Vermont Trail Collaborative  
Monday, May 2, 2011 from 1:00 to 4:30 p.m.  
Central Vermont Chamber of Commerce, Berlin

**Facilitator:** Lisa Chase, University of Vermont Extension  
**Notetaker:** Carol Knight, Green Mountain National Forest  
**Organizations and Clubs in Attendance:** Lisa Chase (UVM Extension), Bill Valliere (UVM Rubenstein), Peter Pettengill (UVM Rubenstein), Jean Haigh (GMC), Dave Hardy (GMC), Kathryn Wrigley (GMC), Doug Weber (VORA), Danny Hale (VASA and VT Trails and Greenways Council), Tom Berry (Senator Leahy’s office), Tony Clark (Moosalamoo Association), Ed O’Leary (VT FPR), John Bennett (Windham Regional Commission), Keegan Tierney (VYCC), Amy Kelsey (CTA), Steve McLeod (VASA), Walter Opuszynski (Northern Forest Canoe Trail), Colleen Madrid, Melissa Reichert, Jay Strand, and Carol Knight (USFS), Anthony Larrapino (CLF), Don Dickson (Sierra Club), David Frisque (Mississquoi NWR), Rees Harris (Cycle Conservation Club of VT)

**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). Follow-up meetings were held October 14, 2009, April 14, 2010, and October 19, 2010 to continue the discussion and to address various work group assignments and accomplishments. Today’s meeting is intended to hear updates from the following work groups and to address what happens when the 2 year process comes to an end (May 2011):  
(1) Stewardship and Communication Work Group: This group is working closely with VT Trails and Greenways Council to improve interpretive and education information for recreational use in VT.  
(2) Landscape Management Work Group: This group is evaluating ways to improve upon trail systems on the GMNF and beyond.  
(3) Science Panel: This group is reviewing existing scientific studies related to trail use and impacts and prioritizing needs for future research efforts.

**Agenda**

1:00 – 1:30 Introductions and Background  
1:30 – 2:15 Landscape Management Work Group  
2:15 – 2:45 Science Panel  
3:00 – 3:30 Stewardship and Communication Work Group  
3:30 – 4:30 Open discussion

**Introduction, Background and updates from Lisa, Colleen, and Ed**

Introduction by Lisa Chase, including history of how we arrived to where we are today (see background above), trail groups represented and committee presentations. This is the final scheduled meeting for the collaborative. Working groups will present what has been accomplished to date and what still needs to be done. Ed O’Leary discussed the status report, looked at major areas of interest and concern. VT Forest, Parks and Recreation (FPR) is interested in pursuing with others the trail issues/concerns that need to be addressed, and has enlisted VT Trails & Greenways Council to assist. VT Trails & Greenways or VT FPR may have capacity to leverage grant money to assist with further trail objectives. VT FPR will develop a statewide comprehensive outdoor recreation plan (SCORP) so the rest of this year will
work with a contractor (UVM) to develop SCORP and will utilize work of the collaborative in the plan.

Public meetings will be held in northeastern and northwest Vermont in mid to late June to replicate the meetings held last year by the Landscape Management Work Group (LMWG) in and around the GMNF to respond to feedback that this was understood to be a state-wide collaborative effort. Results from these additional meetings will be incorporated into the draft LMWG recommendations from the meetings completed to date. The information can also be used in the SCORP development process.

Colleen reflected on the hard work of this group and this has held true to vision of Meg Mitchell, former Forest Supervisor. She appreciates the diverse and broad range of views represented by this group, and the interrelationships developed by this process. GMNF plays a large part in the recreation landscape of the nation and region, and this process will allow the Forest to decide what to carry forward and inform us in our recreation future.

**Landscape Management Work Group (LMWG) by John Bennett, Melissa Reichert, and Jay Strand:**

John Bennett presented brief background of this committee with Jay Strand and Melissa Reichert. They presented the draft recommended actions resulting primarily from seven public meetings held last year near the GMNF and surrounding areas. The recommendations and will include input from future public meetings that are planned for the northern part of the state later this spring. The recommendations follow the six issues that were developed earlier in the collaborative process: Trail connectivity/trails with multiple landowners, ecological impacts from trails, trail user relations, existing supply and demand for trails, trail funding/volunteer management, and unauthorized/illegal uses of trails. John outlined the public meeting locations and process. LMWG Results and recommendations were synthesized and presented by Jay and Melissa. NOTE: The North Country Trail was considered (see trail connectivity). The draft recommendations from the LMWG are posted on the webpage at: http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/landscape

Highlights are listed below:

1. Trail connectivity: continue to list and work on important regional and local level trails; trail connections
2. Ecological impacts of trails: trail erosion, non-native invasive species, flooding, trail “creep”, poor trail location and/or design, sensitive habitat, are key ecological indicators; provided recommendations for areas of concern
3. Trail user relations: three types are motorized vs. non-motorized; non-motorized vs. non-motorized; recreation vs. non-recreation; site specific examples, provided recommendations for areas of concern
4. Supply and demand for trails: identified and quantified supply (not completed), recommend a development of statewide database of GIS layer, update FS maps and increase accuracy, identify and continue to develop compatible uses that can share trail systems, provided recommendations where supply does not meet demand i.e. horse, bike and ATV
5. Trail funding & volunteer management: identify major sources of funding managed by a central source like a clearinghouse; develop standard baseline cost estimates of trail
construction and maintenance; provided recommendations on how trail organizations can work together to leverage funding, and how to recruit and maintain volunteers

6. Unauthorized/illegal use of trails: examples, user generated trails, identified locations and mapped, provided recommendations on how to address

Questions and discussion:
- Local Motion has a GIS database called Trail Finder (managed by Todd Taylor), may be a source of information and included in SCORP
- ADA accessible trails were not a specific issue, but a general comment
- There is concern that trails at Nordic Ski Areas are not incorporated into this network and could potentially be multi-user trails
- Should emphasize that good working relations overrode conflict at the public meetings
- There is concern that illegal and unauthorized use of trails emphasizes education vs. enforcement, more presence and meaningful penalties should be included, funding to user groups could increase education, there is a concern that there is a lack of enforcement on private and town lands
- There is concern that there is no data on illegal and unauthorized uses- How will this be further developed?
- Next steps are public meetings to be held in Northern VT, synthesizing the information/input, identify what’s been done, and figuring out next steps without this formalized Trail Collaborative - is an Action Plan needed?
- There is concern that not all trail user relations are resolved (see full document);
- Public meeting input cited appreciation of the opportunity to be involved; many of these issues can be brought forward and addressed in SCORP
- There is recognition that public lands are finite resource and should not be compromised by solicited public input/demand; need to remember there are existing laws and regulations that emphasize protection of natural resources

Science Panel Report by William Valliere

Available:
http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails/Annotated_bibliography_draft_05-02-11.pdf

Key findings have changed slightly since last meeting. The report also includes research needs, executive summary, and cited studies. The group is invited to submit additional studies to Bill by May 10.

- There is concern that the OHV/ATV studies are based on illegal use not permitted/managed trail systems, Bill will review the literature cited and he observed that both kinds of use (permitted or illegal) are represented by social and ecological effects in these studies
- Suggest the need for further examination and assessment of trail cooperators and general users (conflicts, resource limitations) vs. just trail users/community
- There is concern that lack of user conflict is due to lack of multi-user trails in VT; concerns about how this report will be used, such as to highlight only negative impacts of OHV/ATV not just negative impacts caused by all trail users
- The report could drive better trail decisions by organizations in VT for the future
• The identification of research needs are not prioritized and there are opportunities for studies be conducted in VT or New England
• Bill will discuss finalization and how will this report be updated and maintained with Science Panel members on their next scheduled conference call

(15 minute break)

**Stewardship and Communication Work Group by Amy Kelsey**

The Trail Ethic report (May 2, 2011) is available: [http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails/Vermont_Trail_Ethic_Presentation.pdf](http://www.uvm.edu/tourismresearch/trails/Vermont_Trail_Ethic_Presentation.pdf)

This report was developed after survey responses were reviewed. Over 10,000 surveys were sent out with 900 responses, and 250 responders volunteered to help. The trail ethic will be implemented through this collaborative and the volunteers. Amy Kelsey presented an overview of the process and detailed information can be provided by contacting her. A side by side comparison of the October 19, 2010 version and current version of Trail Ethics messages were presented:

- There was a suggestion that the title be changed to “VT Trail User Ethic” and Workgroup kept the title “VT Trail Ethic”
- “Report Misuse” was eliminated as a message because signs and other marketing material will contain contact information for managing trail organization/user groups
- There was a suggestion that report trail misuse be added on bottom of the page along with reporting trail satisfaction
- There is concern that Leave No Trace is not specific for Wildlife, suggest clearer messages about what helps wildlife, such as pack out food and trash, keep pets on leashes;
- Suggest switching positions of numbers 9 and 10 to end on positive note-group agreed to implement

**Next Steps and how to implement:**

- Present at trailheads, work with recreation groups and vendors, post on the web (VT FPR, VT Greenways Council, GMNF);
- Marketing products will need funding, suggestion is that free methods be tried for a year before looking for funding sources, such as applying for grants for a pilot projects,
- Give to user groups to disseminate for print/publications (pdf for towns, chambers of commerce, VT Dept of Tourism and Marketing, other State printings, such as trail brochures, etc.)
- A draft version of the VT Trails and Greenways website was shown and is a place to present (with links to trail organization and public trail managers),
- Ed O’Leary suggests that the Governor include in his weekly address on National Trails Day on June 4, 2011 (prepare a press release), could coincide with launch of VT Trails and Greenways Council website (Ed will work with Tom Berry on press release),
- Amy will make changes prior to this and send out to group to verify in the next couple days
Open discussion

Actions items noted so far are the **Input for Science Panel, Press Release of VT Trail Ethics** with noted changes, and how to include **future input for the Landscape Management Workgroup**.

Other items:
How to expand outreach for VT Trail Collaborative work done so far? Suggestion is to finalize all three workgroup findings as one document. Status report of VT Trails Collaborative is posted on web and will be updated to include final document. Lisa will update status report on the website and ask for feedback on suggestions on final reports.

Ed will send out **request for information for SCORM input** (what’s important, what’s missing in the status report, etc).

How to maintain momentum now that the VT Trail Collaborative is coming to a close? Suggestion is for continued participation by groups represented here at meetings twice/year. Other suggestions are for groups currently participating in this collaborative to become members of VT Trails and Greenways Council to be carried forward. Lisa can send out information on next meeting date for VT Trails and Greenways Council (which has quarterly meetings). Send ideas and suggestions for follow-up to Lisa.Chase@uvm.edu.
### Appendix A: Participant List

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<th>Organization</th>
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<td>John</td>
<td>Bennett</td>
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<td>Tom</td>
<td>Berry</td>
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<td>Lisa</td>
<td>Chase</td>
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<td>Tony</td>
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<td>Amy</td>
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<td>Steve</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ed</td>
<td>O'Leary Vermont Department of Forests, Parks &amp; Recreation</td>
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<td>Walter</td>
<td>Opuszynski Northern Forest Canoe Trail</td>
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<td>Peter</td>
<td>Pettengill UVM grad student</td>
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<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Reichert USFS</td>
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<td>Jay</td>
<td>Strand USFS</td>
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<td>Bill</td>
<td>Valliere UVM Rubenstein School</td>
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<td>Doug</td>
<td>Weber VORA</td>
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<td>Kathryn</td>
<td>Wrigley GMC</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Frisque Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Swanton Vermont</td>
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