

**CONSERVATION COMMISSION MINUTES**  
**Regular Meeting of January 24, 2017 at 7:00 pm**  
Meeting Room #3, Municipal Center, 3 Primrose Street, Newtown, CT

**These Minutes are Subject to Approval by the Conservation Commission**

**Present:** Tom Philbrick, Cindy Joyce, Karlyn Sturmer, Holly Kocet, Mark Boland, Chris Smith (arrived at 7:46 pm)

**Also Present:** Mary Wilson, High Meadow Study Group

**Absent:** Jim Ryan

**Staff:** Dawn Fried, Clerk

Mr. Philbrick served as acting Chair in Mr. Ryan's absence.

Mr. Philbrick opened the meeting at 7:06 pm.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES FOR January 9, 2017**

Ms. Joyce motioned to approve the minutes from January 9, 2017. Ms. Kocet seconded. All in favor. Mr. Boland abstained. The minutes from January 9, 2017 were approved.

**CORRESPONDENCE**

Mr. Philbrick distributed two emails given to him by Robert Sibley, Deputy Director of Planning. The emails were a correspondence between Mr. Sibley and Mr. Robert Eckenrode, President of Newtown Forest Association (NFA) (attached). Mr. Eckenrode stated his concern with hunters luring deer from the Newtown Forestry Preserve onto private property and shooting them. The Commission had a lengthy discussion on their role in this matter. Mr. Boland and Ms. Kocet determined Mr. Eckenrode's letter was looking for support from the CC.

Mr. Boland motioned for the CC to join with the Newtown Forest Association in lobbying the state to restrict hunting on open space with the 40 yard barrier from other properties throughout the week. Ms. Kocet seconded.

Ms. Sturmer pointed out that this motion needs to be added to the agenda in order to have a vote. Ms. Sturmer motioned to add the NFA correspondence letters to Action Items of the agenda as well as add Earth Day to Commission Priorities. Ms. Joyce seconded. All in favor.

Ms. Joyce stated that there needs to be more signage because not all of the properties are marked clearly. She was concerned that if the hunters are not aware of their borders it can affect the New England cottontails on the Stonebridge property. Mr. Boland's motion was reinstated. All in favor.

## **ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

**Board of Finance (BOF)** – Mr. Boland stated that the BOF is voting on the bonding of funds to purchase Paproski farm.

**Fairfield Hills Authority** – Mr. Boland suggested keeping an eye on the trails becoming wheelchair accessible. Making the trails wheelchair accessible would mean bringing in fill to raise the grade on the trails.

**Parks and Rec** – Ms. Sturmer is waiting for a response from Mr. Ryan regarding prior conversations to schedule a meeting with Ms. Mangold from Parks and Rec.

## **ACTION ITEMS**

### **High Meadow – Study Group Update Summary**

Mary Wilson gave an overview of the study group's progress and distributed a document titled "Draft, High Meadow Management Proposal, dated January 2017" (attached). Ms. Wilson stated there have been changes since the CC meeting on January 9, 2017. At the last CC meeting Ms. Wilson discussed changing the site of the study from one 5-acre parcel (Site A) to a more preferable 6-acre parcel (Site B). Ms. Wilson presently wants to include both parcels and explained the benefits of both. Ms. Wilson explained that it would be logical to keep Site A to study because of its un-mowed state and the benefits of increased diversity of a natural wildlife habitat. In order to go ahead with the High Meadow studies, Mr. Benson (Director of Planning) requested an approved proposal from the CC which will then be presented to First Selectman, Pat Llodra for final approval.

Ms. Wilson distributed a document titled "Study Group for Restoration of the High Meadow (SGRHM)" (attached) that will give clarity to SGRHM's purpose and to serve as a mission statement. Ms. Sturmer made a motion to adopt the definition of this mission statement for the ad-hoc Study Group for Restoration of the High Meadow. Ms. Joyce seconded. The Commission had a lengthy discussion and made changes to the document. All in favor as amended.

Ms. Wilson continued to go through the "Draft" document and explained the management plan in more detail. She stated that the areas are using two different management techniques which are applied science for Site B (the wildflower meadow) and a field study to monitor Site A (the grassland area). Ms. Wilson also discussed the timing of the plantings, coordination of the mowing and the cost factors. The Commission discussed how the management plan budget will be determined by the funds raised by the Stonebridge project. They also debated the pros and cons of student volunteers versus professional consultants (i.e. field botanist) and how the management plan will be documented.

Ms. Wilson would like a commitment or vote of approval at the next CC meeting regarding the High Meadow Management Proposal. This will be added to the next agenda under Action Items. Ms. Wilson will send out a word file of the proposal to the Commissioners for their review and comments.

## **DISCUSSION ITEMS**

### **Web Page**

Ms. Joyce would like to post the Stone Bridge information on the web site as soon as possible especially since the project is now underway. Ms. Sturmer distributed a rough draft of the changes she made to Ms. Joyce's draft. Ms. Sturmer feels that leaving in too much detail might

not be necessary for the town resident. She would like to keep it “simple, focused and addressed to our primary consumer which is the Newtown resident.” Ms. Sturmer would like feedback from the other Commissioners. Mr. Philbrick agrees that less is more. Ms. Joyce stated that since this website represents the entire Commission it's important for all of the commissioners to give their feedback. Each Commissioner will send their comments to the entire Commission at which time Ms. Sturmer and Ms. Joyce will create the final draft and will post on-line.

### **Stone Bridge Update**

The Commission called Jeremy Clark, Clark Forestry Services, via cell phone. Mr. Clark gave a status update of the Stone Bridge project:

- Mr. Clark stated that Don Moon signed the contract Friday, January 13, 2017 and began felling the southeastern corner on January 21, 2017.
- Mr. Clark described the conditions as being dry.
- Mr. Clark has his associate checking the site frequently while he is in Maine.
- Mr. Clark has been in contact with Iroquois regarding the air bridge that will be constructed over the pipeline. Since the ground is not frozen they may wait to begin the construction next week when the ground freezes.
- Mr. Clark gave a rough estimate of 4 or 5 weeks for the completion of the project depending on weather conditions.
- Ms. Sturmer asked Mr. Clark to send an updated email once every two weeks to the Commission.
- Mr. Clark stated that one curve of the driveway was widened to fit the trucks thru.

### **Earth Day**

Earth Day is April 22, 2017. Ms. Sturmer's proposal for Earth Day is to highlight habitat diversity and to use the Stone Bridge project and the High Meadow study as examples. The Commission discussed the previous years at Earth Day and how to make it more enjoyable for the public.

They also discussed the following:

- Schedule for the day
- Commissioners availability
- Website info – Mr. Smith will help coordinate
- Visuals for table – Ms. Joyce will help coordinate
- Interactive activities

Earth Day will be added to the agenda under “Commission Priorities” for the next meeting.

### **Native Plant Policy**

Mr. Philbrick would like to make comments on Ms. Sturmer's Native Plant Policy draft.

### **Adjournment**

Mr. Boland motioned to adjourn the CC meeting. Ms. Sturmer seconded. All in favor. Meeting adjourned at 9:06 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Dawn Fried, Clerk

**DRAFT**

## **High Meadow Management Proposal**

High Meadow at Fairfield Hills, Newtown, CT  
47.0 acres

January 2017

DRAFT



### **Proposal Prepared by:**

Study Group for Restoration of the High Meadow (SGRHM)  
Ad hoc committee of Newtown Conservation Commission

January 24, 2017

CC mtg.  
Jan 24, 2017  
D.F.

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## **Introduction**

Newtown's Plan of Conservation and Development for open space includes recommendations for preserving and protecting Newtown's natural and scenic resources, enhancing and maintaining open space sites, and improving opportunities for passive recreation. The Town's goal is to preserve and protect 21% of Newtown's land through a combination of state parks and forests, private land trusts and Town-owned open space, and to provide policies, funds and funding mechanism to care for open space properties.

The Newtown Conservation Commission manages nearly 2,000 acres of open space to provide recreational and educational opportunities and preserve and enhance wildlife habitat diversity. In doing so, the Commission supports the development of habitat for an array of wildlife including a variety of pollinators, birds, mammals, amphibians, reptiles and insects.

### **The Importance of Preserving Meadow Habitat**

Grasslands and Meadows are among the most threatened and rare habitats in Connecticut. Nine species of songbirds and four species of raptors that make use of grasslands as their primary breeding habitat are listed as endangered, threatened, or of special concern. Succession of old fields to forest and fragmentation due to increasing development are taking a toll on grassland birds and other wildlife species that depend on this habitat.

Many grassland species have specific habitat and territory requirements. Contiguous habitat blocks are required for successful nesting. Some species require 200 acres or greater. That is why it is important to recognize that the High Meadow, which includes East Meadow, is part of a larger significant swath of bird habitat stretching across Wasserman Way through Governor's Field and the fields owned by the state and the town along Deep Brook and up to Queen Street.

Pollinator populations including bees, butterflies, and other pollinator species are in significant decline. Important losses in bumble bee species have been documented in Connecticut. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) has listed the rusty-patched bumble bee, a CT native, on the list of endangered species under the Endangered Species Act (January 2017). The FWS is considering adding three more species to the list: the Franklin bumble bee, Western bumble bee and the yellow-banded bumble. Two bumble bee species are believed to be extirpated according to the Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. While other native bee species, (i.e. mason bee, squash bee) may also be threatened, they have not been intensively monitored and their current status is unknown.

### **The Importance of the High Meadow Open Space Parcel**

It is important to recognize that the High Meadow is part of a larger significant bird habitat stretching across Wasserman Way through Governor's Field and the fields owned by the state and the town along Deep Brook and up to Queen Street. This larger area provides habitat for many wildlife and bird species. In particular, many birds have been observed on Governor's Field and other parts of this larger bird habitat area. The importance of the High Meadow was documented by the Conservation Commission in Section 2.0 Meadow Assessment High Meadow of the Habitat Management Plan – West and High Meadows, 10-2-2013, "The presence of such a large

meadow in Newtown is significant. Studies have shown that larger meadows foster more of Connecticut's at risk species and as such, the value of protecting them is greater. For example, Eastern bobolinks, a Species of Special Concern, were observed in the grasses during breeding season. Fostering numerous meadow species, including butterflies, bees, and other pollinators, adds to the ecological diversity of the entire area."

### **Documentation in the 2013 Fairfield Hills Master Plan**

The 2013 Fairfield Hills Master Plan cites reasons for designation of Open Space for this parcel:

- These lands are of particular importance for a variety of plant and animal life, passive recreation opportunities, and pleasing aesthetics.
- The scenic vistas provided from and of the campus along Wasserman Way and Mile Hill South Road offer a rural, scenic town corridor for both residents and visitors to the town. Maintaining Newtown's rural character has been documented as being very important to Newtown residents.
- There are also very practical reasons to preserve large tracts of undeveloped land which will support diverse species of plant and animal life. Such biodiversity is key to maintaining healthy environments. Large tracts of land also enhance air and water quality.
- Because development, and the resulting parcel fragmentation, causes decreasing biodiversity of flora and fauna, as well as increasing incidence of zoonoses, preserving large uninterrupted tracts of land should help to protect the environment as well as the health of Newtown residents.
- These diverse habitats support many different bird species, including song birds, birds of prey and migrating birds. Birds of prey are important given the increase in small disease carrying rodents that occurs with development and forest fragmentation. Habitat for migrating birds is important because these birds depend on large, visible areas of undeveloped land as stopovers to rest and feed. These areas have become less prevalent throughout the region.

### **Current Management of the High Meadow**

The High Meadow became designated Open Space and is currently managed by the Conservation Commission.

Current management of the High Meadow includes:

1. An agreement with the farmer for the meadow to be mowed and hay collected once during the summer at an unspecified time. However, the Fairfield Hills Master Plan Amendment Work Group, Town of Newtown, May 31, 2013, states on Pg. 5, "Haying may continue in the areas designated as open space provided that care is taken to prevent disruption of nesting birds, other wildlife and natural resources like trees and waterways."
2. A number of events which take place at the High Meadow are approved by a process involving Land Use, the Fairfield Hills Authority, and Parks and Recreation. Those events include a Mud Run and a bicycle event.



3. Improved trails through the High Meadow allow for passive activities such as walking, hiking, bird watching, bicycling, dog walking, etc.

### **Enhancement of the High Meadow**

In May of 2016, George Benson, Director of Planning, issued a memorandum (as attached) directing that the Land Use Agency staff develop a Management Plan for the future of the High Meadow. To that end the Conservation Commission was requested to appoint an ad hoc committee of town residents to manage a five-acre parcel (Site A on map) near the water tower to be used as a “meadow test plot”.

In the fall of 2016 such an ad hoc committee was formed. Known as the Study Group for Restoration of the High Meadow (SGRHM), it will operate under the Newtown Conservation Commission which will provide guidance, consider recommendations made by the SGRHM, and help find ways to fund the approved project. The SGRHM consists of Mary Wilson, Holly Kocet, Dottie Evans, and Karlyn Sturmer with experienced birder Renee Baade assisting in field observations.

### **The Purpose of the High Meadow Plan**

The purpose of the Conservation Commission High Meadow Management Plan is to assist the Land Use Agency staff in developing a Management Plan for the future of the High Meadow located on the Fairfield Hills Campus which should include short term and long term strategies to achieve production of native wildlife.

The proposed plan as submitted by the SGRHM seeks to enhance habitat and overall health, diversity and vigor of the site. The SGRHM will create this habitat through active meadow management, mowing, seeding, and monitoring, further outlined within the High Meadow Management Plan. The plan is a guide to manage and maintain the High Meadow's natural resources for the next three (3) years.

The SGRHM has requested assistance from the Wildlife Division of Habitat Management, Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) to conduct and evaluation of the High Meadow and provide guidance for increasing wildlife habitat for pollinators, birds, and other important wildlife. SGRHM has also consulted with other experts and officials from Newtown Land Use, Audubon Connecticut, and Fairfield Country Regional Conservation Partnership.

After consulting with above noted experts, it became evident that a better plan could be developed by focusing on improved habitat through seeding along the trail (Refer to map Site B). The five-acre parcel (Site A) as originally proposed to the Conservation Commission is part of the contiguous swath of bird and wildlife habitat. As such, we would like to see it eventually managed as part of the entire meadow. This would entail a managed mowing schedule which is amendable to nesting birds and also which will allow for a greatest number of native grasses and forbs to develop. Site A should be the site of a quantitative vegetation study and data collected can be an example for the entire High Meadow as well as for other town open space meadow sites.

Proper management techniques will expand educational and recreational opportunities for the High Meadow by providing opportunities to interact with nature in a healthy, positive, and inexpensive way. Activities such as walking, jogging, bird watching, enjoying scenic vistas could be enhanced. Nature and ecology field studies

could be accomplished through guided walks and educational signage. These management techniques could expand the Commission's eligibility for funding and be useful in demonstrating future management and conservation practices on other open space properties in Newtown.

After three years, a comprehensive evaluation of the Meadow shall be conducted to determine future restoration strategies for the entire High Meadow. The High Meadow Management Plan evaluation will also be useful for restoration of other town open space sites.

### **Goals of the High Meadow Management Plan**

- 1) To achieve increased diversity and/or quality of native wildlife including plant species that will provide food and habitat for birds, pollinators, insects, and other important species, mammals, etc.
- 2) To gain the experience of a meadow restoration project which could then be useful in management of other meadow sites in Newtown.
- 3) To provide a pleasing meadow experience for Newtown residents for enhancement of aesthetic, education, and cultural values.

To meet the above goals, the SGRHM may want to:

- 1) Let a section of the meadow go unmowed for a specific period of time to determine changes,
- 2) Actively manage a section through reseedling for the purpose of increasing diversity of grasses and forbs,
- 3) Make recommendations for the mowing schedule for the entire meadow.

Monitoring of sites under consideration will be done through documentation (observations, photographs, etc.) as agreed to by the Conservation Commission.

The SGRHM will report to the Conservation Commission monthly or as needed.

The SGRHM will be in existence for three (3) years.

## Management Recommendations

1. Allow the five- acre location (Map Site A) to be unmowed for the three-year period to do an evaluation assessment study which will be useful in demonstrating future management and conservation practices on other open space properties in Newtown.
2. The balance of the High Meadow (including East Meadow) should be managed with a mowing schedule which is amenable to ground nesting birds and other wildlife and that will also allow for the greatest number of native grasses and forbs to develop. The farmer should delay mowing/haying the High Meadow until after ground nesting birds have fledged, no earlier than August 15, in any given year. The five-acre and six-acre parcels are excluded from this haying since they will be managed and monitored by the SGRHM. After the three-year period, the five-acre test location (Site A) should be included as part of the afore-mentioned contiguous swath of bird and wildlife habitat and managed accordingly.
3. One-time seeding the six-acre area (Map Area B), with Wildflower and Warm Season Grass Mixes as recommended by Peter Picone, Wildlife Biologist, CT DEEP, will have a number of advantages:
  - a. Increased diversity of plant life will benefit bees, butterflies, beneficial insects, birds and other wildlife whose natural habitats are disappearing due to development, succession and fragmentation.
  - b. This increase in diversity of both plant and animal species will support a healthier and more sustainable ecosystem.
  - c. Trail walkers/joggers/bird watchers will enjoy the beauty of a wildflower meadow with three-season bloom and butterfly activity near the main trail.
  - d. Such a meadow will also be visible from the Fairfield Hills campus including the Municipal Center, the Newtown Youth Academy, parking areas and at baseball games by spectators. Visitors would not benefit from a wildflower meadow on the original five-acre parcel (Site A) because the area is only partly visible from the main trail.
  - e. Interactions with the public can be encouraged through signage, publicity and resident involvement (i.e. Boy Scouts, Girls Scouts, civic volunteer organizations, high school environmental classes, garden clubs, etc.).
  - f. Although different in selected plantings, such a meadow is consistent with some goals of the Fruit Trail, already established on the West Meadow.
  - g. Not taking the offer of the State (Truax and personnel) would be a lost opportunity that may not be on the table in the future.
  - h. Frequent visits to the site will be done to track changes in vegetation and also bird sightings which will be tracked using Ebird.org.

## Executing the Management Plan

This meadow management plan involves both applied science for planting a wildflower meadow and a field study to monitor the site. Healthy, diverse, and resilient meadows are capable of providing wildlife habitat, food, aesthetics, passive recreation, and other open space benefits.

### Site B – Seeding with Wildflower/Grass and Warm Season Grass Mix

#### Xerces Mid-Atlantic Pollinator Mix (Ernst Seed Company) for Upland & Meadow Sites

Recommended by Peter Picone, Wildlife Biologist CT DEEP.

This seed mix was chosen for its wildlife value, deer resistance, sun exposure, and its adaptability of soil conditions (see spreadsheet, High Meadow Restoration Project, January 1, 2017).

Cost is \$65.57/lb. Coverage is 8 lbs. per acre. The cost of seeding five acres of Site A is \$2,622.80.

#### Warm Season Grass Mix (Ernst Seed Company) for Upland & Meadow Sites

Recommended by Peter Picone, Wildlife Biologist, CT DEEP.

Native grasses and oats chosen for wildlife value, sun exposure, and soil adaptability.

Cost is \$4.14/lb. Coverage is 40 lbs. per acre. The cost of seeding five acres of Site A is \$828.

Total Cost of Seed is \$3,450.80.

CT DEEP staff will plant the seed mix using a Truax planter and tractor. Use of the machines and the operator are at no cost to the town.

Supplemental Plugs - Some Butterfly Weed (*Asclepias tuberosa*) plugs can be added to further diversify wildflower seed planting. Volunteers can help with the planting.

Cost for 3 trays of plugs (72 plants per tray) is \$650.

Signage – Conservation Commission will requisition signs and posts that will inform visitors of the restoration being done to Meadow Site B.

Cost of 3 signs: \$300

Cost of 3 posts: \$50

#### Placing Seed Order & Reserving Truax Seeder

- Upon approval of this plan, Conservation Commission will obtain a purchase order from the Finance department, place order with the Ernst Seed Company for seed, set up delivery date and deliver/storage location. Ernst Seed Company should be contacted (deadline for order to insure delivery on time)
- Reservation with CT DEEP for Truax seeder should be done at this time.

#### Requesting Help from Park and Recreation Staff

- Once the date is confirmed for the Truax seeding, the Conservation Commission will put in a request to the First Selectman for a Park and Recreation Department (P&R) to provide an operator and sensitive meadow mower to cut the six-acre meadow location (Site B) the first week in June (between June 1 and June 9).
- Commission will request that P&R transport the seed to the Meadow location (Site B) on the specified seeding date, (on or around June 12).
- Commission will request that P&R close the High Meadow trails on the day(s) of Truax seeding for protection of visitors from machinery and truck activity needed for the operation.
- Commission will ask P&R to mow 1/2 of the wildflower meadow area (Site B) in fall.

First week in June – (June 1– 9), Six-acre Meadow Site B will be mowed using Park & Recreation staff and sensitive meadow mower.

Second week in June – (June 12-16), CT DEEP will bring in Truax seeder and tractor to Site B meadow location and commence seeding. Park and Recreation staff to deliver stored Wildflower and Warm Season Grass seed mixes to Site B.

Placement of Signs – It is important to place signs along trail bordering seeded meadow to alert visitors about the project for educational purposes and to insure that foot traffic, bicycles, and dogs are kept out of that area. This can be done before renovations begin or after Truax seeding is completed.

Monitoring of Wildflower Planting – SGRHM will set up guidelines for a qualitative assessment of the six-acre wildflower meadow Site B. SGRHM will record and document grasses and forbs throughout the summer and fall and continue monitoring the site for the three-year study. Data collection will be accomplished through observation and photography of the site. Monitoring for invasive plant encroachment should also be done.

Maintenance of the Wildflower Meadow – Park and Recreation staff should mow the wildflower meadow in late fall of each year with their sensitive meadow mower. Recommend that only 1/2 of the six-acre wildflower meadow be mowed each year. This will be more economical, saving time and money. It will also insure that woody growth and invasive plants will not creep in. However, if invasive plants are monitored and remediated each year, mowing 1/3 of this site will be sufficient.

### **Site A – Monitoring and Evaluating Area for Diversity of plant Material**

This location will be left unmowed for a three-year period. The area will be monitored and studied using a method to quantify plant species diversity in the meadow. The study was suggested by Conservation Commissioner Tom Philbrick. The intent of converting part of High Meadow from an agricultural field to a more natural meadow is to enhance diversity of pollinators, ground nesting birds, and animals by establishing habitat. It is the diversity of plant species that make up vegetation; a key element in providing this habitat.

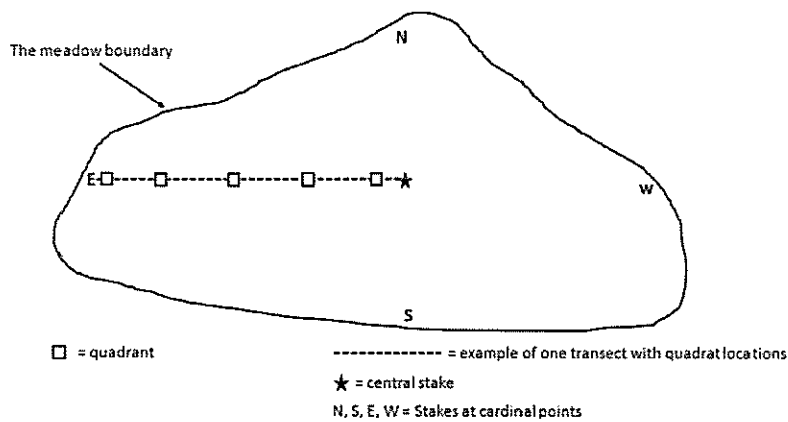
Quantification will be important in assessing how species/vegetation change(s) as the management of the meadow progresses.

Recommend that student volunteers from a local college be enlisted for data collection, recording, and sampling. Samples would be pressed and preserved for future reference. Student volunteers would collect and quantify data under supervision of a person knowledgeable in the vegetation study process. We believe community involvement of volunteers would be a beneficial aspect of the project. The Commission may also decide to contract a vegetation consultant to do the study in its entirety or with help from volunteers.

Data would be collected once a year in June. Yearly progress reports would be presented to the Conservation Commission. At the end of the three-year period, a final Study including pressed specimens to be presented to the Commission. This important data could then be used to create guidelines and procedures for managing other open space meadows in town. (See of data collection procedure below).

#### **A simple method to quantify plant species diversity in a meadow**

1. Place a stake near the center of the meadow. The stake will need to stay in place for a couple years, so make it rugged. Refer to figure below.
2. Place additional stakes at the four cardinal points around the periphery of the meadow. Note: the number of transects you run and their locations will depend on the questions you are asking.
3. Once a year (always the same month) do the following for each of the cardinal points. I'll use east as the example.
4. Run a string from the east stake to the stake in the center of the meadow.
5. Beginning from the east stake, every 25 ft. (or whatever distance you decide) set a 1x1 yard quadrant across the string, so that the string runs through the middle of it.
6. Make a list of every species you see in the quadrant.
7. Estimate the amount of the space inside the quadrant covered by each species. You can do this qualitatively or quantitatively. I'll explain in person.
8. Take a picture of each quadrant from above.
9. Collect and press a specimen for every new species you see in a given quadrant. If you've already seen that species, no need to collect another specimen. Pressed specimens will be used to document what you find. I will show you how to press and preserve specimens.
10. Then, casually walk the meadow and collect specimens of anything that you did not see in at least one quadrant.
11. Later. Use your data to calculate percent cover, species richness, species diversity, etc. You can use these values to track how each changes from year to year.



### Grassland Areas of the High Meadow (includes East Meadow)

Managing these grassland areas requires only proper timing for mowing/haying. Effective in spring of 2017, the farmer will be asked to forgo haying the fields until after August 15<sup>th</sup>. This managed mowing schedule is amenable to ground nesting birds and other wildlife. Waiting until August 15<sup>th</sup> each and every year will protect hatchlings and nestlings from being killed when tractors pulling mowers thrash their way through the fields. (Refer to calendar for ground-nesting birds). Proper management of the fields will also allow for the greatest number of native grasses and forbs to develop. (The five-acre and six-acre parcels are excluded from this haying since they will be managed and monitored by the SGRHM.) After the three-year period, the five-acre test location (Site A) will be included as part of this contiguous swath of bird and wildlife habitat and managed accordingly. Data collected from observation and entered on Ebird.org can be used to create guidelines and procedures for managing other open space parcels.

This plan is consistent with Section D, Open Space and Trails of The Fairfield Hills Master Plan, Amendment Work Group, Town of Newtown, May 31, 2013, which states, “Haying may continue in the areas designated as open space provided that care is taken to prevent disruption of nesting birds, other wildlife and natural resources like trees and waterways.” The Conservation Commission’s Habitat Management Plan – West and High Meadows, section 2.0 Meadow Assessment – Maintenance, 10-2-2013, states: “Another value of maintaining the area as a meadow is low short- and long-term maintenance. Once preserved, the meadows will only require mowing at most once per year or every two-to-three years (after bird breeding season) to deter the natural succession of woody plant growth. No pesticides, fertilizers, seeding or other maintenance normally would be required as long as invasive plants are not allowed to colonize the area.” There is a consensus among the meadow experts consulted that the current meadow mowing/haying practice is disruptive to nesting birds and should be revised for the protection of such; specifically hatchlings and fledglings who are most at risk.

## Summary of Costs for High Meadow Management Plan – 2017

Seed	\$3450.80
Plugs	650.00
Signage	<u>350.00</u>
	\$4450.80

Consultant for Quantification Study on Site A (To Be Determined)

## Work Plan Schedule of Managing Activities – 2017

Priority	Area	Acres	Activity Description	Dates	
				Planned	Applied
1	Site B and balance of High Meadow	5 acres 36 acres	Farmer asked not to hay Site B. Farmer asked to forgo haying High Meadow grassland until after August 15.	Spring 2017	
2	Site A	5 acres	Commence quantitative vegetation study and sample collection.	June 2017	
3	Site B	6 acres	Park & Recreation staff mows area using sensitive meadow mower.	Between June 1 - 9	
4	Site B	6 acres	CT DEEP plants wildflower and warm season seed mix with Truax seeder.	Week of June 12 - 16	
5	Site B and balance of High Meadow	6 acres 36 acres	SGRHM to monitor and document meadow progress of 6-acre site. SCRHM to monitor bird activity of entire High Meadow and record data on eBird website.	June – September 2017	
6	Balance of High Meadow	36 acres	Farmer hays High Meadow grassland areas, except Sites A & B	After August 15	
7	Site B	3 acres	Park and Recreation mows 1/2 of wildflower meadow using sensitive meadow mower.	Fall 2017	





## References and Resources

1. Connecticut State of the Birds – The CT Audubon Society, 2016.
2. Audubon Connecticut Eastern Grasslands and Shrublands – The CT Audubon Society.
3. Grassland Bird Calendar – Audubon Center Bent of the River.
4. Hayfield Management and Grassland Bird Conservation – Cornell University Cooperative Extension, January 2006.
5. Management of Grasslands and Meadows in CT – Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS), July 16, 2009.
6. Managing Habitat for Farmland and Grassland Birds – Audubon New York, March 2009.
7. Meadows – Catherine Zimmerman, Matrix Media Press, 2010.
8. Public Lands and Pollinators – Public Land Task Force of the North American Pollinator Protection Campaign (NAPPC).
9. Transforming Fields into Grassland Bird Habitat – Cornell University Cooperative Extension, January 2006.
10. Agricultural Practices That Conserve Grassland Birds, Michigan State University Extension, September 2012.
11. E-bird.com website.
12. Newtown Plan of Conservation and Development, 2014 Update.
13. Habitat Management Plan – West and High Meadows, Conservation Commission, October 2, 2013.
14. The Fairfield Hills Master Plan Amendment Work Group, Town of Newtown, May 31, 2013

## Appendix

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3 Primrose Street  
 Newtown, CT 06470  
 Tel. (203) 270-4276  
 Fax (203) 270-4278



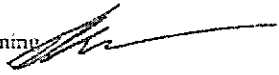
George Benson  
 Director of Planning

## TOWN OF NEWTOWN

## Land Use Agency

## MEMORANDUM

May 23, 2016

From: George Benson, Director of Planning 

To: Newtown Board of Selectmen

Re: Preliminary High Meadow Management Plan

The Board of Selectmen has requested that the Land Use Agency staff develop a Management Plan for the future of the High and East Meadows located on the Fairfield Hills Campus. The Agency recommendations are to be presented at the August 1, 2016 Board of Selectmen meeting. However, due to the seasonal time constraints of some of the strategies this preliminary plan is being submitted.

As I stated in previous memos regarding the cessation of mowing proposal, the Land Use Agency staff is supportive of the High Meadow restoration. There have to be short term and long term strategies to achieve production of native wildlife. The Land Use Agency does not have the staff or budget to implement a meadow restoration.

Therefore to facilitate the restoration, the Land Use Agency is suggesting the following steps be taken:

1. That starting in the 2016 season the farmer cease mowing an approximately 5 acre section of the High Meadow located near the water tower, designated in the attached map.
2. That a condition of the establishment of this five acre "meadow test plot" be that the Board of Selectmen or the Conservation Commission appoint an ad hoc committee of town residents to manage the parcel utilizing volunteer workers and resources.
3. The Land Use Agency would like to recommend that the following concerned residents be considered for appointed to the ad hoc committee; Ann Astarita, Mary Gaudet Wilson, Joe Hovious, Holly Kocet, and Karlyn Sturmer.
4. That this committee shall submit quarterly reports to the Board of Selectmen or the Conservation Commission on the status of the project.
5. That after three years, a comprehensive evaluation of the meadow test plot shall be conducted to determine future restoration strategies for the entire High and East Meadows.

@ @

[https://us-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/ie\\_blank](https://us-mg6.mail.yahoo.com/neo/ie_blank)

6/6/2016



# Native wildflower/grass mix recommended for High Meadow site:

## Available at Ernst Seed Company XERCES Mid-Atlantic Pollinator Mix

ERNMX # XERC00102

Cost Per  
Pound \$65.57

Seeding Rate 8 lb per acre

Mix Type Upland & Meadow Sites

Species List  
(click for  
details)

- 32.85% Little Bluestem, 'Aldous' (Schizachyrium scoparium, 'Aldous')
- 16.9% Purple Coneflower (Echinacea purpurea)
- 10.98% Anise (Lavender) Hyssop (Agastache foeniculum)
- 9.86% Lanceleaf Coreopsis, Coastal Plain NC Ecotype (Coreopsis lanceolata, Coastal Plain NC Ecotype)
- 6.7% Partridge Pea, PA Ecotype (Chamaecrista fasciculata (Cassia f.), PA Ecotype)
- 6.22% Common Milkweed, PA Ecotype (Asclepias syriaca, PA Ecotype)
- 4.4% Ohio Spiderwort, PA Ecotype (Tradescantia ohiensis, PA Ecotype)
- 4.36% Marsh (Dense) Blazing Star (Spiked Gayfeather), PA Ecotype (Liatris spicata, PA Ecotype)
- 2.06% Blue False Indigo, Southern WV Ecotype (Baptisia australis, Southern WV Ecotype)
- 2.02% Wingstem, PA Ecotype (Verbesina alternifolia (Actinomeris a.), PA Ecotype)
- 1.2% Wild Bergamot, PA Ecotype (Monarda fistulosa, PA Ecotype)
- 1.09% New England Aster, PA Ecotype (Aster novae-angliae (Symphyotrichum n.), PA Ecotype)
- 0.81% Showy Goldenrod, Southern WV Ecotype (Solidago speciosa, Southern WV Ecotype)
- 0.39% Slender Mountainmint (Pycnanthemum tenuifolium)
- 0.16% Boneset, PA Ecotype (Eupatorium perfoliatum, PA Ecotype)

Total: 100%

Cost of this seed package for 5 acres is **(8 pounds per acre X \$65.57/lb X 5 acres) = \$2622.80**

## Warm Season Grass Mix recommended for High Meadow site:

ERNMX # ERNMX-117

Cost Per Pound \$4.14

Seeding Rate 40 lb per acre

Mix Type Upland & Meadow Sites

Species List  
(click for  
details)

- 70% Oats, Variety Not Stated (Avena sativa, Variety Not Stated)
- 10% Indiangrass, PA Ecotype (Sorghastrum nutans, PA Ecotype)
- 10% Little Bluestem, 'Camper' (Schizachyrium scoparium, 'Camper')
- 5% Switchgrass, 'Cave-In-Rock' (Panicum virgatum, 'Cave-In-Rock')
- 5% Big Bluestem, 'Southlow'-MI Ecotype (Andropogon gerardii, 'Southlow'-MI Ecotype)

Total: 100%

DRAFT

**COST : 5 acres X 40lbs/acre X 4.14/lb = \$828**

**The native seed cost for the 5 acre meadow would be \$3450.80 .**

**DEEP Wildlife staff would plant the seed mix using a Truax planter and tractor.**

Peter Picone  
Wildlife Biologist  
Wildlife Division Habitat Management/State Lands  
Connecticut Department of Environmental Protection  
Sessions Woods WMA  
PO BOX 1550  
Burlington, CT 06013 OFFICE PHONE 860-424-3032 CELLULAR 860-916-0963

HIGH MEADOW RESTORATION PROJECT - January 1, 2017

RECOMMENDED WILDFLOWER/GRASS MIX

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom	Soil Type	Light req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Wingstem (Crownsbeard) (Yellow Ironweed)	Verbesina alternifolia	Perennial	Yellow	Aug - Sept	Moist	Sun - Part Sun	Alternate & simply toothed Bitter taste	3 - 8'	Bumble bees Other Native bees Honeybees Seeds for Birds	Yes	Friendly neighbor
Partridge Pea (Sensitive Pea)	Chamaecrista fasciculata	Annual	Yellow	Summer	Dry - Moist Well-drained Adaptable	Sun - Part Sun	Leaflets fold in when touched	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Halictid bees Honeybees Butterflies Larval host plant flies, wasps Seeds for songbirds & gamebirds	Yes	Yes
Ohio Spiderwort (Smooth spiderwort)	Tradescantia ohiensis	Perennial	Blue, Purple	May - July	Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable	Part Sun	Grass-like	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Halictid bees Syrphid flies Butterflies Other pollinators Mammals Box turtles Cottontail Rabbit	No	Yes
Anise (Lavender) Hyssop	Agastache foeniculum	Perennial	Purple	Late summer	Well-drained Rich, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Anise scent	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Digger bees Halictid bees Leaf-cutting bees Masked bees Honeybees Butterflies Skippers, Moths Syrphid & bee flies Hummingbirds	Yes	Yes

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Common Milkweed	<i>Asclepias syriaca</i>	Perennial	Pink	Summer	Moist, Dry	Full Sun	Large & thick Reddish-veined light green color	4 - 6'	Monarch butterfly & larval host plant Butterflies Skippers, Moths Short-tongued bees Long-tongued bees Plant bugs, Flies Predatory Wasps	Yes	Yes
Blue False Indigo	<i>Baptisia australis</i>	Perennial	Blue	June - July	Well-drained Rich, Dry Average Adaptable Very drought tolerant	Full Sun	Bluish-green leaflets	4 - 6'	Bumble bees Butterflies Other pollinators	Yes	Yes
Lance-leaved Tickseed (Lanceleaf Coreopsis)	<i>Coreopsis lanceolata</i>	Perennial	Yellow	Late spring - early summer	Well-drained Sandy, Dry Average Adaptable Drought resistant	Full Sun	Lance-shaped Pinnately lobed	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators	Yes	Yes
Boneset (Common Boneset)	<i>Eupatorium perfoliatum</i>	Perennial	White	Late summer	Wet, Rich, Moist Average Adaptable	Full -Part Sun Part Shade	Lance-shaped Medium green	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds	Yes	Yes
Wild Bergamot (Bee Balm)	<i>Monarda fistulosa</i>	Perennial	Lavender	May - July	Well-drained Rich, Dry Average Adaptable	Full -Part Sun	Fragrant Toothed & oblong Grayish-green color	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds	Yes	Yes
Little Bluestem 'Camper'	<i>Schizachrium scoparium</i>	Grass	Purplish- bronze to silvery-white	Fall	Well-drained Dry	Full Sun	Blue-tinged base Bronze-orange in fall	1 - 3'	Seeds for songbirds & gamebirds Cover protection	Yes	Yes

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Showy Goldenrod	<i>Solidago speciosa</i>	Perennial	Yellow	June -October	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Narrow-leaved	1 - 3'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds Seeds for Goldfinch	Yes	Yes
New England Aster	<i>Symphoricarum novae-angliae</i> (Aster n.a.)	Perennial	Purple	Late summer- Fall	Wet, Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Rough & hairy Lance-shaped	4 - 6'	Bumble bees Honeybees Miner bees Leaf-cutter bees Short tongued bees Long tongued bees Bee & syrphid flies Butterflies, skippers Migrant Monarchs Moth larval host Seeds for turkey	Yes	Yes
Narrow-leaved Mountain Mint (Slender M. Mint)	<i>Pycnanthemum tenuifolium</i>	Perennial	White	Summer	Well-drained: Rich, Moist, Dry Average Adaptable	Full - Part Sun	Fragrant Needle-like	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Honeybees Butterflies Other pollinators Seeds for wildlife	Yes	Yes
Blazing Star (Marsh/Dense B. Star) (Spiked Gayfeather)	<i>Liatris spicata</i>	Perennial	White, Purple	June - July	Wet, Well-drained Rich, Moist Average Adaptable Drought tolerant	Full Sun	Narrow & grass-like Medium green color	1 - 3'	Bumble bees Butterflies Other pollinators Hummingbirds Seeds for birds	No	Yes
Purple Coneflower	<i>Echinacea purpurea</i>	Perennial	Pink	Summer	Well-drained Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Ovate to broad- lanceolate Dark green color	2-5'	Butterflies Other pollinators Birds Seeds for Goldfinch	No	Yes



## RECOMMENDED WARM SEASON GRASS MIX

Common Name	Botanical Name	Category	Flower Color	Bloom Time	Soil Conditions	Light Req.	Foliage	Height	Wildlife Benefit	Deer Resist.	Native to CT
Switch Grass 'Cave-In-Rock' (Tall Panic Grass )	<i>Panicum virgatum</i>	Grass	Pink-tinged panicles	Summer	Sandy, Moist - dry Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Medium green Yellow w/orange tint in fall	4 - 6'	Birds	Yes	Yes
Big Bluestem 'Southlow'	<i>Andropogon gerardii</i>	Grass	Purplish-red clusters	Summer	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Red-tinged turns orange-yellow in fall & bronze after first frost	4 - 8'	Birds Mammals	Yes	Yes
Indian Grass	<i>Sorghastrum nutans</i>	Grass	Brown panicles highlighted w/ yellow stamens	Summer - Fall	Well-drained Dry, Average Adaptable	Full Sun	Blue-green turns orange-yellow in fall	4 - 6'	Birds	Yes	Yes
Oats, Common Oat	<i>Avena sativa</i>	Annual	Yellow	Late spring	Adaptable	Sun	Winter interest	2'		Yes	Yes
Little Bluestem 'Camper'	<i>Schizachrium scoparium</i>	Grass	Purplish-bronze to silvery-white	Fall	Well-drained Dry	Full Sun	Blue-tinged base Bronze-orange in fall	1 - 3'	Seeds for songbirds & gamebirds Cover protection	Yes	Yes

Color Chart:

-Absent from CT grasslands

-Migration\*

-Present/Overwintering\*\*

-Nesting/Fledge

## Grassland Birds Calendar

A chart designed to convey seasonal migratory and nesting patterns for common grassland birds.

Month:	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec
Species:					HARVEST RISK							
Bobolink												
Grasshopper Sparrow												
Savannah Sparrow												
Upland Sand Piper												
Eastern Meadowlark												
Horned Lark												

**\*Migration**– The period in which the birds begin to arrive in early spring or depart in late summer from CT grasslands. **Are capable of flight.**  
**Nesting**–The period in which a bird gathers and builds a nest to the birth and first flight of its offspring. **Vulnerable to haying.**  
**Fledge**– The period in which it takes a hatchling to develop proper flight feathers. **Vulnerable to haying.**  
**\*\*Overwintering**– To remain present in a certain area during the winter months. **Are capable of flight**

18 Jan 2017

Good Morning Bob,

Thank you for the information and request. To clarify, you addressed the email to me but the correspondence seemed to be inclusive of all. I will respond to my ability.

As staff I am in a lesser position to lobby for statutory change even if I personally agree with the requested amendment. The Conservation Commission (CC) is well suited to take up this request and partner with NFA.

My personal inspection of town-owned OS reveals that we do have hunting occasionally on the town OS. For each instance I gauge the level of illegality before I reach out to CT DEEP. I would call the level of hunting on town OS as unusually limited when compared to the number of actual parcels we oversee.

I will defer to Tom and Mark as the contacted CC members for next steps with CC.

Best,

-Rob

**Rob Sibley**, Deputy Director of Planning, Land Use and Emergency Management  
**Town Of Newtown**  
3 Primrose St.  
Newtown, CT 06470  
Office 203-270-4351  
Cell 203-364-7090

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On Wed, Jan 18, 2017 at 10:45 AM, Robert Eckenrode Design <[rtedesign@gmail.com](mailto:rtedesign@gmail.com)> wrote:  
**Greetings and Happy New Year,**

**Here is something worthy of discussion to speak with you all about.**

**It involves a real case of hunting on and near our Land Trust property we share a common border with Brookfield Open Space legacy (BOSLI) Both these two wildlife preserves are linked with clearly marked walking trails used by us and the public...6-7 yards away there is a deer stand on private property..**

**Stone walls separate these parcels and our neighbor or these hunters had removed a portion of the stonewall and put a bait pile right not 6 feet away from our preserves property line . This is where the homeowner is permitting hunters to lure wildlife from our**

CC m + g -  
Jan 24, 2017  
AG-F.

preserves onto their property and then shoot them and this we have found out is completely legal...

We the NFA have 5 other known properties in town in residential neighborhoods where this is taking place and all with literally 3-4 deer stands right on our property line shooting into our preserves ...We have taken down multiple deer stands erected on our own property and are frankly fed up with this form of legalized wildlife poaching on our preserves.

We are aware this maybe happening on some town Open Space parcels here in Newtown We do know this is an issue in surrounding towns in Fairfield County who will be contacted for their support of taking some action .We would like your opinion as to whether you feel that this should apply to Town owned Open Space in addition to private land trust preserves.

Assuming that there is sufficient interest in this, we plan to contact the CT Land Conservation Council and the CT Forest & Parks Assn so they can help put some pressure on the CT Legislature to amend the current hunting laws. We are also working on this through a contact within DEEP and plan to contact State Senator Craig Minor who is co-chairman of the CT Legislative Sportsmen's Caucus.

In essence we want to update the state's current 40 yard buffer for hunting from trails only on Sundays to everyday from all town owned open space and land trust property lines and walking trails clearly posted no hunting.

Please let me know what you think..  
Regards Bob Eckenrode  
President  
Newtown Forest Association

203- 606-9781 cell  
[rtedesign@gmail.com](mailto:rtedesign@gmail.com)

~~Ad Hoc~~ Study Group for Restoration of the High Meadow (SGRHM)

This group will operate under the Newtown Conservation Commission which will provide guidance, consider recommendations made by the SGRHM Group, and help to find ways to fund approved projects.

The goals of the SGRHM are:

- 1) To achieve increased diversity and/or quantity of natural wildlife<sup>habitat</sup>, including plant species, birds, pollinators, insects that provide food for birds and other important species, mammals, etc.
- 2) To gain the experience of a meadow restoration project which could then be useful for management of other meadow sites in Newtown.
- 3) To provide a pleasing meadow experience for Newtown residents for enhancement of aesthetic, education<sup>ed</sup> and cultural values.

To meet the above goals, the SGRHM may want to 1) let a section of the meadow go unmowed for a specific length of time to determine any changes, 2) actively manage a section through reseeding for the purpose of increasing diversity of grasses and forbs, or 3) make recommendations for the mowing schedule for the entire meadow.

Monitoring of sites under consideration will be done through documentation (observations, pictures, etc.) as agreed to by the Conservation Commission.

The SGRHM will report to the Conservation Commission monthly or as needed. The Conservation Commission will report to the First Selectman quarterly or as requested.

The SGRHM will be existence for three years.

CC mtg  
Jan 24, 2017  
07