

Minutes of the Sugar Hill Conservation Commission

Date May 16 2019

Start Time. 5:30

Adjournment Time 7:10

Attending Members

Margo Connors

Chris Ellms

Charles Wolcott

Cathy Strasser

Timothy Williams

Location: Robertson town forest

Accepted minutes of April 19, 2019 meeting.

CATHY STRASSER will provide draft minutes of March 21 meeting

We walked the Town Forest loop trail which has been cleared, repaired, provided with new signs, and mowed by CHRIS ELLMS. Many thanks to Chris. The basic loop trail appears to be in good condition at present with a few minor improvements. We also explored a trail leading from the loop trail to the property boundary of the town forest this trail could be connected with the Bearclaw trail which traverses the ridge of Garnet Hill.

Detailed notes were taken by CATHY STRASSER and are appended below.

Next meeting June 21 2019 at 5:30 at Crapo Building

Submitted by Tim Williams

Many thanks to CATHY STRASSER for this detailed review of present states and plans for trails in Robertson Town Forest.

Sugar Hill Town Forest – Follow-up to walk through on 5/16/19

1. Area adjacent to parking area:

- Area has been mowed/weed whacked (thanks Chris!!!). Some blackberry bushes were cut back and small pine trees cut down. Several blackberry patches were left – one in center of the meadow and many along the edges. Some deciduous trees were left in places in the meadow.
- Questions – Cut down deciduous trees or leave some to grow larger and provide some shade?
- ACTION PLAN: Mow/weed whack meadow as needed - ? September of each year once birds are off their nests.
- ACTION PLAN: Set up sign for forest – possibly on a kiosk with trail map and some history of land and Phil Robertson's contribution.
- Signs similar to those at Coffin Pond about waste disposal..?

2. Main path, first path cut by Ben Hudson in original work in 2016-18:

- Path has been weed whacked (thanks Chris!!). Weed whacking helps mark trail and keeps vegetation/blackberry bushes from taking over. Grass seed spread by Ben H has filled in many areas of the path, adding to its appeal.
- Trail markers have been placed on trees – brown diamonds with picture of a hiker – at intervals to help define path.
- ACTION PLAN: Continue to weed whack path as needed – 2X a year? Spring and late summer or fall?

3. Bridge over stream: logs with pressure treated slats, steps up to bridge at either end.
  - Bridge is in good condition – accessible for walking, not for bicycles
  - Step on trail side of bridge is not stable
  - ACTION PLAN: Monitor bridge condition and repair/replace when needed. Secure steps at either end of bridge.
  
4. Trail split beyond bridge – path toward Marsh is very wet
  - ACTION PLAN: Adjust trail to split further up hill across drier area and mark.
  
5. Continuation of “Loop Trail” (consider formally naming trails to prevent confusion?)
  - Spring Trail clearing and maintenance completed (thanks Chris!) with special attention paid to several view areas where stone seating was built by Ben H. and at notable views or natural points of interest. Some wet areas exist, but these are small – 3 to 4 feet in length – and may disappear as the seasons change.
  - ACTION PLAN: Continue annual trail maintenance such as cutting/removing fallen branches and trees – do as full CC activity? Contact local schools for assistance?
  - Place rocks or cut branches in wet areas to provide options for dry traverse. Full CC activity?
  - Place additional seating made of natural materials similar to those made by Ben H at places of interest? Mike Warren?
  
6. New trail/Phase 2 trail – connection with former Bear Claw mountain bike trail
  - Walked new trail portion (thanks for all the work Chris and Rose!) Lovely winding trail gently climbing toward the height of land and boulder marking the edge of the Town Forest land. Some wet areas, crosses power line, recently mowed.
  - ACTION PLAN: Place stones/logs in wet areas for dry traverse – full CC activity?
  - Mark new trail – Choose name (Bear Claw?) and mark with different markers, similar to one on Loop Trail but with picture of a Bear Paw?
  - Spread grass seed on areas of trail that have no natural groundcover – helps mark trail and soak up excess water?
  - Add this trail extension to annual maintenance schedule for CC/ ? School groups.
  - Place seating made of natural materials at points of interest?
  
7. Possible Phase III Plan?
  - Adjust new “Bear Claw” trail as it approaches the boulder to remain on Town Forest Land.
  - Cut new trail from Boulder down to marsh area, crossing power line closer to the upper boundary of the Town Forest and terminate at stone ledges at upper end of Marsh
  - Connect new “Marsh Trail” to Loop Trail
  - Cut trail along stream from Marsh back to Bridge near the Meadow/entrance to Town Forest. Or would this be Phase IV? Hire Mike Warren if needed for assistance?
  - Connect new “Bear Claw” trail with Mike Warren’s trails??
  - Continue connection with landowner abutting the Town Forest for possible purchase/donation to expand forest....?
  - Connection of Town Forest trails with other local trails?
  - Open trails for Mountain Biking?