

McLean Land Management Committee
DRAFT MINUTES
June 15, 2006

The meeting was called to order at 6:03 pm for a planned site walk at the McLean Open Space. The group met at the lower meadow entrance mid-way in the Pine Allee.

Present were committee members: Andy Healy, Wes Ward, Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Michele Gougeon, Martha Moore. Members absent: Steve Kidder, Frank Keefe, Carla Moynihan, Richard Pichette. Also in attendance was Roger Wrubel, Director of Mass. Audubon Habitat.

Minutes

The full committee voted unanimously to accept the minutes as distributed for the following meetings: March 2, 2006 (to be filed with addendum 6/14 provided by Ellen to Martha Moore), May 2, 2006. The meadow reclamation sub-committee voted unanimously to accept the minutes as distributed for the following meetings: March 9, 2006 and April 27, 2006. Minutes of the meetings April 18 and May 22 will be voted at the next meeting of the LMC.

Eagle Scout Project

The committee asked Ellen to communicate again with the Eagle Scout candidate to propose a change of project we proposed when solicited in the early spring. She will propose the area adjacent to the Barn on Mill Street to remove the invasives to the immediate sides of the barn. This project is deemed contained and of high visibility and manageable for the scout. Had the work along segment #14 been accomplished in early spring, it was doable, now it is too big a job for the scouts.

Meadow Reclamation Decisions – The committee walked the site, using the recommendation report by Jeff Collins dated May 15, 2006 for specifics areas: LMC decisions and comments are shown in red below as inserts to Jeff's report

Roger Wrubel recommended that all mowing work be conducted after August 1st to allow the ground-nesting birds to complete activities.

The Great Field

Comments are keyed to management units numbered in Figure 2.

Trees and shrubs – These copses and individual trees dot the field. Several of them provide a visual treat and should remain, with some cutting of invasives from underneath, Since too many trees dotting a field can detract from the grassland habitat, some of these trees and shrubs should be removed, particularly the poorly formed ones. Final determination of which trees to remove will be completed in the field and will involve the landscape contractor, Mass Audubon, and the Land Management Committee.

1) A sparse stand of black locust, generally less than 3 inches diameter at breast height (dbh) and under 20 feet tall, although a few reach 6" dbh and 25' in height, and a single tree is up to 12" dbh. Oriental bittersweet grows along the ground underneath these trees and has begun growing up some of them. Staghorn sumac and common buckthorn also grow in this patch, with Celandine common on the ground.

- This area should be cleared with a brush hog. A few of the larger black locust may require clearing by hand. After brush hogging, the site should be mown to reduce the cover of Gallium.
- LMC agrees, remove to approximately 15 feet in (south) from the Pine Allee.

2) A small stand dominated by a large black oak roughly 18 inches dbh and 30' tall with a pleasant, spreading canopy. Glossy buckthorn and a few black locust grow around the tree underneath the lowest branches and oriental bittersweet is underneath and starting to reach up into the tree.

- Brush hog buckthorn, pull down and cut out bittersweet, trim lower dead branches from black oak (for access and aesthetics). Remove 8" dbh black locust nearby.
- LMC agrees

3) A sparse stand of glossy buckthorn on a small bedrock outcrop.

- This section should be cleared out with a brush hog, paying attention to the presence of bedrock.
- LMC agrees

4) A single large silver maple with dense common and glossy buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, and poison ivy growing underneath.

- Leave large silver maple, but brush hog vegetation underneath, pull bittersweet vines down from tree. Remove the few small white ashes too.
- LMC agrees

5) A section of 40 or so small trees including white ash, glossy buckthorn, ~20 apple or cherry trees and one larger white ash. This larger white ash is multi-stemmed, poorly formed, and not in good health. A single patch of Japanese knotweed has established in this section.

- The apple trees are beautiful in flower and are worth keeping for now. In future they might be thinned. All other trees should be removed, including the large white ash.
- LMC agrees

6) This patch extending from the adjacent forest is dominated by staghorn sumac and glossy buckthorn.

- This stand should be cleared to expand the meadow and control the spread of glossy buckthorn.
- LMC agrees

7) Edge between forest and field fairly dominated by invasives and creeping further into the field. One large mulberry (12" dbh, 25') stands at the north end of this section, surrounded by multiflora rose, buckthorns, staghorn sumac, and oriental bittersweet. A ragged edge of oriental bittersweet, buckthorns, honeysuckle, and multiflora rose continues south to a large bigtooth aspen with an Autumn olive near its base. Other bigtooth aspens along this border are heavily laden with oriental bittersweet vines into the canopy.

- The mulberry and invasives at the north end should be completely removed. The edge should be pushed back into the forest to remove invasives and expand the meadow. There is a beautiful redbud roughly 50 feet into the forested section, obscured by poorly-formed trees and oriental bittersweet. Should be revealed. Immediate attention should be paid to removing the Autumn olive near large bigtooth aspen; this is the only occurrence of this rapidly spreading species found on the property.

- LMC agrees

8) Further into the forest edge is a Tree-of-heaven and a Norway maple with multiflora rose growing underneath. Oriental bittersweet grows into the crown of a quaking aspen.

- Although this is getting some distance from the meadow itself, these trees should be removed, especially the Tree-of-heaven, which can rapidly spread along the meadow edge. Area could possibly be addressed as part of removal of construction debris, etc., from nearby.

- LMC agrees

9) A large stand of Japanese knotweed

- This stand should be a high priority for control.

- LMC agrees

10) A very large pignut hickory with two smaller ones surrounded by buckthorns, oriental bittersweet and staghorn sumac.

- Largest pignut hickory, and possibly smaller ones, should stay, but invasives should be removed, with hand tools if heavy equipment can't get underneath large tree.

- LMC agrees, leave the pignut hickories

11) A dense thicket on a short, steep, rocky slope. There are many invasives including black swallowwort, Japanese knotweed, and honeysuckles. A larger white ash growing at the eastern end is not in good form or good health. Two red cedars and the site's only willow grow in the mix. The area directly adjacent was brush hogged in 2005. The vegetation, when viewed from the stones under the Lone Tree, provides some screening of the new townhouses built to the south, but most of the vegetation is actually down the steep bank from this viewing point, and provides no screening.

- Management of black swallowwort here should be a very high priority. The white ash could be removed and most of the shrubs in this stand could be removed. The red cedars and willow should remain.
 - LMC agrees about the swallowwort (assume chemical treatment) but isn't clear about the additional vegetation. Concerned to keep the screening so any additional clearing here should be determined on-site.
- 12) A stand of quaking aspens with glossy buckthorn underneath and bittersweet behind.
- This section should be left as is and monitored for spread of oriental bittersweet into the meadow.
 - LMC agrees – only the aspens should remain, buckthorn should go
- 13) One of the few locations of black swallowwort found on the property.
- Black swallowwort can rapidly expand and become a very troublesome invasive plant. This section should be regularly mown and monitoring for the spread of black swallowwort. Chemical control may be necessary.
 - LMC agrees, we assume chemical treatment is necessary.
- 14) The southern end of this section running along a stone wall includes large trees overhead with mostly glossy buckthorn growing underneath. The northern end has fewer large trees and is dominated by multiflora rose, Japanese barberry, honeysuckle, and oriental bittersweet.
- The northern end of this section is the area proposed to be controlled as a Boy Scout project. The understory of the entire section could be cleaned out by hand if Scouts are available. The committee expressed concern about potential complications of the Boy Scout work if this area was heavy with poison ivy. There is actually very little if any poison ivy here, so this should not be a problem if basic precautions are taken.
 - If the Boy Scouts or other volunteers are unavailable, the northern end should be brush-hogged as close to the wall as possible, and the area should be regularly mown to control resprouting of woody species. Brush-hog should get in underneath larger trees of southern section as much as possible, but large trees should remain.
 - LMC agrees, Ellen will offer the barn location instead of this location to the Boy Scout candidate. Growth in this area is significant and may be unmanageable.

The wetland buffer

These sections are adjacent to the forested wetland. Any management in these areas should be done after communication with the Conservation Commission regarding activities within the wetland buffer area. Questions include: is this patch within the Conservation Commission jurisdiction? Does the wetland act as a vernal pool? Where are the boundaries of the wetland? What is the applicable 'no activities' buffer?

All recommendations for vegetation management are secondary to buffering the wetland. Vegetation management in these areas will only marginally expand the meadow habitat, but will help to reduce the seed source for invasives to re-establish in the meadow. The understory of the adjacent forest stand is dominated by common buckthorn, so complete removal of the seed source is not feasible

15) Much of this section, now dominated by pin cherry and black cherry saplings, was already brush hogged in 2005 and the remaining edge needs no further treatment. This section may be best left to regenerate to strengthen the buffer area of the vernal pool. A few cherries were left standing 20-30 feet from the shrubby edge. These should be removed to open up the meadow and to ease access for a mower. The heavy woody debris remaining from the brush-hogging should be reduced with a mower and this section mown regularly as part of the meadow.

LMC agrees

16) A few pignut hickory and quaking aspen with staghorn sumac and gray dogwood underneath.

- This stand should be left alone to buffer the wetland.
- LMC agrees

17) This area was cut in November.

- Some consideration should be given to allowing the edge vegetation to regenerate here, as a buffer to the vernal pool.
- LMC agrees

18) A small stand of cherries with a poorly-formed white ash and common and glossy buckthorn dominating the shrub layer.

- The buckthorn could be pushed back from the field edge with a brush hog, but the trees should be left.
- LMC is concerned about the proximity to the vernal pool. Specific tagging in the field would be required.

19) A large black locust (5" dbh) with glossy buckthorn, common buckthorn, and multiflora rose underneath.

- This section should be cleared out with a brush hog.
- LMC agrees, 8 – 10 ft in from main path for general clearing

The open meadow

20) This section appears to have drier soil than others and to have been more recently disturbed. Herbaceous vegetation is dominated by ragweed with goldenrod and grasses are subdominant. Japanese knotweed and oriental bittersweet have crept in from the adjacent forest. A single small quaking aspen stands in the middle of this section and seedlings of quaking and bigtooth aspen are pioneering the section.

- The quaking aspen should be removed and this section should be mown regularly to favor grasses over ragweed and invasives.
- LMC - did not consider this area at the time of site walk

21) This eastern section of the meadow is an attractive meadow dominated by grasses. A few areas are currently covered with woody slash from the 11/05 brush hog operation. The vegetation management in November left approximately 20 trees standing within the meadow; most are pignut hickory, quaking aspen, or pin cherry.

- Too many trees within a meadow detract from its habitat quality. Several of these trees should be removed. The trees to remove should be decided on site by the contractor, Mass Audubon, and members or representatives of the Land Management Committee. The large privet shrub should be removed.
- LMC – standing on Lone Tree Hill, to the right of the path, the large shrub vegetation should go. Also to the right of the path, there is a pair of pignut hickories, the rear one is sort of spindly. The spindly one should go, the other one remains. The other pignut hickories to the right of the path (looking from Lone Tree) should stay.
- LMC – standing on Lone Tree Hill, to the left of the path, all the cherries should go.

22) The lone tree of Lone Tree Hill. A very nice pignut hickory with a few stones underneath for sitting in the shade.

- Area requires no special management at present but should be monitored for new sprouts and poison ivy.
- LMC – bittersweet vines growing vigorously. Mowing should be kept very tight to the lone tree

23) The central section of the meadow is dominated by grasses and only needs to be mown regularly.

LMC agrees

24) The north-western section of the meadow is thick with wild madder and needs regular mowing to favor grasses over this moderately invasive non-native herbaceous plant.

LMC agrees

Adjacent shrubland

25) This large section northwest of the meadow is excellent shrubland habitat and should be left as is. Invasives management here, focusing on control of glossy buckthorn, would be beneficial, but would involve mowing back to meadow stage and allowing to revert again to shrubland. The invasive species would likely come to dominate again after mowing. The best approach here may be to allow this patch to grow undisturbed for now.

LMC – didn't discuss

Heart-Shaped Field

This meadow is generally in good shape after some clearing completed in November, 2005. The field could be left alone but for mowing to reduce coarse debris and limit resprouting. A more aggressive approach would include additional clearing on the western bound, to maintain and enhance the view of stone wall, to remove poorly-formed and non-native trees (black locust and mulberry), and to clear out the unsightly oriental bittersweet vines which were cut near the ground in 2005. This meadow is adjacent to a wetland at the southwest, and the southwest corner of the meadow shows some wetland characteristics. Activities in this corner should be limited, or planned in consultation with the Conservation Commission. The following comments are keyed to the management units numbered in Figure 3.

1) A stone wall runs the length of this end of the field, southwest to northeast. Pignut hickories, white ashes, and black locust trees grow along the wall and a short distance from the wall out into the meadow. Poison ivy is rather common along the base of the wall, and oriental bittersweet grows on the ground and formerly grew into the trees. Vegetation management in November 2005 removed many lower shrubs and revealed the very attractive wall somewhat. The 11/05 operation cut most of the bittersweet stems, but left them dangling 8 feet above the ground. Many of the trees are heavily laden with bittersweet vines, now dead, but still unsightly.

- The ground in front of the stone wall should be kept clear of woody plants by mowing. A few more of the trees growing alongside the wall might be removed, particularly the white ashes. Oriental bittersweet vines should be pulled down from the trees that remain.

- LMC agrees

2) A thick stand of glossy buckthorn and oriental bittersweet.

- This clump of shrubs should be cleared out with a brush hog and then mown as part of the meadow.

- LMC - need to have a better picture of the specifics, in the field determination of the line would help. Until then, leave it as is.

3) This is another stand dominated by glossy buckthorn in the shrub layer.

- Buckthorn should be removed underneath larger trees.

- LMC - leave as is

4) The southwest corner of the meadow is adjacent to a forested wetland and has some plants that indicate higher soil moisture including jack-in-the-pulpit, jewelweed, and sensitive fern. Conservation Commission staff should be consulted regarding the classification of this wetland, its boundary, and requirements for buffering the wetland.

LMC agrees – leave as is

5) A single mulberry tree stands alone in the meadow.

- This tree should be removed.

- LMC – did not discuss
- 6) A single black locust tree stands alone in the meadow, heavy with bittersweet.
- This tree should be removed. Poorly formed pignut hickories growing away from the wall could be removed as well.
 - LMC – did not discuss

Barn Meadow

A pleasant, small meadow dominated by little bluestem and other grasses, with mosses and a few wildflower species. Effort should focus on thinning areas of woody shrubs and removing invasive species. Ongoing maintenance includes mowing open areas annually or every second year. Comments keyed to management units numbered in Figure 4.

- 1) A few staghorn sumac grow along the property bound adjacent to the road and the Rock Meadow driveway.
 - It would be nice to clear these out to maintain the view into the meadow from the road.
 - LMC - did not discuss
- 2) A very large, old common buckthorn, quite a specimen. Honeysuckles grow underneath and a red cedar grows in tight to the buckthorn. A few small cherry trees grow nearby.
 - The buckthorn isn't unattractive, but is a seed source and should be removed, together with the honeysuckle, by a brush hog. If possible, the red cedar could stay, but it is growing in close contact to the buckthorn and may need to come down. The cherries could stay if possible.
 - LMC – did not discuss
- 3) A large black cherry with Norway maple black cherry, staghorn sumac, and buckthorns underneath.
 - The large black cherry should stay. The Norway maples, buckthorns, and sumacs should be cleared out with a brush hog. The small cherries could be removed, or could stay if possible.
 - LMC - did not discuss
- 4) A large black oak with glossy buckthorn, oriental bittersweet, and staghorn sumac underneath.
 - The black oak should stay. The smaller woody vegetation should be removed with a brush hog.
 - LMC – did not discuss
- 5) A steep bank with glossy buckthorn thick in the shrub layer and various tree species overhead.
 - This area may be best left untouched due to the steep bank. If possible, the buckthorn could be thinned underneath

- LMC – we intend to propose to the Eagle Scout candidate a project to remove the invasive tangle immediately adjacent to the barn, both sides.
- 6) This very thick tangle is best left untouched.
 - LMC – we intend to propose to the Eagle Scout candidate a project to remove the invasive tangle immediately adjacent to the barn, both sides.
- 7) A very large cottonwood with honeysuckle, oriental bittersweet, and glossy buckthorn underneath.
 - The smaller vegetation should be cleared with brush hog.
 - LMC – did not discuss
- 8) A line of black cherries, red cedar, and black oak with glossy buckthorn underneath. The ground is rocky underneath
 - Buckthorn should be cleared out with a brush hog.
 - LMC – did not discuss
- 9) The house site. A variety of invasives and poorly formed shrubs grows around the house.
 - After removal of the house, all vegetation within the fence should be removed. It would be nice to retain the one large white cedar (arborvitae) at the southeast if possible.
 - LMC agrees. The demolition of the house, removal of debris and the regrading of the site is in the works. Is seeding required/suggested? What seed mix?
- 10) A classical line of old sugar maples with glossy buckthorn and a few other shrubs growing very sparsely underneath.
 - An arborist should be hired to remove the worst of the sugar maples, a few of which are dead or nearly dead. The shrubs should be removed to maintain a sightline into the meadow from the road.
 - LMC – did not discuss
- 11) Could keep red cedar in middle of field.
 - LMC did not discuss

Specific Management Steps and Timeline

Shrub clearing

The following areas should be cleared with a brush mower capable of handling vegetation up to 4 inches in diameter:

Great Field – sections 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,10,11,14, 18, 19 (1.8 acres).

Heart-Shaped Field – sections 2,3 (0.2 acres).

Barn Meadow – 1, 3,4,7,8,9 (0.4 acres).

Tree clearing

Larger trees should be removed from the following sections. Stem diameters (dbh) are approximate.

Great Field – sections 1 (3 6" black locust, a 12" black locust), 2 (8" black locust), 4 (3 6" white ash), 5 (6" white ash), 7 (12" mulberry), 11 (8" white ash), 21 (many).

Heart-Shaped Field – 1 (10" white ashes), 5 (8" mulberry), 6 (8" black locust).

Barn Meadow – 2 (8" common buckthorn), 10 (one or two large, dead sugar maples).

As specified above, the LMC will need to make decisions about the barn meadow and the individual recommendations in the heart-shaped field. Since the mowing activity should not occur until after August 1st (perhaps even in fall), the committee should have a site walk of the barn meadow and the heart-shaped meadow.

Only once the full scope of mowing is determined can a price and schedule be clarified. Ellen will contact the mowing companies to determine general availability for after August 1.

The LMC noted that the Pine Allee is getting overgrown to a point that the line of trees is being obscured by undergrowth. A brush saw and selective herbicide treatment was suggested by Wes and Roger. We should investigate the possibilities of having the mowing company perform this work also.

Martha Moore reported that she had participated in the WHIP grant tour of Rock Meadow and McLean open space. Ellen is working with the Conservation Commission Chairman, Miriam Weil on this issue in hopes of getting long-term mowing/invasives management grant for the two public spaces.

Regarding the Telecommunications Tower plantings – Ellen will communicate to the ZBA./Planning Board that we feel it is too late and risky to plant the buffer at this time. This condition should have been fulfilled last spring/fall or early this spring. Ellen has been in touch through Tom Younger to resolve this issue over the past several months to no conclusion. Concern from the Cemetery Commission about potential damage to the cemetery roadway, off of which the telecomm facility roadway branches.

Meeting Adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ellen O'Brien Cushman, Chairman