

247 Durham Point Road

Durham, NH 03824

June 16, 2019

Dear Mr. Behrendt and Members of the Planning Board:

Re: Tree Cutting in the Rights of Way along Durham Point Road

I wish to speak in favor of clearing the Rights of Way within the road areas between the historic stone walls on Durham Point Road.

First, having been present and prepared to speak at the hearing on this matter last week, as well as at other meetings of the PB, I must commend the members of the Board for your patience and thoughtfulness about the matters brought before you. Thank you.

There are several issues in my awareness that are involved in the decision for or against cutting the vegetation:

1. Eversource's (as well as Comcast's and other utilities') ability to replace poles, and string and maintain new electric supply.
2. Public safety.
3. Road Maintenance.
4. History of the land area.
5. Scenic Roadway/Area designation.

In my view matters of Public safety are paramount. These are:

1. Maintaining electric power during and after storms in all seasons, which can be a health issue for senior residents.
2. Making power restoration easier and safer for repair crews when necessary.
3. Improving ease of road maintenance, especially for winter snow plowing/removal.
4. Improving safety for motorists, pedestrians, and recreational users.
 - Presently motorists have little space to get off the roadway for emergencies, or for emergency vehicles, or to avoid pedestrians, bicyclists, or animals, i.e. to share the road and avoid accidents.

- Neither can bicyclists, joggers, walkers with strollers, or dog walkers easily get off the roadway in many areas.
- This roadway is used by pelotons of cyclists, track team joggers, cross country ski team skaters, individual pedestrians and cyclists, and for road races. The curves and hills make sharing the road with motor vehicle drivers difficult at best.
- Deer and other animals are often struck by motorists on this road. Having a wider cleared view would reduce the incidence of such collisions by increasing opportunity to see animals which are about to cross the roadway.
- View of traffic warning signs is obstructed by trees and growth of underbrush, e.g. before entrance to the Transfer Station as approached from the Newmarket end. The parabolic traffic mirror there is also obstructed.
- Some underbrush actually grows into the roadway during Spring and Summer. Trees prevent the Public Works department from being able to mow this underbrush. This inability to control the vegetation may also lead to the development of invasive species of plants.
- Wind and Ice storms break branches which are often hung up in the canopy above the roadway, creating an ongoing hazard just waiting to fall on unsuspecting passersby or cause a road obstruction.

5. Historically, much of this area was cleared farmland. The rock walls are both historic and scenic. In some places the rock walls are crumbling and degraded by tree roots, and by trees growing up in them.

A nonagenarian living in our household remembers moving here in 1945 when there were very few trees in the area.

In the late 1940s (1946?) a forest fire destroyed a swath of forest between Longmarsh Road and the Chase property, including some dwellings. Consequently, much of the present forestation is new growth since that time. We know of at least one casualty attributed to that fire.

6. The area is scenic and has been declared a scenic way. I reference <https://www.nh.gov/osi/resource-library/transportation/documents/scenic-roads.pdf>.

What is beheld as scenic is subjective, therefore is an individual determination. I would submit that it is not the canopy alone that creates the scenic nature, but the whole of the landscape including rocks, trees, fields, flowers, waters, hills, curves, historic structures, and yes, sky.

Clearing the Rights of Way will improve the scenic nature of the roadway by preserving the structure of the historic rock walls and improving their visibility. Trees growing on the private properties behind the rock walls will continue to provide canopy and plenty of forest for natural habitat.

In summary:

1. Clearing the vegetation will enable the various utilities to upgrade their infrastructure and equipment, improve their ability to maintain services reducing the incidence of emergency repairs, reduce the severity of vegetation removal every four years, and improve safety for their maintenance personnel long term. This should result in not only a cost saving to the utilities, but ultimately to rate payers.
2. Public safety will be improved for all users of Durham Point Road, reducing the probabilities for personal injuries and property damage. Liability overall is reduced.
3. Road and Right of Way maintenance is made simpler. This should help reduce budget costs.
4. History shows that the land is ever changing. It has not always been the way it appears now, and it will continue to change in the future. It seems to be human nature to resist change, especially as we age. Our own senior relatives recall the original installation of poles and electric service, as well as installation of microwave towers. Historically these changes have caused public hysteria initially, and then been accepted and taken for granted in short time.
5. Durham Point Road will remain scenic after the removal of trees and invasive vegetation.

I would respectfully ask the Planning Board to consider the complete clearing of the Rights of Way areas between the rock walls on Durham Point Road, and to recommend such to the Town Council. I believe this action would actually improve the safety and enjoyment for all users of this roadway.

Thank you.

James Bullock

247 Durham Point Road

