

Spring 2018 Member & Steering Committee Meeting
Friday, May 11, 2018 10 am – 1 pm
Assabet River National Wildlife Refuge
680 Hudson Road, Sudbury MA

Call to Order

Lisa Vernegaard opened the meeting with a round of introductions. See attached list of participants. Kathy McGrath was recognized for her decades of service to MLTC with a standing ovation.

Approval of Minutes. Buzz Constable made the motion to approve the minutes from the last Steering Committee meeting as presented, seconded by Amy Janovsky. Passed unanimously. Carolyn Sedgwick briefly introduced herself.

MassLand Reports

Carolyn has a main priority to meet all the members and hearing about what our challenges are and how MLTC can be part of our future. Thank you to everyone who attended the MLCC in March. Nearly 500 attendees with good feedback about Rand's talk and more discussions about climate adaptation. This is Kathy McGrath's last Steering Committee meeting after her long years of service to MLTC. Membership renewal letters will be coming in June. Several workshops are coming up, including a climate workshop on June 12th and Leadership workshop on June 20th.

Matt Cannon shared plans for the Young Land Professionals group. They will have a hike and social hour in the Berkshires in June. There are other activities planned during the year to get together. The networking and learning is very helpful to the participants.

Kathy McGrath shared information about the continuing discussion about dogs on conservation land. She passed out a draft handout for review, and comments should go to Laura Mattei at Sudbury Valley Trustees lmattei@svtweb.org.

Legislative Updates

Karen Heymann (Mass Audubon) and Emily Myron (TNC) passed out a written summary of the legislative update. The operating budget was passed by the House, and looks pretty good, including climate change adaptation with \$2M in funding included by the Governor. The Senate Ways and Means just released their draft and will go to review. The CPA increase in deeds fee did not make it to the House bill, but will work to get in the Senate. The Environmental Bond Bill is in the bonding stage, but it needs to be moved quickly to pass this year. The Conservation Land Tax Credit increase of cap was able to go into the House budget. Senator Tarr will put in an amendment to the Senate budget, but we need to reach out to our Senators. Stay tuned. LWCF and Farm Bill are moving, but need our continued attention. Questions were raised about several pollinator habitat bills, which Karen provided an update. Additional policy questions were discussed.

State Updates

Bob O'Connor shared his updates. Need to redouble our efforts to connect our land conservation to climate change and adaptations. Bob is working on the Land Report for the first three years of the Baker administration. We don't know what climate change will bring, but we conserve land for protecting water supply, storm water surges, prime

agricultural soils, and prime forest soils. Loring Schwarz reminded the group that there is a Return on Investment study done just 5-years ago that can bring compelling economic arguments to the climate change discussion and link with land conservation. Melissa Cryan announced the LAND and PARC grants are due July 12th. The Conservation Partnership grants are due July 16th. Special LWCF grant round is due in June 11th for trail projects. Another LWCF grant round is coming in September for park lands projects that also help with job creation that will be judged nationally. The Landscape Partnership grants will be due in October. The OSRP planner's workbook hasn't been updated since 2008, but Melissa will be working on that update soon.

LTA Update

Kevin Case shared his updates. The Advocacy Day in DC happened with 200 visits and good responses about the Farm Bill and concerns about syndication for tax shelters of conservation lands. There will be a sign-on letter about the Farm Bill. The climate resilience workshop is coming up. LTA initiated a climate program, manager is Kelly Watkinson, focusing on having land trusts incorporating climate data into their conservation work, training around coastal climate issues, there is a training on climate communications that was informed by a survey of land trust members. LTA has a new strategic plan focused on a broad and national campaign about land trust relevance with the general public. The 1772 Foundation grants for farmland conservation are due June 8th. There is a state agency gathering for all the groups in the northeast is coming up, and Carolyn is welcome to attend. The 2018 Rally is in Pittsburg this year.

Value of Open Space

Bob Wilbur and Loring Schwarz led a discussion about how we are valuing open space, the return of investment studies and cost of community service studies. A working group will be established to take next steps in getting updated studies that will help illuminate the benefits of open spaces within our communities.

Conservation Restriction Update

Buzz Constable began the discussion about the conservation restriction (CR) review process and the role that MTLC can play in future revisions of the model CR. Bob O'Connor shared statistics on CRs completed: 19 amendments, 21% of CRs were tax credits, 14% CPA, 6 were Forest legacy, 13% were grant CRs, 11 were MESA, 45% were regular CRs. Bob reinforced that EEA is asking people to use the model as the start, knowing that there will be changes to each document. The model hasn't really been changed, but some tweaks were added in recent years. John Gioia is looking at examples of forestry and farming language and improving the model now. John's first goal is to get caught up with the backlog of CR reviews. He has reviewed 100 CRs since the beginning of the year and 40 were returned with approval for local signatures. About 2/3 of the CRs are from land trusts and 1/3 are from town administrators. Buzz suggested the MLTC and MACC should work together to raise the level of knowledge and understanding about CRs. Rich Hubbard asked about a year-end drop dead date for submitting CRs, and John is still getting a feel for how fast CRs can be reviewed and signed. MLTC volunteers will work with John to clarify concerns and solutions.

Respectfully submitted by Cynthia Henshaw