



# TOWN OF COLONIE

347 OLD NISKAYUNA ROAD

LATHAM, N.Y. 12110



## **Town of Colonie Conservation Advisory Council Meeting Minutes March 7, 2013**

Present: Bob Ulrich, George Palmer, Ellen Rosano, Laura Weed, Sudhir Kulkarni, Linda Whelton; meeting commenced at 6:30 pm

The meeting minutes of February 7<sup>th</sup> were moved for acceptance by Ellen Rosano and seconded by Laura Weed.

Chairperson Ulrich reported that the Supervisor's conference room has been made available for CAC going forward and some provision for storage of CAC papers in the conference room has been made.

Report on Albany Pine Bush Commission event Recovery Efforts for the Endangered Karner Blue Butterfly presented by Dr Stephen Campbell, Conservation Biologist held at the Albany Pine Bush Discovery Center on February 21, 2013 was made by George Palmer:

Members Present: Robert Ulrich, Linda Whelton, George Palmer

Dr. Campbell reviewed the following topics on the Karner Blue Butterfly:

Description: There are two species and six subspecies of the Karner Blue. The males have bright blue wings and the females a dull purple. They have a wing span of one inch and a life span of five days. They breed in "broods" from April through August. They are fragile and can only fly about 20 feet from their release site.

Habitat: The Karner Blue feeds on wild lupine and plant nectar that are necessary for their survival. The ideal habitat must also include oak savanna and pine barrens trees. The black locust tree, an invasive species native to this area, is harmful and needs to be removed from the habitat. Other threats to the habitat include fragmentation caused by encroaching development, fires, invasive species, unusual weather and climate change.

Conservation Strategies: In 1992, the US Fish & Wildlife Services listed the Karner Blue as an endangered species. The NYSDEC then designated the Albany Pine Bush Preserve as a "recovery unit" to restore and protect the Karner Blue butterfly. The recovery efforts include the removal of invasive plantings, increased planting of wild lupine and nectar plants, prescribed burning and thinning of overgrowth, and captive breeding and release into new habitats. Captive breeding is the process of harvesting pupae and sending them to a specialized breeding lab in New Hampshire for incubation and then returning them to the Pine Bush for adult maturation and release into the habitat.

Current Status: There are currently 3000-4000 Karner Blues on 3200 acres of habitat. The goal of the recovery effort is to increase the habitat to 5400 acres in the Pine Bush Preserve. The Preserve continues to monitor the number of butterflies using a "Distance Sampling" method whereby interns count the number of butterflies observed in selected sections of the habitat.

Report on program about wetlands titled Wetland Conservation: What Do We Have To Lose? Presented by Laura Heady, Hudson River Estuary Biodiversity Outreach Coordinator (NYS DEC) held at Taconic Hills Central Schools on Sunday February 4th and co-sponsored by Columbia County Land Conservancy was made by Don Allard:

The program concerned the diverse wetlands of Columbia County and the Hudson Valley ....their economic and environmental values, and why it makes good sense to conserve them for future generations. Laura Heady, Biodiversity Outreach Educator with the Hudson River Estuary Program started the program with a presentation, followed by a locally made film Liquidity: The Value of Wetlands. Overall program was titled "Wetland Conservation: What Do We Have To Lose?"

- Purpose of the Hudson River Estuary Program is to ensure clean water; restore fish and wildlife; adapt to climate change; provide recreational opportunities and access to the Hudson River
- A full definition of "wetlands" can be found on the DEC website. Soils in a wetland are different from surrounding "uplands" soils. Some of the characteristics of a wetlands area include "emergent marsh" primarily water with little islands of vegetation and trees alive and dead "emerging" through the water. A "wet meadow" is a grassy area with spongy soil. A "hardwood swamp" is a wooded wetland....easily recognized by a growth of skunk cabbage in the spring. Also a spongy ground surface. "Woodland Pools" also known as vernal pools that appear in the spring from melted snow and rain but have no stream inlet or outlet. They are surrounded typically by "hardwood swamps" and are important to reptiles (toads, frogs and salamanders). Deafening in the springtime. Then finally, "riparian wetlands" are boggy found along sides of streams.
- Wetlands work like kidneys in the human body. Wetlands remove 60% of metals found in water circulating through a wetland. The Village of Lake George created a man-made wetland to act as a filtration area behind a Route 9 strip mall and the million dollar beach on the south edge of the lake.
- Wetlands also perform the valuable function of "flood control", saving private property from damage.
- Wetlands are helpful in "mosquito control". There is a mistaken impression that there are more mosquitoes in wetland areas but studies show that a healthy wetland sustaining amphibians actually reduces mosquito problems.
- Recreation involving lakes, rivers, streams and wetland areas of NYS produces 1.4 billion dollars spent and \$250,000.00 in local and state taxes.
- 1/3 of all NYS plant species can be found in wetlands which account for 5% of the state geography.
- NYS law protects larger wetlands of 12.4 acres or greater with 100' buffer zone....or smaller if designated as ULI areas (unusual local importance) and wetlands must be on a regulatory map. The "environmental resource mapper" can be found on the DEC website.
- Other maps are useful (but are not regulatory for planning board purposes). They include the National Wetlands Inventory (Army Corps of Engineers).
- The Army Corps of Engineers use "Field Investigations" for making determinations of wetlands areas rather than relying on regulatory maps. These field investigations utilize "soil surveys".

Other CAC business:

Bob Ulrich reviewed role of CAC in Colonie and what other CAC groups are doing.

Bob noted that NYSDEC magazine the Conservationist has a subscription price of \$7.00 per year. He also noted that beauty products are a significant non-recoverable waste in landfills.

Some discussion was had concerning the "passive park" planned for near the town water treatment facility. The CAC may want to make suggestions to the TOC regarding some use of that space including park benches and bird feeders and/or a blue bird trail (made up of bluebird boxes constructed and maintained by boy scouts/girls scouts or some other group)

Planning Board site plans reviewed: 1) 40 Century Hill Plaza-First Columbia Office 2)106 Wolf Rd McDonalds 3) precision Valve & Automation at 1 Mustang Drive and 1235 Loudon Rd....suggested increasing greenspace from 31% to 35%.

A review was made of upcoming Conservation Day: Key clubs have been contacted; Sara West shall put a notice of event in the Chronicle. Library to reserve space for tent; Roll Off for compost has been secured; Banner has been ordered from sign shop; CAC members reminded to save newspapers as tree wrappings. Plastic bags to be requested from the Times Union to put the tree seedlings into.

Bob still working for speaker to address CAC on the topic of porous pavement

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 pm

Minutes submitted by Don Allard