

## **OUUSD'S LOW ST. JOHN FOREST**

**Prepared for the OUUSD Board by Emily Shipman**

**June 10, 2019**

### **Background**

- The Bradford Academy & Graded School District was bequeathed two parcels of land totaling 130 acres from the Low family (1946) and St. John Families (1962).
- Location: Main access is via parking area off Goshen road. Coming from Bradford village, pass under I-91 and the entrance to the forest is immediately after the second house on the right
- The forest was bisected by the construction of I-91 between 1968-70. The Interstate land totaled 40 acres and the compensation for this land was set up as an endowment for forest stewardship and educational opportunities related to the Forest.
- The Forest now consists of roughly 80 acres. Due to the bi-section of the land, BES owns two small parcels of land of Summer Street on the east side of the highway.
- According to the BAGD's 2018-19 Annual Report, the Low St. John Fund market value at 2018 year-end was \$50,454. The Chickering Fund, also to be used for Low St. John Forest (which includes Chickering Field) had a value of \$1769.
- OUUSD owns this property. It is governed through the Low Forest Advisory Committee formed in 1987.
- An extensive trail system (1.9 miles) was built and is used heavily for recreation and educational purposes to this day.
- Orange County Forester, David Paganelli, developed a forest management plan for the forest in 1994. This plan was approved by the Low-St. John Forest Committee. The plan was updated in 2004, and now again in 2018.
- The land is currently being logged. Our income from this harvest is currently ~\$7k. We have indicated to Mr. Paganelli that we opt to keep logging income under \$15k. When logging is completed in the winter of 2019/2020, we will have made just under \$15k, leaving some harvestable timber untouched.

### **Low St John Forest Advisory Committee**

The Low St. John Forest Advisory Committee consists of the following individuals:

- Dr. Kate Paxton, BES Principal
- Fred Tougas, BES Facilities Manager
- Judy Slack, BES teacher
- Megan Dubuque BES teacher

- Nicole White, BES teacher
- Darlene Sanborn, BES Parent/Community Coordinator
- Skip Barrett, former BES principal
- Emily Shipman, environmental education consultant, former BES Board member
- Rick Evans, civil engineer, BES parent, member of Grafton Orange Trails Alliance, organizer of Race to the Top of Bradford
- Jared Pendak, member of Bradford Conservation
- Shiloh Gregory, building contractor, member of Bradford Conservation Commission and co-founder of Grafton Orange Trails Alliance

The Committee has recommended that Emily Shipman act as Chair of the Low St. John Forest Advisory Committee. She will accept this nomination if the OUUSD Board approves.

Low St. John Forest Advisory Committee functions under BES Policy H-8. See addendum.

### Current Activities

- The Forest is currently being used by several grades on a regular basis for place-based, environmental education activities and recreation.
- **Place-based education fosters students' connection to place and creates vibrant partnerships between schools and community. It boosts student achievement and improves environmental, social, and economic vitality.**
- BES has a long history of using the Forest for educational activities. There have been summer camps hosted in the Forest as well as community "Walks & Talks"
- Students snowshoe in the Forest in the winter.
- The students are being bused to the Forest because it is not particularly safe to walk up the stretch of Goshen Road just before the Forest entrance.
- Renovation of the pond at the Forest is scheduled for summer 2019. This will cost \$3400. This spending was approved by the BES Board in summer 2018. An inventory of pond life was done by a local biologist. Based on her recommendation, steps will be taken to maintain a number of important plant/animal species.
- Logging is taking place in the forest and will end in winter 2019/20
- The Grafton Orange Trails Alliance was given approval by the BES Board in summer 2018 to seek funding and begin some work on mountain bike trails at The Forest. The group has begun some clean-up and hand clearing of trails. They have received \$3500 from the Upper Valley Mountain Bike Association for these trails. They are seeking permission from the OUUSD Board to begin more intensive work on trails (using small equipment) on the upper landing.
- BES teachers Megan Dubuque and Nicole White (who currently lead the 2nd grade "Wednesday in the Woods" forest day) have received a \$10k grant to

construct a composting toilet at the Forest. The Committee is currently reviewing toilet options.

- Adam Lornitzo received approval from the Bradford Select board to apply for a grant to fund a feasibility study to put in a pedestrian walkway from North Pleasant Street to the Goshen Road entrance of the Forest. This would allow BES students to walk from the rear of the school, along North Pleasant, to the Forest safely. Adam and Emily Shipman are working on this grant application, due 6/28/19.
- Judy Slack, Emily Shipman, and Jess Loeffler (BES teacher) have been working on a proposal for an outdoor classroom at the Forest. The Committee supports the construction of this outdoor classroom and is asking the OUUSD Board to vote to allow use of up to \$10k of the logging funds to go towards this work.
  - Teachers at BES have expressed that they would be more likely to use the Forest more frequently if there were a structure there to use to temporarily store supplies, take snack breaks, and get out of any inclement weather. Additionally, community members could use this structure when utilizing the bike trails and picnic areas at the Forest.
  - There has been interest in constructing this shelter since at least 2005 when the Committee applied to the NPS Land & Water Conservation Fund for a grant to support building a more sophisticated nature center (for \$42k). They did not receive the grant.
  - They propose to use \$8k-\$10k of the Forest logging income to hire Riverbend Career & Tech Center to construct a three-sided pole barn type structure. Lance Mills is currently drawing up a plan for this and has quoted ~\$8k for this. RBCTC can schedule this work for the fall if we can confirm this project with them soon.
  - Mrs. Slack will also be applying for a grant from the Wellborn Fund to support this project.

#### **ADDENDUM A.**

#### **H8: LOW FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

**Adopted 02/25/09; Revised 05/15/19**

The Bradford Academy and Graded School District Board of Trustees recognizes the importance of successful planning and utilization of the Low-St. John Forest. Therefore, the board has included the work below within the charge of the Low Forest Committee which will:

1. Work closely with the Facilities Committee to ensure that the activities of the Low Forest Committee are aligned with those of the Facilities Committee.

2. Prepare a report for the board in January of each year on the finances and operation of the Low-St. John funds and forest.
3. Hold an annual publicly warned meeting in February of each year to invite townspeople to share their thoughts about the use of the Forest.
4. By March 1 of each year, propose a budget for maintenance programs and improvement to the Forest, for approval by the board; and to oversee the budget and management of the forest.
5. By April 1 of each year, communicate to teachers how they may apply for funding from the Low Forest Fund.
6. Provide for maintenance for the following: trails, signs, pond, parking area, fireplaces, toilets, trash removal, keeping open areas clear, and poison ivy control.
7. Submit proposals to the board for special projects that would permanently alter the land or for use of funds beyond the annual budget.
8. Work alongside the Facilities Committee to develop and maintain a long-term (10 year) forest plan that gives consideration to the educational needs.

The Low Forest Committee shall consist of at least 5 individuals and not more than 10. It will include:

1. One member of the Bradford Academy and Graded School District Board of Trustees
2. Two members of the Bradford Academy and Graded School District Facilities Committee
3. The Bradford Academy and Graded School District Facilities Manager, which may be the same as number 2, above
4. At least one Bradford Academy and Graded School District teacher