

Natural Environment Work Group Core Meeting Notes of March 22, 2007, 11:00 A.M., MVC

Present - Members: Tom Wallace (Chair), Judy Crawford, Dick Johnson, Brendan O'Neill, Matt Pelikan, Leah Smith (telephone), and Tom Chase

Present – Work Group Members: Will Geresy, Bob Woodruff

Present – MVC Staff: Jo-Ann Taylor, Mark London

1. Bold Initiative and Short-term Strategies

- There was a discussion of the main Bold Initiative and 4 Short-term Strategies (one for each subtopic) selected at the last meeting for forwarding to the Steering Committee.
- There was also discussion of a Bold Initiatives package drafted by Brendan, deemed in need of further discussion.
- It was determined that the Working Landscapes short-term strategy of support for the “Buy Local” campaign should be replaced with something more proactive. Discussion resulted in formulating a new select short-term strategy for the Working Landscapes subtopic.
- Volunteers agreed to produce 100-word representations of the Bold Initiative and the Short-term Strategies, with the subsequent result of the following March 30 draft:

Natural Environment Bold Initiative and Short-term Strategies DRAFT 3/30/07

Bold Initiative: Undevelopment - purchase remainder interests (“life estates”) from willing sellers in prioritized areas. At the end of the owner’s lifetime, remove/recycle the house, restore the land to native vegetation and provide public access.

- Helps reunite tracts of land large enough to absorb multiple uses and still provide for biodiversity and cleaner watersheds
- Can be relatively inexpensive because property is acquired in the future (the longer the buyer waits, the less expensive it is)
- Allows current owners (and/or heirs) to remain living where they are; benefits sellers before economics force them off Island.(2007-03-30)

Short-term Strategies:

Recreation: To responsibly meet the ever-increasing need for recreational assets and open-space for seasonal and year-round residents, a priority should be the methodical inventory of under-utilized public properties, ancient ways and shoreline access points. Determining this inventory and land status provides opportunities for both public and private entities including town, state, land bank, non-profit organizations and regional planning agencies to refine through appropriate legal mechanisms, the true viability of dormant rights and accessibility. With the benefit of collaborative stakeholders, the

Vineyard has an opportunity and responsibility to manage these assets for better public use, both the existing resources and their links in their long-term planning agenda. (2007-03-30)

Biodiversity: Map priority areas to restore native habitats and species populations to viable levels, to locate compatible land-uses (e.g. grazing), and to reverse or minimize impacts to lands and watersheds. Town boards, regional planning agencies and conservation organizations can use these maps to encourage private and public landowners to integrate specific practices including but not limited to: native plant landscaping, prescribed burning, native-grass grazing, denitrifying septic systems, removal of invasive species, and undevelopment. (2007-03-30)

Working Landscapes: Agricultural Lands Initiative - In order to assure adequate agricultural land for future local food production, promote the formation of agricultural commissions in each town. In collaboration with the agricultural community, and with technical assistance from the Martha's Vineyard Commission, the agricultural commissions will identify important agricultural lands in each town and implement methods for the protection and availability of agricultural lands and soils for future generations. Methods may include such tools as the use of Ch. 61 A taxing; agricultural preservation restrictions or easements; outright purchase of agricultural lands; short or long-term leasing. (2007-03-30)

Character: Roadside Vegetation and Lighting Initiative - The character of the Island comes largely from what people see as they drive along Island Roads. The purpose of the Roadside Vegetation and Lighting Initiative is to:

- Open up the views that are an important part of the Vineyard's identity (e.g. Views from Tashmoo and Menemsha Pond overlooks, roadside farms and fields),
- Increase vegetation and reduce exterior lighting along Island roads to strengthen the rural character especially adjacent to public, institutional, utility, and commercial properties, outside of town centers.

In the longer term, this could lead to more general strategies to maintain rural roadside character dealing with fencing, vegetation, and lighting. (2007-03-30)

2. Upcoming Meeting

- Core – Thursday, April 12, 11:00 A.M., at MVC on the draft summary doc – how to approach editing and exposure

Notes prepared by Jo-Ann Taylor