has now been submitted for a request of \$22,000 with a \$4,000 match to be provided by the Town. If awarded, it will be subcontracted to an earthwork person to actually put in the access point for paddlers along with a small handicap assessable trail. The management of it would fall under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission if the Town is awarded the grant.

- c. Montague City Road Flooding- Consider potential ecological restoration project to alleviate roadway flooding.

There is currently a flooding problem downhill from Thomas Memorial Golf Course around Walnut Street and the intersection of Turnpike Road/Montague City Road. The utility company has been doing some drainage work in the area and so far there has been no flooding this year. However, the concern encompasses a larger area and still needs to be addressed to prevent flooding in the future. Walter noted that when Montague City Road use to be considered Rte. 2A the state dredged it regularly. Now Montague City Road is the Town’s concern and consistent flooding problems are happening. Walter stated that the old railroad bed runs along the road and goes right through the wetlands and separates the stream from the wetlands area causing flooding 2-3 times a year and road closures which leads public safety issues.

Walter Ramsey, Mark Stinson – DEP and Tom Bergeron – Highway walked the area of concern this winter and it was suggested by Mark S. that town restores/ recaptures some of the wetlands as an ecological restoration project.

Justin and Addie both spoke in terms of the hydrology and that you need a flood plain and not to have the road be the floodplain. They supported exploring whether wetlands on the other side of the railroad track could be re-connected. Mark F. cautioned that the Town will need to explore its rights to do that. Mark F. believes that there are drains located near the old railroad bed behind Shanahan’s building on Montague City Road (across from Bob’s Inspection Station) that have been plugged for a very long time which are likely contributing to the flooding issues.. Mark Fairbrother suggests opening that drain as a first step and putting a beaver guard on the end of the drain. Walter will look into this as it would be good first option in helping to resolving the flooding issues on Montague City Road.

- d. Consider purchase of tablet for Conservation Agent using Wetlands Protection Funds
Agent requested that the Commission allow him to purchase an iPad. The Agent will use this to help with administration of the Wetlands Act. (Review site plans in field, access permits in field, share photographs, mapping). Expected price range \$500- \$700.

Motion made by Justin Fermann to approve the use of Wetlands Protection funds to purchase an iPad. Seconded by Donna Francis. **Motion passed.**

Motion made by Mark Fairbrother to adjourn the meeting at 7:02 PM. Seconded Addie Rose Holland. **Motion passed unanimously.**

Approved by: _____ Date: _____