Natural Resources Committee
April 20, 2011 meeting
Approved Minutes

Attendance
Commissioners: John Whitman, Lynette Hamilton, Andy Toepfer, Jenna Pugliese, and Maggie Bartenhagen
Guest: Joan Weir, Southeast Region Manager for Vermont Land Trust (VLT)
Staff: John Bennett

The Chair called the meeting to order at 17:08

Guest Presentation about Land Conservation
Joan explained she would address three primary topics: 1) general information about VLT, 2) the nuts and bolts of conservation easements, and 3) possible ways to strengthen the regional plan.
1) Joan explained that VLT’s broad mission is to conserve land for the future of Vermont. It has six regional offices with a central administrative office in Montpelier. Its focus is to conserve three types of land: farmland, forest land, and community lands (e.g., town forests, recreation areas, and “gateways to communities”). She noted that since 1977 VLT has conserved over a half million acres state-wide, including 35,815 acres in the Windham Region.
2) Joan handed out copies of a Conservation Easement and explained its elements, including “the Whereas-es” (recitation of facts and intentions), Purpose, Restricted Uses, Permitted Uses, Forest Management Plan, Enforcement of Restrictions, and Miscellaneous Provisions. The easement is a legal interest in the property and an agreement that restricts uses in perpetuity. The easement may be purchased or donated. Even donations carry significant transaction (closing) and stewardship (monitoring) costs.
3) Joan reported she finds the Windham Regional Plan to be good quality, detailed, and tight. She suggested updating the 2004 WRC-produced conserved lands map and trends analysis, with a focus on unprotected critical areas, particularly in underserved places, such as the West River and Deerfield River watersheds.

Comments on FP&R Long Range Management Plans (LRMP)
Review of the LRMP for Dutton Pines, Fort Dummer, Molly Stark, and Sweet Pond State Parks and the one for Roaring Brook Wildlife Management Area noted several issues, including: Non-Native Invasive Species control, non-lethal control of beaver, and access. There was Committee consensus for staff to draft comments for filing with the Department by the comment deadline.

The meeting adjourned at 6:20 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,
John Bennett