

**Conservation Committee
Minutes
March 20, 2007**

Talk by Steve Walker

from *Beginning with Habitat* part of Maine Inland Fisheries and Wetlands

- Goal: Identify special habitats in Phippsburg to be careful to preserve
- Bethany Atkins also visited
- what we can provide to Phippsburg. Very excited.
- One of the most ecologically diverse in the state of Maine
- Important for various reasons
 - “enough land has been preserved” mesh habitat conservation with future growth
 - active land trust, lots of preserved land
 - want to be able to keep special values over time:
 - landscape connectivity; not becoming too fragmented
 - mesh special values with zoning
 - want to maintain immigration and emigration of species
 - development and road construction can affect

PPT presentation

- Habitat loss and fragmentation are biggest threat to Maine’s wildlife
 - poorly planned development, land use choices
- proactive choices as communities grow to maintain Maine’s economy and way of life
- **Brookings Plan “Charting Maine’s Future” - recent trends**
 - new wave of development, loss of rural acres in Sagadahoc county falling 35%
 - from 1980 to 2000 for example territory the size of Rhode Island, rural land and woodlots to residential, second only to VA in loss of rural acres nationwide
 - timber harvesting and agriculture no long viable
 - sprawl, spreading out, causing tax increases due to problems with fire fighting coverage, school busing, road maintenance, etc.
 - loss of home town identity, destroy small town ambiance, degrade quality of life, property values decrease.
 - Spread of anonymous suburban development threatens to degrade Maine’s quality of place.
 - implications for property values
 - neighboring towns with higher mill rates next to towns with lower mill rates can contribute
- **Beginning with HABITAT**
 - coalition of several agencies, nonprofit groups presenting a single consistent message compiling it from these different groups taking it to towns. Funded by conservation credits and lottery.
 - non-regulatory
 - give you the tools you need make your choices to meet your community goals
 - bring in a package
 - recent comprehensive plan has a lot of data missing. They are concerned. A lot of key features were not included in the plan.
 - follow up workshops
 - build a conservation blueprint locally
 - guide to show how best to manage

- provide maps of each type of feature to give you a sense of where these key features in town are so you can start thinking about Phippsburg on the **landscape level** rather than lot by lot. see how things fit together and work together logically
- services: notebook with a series of maps, a data cd, all the maps in pdf format can email or put on website
- can provide digital gis data to use with Arc View or Arc Map (shape files)
- follow up assistance with:
 - implementation of comp plan
 - if Conservation Commission would like to talk about a local open space plan
 - local zoning ordinance revisitation
 - tools that other communities have developed
- state wide picture of diversity and development
 - species richness is southern Maine, the heart of diversity
 - overlaps where expected growth will be taking place
 - e.g. Phippsburg is within an area that we will see increasing suburbanization over the next 40 years
 - opportunity right now, less five years along the road, you'll have less choices later
 - not about stopping growth but deal well with landscape
 - e.g. Scarborough aerial views over 40 very dramatic. Would make a good poster with notes about changes in water quality etc.
 - marine resources very important in Phippsburg
- **Core Maps**
 - major water resources map – riparian zones
 - major surface and coastal water areas are in Phippsburg
 - buffer zones state regs and local zoning
 - can see the connectivity in these drainage patterns and provide for landscape connectivity
 - enforcing shoreline zoning rules can go a long way in preserving landscape, maintain flow of species
 - 50-75% of species use these riparian zones in their life histories
 - some protection is already there to protect these areas. Maybe better enforcement or maybe rules can be ratcheted up, e.g. protect 1st order streams
 - Comment from audience: We need your help on the land use ordinance committee, have been discussing minimizing the number of districts under shoreline zoning. 4 zones: resource protection, residential, commercial, fisheries & maritime. Taking out one of the districts we currently have, resource conservation. Groundswell movement towards simplifying. More development pressure causes town hall to be overwhelmed and want to simplify. Need help to do it right. They'd be happy to look at that.
 - towns use these maps:
 - augment shoreland zoning requirements.
 - Many towns in this area are seeing the value of 1st order streams locally. Local buffers associated with these streams.
 - State of Maine defines a **1st order stream** as
 - six months of flow
 - scoured mineral bottom
 - defined banks
 - small streams run most of the year
 - **2nd order stream**
 - below where two 1st order streams merge

- serve as a starting point for planning habitat connections and recreational trail corridors
 - designate growth areas to protect water quality
 - High value plant and animal habitats map
 - rare and endangered plant and animal occurrences
 - essential habitats for wildlife and significant wildlife habitats (regulated)
 - rare and exemplary natural communities
 - important habitat for USFWS Trust Species
 - migratory, regional
 - **Essential Habitats:**
 - *regulated under Maine endangered species act*
 - *bald eagle nesting area*
 - *piping plover / Least Tern nesting habitat*
 - *roseate tern nesting habitat*
 - *Phippsburg is the only of one of the only towns with all of these habitats*
 - **Significant Wildlife Habitats:**
 - *deer wintering areas*
 - *tidal and inland bird, wading fowl*
 - *seabird nesting islands*
 - *shorebird feeding and roosting areas*
 - *vernal pools: do not show up on the map. Phippsburg likely has significant vernal pools. New category. Department did not have the resources to do a survey.*
- Definition of Vernal Pool**
- small and don't show up on aerial photographs
 - new regulation
 - small isolated wetlands
 - usually in a forested environment
 - isolated, no permanent inlet or outlet, a key feature, fishless.
 - not gravel pits
 - naturally occurring depressions
 - early spring standing small ponds
 - summer all dried out
 - only breeding habitat: wood frogs (duck quacking), spotted salamanders, peepers, tree frogs
 - vernal pools are fairly common. Want to add regulation to just "significant vernal pool"
 - size and use
 - amount of use
 - use by vernal pool obligate species:
 - spotted salamanders: 20 or more egg masses during the season
 - wood frogs: 40 or more egg masses during the season
 - blue spotted: 10 or more during breeding season
 - any occurrence of rare turtle species: spotted, blandings
 - larger deeper with large canopy openings
 - get a sense locally of where vernal pools are
 - note: peepers will breed lots of places
- towns typically use this map for resource inventory for comprehensive plan
 - screening new development proposals

- prioritize locations for open space plan, prioritize future acquisition
 - educate landowners and promote voluntary protections
 - Undeveloped habitat block map
 - in addition to protecting endangered species, want to keep common species common
 - maintaining large blocks
 - contributes to local rural character
 - support recreational opportunities
 - hunting, snowmobiling
 - helps to maintain local natural resource based industries (agriculture and forestry)
 - try to keep as much of the “backland” as possible
 - how towns use this:
 - designate rural zones
 - prioritize open space protection
 - if riparian zone serve as skeleton then blocks are the flesh of a local conservation blueprint
 - promote enrollment in current use tax programs (open space and tree growth)
 - conservation subdivisions, cluster ordinances, can be improved by shifting these into more meaningful conservation planning using the map to help plan growth
- **What happens to wildlife as we develop the rural landscape – “landscape 101”**
 - reduces size of habitat: undeveloped => edge habitat
 - decline in diversity
 - some species require large home ranges e.g. large mammals
 - area sensitive e.g. migrating songbirds
 - **edge effect:** and habitat degradation
 - immediate footprint of a house
 - larger secondary footprint: erosion, fertilizer, light pollution, outdoor cats (in Maine kill a million songbirds annually, also small mammals)
 - great for white tail deer, raccoons, bluejays, generalists that feed on suburban garbage and landscape
 - Loss of habitat connectivity
 - key to maintaining species diversity
 - islands of habitat won’t provide all the habitat to support diversity – need *habitat corridors*, critter crossing
 - increase mortality from fragmenting features
 - roads implications for habitats
 - road kill collisions
 - idea: road kill surveys to show spots to add wildlife underpasses, somehow encourage animals to go the other way?
 - barrier to species
 - noise and runoff
 - facilitate further fragmentation
 - stream continuity
 - poorly installed culverts fragment aquatic habitat
 - how do they size culverts?
 - larger diameter pipe, some shelves on either side, natural substrate within the pipe
- **Rules of thumb for incorporating habitat in future growth plans – Developing a Conservation Blueprint**
 - maintain large habitat blocks, encourage subdivisions to minimize destruction of backlands

- preserve riparian habitat and upland/wetland connections
- maintain connections among habitat blocks
- focus efforts on habitats of special concern
 - what is important to Phippsburg
 - higher value small wetlands
 - late successional forests
 - large unfragmented forests
 - interconnected vernal pool complexes
 - grasslands
 - shrublands
 - locally rare natural communities
 - riparian areas
- **other maps:**
 - conservation lands
 - wetland characterization
 - USFWS Trust Species (94 species within the Gulf of Maine watershed showing regional federal migratory decline)
 - interior forest
 - comprehensive aerial photograph (2003?)
- what are *focus areas*:
 - statewide ecological significance. Phippsburg has two (out of only 86 statewide): **Morse Mt and Pasture Ridge** these areas cover a lot of area in town
 - identified based on info from MDIFW, MNAP, USFWS
 - variety of conservation strategies: easements, acquisitions, shoreland/overlay zoning, tree growth & open space enrollment
 - conservation funding programs:
 - Land for Maine's Future
 - Land Owner Incentive Program
 - Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund
- ***Sagadahoc Region Rural Resource Initiative***
 - undeveloped blocks rated by habitat values
 - scoring based on habitat values
- **CONTACT INFO:**

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