

The Lincoln Conservation Commission (LCC) sees itself as a collaborative, community-building advisory group, interested in connecting Lincoln residents with the town's natural resources, and in facilitating respectful community dialog on current issues that impact those resources. The LCC does not utilize town funds to carry out its activities, but has applied for and received grants for specific projects.

We had a Winter Tracking Outing on Feb 3rd on the Colby Hill Property. We will host a similar walk on the Town Forest at the southern end of Lincoln (the so called "Ripton Lot") later this winter.

The Lincoln Conservation Commission's main activity this past year was to develop a forest management plan for the piece of town property often referred to as the "Ripton Lot." This town forest of just over 100 acres is located in the southwestern corner of the town. Ripton borders it on two sides. Sandra Murphy, the then-current LCC Chair, wrote a proposal to the State of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation for a "Trees for Local Communities" grant, which was awarded to the Commission. This enabled us to hire a Vermont Family Forests forester, Brendan Weiner, to survey the land and write a forest management plan. The draft plan is now available for review at the Town Office.

Brendan used the Vermont Family Forests management plan template, meaning that the management plan for the Ripton Lot will be Forest Stewardship Council-certified, helping ensure that any management activities maintain or improve the forest's health.

In November the LCC hosted another Chili Forum to discuss the plan and get town residents' ideas on how to manage this property. Many good ideas were generated from this discussion. While all agreed that it might not be a big priority to log the Ripton Lot, we felt that if logging should occur we would want it to be done in a very conservative and careful manner. Ideas were fielded for value-added products from the lumber that would benefit the town, such as flooring for a new Town Office. We are grateful to Brendan Weiner and David Brynn of Vermont Family Forests for their work and inspiration.

Also this year, the LCC followed the debate about the proposed cell tower. We attended meetings, reviewed the Town Ordinance and the Unicel Proposal, and made recommendations to the Selectboard concerning the tower's aesthetic impact and potential effect on wildlife.

During the spring months we will finalize the Ripton Lot Forest Management Plan, and host an outing and meeting on the property for all interested town residents. One thing we hope to accomplish, besides introducing this beautiful piece of public land to the people who own it, is to find a patch of rare yellow lady's slippers that has been observed in the past. It would be a priority to avoid any such special features on the lot if logging was ever done in the future.

We welcome and need new members - please join us! Enthusiasm for Lincoln's landscape, flexibility, and a sense of humor are helpful member qualities. Please contact any conservation commission member if you're interested.

Respectfully submitted,

Alan Finn
Tina Scharf
Jackie Tuxill