

**Town of Amherst
Conservation Commission Meeting
Wednesday September 14, 2016**

Attendance: D. D'Angelo- Chair, J. Harvey, R. Clemens, R. Hart, L. Gilman, V. Bennison, W. Robertson, B. Beckley- Alt, J. Hardner-Alt

Daryl called the meeting to order at 7:05pm

Topics/ Invited Guests

- Trapping Permission- Brandon Dubois

Mr. Dubois came before the Commission to ask permission to continue trapping on Town- managed conservation land. He has been doing it for about four years and needs to receive approval each year. His main objectives are to manage population and control mange in coyote, fox, raccoon and opossum. The animals are not wounded in the trap, just captured and held. Captured animals will be in the trap 6-12 hours. Some animals will be released if they are healthy and young.

He works with Fish and Game and reports his numbers to the state. Rob thought he only received one email report from Mr. Dubois last year in February. He and Daryl requested reports be sent more frequently and include numbers and types of animals trapped and notes on where and what he is seeing out there.

Mr. Dubois explained he sends the pelts to a tannery and hopes to get these pelts to the local schools. He also sends them to Canada to be made into garments.

R. Clemens moved to approve the trapping permit as submitted with the restrictions the commission has applied in the past and consistent with Fish and Game's regulations J. Harvey seconded.

Vote: All in favor

Administrative Reports

Minutes-Jessica/Rob

V. Bennison moved and R. Hart seconded to accept the minutes of August 28th as submitted.

Vote: All in favor

Finance Report- John

John updated the board on the budget.

See attached document from John

Planning Board Update- Rich

- Lindabury Orchard Working group: Regarding vision work, the dates are set. They would like to present and give recommendations to the Conservation Commission at the October 25th meeting. They have three more meetings to go to collect information. Next Sunday they will hold a public meeting.

Lee asked if there were minutes to review. Yes, they got behind but they have been given to the group for review and after that they will come to the Commission. Daryl asked to receive them in two weeks so they can review them before the October presentation.

- At the previous Planning Board meeting they approved an addition to a house on Baboosic Lake and Bruce Berry apologized to the board for needing to cut down three more trees than he was approved for at the Col. Wilkins project. A conceptual discussion on an elderly housing project was tabled to a future meeting.

Management Areas

Water Resources- Rob

There have been discussions on doing a hydrology water resources study for the Town. There are Federal, State and regional programs for water protection and they have to be looked into. This study will likely will cost money so we might seek help from the Town once we put the skeleton together. Its currently under discussion with more details to come.

Meadows/ Forests/ Invasives- Lee

- Upper Bragdon has stones and needs to be rocked before it can be mowed. The board decided everyone will help on Saturday October 1st from 10am-12pm to get it done. Volunteers welcome.
- Lee put a new lock on the gate at Joppa Hill
- Logging was done and there is one load of logs left to be picked up
- Daryl explained that trees came down at the upper parking lot, but large stumps were left. Jared and Lee said they will work on putting up a 2-rail fence across the stumps so cars can pull up to it.
- The board suggested gravel is needed at Betty Arnold parking lot, Caesar's Brook Trail head and Haseltine Upper lot. Wes will call Bruce Berry.
- Lee said treatments were done at Upper Lindabury Orchard and Lower Bragdon. They were edged for poison ivy.

Infrastructure- Frank (Daryl)

- There is a request list on the share drive.
- He cut metal stakes on one side of the canoe launch stairs. He has to get a tool for the other side because the new stakes are steel and his blades didn't work
- He hasn't seen the rebar issue yet
- He hasn't gotten an estimate yet on getting the Lindabury sign back up so it won't be up for the Cider festival
- He still needs a plan and materials list for the Arnold stairs
- Wes got a group to work on the southern bridge in the Betty Arnold Forest. The northern bridge still needs some work
- Replacement of the Plum trail bridge will be done Sept 22nd

Frank's note said to keep him informed when and where infrastructure work is happening. Also, it's great to have volunteers, but don't let the availability of volunteers pressure us to find something for them to do.

Trails

- Currier/ Forman Trail Agreement- John

John said a resident had his property surveyed and the entire entrance to the trail is on his property. We need that 100' access point to the trail. The resident is amenable to allowing the easement and has already signed the agreement that John brought tonight. **J. Harvey moved that the Conservation Commission approve the Currier/ Forman Trail Agreement and send it on to the Town Administrator for signature. R. Clemens seconded. Vote: All in favor**

- Betty Arnold Forest- trail approval- Wes

The Commission discussed trail names. Wes reported the new kiosk is complete. He would like to put a trail from the parking up along the eastern edge of the property line. It would be a flat trail.

The other trail he discussed will be tough to create because it is steep. He showed the location on the map and how it could be connected to the Arnold Loop. He suggested building it with either a 4' tractor or renting a smaller machine for a day to get the benching done. Everyone agreed to try the machine.

W. Robertson moved to approve the proposed trail and that it be partially machine-built. L. Gilman seconded. Vote: All in favor

- Signs- John

John discussed trail signs for driver visibility. Last year they used 12x12 aluminum signs and put one on either side of a tree. They are about \$8 a piece. He suggested putting up signs on posts at the trail heads that show what is prohibited. They could use smaller aluminum signs or decals. These decals could attach to a 4x4 post. The decals are \$1 each. John estimates spending \$600 for the project with aluminum signs or \$300 with decals.

Rob asked if the money has already been approved in the town budget. Yes.

R. Clemens moved to accept John's proposal to spend up to \$600 to get the sign project done.

V. Bennison seconded. Vote: All in favor

- Heritage signs- Bruce

The board tabled this topic to the next meeting. Bruce will circulate his draft grant to the board for review.

Easements and Properties- Daryl

The master index is mostly done. She is working with NRPC and the Town so everything is correct. She discovered that a lot of developments were built with open space regulations. She found over 400 acres of open space within these developments. She will submit that to NRPC.

At 71 Broadway we thought there was encroachment issue. She asked the Town Administrator what to do about it and he said the Town has that issue on some properties as well. The BOS is putting a committee together to analyze the issue. Easement monitoring will fold into this project. Two members of the ACC will be on the committee.

She also reported she has downloaded a monitoring training program.

Management Planning

- Plan for a Plan- slideshow- Jared, John

John presented a slide presentation about creating a conservation plan. See attached slide show presentation. This will be a standing agenda item for updates and assignments.

- PPTF/ GW Plan- slideshow- Bruce

Bruce described the Grater Woods Pond Parish conservation management area by listing its attributes and challenges. He highlighted some management plans for the area. The board discussed the term 'area' and how to define it.

Rob stated that some actions are to 1) define the properties the ACC owns and 2) figure out how to better coordinate with Merrimack.

See attached document from Bruce.

Education and Outreach

- Website update- Rich, Vick

This item was tabled.

- Press releases
 - Habitat for Humanity (Sept 22 build)
 - Storybook Trail (nearing completion)

Daryl stated someone needs to write articles on these two projects. John will do the article for Habitat and Wes will write the Storybook article.

Topics/ Invited Guests

- Election- Secretary- Clerk

Jared volunteered to take minutes on Sundays. The back-up person is Wes.

W. Robertson moved and L. Gilman seconded that J. Hardner will take the minutes during Sunday meetings. W. Robertson will be the back- up when needed. Vote: All in favor

Round Table- All

John said he is working with Deb in the Community Development office to get past meeting minutes scanned onto the website. Once completed, searches can be done by using keywords. This project will continue for the next few months.

Rich said Cider fest will be October 2nd.

His report to the ACC will be on October 23rd, not the 25th as previously stated.

He is creating posters for public outreach, but they are not complete yet.

R. Clemens moved to adjourn at 10:15pm. V. Bennison seconded. Vote: All in favor

Respectfully submitted,
Jessica Marchant

Finance and Asset Manager Report

September 14, 2016

Treasury

- **Conservation Fund: \$500,066.98**
 - Deposit: Haseltine Stumpage + \$5,223.76
- **Town Budget FY17: \$9,432.03**
 - Expense: Meridian/Survey Old Mail Road corners -\$410.40
- **Gift: \$16,017.58**

Purchases & Long Term Agreements

- Lindabury Orchard:
 - Clear lower orchard awarded to Scott Tiedemann: \$4200
 - \$1,500/Town Obligation Budget
 - \$1,700/ACC
 - \$1,000/FOTO (presumably)
 - Repair shed: \$3,500/Town Obligation Budget

Assets

- No transactions

Conservation Management Plan:

Development Roadmap for Commission Feedback

Presented by:

John Harvey (Commissioner)

Jared Hardner (Alternate Commissioner)

September 2016

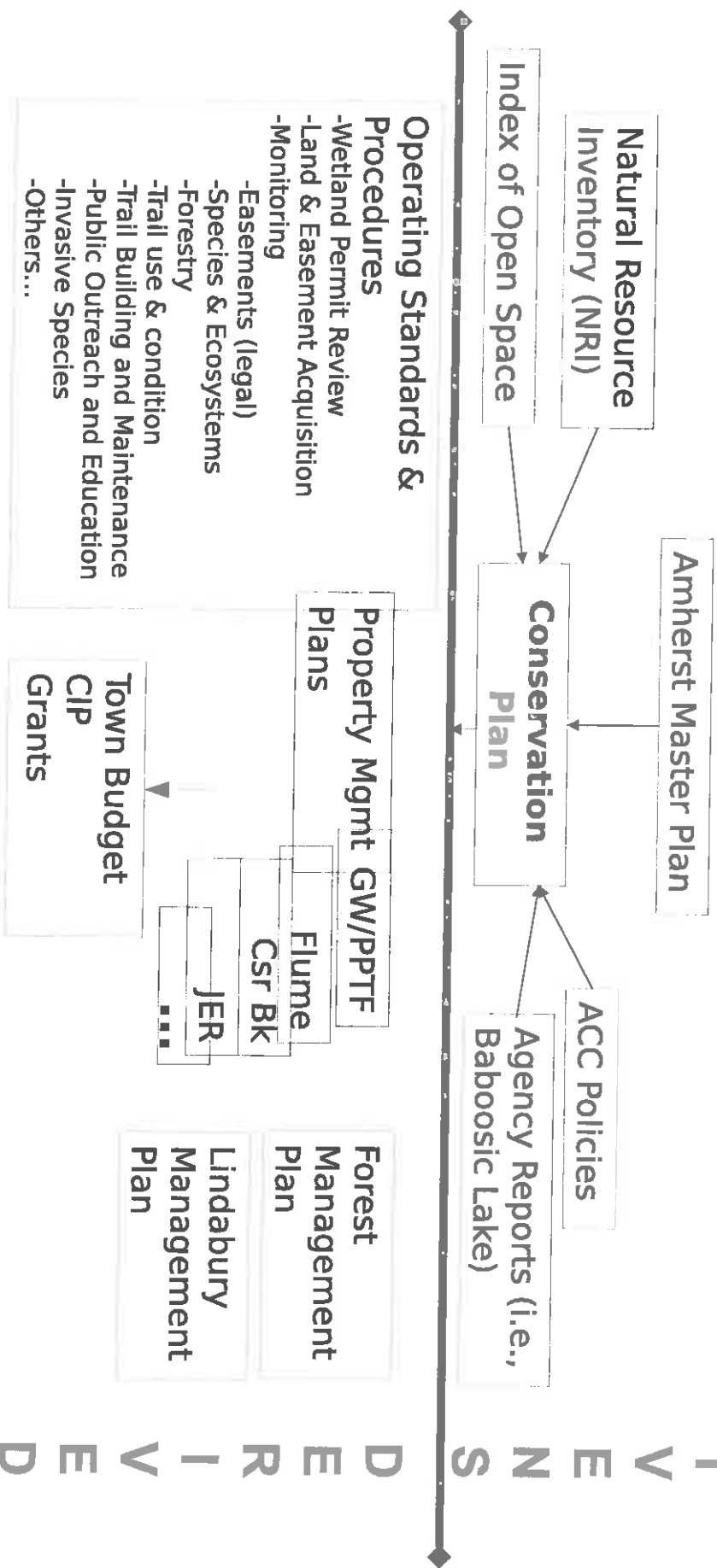
Purpose of a Conservation Plan

A conservation plan is created to:

- Identify and describe the most important natural features and resources in a geographic area
- Promote conservation of these natural features and resources
- Document conservation priorities and recommended policies from the town master plan [Amherst Master Plan]
- Guide town or private voluntary land conservation planning (i.e.; set acquisition and development guidelines, assess conservation values, maintain property inventory, manage to legal requirements)
- Suggest regulatory protection for some features and resources

Preparing a Conservation Plan, UNH Cooperative Extension

Hierarchy of Documents



Contents of a Conservation Plan

A conservation plan reflects the physical, biological and social realities in its geographic areas of interest.

Typically includes:

- A statement of purpose
- Goals
- References to documents that support the work
- Review of a natural resource inventory
- Interpretation of the inventory
- Landscape level considerations - watersheds, biological needs of wildlife, etc.
- Recommended types and levels of protection for identified features and resources
- An action plan indicating what is to be done, by whom and when.

Preparing a Conservation Plan, UNH Cooperative Extension

TOWN OF FRANCESTOWN, NH

Conservation Focus Areas



MAP FEATURES

Focus Areas

Francestown Parcels 2012

Lakes and Ponds

Conservation Lands as of

Village Conservation Value

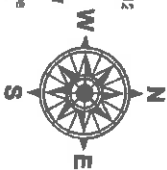
Agricultural Conservation Values

Groundwater Aquifer

Wild Trout Streams

Surface Water Conservation Values

Forest and Wildlife Conservation Values



Prepared by P. Throp, Monadnock Conservancy
July 21, 2013
Sources: SPNHF, NH GRANIT, PWA, SWRPC,
and Community Input - NAD83/NHSP



Plan Chapter		Gap	Who
Consultation summary	Coordinate with Master Plan / Planning Board	ACC Chairperson, Sub-Committee	
Statement of purpose	Any language at present?	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
Goals	Any language at present?	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
Reference to governing law, policy, planning	Any language at present?	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
Summary and Interpretation of NRI	Determine questions that need to be answered	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
	-Wetland permit reviews	ACC Chairperson to coordinate with Planning Board	
	-Reviewing acquisition opportunities		
	-Input to town zoning and planning		
	-ACC land mgmt (e.g. avoiding impact to sensitive features)		
	-Others?		
	Index of Open Space	Daryl	
	-Map exists		
	-Need legal documentation of lands managed by ACC		
	-Need ownership info on all other open space		
	Update/ dean up existing NRI with current map layers	Sub-committee, external GIS help?	
	Capture local knowledge, higher resolution data, ground-truth maps	ACC members - past and present, consulting biologist(s)	
	Place in landscape context	Sub-committee, UNH, State of NH, Regional Planning Commission	
	Prioritize resources for conservation	Sub-committee, external GIS help?	
Recommended management	Select conservation strategies	Sub-committee	
	-Acquisitions and easements		
	-Private landowner outreach		
	-Regulations		
	-Other		
	Link to Standards, Procedures, and Operational Plans	Sub-committee to coordinate with: -Frank on trails infrastructure -Wes on trails -Bruce on Grater Woods Management Plan -Etc	
Action plan	List of actions to implement recommendations	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
	Performance Indicators	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	
	3-year budget based on action plan	Sub-committee, to be reviewed by Commission	

Key Resources for Plan Development

- Us
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- USGS
- NRPC/GRANIT
- NH Wildlife Action Plan
- Local Knowledge
 - Consulting Forester
 - ACC Commissioners past and present
 - Biologists (seeking references)
 - Hydrologists (seeking references)
 - Other (seeking references)
- Others?

Grater Woods – Pond Parish Conservation Management Area



Amherst Conservation Commission

July 27, 2016

Grater Woods – Pond Parish Conservation Management Area

Location:

The Grater Woods – Pond Parish Conservation Management Area (GW-PP CMA or The Area) is outlined in Figure 1. It includes lands in both Amherst and Merrimack, NH. The Area is defined more by its natural features and values than by legal bounds. Nevertheless, for management purposes, The Area includes:

Grater Woods Reservation in Merrimack – 337 acres managed by the Merrimack Conservation Commission (MCC).

Grater Woods Preserve in Amherst – 205 acres managed by the Amherst Conservation Commission (ACC).

Pond Parish Town Forest in Amherst – 208 acres managed by the ACC.

Private parcels in Amherst of approximately 100 acres.

Another way of defining The Area is that land encircled by The Fells, Spring and Wilson Hill Road, Old Blood Road, Baboosic Lake Road and back to The Fells. Within the loop are parcels on both sides of Grater and Pond Parish Roads. In comparison, The Area of approximately 1,000 acres is half again in size that portion of the NBAS within Amherst.

Natural Features:

The GW-PP CMA holds as much natural variety in its features as any other area within at least 25 miles. The upland forest is placed in the rare and threatened status by the NH Fish & Game Department due to the threats it faces of an expanding suburbia.

Wetlands created by beavers capture the flowage of small streams coming out of The Area with the creation of ponds in four locations. Ultimately drainage from The Area goes into Baboosic Lake, Beaver Brook and the Souhegan and Merrimack Rivers. The flow from the Pond Parish Ponds and off the Grater Bluff crosses over the Amherst Aquifer and is a contributor to its recharge.

Biodiversity:

Flora and fauna have been surveyed and recorded in Merrimack as a component of the MCC Biodiversity Conservation Plan prepared by Moosewood Ecological LLC. To the north of The Area, the NBAS has prepared very detailed scientifically-based inventories of the species using or situated on the Station land. The diversity of plants, birds, and animals identified on either side of the

ACC -managed properties can be expected to exist in the similar habitats of Amherst GW and PPTF holdings.

Recreational Usage and Challenge:

There are developed trail systems for hikers, X-C skiers, and snowshoers in both towns of The Area. There are about 7.5 miles of trails in Amherst maintained by the ACC and the Amherst Ski Club. The MCC and New England Mountain Bike Assoc. operate about 8 miles of trail there.

A popular trail on private land connects the PPTF with GW. It is used and abused by hikers and bikers – motorized and pedaled. No agreement has been made between the ACC and the owner. Consequently the trail is not marked, maintained or described in ACC literature.

The MCC does not permit hunting. The ACC should review its rules for firearms and archery.

Economic Benefits:

Land managers in both towns recognize the value inherent in a managed woodland. However, the approaches of the two commissions and the Merrimack School District differ. The ACC manages for long-term returns while enhancing habitat and wildlife diversity. Forest management, as planned by the ACC's professional forester is cognizant and responsive to the enjoyment of passive recreational users. The logging in Merrimack, by comparison, resembles clear cutting.

Planning Ahead:

The MCC has formulated and adopted management plans for the Merrimack portion of the GW-PP CMA. The *MCC Grater Woods Stewardship Plan* includes all aspects and goals of the of the management effort with the *Biodiversity Conservation Plan* as a foundational document.

It would behoove the ACC to formalize its plans for the area to mesh with the MCC plan as much as their philosophies agree. The following are suggested components of such a plan for the approximately 500 acres of the GW-PP CMA in Amherst. The order in which they are listed should not be taken as prioritization. All are important.

- Promote common management actions for The Area by the ACC, ALT, and MCC.
- Continue efforts to bring privately held lands under ACC management in fee, by easement, or trail agreement.

- Maintain existing trail and educational assets in safe, user-friendly conditions, including the treadway, structures and signage.
- Promote The Area as a town and regional gem.
- Encourage respectful use and understanding of The Area by the schools, scouting units and community organizations.
- Cooperate with the schools, the Town Library, and other Town Commissions to capture and explain the natural and cultural history of The Area.
- Remain open to additional land and species protection opportunities in concert with the ALT and similar organizations.
- Cooperate with the Amherst Recreation Department in planning for the compatible uses of the Amherst property.
- Review the existing ACC trail system and plan changes and additions as appropriate, sensible and needed. Plans are on file for proposed trail additions.
- Commence work to prepare a Natural Resources Inventory for future use in education and funding.

The following specific steps are suggested with a target completion date of December 31, 2016. Some of these projects lie outside the GW-PP CMA however, the outcome of each stands to affect the resources available for all ACC projects:

- 1) Complete closures with the Bowers and Ariel Taylor for easements over portions of their lands.
- 2) Press for trail agreement(s) with the Currans.
- 3) Obtain permission from the MCC to complete the Three Ponds Trail in GW.
- 4) Investigate and pursue optional locations for a trail bypassing Lakey land and connecting the B&M and Parker Trails.
- 5) Revise as necessary the forest management plan for GW and PPTF.
- 6) Expand the educational programs and resources of The Area in collaboration with the AHC and SHS. Durable trailside display kiosks should be considered. While the interests of school groups and others in the community are needed and welcome, the products of their efforts should be durable and demand a minimum of maintenance.
- 7) Make the ACC known as an efficient, user-friendly land manager, dedicated to preserving and protecting Amherst's resources and opportunities for education and passive recreation for the town residents.

Abbreviations used:

ACC	Amherst Conservation Commission
ALT	Amherst Land Trust
AHC	Amherst Heritage Commission
GW	Grater Woods
MCC	Merrimack Conservation Commission
NBAS	New Boston Air Station
PPTF	Pond Parish Town Forest

Useful References:

General Background

At What Cost? Shaping The Land We Call NH	SPNHF
Reading The Forested Landscape	Wessells
The Granite Landscape	Wessells
Wicked Big Puddles	Vernal Pool Assoc
Good Forestry In The Granite State	NH Forests Sustainability Standards Work Team
Natural Communities of NH	Sperduto & Nichols
Landowner's Guide to Identifying & Monitoring Wildlife	UNH Coop Extention
Buffers For Wetlands	Chase -- ASNH
NH's Changing Landscape	TNC -- SPNHF
NH Outdoors -- Comp Outdoor Recreation Prog	NHOSP
Best Development Practices -- Conserving Pool- Breeding Amphibians	Metropolitan Conservation All.
Publications of the Land Trust Alliance	LTA
NH Living Legacy -- Biodiversity	NHF&G

Amherst Region Studies and References

Consultant-prepared reports on cultural and natural resources of NBAS:

Environmental assessment for JE Pond Dam	
Biodiversity Study NBAS	
Integrated Natural Resources Management Plan	
Assessment of Wetlands Amherst, NH	Antioch, NE
Forest Management Plan of ACC Properties	Koch
Region-Wide Buildout Analysis	NRPC
Soils Survey Hillsborough County	USDA-SCS
Pennichuck Watershed Management Plan	PWW

Other reports at one time in the Town Hall (may be in ACC files) covered an environmental study (EPA?) of Souhegan River habitats including unusual areas around old horseshoe. Prior to state setting up threatened species office, I recall seeing Pond Parish as area with a rare salamander but never found written verification.

Further References

1. Biodiversity Conservation Plan, Merrimack, NH 70+ pp, Moosewood Ecological LLC. This a study of all MCC and adjoining land identifying ecologically significant areas, species of conservation concern, landscape-level considerations, focus areas, and several appendices tabulating other resources, ecological data. Discusses upland and riverine communities and their management and public opportunities.
2. Grater Woods Forest Stewardship Plan, 61 pp, Includes water and soil resources, wildlife habitat management, trails, educational opportunities, proposed projects. The information in this report and the previous one is directly applicable and extendable to the ACC-managed half of GW Preserve.
3. The USAF under congressional order commissioned the Argonne National Laboratories to perform both natural history and cultural surveys and reports for the NBAS. These multi-volume reports which cost the taxpayers hundreds of thousands of dollars are directly applicable to the northern areas of Amherst and the watersheds therein. There's no way, or reason, we could replicate these efforts which assess habitats, avian, mammalian, amphibian, and herbaceous species. The cultural history of the area and streams is equally extensive.
4. New Hampshire Outdoors, SCORP, 28+ pp, NHOSP. Chapters on importance of local outdoor recreational opportunities, Open space protection, Education of users, use of financial resources to competing needs, health and welfare issues.
5. NH Wildlife Action Plan, 165+ pp, NHDF&G. *Very applicable to Amherst forests, wetlands, species, conservation strategies, monitoring, and risk assessment.* Also links to valuable habitat, species and terrain resources.
6. A report [USEPA or USF&W ?] I have seen referenced but not seen report itself examined the biota of the Souhegan River floodplain and listed forest types. Another study [probably in the 1960s] I have heard of identified rare and endangered species in Amherst.
7. I find Charles Koch's reports very helpful in studying and guiding others in ACC woodlots. They show a sound balancing of forest management goals with other regulations by OSHA and NHDES especially.

Beyond these resources applicable directly to our charter under the RSAs are several other books and reports about the natural history of our area and interpretation of the stories the land tells. A few of them which I find valuable are:

1. Field Book of American trees and Shrubs, Matthews 1915 [out of print]
2. New Hampshire Game and Furbearers, Silver 1957 [hard to find]
3. Sierra Club Naturalist's Guide, Jorgensen 1978
4. Forest Forensics, Wessels 2010; other books by Wessels include Reading the Forested Landscape 1997, and *The Granite Landscape* 2001
5. Bogs of The Northeast, Johnson 1985
6. Exploring Stone Walls, Thorson 2005. Also others by Thorson on related subject
7. The Peterson series of field guides, particularly Eastern Forests Kricher/Morrison 1988
8. Newcomb's Wildflower Guide, Newcomb 1977

For those involved with trail maintenance, I suggest the following be used as the bible:

Trail Building and Maintenance Proudman & Rajala, AMC 1981

Untitled Map

Write a description for your map.

Untitled Map

Write a description for your map.

Legend

- Feature 1
- Feature 2
- Feature 3
- PP-GW Regional Management Area
- Untitled Path

- Legend**
- Feature 1
 - Feature 2
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 - PP-GW Regional Management Area
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