

EATON CONSERVATION COMMISSION

March 10, 2025

1. Meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm. Members present were Paul Nuccio, Tom Head, Dick Fortin, Robin Nuccio, Holly Fortin, Steve Kafka and Marnie Cobbs. Also present was Dagmar von Schwerin.

2. **ADMINISTRATION** – Minutes of the February 10 meeting were accepted.

3. TREASURER'S REPORT

Land Conservation Fund	\$21,611.17	CD \$10,652.66	
Forest Management Fund	\$17,622.08	CD \$31,957.96	
Foss Mountain Fund	\$13,367.31		
Conservation Fund	\$14,390.28	CD \$10,652.66	
TOTALS	\$66,990.84	CD \$53,263.28	\$120,254.12
Donation boxes	\$0.00		
Website Donation Income	\$0.00		

ECC will transfer Foss Mtn website ownership out of Heather McHendry's name going forward.

Treasurer's report was accepted.

4. **SELECTMEN'S REPORT** – no issues

5. **PLANNING BOARD** – Reviewed a preliminary proposal for a cluster development on a 40-acre lot across from Town Hall and made minor changes overriding a 300' Village District setback for approval. Process exposed issues with Town's cluster development regulations that the PB will consider amending. PB also worked on Roads chapter of the Master Plan.

PB is reviewing draft agreement to the Wetland's Ordinance aiming for inclusion on the Town Warrant in 2026. PB would like feedback from the ECC by mid-June 2025.

Initial ECC Comments – All agree that the first page was helpful in clarifying Authority and Purpose of the Ordinance. Discussed violations of the ordinance, agree that violations should be addressed as stated in the ordinance: "wetlands altered in violation of this ordinance shall be restored at the expense of the violators". Actual legal enforcement is typically done by Army Corps of Eng. / NH DES Wetlands Bureau in Concord – this agency should be referred to more clearly in the ordinance as ECC typically works with them on all wetland issues. We felt that a 500 square foot vernal pool seems a reasonable minimum size to require protection. More research is needed to address other wetland minimum sizes for bogs and other wetlands. May need more specificity with regard to wetland types and minimum sizes that need protection using a 100-foot buffer. A general 100-foot buffer may not be the best approach for protection.

A difficulty may lie in the fact that the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) does not show all wetlands, and without permission, the Town cannot go on property to determine the existence and size of wetlands and whether regulations are being violated. ECC strongly agrees that

landowners need to apply for a wetlands permit to be reviewed by the Army Corps of Engineers for any activity that may disturb a wetland.

ECC recommends continuous education on the amended wetlands ordinance, ensuring townspeople vote with better awareness in 2026. A one-page summary would be helpful. Discussed possible notices in Town Tattler and Eaton Ears, education sessions, info in Town Hall and at Town events. Robin is also working on a Town mailing list.

6. FOSS MANAGEMENT – Dick talked to Mike Crawford of The Nature Conservancy (TNC) about insurance companies to use for burning Foss Mtn fields as the Town's insurance policy does not cover prescribed burns. TNC is currently negotiating with Alliant for the Town of Freedom. Dick will also call Bill at Star Tree to see who they use for insurance. Mike Crawford indicated that the "burn boss" (lighting the match) usually carries insurance. Dick will talk to Chris O'Brien, Prescribed Fire Coordinator for the Forest Protection Bureau again to understand why they cannot carry the insurance.

Brooks Pasture needs to be burned as span worm is taking hold, even if that might mean 2 years without a good berry yield. ECC will talk to Emily Lucy to coordinate with her schedule developing markets for the berries etc. ECC is also having discussions with Lily of UMaine who is investigating the drosophila that makes blueberries mushy and therefore, worthless.

Dick and Holly listened in on the blueberry grower's conference in Belfast, ME and learned valuable information about organic certifications and berry harvesting.

ECC recommends putting "Road Closed" sign at the start of unplowed section of Foss Mtn Road until at least mud season is over so that GPS App followers don't take that route.

7. TOWN LAND MANAGEMENT – NH State Senator Mark McConkey plans to do a safety / traffic study in 2025 of Rte153. In the past he has said he wants to widen and straighten Rte153 to create an alternative to Rte16. Traffic continues to increase with various GPS Apps directing people to Rte153 as a faster route to North Conway than Rte16. New cell tower coverage will add to that traffic as the lack of cell phone coverage is a deterrent.

Visibility test was held for proposed 180' Cell tower on Ridge Road – Balloon was visible from Ridge Road, Foss Mtn and part of 153 heading into Eaton from Conway.

Discussed action items for Conservation Plan. Recommended streamlining list prioritizing 5 items to focus on this year and 5 longer term items. Others can be ranked below that.

8. FOREST MANAGEMENT – no issues

9. WATER MANAGEMENT – Paul and Steve attended zoom session with Andrea LeMoreaux and Brea Arvidson of NH Lakes, discussing partnership and benefits. CLCA is a member because NH Lakes sponsors their Lake Hosts, and ECC can share information for now. Steve will invite Andrea of NH Lakes to an ECC meeting to review their many resources, answer questions and provide advice. This will help us decide if the ECC wants to vote on becoming a NH Lakes Partner.

NH Lakes' Lake Smart program is free – they will conduct a site visit, make recommendations about shore access, septic, buffers etc. and provide a sign indicating you are a member of Lake Smart, encouraging others to look into the program.

Lakes Congress – June 5 2025 in Concord – Maria Gross of CLCA goes every year and Steve, and maybe Paul will attend and make a presentation to ECC.

Take aways from discussion between Bob Craycraft, Selectmen and ECC – If septic systems are polluting a lake, you would smell or see effluent. Biggest issue is probably salt. Can't judge Thurston Pond status solely by last year's numbers because of high pollen last year.

Recommends increasing number of testing sites and start monitoring as soon as the ice goes out as that is when you will see impact of salt. We should look into making a buffer between the road and pond. Also check connection between Hatch and Thurston Ponds where Paul Hill Road dams up a portion of Thurston Pond. Water on the north side of the road is almost stagnant. Education is an important tool. Ask NH Lakes and Chocorua Lake Conservancy (CLC) for examples. CLC discussed some of their efforts at recent Tuckerman Brewery "Sense of Place" event.

10. OTHER BUSINESS –

Water quality outreach might be a good Conservation Conversation topic for 2025. Need to make a subcommittee to organize as it is a lot of work. Subcommittee should also plan for summer programming to follow up with actual projects. Outreach ahead of time with letters to lake owners may encourage attendance outside the usual group – make it fun and interactive to enhance attendance.

Next meeting: April 14, 2025 at 6 pm

Meeting was adjourned at 7:50 pm

Respectfully submitted by Dagmar von Schwerin, Recording Secretary