

P.O. Box 134
Hubbardston MA
September 24, 2015

Board of Selectmen
Town of Hubbardston

Dear Selectboard member,

I am responding to the Town Administrator's/Board of Selectmen August 25th letter as both a citizen of Hubbardston and as a representative of Ware River Nature Club (formerly Hubbardston-Ware River Nature Club). I believe I speak for all of us when I say that we would appreciate it if you would communicate with us with honesty and respect for our intelligence. The letter does neither.

It is clear that the Selectboard had no intention of reviewing our May letter or discussing our concerns until we complained publicly. The response we finally received was dismissive and indicated that there was no interest in our immediate concerns and current ideas. Apparently Selectboard members prefer to remain in the dark about and close their ears to any updates about bird conservation and protection strategies at the town conservation area. By refusing to learn new facts, the Selectboard can feel justified in declining to "get involved."

Referring back to the warrant item of 2013 is demonstrative of circular reasoning. The reason we were/are trying to engage the Selectboard on this matter is precisely because the warrant item didn't pass, and we wish to try a new approach. It was hoped that the "new" Selectboard would be willing to learn more about this issue and take on a leadership role.

It was unnecessary to send the text of the warrant item, since I was the one who wrote it. But since it was brought up, I want to point out that our group's present management request sets a much earlier delayed-haying date. We also had/have additional information which we hoped you would consider.

I of course was present at that town meeting and know that the warrant item failed by a negative vote of only about 100 voters, most of them disinterested and/or misinformed. After that town meeting, many attendees told me that they had been influenced to vote against my proposal because of false statements made by the Open Space Committee Chair and others, and they regretted doing so.

We are fully aware that most residents are completely apathetic to this issue. We understand that most, if not all, Selectboard members don't care about bird conservation at Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area either. In that light, we would have appreciated a more honest answer to our concerns, which would include the statements on the next page.

The Selectboard:

- ◆ places almost complete care, control, and management of the Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area in the hands of the Open Space Committee and Conservation Commission;
- ◆ must prioritize its interests and involvement in town matters, and wildlife conservation and ecology—and education about these subjects—is not a priority;
- ◆ supports management of the Mt. Jefferson property based upon political expediency as opposed to wildlife conservation science and is unwilling to take a position contrary to the wishes of the Open Space Committee Chair;
- ◆ supports awarding the hay license to a farmer who will not delay haying to protect birds, even though there are local farmers who would be willing to do so;
- ◆ approves of management of the fields with farmer profit as the primary objective and is pleased to receive the small amount of money generated by the leasing fees. (By the way, our offer to donate to the Town the equivalent amount of money as the leasing fees in return for a post-July 10th first-mowing date still stands.)
- ◆ supports, or doesn't care about, the destruction of nests, baby birds, and some adult nesting birds as a result of too-early mowing.
- ◆ does not wish to take a leadership role in promoting good wildlife conservation practices on town-owned property.

It's obvious that the letter we received was sent as a placating gesture intended to encourage us to drop the matter. While we would be happy to provide you with education and information about grassland bird conservation, we will indeed stop asking you to take positive steps to help protect the birds that nest at Mt. Jefferson Conservation Area. It is with great regret that we admit to ourselves that the Open Space Committee will never adopt plans to protect nesting birds at this property, and the current Selectboard doesn't care enough to do anything about it.

We hope there comes a day when Hubbardston's Selectboard and Open Space Committee are made up of compassionate individuals who have a positive environmental ethic.

Sincerely,

Wendy Howes
Wildlife Advocate & President of WareRiver Nature Club

cc: Anita Scheipers