Attendees: Chad VanOrmer (GMNF), Lisa Chase (UVM), Mary Jean Packer (Moosalamoo Association), Bruce Brown (Moosalamoo Association), Patrick Kell (Vermont Mountain Bike Association), Amy Kelsey (Catamount Trail Association), Andy McIntosh (Catamount Trail Association), Bruce Acciavatti (Wonder Walks), Steve McCleod (VT Traditions Coalition, VASA), Tony Clark (Moosalamoo Association)

Meeting began at 6:30 p.m.

Introductions were made by group participants. Opening remarks were made by Chad VanOrmer and Tony Clark to introduce the agenda and topics.

The following are notes that resulted from the Group Discussion.

Trail Connectivity
- Different agencies are more cooperative for trail development than others. The railroads are pretty much non-cooperative.
- Different user groups face different issues associated with trail connectivity. For instance, bikers prefer loops that come back to the same point. VMBA seeks out areas where trails can be developed on land owned by a single property owner. But, the CTA is more linear, where it is impossible to avoid multiple land owners and jurisdictions.
- Historically, the FS has been used as a clearing house for connecting different user groups on multiple use trails. It would be difficult for a trail user desiring access to go around to every other user group on their own for trail development and access.
- VAST and CTA are trying to separate their trails where they can. But, is it appropriate or fair for every user to have its own independent trail system? VAST and CTA are an example of successful multi-use trails (cooperative use trails).
- If adding equestrian use or any other new use to existing trails, there is a need to ensure adding a new user won’t adversely affect current users.

Ecological Impacts
- There are unanswered questions about the ecological impacts of glade skiing creating even aged stands. Glade skiing impacts young tree regeneration.
- Personal observations show that non-native invasive species (NNIS) are more prevalent at trailheads today than 15 years ago.
• Education for reducing the spread of NNIS has been very effective for watercraft (Eurasian Milfoil). Trail managers should do something similar.
• Invasive species is a big concern along trails. A study found that one way to reduce the risk of invasive species is to keep a closed canopy intact.

User Conflicts and Safety
• There is a need for a one-stop source for getting information and providing feedback for trail conditions in the state.
• There is a need to collect better data on user conflicts (how often, what types of recreation, what locations have higher incidences of conflict).
• It would be helpful to have a website with contact info for recreation groups so conflicts can easily be reported.
• The vast majority of trail users are getting along. We should not over-state conflict issues in the report. All at the meeting agreed.
• There are conflicts between backcountry skiers and sugarmakers in Warren, VT. Skiers have cut sugar lines. This conflict could worsen in the future with the State of VT encouraging/promoting sugar making on public lands.
• Conflicts occur between skiers with and without dogs.
• Conflicts occur between skiers with dogs and dog sleds, where dog sleds veer off the trail to follow other dogs.
• Multiple use trails need to be designed together by the different user groups on the front end of trail development.
• Multiple use trails really come down to user groups that are willing to cooperate. Practical realities of funding necessitates ‘cooperative use trails.’
• CTA/skiers say the more organic matter on a trail, the better it is for freezing and skiing conditions. This conflict with other trail users (such as mountain biking) where organic matter is removed from the trail for a durable summer surface.
• Obstacles on trails for skiers could be considered “features” for mountain bikers. Trails for both uses need to include detours around obstacles/features.
• Are horses allowed on winter use trails during the winter? The answer is not clear from VAST or other trail managers. Need to better define where and when they are allowed.

Supply & Demand
• Demand for backcountry skiing has exploded in recent years.
• Other uses (emerging and traditional) that aren’t necessarily trail based, but rely on trails for access to wild areas.
  o Bird watching
Geocaching
- Accessing water for recreation
- Fishing & hunting
- Dark skies – areas with no light pollution
- Disc golf

- Equestrian users are looking for luxurious types of accommodations for overnight facilities. VT does not currently have facilities. Many Vermonters and others in the Northeast travel to NY for equestrian trails and facilities. High demand/use in some places in NY.
- There are questions whether demand is really there for equestrian use in VT.
- Existing trails aren’t very suitable for equestrian riders due to steep and wet terrain.
- LMWG should take a closer look at addressing future demand for equestrian use.

Funding & Volunteers
- Recreation groups can always use more of both.

Unauthorized/ Illegal Uses
- Do established trails encourage or discourage additional illegal uses? Anecdotal evidence suggests establishing sanctioned trails will discourage illegal use. Is there research to support this?
- Mountain bikers may go off trail to gain access to “features.” Trail design could include features to minimize going off trail.
- Better communication/signage can educate trail users.
- Recreation groups can play an important role educating their members (the Communication and Stewardship Work Group is working on this).

Other
- Collaboration is key for recreation groups, and we’ve seen better collaboration in recent years, thanks in part to the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council. For example, the town of Canaan instituted an increase in taxes on properties with ATV trails, and members of the Vermont Trails and Greenways Council joined forces to successfully argue against the tax. Recreation can improve for multiple uses if different user groups work together.