

DRAFT

RANDOLPH PLANNING BOARD Minutes of Meeting and Public Hearing December 5, 2013

Members Present: John Scarinza, Bob Ross, Arlene Eisenberg, and Roberta Arbree.

Alternates Present: David Willcox

Others Present: John Severance, Elise Lawson, Doug Mayer, Mark Kelley, Dave Tellman, Sarah Warren and Michael Warren.

The chairman opened the meeting at 7:05 pm. He asked if there were any suggestions for changes to the minutes of the November meeting. There were none. Bob moved that the minutes be adopted as written. Roberta seconded the motion and it passed.

The chairman then explained that the Randolph Forest Ordinance provide for the ten year stewardship plans to be reviewed and approved by the Randolph Planning Board at a public hearing before being sent to the State for final acceptance. He then opened the public hearing on the Second Stewardship Plan for the Randolph Community Forest (RCF) by asking John Severance and Elise Lawson, partners in Watershed to Wildlife, a component part of the Randolph Forest management team, to go over the Plan.

John and Elise presented the Plan using a power point slide show. It began with a review of the achievements over the last decade. As was pointed out, with a year to year perspective it is sometimes easy to lose sight of what has been accomplished, but when viewed from a ten year time span, the achievements are impressive. For instance, 798 acres of land, representing 9.9% of the total land area, was managed for timber production in one way or another. This produced 701 mbf of saw timber, 20,258 tons of pulpwood and 20,085 tons of wood chips. The RCF became a certified Tree Farm in 2007. This means that it is monitored periodically on behalf of the American Tree Farm System to ensure that the best management practices are being employed.

A couple of charts were displayed showing that in all but one of the compartments into which the RCF is divided, the volume of wood has increased over the last ten years, in spite of the fact that most of these areas have seen active logging activities. This underscored the conclusion that the RCF is meeting the goal of sustainability.

Towards the goal of improving wildlife habitat, 25 acres of new permanent openings were created. These openings have to be cleared of stumps and rocks so that they can be preserved by periodic mowing. In addition, management projects included 3 acres of alder regeneration, 22 acres of softwood release and 54 acres of early successional stand creation. A wetlands study of the Israel's River area was undertaken in conjunction with the Randolph Conservation Commission which resulted in the identification of critical wetland complexes along the river. This will help with the

management of the southern part of the newly acquired Farrar Farm, which includes some of the most important wetlands in the RCF.

By the end of 2010, 15 permanent transects were located within the RCF and the neighboring portion of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). These are expected to be useful for future systematic studies of the animal and plant life of the Forest.

The RCF contains 27 miles of logging roads. While not all of them are kept open all of the time, they do need to be kept usable, so as to provide access for logging activities and for emergency vehicles in case of need. Improvements to the road network over the last ten years include the installation of a Bailey bridge, installed under a partnership agreement with the US Forest Service (USFS,) the placement of 29 new culverts and 67 new waterbars. Again, in partnership with the USFS, the Pond of Safety Road was substantially upgraded so that today it can be used by a greater range of vehicles than was true ten years ago. In addition, many improvements to existing facilities were undertaken, gates were installed and maintained, two parking lots were constructed and the turnaround by the Pond of Safety was remodeled.

Other achievements include the creation of a Geographical Information System data base for information about the RCF and the activities carried out within it; the establishment of a RCF website, the continued popularity of the annual Forest Tours and of the recreational opportunities provided by the Forest.

Turning to the future, John and Elise noted that many of the future actions would be continuations of the work that had been done over the past ten years. New timber harvesting projects are proposed, new wildlife habitat openings would be established, road maintenance will go on and the new transects will be kept open. New projects, however, also include the redevelopment of the newly acquired Farrar Farm and the creation of a management plan for the Israel's River part of that property, the establishment of a sledding hill in conjunction with the completion of the Randolph Hill parking lot and the promotion of research projects within the RCF.

One other proposal in the Plan calls for further measures to be taken to protect the crystal mine located within the RCF. The last year saw some serious vandalism at the mine and, in response it was designated as a "natural area" by the Town of Randolph, which has significance under state law. But, more needs to be done to protect it and it has been proposed that an RMC trail be constructed to the mine. This would have the effect of making it accessible to everyone, not merely those who know the way. It is hoped that the trail would serve as a twofold benefit. It would serve as a response to the increased popular interest in visiting the mine and, by opening it up for casual visitors, it would also serve to minimize the protection offered to vandals by the mine's relative isolation.

When the presentation was finished, the chairman asked for comments. Dave Tellman, representing the Presidential Gem and Mineral Society, said that he had no objection to the construction of a trail to the mine, so long as could not be used by vehicles. In fact, he thought that such a trail might help to deter vandalism.

Sarah Warren, representing the Jefferson Conservation Commission, asked about timber harvesting practices along the edges of brooks, feeding into the Israel's River. She was reassured that buffer zones protecting watercourses are not only required by the conservation easement, they are practiced by loggers working in the RCF. The Town has purchased three portable bridges for use in logging operations. They enable the creation of bank-to-bank crossings, without the need to disturb the edges of streams.

After everyone who wished to speak had been given an opportunity to so do, the chairman called for a vote on the Stewardship Plan. Arlene moved that it be approved. Bob seconded the motion and it was adopted.

There being no further business, the meeting was closed by general consent at 8:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

David L. Willcox
Acting Secretary

Posted at the Town Hall on December 9, 2013