

Milton Frye Nature Area Committee Minutes for 2/13/23

Present

Craig Layne, Chris Rimmer, Derek Walker, Brie Swenson, Lindsay Putnam, Lynnwood Andrews
No public comment

Chris presented a draft of a letter to the selectboard about adopting “Milton Frye Nature Area” as the formal name of nature area. Edits were suggested based on Lindsey’s recollection of Milt Frye’s support of experiential education at Marion Cross during his tenure as principal. Chris will amend the draft and have it ready for the NCC meeting on the 21st.

Needs to be presented to NCC

Uses of MFNA

Brie reported that the Rec Dept uses the trails for biking and hiking

Marion Cross students have been snowshoeing and sledding

Lindsey reported that she is tapping maple trees

There was discussion of installing a Trail counter to provide additional information about MFNA use.

Brie reported that Roger Arnold has questions about the ABA trail. He wants to know who is in charge of ABA trail – making sure it is actually accessible and inspecting it. Brie stated that the contract states the school is responsible. It is uncertain who at the school is the contact for the trail.

Bat houses and Bat Webinar- Lynnwood reported that after talking with Dan Goulet, who ran a bat house community build a couple of years ago and Cody Williams that having a community build might not be feasible given the amount of prep work that is involved. Brie asked about having a collaboration with the Richmond MS where they have an extensive woodshop and are interested in doing these kinds of projects. Lynnwood will contact Richmond MS about it. Lynnwood estimated that to create 2 4-chamber bat houses based on the Bat Conservation International plans would be approximately \$250 for the house, not including mounting materials. She used Home Depot for pricing, but less expensive sources are likely available. Concerns were shared about placing a bat house in the MFNA field where there is also a kestrel box – hawks being predators of bats. Lynnwood consulted the Vermont Bat Center, and was advised that if they were at opposite ends of the field, it should not be a problem. Other potential sites for bat houses were discussed including Foley Park, Huntley Meadow and the Melendy tract.

Lynnwood spoke with Barry and Maureen Genzinger at the Vermont Bat Center. They can do a webinar. They do it for free. They would not be available before the end of March. Lynnwood will convey this information to Cheri Asa, who has offered to organize the webinar.

Deer exclusion – Possible locations within MFNA were discussed. It was agreed that the intersection of the ABA and orange trails might be the best place, but that the committee needed to get out and survey potential sites.

Meadow management – Lindsay expressed concern about the invasives situation, especially at the south end of the field. There had been an agreement that the area would be brush-hogged but that it did not appear to have been done. DPW continues to be short-staffed.

The problem of invasives was brought up by Lynnwood – buckthorn and chervil, primarily. Chervil infests the area from the guardrail along Main St to the streambank. It is now in the streambed and there is a large patch on the field side of the stream that Lynnwood weedwhacked last year before seed set. She is concerned that this patch will spread rapidly over much of the field. Wild Chervil is phototoxic if the sap gets on exposed skin that is exposed to sunlight. A blistered rash ensues, so this presents a significant risk to the use of the field by the public. Various methods of control were discussed, including chemical, repeated mowing and smothering. The chervil in the streambed and on the Main St side of the stream is not amenable to smothering and requires attention. DPW needs to be contacted about this.

Wildflower – Lynnwood would like to initiate a biodiversity project in the field. The possibility of involving students was discussed, but given the multi-year commitment required, it was decided this was best started with adults only. The possibility of asking for a NWC grant was decided against in favor of a small pilot project first using Lynnwood's own materials.

Buckthorn – This should be an agenda item for the next meeting Lindsey will talk with Amy about the possibility of student involvement in pulling buckthorn.

Stream bank erosion - Lynnwood reported that the Main St side of the stream bank was significantly undercut that made it impossible to plant. She would like to have a streambank restoration specialist consult with the committee to develop a plan that would also allow for better management of the chervil over the long-term and stabilize the stream.

Japanese Knotweed – It was agreed that the NCC will be asked to purchase a 4' x 100' roll of ½ inch hardware cloth to try an experimental control method of Japanese knotweed on a patch on Derek Walker's property that abuts the MFNA field. The patch needs to be measured. DPW will also be contacted about a trial use along the roadsides. This is a very long-term control method, reportedly taking 5 years at the minimum, but involved minimal maintenance compared to other methods.