

# **Trails Collaborative**

## **Trails and Recreation in the Green Mountain National Forest and Surrounding Areas**

### **Meeting Notes**

**DATE:** October 14, 2009   **TIME:** 1-4 PM   **LOCATION:** Central VT Chamber of Commerce Berlin, VT

**Facilitator:** Lisa Chase, University of Vermont Extension; John Bennett, Windham Regional Commission  
**Notetaker:** Holly Knox, Green Mountain National Forest

**Organizations and Clubs in Attendance:** See Appendix A

**Background:** About 40 stakeholders met on February 11, 2009 to discuss trail use on public lands within and surrounding the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF). Today, October 14, the discussion will continue and include break-out sessions for the following work groups:

- (1) User Compliance, Stewardship and Education Work Group (now called Stewardship and Communication Work Group) -- Several organizations have expressed interest in working together to improve the educational and interpretive information available for trail users. The Vermont Trails and Greenways Council may be willing to take the lead on a coordinated effort throughout the state, in collaboration with the GMNF and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.
- (2) Landscape Management Work Group -- Moving from north to south, the group will evaluate ways to improve upon the overall trail system in the GMNF and surrounding areas. A core group will attend regular meetings and additional stakeholders may bring local knowledge to the discussion as specific sites are addressed.
- (3) Science Panel -- A panel of stakeholders and scientists will review existing literature to determine the most relevant studies for trail management in the GMNF and surrounding areas. The panel will address research questions identified by the Landscape Management and User Compliance, Stewardship and Education Work Groups.

#### **Agenda:**

- 1:00 – 2:00 Introductions; Discussion of structure and work groups
- 2:00 – 3:30 Work groups meet
- 3:30 – 4:00 Work groups report back and present next steps

#### **Notes:**

##### Introduction and Overview by Lisa, Meg, Ed, and John:

Introduction by Lisa Chase, including history of how we arrived to where we are today. Meg Mitchell provided a welcome and thank you, as well as an introduction of Jer Marr-Acting GMNF Forest Supervisor (for next 4-5 months). Meg identified two sideboards:

1. The timeline for this trail collaborative effort is intended to be 18-24 months. After the trails collaborative steering committee (Meg M, Chad V, Ed O, Lisa C, John B) heard concerns at February meeting, they grouped them into the 3 work groups identified above. The timeline was identified as it allows enough time for the work groups to explore and accomplish the intended mission, while providing timely results for recommended implementation activities. Recommendations by the work groups will be sent to appropriate landowners and they are responsible decision makers...but recommendations will be taken very seriously.
2. GMNF does not allow ATV use at this time. Recommendations for where ATVs should be allowed is not the intent for these working groups (as far as the physical location of trails on the GMNF). We are focused on existing trail uses that are allowed. ATV issue is being handled in a separate forum.

Ed O'Leary identified why the State of VT decided to cooperate on the effort spearheaded by the GMNF. Knowing that VT is a small State, recreation issues are inherently crossing State, federal, and private boundaries...important to all be at the table.

John addressed the three work groups and how the process would likely work. Within the two year timeline, working groups will need to determine their goals, identify participants/stakeholders that may be missing,

define next steps-including timelines for targets and deliverables. Lisa provided a general overview of each work group, noting how the information flow can and should include information gathered beyond the boundaries of this group. For example, VAST study of environmental effects (by EHB Environmental) to look at snowmobile impacts may be included in reviews by the Science Panel work group.

Ground Rules:

- Civil discussion
- Open-minded listening
- Interests, not positions
- Agree to disagree

Q&A:

- **Q:** Could the Steering Committee include an at-large member from the Trail Collaborative group at large? **A:** Definitely a possibility. In further communications we will ask for nominations or volunteers.
- If there is an at-large member, should there be 2 (one motorized and one no-motorized)? **A:** Not decided today.
- **Q:** Are we looking at specific trails or types of trail use? **A:** Both! Issues that we are looking at may include (among others): Are trails we have duplicative (that is, do we have more trails than are needed based on what we can maintain)? Are there more possibilities for disabled recreation opportunities.
- **Q:** Can you clarify the difference between the Landscape Management group and the User Compliance and Education Group...is the landscape group looking at nitty gritty details of specific areas? **A:** Landscape work group will look at GMNF big picture and discuss concerns in white paper. Then, specific areas will be reviewed as examples of the concerns.
- **Q:** Are deliverables going to be realistic (on short timeframe of 18-24 months)...or will some potentially be pie-in-the-sky that might be achievable over 5-10 years? **A:** Groups should consider both if appropriate. One way to approach varying ideas would be to have the group prioritize implementation of the ideas...particularly if priorities resolve a problem or an issue. Always interested in all ideas that could help solve problems or identify priorities for tasks needing accomplished when funds are available. Bryant Watson noted that the Congressional delegation may be able to help secure funds for any priority tasks the work groups may identify.

Reconvening Groups and Group Report-Outs:

**Landscape Management:** As a group, we fleshed out the objectives of what we hope to accomplish. Note that although this is a landscape scale assessment, the group will likely be looking at some very site-specific projects and deliverables. We did not set a next meeting date but will establish a Google group to share the summary of what was discussed today and the next steps we hope to take.

**Stewardship and Communication** (formerly called User Compliance, Stewardship, and Education): This group identified a number of goals (in a perfect world, what would be the desired conditions). Then they tried to address what specific actions/strategies they could undertake to help them achieve those goals. People volunteered to take on the 6-8 strategies and will report back in a month via a Google group. Then they will further articulate goals and see if there is more challenging work that needs addressed in the future.

**Science Panel:** Discussed two main charges: collecting and reviewing existing lit and identifying lit gaps. Also discussed desired deliverable- a compilation/annotated biblio of relevant information that is user friendly. Research issues and priorities were discussed...as well as need to communicate closely with other 2 work groups. By end of this month, science group will send out a list of research issues and experts associated with issues. Other groups will be invited to add to the list. If you have lit likely to be of interest, send to Lisa or Bill (william.valliere@uvm.edu). They will post to website: <http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails>. May be important to have a State researcher/expert involved in the group (such as Forrest Hammond). Future communications will be over email and conference calls. In late October, VAST will be meeting to refine their study. The Science Panel work group will post study plan to the website and meet in mid-December.

\*\*\* **Next big group meeting:** Wednesday: April 14, 2009. Berlin (Chamber), Randolph (VTC) or South Royalton (VT Law School)

## Landscape Management Work Group Notes:

### Participants:

John Bennett (work group facilitator), Amy Diller (CTA), Alexis Nowalk (VAST), Patrick Kell (VMBA), Dave Hardy (GMC), Tom Myers (CCC), Jim Henderson (BCRPC), Dwight Gies (Mad River Path Assoc), Mike Benoit (VT Horse Council), Jer Marr (GMNF), Chad VanOrmer (GMNF), Clare Rock (Central VT RPC), Holly Knox (GMNF), Justin Kenney (VYCC), Steve McLeod (VT Traditions Coalition)

Introductions, interests and why people are at the table:

- Access opportunities (ex. motorized bike use)
- Net loss in opportunities from Wilderness
- Trail opportunities for mtn bikes, snowmobiles, horseback riding, x/c skiing, hiking, etc.
- Long Trail
- Participating in a functional process and goals that produce achievable deliverables
- Sharing information and increasing communication with other user groups/partners
- Ensuring multiple use trails are in right place with right safety precautions
- Preserve/develop/protect GMNF
- Identifying trail connections and promoting outdoor activity
- Multi-use where appropriate and separating shared corridors where safety is questionable
- Conserving land against future development and potential trail closures
- Trail maintenance for 4 season use
- Liability of user groups on various properties
- Potential access/lack of access on new land acquisitions by GMNF...needing open and honest processes by FS

### Objectives for this work group (in blue) and comments from participants (in black):

1. **Identify high priority statewide or regionally important trails that transition across various land owners. Determine which trails need to be managed in perpetuity by identifying land acquisition (easements, fee, etc.) and/or agreement priorities.** The issue is not looking at particular trails but instead, addressing the transitions from federal to State and private land. The Forest Service relies on many trail organizations to help us manage trails that run across federal, State and private lands. How can we identify the high priority areas that we want to protect in perpetuity (or at least longer term) so that trails do not end up as dead ends when property owners change? Investment in trail system is lost when trail segments are cut off. Where can we find portals that are protected for long-term management? Question: does this issue get at managing for various uses too? In some places you may easily get permission for one activity but not another. This objective is one of our greatest challenges. When a trail is vulnerable, it is difficult to spend the time and investment...how can we minimize vulnerability first and then address the multiple use issues. This objective will tie closely with the work of the stewardship and education group.
2. **Identify sources and possible actions to remedy unacceptable ecological impacts (i.e., soil erosion, deer wintering areas, etc.) and/or social conflicts (noise, conflicting uses, etc.) on the existing trails system** Challenge is the need to a) identify what key factors we will use to say an area is vulnerable (deer winter areas? Steep slopes?) and b) where are those vulnerable areas across landscape? This topic overlaps with the science group...they may be able to help us identify parameters and define what are unacceptable ecological impacts. May need to consider that it is not just trails impacting ecological resources but ecological resources (ex. beaver) impacting existing trail network. In addition, need to consider that a net loss of trail is also an unacceptable consequence of the social kind....need to balance ecological and social impacts while looking at if trail closures are appropriate. Question was raised about how easy it is for GMNF to implement desired reroutes (if the group were to identify them). Brief discussion about Forest Service NEPA process.
3. **Identify existing trails that may be appropriate for multiple use management by adding additional uses. This process will include criteria that will determine the sustainability (both social and ecological) of the proposed trail.** There are places where multiple uses are appropriate and places where multiple use is not desirable. Focus is on existing trail system and seeing if we can add more uses. Need to consider season of use!! Should broaden this from multi-use to also multi-experience (such as difficulty level,

groomed versus backcountry). May need to establish criteria that will help us determine what uses are compatible on a given trail, while also considering that for some user groups (ex. VAST) multiple use designation is up to the land owner. If terrain can support multiple uses but the uses are not compatible...can we separate use based on days (ex. can hike with dogs on T/Th but not M/W/F.

4. **Identify and address any public health and safety concerns of the existing trail system, such as mixed motorized uses (i.e., snowmobiles and automobiles using the same travel route).** Safety concerns are priority for Forest Service to deal with. Example of snowmobile use on plowed road...recipe for disaster. Mountain bikes and horseback riders may be best separated. Road crossings are another safety concern (ex. snowmobiles running down state highway instead of a direct crossing). Question: does this include public health issues (restrooms, water quality). Can we identify abuse of dispersed recreation sites (places where trash and human waste are a problem).
5. **Identify existing trails that are determined to not be ecologically sustainable and/or receive very little use for decommissioning.** Nobody wants access to trails that are not sustainable and require a constant maintenance battle...if this is the case the trail is probably not meant to be there! Must consider not only ecological sustainability but maintenance capabilities. What are trail standards that must be met on different lands? Must consider that the So Zone of the GMNF is largely one giant wetland (as it is on a plateau)...may need to consider Taconic Range as a recreation resource due to different geological nature there, a place where you can make up for trail losses in other areas.
6. **Identify potential new trails in sustainable locations, have a need based on supply & demand and are supported by multiple user groups to assist in the long-term operations and maintenance.** Need to consider potential for more loop trails. What are our coarse filters (no trails in wetlands for example). Supply and demand based on user data (ex. Forest Service National Visitor Use Monitoring and National Survey on Recreation and the Environment). Forest Service should consider asking local clubs if there is a need for additional trails-soliciting feedback in an enhanced manner other than just national surveys. This will be a difficult objective to tackle as trends are difficult to predict and demands may change...need wiggle room to accommodate potential changes. Should include transparency and inclusiveness in this process (of identifying trail needs and potential trail locations).
7. **Establish cost estimates for operating and maintaining the existing and proposed trail system, including any existing backlog of maintenance needs.** Federal and State may take lead for identifying this on their respective lands; however, partners may be particularly impacted by other costs (such as acquisition and easement costs). All groups should help to identify areas needing attention, if multi-use...opportunity to country barter the different skills that neighbors/organizations may have. Give and take on the local level...and some companies offer reduced rates to non-profit organizations doing volunteer type work. Perhaps we could generate a list of resources (a laundry list of businesses or people who can contribute services or reduced rate rentals).
8. **Identify areas with particular compliance concerns and develop strategies and priorities to address these concerns (i.e. signage, education, joint enforcement, etc.).**

Suggestion to add an additional bullet (#9): Goal to avoid net loss of trail opportunity

#### Logistics for this working group:

NOTE: Steering Committee is considering having several spatially oriented meetings-so local experts can join in discussion when we review site-specific areas.

Next step: take today's notes and refine objectives of this work group. Next meeting we can adjust the result, prioritize, and agree to move on.

1. How often will we meet?
2. What venue will we meet in (conference call, in person, etc)? Set up a Google group and/or voice thread (voice thread allows people to post maps and make comments on it vocally-yikes we are so technologically advanced!!). Chad will set up a Google group.

## **Stewardship and Communication Work Group Notes**

### Participants:

Ed O'Leary, Kristi Ponozzo, Tony Clark, Doug Weber, Walter Opuszynski, Mark Maghini, Danny Hale, Heidi Fleury, Jeanette Cole, Jessi Hudson, Craig Whipple

### **Goals:**

- Trail users are safe, informed, and resources are protected
- We have uniform trail signage throughout the state of Vermont – people know how the trails are marked
- Users have a good feedback mechanism to report trail conditions
- We have closer connection with state information centers, chambers, etc.
- Trail users understand the purpose of the land they are traveling

### **Objectives/Strategies:**

- Collect what is already out there (information materials) – research what already exists – Jeanette Cole
- Find information for difference land management purposes – Danny Hale
- Research currently existing trail signage – Doug Weber
- Contact Department of Tourism, Chamber, etc to find existing materials/opportunities –Heidi Fleury
- Contact sheet for different entities – Ed O'Leary
- Local Motion contact for possible clearing house of trail info for State –Walter Opuszynski

Report Back Via Google Groups by Nov. 15<sup>th</sup>

<http://groups.google.com/group/trails-collaborative-education-group>

## Science Panel Work Group Notes

### Participants:

Lisa Chase-UVM Extension Facilitator, Don Dickson-Sierra Club, Jim Harding-Green Mountain College, Rees Harris-Cycle Conservation Club of VT, Rob Hoelscher-USFS, Anthony Iarrapino-Conservation Law Foundation, Mollie Matteson-Center for Biological Diversity, Meg Mitchell-USFS, Pete Pettengill-UVM Park Studies Lab, Bill Valliere-UVM Park Studies Lab, Bryant Watson-VAST

Goals of Science Panel- Review existing literature relevant to trail issues in VT; Identify gaps in the literature.

-Do we want a summary of our findings?

Yes, potential deliverables could be fact sheets and/or an annotated bibliography.

-Jim Harding of Green Mountain College has experience with environmental impacts/recreation ecology

-Bill Valliere, Pete Pettengill, and Bob Manning have experience with social issues and carrying capacity

-Expertise available outside the group too

-How does our product fit into a regulatory decision?

Literature review alone is a deliverable and can contribute to decision making

Literature review will be an online working document available to the public

Who else should be here?

-We have recreation experts...need soil, water, fisheries, wildlife, road ecology, biology

-Possible transportation ecology link. NE FS research station is possible resource to use

-USFWS biologist in Island Pond?

-Seek out a list of resources...individuals and specialties as well...invite on an as-needed basis...possibly a biologist from State ANR

-Are State regulatory regimes similar to Federal guidelines? Do they have active research?

-Maybe we need someone from the state in this group as well

-Forrest Hammond as representative from state?

Specific Issue: VAST Study

-Pro-active approach...address pollution impacts on water and soils

-A study like this has never been conducted east of the Mississippi

-Need a site/VT-specific study to address the issue

-Pioneer Environmental and VHB Engineering to conduct this work

-GMNF & USFWS have agreed to participate

-2 sites at Silvio O. Conte NWR

-2 sites southern VT

-2 northern VT

-2 state sites including Lamoille Valley Rail Trail...how does proximity to roadways affect the snow pack as well and conduct a comparative analysis

-1 wilderness area will be tested to as a comparative analysis

-let's look to Canada as well...more info on roads, but not necessarily trails

-Water tests, vehicle counters, high use and low, gps sites to come back to in February, conduct core tests next to and away from trail

-Spring- water samples and soil samples for contamination testing 9 different exhaust emissions

Literature Review

-Are there enough studies to address wildlife already? Will keep literature review in regards to this issue

-Send journal articles to Bill and we will post if we don't violate copyright regulations. Eventually we'd like to have an annotated bibliography or some sort of summary (this could be the summary of findings and then relate to VT)

-Use links for articles on the website

-Will check with library and reserve system for copyright issues

How do we divide social and environmental issues and prioritize?

-Identifying and prioritizing issues...looking to the last meeting...water quality, wetland health, and wildlife disturbance as it relates to mountain biking and snowmobile use, trail use in general with regards to wildlife, social-user conflict leading to user displacement-who does not want to ski next to motors, can we create a spectrum of recreation opportunities for everyone, invasive species, rate of introduction change based on different types of use, vegetative impacts, habitat fragmentation as well, wildlife security issues, seasonality, type of use

-What about climate? What climate projections are even feasible for certain types of use?

-Fragmentation and what is it? Is there a way to define and measure using density of trails...has this already been done...critical pathways. How do we define this issue, before we begin this work? Consider keystone species? Density as it relates to impacts on wildlife. DOT info and wildlife kills.

-There is already a social survey in use by GMNF. Specifically checks use trends...more reliable at landscape scale

-Type of use trends...are there limitations to the data...what about displacement based upon certain types of use...what's missing in social impacts?

-Meg is providing information about current surveys. It is a year long process

-They are not really about getting at user conflict so can we rely on this data for our issues

-Pipeways of roads and trails...culverts as another potential issue

-This list will be ongoing and posted as another deliverable

-Site-specific issues...Lamoille Valley Rail Trail...but what are the site-specific priorities of the other groups?

-Cast the net and use a deductive approach? Prioritize from here.

-Iterative as well...bringing in site-specifics from other groups as a dynamic process.

-Using LVRT as good basis for recent data

-Narrow by research based upon the location...going regional as opposed to west of the Mississippi approach

Next steps...give info to Bill, pdfs of studies, references; casting the giant net and brainstorming

-Methodology of VAST work will be reviewed by GMNF and FWS on October 27<sup>th</sup>

-Mid-november should have a VAST document for presenting/sharing

-Post Yellowstone study that VAST study is based on (have link on website)

How do these meetings happen in the future?

-e-mails, then conference calls, then physical meetings

-1<sup>st</sup> conf. call regarding VAST study will happen in mid-December

-E-mail research issues list at end of month, have other groups look at list in early November for a couple weeks each, comprehensive list ready in December.

-Rob will be available to work together, and the NE research station could be a possible meeting place

Follow-up

- 1) Send relevant lit to Bill at [william.valliere@uvm.edu](mailto:william.valliere@uvm.edu) and it will be posted on webpage [www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails](http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails)
- 2) List of research issues and expertise throughout the country will be shared with Science Panel by the end of this month; Trail Collaborative will then have a chance to add to the list
- 3) VAST study plan will be posted on webpage by late November
- 4) Lisa will schedule a conference call for the science panel in December to discuss the VAST study, lit review, research issues and expertise

Appendix A: Participant Invitation List and Meeting Attendants

First Name	Last Name	Partner Organization Name	In Attendance
Dick	Andrews	Sierra Club	
Mark	Atherton	Bennington Trail Conservancy, VASA, VORA	
Ray	Atwood	Cycle Conservation Club Of Vermont	
John	Austin	Vermont Fish & Wildlife	
John	Bennett	Windham Regional Commission	X
Mike	Benoit	Vermont Horse Council	X
Tom	Berry	Senator Patrick Leahy	X
Bruce	Brown	Moosalamoo Association	
Adam	Brown	ATC New England Regional Office	
Susan	Bulmer	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Chapin	Carpenter	Localmotion	
Jody	Carton	ATC New England Regional Office	
Lisa	Chase	UVM Extension	X
Tony	Clark	Moosalamoo Association	X
Patricia	Coates	Congressman Peter Welch	
Jeannette	Cole	Vermont Horse Council	X
Daniel	Davis	Cutting Edge	
Tom	Decker	Vermont Fish & Wildlife	
Don	Dickson	Sierra Club	X
Fred	Dieffenback	National Park Service - AT	
Amy	Diller	Catamount Trail Association/ VT Trails & Greeways Council	X
Jim	Federicks	Catamount Trail Association	
Erin	Fernandez	VT Adaptive Sports	
Jamey	Fidel	Vermont Natural Resources Council	
Marge	Fish	Green Mountain Club	
Heidi	Fleury	Green Mountain Club	X
Diana	Frederick	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Adam	Gebb	Green Mountain Conservancy	
Dwight	Gies	Mad River Path Association	X
Steve	Gladczuk	Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	
Jeremy	Goetz	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Danny	Hale	Vermont ATV Sportsman's Association, Inc. (VASA)/ VT Trails & Greenways Council	X
Forrest	Hammond	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department	
Jim	Harding	Green Mountain College	X
Dave	Hardy	Green Mountain Club	X
Rees	Harris	CCCoVT	X
Thomas	Hark	Vermont Youth Conservation Corps	
Jim	Henderson	RPC	X
Linda	Henzel	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Rob	Hoelscher	USFS	X
Jessi	Hudson	VAST	X
Anthony	Iarrapino	Conservation Law Foundation	X
Richard	Kehne	Addison County Regional Planning Commission	
Patrick	Kell	Vermont Mountain Bike Association	X
Beth	Kennett	Moosalamoo Association	
Justin	Kenney	VYCC/ VT Trails & Greenways Council	X
Chris	Kilian	Conservation Law Foundation	
Holly	Knox	USFS	X
Virginia	Lancaster	Vermont Horse Council/ VT Trails & Greenways Council	
Leanne	Linck	The Wilderness Society	
Mike	Lynch	Bennington Trail Conservancy	
Mark	Maghini	FWS, Silvia O'Conte	X
Jer	Marr	USFS	X

Matt	Mann	Windham County Regional Planning Commission	
Bob	Manning	UVM Rubenstein School	
Willene	Martin	Equestrian Volunteer	
Christina	Marts	MBR National Historical Park	
Jeff	Mast	Bennington County Regional Planning Commission	
Mollie	Matteson	Center for Biological Diversity	X
Joan	McCloud	USFS	
Steve	McLeod	VASA	X
Meg	Mitchell	USFS	
Tom	Myers	CCC	X
Steve	Noble	Vermont Horse Council	
J.C. (Jonathan)	Norling	Lyndon State College	
Alexis	Nowalk	Vermont Association of Snow Travelers/ VT Trails & Greenways Council	X
Ed	O'Leary	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	X
Walter	Opuszynski	Northern Forest Canoe Trail; VT Trails and Greenways Council	X
Bob	Paquin	Senator Patrick Leahy	
Peter	Pettengill	UVM grad student	X
Kristi	Ponozzo	USFS	X
Ethan	Ready	Senator Bernie Sanders	
Andrew	Renter	VASA	
Clare	Rock	Central Vermont Regional Planning Commission	X
Ben	Rose	Green Mountain Club	
Denis	Rydjeski	Sierra Club	
Gary	Sawyer	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Brooke	Scatchard	Local Motion	
Susan	Schreibman	Rutland County Regional Planning Commission	
Todd	Sheinfeld	CCCoVT	
Steve	Simpson	Vermont Horse Council NEK Trails	
Sherry	Smecker		
Gray	Winnie	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Mark	Stevens	Vermont Outfitter and Guiding Association	
Mark	Sweeney	Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge	
Lisa	Thornton	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Bill	Valliere	UVM Rubenstein School	X
Chad	VanOrmer	USFS	X
Kathleen	Wanner	Moosalamoo Association	
Bryant	Watson	Vermont Association of Snow Travelers	X
Doug	Weber	VORA	X
Klaus	Weirether	Killington Snowmobile Tours	
Craig	Whipple	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	X
Rick	White	Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation	
Cindi	Wight	VT Recreation & Parks Assoc.	
Chuck	Wise	Two Rivers Regional Planning Commission	
		Silvio O. Conte National Wildlife Refuge	

**Goals:**

Establish a collaborative process to improve management of trails and recreation in the Green Mountain National Forest and surrounding areas. Complete the formal collaborative process within two years (spring 2011). Success is defined by each member of the collaborative agreeing that:

- 1) The process has made a substantial contribution to the betterment of social and biological health in the region
- 2) The trail system is more sustainable today than it was two years ago and this will continue into the foreseeable future
- 3) Our understanding of and application of science to trail and recreation management has improved
- 4) We have empowered local or regional groups to continue making progress

**Principles:**

- Focus on common values while working to resolve issues that can only be dealt with at a larger scale (e.g., addressing social conflicts and perceived equity among various types of trail recreation, mitigating landscape level effects to wildlife and important habitats, quantifying possible cumulative effects to soil/water/air, identifying common priorities and strategies for user compliance and education, common maintenance practices or standards, etc.) while engaging and empowering local place-based groups, communities and citizens to resolve issues that are site-specific.
- Engage groups and individuals that represent the diversity of views, interests and demographics. Include individuals that are creative or civic leaders that may not belong to a particular interest group and are leaders in their communities, arts, schools etc. Include youth.
- Make process transparent and invite participation early, often and throughout. Follow Federal Advisory Committee Act requirements by ensuring all meetings are advertised and open to the public. Use technology effectively to unify, build trust and be open and transparent.
- Incorporate best available science that is relevant to this particular landscape. Include science in the process itself, social sciences and physical or biological sciences. Focus on a few key priorities to expand or create 'new' science.
- Utilize an 'adaptive' approach (i.e., don't try to answer all questions, or resolve all conflicts, for all time). Make agreed upon changes that will substantially improve the current situation over the next 10-15 years.
- Based on common, shared information from the collaborative, each landowner will make decisions that it deems appropriate, using methods it deems are appropriate. Any 'sideboards' that landowners and governments have should be made known.

**Structure:**

Overall Trail Collaborative - Has at least one representative from each group/organization that wants to participate. Includes individual participants willing and interested in volunteering their time over the course of two years. This group meets 2-4 times per year to review and provide feedback to the steering committee, science panel, and each work group.

Steering Committee - Consists of the overall facilitator for the effort (UVM Extension) and government leaders (i.e., Federal agencies, State agencies, and a member of a Regional Planning Commission to represent Town government perspectives). This group meets to determine the process, and consult as necessary on policy or decision-making issues related to the process. Members of the Steering Committee include:

- Lisa Chase – University of Vermont Extension
- Ed O'Leary – Vermont State Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation
- Meg Mitchell – Green Mountain National Forest
- Chad VanOrmer – Green Mountain National Forest
- John Bennett – Windham Regional Commission

Science Panel - An independent panel of 8-10 representatives from the research community and collaborative group that interacts with all other groups and is charged with reviewing existing science and literature to determine the most relevant to trail management issues in this landscape. The panel will recommend the most relevant new science (i.e., original research) priorities to be pursued. Lisa Chase will facilitate the panel.

Members of the Science Panel include:

- Bob Manning, University of Vermont
- Jim Harding, Green Mountain College
- Other representatives from overall trail collaborative

User Compliance, Stewardship and Education Work Group - This group will focus on expanding and prioritizing common efforts to:

- 1) develop a common set of trail behavior expectations regardless of land ownership,
- 2) increase volunteerism and user stewardship across all user groups,
- 3) increase the amount and quality of information and education as a tool to address resource and social issues,
- 4) develop common trail construction and maintenance best management practices

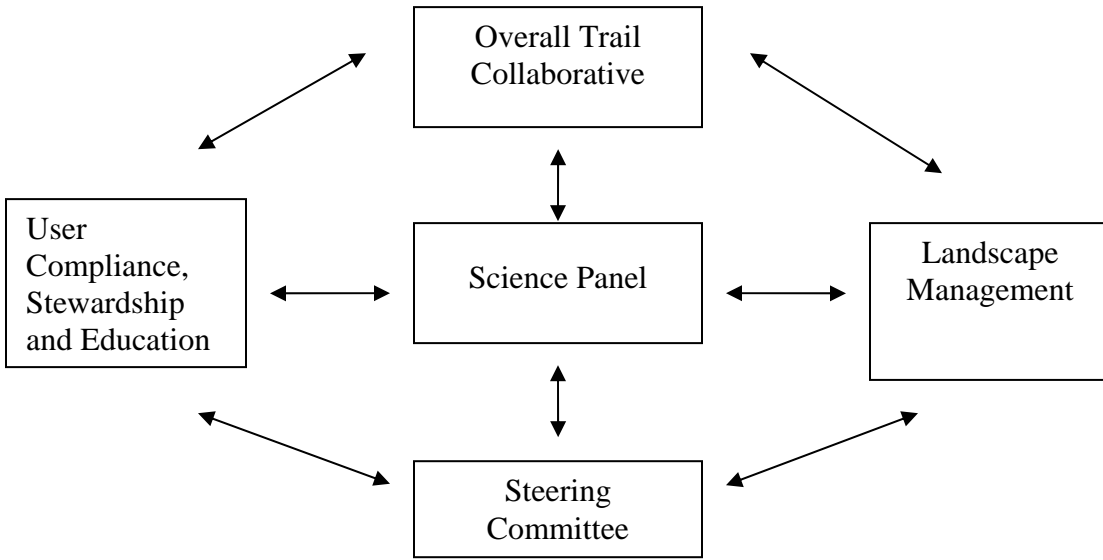
A proposal has been presented to the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council to facilitate this group. One does not need to be a member of the Council to participate in the work group.

Landscape Management Work Group - Exact membership of this group will be somewhat fluid, as we move from north to south across the Green Mountains. This group will evaluate ways to improve upon the overall existing trail system in the Green Mountains. We will invite any interested persons to participate and groups with local knowledge to engage in workshops. A core group will consist of at least one representative from each level of government and the science panel. The facilitator will be John Bennett. Web-based systems or other technologies may also be used for keeping people engaged and soliciting feedback. The core group will keep the overall collaborative engaged and updated periodically.

Generally, the objectives of the group will be to address landscape scale issues that transcend landownership and jurisdictional boundaries which have been identified from local knowledge, previous planning and the collaborative process. The general trail management objectives the group will address include:

- Identify high priority statewide or regionally important trails that transition across various land owners. Determine which trails need to be managed in perpetuity by identifying land acquisition (easements, fee, etc.) and/or agreement priorities.
- Identify sources and possible actions to remedy unacceptable ecological impacts (i.e., soil erosion, deer wintering areas, etc.) and/or social conflicts (noise, conflicting uses, etc.) on the existing trails system.
- Identify existing trails that may be appropriate for multiple use management by adding additional uses. This process will include criteria that will determine the sustainability (both social and ecological) of the proposed trail.
- Identify and address any public health and safety concerns of the existing trail system, such as mixed motorized uses (i.e., snowmobiles and automobiles using the same travel route).
- Identify existing trails that are determined to not be ecologically sustainable and/or receive very little use for decommissioning.
- Identify potential new trails in sustainable locations, have a need based on supply & demand and are supported by multiple user groups to assist in the long-term operations and maintenance.
- Establish cost estimates for operating and maintaining the existing and proposed trail system, including any existing backlog of maintenance needs.
- Identify areas with particular compliance concerns and develop strategies and priorities to address these concerns (i.e. signage, education, joint enforcement, etc.).

(Note- On federal lands, the NEPA process may apply and be utilized in order to evaluate any site specific options and alternatives identified by the landscape management group)



## Appendix C. Comment Submission

### 1. **Robert Farley:**

I will not be able to make this meeting, but I would like to provide information on my trail use in the GMNF and concerns my sport may have. I run a sled dog team and have used GMNF in So. Lincoln, Ripton, Goshen, Hancock, Grandville, Chittenden and by Summerset Reservoir on occasions. Mainly I run from So. Lincoln, around Ripton and Goshen (Silver Lake/Leister Hollow). I primarily use VAST trail but on occasions use the Catamount trail which puts me on some x-country touring trails. For the VAST trails, safety is the most important for me. I work hard to keep my team on the right, but some of the though tight wooded trails have me all over them. To keep it safe for all users the speed of the snow machines need to be kept in check and signage of our present is needed.

I also enjoy having the opportunity to get off VAST trails and the Catamount trail works nice for this, as well as forest service roads not open to VAST, and they also helps me establishing loops to eliminate the 180 degree turn arounds. To acknowledge Musher as a user on these trails, I believe is appropriate. The fact that the Catamount trails do end up on Touring Center Trail worries me that we may be upset the owners. I would like to see some understanding that using the catamount trails to pass through a touring center trail is permissible.

This is a quick expression of my concerns and I mainly want to see that Musher are a recognized user in the GMNF. Second I would like to see more non motorized trails establish for mushers use.

Rob Farley and  
The October Siberians  
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