

**Kent Conservation Advisory Committee, Town of Kent,
Meeting Notes*, February 20, 2013**

Attendees

Committee members: Bill Buck, Marty Collins, Dave Ehnebuske. Visitors: Janis Bolbrock, Jean Ehnebuske, Bill Volckmann.

*The meeting began at 7:08 PM. There was not a quorum, but those present informally discussed topics on the agenda.

Note: Chairperson Beth Herr was absent, so Co-chair Dave Ehnebuske presented her report and conducted the meeting.

1. Chairperson's Report

2013 CAC meeting schedule

The CAC will not be meeting in July or August.

Letter from Town of Kent Counsel Tim Curtiss

Mr. Curtiss explained that the law does not allow the Town of Kent to use tax dollars for maintenance of the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower since it belongs to New York State, not to the Town of Kent.

Status of vacated position on CAC

Bill Volckmann said he plans to apply for the position with the Town of Kent.

Review of Annual Reports

Dave passed around the Chair's Annual Reports to the Town of Kent and to the Department of Conservation. He will also distribute the two reports via e-mail for all CAC members to review. Both reports need to be submitted soon.

2. Kentcac.info website

Dave reported that there were 69 visits—and 59 unique visitors—to the website last month. He said that the most popular webpages are those that provide maps and information about hikes.

He plans to update the website from both content and technology perspectives, and stated that a new version would allow interactions with and contributions from registered users who view the pages.

3. Kent Nature Almanac

There were three outside contributors for the months of November and December. Because of her eye surgery, the Chair has not been able to work on the almanac recently.

4. Hikes and Trails

New Year's Day Hike to White Pond

Dave reported that the hike was a big success. Although it was a cold day, the sunshine brought out many people, and everyone had a good time.

Future hikes and events

The Chair asked Dave to provide details about events that are already scheduled as well as present her proposals for some future CAC events.

Scheduled events

- Thursday, March 7 and Friday, March 8, 8:30 AM to 3 PM. Green Chimneys Annual Environmental Education Exchange at Clearpool Education Center. The Chair received permission to place the CAC display she designed on exhibit at the conference, but a volunteer is needed to sit with it. Dave will send out an e-mail to CAC members calling for volunteers.
- Sunday, March 24, 2 – 4 PM. Amphibian Hunt at Clearpool Education Center. This is a chance

to help identify and count Clearpool's collection of creatures in one of three bodies of water. Since this event is co-sponsored by the CAC and FRoGS, the Chair encourages CAC members to attend and participate.

- Sunday, April 14, 5:30 PM. Woodcock Walk at the Great Swamp Wildlife Management Area on Cornwall Hill Road in Patterson, guided by the Chair.

Proposed events

- End of April/beginning of May – Author Carol Gracie will have an exhibit of her wildflower photographs from her book, *Spring Wildflowers of the Northeast: A Natural History*, in the Kent Public Library this spring. At some point, there will also be a book signing. The Chair is hoping that the CAC can arrange to sponsor a display of Carol's photographs in the foyer of the Kent Town Hall.
- Early May – Annual Spring Walk to Hawk Rock
- May – Installation of mural created by students from George Fischer Middle School at Mt. Nimham Fire Tower.
- June – Fern Walk and Survey at Clearpool Education Center. This could be part of the work on the Natural Resources Inventory.
- September – Fruits, Berries and Nuts of Autumn at Clearpool Education Center. This could also be part of the work on the Natural Resources Inventory.
- October – Annual Fall Foliage Hike to Mt. Nimham Fire Tower.

Suggestions were made for other CAC-sponsored activities that were successful in 2012.

- Early June – Mountain Laurel Walk at Clearpool Education Center.
- August – Invasive Plants Walk.

5. Mt. Nimham Fire Tower

Chair's correspondence

Dave reported that the Chair wrote to Bill Starr, the State Director of the Forest Fire Lookout Association. He has not yet responded.

Meeting with DEC's Barbara Lucas-Wilson

Dave also reported briefly on the meeting with Barbara Lucas-Wilson that he attended with the Chair and Bill Volckmann in mid-December. He explained that among other things, Ms. Lucas-Wilson would like the CAC to convene a meeting with the Putnam County Emergency Services, mountain bikers and amateur radio operators so that everyone can get to know one another and stay on the same page in regard to safeguarding and maintaining the Mt. Nimham property.

Staircase braces for the fire tower

Bill Volckmann reported that the man he has been talking with at Brewster Iron Works will get started on the braces. He will charge \$200 for materials and donate his time since he likes to give back to the community when he can. The braces will be steel, not aluminum, and Bill will check to see if they will be made from galvanized or non-galvanized steel since that will determine the paint that has to be used.

Sharing garbage pick-up responsibility

The Chair requested that Dave ask CAC members about finding volunteers to help pick up the garbage from the can at the upper parking lot for Mt. Nimham and at the one at the base of the fire tower. Currently, Bill Volckmann and George Baum are the only ones doing this. The immediate plan would be to find volunteers who would initially work with either Bill or George before beginning to work on their own. Marty Collins suggested that the contents of the cans could be taken to the Kent Recycling Center. Dave will send out a “call for volunteers” to the 80-plus people who have subscribed to the “Hikes” list through kentcac.info. Janis Bolbrock volunteered to help.

6. ELLA (Hudson Hills and Highlands Environmental Leaders Learning Alliance)

ELLA would like more volunteers. Phil Tolmach will be renewing his ELLA membership, and will act as the liaison between ELLA and the CAC. Mike Rubbo, Teatown Lake Reservation's Director of Conservation, urges all CAC members to join ELLA.

7. Other

Long-term plan for repainting/refurbishing the Mt. Nimham Fire Tower

Given that it will take several years to raise the money—probably \$30,000—needed to repaint and refurbish the fire tower, Dave would like to see the CAC move to create a long-term plan to determine how to proceed. He volunteered to sketch out such a plan and bring it back to the CAC, and asked for Bill Volckmann's help. Bill said he would be willing to work on it with Dave.

Fundraising and promotional ideas

Bill shared a story of a successful fundraising effort launched by the Mt. Shasta Trails Association in Washington to reach their goal of maintaining current hiking trails and constructing new ones. The organization was able to get a local chocolatier to create a chocolate bar with an image of Mt. Shasta on it, and local businesses were happy to stock and sell it. Perhaps that might be a possibility for the CAC as well.

Marty Collins suggested that the CAC might look at the kinds of fundraisers the Imagination Station organizers are hosting to reach their goals. She also suggested scheduling presentations on the need for the fire tower maintenance to the local Chamber of Commerce and to the Rotary Club.

Ideas for Green Living Series this spring

Dave stated that the Chair would present her ideas on this topic at a future meeting.

The meeting ended at 8:10 PM.

The next meeting of the Kent CAC will be at 7 PM on Wednesday, March 20, at the Kent Town Hall.

Respectfully submitted,

Jean Ehnebuske,
ex-officio recording secretary