

Hampton Conservation Commission Meeting
Draft Minutes
Tuesday, August 30, 2022

I. Call to Order: 5:11 pm

Deborah Wrobel
Jay Diener
Sharon Raymond
Pete Tilton
Robert Fox, arrived at 5:15pm

Staff Present:

Brianna O'Brien, Conservation Coordinator

II. Applications

1. Ditch Remediation

Applicant: Jamie Sullivan, DPW, Town of Hampton
Agent: Roy Schiff, Jessica Louisos, and Alex Marcucci, SLR International Corporation and David Burdick, University of New Hampshire
Property Owner: Town of Hampton

The applicant is seeking Conservation Commission support for a ditch remediation project that will take place in 4 different locations throughout the Hampton Salt Marsh Complex all on Town-Owned parcels.

Ms. O'Brien read the project description from the permit application. "Long term project goals are both for ecological benefit and flood resiliency for the Town of Hampton. There are numerous species, including rare, threatened, and endangered species, that depend on high marsh habitat to survive. This project aims to restore and protect the high marsh by building the elevation of the marsh up over time and reversing subsidence. Historic loss of high marsh has led to the decline of such species as the saltmarsh sparrow. If marsh subsidence continues to occur, eventually large portions of the marsh will likely collapse and be converted to open water, reducing the buffer between areas subjected to flooding and storm surges and surrounding development in Hampton. The project will implement two techniques to restore marsh hydrology, ditch remediation and microrunnel creation. Ditch remediation will involve the treatment of existing ditches with a long term goal of raising the elevation of the ditches through natural sediment deposition and colonization of high marsh grasses. Additionally, marsh hydrology will be restored through the creation of a handful of microrunnels, or small hand dug channels, that will drain overly saturated areas where the marsh may have already subsided. All work will be done by hand or with manual equipment."

Ms. O'Brien also reviewed some of the relevant construction notes. "Ideal mowing times are early spring to harvest precious year's grass or fall to harvest current years grass. Avoid mowing June 1 to September 1 during Saltmarsh Sparrow breeding season. Source all grass within 10 feet of ditch to be remediated where practicable. Access routes to be used by foot traffic and push mowers. Avoid compaction and trampling of vegetation. Do not repeatedly travel over same area. No vehicle access is permitted within

the marsh. Approved equipment includes mini combine, walk behind mower, and walk behind rake. Ditch crossings to be accomplished with use of wood planks. Typical length of time for construction per local ditch network area two to three days for a small crew of three people. Work should be performed during low tide”

The Commission discussed the project. Several members watched the Planning Board meeting when this project was presented for public comment. Mr. Diener had previously asked: Do we know if mowing, which is not typically done in the salt marsh, will do any damage to the existing salt marsh grasses? Has it been demonstrated, in the Great Marsh in MA or elsewhere, that new grasses will and do grow in ditches that have been remediated through this process? What type of monitoring of the sites will be done during the project, and after the work is completed? If there will be post-project monitoring, who will do it, and how long will it go on for? Are there plans for photographic/video documentation of this work? If not, can a third party (SHEA?) be brought in to conduct and feature such documentation? Jen Hale, DPW Director is working to obtain these answers.

The Commission also asked who would be physically implementing this project. There is a strong interest in having someone with experience leading the work. The Commission would also like to know what type of mower is to be used. There is a concern that if a mower that chops the grass up is used, then there is no way to get bundles of the grass to use effectively within the ditch. The Commission would like clarification of the dimensions and methods of the staking within the ditch. The description indicates that the grass will be bundled and staked, but one of the images shows the grass placed in the bottom of the ditch, staked and then tied down. Lastly the Commission indicated that they would like to be made aware before this project commences so they can present for the installation to observe and document.

Mr. Tilton moves to sign the Minimum Expedited Permit Application for the Ditch Mitigation Project in Hampton.

Mr. Diener seconds.

All in favor. Motion Passes.

Mr. Diener moves to adjourn.

Mr. Fox seconds.

All in favor. Motion Passes.