

# FISH CREEK UPDATE

## Working Group Meets To Discuss Easement Changes

About 60 people met at The Alpine in Constableville on September 21, 2017 to get reacquainted with the East Branch of Fish Creek conservation project and each other. There were many familiar faces around the table, as well as new people in a variety of capacities. Katie Malinowski, from the Tug Hill Commission, welcomed the group and gave a brief timeline of how and why the group was formed. Presentations by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC), Molpus Woodlands Group, and The Nature Conservancy (TNC) followed.

## NYSDEC Updates

Exclusive hunting rights have expired on the land owned by Corrigan and managed by Molpus, referred to as the West Compartment of the southern conservation easement. The entire compartment is open year-round for public use, as described in the recreation management plan. Recreational lease structures are still being leased by the landowner to clubs, and include a 5-acre envelope around them, from which the public can be excluded. New boundary line signs are being installed on the West Compartment.

Camp 5 Road has been upgraded and now includes an accessible fishing/wildlife observation deck on the East Branch of the Salmon River. A parking area was created and fisheries improvement work has been completed.

In addition, International Road has been upgraded as a motorized access route for people with disabilities. A new accessible parking area has been constructed and improvements made to the existing parking area and kiosk.

Work on the G&W Road, which began in 2008, has also been completed between Talbolt's Corners to the Osceola town line. The road surface was resurfaced with crushed stone, culverts have been installed and the deck has been upgraded on the bridge over the East Branch of Fish Creek.

Planned projects at the North Osceola Snowmobile Trail include replacing the Fall Brook bridge, upgrading the trail and creating additional access from the North Osceola Road. The first leg of the Tug Hill Traverse Trail, in the East Branch of Fish Creek State Forest, is almost complete.

## MOLPUS Report

Seven of the ten gates on Molpus property were cut and stolen earlier this month. Total damage is approximately \$30,000, which is a felony. Molpus is looking to install fewer gates but better signage moving forward, and will use "daisy chain" locks with clubs to grant admittance. Access to inholdings must be proven in property deeds. ATV trespass continues to be an issue.

Beaver damage on Molpus land and adjacent properties is becoming an increasing problem. Molpus will discuss possible solutions with TNC, as TNC does not allow trapping on their land.

Molpus claims that roads open to snowmobiles have experienced damage, with high traffic and compaction causing the frost to get pushed down further into the soil. During the thaw, rocks are pushed out of the soil and culverts damaged. Molpus would like to discuss trail maintenance with snowmobile clubs. Molpus does not want to lose their investment in their roads and would consider closing the trail.

Attendees were also reminded about the regulations regarding tree stands. Tree stands must be properly labeled with name, address, and phone number of the owner, cannot damage the trees, and must be taken down at the end of hunting season.

### **The Nature Conservancy News**

Since the group met last, The Nature Conservancy has acquired about 1200 acres, which is not under a conservation easement. TNC has increased revenue to offset the changes in the PILOT with the taxing jurisdictions by leasing areas on their land. They have no current plans to add more land. They are working on a forest restoration project, which includes 750 acres of timber stand improvements and planting about 45,000 seedlings over the next couple years. They are dealing with beaver through nuisance permits from the DEC and have no other management in place yet. There is no trapping allowed by the public on the easement lands. They lease to 5 camps and are down to the maximum allowable amount of camps. They are still working with two clubs on camp structure removal/relocation.

### **Moving Forward**

The Working Group would like to meet more frequently, on an annual basis, possibly beginning in the spring of 2018. A

spring time meeting may provide more opportunities for folks to attend.

### **Organization/Agency Contacts**

#### ***Molpus Woodlands Group***

Tim Burpoe, Property Manager  
[tburpoe@molpus.com](mailto:tburpoe@molpus.com), 518-294-4045 ext 101

#### ***The Nature Conservancy***

Brian Roat, Sandy Creek  
[broat@tnc.org](mailto:broat@tnc.org), 315-387-3600

#### ***NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation***

Michael Giocondo, Lowville  
315-376-3521  
[michael.giocondo@dec.ny.gov](mailto:michael.giocondo@dec.ny.gov)

#### ***Tug Hill Commission***

Katie Malinowski, Watertown 315-785-2380  
[katie@tughill.org](mailto:katie@tughill.org)

#### ***Tug Hill Tomorrow Land Trust***

Linda Garrett, Watertown, 315-779-8240  
[thtomorr@northnet.org](mailto:thtomorr@northnet.org)

#### **Shared Goals of the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group** ***(From April 1997 Report)***

1. To maintain a high-quality, sustainable environment for the health, safety and enjoyment of our children, our children's children, and successive generations.
2. To provide for the protection of the core forest's long-term timber productivity, water quality, and overall natural resource and habitat health, as well as traditional hunting, trapping, fishing and recreational uses.
3. To provide for resource protection in a way that avoids a shift in the property tax burden to local taxpayers, prevents a negative impact on local job availability, and sustains the economic viability of area communities.
4. To help spread the costs of protection over the many beneficiaries at the local, regional and state level.
5. To maintain mixed ownership of most of the eastern core forest, and find ways to provide for recreational access in a way that does not threaten natural resource quality or adversely affect private property rights.
6. To encourage continued private land stewardship through voluntary compliance with environmental standards and methods, such as timber harvest guidelines.

