

**Conservation Committee  
Draft Meeting Minutes  
May 11, 2020**

Present: Dawn Andrews, Gary Gulka, Chris Duff, Roland Payne, Jr.

Next Meeting: **June 8, 7:00 PM**

This meeting was held via tele-video conference in accordance with state open meeting statutes for electronic meetings.

Draft minutes of April 6 approved without changes

Public Comment

None

Natural Community Project - Review Progress with Matt Peters

Matt Peters gave an overview of the landscape analysis, background information and site prioritization for field visits. Landscape analysis and background information gathering included aerial photos; bedrock, soils, wetlands, and topographic maps; Natural Heritage Program (VT Fish & Wildlife) databases, and personal contact with Brett Engstrom and Art Gilman in Marshfield. Information was also obtained from the Consortia of New England Herbaria on plants recorded in Cabot as early as 1915 - quite a few rare and uncommon plant species have been noted. The landscape analysis identified features such as cliffs and outcroppings, potential vernal pools, rich northern hardwood forests and wetlands such as northern cedar swamps, some potential fens, and several beaver meadows. In comparison to surrounding towns in the region that Matt is familiar with, Cabot's interesting natural features and communities tend to be smaller in size, and perhaps more locally significant than of statewide significance. A dozen or two vernal potential vernal pools were noted for possible site verification.

In general Matt has identified 15-20 high to high-medium sites that would be the target for field work. There was general agreement that these sites would be the focus of his work.

Matt will provide the committee with a refined list of parcels by the end of the week with high to high-medium priority. This can then be our focus of outreach for landowner permissions to visit the site. The committee will then divide the work of contacting these landowners in person, by phone or letter. Landowners will be asked if sharing of natural community information will be restricted to the town or whether it can be shared with the state's Natural Heritage Program. The committee will reconvene in the near future to develop a plan and strategy for contacting landowners. This will then guide Matt's site work. Matt suggested that there be a single point person to which the landowner permissions are funneled and then included on the spreadsheet of sites.

A public meeting to inform landowners of the project and to seek local natural community information is a part of the project work plan. Given current restrictions on public gatherings presents some challenges to accomplishing this. The committee will discuss this further at its next meeting.

Public Outreach

Articles will be submitted to the Cabot Chronicle and land-based and aquatic invasive species. An article will also be submitted on the natural community project. Gary will draft the latter and send out for review this week.