

DRAFT

THE RANDOLPH FOREST COMMISSION

February 6, 2013

Members Present: John Scarinza, Jeff Parker, Doug Mayer and Walter Graff

Others Present: Ben Eisenberg, David Willcox and Steve Faccio

The chairman opened the meeting by welcoming Walter Graff, who has been appointed to this Commission by the Conservation Commission to fill the seat reserved to that body made vacant by the resignation of Ben Eisenberg from the Conservation Commission. Ben will continue to participate in the activities of this Commission in an unofficial capacity.

The Commission then approved the minutes from the January meeting.

Doug introduced Steve Faccio, Conservation Biologist for the non-profit Vermont Center for Ecostudies. He and Steve had talked about the Commission's goal of having an inventory made of the birds commonly found in the Randolph Community Forest. Steve's organization has done several such surveys, although none on as large an area the Community Forest.

Steve explained the methodology: The area would be overlaid with a GPS map of "points." These points would be used as the locations at which the counting of the birds would take place. There would be 20 to 30 points designated in each forest type (i.e. lowland, softwoods, etc.) The counting should take place during early morning hours (5 to 8 a.m.) in June and the first half of July, the breeding season for birds. The counters would spend about 5 minutes at each point recording the bird sounds that they hear.

John explained that one reason the Commission was interested in having an inventory was to create a baseline of data which would enable it to determine whether its management strategies were working. Timber harvesting activities, especially dealing with ice-storm damaged trees, often result in temporary clear-cuts, and the Commission has been making some of them permanent as it tries to reach the 2% to 3% open land recommended for healthy forests. Clear-cuts provide open space for bird habitat. In the past, the assumption was that smaller spaces were preferable, but recent

studies seem to suggest that some birds need larger spaces. So, the Commission needs a way of testing issues like that. The data would also be valuable when the Commission in applies for grants to do habitat work.

Steve said that management recommendations would be part of any inventory that his organization might carry out. He would expect to hire a summer field crew of knowledgeable students. He has in the past hired Antioch grad students as interns and it has worked well.

In terms of a more comprehensive study of the RCF, he mentioned that the University of Vermont Naturalist's Program is a master's degree program. As part of the requirements for completion, the student is expected to do a comprehensive survey of a forest. He thought the RCF would make a good subject for a student or students in that program.

The discussion ended with Steve agreeing to put together two, alternative, proposals - a more comprehensive version and a less comprehensive one – for the Commission to consider. The chairman thanked Steve for coming, told him the Commission would look forward to his submission and wished him a safe drive back.

The Commission then turned to the task of designing a web site, which Doug is spearheading. He had some questions from Alison Taylor, whom he has engaged to draft the design. The site will need a logo and it was agreed that this should take the form of a rough outline of the silhouette of the Crescent Range with some trees, or something along those lines. Doug will ask Alison to come up with a couple of designs for the Commission to look at.

John then noted that the Tree Farm program was undergoing some changes. The Federal program was taking a larger role. Since the RCF is larger than 10,000 acres, it falls under Federal jurisdiction. When our audit was done a couple of years ago under Federal auspices, it was a sort of prototype and we did not have to pay for it. In future, however, we will have to pay the costs of the three year audits. Walt Wintturi does not yet know what that cost will be; when he does have a figure, the Commission will have to decide whether or not it is worth staying in the program.

The Commission approved an invoice from the Randolph Mountain Clubs for trail relocation work at the new trailhead site at the end of Randolph Hill Road.

There being no further business the meeting was closed by general consent at 8:50 pm.

Respectfully submitted

David Willcox
Acting Secretary

Posted at Town Hall on February 11, 2013