

Minutes
Black Creek Watershed Coalition
Tuesday, November 29, 2005

Present: Jennifer Balonek, Town of Riga; Rochelle Bell, Monroe County Department of Planning and Development; Joe Carr, Town of Chili; Betsy Johnson, Town of Bergen; George Squires, Genesee County SWCD; Don Hoyt, Town of LeRoy; Robert Remillard, USDA NRCS Lakes Plains RC&D; Roger Rouse, Town of Byron; Larry VerWeire, Riga Resident; Lyle Warren, Village of Churchville.

Guests: Barbara and Lee Drake, Bergen Swamp Preservation Society

Action items are underlined throughout the minutes.

Introductions, assignment of roles, questions about minutes

Introductions were made. Larry VerWeire managed the meeting and was timekeeper, Rochelle Bell was scribe. The minutes for October were approved as submitted. A few items were added to the agenda.

Black Creek Park Wetland. Construction has begun. A documentary is being made of the creation of the wetland.

Meetings with Political Representatives: David Zorn and Rick VenVertloh met with Senator Volker and a staffer. Senator Volker appears to understand our group's mission and goals and would likely be supportive of a member action taken on our behalf.

Grant Updates

- ☐ Controlling Erosion and Sediment in the Black and Oatka Creeks - GLC grant: No update.
- ☐ EPF Grant: no word yet.
- ☐ Wilson grant: we weren't funded.
- ☐ Recommended website: "Watershed funding" section of the EPA website. Rochelle will send out link.
- ☐ Bergen Swamp Preservation Society – the Society pursues funding, too, and would be happy to collaborate and write letters of support. They invite us to send a representative from our committee to their monthly meetings. Their next meeting is on Tuesday, January 17th, 2006 at Brighton Town Hall. Barbara Drake will send us an announcement. The Society meets in Brighton because it is central to their land holdings. Rochelle volunteered to attend the meeting, and take packets of information about the BCWC for the members of the Society.
- ☐ Robert Remillard has a grant announcement concerning the removal of obstructions. He will send it to Rochelle and Ken Avery.

Jennifer Balonek asked if we have a list of the grants we have applied for; Rochelle will compile that information. Lee Drake reminded us that we may have to apply for the same grant two or three times before we get accepted.

We were reminded to keep our goals in mind when seeking grants:

- ☐ We'd like a large far-reaching grant to write a watershed plan. We are hoping this work will be funded by a member item in state government, but we might have to push the state legislators with a grant match.
- ☐ We have the riparian corridor report for the watershed; we should use look for funding for projects listed in that report.

- ❑ The map/guide project is still a good idea!

The Nature Conservancy:

TNC and Cornell University are working with other organizations to build on an existing GIS-based approach to characterizing watersheds' impairments. These impairments might include hydrologic fragmentation due to dams, road encroachment on floodplains, altered hydrology, sedimentation and eutrophication. The goal is to identify subwatersheds where impairments are the greatest - presumably to help watershed organizations focus their efforts.

The project is looking at four watersheds in NYS and four in Ontario. The watersheds in NYS include Black Creek -- due to its unique biology (specifically the Bergen Swamp); Lake Ontario marshes (Sodus Bay east to Sterling); Sandy Creek in the Tug Hill area; and, the Salmon River. David Klein, Sr. Field Representative, TNC, and possibly his colleague at Cornell -- Marci Meixler, an aquatic ecologist in the Natural Resources Department. -- will give a presentation on the project at our next meeting.

Display Boards

Jennifer will take the display board that has been in the library and Riga Town Hall to her daughter's school. She will also take the board that is in Chili to Roberts Wesleyan.

Lyle will see if the Churchville bank would like to display the board.

George will move a board from the Gillam Grant Center to the Bergen library, and then to GCC.

Joe Carr will see about moving a display board from the Scottsville library to the Town/Village Hall.

Bergen Swamp Slide Show

Barbara and Lee Drake treated us to a spectacular slide show of the Bergen Swamp. They began with a short history of the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society: the Society was founded in 1936 and one of the original founders went on to found The Nature Conservancy! The Society owns four properties, two of which (Zurich Bog and the Bergen Swamp) are designated by the National Park Service as National Natural Landmarks. They also own Taylor Marsh at the north end of Honeoye Lake. Find out more about the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society at www.bergenswamp.org.

The Bergen Swamp encompasses approximately 1,800 acres in the towns of Bergen and Byron. It is situated on an Ordovician shale between the Onondaga and Niagara limestone escarpments. The Niagara Escarpment was named a World Biosphere Reserve by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 1990. The Niagara Escarpment is an important and unique ecosystem -- the Escarpment is very important in Canada (just Google "Niagara Escarpment!")

The Bergen Swamp has many unique plant and animal species and features. It is characterized by drumlins, upland forests and grasslands. The 30-acre grassland sustained by the Society has been classified as an important Bird Area by the National Audubon Society. The concurrence of limestone and hydrology create unusual "marl rooms."

Barbara and Lee discussed the complicated management issues posed by the swamp and how conflicts can arise when managing for plants vs. animals vs. the ecosystem as a whole while dealing with a host of threats (deer, storm drainage, succession, disease, human impact). Otters were introduced above the swamp and are now thriving in the swamp. Obstructions in the creek pose pros and cons for the swamp, too.

Barbara said that in 1971 the Chili Environmental Council studied Black Creek water quality. Pat Tindale and Joe Carr may know where the old files are.

Barbara is no longer President of the Bergen Swamp Preservation Society. Lee Blair and Steve Locke are the new President and Vice President, respectively. Rochelle will update the database.

We were invited to plan a guided hike in the Swamp. The hike should be planned for May (mid to end) to see Orchids, or September to see goldenrod.

Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Wednesday 12/21/2005 at 5:30 p.m. Joe Carr will schedule a meeting room. *(scheduled for the Town Hall meeting room)*