

Orford Conservation Commission

Meeting Minutes: September 19, 2024

Meeting held in-person at the Niles Room in the Town Office

Present in-person: Commission members: Ted Cooley, Bob Hedges, and Harry Pease; Alternates: Emily Bryant and John Miller. Also attending was Kevin Follensbee representing the Selectboard.

Meeting called to order at 7:02 PM

Emily Bryant and John Miller were seated.

1. **Approval of the minutes from August 15, 2024:** Minor wording changes were suggested and incorporated to the draft meeting minutes. Ted moved to approve the minutes. Harry seconded. Motion carried.
2. **Water testing program:** We have concluded our water testing program for the season. Harry reported that the local summer camps and NH State appreciate our sharing the test results. We discussed how to more broadly share the water test results with other interested parties (e.g., Piermont listserve, the potential new kiosk at Lower Baker Pond). We agreed to look for more opportunities to share the test results since they are valuable public information.
3. **Stargazing event with UVLT at Mountain View Farm:** More than 100 people attended the recent Orford Conservation Commission stargazing event with the Upper Valley Land Trust (UVLT). The evening program was very well received. We will reach out to UVLT to plan to do this popular program again next summer.
4. **Updates on our Hike Orford! program:** We are ready for the Ten Mile Trail hike on September 21st. Harry will be the host/guide. We are also ready for the Cottonstone Mountain hike on October 12th. Jason Berard from UVLT will be the host/guide. We continue to get a lot of positive community feedback on the Hike Orford! outings.
5. **Trail work on the Orford Heritage Trail:** Bob hiked the Orford Heritage and took photos of fallen trees to plan for the upcoming trail work day on September 28th. More than 20 fallen trees need to be removed. Harry and Bob are recruiting chainsaw volunteers and Harry will bring his tractor to help remove the large tree sections. Once the large trees are removed, we will plan and promote "lopping" trail work days to allow broader community participation. We also will need to develop a plan to address the trail's erosion problems. Bob is coordinating the dates and forest road access for trail work with landowner Andy Schwaegler.
6. **Potential winter events to be sponsored by the Conservation Commission:** Given the positive energy from the summer Hike Orford! Program, we discussed options for winter programs. Several winter hikes ideas were discussed including a Full Moon Snowshoeing outing, a winter

hike up to Brackett Falls, and several evening speaker ideas. Bob will prepare a proposed calendar for discussion at our October meeting.

7. **Thinking ahead to Summer 2025 programs:** We discussed developing a calendar for Summer 2025 hikes. We will seek to have the calendar developed in advance of the Orford Town Meeting on March 11th so we can communicate and distribute the program calendar at the Town Meeting. Bob will prepare a proposed calendar for discussion at our October meeting.
8. **Update on Japanese Knotweed:** John reviewed the status of our efforts and the ongoing challenge that invasive species are to our landscape. We discussed the need to strengthen the Do-It-Yourself advice available of the Orford Conservation Commission website. Establishing better communication and coordination with Town and State mowing efforts remains an ongoing challenge.
9. **Plan to refresh the Orford Conservation Commission website and social media efforts:** Bob will dedicate some time this fall to taking on this project. Step one is to agree on a “table of contents” for what info we would like to present and maintain.
10. **Upcoming discussions on the Cross-Rivendell Trail:** Bob has been in contact with Gail Keefer and David Hubbard representing the Rivendell Trail Association. Gail and David will be joining our October 17th meeting to discuss needed work efforts and support for the Rivendell Trail in Orford.
11. **Opportunities with the NH Association of Conservation Commissions (NHACC):** The NHACC Annual Meeting is Saturday, November 2nd. If any Commission members can attend, it is a great networking and learning opportunity. Bob will be meeting with NHACC Executive Director Barbara Richter in Concord on October 10th to learn more about how NHACC might support our Orford efforts.
12. **Recruiting new Commission members:** We continue our efforts to engage community members and seek additional Commission members. The Hike Orford! program has introduced us to several potential new/future Commission members.

A motion was made by Ted to adjourn the meeting. Harry seconded. The motion passed.

The meeting adjourned at 7:55 PM.

Minutes were taken by Emily Bryant.