

Bethel Conservation Commission Minutes – 4/1/14

Present Mary Floyd, Moe Brigham, Tom Warhol, Emily Miller, Jen Schomp, Dave Stanley, and two guests (Dan Ruddell and Mary Russ) at the Town Offices.

Action on Minutes approved minutes from March meeting as written.

Business

- **Bethel's Phase 2 Geomorphic Assessment** is being done by the consulting firm Redstart hired through the White River Partnership. Redstart's Dan (Rudi) Ruddell joined us to share his *initial impressions* of the data collected in 2013. All of the data has been collected, the Phase 2 assessment is underway and a draft corridor plan will probably be delivered in August with public meetings to follow.
 - Glacial Lake Hitchcock's legacy is important.
 - Rudi explained that there's still a lot of evidence of the influence of Glacial Lake Hitchcock in the White River watershed and in Bethel in particular. One of the results of Lake Hitchcock is the fine – very erodible – deposits present throughout the valleys (seen in many of the mass failures).
 - Straightening, downcutting, and losing access to floodplain are very prevalent problems in Bethel's rivers. Seen in lots of places, two specific examples include:
 - Rte. 107 Bethel-Stockbridge
 - 3rd Branch- this area is so active that trying to open up flood chutes, etc. might not be worth the money.
 - Lack of ledge or grade controls in Bethel (unlike the First Branch of the White River which has a lot of ledge). This means that downcutting will not be so limited and streams may continue to lose access to floodplain.
 - Weirs and other in-stream grade control measures put in after Irene should be monitored as they may begin to fail.
 - At this point, Rudi thinks that the Corridor Plan will likely suggest these priorities (again, these are just initial impressions at this point):
 - protecting river corridors;
 - planting stream buffers;
 - stabilizing banks,
 - arresting head cuts, nick points;
 - removing berms and other constraints;
 - removing/replacing structures (culverts, bridges);
 - One of the best ways to make an impact on flood resiliency is by adopting flood hazard bylaws/zoning changes. This includes changes along very small streams that are not covered by the Phase 2 Assessment (for example, Bethel could require 50ft setbacks from streams with watersheds of less than 2mi²).
 - Flooding will continue to be a problem. Rudi noted a statistic from NOAA's Climate Central that predicts a 74% increase in heavy downpours.
 - We discussed ways to educate people about the river and in particular to get beyond common misconceptions about dredging.

- It was recommended that we talk with the Planning Commission about ensuring that Bethel adopts the state's 2013 Bridge and Culvert Standards.
- **Increasing public river access on the buyout properties.** Mary Russ (White River Partnership) spoke with us about two opportunities involving public access along the river:
 - VYCC crew
 - due to interest from Bethel's Parks and Public Spaces Committee, VYCC is planning to construct a trail from the parking area down to the river under the new Rte 107 bridge (currently it's a jumble of riprap).
 - would the CC be interested in having VYCC help with a boat launch at the Marsh Meadows Property?
 - The River Conservancy has a grant to help with the "visioning" of public river access. Through this grant the River Conservancy can help facilitate the process of getting public input about river access and help us work through beginning of design steps in order to apply for available grants. WRP happy to play a role in this sort of meeting if we want to pursue this.
 - CC agreed that we would to say yes to a boat launch with VYCC and also take the WRP and River Conservancy up on help with the visioning of public river access in Bethel.
- **Public meeting about river access**
 - When is yet to be determined, but Saturday afternoon was agreed to be the best time.
 - VINS film seems like it might pair better with the Phase II public meetings than a meeting about public access. It would be nice to also have the stream table at such an event.
 - CC might want to look at plans that had been drawn up for a river walk behind the Main Street buildings.
- **Marsh Meadow property**
 - Clean-up is still needed (once the snow melts). Mary will contact Nicole LaMothe about getting the word out again.
- **VT Agency of Natural Resources Natural Resources Atlas** an excellent mapping tool available at <http://anrmaps.vermont.gov/websites/anra/>.
 - Carl Russell suggested we check it out. He would be happy to come show us around the site sometime. The CC will explore the site and then decide if we'd like Carl to show us more.
 - Rudi also mentioned this tool. Phase 2 data for Bethel will eventually be included on this site.
- **Town Water Supply's Water Quality Testing Info**
 - CC reviewed the information received from the town, including the town's sampling plan, the state guidance for testing and the town's notification plan.

- CC remains interested in learning more about the notification plan and exploring how we might modify it so that notification may be received by users more promptly in the future.

Meeting adjourned at 8:40pm.

Next meeting will be May 13th, at 6:30pm.