



Randolph Community Forest

Sustainable forestry & traditional uses on 10,000 acres in Randolph, NH

- Date:** February 5, 2025
- Location:** Randolph Town Hall
- Members Present:** Mark Kelley, Laura Brockett, Tim Mather, Walter Graff, and David Willcox
- Guests Present:** Paul Jadis, David DeGruttola from LandVest, Edith Tucker, Jacob DeBow from NHFG, Henry Jones from NHFG, Patrick Tate from NHFG, Elise Lawson, and Shelli Fortin, Minutes

Mark Kelley called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

- I. Review Minutes of November Meeting
On a motion by Laura Brockett, seconded by Tim Mather, the Commission voted to approve the minutes of the January 8, 2025, meeting as presented.
- II. Financial Review
 - A. Invoices Received
There were no invoices received.
 - B. Payments Received
No payments were received.
 - C. Financial Report
Mark Kelley advised that they reviewed the most current report at the last meeting.
- III. Henry Jones, NHFG – Moose Habitat
Henry Jones presented a PowerPoint to those in attendance. Mr. Jones spoke first concerning the proposed road crossing project, which was not funded, noting that any crossing needs a specific landscape and fencing. Mr. Jones noted that it would be a wildlife crossing, not a moose crossing, as it may or may not benefit moose.

Mr. Jones then discussed the important attributes of moose habitat: regenerating forest for food, evergreen canopy for shelter and movement, deciduous and mixed canopy for shelter and food, elevation for thermal relief, and wetland and shallow ponds and lakes for forage and thermal relief. The home range for a moose is 6-15 square miles. Mr. Jones reviewed the types of food moose eat in winter and summer.

Mr. Jones discussed winter ticks and their life cycle, and advised they are a different species of tick than are typically on people. Mr. Jones advised that areas with a high concentration of moose still have a high tick infestation. Walter Graff asked when the moose are most affected by the ticks, and Mr. Jones advised in March and April after the ticks take their blood meal. David DeGruttola asked if the ticks were always here, and Mr. Jones advised they are a natural species in Northern New England. The ticks were originally on white-tailed deer, but then also infected moose when they entered the area. Deer groom themselves and remove many of the ticks, so are not as affected as moose, who do not start rubbing them off until it is too late.

David DeGruttola noted that the Town Forest is predominantly northern hardwoods, and that they can disperse the population with smaller openings, however the challenge will be softwood cover, which will take time. When asked how close the openings should be, Jacob DeBow advised it is difficult to come up with a number. Mr. DeBow advised he could work with Mr. DeGruttola on plans for wildlife openings.

Paul Jadis asked if there was a way to control the tick population and Mr. Jones advised that there was someone in Vermont looking at a pesticide, however this becomes an ecological question as to how it will affect the rest of the ecosystem, so his inclination is to steer away from that as a solution. Patrick Tate noted that medicated salt licks were also suggested, however there is no way to control the amount of medication they would receive, and the moose would either be over or underdosed. It was noted that some species also depend on ticks as food for survival.

IV. Patrick Tate, NHFG – Beavers Role in the Environment

Patrick Tate spoke about beavers, noting that there are lots of benefits to having them, however it sometimes conflicts with infrastructure.

Mr. Tate discussed the repopulation of beavers in New Hampshire, and noted that live trapping may make people feel good, but it is not in the best interest of the beaver, as they are very territorial.

Mark Kelley advised that a neighbor of the Town Forest expressed concerns about beavers, however it may not be a nuisance, and suggested that they visit the site.

Mr. Tate noted that culvert crossings are the largest issue, and that beaver pipes require maintenance once or twice per year. Mr. Tate suggested that you can allow the forest to mature where you do not want beavers.

The Commission discussed the existing beaver ponds on the Forest, by Jimtown Road and Wetlands Road, and noted they are also in the area between the rail trail and Route 2 by Bowman.

Walter Graff asked if there was still an issue with Giardia in beavers, and Mr. Tate advised that there always will be.

Mr. Tate advised that the beaver harvest decreased when the price of pelts decreased, and they regulate the take by trappers to keep a healthy population. Laura Brockett noted that trapping is an allowed use in the easement, and David Willcox noted that they have not issued any new permits in many years. Mr. Tate stated that there are between 450-520 trapping licenses issued in the state and about 25% of those pursue beaver, which is not a high rate. The activity is managed and enforced, and has been modernized. Mr. Tate noted that currently about 900-1300 beavers are removed during trapping season, and an additional 1600 by wildlife control each year. In the 1980's there were 4500-5000 per year. The Commission discussed the important historical value of trapping, and noted that it, like logging, it has often been portrayed in a negative light.

V. Elise Lawson, Wildlife Biologist

Elise Lawson advised that 15 transects were put in between 2008 and 2012, and that they would like to work on revitalizing them. Suggestions as to how better mark the transects were discussed, and Paul Jadis suggested a 4x4 post marking the start. Laura Brockett suggested that information on the transects be added to the kiosks. David DeGruttola will work with Ms. Lawson to decide what is needed for brushing them out.

David DeGruttola advised that the Management Plan has been approved and he has send a copy to be posted on the website. Mr. DeGruttola advised he will work with NHFG, who holds the easement, to plan the wildlife opening on the Potter tract.

Elise Lawson suggested reviewing the riparian habitat buffers on the Farrar Farm, similar to what she did for the Israel River study for the Conservation Commission. It was noted that the Coos County Conservation Commission was involved with planting native plants to minimize erosion, and they will be contacted for information on this.

Ms. Lawson suggested an interpretive trail on the Meiklejohn property that was donated to the Town Forest, and David Willcox suggested that instead of an interpretive trail, they could just work on laying out a trail to provide a nice place to walk along the river that is flat. The area will need bog bridges as it is wet. Laura Brockett asked about the current interpretive trail and stated this may not be the best place, and suggested that the Farrar Farm property would be a good place for it. It was suggested that QR codes could be used to provide information. The Committee agreed that using the QR codes, they could also have more than one trail.

Ms. Lawson noted that there are lots of vernal pools in the Forest, and noted that this may be an interesting Forest Day topic. David DeGruttola requested that Ms. Lawson send him information on the vernal pools so that they can be entered into the system.

VI. Concerns about the Randolph Hill Road Parking Area

Edith Tucker was in attendance to share concerns about the closing of the Randolph Hill Road Parking Area this winter. Ms. Tucker shared a letter that was written to her after making a contribution to the Mt. Crescent Land Protection Campaign in 2018, and requested that it be included in the minutes:

Dear Edie,

As President of the Randolph Foundation, and on behalf of our Randolph Mountain Club partners on the Mt. Crescent Land Protection Campaign Committee, I would like to thank you sincerely for your generous support of the community effort to bring new protections to the Mt. Crescent area, and to add land to our beloved Randolph Community Forest. Your gift (blank) is greatly appreciated and will allow us to advance this critical work.

As you know, in June 2018 we announced a campaign to fund the \$52,500 purchase of a sixteen-acre parcel of land at the foot of Mt. Crescent. That parcel is adjacent to the Community Forest Trailhead and is traversed by several RMC paths (see light green parcel in map below). Adding this land to the Randolph

Community Forest is a major step forward in protecting the area from development and securing the future of this popular hub of recreational activity.

During this summer's campaign, a further opportunity to protect the Mt. Crescent area presented itself at an abutting parcel (see striped area in map). The campaign committee worked with the owner to negotiate a \$26,000 purchase of a conservation easement on that land. This means that access to the three RMC trails and the Community Forest Trailhead on that parcel will be permanently protected from incompatible uses and/or future development.

I was thrilled to announce at the August 17 Randolph Foundation annual meeting that we had raised both the \$52,500 and the \$26,000, so that we can implement protections for both parcels of land. The Foundation will be following up with the Town of Randolph and other parties to execute the transactions.

Thank you for your gift. We could not have achieved this tremendous community success without you. The Randolph Foundation is a tax-exempt organization under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code and contributions in support of its mission are tax-deductible. No goods or services were provided in exchange for this donation. A summary of the campaign and its donors will be included in the Foundation's upcoming annual report.

I am indebted to the campaign committee members who devoted themselves to this endeavor – Sally Boothman Glines, Jamie Maddock, Randy Meiklejohn, Ben Phinney, and John Scarinza – and would like to thank them for their stewardship and leadership. I would also like to acknowledge the hard work of Randolph Foundation Treasurer Angela Brown and Secretary Sue Temme who together managed all of the contribution details over the summer.

With gratitude for your ongoing support of the Randolph Community,

*Sarah Eusden Gallop
President*

Ms. Tucker advised that it bothers her that they are not plowing the parking lot to provide access to this area, as it is a recreational hub. Ms. Tucker recommended that the Commission form a study committee to see what can be done so that the land can be used for skiing or sledding on the sledding hill. Ms. Tucker stated that our area is facing an economic disaster, as we are losing population and jobs, and we need to provide things for people to do outdoors.

Mark Kelley advised that the Commission has been wrestling with how to handle this problem, and has been discussing it at every meeting. Mr. Kelley noted that things have changed a great deal from ten years ago, and local residents were complaining about the overuse of the area. Mr. Kelley explained that they are trying to balance the concerns of the residents with the use of the area. David Willcox noted that the closing is just temporary, and advised that the Planning Board held a hearing on this issue last year. Walter Graff noted that he agrees with Ms. Tucker about the use, however it has gotten out of control and needs to be mitigated. Paul Jadis noted that that people were using the area the wrong way, and they are getting the message now that the parking area is closed.

VII. Other

VIII. Executive Session

There was no executive session needed.

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 8:28 pm by general consensus.

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday, March 5, 2025, at 6:30 pm at the Randolph Town Hall.