

**Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
South Central Connecticut Regional Water District**

**June 10, 2020
Meeting Transcription**

A regular meeting of the Land Use Committee of the Representative Policy Board of the South Central Connecticut Regional Water District ("RWA") took place on Wednesday, June 10, 2020 via remote access. Chair Levine presided.

Present: Committee Members: P. Betkoski, B. Eitzer, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young
RPB: M. Rizzo and P. DeSantis
Authority: D. Borowy
Management: T. Norris and J. Triana
RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

Chair Levine called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Mark:

Okay. So I'm going to call the meeting to order. Is that okay with everybody?

Peter:

Absolutely.

Speaker 2:

That's good.

Mark:

Okay. In the safety moment. Everybody's got the safety moment? Are you going to put any of this stuff up? There you go. Oh, Jennifer. You're the best. I print it out before just in case you're not going to be at the meeting.

Jennifer:

No, I'm ready.

Mark:

There has a [inaudible 00:00:50] yard cleanups. Look at that. [inaudible 00:00:53] prevent any stones. Never operate a mower on your bare feet. I did that when I was a kid. Got cut real bad. Never start a mower indoors. When fueling your mower, make sure the engine is cooled off. Never leave your mower unattended. Don't use electric mowers on wet grass. I would think it would be grounded. Okay. Did everybody read it?

Speaker 3:

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Yep.

Mark:

The next thing is approval of our minutes.

Greg:

I make the motion. This is Greg.

Mario:

Second.

Mark:

Oh, Mario's on our meeting again. We are honored.

Mario:

[inaudible 00:01:35] Need to keep an eye on you.

Mark:

And Jamie's here, too.

Jamie:

Hey, sorry. I was out in the yard covered in mud, so I raced right out of the shower. Sorry.

Mark:

Approval of minutes. Anyone want to make a motion?

Jennifer:

I'll make a motion.

Greg:

It was already done.

Mark:

All those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Mark:

Okay, now the special topic is update from John Triano.

John:

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What I'm going to do today is I'm going to give you a summary of a recreation program that has been doing for the last three months during the COVID period. And I'm going to see if I can share my screen. Let's see here.

Jennifer:

Are you in the Star Wars vehicle, John?

John:

Well, if you consider a death star a vehicle then the answer is yes. Okay, can you see my screen?

Speaker 2:

Yep.

Mark:

Permit holders have gone way up.

John:

All right, let me see if I can make it better. There we go. Okay, so, in the last three months it's been quite eye opening in terms of what has happened to our recreation program due to the COVID restrictions that we have been enduring during the pandemic. And so what I'm going to show you is a series of graphs, bar graphs, and line graphs that show you the impact of the pandemic. And as I've said to several people, while this is a tremendous boom to the recreation program it's impossible to raise my arms and fists in triumph about it knowing that it's due to something that there's a hundred thousand or more people around in our country who are not here who were here during prior to St. Patrick's Day. But this is one thing that has been a silver lining for the recreation program. What your looking at is the graph of total permit holders by month. And you can see in the last three months we have skyrocketed.

Mark:

Up to 5,000 wow.

John:

Yeah, we're over 5,000. 5,100 something and I'll show that in my summary later tonight. Over 5,100 are in the program at the end of April. Now the little blip that you see way back in June of 2016, the detail numbers I only have through 16. I do have the monthly numbers before that, but I didn't put it all into one spread sheet yet. And I don't know why there was a blip in early 2016 because if you look at February and March of 2016, those numbers are around 38 3900 as well. So I'm not sure what happened during the spring of 2016. But I can say that every spring we would see a blip, an increase. When I used to do the DPH permit... the DPH permitting for us and the recreation program, I always would see these increases in spring. It would not make sense if we have a lot of people coming in during the spring and you should also see a commensurate drop in people who are no longer renewing their permits in spring.

John:

So it should be a wash if everything was the same. Well it wasn't until maybe the second or third year when I was doing the DPH permits where I asked Maria Santillo, who was handling the recreation

program at the time with customer service. I said why is it that there's always this bump in the spring at the beginning of fishing season. She's like, "oh, that's because the system looks at people..." they basically, the system gives people 13 months. It's not a 12 month permit, it's a 13 month permit. So, there's always a lag time and where the people who have come in at the end. From the previous years fishing season now are still in the system and the new people coming in the new fishing season they overlap and that creates the bump.

John:

So then it flattens out for the rest of the year. All that explaining goes just for background. What you really see here is the massive increase that we've seen due to COVID. Now to look at it a little more in detail what you see here is a graph with three lines, the red when you see purchased and renewed, those are people buying permits. Purchases are people who are [inaudible 00:06:06] or at least you can say were not in the system the previous year. They have been permit holders in previous years, we don't track that.

John:

But, the renewed people are already in the system from the previous year. Expired people are those who are not renewing their permit, and you can see how the expired numbers peak a little bit a month or two after the people coming in. So that shows you again that 13 month permit system. So, in this graph what you see are number of permittees, total permittees in the each month, at the end of each of the last four months, for March excuse me. In the 2017, 2018, and 2019 period we're talking about 3,800, 3,850 or so as an average. We saw that just with half or about half of the month of March, when we start to see COVID restrictions we start to see an increase in it. That bumped our numbers up by about 200 or so. That was a pretext of things to come. When we looked at how things are broken down by purchases and renewals, you see that the greater increase was actually on the purchases, not the renewals.

John:

So these are people, as I said, coming into the system newly, not just renewing from last year. And here again you see it compared to the last three years to the present year. Where as, and the two bar graphs on the left are added so the bar graph on the right is the total. So as an example, if you look at purchases in 2019 there are 180. The renewals were 110 and then the total permits that were bought in 2019 turns out to be 290. So we were up quite a bit from 270 or so as an average for March sales. Now we're up to in 2020, 467. The three things that move the needle here was... The main thing is the COVID restrictions people now no longer have things to go out and do such as restaurants, such as ball games, such as hockey games, such as gyms. So, they were forced to go out and recreate in places like ours.

John:

And even as things progressed through March and then into April, we started seeing more and more restrictions on other things outside like playgrounds got closed down, the beach walk at West Haven was closed down. Part of the Naugatuck Valley river walk-in and Sonia was closed down. So people were actively looking for other things to do outside. And then state parks, some of which like closest to us Sleeping Giant were closed because they reached capacity. So that's all people spilling into our system which is good. Now we did start a billboard coupon campaign early in the month, just as things started to get a little crazy, on March 12. But things didn't really accelerate until the governor moved opening

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day up to March 25th. While we were seeing sales of the coupons on the order of one, two, or three per day from March 12th to March 24th, it wasn't until March 25th where we started selling like nine, 10, 12 of these per day.

John:

So of the 153 coupons that were redeemed in March, 98 of them came after opening day was accelerated to March 25th. And half of them were family permits either for one year or for two years. So when we look at the numbers, the raw numbers that you saw there, now lets look at revenue. The last three months, last three Marches that we've had averaged about \$6,200 or so per month in March. In March of 2020, we grossed \$12,880. So doubling, or more than doubling what we had seen in an average month, an average March the three previous years. The previous highs that we've had for revenue in March, and this is not including boat sales this is only for permits sales, the previous highs were \$12,780 in March of, I'm sorry, in May of 2018. And a close second was... Or close now third, was April 2017 which was \$12,685. So we eclipsed all the previous sales for revenue in March of this year.

John:

But this was only the beginning. As we saw in April now things really started ramping up, now we have a full month complete with fishing for the entire month. And now we see that for the previous three Aprils, we averaged about 4,000, a little bit less than 4,000 permittees. Now we've jumped up about almost about 500 compared to what the previous April's average was. Now we're almost reaching to 4,500. Looking at it, breaking it down a little bit more, we sold 492 new permits, renewals of 151. And what you see here is what you should have also noticed and I mentioned in the March thing is that these increases are not the renewals, the renewals are pretty much the same down here. Not an increase compared to March, I'm sorry April 2019. This is really the new permittees coming into the system.

John:

So, the previous high for total permits sold was 467 which was last month, now we're up to 643. The coupon we continued to do in April, we had 334 people redeem the coupon, and this is for 20% off by the way, and we had them redeemed on every single day in April between five and 20 people redeemed it each day and one third of the total of 334, so it's like 111, were two year family permits. Looking at the revenue now, now we've completely blown away the high point that we just made in March of 2020.

John:

Were as the previous three Aprils averaged around \$12,000, we grossed twice that in April of 2020, \$24,690 just off the charts. But we're not done. In May of this year, now I figured well opening day came and went, fishing season is in full swing we aren't doing boats yet. So we haven't been able to offer that carrot for our anglers. So things would probably start to slow down. Well that was not the case for May. In May the previous three years, we saw an average of about 4,000 people who were permittees, in this May we had over 5,100, 5,160 as you see in the graph.

John:

Bringing that down more, the previous high for total permits bought was last month April of 2020. Well in May of 2020, we sold 950 and 746 of those were new permittees. The renewals did a little bit better 204 compared to an average of around 150 for the previous three Mays but nevertheless, it's still mostly new people coming in the door. We had people redeeming the coupon every day through the month of

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May and this time was even better than April we saw between nine and 28 coupons redeemed per day. And again over one third of these are two year family permits. So for revenue as you can expect with all those numbers that I just mentioned, we are again knocking it out of the park and it's way in the parking lot.

John:

So the previous three Mays that we had for gross revenue, again this does not include any boats, this is just gross revenue for permits, the average for the last three Mays is around \$11,000. This year we grossed \$35,000, over \$35,000. The last high, previous high, was last month \$24,000, excuse me, before that was March when we just had a slightly new high of \$12,800. So you can see that the numbers are just unbelievable, tremendous, incredible and I have not asked Kayleen what have we done in the first week and a half of June. I'm going to leave the surprise for myself. She gets me the report in the beginning of July.

John:

But it was a really big surprise to see how good of a May we had. And we do, I've reported the last two months of how we've seen an increase numbers of people out in the trails. Some illegal, some trespassing ATVs and just walkers. But a lot of it is also new people coming into the program, buying permits and getting out there and still doing so. It will be interesting to see, excuse me, how things progress through the summer. Typically in the recreation program, we have a lot of people coming in spring primarily for fishing. And then it kind of peters off in June and July as the heat increases and the humidity increases and the insects increase. It remains to be seen whether or not COVID will continue to have a positive affect on our numbers while the temperatures and insects increase or whether or not it kind of mellows out.

John:

And with that I will answer any questions you have.

Mark:

Well, John, seems to me that we got all this new revenue here that maybe we should try to put some towards getting inner city kids on our property for fishing and pay some people to help in that respect. What do you think?

John:

Well, I mean we have done that in the previous years and we [crosstalk 00:16:15] again this year. However, [crosstalk 00:16:18]. What's that?

Mark:

We got some more money though this year.

John:

Well, that's not the problem, Mark. The problem is that all the camps have canceled. We've had four or five camps lined up for this year before COVID started and they've all canceled because they can't transport the kids. That's the big issue.

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Mark:

I didn't think about that. All I thought about was the getting inner city kids. But let's try to do that for next year. If we don't have anymore COVID, how's that?

John:

Absolutely. [crosstalk 00:16:47]

Speaker 3:

I noticed Larry sent out a message yesterday, there's more damage now that's happening on our trails.

John:

Yeah, the damage is through ATVs and it's not just on our trails. They carve up our property all over the place. Mostly woods roads, but there are some trails that they use as well. [crosstalk 00:17:14] Depends on the location. But most of it, one thing that our police are looking at is where they're coming in. Most of them are not in locations that are next to our property, in other words, we've had a lot of discussions with the Guilford land trust over the last three months about ATVs up by Bluff Head which is the very northern part of northern Guilford. And in all those locations, it's kind of a patchwork quilt of open space up on Bluff Head. There's our property, there's land trust property, and there's also town property. And where they're coming in is either from private property or land trust or town and they're just using us as a cut through.

John:

And that's true for all the area up there. There's even one place where they come in that's the gate at Lanes Pond Road, that in north Branford, is actually owned by the town of Wallingford. So they go around that gate, come up Wallingford's road, Wallingford's road transitions into our road, and then they take our road over to the Guilford land trust properties. So, that's a lot of the damage, the environmental stuff where they're carving it up. But we've also seen people who got stuck inside of locked gates and have just used hammers and so forth to break locks to get out or in, we can't really tell which way they're going, but they're probably getting locked in. People who got in when the gate was unlocked and left open and then meandered in at that time and then somebody left, they locked it and then that person was trapped inside.

John:

They take out a hammer or sledgehammer and they bust themselves out.

Mark:

Maybe our police should try to use our, we have an ATV now. With our ATV, are they doing any of that? You know I just thought...

John:

Yes, the police have gone out multiple weekend days.

Mark:

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With our ATV?

John:

With our ATV and with one officer was on an ATV and another officer was in his regular assigned vehicle trying to find people. I believe, what I was told from Paul, they did it a couple different days. And they saw, the number he said was a large number but they only intercepted one, the rest I want to say was like... For some reason the number 24 sticks in my head. I don't know if that's true, don't hold me to that. But of all the people that he saw, within a short like four hour shifts where they did these patrols, they saw dozens of ATVs but were only able to intercept one. They're not going to go chasing them through the woods, that's not the safe way to do it.

Mark:

John, how about the Guilford Land Trust. John, are they doing anything about it?

John:

The Guilford Land Trust has put numerous cameras and caught these people on these trail cams and then published the images on their website looking for people to identify the trespassers and snitch them. I know they got many comments on it, I did not hear from anyone in the Guilford Land Trust saying that they've identified anyone. The problem is, and we do cameras as well, our police put up cameras as well to see these people trespassing. The problem is they always come in with headgear and they're going fast so with that unless you know the person's what their helmet looks like and what they dress as, you can't identify them as they go by. It's very hard to get identification with the dirt bikes and the ATV's, there's no plates on them. Guilford Land Trust did have images of two Jeeps that drove on these trails one day but it was not clear enough to identify the license plates.

Mark:

Do all the funds from recreation permits get funneled back into the recreation program or do they go back into general funds?

John:

I believe they all go back to the general fund but maybe I don't know if Ted knows the exact answer to that.

Ted:

Yeah, they do, John. They go back into our revenue fund, yes.

John:

Okay [crosstalk 00:21:22]

Mark:

We're going to start taking some of that money out next year and use it for getting kids there.

Speaker 3:

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[crosstalk 00:21:27] Second question I have, John, is do all these people join the program as a first time program, can we think of anyway that we can try and promote retention of these people when their first year or second year comes up?

John:

Yes, one of the things that I would like to do that we have put it on the back burner since Kate Powell retired is to start redoing the news letter. We haven't done a newsletter since I think this, it may have been the fall but it was definitely had one in the summer of last year. And Kate retired, I think it was around Halloween so it may have been the fall, don't quote me on that. We have not done newsletters. One of the restraining things or the parts it hurts is that, in fact just last week, no sorry this week I sent Dan Doyle an email asking that he put together a newsletter to get information out there. It's what you're saying, we've got the fish on the hook lets bring them in so they stay longer and they're not just off into the water after a little while.

John:

So, with the newsletter we hope to engage people who aren't necessarily on Facebook. We have definitely been making a conservative effort to increase our presence on Facebook and get more engagements there. And I want to commend Jeff Yale, who has been doing that, doing a tremendous job of that. He puts out regular posts on...

Mark:

Unbelievable, he really does a lot.

John:

I post things as well on an unscheduled basis and we've gotten a lot of reaction to, especially some of the information... What's another word for that? Well, what he just did recently is he put up a post about identifying snakes [crosstalk 00:23:31] and venomous in Connecticut and that post just went out this week has had the most engagements we've ever had for a Facebook post.

Mark:

I'm telling you he is doing a great job.

Mike:

[inaudible 00:23:43] dedicated part of the Facebook recreation page?

Mark:

Yes, Jeff and I and Lisa Defrancisco are the administrators and then Dan Doyle also has the ability to post. It's a lower level but he does posts as well.

Mike:

I think this would be an excellent idea. For the Regional Water Authority to do that. To encourage so many people to use our services.

John:

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He does that. [crosstalk 00:24:16]

Mark:

He does that now, Mike.

Mike:

Thank you.

Mark:

It's unbelievable what he's doing.

John:

Thank you. Any other questions regarding the recreation?

Mark:

Thank you, John. Okay, item number four. Consider an act in [inaudible 00:24:40] to representative positive [inaudible 00:24:42] completeness of the mode of the authorities application for non substantial land use amendment. To create a new trail for the authority property on authority property at Lake Gaillard in North Branford, the Harrison Preserve Trail. I asked Bob, attorney Bob Harvey, to look into this and he is going to tell us whether the application is complete or not.

Bob:

Mark, I have looked at the application for the Harrison Preserve Trail, and I did find it to complete. And no, I'm not a lawyer.

Mark:

Okay, thank you attorney Harvey. Okay, so all those in favor can I get a motion to accept this?

Speaker 3:

Moved

speaker 4:

Second.

Mark:

Okay, all those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Mark:

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Okay, number five consider an act [inaudible 00:25:34] to representative [inaudible 00:25:36] and motive the authorities application for non substantial land use amendment to relocate Quinnipiac Trail on authority property in Prospect. The Quinnipiac Trail relocation. I again ask attorney Harvey to look into this.

Bob:

I did review this application and also found it to be complete.

Mark:

Thank you very much. Do we have a motion to accept? Do you want to say something?

Speaker 3:

Yeah, I just have a question, okay. Does he have a conflict since the original prospect?

Mark:

I do have a question, do these two non substantial things come before our RPB still or no?

John:

Yes, are you asking me?

Mark:

Yeah.

John:

The answer is yes. They don't require a public hearing. But they will come before you and at the June meeting, right Ted?

Ted:

I believe so, yes.

John:

Yeah, and then you'd be able to decide on it that night because there's no public hearing with non substantial land use plan amendment.

Mark:

I appreciate Mike horrible writing in questions we like that questions. Okay, do I have a motion to accept it as complete?

Speaker 3:

[inaudible 00:26:54]

Mark:

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Okay, all those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Speaker 3:

Mr. Chair?

Mark:

Yes.

Speaker 3:

If you would just make sure that the motion indicates that there's no public hearing recommended by the committee on either of the two applications just to clarify so the RPB is aware.

Mark:

Yeah, non substantial means the hearing is not required. Am I correct, John?

John:

Correct.

Mark:

Okay, so do you still want to us to put that in there?

speaker 4:

Sure why not.

Speaker 3:

As long as you find them to be non substantial and there's not public hearing required then that's fine.

Mark:

Okay, can we add that to the... Or we can't? Can we add that to the...

Speaker 3:

You're taking notes, Mark.

Mark:

No, I'm not taking notes. Jennifer's taking notes.

Jennifer:

Well yeah if it's... If you're recommending that it's non substantial...

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Mark:

Why don't you put non substantial, does not require public hearing for both of those. Can I have a motion to accept the second one?

Speaker 3:

No moved.

speaker 4:

I second.

Mark:

Okay, all those in favor?

Group:

Aye.

Mark:

Okay, so we're going to have updates on the other land and RWA properties including invasive species update from John Triano.

Jennifer:

John, you want to share? I have them here. You want me to bring it up?

John:

You can go ahead and do it and I'll just follow along, read a long.

Mark:

Here we go.

John:

All right, thank you, Jen. First thing the reservoir levels at the end of our fiscal year were at 96% last year were even higher because we had a wetter spring. And the long term average is 93%. So, we're doing well. We have started to move water not only I think by last month we were... We're moving water from Ununtutuk over to Gaillard but now we've open Hammonasset and put water from the Hammonasset River over to Gaillard and we've also open the [inaudible 00:29:04] diversion to put water into Saltonstall and that occurred early this week.

Mark:

[crosstalk 00:29:08] down now?

John:

I'm sorry?

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Mark:

Is that because those two reservoirs are down now?

John:

They're down... We're at the point in the curve where we would operate them and move water from the other basins to the active reservoirs. So to answer your question, basically yes.

Mark:

Okay, thank you.

John:

May was pretty dry month at 1.73 inches and last year we had over six inches, that's why we're at 99 last year. Long term average is just under four. And for the year the fiscal year for 20... FY20, we were just above the long term historical average. The previous year FY19 you can see was much wetter, 63 inches of rain during that fiscal year. The land we need from the water we use program we talked to the property owners in Cheshire and Branford of 40 and 30 acres respectively, the Deepedesta and Hendrickson properties and Hambit and Bethany, where we got [inaudible 00:30:18] grants we compile all the documents next for the ones for the Hendrickson property, I have not received the stuff for Deepadesta yet. But Ted is taking care of all the signatures he needed to do for the Hendrickson stuff and we've sent it all to Hartford. So, from what I understand from talking to DP staff we should be seeing the check for Hendrickson pretty soon.

John:

Rental houses 59 Raymond road we held two pre bid meetings we had six people attend. Basically, it was in two parties though, one young couple and then four people were basically one party. So it does sound optimistic that we will get bids from both of them. From talking to both, one is definitely going to bid and the other one seems very likely that she will bid.

John:

Hamden, Ives street, and Skip street they all rental houses there. We submitted the zone application, zone change application for Skip street. And as a matter of fact we had the public hearing last night, excuse me, everything went very well. We answered an email from DPH staff also about the application because we do have to notify them when we go for these land use planning boards in the municipalities.

Mark:

Have you seen that house lately, John?

John:

I'm sorry? Say that again.

Mark:

Have you seen that house lately on Skip street?

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John:

Yes.

Mark:

Oof.

John:

Yes, it's in bad shape. I mean it's not as bad as what Sperry road was but it's pretty close. And of course it doesn't look any better because it's surrounded all by DOT's. It's basically their staging area for the work on the bridge. So that doesn't help it with any eye candy points for sure.

Mark:

I went by and I couldn't believe it.

John:

I'm sorry, say that again.

Mark:

I went by it. I couldn't believe how it was boarded up or what kind of condition it looked like.

John:

Right, to try and improve it slightly I will admit that I went over to it... Oh geez, when was it? Well, it had to have been the fall, I went over there, or sometime in the winter, and removed... I cleared out the front gutter, the front gutter was filled with pine needles and there were plants growing out of the front gutter so I at least got that working again. But I would not go on the... It's got like two roofs kind of. The gutter that I did was for the porch overhang and was easily accessible. I couldn't do it to the main house itself. So all those gutters remain clogged.

Mark:

Your job description never ends, huh?

John:

No, it doesn't but I do enjoy doing the physical stuff because you know when you get off the ladder you could look up there and something has been improved so that makes me feel good inside. Excuse me, forestry updates there were no advancements for any of the forest, timber sales in the last month. Basically, forestry has ground to a halt because of COVID restrictions on the markets for timber sales and for timber have ground to a halt and we're just putting everything on the back burner until things restart again because there's no sense in accelerating sales if we're going to get the lowest amount of money for them.

John:

So, Alex is aware of this and he's continuing doing work on things like the firewood program and also help Josh with the invasive plants. So they both installed deer cages around the remaining pitch pine

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over at Maupey and up on the swath that was cleared at Great Hill by Gaillard when we had to do the tunnel project. They also worked on with John who worked on drone flight [inaudible 00:34:01] that included work to look at invasive while the drone is flying. They also helped capture drone footage for outreach and communications. They take these minute long videos and they give them to our communication staff. And they post them on Facebook and Instagram as little like like things for people to enjoy.

John:

And then, Alex also inventoried several parcels of prospect and wrote qualified foresters reports for these parcels so that we can get them under 490. Recreation we just talked all about this. Permit holder numbers at the end of May is 5,160. The billboard campaign with 20% off coupon continued into the month of May. We saw heavy use at all areas during COVID restrictions and additional signs were placed at various sites. And all lead to the record breaking sales which I just mentioned to start off the meeting tonight.

Mark:

I'd be re missed if I didn't say that the Rick Albrick, the older members on the committee would appreciate this. Rick Albrick would be unbelievably happy with 5,100.

John:

Absolutely, I did look back at some of the other raw numbers that we had. The last time that we were over 5,000 was around 2010. So the numbers have been slowly diminishing, well even before 2010 they were diminishing, but the last time we were above 5,000 was around 2010. Recreation staff continue to re station at Maupey and Saltonstall every night since the day after Easter. What this has done is that it's helped our police staff know who is staying late. We chose those two sites because they have the most usage. Has also helped in terms of sales because with everybody smartphone people come in without permit. Do you have a permit? They say no. Which well, you can get it by going on the website. They open up their phone, they type in the website, they go to it, they pay with a credit card and boom they are instantly legal. So I don't have a firm number on the point of sales that we've done in parking lots, but I can say it's got to be well over 50, maybe even approaching 100 at this point.

Mark:

That's great.

John:

That's jus a tremendous boom for the recreation program right there. We recently cleared trails at Chamberlain and [crosstalk 00:36:35]

Mark:

John, one quick question, John.

John:

I'm sorry, yes, go ahead.

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Mark:

People call in right away, I had this question to me when I was on the trail a couple weeks ago, that they're coming in... When they call in right away, can they get the combination to the lock right away? Is it on... It is there on when they set up?

John:

Correct. It's on the stuff that they receive in the email. They get the combination number right then in there and they also are able to download all of the maps that they need.

Mark:

I told them about the maps and stuff I gave them the combo because they said they were downloading the stuff into the... I didn't know if they had... Because I was coming out of the parking lot I just was curious if the lock combo is in the downloaded version.

John:

Yes, that is there.

Mark:

Okay.

John:

Latest plan amendments were approved by the fine men of authority for relocating the Quinnipiac Trail prospect and the Harrison Preserve and extending the trail in North Branford. And determined those were both complete permits so we'll be happy to... I'll be happy to talk to you more about those at your meeting in, later this month in June. Two large tagged trout that were put in Maupey were recovered by anglers so we gave out two more gift cards. That was a good thing and again Jeff got the photographs from the anglers showing what they had caught, put it on Facebook and got many engagements from those two posts as well. And then all water wagon events were canceled through June. I think there was one that was alive by this time last month but that got canceled and we just heard in the last week, as I mentioned early to Mark, that the last of the potential camp visits over the summer was canceled this week or last week.

John:

Special activity permits we only had two in the month of May, again this is highly unusual. At this time of year we usually, Linda is, or Vivian before her is usually very busy. Special permit request, half dozen or more is not unusual for May but this year we only got two, again COVID rears its ugly head. Other items, while we've been busy... Or while we have not been in the office so much, we've been busy on the field looking at encroachments, marking boundaries, including finding encroachments in Bethany and Hamden, of which you see here, five listed. I have a whole probably another dozen or so where I need to send out letters, I haven't had a chance to do that yet. But those went out in the last month, the five that you see in front of you.

John:

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Nothing major those are all small ones. [crosstalk 00:39:17] dumped over the fence and stuff like that. And we also took several inquiries from potential farmers for using fields. We met with someone from Highstead about... Did somebody have a question?

Joe:

Yeah, John.

John:

Yep.

Joe:

When you say there are encroachments, what are they actually doing?

John:

Okay, let's see if I remember. Wooding Hill Road Bethany there that one was just brush that was dumped over the fence line. In all these cases I send a registered certified letter notifying them that we have found the encroachments so they're on watch. And depending on the nature of it either we just say, okay, stop doing it or you have to remove it or sometimes we offer a license agreement if it's nothing major. So for Wooding Hill Road that one was just brush over the line. And she wanted to meet and her husband was in the hospital so we haven't met. I told her when ever your husband gets home, just give me a call and I'll be happy to meet you. Holding Road, what was that one? I can't remember what Holding Road was.

John:

Maher Road was also, there's a fence by Maher behind this guys house, the gate is there on the fence which is fine but he's opening his gate, that he put there, and then dumping brush. So we just told him to stop that one. One of them, I can't remember... I think it's Washington Road was also brush being dumped over the line. Washington Court was a little bit bigger where he cut down some trees, just small stuff that was encroaching over the line. Our trees went over the fence line, and then he dumped brush, what he had cut and then other stuff he dumped brush there, his brush on our property. And then he had also put in like pavers, or no I'm sorry, he was storing pavers on our property. Just over the line. So we said just take the pavers out, stop cutting the stuff over the line and don't dump stuff.

John:

He called me, we talked about it and he's all good now too. So that's how those are. The ones that I had... Those are all easy, the other ones I have still waiting to do are much more are bigger, more complicated. Some of them are going to be a cease and desist. You've got to remove what you've done. Others are... Some are bigger and will be offering a license agreement. But they all vary in nature. Does that answer your question, Joe?

Joe:

Yeah, thank you.

John:

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Okay. Agricultural fields, so I did talk to people at Highstead about a wild flower plots they've been doing with the hope that maybe we can get one of our farmers interested in it. But the scale that they're doing at the Ridgefield farm is pretty small so probably a few years before I can have anything to report to our farmers. I did meet with one potential farmer who was interested in using basically all of the fields on the western side of our property Prospect, Bethany and Woodridge, he seemed pretty encouraged, or I was encouraged by the meeting that I had with him. But I sent him a draft agreement but he hasn't gotten back to me yet. Last I talked to him, he was looking into the insurance that he would need to get in order to hay the fields and he was only going to do hay.

John:

Invasive plants will, as correspondents with our water chestnuts vendor for the project that is scheduled for next month in first pine.

Mark:

Will you please let us know about that when the guys coming so if we want to go out and watch it?

John:

Sure, and as a matter of fact, I'll have to talk to Jen about this, maybe that's what we do for our July meeting because they will be, I believe they will be active that week. The second week of July.

Mark:

Beautiful.

John:

I'll talk to Jen and we'll see what we're allowed to do for next month.

Mark:

Okay.

John:

Josh has been very active up at Saltonstall Ridge, cutting mostly Ailanthus on the ridge, the entire Saltonstall Ridge is just a menagerie of invasives up there. But he's been putting the chainsaw to good work and getting rid of a lot of the Ailanthus along the road. And he also cut a lot of invasives along the trails at Lake Chamberlain. So, he's documented 160 acres of invasive species in our GIS program for the last month. And then treated, did some kind of treatment on 32 acres.

John:

Vassel driveway issue, the attorney for Vassel did make contact with the abudder to his north where he has the current driveway so he that he's trying to work out a deal with them to have a quick title action so that they would be legal on that driveway to sort of perfect their adverse possession rights. I've not heard anything since then, that was early in May when that occurred.

John:

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ATVs and dirt bikes we touched on this before. We've gotten a lot of contact with different groups, land trust especially but also neighbors about dirt bikes and ATVs cutting through our property. And our police staff has been working on it all over the place, very active. Deer hunt... Trevor sent out all the applications and we have already seen a flood of applications come in. She has been starting to do the data entry for. We do expect that we will see a very high number of applications due to COVID concerns. People worry about food security being able to get food. That's definitely one thing that we have seen through the years that our hunters are very good at stuffing their freezers. So that's all good local sources of food there.

John:

The deadline for applications is June 20th in case you know of anybody who is interested in applying. We can get them an application. North Haven Clintonville pump station, I spoke to the North Haven land trust staff because they have a property behind us and they park cars next to us so we just want to make sure everything was there. I heard from some of our staff that there was increased activity over there.

John:

And I did talk to a, someone from New Hampshire who was interested in putting in a trail system location where there's a population of turtles, specifically wood turtles, and there was a study done on our property from 1974 to 1993, at Lake Chamberlain they showed a decline in turtle population there. We talked about it. I've read the research before the paper and when I reread it this time, to me it clearly seemed that somebody... I don't think it was the recreation program itself that caused the decrease in population. Actually, it wasn't just a decrease, there were no more wood turtles there after 10 years. I think it was that there was probably one or more people who were collecting them.

John:

Who were recreation permit holders, and they just wiped out the turtle population over the span of 10 years. Because we do have populations of wood turtles at other properties where we have recreation, so I don't think it was just the general recreation that caused it. I think it was specifically that there were turtle collectors that frequented Chamberlain during the late 80s and early 90s. Jen, can you scroll up?

John:

Thank you. And then there's only two attachments. Most of the news, as you can imagine, has been on the George Floyd issues around the country as well as COVID. So there's only a couple of articles that I saw dealing with natural resources that I thought would be of interest to you. And as I've mentioned I will talk to Jen about what we are allowed to for July and if possible we will try to get out to Bruce Pond to see the water chestnut harvesting. And with that, I'll open any questions.

Mark:

John, again I wanted [inaudible 00:47:27] presentation. Does anybody have any questions?

speaker 4:

Simple question, would there be thought to ever try to reintroduce something like wood turtles to the area? Since they were there originally, since you know of a study. Or is that just...

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John:

Yeah, I don't know of anybody who is doing that, but if you do come upon someone who has an abundance of Wood turtles or would be interested in that, we'd be all ears.

speaker 4:

Just curious because I've never seen a Wood turtle there.

John:

I never have either. But I said to the people in New Hampshire that I've seen them at other places on our property. Including places with recreation so, I don't think it was just a recreation issue, I think it was one or two bad seeds, or maybe more than that, bad seeds in the recreation permit holder population at Lake Chamberlain during the time period and they slowly picked them away.

Mark:

Is a wood turtle different then a box turtle?

John:

Yes. They are a different species.

Mark:

Okay.

John:

As a matter of fact, just as a potential anecdotal note I got that email from the guy in New Hampshire, I think on Thursday or Friday just before the weekend, and then I went out hiking at Chamberlain that Saturday. While I was on the trails for Chamberlain, I saw it there was a box turtle sitting in the middle of one of the trails, one of the woods roads. So turtles themselves did not extirpated from Chamberlain but wood turtles were.

speaker 4:

I have not seen any turtles there. Glad to know that they're there.

Mark:

We saw a lot of box turtles in Bethany when we were looking at a couple years back. They were laying their eggs right in the middle of the road.

John:

That's what this was, a female box turtle that was crossing the road.

Mark:

Okay, guys. Let's see where are we now? The agenda, thank you, John.

John:

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You're welcome.

Mark:

Notification of our committee chair election for July 2020. This is to let you know, that in July we vote for a chairman. I've served three years already, and according to Jennifer and the bylaws, I can't serve again.

Jennifer:

Four years.

Mark:

Four years, I've served four years. And unless somebody wants to write in and go against the bylaws I doubt it. But anyways, so think about who would want to be chairman and we can nominate them at our July meeting. Okay?

speaker 4:

I'm going to be the chair of the election committee and I'm accepting donations at this time.

Mark:

To get me for a fifth year? Okay. Do we want banners? Do we put banners... Do we want radio ads?

speaker 4:

We need the money.

Mark:

Okay guys, that was... Next meeting is July 8th at 5:30. Anything else anybody wants to bring up? If next month you want to be considered chairman let me know, or somebody else on the committee. Okay, anything else? Okay. I'm going to entertain motion for adjournment.

speaker 4:

Moved.

Speaker 3:

Second.

Mark:

Okay, all those in favor?

Group:

Aye.