

Stockbridge Agricultural and Forestry Commission Meeting

January 9, 2023 Minutes

Present

Agricultural and Forestry Commission	Guests
Mathieu Boudreau, chair Erik Rasmussen, co-chair (via Zoom) Lisa Bozzuto Abigail Fredsall Shelby Marshall	Jaimie Minacci Ron Browker Sally Underwood-Miller Tom LaBelle Peter Grima, DCR Jess Toro

1. Matt called the meeting to order at 6:33 pm.
 - a. Matt made a motion to approve the minutes from the meeting of December 5. Motion approved unanimously.
2. **Discussion:** Invasive Species affecting our forests around Stockbridge Bowl and other waterways.
 - a. Landowners are reporting trees that are infested, some of which are already dead.
 - b. Hemlock Woolly Adelgid (HWA) has been seen in the woods around Stockbridge Bowl. About 72% of the land surrounding the Bowl is forested. The forest includes Hemlock and Ash, both of which are infested (and will continue to be more intensely infested).
 - c. Tom LaBelle read from an article coming out of Yale. As trees die, the community makeup will shift to shrubs, invasives, and other plants that thrive with more light.
 - d. Peter Grima: In Connecticut, he has seen a gradual ongoing loss of hemlock, with a shift to sugar maples and black birch in particular. Sugar maples are sensitive to drought, but they may be okay around the Bowl.
 - e. Do we want people to replace evergreens with other evergreens rather than with deciduous trees?
 - f. The properties around the Bowl are privately owned, and many are small. They won't go through natural succession – landowners will select what to plant.
 - g. Jess Toro:
 - i. It's easy to do a survey to determine how much of the cover is hemlock. She thinks hemlocks are playing a bigger role along the feeder streams to the Bowl, probably more on the north side, rather than around the Bowl, because they keep the water cooler in those streams. In general, the woods on the south side are more mixed.
 - ii. Climate change impacts over the next 10 years or so: Summer will get more periods with higher temps (over 90°) and drought. Winter will get more storm events that are rain/ice rather than snow, which will impact the trees.
 - iii. Ash dies in 3–5 years once infested. Hemlock takes longer to die. It's useful to think about the role each species plays (in terms of forest structure), and look for replacement species that fill that role.
 - h. Peter: We can replace Ash with Tulip poplar, sugar maple, basswood, and even oak and hickory. Many of these are already associated with Ash in the South.
 - i. Jess: Think about it as each area has a “stage” with certain soil characteristics, etc., and the players on it will change, while still fitting into the conditions of the stage.

- j. DCR is rolling out a new program to get forest management plans done on plots of 7 acres or more, with a focus on climate resilience. We should encourage people to apply. People can also get a free walk from the state service forester. That can lead to a plan or not.
 - k. Peter has seen areas where hemlocks are more abundant than they would be naturally, due to past forestry practices. So it's not always a problem to lose them. When they die, species that "should" be there get reestablished.
 - l. Matt: Now we can start to put a pamphlet together for landowners. We have good info.
3. **Discussion:** Setting date for Town Forest visit.
- a. Shelby will get in touch with Jeff Jourdain, Mike Buffoni, and Collin (Peter's replacement at DCR) to schedule a walk in Feb/Mar.
4. **Adjournment:** Confirm next meeting date and time
- a. Next meeting is Monday, February 6, at 6:30.
 - b. At 7:20 pm Matt made a motion to adjourn. Passed unanimously.