



## **PUBLIC AWARENESS AND COMMUNICATION COMMITTEE**

**May 17, 2019**

The Public Awareness and Communications Committee convened at 10:05 am.

### **Committee Members Present:**

Arthur Lussi, Acting Committee Chair, Daniel Wilt, Bradley Austin (ESD) and Lynne Mahoney (DOS)

Absent - William Thomas

### **Other Members or Designees Present:**

Chad Dawson, John Ernst, and Karyn Richards (DEC)

### **Local Government Review Board Present:**

Gerald Delaney, Executive Director

### **Agency Staff Present:**

Terry Martino, Executive Director, Christopher Cooper, Counsel, Keith McKeever, Mary Palmer

### **Public Outreach Report**

Mr. McKeever noted the monthly meetings are posted to the Agency's website and are there for two years. He said it takes a few clicks to get to the webcast and staff are working to make it easier for the public to access them. Mr. McKeever said to make it user friendly, the presentations and Certificate of Appreciation given to the presenters are posted on the homepage. There is also a link to the video of the presentation.

Mr. McKeever said that today has been named as Endangered Species Day. It was started in 2006 by the United States Congress and is a celebration of the nation's wildlife and wild places. It is an opportunity for people of all ages to learn the importance of protecting endangered species and actions they can take to help protect them.

### **30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Summit Steward Program**

Kayla White, Summit Steward Coordinator, presented a summary of the Summit Stewardship Program, which is celebrating its 30 year anniversary. The program is a cooperative program between The Adirondack Chapter of The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) and the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC).

Ms. White discussed the ecology of the alpine zone, emphasizing difficult growing conditions and adaptations made by the plants to these conditions. She stated that even though the plants are hardy to these conditions, they are sensitive to human impacts.

The Summit Stewardship Program was started 30 years ago to teach a new hiking ethic that would prevent additional damage or loss of these natural communities. In addition to educational outreach, summit stewards also conduct trail work and research. The program has grown over the years, including staff, volunteers, mountains covered, and the number of visitors contacted. Photo point monitoring examples were shown that demonstrated the recovery of alpine communities since the inception of the program.

Ms. Richards asked if they were letting things revegetate naturally or if species are being moved around. Mr. White said species are not being moved around because alpine plants do not like to be transplanted, so summits are being allowed to revegetate naturally.

Mr. Ernst noted that the summit program is a small group and asked if the constraints were training or money. Ms. White said it is money. Even though the Summit Program is highly successful there are struggles with funding every year. The volunteer program has grown over the last ten years and has really expanded in coverage. She said they have five paid staff and about twenty-five volunteers.

Dr. Dawson noted that even with the written information and social media, the person-to-person is the most effective way to educate. Ms. White agreed.

Ms. Richards asked if it was challenging to get volunteers. Ms. White said there has been an increase of interest in the program within the last five to ten years. She said stewardship program staff from inside and outside the park come for training.

Mr. Austin asked what they do to make this program successful. Ms. White said staff arrive at the trail head early and spend the day talking with sometimes more than one hundred people per day.

Peter Fish, Retired High Peaks Forest Ranger when the stewardship program started, added that the stewards are often taken as rangers, and they do a good job in other ways too. If there is a problem, such as an injury or someone is lost, the stewards can be of assistance. He said they have radios, so Search and Rescue can start with the stewards.

Mr. Lussi thanked Ms. White and Mr. Fish.

**Old Business**

None

**New Business**

None

**Adjournment:**

Mr. Lussi, Acting Committee Chair adjourned the meeting at 11:10 am.