

## MINUTES - TOWN OF SOUTHEAST OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

DATE: APRIL 30, 2008

PLACE: CORNERSTONE PARK

TIME: 7:30 PM

ATTENDEES: Milly Nugent, Don Burrows, Cherie Ingraham and Ann Fanizzi. Guest: Dr. Michael Klemens, Scenic Hudson. Consultant to the Committee on Biodiversity  
< BR>Excused Absence: Kerry Cunningham

TOPIC: Identification of Priority Areas for Establishment of Biodiversity Corridors. Evaluation of areas in the Town of Southeast employing maps created by Graham Trelshed. Dr. Klemens guided the Committee in determining areas meeting ecological requirements for biodiversity protection. He particularly emphasized that attention to biodiversity should be part and parcel of good environmental and land use planning and that a more sophisticated, complex perspective, stressing Conservation Planning should inform zoning codes. Especially in light of global warming, the need to reduce carbon footprint and threat of species extinction, towns must revise present codes.

Particular attention was given to the 166 acres recently purchased through the Open Space fund; its natural resource characteristics; its connectivity to the 200 acre Tilly Foster Conservation Area and its relationship to an adjoining 45-acre parcel, the majority of which evidenced significant wetlands.

Dr. Klemens emphasized that endangered species required large tracts of unfragmented land in order to maintain species viability. For ex. Amphibians, reptiles and birds are particularly sensitive to fragmentation. He delineated three categories of species responsiveness and quality of habitat: sensitive (highest); neutral; and associative (highest) and noted that the proliferation of certain species i.e. deer and Canada Geese were indicators of severely disturbed habitat..

In examining the map, Dr. Klemens concluded that in the Town of Southeast's open space was so fragmented by either roads or development, that few areas remained of sufficient acreage to establish a viable biodiversity corridor. The location of the Town of Southeast between inter-states that literally dissected the town into quadrants, presented an almost insurmountable obstacle to maintaining the integrity of large swaths of land. Characterizing the "impact on species as huge not only from roads, but drainage and lighting," Dr. Klemens concluded that unless 1000 acres of unfragmented land were available, then the benefits to be derived in terms of protecting either vegetative or habitat areas would be lost. In planning, we must "develop a footprint harmonious with the ecological footprint."

The area immediately north, along Pugsley Road and I84 appeared to be the last area of unfragmented open space and therefore met the specifications for study. However, other areas, although somewhat problematic, could possibly be included in the study. And Dr. Klemens suggested that a GIS analysis of the following areas be included: Tilly Foster itself; Joe Hill's; Mill Plain; Dingle Ridge and Ice Pond (The Great Swamp).

A timeline for initiating and completing study was then discussed. According to Dr. Klemens, springtime from April - October would provide optimum conditions for collecting species data including kind, number and location.

Both Dr. Klemens and the Committee were particularly conscious of the need to raise official and public awareness of and education for creating new planning models and tools protective of whatever remained of the Town's biodiversity. These included but were not limited to the following proposals: meeting with town and county officials; presentation at town and county

meetings; one- on- one neighbor discussions; developing educative public outreach campaigns; conducting community forums i.e. the role of property rights in the face of possibly new, more restrictive codes; informal get-togethers and formal suppers and video presentation on local community cable stations.

The Committee ended the meeting with following up on the recommendation that we meet with Supervisor Rights to introduce committee members and to appraise him of the direction of our work.

Meeting Adjourned: 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted,

Ann Fanizzi, Secretary