Vermont Trails Collaborative  
Landscape Management Work Group  
Warren Town Hall, April 28, 2010

Attendees: Dinsmore Fulton, Fred Gilbert, Laura Brines, Bobbi Reed, Joshua Schwartz, Walter Opuszynski, Phil Huffman, Carl Demrow, Dave Hardy, Brian Cotterill, Chad VanOrmer, Jay Strand, Holly Knox, Dun Cochrane

Trail Connectivity
- Several trails in the local area, including Catamount Trail, Mad River Path, VAST Trails, local town trails (ie, Eaton trail near Warren School), and the Long Trail, all rely on public and private land. All are important to the community but there are missing connections. As an example, the Mad River Path would like to connect from Warren to Moretown but is currently missing links.
- Several trails have been "lost" in Waitsfield and surrounding areas due to changing landowners and/or lack of use.
- Ongoing problem...what do organizations have to offer as incentive to landowners to give easements/ROWs for trail continuity? A lot of landowners are looking for some sort of compensation for use of their lands. Some towns provide tax abatement; some organizations provide gifts or monetarily compensate the landowner. It was suggested that the State could address this issue with tax policy changes.
- Landowners worry about safety (or their property and person), privacy, tax impacts, property values, and encumbering the property for their heirs.
- Other trails to consider for connectivity may be payer use/restrictive use trails such as Sugarbush Resort (mountain bikes and hiking), Mad River Glen, and Ohly’s x-country ski trails.
- Action Item: Joshua Schwartz provide Mad River Path and Mad River Byway GIS layers to Chad VanOrmer.

Ecological Impacts
- To address ecological concerns, need to hold workshops to educate public on how to build and maintain sustainable trails.
- If there is an underlying code of ethics such as “Leave It As You Found It” for all trails, how do you spread that message? As an example, the “Don’t Hike In Mud Season” message is well known...can this be attributed to Mark Breen?! ☺ This message was consistently spread over many years on tv, public radio, newspapers, etc. Another example is staying on the trail at Camel’s Hump to protect fragile alpine plant habitat.
- Why does the USFS not have a trail closure in effect for mud season so they could ticket people who walk on and damage wet trails? There needs to be something between doing nothing (status quo) and issuing a closure order. Education may be the best middle ground approach.
- Ecological impacts may include:
  - Hiking during mud season
  - Dog impacts (poop, not staying on trail and impacting vegetation and wildlife)
  - Viewshed impacts (example, does the USFS comment on projects that are not on their land such as wind towers but impact the scenery that visitors look out on when hiking Green Mountain NF trails?)
  - Agricultural neighbor impacts (example, hikers throw Frisbee into field and it damages farm equipment)
Maple sugar taps across the trail
Invasive species (didymo, chervil, knotweed)
Wildlife
Erosion

Supply & Demand
- Lots of combination of trail systems in Mad River Valley (public and private with a mix of uses)
- Lack of supply is more of a motorized trail issue with snowmobiles as the exception
- Horse opportunities are increasing but mostly on private lands
- Mountain bike trails exist but many are on private land, unofficial and not publicized (allowed by landowner but not widely known)…need recognizable connections

Trail Conflicts and Safety
- Trails should be closed during hunting season
- Dogs (people who have them off leash and not under control)
- Sugar tap lines
- Mixed uses (example, VAST and cross country ski uses on one trail)
- ATVs where they shouldn’t be
- Trails not constructed appropriately for uses that were added at a later date (example, hike trail that had bikes added to it...is it built sustainably for bikes?)
- Ancient Roads Issue...how do we prevent it from allowing Towns to open National Forest System lands to motorized uses on roads that were never built for modern equipment?
- Suggested way to address trail conflicts (such as bikes/hiking, or snowmobiles/skiing) & proper trail use is through state-wide code of ethics

Funding and Volunteers
- Volunteers need rewarded (hats, picnics, etc). GMC does a great job with this.