

A "tri-community Greenway" is exactly what I'd like to see in the collection of huge wetlands on the Randolph-Braintree-Holbrook borders. Braintree officially has a low-open-space rating in that area (especially because they lock people out of the Reservoir Walk) and the District Councilors there, as well as bicycle-pedestrian groups, are all for it. Maybe next year.

For this year, here's a framework of questions for the ConComm to address -- the answers could become "guidelines for CPC grants" and for other wetland work.

1. Rules for "Welcome" signs at pedestrian entrances to wetlands? (This is what I'm proposing to CPC this year, so guidelines would be very timely. Or better yet, design specifications -- I proposed exactly that to the CPC last year and they said "we're not going to spend \$15,000 on sign guidelines when the DCR already has perfectly good guidelines, so use theirs").

2. Rules for negative signage at pedestrian entrances to wetlands? ("No Dumping"; "No Fishing"; "No Trespassing" -- that last one is the one I find most objectionable and is what the "Welcome" signs defeat! -- but I think the rest tell people "this must be a good place to dump" or "this must be a good place to fish" since otherwise why would there be a negative sign?)

3. Rules for parking at pedestrian entrances to wetlands? (Parking is what abutters oppose the most strongly, so my solution is, indicate on the "Welcome" sign where people SHOULD park, around the corner or up the street etc. and forgo the "No parking" sign since the police will never enforce them anyway).

4. Rules for litter cleanup in wetlands: I would like to have a DPW schedule for litter cleanup at every wetland and park. I have found DPW very challenging to get to commit to even "unscheduled" litter cleanup -- for the Lokitis Conservation Area, the CPC agreed to funding DPW overtime to remove the junk gathered over decades but actually getting DPW to do it is.... very challenging. Having ConComm guidelines on what is "expected" would really help. Like "Bring a pickup truck once per quarter to Lokitis and pull out a truckload of junk" or "send in a crew with 6 litter-grabbers to the Old Colony Rail Trail once a month" etc. I consider an ongoing litter cleanup plan to be the main way to facilitate the ConComm mandate from the Master Plan OSR1 "Continue the protection of existing open space parcels."

5. Rules for brush clearing in wetlands: This is the bulk of my CPC proposals for this year -- go in with a clipper and boots, and clip and stomp a "recommended path" so people can walk through. Sometimes there are pre-existing "natural" paths -- that's true for Lokitis and the Old Colony Rail Trail -- but sometimes there's just sticker brambles that need clipping -- that's true for Jablonski parcels near Bear Swamp. I consider brush clearing to be the main way to facilitate the ConComm mandate from the Master Plan OSR4 "Improve public access at and within land managed by the Conservation Commission."

6. Rules for boardwalks over streams in wetlands: This is the costliest item in my CPC proposals for this year -- \$700 per foot for Powers Farm-style boardwalks. I'm proposing a boardwalk to cross streams in the Jablonski parcels near Bear Swamp; and near and in the Higashi School property. Rules by the ConComm would be excellent -- like "minimize the amount of construction to as few boardwalks as possible, just to allow pedestrian access" and "let people get their feet muddy but avoid obliging people to get their feet soaking wet." This is the only "development" I'm planning this year on ConComm properties, and might be the point at which everything is considered "access" and not "development" (but a ConComm definition distinguishing those two would be useful too). The reason to make ConComm guidelines for boardwalks is that people build their own bridges over streams if there are no guidelines -- there's one right now 100 yards in to Lokitis from Stoughton Street, and another 100 yards north of Turner Drive in the Blue Hills, and a really long one just south of the dam on the Reservoir Walk.

7. Rules for Trail Maintenance: There is some potential "development" needed here for long-term maintenance -- like making water runoff swales, or adding gravel to avoid a puddle at the entry point of a boardwalk, or cutting downed trees that block the established footpath. The DCR has guidelines on this too, which the Friends of the Blue Hills (FBH) routinely implement in Randolph's state park lands and wetlands. DCR hardly ever DOES anything (just like our DPW) but they ALLOW volunteers from FBH to do it all. FBH has an "adopt-a-trail" program for that purpose, which includes reporting disallowed tasks to DCR (like FBH is allowed only to use hand tools in the state park, so we have to ask DCR to bring in a chainsaw if a downed tree is too big). MOST of the state park in Randolph is near wetlands, and FBH has decades of experience doing "development" in wetland areas that is environmentally sensitive while protecting long-term access. Maybe ConComm could adopt DCR/FBH's Blue Hills trail maintenance system as a model for DPW/ConComm.

Let me know what you think and maybe I can come to present/discuss?

--jesse

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to Joseph

I'm preparing a presentation on the "Rules for Wetlands" and I think there are two big concepts to discuss, to feed into defining the 7 Rules above. I think this discussion should be the primary ConComm contribution to the OSRP -- does that make it an easier framework under which to have a full discussion? I.e. the ConComm should have a full discussion anyway, for contributing to the OSRP and Master Plan update -- so I'm suggesting a framework for that discussion, rather than suggesting something out of the blue.

Two big concepts:

- A) Dual ConComm mission of balancing wetland protection vs. public access
- B) Encouraging passive recreational use of all conservation areas, but not active recreational use

--jesse

A) Dual ConComm mission of balancing wetland protection vs. public access

The ConComm's explicit mission is to protect wetlands and conservation areas. It's obviously a "balance" when there's a request for construction near wetlands and the ConComm balances development needs with wetland protection. It's a less obvious balance in conservation areas that have no construction, but which might require maintenance for public access. Public access isn't explicitly in the ConComm's mission but it is in the public expectation, as expressed as the public will in these documents:

- Master Plan OSR4: "Improve public access at and within land managed by the Conservation Commission."
- Community Wellness Plan 14.4: "Assess public transit service, walkability, and safe bike routes to parks and recreational facilities, and identify improvements that would increase Randolph resident access."

The 7 sets of rules are about public access. The ConComm is not **required** to think about public access -- but the people of Randolph have expressed their goal of public access, and are thereby asking the ConComm to balance public access with wetland protection.

My personal beliefs about this balance come from Jacques Cousteau: "To go out into nature is to love nature; and to love nature is to want to protect nature." He said that at the 1992 U.N. Conference on Environment and Development -- the name of that conference itself focuses on the balance between environmental protection and development. Cousteau suggests that development that fosters people getting out into nature causes people to want to protect nature -- in other words, we need **some** development so that people know what should be protected. Jacques

Cousteau is responsible for inventing scuba gear -- which has allowed millions of people to explore underwater nature -- and greatly fostered people's desires to protect what they saw. That's my goal for wetland access too.

B) Encouraging passive recreational use of all conservation areas, but not active recreational use

What can the ConComm do, to get people out into conservation areas, while protecting nature? The E.P.A. has a clear answer: "Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, they can provide ecosystem service benefits and are highly compatible with natural resource protection." I'd like to suggest that all of the ConComm rules for wetlands encourage passive recreational use -- which includes public access for hiking and birdwatching and picnics -- but discourage active recreational use -- which includes building facilities or maintaining sports fields.

The ConComm does encourage active recreational use of some parks, such as Powers Farm and Belcher Park -- and that's appropriate for areas considered "park usage". For everywhere else, the rule should be "passive recreational use encouraged and facilitated." How exactly to encourage and facilitate passive recreational use is the focus of the 7 sets of rules. I'd like to have a discussion about those rules, and then start implementing them in Randolph's conservation areas.

--jesse

Source: <https://semspub.epa.gov/work/HQ/174083.pdf>

Meeting Community Needs, Protecting Human Health and the Environment: Active and Passive Recreational Opportunities at Abandoned Mine Lands

Active recreation refers to a structured individual or team activity that requires the use of special facilities, courses, fields, or equipment.

What are Examples of Active Recreational Activities?

- Baseball
- Football
- Soccer
- Golf
- Hockey
- Tennis
- Skiing
- Skateboarding

Passive recreation refers to recreational activities that do not require prepared facilities like sports fields or pavilions. Passive recreational activities place minimal stress on a site's resources; as a result, they can provide ecosystem service benefits and are highly compatible with natural resource protection.

What are Examples of Passive Recreational Activities?

- Hunting
- Camping
- Hiking
- Wildlife viewing
- Observing and photographing nature
- Picnicking
- Walking
- Bird watching
- Historic and archaeological exploration
- Swimming
- Cross-country skiing
- Bicycling
- Running/jogging
- Climbing
- Horseback riding
- Fishing