

**Robinson Duck Farm County Park Habitat Restoration Work Group
Public Meeting**

**MEETING SUMMARY
June 17, 2009
Meeting Number 2**

Location: Southaven County Park Lodge, Victory Avenue, Brookhaven, New York

Start/End: 2:00 p.m. /4:00 p.m.

Attending: *Work Group/Participating Staff*

Thomas Isles, DeWitt Davies, Lauretta Fischer, Michael Mulé, Susan Filipowich, John Pavacic, Diana Sanford, Ralph Borkowski, Elyse O'Brien, Michelle Williams, Kevin Jennings, Claire Goad, Thomas Williams

Consultants/County Staff

Robert Grover, Keith Holley, Kristen Ross, Bryan Devaux, Terry Maccarone, Barbara DelGiudice

Others

Steve Terr

Materials

Distributed: Meeting Agenda; March 12, 2009 Meeting Summary; Hard copy of the *Robinson Duck Farm County Park Habitat Restoration Feasibility Study* website; Task 1 Report - Inventory and Map Site Conditions.

Note: copies of above materials are available and can be obtained by request from Ms. Barbara DelGiudice (Barbara.Delgiudice@suffolkcountyny.gov/631-853-5111).

Welcome and Introductions:

County Planning Director, Thomas Isles, began the meeting with a welcoming statement and introductory remarks

Review of March 12, 2009 Work Group Meeting Summary

T. Isles went over the summary of the first meeting and handout sheets. He also discussed the website, and how all reports, notes from meeting and other pertinent information will be presented on the site.

Results of Task 1 – Inventory and Map Site Conditions

Robert Grover, Greenman-Pedersen, Inc. (GPI) discussed the Task 1 report handed out to all work group members and asked for comments on the report. The work group decided on a deadline of 2 weeks for submission of any comments on the report. After that a final Task 1 Report will be issued. All comments should be sent to Susan Filipowich at Suffolk County Planning.

R. Grover also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the changes to the Habitat Map and other maps. Changes included:

The Maritime Grassland classification for the farm field area has been reclassified as Successional Old Field. This change was made due to the species present and the past uses of the area as a corn field.

The number of buildings to be demolished by the County has also changed. The County is determining if the larger of the two farm buildings should be saved for future use.

Wetland Fringe is to be reclassified as Freshwater Wetland as per the NYSDEC Freshwater Wetland Maps.

Two new maps have also been created after receiving comments from the work group: a habitat map showing only the property line and the habitats of the site; and also a topographic map showing the property line and elevation of the site and surrounding area.

Comments:

Lauretta Fischer - Commented on the classification of the Maritime Heathland area. She is concerned that this is not a typical Heathland area, and maybe the group needs to come to an agreement on the term to use for this area.

R. Grover - Responded that we are trying to stick to the New York State classifications and that this is the best classification for the area.

Results of Task 2 and 3 – Identify Recognized Environmental Conditions (Phase 1 Hazmat findings) and Phase II Environmental Site Analysis

Brian Devaux (P.W. Grosser Consulting), presented a PowerPoint on the progress of the Phase I and Phase II studies being conducted on the site.

Task 2 has been achieved using two methods:

1) P.W. Grosser has done a review of all public documents on the site. These documents were:

- The Army Corps of Engineers Report from February 2009 on the restoration opportunities of Long Island duck farms.
- The site survey located on the project website.
- Historical site photographs and aerial photographs of the site.

Findings from these sources include:

- Past agricultural use of the property.
- Survey reveals more farm buildings than are currently present. These were mostly located in the southeast corner of the property.
- Historic photos show that the large field was historically utilized for farming.
- Army Corps of Engineers report shows that Semi Volatile Organic Compounds (SVOC's), Zinc, Nitrogen and Phosphorous all exceed the NYSDEC TAGM Guidance values.

2) A site walkthrough was conducted on April 17, 2009.

Site walk was to observe any evidence of environmental conditions including, but not limited to:

- Prior Chemical Spills
- Materials storage, scrap piles, above ground tanks
- Underground tanks
- Hazardous waste storage, and
- Floor drains or machinery pits.

During the site walk, several areas were identified as areas of concern:

- Residential buildings
 - Fuel oil tanks located in basements. Need to be checked for leaks.
- Two farm buildings
 - On site sanitary system associated with northern farm building should be exposed and tested.

- Floordrain discharge (northern farm building) should be exposed and tested.
- Southern farm building should have soil testing in areas of staining to determine if superficial or a notable spill.
- Leaching structures
 - Leach structures identified on site should be exposed and sampled as per SCDHS, prior to closure. Due to safety reasons this should be done as soon as possible.
- Aircraft hanger
 - There was no impact found around site of hanger building.
- Vehicle storage area
 - There was no impact found around site of vehicle storage area.
- Coal storage area
 - P.W. Grosser recommends that coal and surface soils in area be removed and properly disposed of.
- Agricultural field
 - P.W. Grosser recommends soil borings to two feet should be taken to assess soil quality.
- Duck ponds and waste ponds
 - P.W. Grosser recommends soil borings to assess vertical extent of duck waste.
- Trash pile
 - P.W. Grosser recommends that debris be removed and area should be assessed for any impacts from dumping.

Comments:

Thomas Williams asked about there not being any standards for Nitrogen and Phosphorous levels.

B. Devaux responded that there may be standards, but they are not the standard TAGM.

R. Grover responded that there are Nitrogen and Phosphorous standards in water, but not in soils.

T. Isles asked if the findings were in line with what P.W. Grosser expected.

B. Devaux responded that other than discovering the debris/garbage dump area, the other findings were as he expected.

Results of Task 4 – Describe Past and Current Management Activities:

Kristin Ross (Green Shield Ecology), presented a PowerPoint presentation on her findings on the past management activities on the site, and what is being done on other similar sites.

- 1) Alterations to Natural Habitats

- Swim ponds created in riparian zone along estuary of Carmans River now contain remnants of fencing.
 - Lagoons for waste disposal now dominated by *Phragmites* and contain remnant embankments and piping.
 - Field for feedlot has become a mugwort field.
 - Many buildings/structures for duck farm activities have been abandoned and are being assessed for removal or restoration.
- 2) Describe past and current management and stewardship activities on the Robinson Duck Farm since the property has been owned by Suffolk County.
- Water Quality has been monitored for the Carmans River near this site, but data are limited.
 - Soil quality results from ACOE report show high levels of contaminants in soils.
 - Habitat Restoration
 - 2 years of restoration efforts. This was performed in 2000 and 2001. It was a 2 phase process with burning area and then seeding with grasses. There are no data on effects of the work.
- 3) Describe management actions and plans of the USFWS/Wertheim NWR that are of direct relevance to the Duck Farm property and this project.
- Habitat Restoration
 - Invasive Plant Management
 - Wildlife Conservation

Comments:

Claire Goad stated that she believes that Friends of Wertheim has a bird list for the area. She will inquire as to the availability of this list.

T. Williams stated that he thinks there has been seeding of Sandplain *Gerardia* into the Successional Old Field (Farm Field), and that someone should inquire with Nick Gibbons about past management of the field.

Michelle Williams stated that the Fish & Wildlife Service has found that you need two consecutive years of treatment on an invaded area to knock back the *Phragmites*. She stated that treatment could be mechanical, chemical, or by hand, and in most cases the areas that have been treated restore themselves naturally (i.e., re-vegetate naturally).

Project and meeting schedule

T. Isles asked where are we going from here.

R. Grover of GPI discussed the progress of the project and the scheduling of the next meeting in October.

The Task 4 report is being edited now. Once completed, it will be issued to the County for revisions. Once the County has seen the report, and revisions completed, it will be posted on the website for any further comments.

At this time the consultant team is on schedule with the project, and has not had any setbacks to slow the work down.

T. Isles asked about the restoration options and if there will be a wide range of options, or will it be narrowed down to just a few.

R. Grover stated that there will most likely be two or three options for the restoration of the specific areas. He stated that each area will need to be looked at separately, since areas that are degraded may not be able to be restored to its present classification. This is seen in some of the Oak-Pine Forest that is so degraded it may be best to remove trees and make it grassland. The real decisions will deal with the wetland areas and how we will manage and restore those areas.

L. Fischer stated that whatever the decision on the work in the wetlands, we should coordinate with the USFWS.

C. Goad stated that the Carmans River Coalition is working on a Watershed Preservation Study, and suggested this be a group effort to maintain consistent management practices.

T. Williams stated that Ron Bush is very knowledgeable about the Duck Farm site, and that he should be contacted as a resource for restoration of the site.

DeWitt Davies asked what the site looked like before the railroad was constructed. Was the area dredged out to build the embankment for the tracks?

Also, how aggressive will the suggestions for the restoration be. Removal of low berms around former swim ponds may be good for control of phragmites.

K. Ross responded that there are a number of restrictions due to the budget and permitting, but there are a lot of options to look at. She stated that the Army Corps of Engineers suggests the removal of the berms.

D. Davies stated that he would like to see all recommendations presented without the restrictions of price, practicality, permitting issues, etc.

L. Fischer stated that this would get the site back to the former hydrology and maybe help in the removal of invasives.

R. Grover stated that the removal of the berms will need to be dependent on the findings of testing the lagoon sediments.

D. Davies asked about the nitrogen numbers in K. Ross' presentation. He wondered if these levels were a problem in the river.

R. Grover responded that these nitrogen levels are bad for the bay.

K. Ross responded that, unfortunately, the numbers do not show that the site is the source of the nitrogen or not. Nitrogen could be getting in the system at any point along the watershed.

R. Grover stated that even looking at the raw data for the water quality studies may not give us any good data. The data could have caught slugs of contaminants, that is not a normal discharge.

K. Ross responded that the time of year that the sample was taken will effect values also.

John Pavicic asked if we will be doing corings to see extent of the waste in the ponds.

B. Devaux stated that yes, we will be getting the vertical extent of the contamination.

D. Davies asked that if we need a lot of samples, due to the findings at the start of testing, could the County use Cornell Cooperative Extension to do some of the sampling in the former cornfield.

T. Williams stated that this has been done in the past in Riverhead, and that County could contact Tom Kowalchik.

D. Davies asked how many samples would be needed in farm field.

B. Devaux responded that they will do a limited screening of the site with 3 or 4 holes spread around the site. If they are clean, then this will be all that is needed. However, if they are different in the readings, than further testing will be necessary.

D. Davies asked if 3 or 4 test holes would be good for the needs of plant restoration.

B. Devaux and K. Ross both responded that yes, this will be adequate for the restoration process.

There were no comments from the public.

The next meeting will be in October. The exact date will be determined at a later time.

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.