

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

**November 18, 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, October 14, 2020 at Lake Saltonstall, 100 Hosley Avenue, Branford, Connecticut. Chair Betkoski presided.

Present: Committee Members: P. Betkoski, B. Eitzer, R. Harvey, M. Horbal, M. Levine, G. Malloy, J. Oslander and J. Mowat Young

Authority: D. Borowy

Management: P. Ruggiero, T. Norris and J. Triana

RPB Staff: J. Slubowski

Peter:

All right. Good evening everyone. Hope everyone's safe and healthy. Before we get started, our CEO Larry Bingham wants to let you know that all these meetings are being recorded and published. Moving on, our safety moment, I'm sure we all put the clocks back and I know this is a tough time of year for everyone, daylight savings, no one really cares about it, or cares for it I should say, but read through your safety moment and stay safe.

Peter:

All right. I need approval of minutes of October 14th meeting. All in favor?

Jennifer:

Aye.

Mike:

Aye.

John:

Aye.

Peter:

Opposed? So moved. Okay now here we have our regional authority police update. Sargent Riggero, are you present?

Paul:

Yes I am, good evening everybody.

Greg:

Good evening.

Mike:

Evening.

Mark:

How you doing?

Paul:

John asked me to attend this meeting to advise you guys of what's been going on and what the police department has been dealing with on the property. I do have some pictures I'm going to share, so I'm going to share my screen and talk about some of these pictures.

Bob:

We can't wait.

Paul:

The first picture I'm going to show you ... well, let me back up. We have purchased three Spartan Go cameras. They are deployed throughout our property where we needed them. This picture was taken as you can see on the 11th at 1409 hours. This camera is deployed at Gaillard Reservoir off of Tommy's path. This is an ATV trespasser that we caught on camera. We do try to identify these subjects. It's very difficult, as you can see by the picture. They do ride up there we know that. There are others. Let me see if I can get to them. There's another picture taken on the 11th at three o'clock. Another group of them.

Paul:

It's very difficult to apprehend these subjects. We're not allowed to chase them, especially with the new police accountability bill and everybody looking at the police departments. We do catch them. I did an operation up there in May with another officer where I was on the quad for the day. We did it three Sundays in a row. We saw a total of approximately 22 or 26 dirt bikes and ATVs. They're very difficult to get, but I did apprehend on two different days one subject each on two quads. It's very difficult to keep them out. I'm going to show you a picture of Beech Street. This is one entrance where we were having a major problem this May and June. We actually thought they had a key to the gate. You see all the rocks? Can you guys see the rocks on the picture.

Peter:

Mm-hmm (affirmative), yep.

Paul:

Okay. There's a brand new fence from the gate, you can see the 4 x 4 poles go all the way down Pomp's Lane.

Mike:

Right.

Paul:

That was put up, don't quote me, May maybe. They kept cutting the fence. We kept fixing it, they kept cutting it. We had to resort to putting the rocks there and trees in other areas. We did that. It subsided for a little bit, and then it picked up again. On the right hand side of the picture is where they were coming in. When we blocked that off with rocks, they started to go, if you look up at the gate on the left hand side we had to put rocks because they started to go to the left. After that, we thought they had a key so we deployed a video camera, a game camera on the left hand side, and there was one little spot, 'cause we were only getting pictures of dirt bikes coming in, they were moving some of the logs or branches that we had put there, going in riding, and then putting them back. When they were coming out, they were putting them back like nothing was moved, and that's how they were getting in, so since then we have blocked that off also.

Paul:

This is one area that was a serious issue for us in May and June. We have stopped it. We actually took the camera down that was watching this gate because they weren't using it anymore 'cause they couldn't get in.

Paul:

The other area, which I do not have a picture of is off of the end of Sea Hill Road, which is about half-mile, three-quarter mile away from this gate. They were using that gate, or by that gate. They were going off to the right hand side in the woods, made a path. We had the lake workers go out and criss-cross drop trees. We stopped them from going in there that way.

Paul:

There is still [inaudible 00:08:02] we're working on to prevent them from coming in. It's very difficult. Some of the areas, as you can see on Beech Street, we started blocking it off and we just have to continue with the rocks because they just move down further and cut the fence and go in that way.

Paul:

So that's one of the issues we've had recently, well all spring and summer.

Greg:

[crosstalk 00:08:29]

Paul:

Go ahead, somebody have a question?

Greg:

Yeah, this is Greg Malloy. You said one Sunday you apprehended a couple of ATV riders?

Paul:

Yes.

Greg:

Okay, now what do you do when you apprehend them?

Paul:

They get a ticket for \$92 and I tow their machine on them that costs them even more money.

Greg:

Now let me ask you something, hold old-

Paul:

That's really all you can do. If you seize the machine the court just gives you-

Paul:

I'm sorry.

Greg:

How old are the riders?

Paul:

The ones I got, one was in his 30's and the other ones were in their 20's. There was two on one, they were in their 20's.

Greg:

So they're not really kids.

Paul:

No. Believe it or not, going back to Beech Street, when we thought they had a key and were opening the gate, those were kids. Because we have cameras we can set for 30-second videos, and even though they're wearing helmets and stuff, we could tell those were juveniles probably that were doing that back then. But the ones I caught, no they weren't. They were adults.

Greg:

Thank you.

Mark:

Where's that marijuana?

Jamie:

This is-

Paul:

What?

Jamie:

I'm sorry, this is Jamie Young by phone. When you started to say that you seized their vehicles, is there a fee involved in getting them back or are they permanently seized. How does that work?

Paul:

No, I don't seize them. I don't seize them unless they're involved in an accident on the property or anything like that. Because what happens is we have to store them and I really have nowhere to store them safely, and the court just ends up giving them back to them anyways.

Mark:

Hey, where's the marijuana? This is Mark, where's the marijuana.

Paul:

Stop. Let me get there. All right.

Mark:

I didn't know you heard me.

Paul:

This is still an ongoing investigation. It's almost done. All I'm waiting for is the state toxicology lab to get me back the tox screening that says it is marijuana. This was an example of early or late May. Two officers, I sent them down to the Mill River in Hamden for a kids camping out complaint. Well, they ended up finding this. So we deployed one of our Spartan Go cameras. These cameras, as soon as they take a picture, they send it to all the cops through an email and we deployed the camera two or three days after the marijuana was found.

Paul:

The camera was there until August 10th. During that time, the same subject dressed all the time ... we couldn't deploy it on the marijuana, there was nowhere to put it, but we put it on the trail going to the marijuana, and for a month and a half, every 8-10 days, the same subject dressed in the same clothes would go down. He wore khaki pants, a blue long-sleeved shirt, and a mosquito net. He would go down the trail, spend 20 minutes down there, and come back. The trail dead ended basically at this grow, so we kind of knew what he was doing.

Paul:

August 10th, I'm getting ready to leave the house in the morning to go to work, and I check my phone, and I see that subject carrying two empty five-gallon ... he went in and he's coming back out with two empty five-gallon pails. Five minutes later, 'cause the Mill River is right there ... he had to go to the Mill River because the swamp, there's a swamp to the left of that grow, had dried up on him. It was so dry he had to go get water out of the Mill River. Long story short, I ran down there and I ended up grabbing the guy. We made the case. He is going to get arrested. The state's attorney will not let me submit an arrest warrant for him until the state toxicology lab comes back saying that it's positive marijuana. So that was a good use of these cameras.

Mark:

I thought all the police departments have that little test kit that finds out if it's marijuana or not.

Paul:

We do. We did test it that way, but because it wasn't an on-site arrest, it wasn't going to be an on-site arrest, the state's attorney wanted it sent to the toxicology lab to confirm that it was. I had to pull three leaves off of each plant and send it up there.

Mark:

You should have taken the buds.

Paul:

There was 24 plants there.

Mark:

You should take the buds, that's where the marijuana is.

Paul:

They weren't big enough. They weren't mature enough to have buds yet. The biggest plant there, it's deceiving in the picture, the tallest plant was five foot tall. Just about five feet. All the rest were smaller.

Mark:

This was in August?

Paul:

Yes.

Mark:

Okay.

Greg:

Probably New Haven or Hamden.

Paul:

I'm sorry?

Greg:

Was he from New Haven or Hamden?

Paul:

He was local, right in Hamden.

Greg:

Hamden, okay.

Brian:

I got a question.

Paul:

Go ahead.

Brian:

Has anybody looked at the soil around there? I mean in terms of there was anything applied on the plants? I am assuming this was within our watershed. Did you take any soil samples and look at that? Because I know a lot of the illegal growers use-

Paul:

[inaudible 00:14:19] soil samples.

Brian:

Have you taken soil samples of any type of pesticide use because illegal growers sometimes apply things that we don't want to have on our land?

Paul:

The only thing he told us he used was fish emulsion to fertilize them.

Brian:

Okay.

Paul:

That's all he had said. We did ask him what he used on it, and that's what he said.

Mark:

Are the plants still there?

Paul:

No, they're not there. Hank might have in his room.

Mark:

Hanging them upside down.

Jamie:

What are the charges that are going to be filed?

Paul:

He'll get criminal trespass third, cultivation of marijuana, and that's probably about it. He'll get possession. He did have some marijuana for smoking in his possession in his pocket when we got him. But he'll get criminal trespass third and cultivation of marijuana. Cultivation of marijuana is a felony.

Mark:

What's he going to get, life in prison?

Paul:

No. He's a first-time offender.

Mike:

He shouldn't be an offender.

Paul:

Well, I just wanted to show this picture because this was a very good case where we used those cameras that send the pictures automatically.

Peter:

Good job.

Paul:

Switching gears, I'm just going to run out the County road in Madison. This was blocked off ... this is County road off of Route 79 in Madison. It goes all the way through to Rockland Road in Guilford and that's blocked off on the other end with the gates same identical to this. This occurred a month or so ago. The gate was pushed in. Now, that's a strong, I-beamed gate that was actually just repaired today and is back up and it's locked up and fixed. But I don't know what ... we don't know if a car coming down the County road, 'cause the road turns here to the right to a dead end, if a car slammed it by accident, or if the kids actually did it because the kids ... the gates were put up because the kids were partying up on Rockland Road and County Road years ago and the town of Madison and Guilford let us block them off. That was five weeks ago. Whatever did that has some heavy damage to it.

John:

Well, question on this one. I mean the gate in question here is right next to a house. In fact, in the photograph you can see a house only like 100 feet away. Did they report anything to the Madison PD when whatever was done was done?

Paul:

They talked to him ... the officers talked to him. He never heard nothing, saw nothing. Actually when they found it, it was two weeks or so that it had been like that and he never called us.

John:

Wow.

Paul:

I'm like, "The guy couldn't even call us and tell us the gate got smashed."

John:

Yeah, I mean it had to take an incredible amount of force to bend that gate. I mean, those gates are super strong.

Paul:

That's heavy pipe, I know. Whatever did it has some serious damage to it I would think.

Mark:

Talking about damage to fences, the security fence on Dillon Road. I called you on that John. Did you ever find out what happened to that or does the police know what happened to that fence?

John:

I talked to, I think it's Warren Connor who is the DPW guy in Woodbridge and he's aware of it, so they have it on their radar in their list of things to do. I mean, some car ran into the guide rail. For everyone else's edification, the guide rail there is a cable system and we put it up there in conjunction with the town many years ago. In fact, there was a fatality with I believe four kids that went off the road in the 90s and went into our reservoir. So I got involved in it when I was working for Tim Holley and we helped out the town to put it up and prevent more problems. You can go up there just about any year and you can see where cars hit on a regular basis.

Mark:

When do you think it's going to get fixed?

John:

I don't know. Warren didn't say.

Mark:

Because it's getting to be winter time and that's a pretty dangerous road.

John:

Yes, and this one was a significant whammo into it. A lot of times you can just see that they glance into one or two of the posts, but this one took down several posts.

Mark:

I think it was a dump truck pulling a trailer with heavy equipment on the back. That's what hit it.

John:

It's possible. Yeah.

Mark:

I don't want to tell you who I think it was, but anyway.

John:

Are you squealing on Pete, is that it?

Mark:

Huh?

John:

Are you squealing on Pete?

Peter:

That's what it sounded like John, huh?

Mark:

Now Pete's a better driver than that.

John:

Okay. Duly noted.

Joe:

John, Joe Oslander. This here that we just saw the pictures of the gate. Just out of the road a little ways going towards Guilford, but on the south side of County road, there's a big open area there that used to be used for illegal dumping and hauling in cars from New York and everywhere else.

John:

Right.

Joe:

That area was really a big party area. You could see trees that were brought in, brush was brought in to start fires. They had campfires there for years, and I think the gate has cut down on that to a substantial amount. But I'm just wondering if some of them aren't coming in from Guilford still. I don't know what the gate looks like over there. Is it the same caliber gate?

John:

Yes.

Joe:

Okay.

John:

And we've had vandalism issues on that side with that gate as well. It's amazing what people will do just to get into the woods.

Joe:

If they're going to do something illegal, they'll do almost anything to get there.

John:

Right.

Paul:

Does anybody have any more questions for me?

Peter:

Sargent, Peter Bakowski here. Yeah, I do. When you patrol, how many guys are on? Is it daily? I know we have so much property you can't be everywhere at once. How do you go about that?

Paul:

Right, there's three officers and myself.

Peter:

Okay.

Paul:

Three of us work 8-4 and one works 10-6.

Peter:

Okay, so you are on full time.

Mark:

Are you on the road too?

Paul:

Occasionally. I'm more in the office, but occasionally I do get on the road.

Peter:

Okay, any other questions for the Sargent?

Mark:

Three officers on the road, two and one, and then you? Four all together then?

Paul:

I'm sorry, what was that?

Mark:

Is there four all together?

Paul:

Four, yeah. Three officers and myself. Four total.

Mark:

Before, your position used to be Captain and General, and Chief, now you can be a Sargent.

Paul:

Well, I am the Captain. Jen did the agenda wrong.

Peter:

Oh I'm sorry.

Mark:

You're Captain, all right. I was going to say ...

Jennifer:

Sorry.

Mark:

I'm glad you got the promotion.

Paul:

Jen I don't care, it doesn't bother me.

Peter:

Any other questions for the Captain?

John:

Yes, I have one follow-up question for Paul. You mentioned that on one particular day you witnessed with the cameras between 25-26 people on ATVs and dirt bikes. I know this is just a stretch, but just off the top of your head if you were to amass all the people who are crossing our property, and you don't have to limit yourself to Gaillard in this case, but all over the place, how many people do you think are trespassing on our property with motorized vehicles? Is it 100? Is it 300? Do you have any sense of what the total number of people doing this may be?

Paul:

John, if I heard you correctly, you're talking about when I worked the three Sundays and we saw 26 ATVs. That was throughout the three Sundays. That wasn't on one day.

John:

Oh okay.

Paul:

If I heard you right, I want to clarify that, that was during the three Sundays that we worked in a row, we saw approximately 26 or 30, that was during the three Sundays. It occurs ... Gaillard is the worst in my opinion and in my years here. The best time ... the most that they ride is Sunday afternoons. Sunday afternoons at Gaillard, which we deploy ... I deployed them, myself and the officers, specifically just to work Gaillard like I did in May, and we've been doing that just to be up there to deter or try to apprehend these people doing this. It's very difficult to do though.

Peter:

Sure. Any other questions for the Captain?

Bob:

Thank you very much.

Paul:

I thank you guys very much. Have a good night, okay?

John:

See you Paul.

Peter:

Good luck and be safe Paul.

Paul:

Thank you very much.

Bob:

I think his office that he's sitting in with that view in back of him is tremendous.

Paul:

You like that huh?

Bob:

That's a heck of an office with a big window like that.

Peter:

Anyways, moving forward.

Paul:

You guys have a good night, take care.

Peter:

All right. We're going to do our regional water updates. I believe John this is you.

John:

Yeah, Jen do you want to share the screen or do you want me to do it?

Jennifer:

Can you see it now?

John:

No, I do not. No.

Jennifer:

Okay, hold on a minute. Can you see ... oh, what is going on? Hold on a moment.

Bob:

Did Paul give it back to you?

Jennifer:

He did. Okay, hold on a minute. It should work now.

John:

There he is. Now you should have it.

Peter:

There you go, now you got it. Yep. All you John.

John:

Ready?

Peter:

Yep.

John:

Okay, so at the end of October we were at 64% full for the surface water supplies. Long-term average is 66, so we've just fallen below the long-term average. Last year we had 80%. A lot rainier, a lot wetter in 2019 than it was in 2020. But our drought status is still none. It just means we're below average. So we've been doing a good job on moving water to where we need to and we're not very far from where we expect to be. Just a side note is that at this time of the year is where we usually see the bottom of the curve. So in the end of October and November we are at 66%, and then we should start to see the

rains and the snows help to push our percent storage going upwards for the rest of the winter and into the spring.

John:

Rainfall for the month of October is at a little bit above average, 4.22, compared to the long-term average, which is 3.85. Last year it was a little bit wetter in October, almost eight inches of rain, and we remain about seven inches below normal in terms of rainfall for this fiscal year, from June to the present day ... or June to the end of October, Halloween.

John:

The Land We Need for the Water We Use Program, Killingworth corresponded to a property owner of 25 acres. Hamden and Bethany for the DePodesta and Hendrickson properties, we recorded the easement for the Hendrickson property in Hamden when we finally got it back. We already had back the one from Bethany. And we issued a revised title policy to DEEP, so that one is in the book, so it's all set. And then we continued to work on the DePodesta survey with issues that DEEP has and also related to title issues. Just little nitpicky kind of things that we want to have all ironed out before we can sign everything and get our money.

John:

In the rental houses, if you were early on the call, Mike asked about how Rimmon Road is going. So in the summary here we say we granted the buyers an additional extension for closing into November. Really that's [inaudible 00:27:32]. It's too complicated to try to undo that, but if you heard the conversation with myself and Mike earlier is that we are expecting to close by or around noontime tomorrow, so that by this time tomorrow we should no longer own 59 Rimmon Road. That's called good news for me because I've had my share of exercise going up and down the stairs there checking on the house, dumping the water from the dehumidifier in the basement, so I'll be happy to let the owners do all that stuff.

John:

Ives Street and Skiff Street, we submitted reviewed plans for the Skiff Street lot split to the Hamden staff. We continue to go back and forth with them. That is to the present day and there is very little, actually no advancement on that. We are at an impasse with the Hamden staff, which is a longer story that I have to talk to our surveyor with tomorrow. He left me a message today.

John:

Woodbridge, the case of 1029 Johnson Road, I contacted the owners about progress on the property. It's been basically at a standstill since we sold it to them three or more years ago. And whenever I ask them, they always say that they're just about to get going. It's been on the back burner, so on and so forth. In other instances I have asked them if they're interested in unloading it to somebody else because I've had other people interested in the property. Well, I mentioned this again to them and they said they will be willing to listen to offers, so I gave them the contact information for the two parties who I knew were interested, and I know they've contacted both. I don't know if there's many any movement beyond that, but it's all in their hands from this point forward. We hope to get the ... the most important thing there from our perspective is that the the house is rehabilitated and it becomes usable again, and the current owners have done almost nothing in the years that they've owned it.

Mark:

Yeah, and how much did they pay for it?

John:

The current owners paid I think it was a little over \$7000. That's how much it was when we conveyed it to them.

Mark:

Okay.

John:

So with the next owners, whoever they may be, it's all a negotiated deal with the next people. So they could sell it for \$8000 or they could sell it for \$800,000. It doesn't matter to us. That's all between them and the next people.

Brian:

Other than it looking bad, is there any issues that it creates to us in the status that it's at since we've already unloaded it?

John:

No. And let me say that we've also not heard anything from historical interest about what the progress is on the property. The people who are calling about it are other, like-minded individuals, meaning like-minded that they are into rehabilitating and working on old houses. It's not like the Emmy Woodbridge Historical Society or the Connecticut Trust for Historic Preservation, they are not really knocking on my door pushing it. It's these other people who are saying, "Hey, I bought this house over here, I've fixed up this house over there, and why aren't they doing something at Johnson Road?" And I said, "Well, I'm trying to keep pushing them. If you're interested give me your name and I'll forward it on." So that's what we've done and knock on wood that they can make a deal with somebody whose got some legs and some real interest to work on the property 'cause it's definitely not getting any better just sitting there being exposed to the elements.

Brian:

Not our problem.

John:

I'm sorry?

Brian:

Not our problem.

John:

I wouldn't say that. It's mostly not our problem. It's not entirely off our plate, but it's really that we're the interested party. We just got to keep pushing them to a successful conclusion.

John:

Forestry. So we have had no movement on the current timber sales that are still out there because the market is still depressed from market forces, plus the COVID issue, but we are marking timber harvests on two areas, which I mentioned earlier to Joe and to Mike in the two sales that he's marking and are going out to bid in Seymour and Madison. It says here the Madison area is complete and is out to bid already, so that must have happened before Halloween.

Joe:

Where about in Madison?

John:

It's the one where you saw the cars parked.

Joe:

Okay.

John:

It's on the east side. Not where the recreation area is on the west side, but on the east side of 79.

Joe:

Okay.

John:

Assisted the Connecticut Agricultural Experiment Station with the help of our facilities department in digging soil pits out by that area where they have experimental plots and we're doing our timber sale. The pits and the data collected from them will allow us to better understand changes in soil composition, understanding the changing tree canopy.

John:

Alex and Josh both conducted a drone flight mapping the ... oops sorry about that. That was my phone. The drone flight mapping some of the tornado damage at the Farm River-East Haven diversion. That area really got hit hard and we've ordered Christmas trees for the planting season next spring.

John:

For recreation at the end of August, we had 5758 permit holders. That again was an increase over the previous month, so we continue to see advancements in the number, whereas normally at this time of year we've always seen the number decrease month to month. Boating ended in October and we had the dock removed. The Maltby Lakes and Lake Chamberlain gates were both vandalized and repaired. And the newsletter was published and mailed to all our permit holders.

John:

Can you scroll ... oh there you go.

John:

Okay, so Josh Tracy held an invasive plant walk at Chamberlain with five participants. We did our walleye stocking at Lake Saltonstall. And the Quinnipiac Trail relocation in Prospect was complete. CFBA has done all the marking out there and cleared the trails and they are ready to go. It is open, although they have not really publicized it to this point.

John:

Special activity permits, just a handful in the month of October.

John:

Other items, encroachments and agreements in the agricultural field department. We discussed the field with another potential farmer. North Branford for 229 Forest Road. We sent out a letter to the [inaudible 00:34:22] there about multiple encroachments. In fact, I just talked to them on the phone today, so we're going to meet with them after Thanksgiving, so the first week of December, and talk about the lines, getting them to move all their stuff back over the line.

John:

Maiden Lane in Seymour, the woman's name was Minnie ... I forget. It wasn't Minnie Lee what was it? Leshaw, she passed away, so that actually terminates the license agreement once the licensee is deceased, so we had a new license drawn up and sent to her son. He signed it and returned it, so we're all good there.

John:

Invasive plants. Josh treated invasives at points in East Haven, Woodbridge, and Bethany. Corresponded with the Agricultural and Experimentation staff about the spotted lantern fly monitoring at Lake Saltonstall, and he collected herbicide plot data on the [inaudible 00:35:23] grass plots that he has in Prospect.

John:

Overall, for areas that he mapped in the month of October, it was about eight acres and he treated about 35 acres.

John:

Deer hunt. The scouting period began and ended in the month of October, and then it actually started the day before Halloween when we actually harvested 11 deer on that first day. It was a beautiful day. It was nice and cool with very little wind, so we had a lot of hunters out and many were harvesters and then tagged off since then with some very windy weather and some very warm weather. We discussed plans with the Agricultural Experiment Station about installing feeders and cameras after the hunt at Lake Gaillard, so they will be doing that once the hunt is completed at the end of November.

John:

Cell phone antennas. We discussed the swap of antennas at Rabbit Rock with T-Mobile. They're the vendor in that instance. Comcast leased at Burwell Tank. We received a proposal from Comcast about an

amendment to the lease, which is going to expire in June of next year, so we sent a counter proposal. We're still going back and forth with them.

John:

And then all the rest is just the attachments, articles that may be of interest to you, including stuff on the drought that we have experienced in 2020. For the meeting in December, I have talked to Josh and Will and they will do the follow-up on the Water Chestnut demonstration, or Water Chestnut talk that they gave to you a few months ago. And with that, I will take any questions that you have.

Joe:

John, how about the bird hike that you had at Lake Hammonasset? How'd that go?

John:

Very well. I mean that was in conjunction with the New Haven Bird Club. The bird club rules that they only allow 10 people to sign up for the walks. Our rule is that we sign up 15 people. Because it was a shared trip, I didn't exclude you know, so the max was going to be about 25 and I think we got actually over the max when we started. The guy from the bird club who actually was checking off the people from the bird club who were registered to make sure that they were there, he was very nervous about the numbers, but we spread out. We actually subdivided into two groups and most people wore their masks the entire time.

John:

We walked from the Hammonasset parking lot all the way up to Abner Lane Road where we walked down the old road to the bridge abutment that's into the water. That's not all exposed since the ... Hammonasset when it gets drained at this time of year, which is common, has a lot of regrowth on the lake bed and all that stuff was dying back because it's in the fall, and as we were standing there on the lake bed on Abner Lane Road, the highlight of the day was a Northern Harrier, which for those of you who don't know is a type of hawk that likes to hover very close, just banking very low over the ground. It likes really wide open areas. It flew around ... it flew to our left and then flew 270 degrees all around us to give us great views and did exactly what is normal Northern Harrier hunting behavior. So that was definitely the highlight of the day 'cause you don't see to many Harriers around.

Joe:

Good.

Peter:

Hey John, I have a question for you. The permit holders, we're up more than usual, correct?

John:

Correct.

Peter:

So I seen something on a station where ... is that doing damage to our trails and stuff or is it not phasing us at all? I mean, they say more than usual because of the COVID-19.

John:

Right. They are not doing damage to our trails. First of all, most of our trails are woods roads, so the woods roads can handle ... if they can handle the vehicular traffic that we put on it, they can definitely handle extra feet by people, so that's really not an issue. And then, even for the amount of extra people that we've seen, it's been a lot more than we're accustomed to, but it's not doing any degradation to the trails at this point. We're in good shape.

Peter:

Yeah, I didn't think so. All right thanks John.

John:

It's not like it is at Sleeping Giant. I went there I think twice during the COVID period. Last time was in either late September or early October. And for the trails that I went on, where I've been to many times before, there was a couple places that you could definitely see have been degraded because they have had so much extra traffic in that state park, and that was ... Sleeping Giant is one of the most used parks in our state, so it's gotten a lot of use and a lot of wear and tear.

Peter:

That might be the one I seen on the news.

John:

Yeah.

Jamie:

John, two things on that with the state park, with Sleeping Giant, was that still damage from the tornado a couple years ago that pretty much annihilated. I imagine there was a lot of erosion from all the trees they had to take out that might have been a precursor, or foundation to the wear and tear that you're seeing at Sleeping Giant.

John:

I don't think that contributed much. I mean, I go to Sleeping Giant multiple times per year and from the point of when they reopened it, which was what almost a year after they had the tornado, so some time in 2019 when they reopened it, and was walking around there, it didn't seem like they had a lot of damage. I mean there wasn't a lot of erosion problems from the tornado, and part of that you can say is because nobody was in for months and months when they closed the whole park.

John:

But I'll give you this example, the one place where I really saw a lot of problems at Sleeping Giant is, if you're familiar with going up over the head, if you come up the top of the head where the quarry was, then you go over to where the chin is, you walk along the chin, and then you start going down towards the throat, that area where you go down towards the throat was always rough, very steep area that was dangerous to begin with. Well because there had been so much extra traffic there, a lot of the soil that was there has now been worn away, and now it's super dangerous. I was actually walking with my sister

and my brother-in-law and he slipped and he cut his leg as he was going down. You could see that it's definitely something that they need to be aware of.

John:

Fortunately for us, going back to Peter's original question, that really doesn't apply to any of our woods roads ... or any of our trails because most of our trails are woods roads. They're not nearly as dangerous or steep as what you see at Sleeping Giant.

Peter:

Thank you John. Any more questions for John? Okay, thank you John.

John:

Thank you.

Peter:

I see Ted's here, right Ted? Is Ted Norris with us?

Ted:

Yes I am.

Peter:

Ted, any updates on anything?

Ted:

No, I think John covered it. Thanks.

Peter:

Okay. All right. And then I see Jennifer gave us our yearly calendar of meetings, and I believe Joe you're going to the meeting tomorrow?

Joe:

That's correct.

Peter:

Okay. And our next meeting is December 9th at 5:30. Mark Levine is buying dinner for us. Right Mark? He didn't like that or maybe he left. Anyways-

Mark:

Listen, first year chairman always buys dinner.

Peter:

Oh okay.

Representative Policy Board
Land Use Committee
November 18, 2020

Mark:

It's supposed to be a Christmas party. We have to social distance.

Peter:

All right. Anyways, I love you all. Motion to adjourn.

Mark:

Wait a second. Everybody have a happy Thanksgiving the best you can.

Greg:

You too.

Peter:

Of course, everyone be safe, happy, and healthy, and God bless you all. Now motion to adjourn.

Jamie:

Happy Thanksgiving guys. Motion accepted.