Natural Resources Committee
May 14, 2013 meeting
Approved Minutes

Attendance
Commissioners: Maggie Bartenhagen, Nicholas Bartenhagen, Andy Toepfer, Lynette Hamilton, John Whitman, Dick Clark, Jenna Pugliese

Staff: Dinah Reed

The Chair called the meeting to order at 4:00 P.M.

Minutes - Draft Minutes of the March meeting, moved to be accepted as written.

Discussion of The Wetland General Permit – John Bennett was asked to give background and explanation

- A “General Permit” is a way of simplifying the bureaucratic process for the agency and applicant. In this case there are thresholds – if the project meets the thresholds then you do not have to apply for a permit.
- General comments by the Committee
  - Q: How does a property owner know if they are working in a section of their land where there is a wetland? A: It is the ZA’s responsibility to help those who want to build, to contact state agencies about permitting when necessary.
  - The General Permit is not perfectly clear to the reader, who it applies to.
  - It would be helpful for the reader to have examples of projects, and/or an explanatory use guide as part of the Rule – possibly as an attachment.
  - How is the Rule disseminated to the public, to landowners? The Rule will not be effective unless people read it.

Biofinder

- New tool being introduced by Jens Hilke of VT F&W.
- Tool is a suitability mapping program that shows land as (weighted) high/low for conservation, soils, habitat, etc.
- Data for the state is not complete, therefore the map in a particular area can paint a false picture. If an area has data, it may rank much higher for biological functions, compared to an area that has no data. Without data in all areas the weighting is skewed.
- It was pointed out though that the tool will be used for generating energy siting suitability.
- Read the new Governor’s comments on new energy siting.
Re-cap of Forestry Forum and Next Steps

- Make sure to look at the Report the Conway School did and ensure the elements expressed in the report are included in the Regional Plan update.
- There was agreement we definitely need to follow through with Forestry as the Working Landscape - forums/workshops/meetings in the future, discussing economics of forestry in Vermont.
- Talk to Bill Guenther about a follow-up meeting
- Look into High School’s forestry program for ideas – Career Center
- Contact Woodland Owners Association
- Engage young people who are working as loggers – ask them how they make this kind of employment work for them?
- Talk to small saw mill owners to get ideas.

Agenda / Homework for June Meeting

- June meeting on June 19th – discussion of updates that have been made to the Natural Resources Chapter, further review and discussion of Land Use Chapter, Community Resources Chapter, and Implementation Chapter – as much as we can get through.

The meeting adjourned at 5:55 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Dinah Reed