Fayston Conservation Commission Minutes

Wednesday, October 22, 2025

5:45 - 7:00 pm

Fayston Municipal Office

1. **In attendance** - Kim Phelan, Brian Litmans, Peter Colgan, Woody Dugan, and Andrea Henderson. Amy Dalton absent.
2. **Meeting called to order at 5:46 pm**
3. **Minutes** from September 24, 2025 were unanimously approved.
4. **Wildlife Corridor work updates from Aaron Worthley, Arrowwood Environmental** via Zoom. He is an Ecologist and GIS analyst working in the MRV with natural resource inventory and planning and has worked with the Conservation and Recreation Visioning (CRV) Project.
   - **The company uses conservation biology tools, and landscape and habitat modeling techniques to map wildlife movement.** This methodology has changed since the Valley wide resource inventory in 2007.
   - He **screenshared a topo map** showing the town boundaries on a map plus 1km beyond (standard practice for GIS mapping). Landscape features have "costs" to wildlife movement - e.g. roads and housing are more costly for animals than moving through a natural forested environment. Animals tend to favor valleys, ridgelines and stream corridors.
   - **The practice for mapping wildlife corridors is to:**
     - **Identify forest blocks.** These are shown as large green blocks on the map with contiguous forest area of over 20 acres - excluding roads and open fields.
     - **Identify high value transit areas for animals between these forest blocks.** These are shown in red and orange on the map. Many of these areas are in stream channels and valleys.
   - **Questions**:
     What are impediments to movement?
     - Seasonality - Fairly consistent movement of some species - fishers, coyotes and foxes; deer and bear move to specific resources at different times of year.
     - Manmade barriers - Not good science around many types of impediments (guardrails, rip rap etc)
   - **What is our goal?** We were spurred to do this to gain knowledge about animal corridors to enable better decision making for recreational development and to identify valuable areas for potential land easements. We have not yet discussed how to share this work with the community.
   - **Final format?** We will have raw GIS data, a summary memo, and a web mapping platform like google maps. We Asked for PDF maps too. Final deliverables dependent on time and budget.
   - **Timing?** Aiming to complete a week before the Tri-town meeting on Nov 20.

- **Follow up actions?** Developing a bulleted list of opportunities for collaboration between towns would be helpful. We could also do field verification of key areas identified.

5. **FCC Administration**
    a. **Tri-CC meeting** - meeting is on Nov 20 at Lareau Farm Inn hosted by George Shenk with a standard agenda, shared for comments
    b. **Fall newsletter -** goal to publish by Nov 10
6. **Project updates**
    a. **Invasives/Knotweed** – getting tree planting tubes and stakes for planting Nov 1 from 10-12 on Mill Brook Road/Rt 17 across from Mad River Lodge, by the Chase brook at Barton Road, and some along German Flats. Use Bee app for sign ups. Some FCCs are also participating in Waitsfield Community Tree Planting Saturday, Oct 25, 9-11;30am
    b. **Chase Brook Mgmt Plan** - Ky is doing a great job on this with Brian, Amy and Peter. The plan has been heavily revamped with forest mgmt recs at the end. The goal here was to streamline and avoid repetition.
    c. **Chase Brook Maintenance** - Recommended continuing $200 powder post treatments 2x/year. Pollinator beds seeded with cover crop. Serviceberry tree is protected. Picnic tables need to be moved into the barn. Need some rules for camps (rock painting) to align with leave no trace. Letter sent to Josh Livingston about repairing driveway. Need to keep watching knotweed along Chase Brook.
    d. **Wildlife Corridors** - see update above
    e. **Conservation and Recreation Visioning** - no new updates until next meeting
    f. **MRV Bear Initiative** – tabling at MRG Green & Gold weekend and Sugarbush Community day; the Story contest has closed with many entries; we are emphasizing positive messaging and success stories to minimize negative bear/human interactions. Shared new website, mrvbears.org with Jaclyn Comeau to be included in next webinar slide deck. **Living with Bears webinar - Session 2: Thursday, November 6th, 2025 10:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m. Register here.**
    g. **Boyce Hill** – Viewshed management clearing completed on Sep 27 work day, chipping completed but some piles need to be spread more for further soil augmentation. Mowing is complete and is slightly expanded from last year. The snow cat with attachment did

well on grasses and raspberries, less well on steeper slopes and year-old poplar stems, so is pretty rough in places. We are exploring the idea of using goats to supplement or as an alternative to mowing keep views through and over currently mowed areas open. Goats can apparently graze while ground-nesting birds are still there (sheep graze down, goats graze up). We would also like to explore the potential for using a side arm mower on ditches and abrupt slope transitions along trail edges. . In the future, Woody and Pete wonder if brushhogging rather than mulching with the snow cat or tractor operated flail mower would result in neater, closer to ground cutting. Further, it is challenging to use the large machine in some areas. 2 days worth of Boyce Hill tours start on 10/23. UVM students on 10/23 and Vermont Land Trust (easement holders on the property) are visiting on 10/24.

7. **Other business**
    a. **Potential new members**
8. **Next Meetings:**
    - Tri-town Conservation Commission meeting Nov. 20, 2025 at Lareau Farm from 5:30-8 pm
    - December Meeting: Monday December 15, 5:45-7 pm
9. **Meeting adjourned at 7:05 pm.**