

Poland Conservation Commission

Town of Poland
1231 Maine St.
Poland, Maine 04274

Meeting Minutes, December 8, 2021

Members Present: Barry Morgan(co-chairperson), Fred Huntress(co-Chairperson), Donald Stover (Secretary), Alan Audet(Naturalist & Trailmaster), Fred Morton, Ray Stillman

Meeting called to order at 7:05 pm by Chairman Morgan.

Minutes of November meeting were reviewed and approved.

Treasurer's report: Barry Morgan reported no changes. There is a Reserve Fund balance of \$5297.73 and Operating Fund balance of \$108,476.28. \$30,349 of TIFF funds remain available until June 30.

Scott Segal has obtained estimates for bog bridges, signs and trail markers. The total estimate is \$28,941.40. Because the final estimate may be higher, the Commission unanimously voted to use money from the Conservation Reserve Fund to pay any increase up to \$31,500.

Fred Morton. and Don Stover re-iterated concerns that the proceeds from sale of the Sadie Jackson property need to be segregated from other funds and reserved for major open space preservation projects. Barry appointed Don and Fred M. to discuss this issue with the Town Manager.

Black Cat Mountain Trail: There appear to be multiple discrepancies in land titles relating to this trail route. Until those are clarified the trail cannot be authorized as a town trail or a snowmobile club trail. Further discussion was tabled until January.

Annual Report: Barry has submitted our annual report to the town. Copies were emailed to commission members. (report is attached)

Budget Request: Barry submitted our budget request to the Selectboard on December 7. He reports it was well received and Selectboard voted to recommend approval of a \$5000 stipend "to continue our stewardship of trails, elimination of invasive plants, and sharing of all this with Poland residents, visitors, and schools."

Heart of Poland: Barry reported that 10 volunteers from Conservation and Trails removed a substantial amount of invasive Asiatic bittersweet adjacent to the town complex. Deb Perkins assisted this effort by teaching the correct ways of identifying and removing the invasive plants.

Thanks to Barry's regular communications with NEFF, the surveys have now been approved by the NEFF attorney. The town meeting can now vote on the amendment to HOP easement.

Review of town owned properties: Fred H. and John will discuss this with selectboard on December 21. They shall recommend the sale of four of these parcels.

Chestnut trees: Barry has been in contact with Tom Flak, University of New England. It is expected that we can participate in planting of hybrid chestnut trees next summer.

Estys Bog: Fred Huntress and John Young will contact the owner of adjacent land to explore common interests in enhancing habitat of the area.

Map 11, lots 2 & 4A: In his capacity as Town Forester, Fred Huntress shared correspondence between himself and the Town Manager concerning a need to clarify the titles of these two parcels. While the Conservation Commission agrees that the title questions should be clarified, they do not believe it is their responsibility.

The following motion was passed unanimously: *While the Conservation Commission shares concerns about the title issues as discussed in November 30, 2021 letter from the Town Manager to Fred Huntress, we do not believe they are the Commission's responsibility to resolve.*

Meeting adjourned at 8:43pm. The next meeting will be Wednesday, January 12, 2022 at 7pm in the library.

Respectfully submitted,
Donald Stover, Secretary

Annual report attached

Poland Conservation Commission

Town of Poland
1231 Maine St.
Poland, Maine 04274

Annual Report, December 2021

The Conservation Commission continues its mission of preservation and stewardship of open space for recreation, wildlife habitat, agriculture, forestry, and water resources. Our three main conservation areas, Bragdon Hill, Heart of Poland and Waterhouse Park comprise nearly 650 acres of protected open space.

During the past year we were able to add 5 acres of significant wildlife habitat to the conservation easement for the Heart of Poland area. A trail has been cleared and plans are under consideration to develop a third trail-head off the Hilt Hollow Rd. to better access this area.

At the request of the Selectboard and Town Manager more than 40 parcels of town land were reviewed with recommendations concerning current and future use. This project was conducted by Fred Huntress and John Young. We recommend that four of these parcels be sold and returned to the tax roles.

We were deeply saddened by the death of Michael Murphy who had brought invaluable knowledge and skills to the Conservation Commission. In his memory we planted a tree and placed an engraved stone at the town lot adjacent to the RSU building on Rt. 26.

The intrusion of invasive plants is an increasing concern. Recently Poland citizen and wildlife ecologist, Deborah Perkins of First Light Wildlife Habitats (<https://www.firstlighthabitats.com/>), donated a day to teaching and assisting a group of our members in identifying and removing a significant amount of Asiatic Bittersweet from an area between the Municipal Complex and the Heart of Poland. Scott Segal also assisted and provided town resources to destroy the weeds. While this was a successful effort, there are more and larger areas to be addressed in the future. If left unchecked, invasive species will seriously degrade property value and spread to adjacent areas. Because a professional licensed herbicide technician will be required to successfully eradicate these plants, this will be an annual expense for years to come. Citizens are urged to review our brochure on invasive plants and seek advice from our members or professionals to identify problems on their own property.

Our Trail Master and Naturalist, Alan Audet, has developed a Master Trail Plan to prioritize and schedule projects for the continuing stewardship of our conservation areas. His projects include trail maintenance, habitat improvement, and photographing wildlife and botanicals. Alan and his Trail Committee members bring invaluable knowledge, skill and effort to these projects. Our continuing program to replace old wooden trail bridges with bridges built by Great Northern Docks will provide increased security and longevity to the wet land crossings on our trails.

As part of our continuing study of conservation issues, Alan Audet, Barry Morgan, Ray

Stillman and Don Stover joined representatives of 15 other towns at the annual meeting of the Maine Association of Conservation Commissions. One of the highlights was a presentation by Maine Economist, Jessica Sargent, who specializes in analysis of the costs and benefits of environmental programs. Her research could benefit over-all town planning. Significantly, she has found that in Maine communities every dollar spent on conservation brings an annual return of \$4 to \$11. In communities she has studied, parks and conservation areas increase the value of area properties, and generally provide the community with a net positive economic value. One of our future goals is to provide a forum for review of such research with town citizens, especially those who are serving on the town boards and committees.

As a final note, we are looking forward to a collaboration with Thomas Klak, University of New England who is involved with a chestnut tree hybrid program. We hope to begin planting chestnut trees this coming summer. We hope to have participation from the schools and community organizations for this project.

Respectfully submitted,

Barry Morgan, co-chairman
Fred Huntress, co-chairman
Don Stover, Secretary
Alan Audet, Naturalist & Trailmaster
Fred Morton
Ray Stillman
John Young
Steve Robinson (Selectboard liason)