

Orford Conservation Commission
Meeting Minutes: August 15, 2024
Meeting held in person at the Niles Room in the Town Offices

Present in person: Commission Members: Ted Cooley, Bob Hedges via Zoom, and Harry Pease. Alternates: Emily Bryant, Fran Plaisted, and John Miller. Also attending was Kevin Follensbee representing the Selectboard

Meeting called to order 7:01 PM.

Fran Plaisted, Emily Bryand and John Miller were seated.

1. **Approval of the minutes from July 18, 2024:** Harry moved that we accept the minutes. Ted seconded. Motion carried.
2. **Invoices:** No outstanding invoices to approve.
3. **Water testing program:** Harry reported that the current week's test results were all good. The previous week's test results that were high are now back down to the safe limits (i.e., Lower Baker, Jacobs Brook, Creamery Rd.). When we have a lot of rain the E.coli levels can become high due to the rain run-off. Thank you to John for covering for Harry with the testing for the past week.
4. **Upcoming Stargazing event at Mountain View Farm:** In search of clear skies, the August event has been postponed to September. The new target dates are September 6, 7, 8 (Friday, Saturday, Sunday). UVLT will make the final date decision and let us know. We will post it. Thanks to Emily for coordinating the event.
5. **Updates on our Hike Orford! program:** We had 20 hikers for our Stonehouse Mountain outing on Sunday, August 11th. A very successful event. Our 10 Mile Road hike is on September 21st. Cotton Stone Mountain is on October 12th.
6. **Richmond Property maintenance and promotion:** Harry put up trail signs and trimmed the trail. Good news --- We have seen no evidence of purple loosestrife after the use of the natural predators that we purchased a years ago. The Richmond Property is an underappreciated "town asset". We may want to promote the area to the town. The property is excellent for birding --- warbler weekend, migratory waterfowl. Mid-September through October would be the target autumn timing. Reeds Marsh is also an excellent birding venue. Early morning or evening. Small groups --- 4-5 people with one guide. Jeff Macqueen is willing to return to area and give walks. Ted to follow-up.
7. **Orford Heritage Trail trailwork efforts:** Targeting a project effort on Saturday, September 28th. Harry and Bob are recruiting volunteers for the trailwork effort. Andy Schwaegler has agreed to the timing and has given permission for us to use his access roads to the trail.
8. **Japanese Knotweed:** Marked the relevant Town roads for mowing, but the mowing/road crews are running late. We have been doing this for four years and the growth on Jacobs Brook is still substantial. Tillotson Falls Rd is looking okay. 25A work still needs to be looked at. Thank you to John for his continuing championing of this issue.

9. **Updating our website/digital presence:** We recognize the need to update the website and expand our digital/social media efforts (e.g., Facebook, Instagram). Bob volunteered to invest time starting in mid-September/October to get moving on this front.

10. **Collaboration with the Cross-Rivendell Trails Association:** We want to start a dialogue about how to support the efforts to maintain the Cross-Rivendell trail. Approximately 8 -10 people from Orford have been active with the CRTA Board as they explore how to secure the future of the trail. We will invite the group to come to a future Conservation Commission meeting this fall to share their thoughts and what needs to happen to the trail.

11. **Signage at Lower Baker Pond:** Both Upper Baker and Lower Baker pond are public beaches. At Lower Baker, however, there is no signage even though it is town-maintained access. We reviewed the history of how Lower Baker Pond is a state boat launch, with maintenance responsibilities shifted to the Town. We reviewed the formal memo from NH State Fish and Game from the 90's. The Town of Orford is today supposed to maintain this area and we currently see higher use for swimming vs. boating. We will explore the option of getting a kiosk/signage for Lower Baker Pond. Harry will discuss with Parks & Playgrounds. We will then plan to consult with the Selectboard.

12. **Indian Pond Culvert replacement:** Kevin brought up the Indian Pond Road Culvert replacement project. DES is looking at plan. The project plan will come to us after DES approved. We agreed to review as soon as we receive the plan.

13. **Budget:** Work on Budget is expected to start in the near future.

14. **Recruiting:** We continue to pursue adding new members to the Conservation Commission. We discussed several potential candidates.

A motion was made by John to adjourn the meeting. Harry seconded. Motion passed.

Meeting adjourned at 7:57 PM.

Minutes taken by Fran Plaisted.