

# FISH CREEK UPDATE

## Working Group Meets To Discuss Easement Changes

Around 40 people met at The Alpine in Constableville on October 2, 2019 for the annual meeting of the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group. The group was formed in the mid-1990's in response to the sale of the Lyons Falls Pulp and Paper lands in southern Lewis County. After attendee introductions, updates were heard from Molpus Woodlands Group, The Nature Conservancy (TNC), and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC).

## Molpus Updates

Tim Burpoe, property manager with Molpus Woodlands Group, which manages the property on behalf of the Corrigan Fund who owns the approximately 30,000 acres south of G&W Road, updated attendees on timber harvests and road closings. Tim said that Camp 4 beyond Camp 5 is gated and closed, and no one should be driving past the gate. There is a timber harvest being conducted on the Camp 4 Road beyond Broad Brook where Salmon River Club used to be that should be completed in the next 4-6 weeks. There will be another timber harvest on Camp 4 Road very soon and another on Michigan Mills next year.

There was a beaver-caused washout on Tin Shanty Road, and also damage to North-South Road caused by beavers. Molpus is redoubling efforts to get nuisance permits and/or access where the beavers are threatening infrastructure. He also reported

that 12 of 15 camp leases are full with three are available, if anyone knows someone who would like to lease some property.

All gates on the Molpus property are intact, in good shape and they will continue to monitor them.

## The Nature Conservancy Report

Brian Roat reported that TNC is looking for people to execute beaver nuisance permits. He also reported that work is beginning on the north section of the Tug Hill Traverse (hiking only) trail on TNC lands that follows the east side of the East Branch of Fish Creek and will eventually connect to the Tug Hill Wildlife Management Area, in approximately two years. TNC just finished a reforestation project, where 35,000 bare root seedlings planted with 38% survival rate. Interestingly, there was a significant drought immediately after planting and oaks and pines seem to have the best survival rate. A patch cut harvest was conducted up Fairchild Road on TNC property last fall. The road has been raked and silt fences and hay bales are being installed to control runoff until vegetation is reestablished.

## NYSDEC News

NYSDEC lands (including both owned in fee and under easement) currently open for public non-motorized access include 35 miles of road/trail for mountain biking, 28 miles of road/trail for horseback riding and three-quarters of a mile of trail for hiking/foot

access. Accessible features include Camp Five Road area Fishing/Observation Deck and the International Road's Motorized Access Permit for People with Disabilities (MAPPWD). This allows users with the MAPPWD permit to drive motor vehicles ~<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>-mile of road beyond the G&W Road to a small parking area to providing hunting access. Information about the MAPPWD permit is available at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/2574.html>.

Projects completed in 2019 include: washout repair on Tin Shanty Road (reinstalled culvert and hauled gravel to fill washed out section); Michigan Mills Road hill upgrade (between High Ridge Road and parking area – cleaned ditches, installed cross culverts and graveled road surface); Michigan Mills Extension parking area (added crushed aggregate to parking area and created an accessible parking space); North-South Road work (fixed water issue, installed two culverts and added additional fill to raise height of the road); G&W Road NY Works project (added crushed stone to Whetstone Reservoir causeway section, upgraded culvert near Stop Sign Road, filled holes and shaped sections west of the town line between Martinsburg and West Turin); and a new kiosk panel installed at G&W Road and International Road parking area.

Mike updated the group on the gates that were stolen last year: NYSDEC, Molpus and lessees have replaced or repaired all damaged gates on EBFC South Property. One additional gate was installed on the F-86 Road located west of Joe's Road.

Summer 2020 work plans include a Fall Brook access and bridge replacement project. A right-of-way has been purchased by NYS DEC for public access and the contract has been awarded for bridge replacement.

## General Discussion

The perpetual question was asked about an ATV access/connector trail and the extinguishment of rights. DEC advised that unless the easement changes, there will not be any changes to ATVs. The Working Group plans to meet again in Fall 2020.

## Contacts

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## *Shared Goals of the East Branch of Fish Creek Working Group – April 1997*

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 guideline