

## **Starksboro Conservation Commission November meeting**

Monday, Nov. 25, 2024, 5-6:30pm  
Starksboro Town Library

### **Agenda**

1. Review of minutes from October meeting.
2. Kiley Briggs from The Orianne Society will meet with the conservation commission to discuss opportunities to improve habitat for rare reptiles on town-owned properties.
3. Discuss the results of our fall efforts to contain invasive species and future plans in this regard.
4. Status of grant to Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation.
5. Plan January talk by Kristen Underwood. Louis Dupont would like the LCA to be a co-sponsor.
6. Adjourn 6:30

### **Meeting Notes 11.25.24**

1. Guest – Kiley Briggs talked to us about wood turtles.

Lewis Creek is one of the highest priority sites in VT for wood turtles

Good wood turtle habitat:

- Meandering rivers
- Sandbars and gravel for nesting. Hopefully above the flood line.
- Having a flood plain on at least one side of the river
- Clear water

The one disadvantage of our site is the pervasiveness of knotweed

Turtles found on both north and south riparian parcels

Monitor by walking stream and looking for turtles in early spring (best) or in fall.

By July they are not in the stream, but within 1,000 feet from it. In the summer they are habitat generalists.

Keily walked between the conserved land and the line in N with Hinesburg. Didn't find any near Lewis Creek farm fields, but they may be there. Starksboro has the clearest water. Also walked around Clifford farm. Did six surveys in all. Found turtles in all but LC Farm.

Roundup used at Clifford's field and may be needed for knotweed on conserved land. Kiely feels it's worth treating with knotweed as long as there is commitment to follow through in subsequent years. Eventually too much knotweed will damage nesting sites.

Also suggest that the next time we plant trees and shrubs for erosion, that we plant larger plants that will not be washed away with erosion so easily.

At the moment the river is doing a good job of protecting nesting habitat even with knotweed

Think of wood turtles as landscape animals. They get around to a varied landscape

#### Trail management

- One option is to mow less, cutting the grass tall so we don't mow down a turtle
- Don't mow from early May to late October when turtles are in the fields
- Instead of mowing could use a weed whacker to keep the grass low. Then one could notice a turtle in the grass
- Could plant forest trees on west side of creek (did he say to the E or W of the river?)

#### Need to pay attention to

- Trail management
- Knotweed
- Planting native trees and shrubs to mitigate erosion

We also have spotted turtles, 4" with yellow spots

116 is a substantial threat. IF there was a known location where turtles were regularly killed, VTTrans could put in a box culvert

Rec field – space eroding along bank. If could have tree planting that goes into Cota Field it would help erosion. Widening the buffer would help.

Kiley now has a \$400,000 grant to do habitat restoration in spring with farmers

2. Invasive plant control with Middlebury students in fall – an evaluation
  - Downside – students only available in fall and early spring
    - No transportation except us that made it onerous
  - Question – how do volunteers at the community garden get permission?
  - The Environmental Club may be able to help in the future
  - To do:
  - Check out other locations where we want to work
  - Check out how habitat is doing in the areas we just did. Will we need to plant native plants there?
  - Shall we explore grants to pay young people, such as the Youth CC?
3. Suspension bridge grant

What is the best approach is still an open question. Shall we build back as is, with additional supports, or use rocks as stepping stones?

4. Kristen Underwood's talk in January. Robert suggests giving her free rein for choosing the topic. What is going on and how to deal with it. How do we reach Starksboro people affected by flooding?
5. We will not have a December meeting. In January we will plan informally as a group

To do: Margi – look at Karina's email referencing a doc that gives more exact and specific information on the state of the dam.