Meeting Notes  
Vermont Trails Collaborative – Landscape Management Working Group  
11/9/10 Public Meeting; Weston, VT

Attending:

David Ratti, Jim Sullivan, Silas Roberts, Sandy and Jim Wilbur, Mark Falango, Bonnie and Austin Zipeto, Bill Salmon, Doug Fish, Grant Braddish, Ernie and Hazel Tracy, Dave Hardy, Marge Fish, Debby Dorsett, Paul Stumpf, David Raymond, Kevin Beattie, Charlie Goodwin, Doug Blodgett (VT-ANR by email)

Facilitating/Note taking:

Jay Strand (USFS), Melissa Reichert (USFS), John Bennett (Windham Planning Commission); Jennifer Wright (USFS), and Kate Walker (USFS)

Issues, concerns and opportunities expressed at the meeting have been summarized and placed into one of the following 6 key issues:

1. Trail connectivity and trails with multiple landowners

Trails from Grafton Ponds to Windham
- Grafton to Houghtonville
- Emanating from Mollie Beattie

Beaver dams
- Jones Brook; too big for volunteers
- Also on Little Michigan; advertised as x-country ski trail by GMNF

General
- Generally, try to open ski trails for year-round pedestrian use
- Connecting WHPA to WRT; several options (see map from meeting)
  ✓ through Townshend most direct, within 3 miles, but there’s a lot of private land
  ✓ or Windham to Glebe
    o Hamilton Falls/Under Mtn. Road to Jamaica State Park
    o Timber Ridge
- Catamount Trail RR crossing at Healdville Station
- Catamount Trail re-routing to avoid approximately one mile road walk on Anderson Road (see map from meeting)
- Rob Hall and Sidney Craven trail group in Grafton
- Lawrence Hill Road (Weston); VAST connection to village (and gasoline) may be threatened with closure
- Trails off back side of Magic down to 121
- WHPA; east/west connection (ask Andy Toepfer)
- Mountain biking loops through Greendale out of Weston, Moses Pond
- Emerald Lake to Dorset Peak
- Corps/state (along West River south of S. Londonderry); trail runs along east side of river until it hits state land (Jamaica State Park)
- Connect to Ascutney
- Potential closure along Moses Pond Road trail (FT 342) between Greendale Road & just east of Weston village (see map from meeting)
- Show road going through from town road to NFS road (Jacqueth Rd) (see map from meeting)
- VMBA proposal for Weston

Ancient roads
- Is Forest Service tracking which towns are pushing ancient roads issues?
- Andover experience with ancient roads- two camps:
  ✓ natives who want to keep all old rights of way
  ✓ new landowners who want them all gone
- Key is town management
  ✓ ancient roads identified and added to VTrans town road maps are automatically classified as Class 4 roads (allowing mandated vehicular access)
  ✓ VT Agency of Natural Resources (not sure which department) may start bringing action against towns for environmental damage
- Towns need to reclassify as legal trails to avoid damage by vehicular use

2. Ecological impacts from trails

- In general, we’re concerned with human impacts/disturbance of sensitive or critical wildlife habitats and would want to take these factors into consideration when locating potential trails or changes. (We would use the compiled literature on "wildlife and human disturbance/impacts” as the scientific/factual basis for these considerations.)
- Sensitive habitats would include (but not limited to) wetlands and associated riparian habitats; Habitats of rare, threatened and endangered species; ecologically sensitive areas; Critical habitats such as deer wintering areas, key "mast" feeding areas, rookeries, Peregrine falcon/eagle nesting sites; key wildlife connectivity corridors, etc.
- Strategies for adequate resource protection would be varied and site dependent and could include avoidance, isolating distance with appropriate buffer distances, timing of use, etc.
- Horses can damage trails during mud season; erosion can also be a problem especially on steep slopes with trails with straight uphill treads
- Horse manure can be a nuisance on multi-use trails
- ATVs have gotten on Jones Brook Trail and have caused deep trenches in trail tread
- Beaver pond is impeding passage along Jones Brook Trail
- Ski trails should be open and available for hiking in the summer
- Little Michigan Trail gets rerouted by users avoiding wet areas
- Reroutes can avoid need to cross streams and reduce the need for bridge replacements
- Ancient roads will become an issue if ATV/ORV use is allowed by towns; this is an issue in Andover; posting of roads may prevent this
- Forest Service needs to provide town guidance on Ancient Road use
- Need to post trail use policy on VT Expedition Society website for proper education
- Be careful where trails are located to be sensitive to wildlife
- Good bear habitat along AT/LT corridor between Hapgood State Park and Snows Valley development; there could be impacts if existing VAST trail in Snows Valley area has to be relocated
- Beaver pond along Little Michigan Brook trail is impeding passage
- Beaver pond along Moses Pond trail (FT 342) is impeding passage
3. Trail user conflicts

- Off of FR 18, trail needs waterbars badly; not sustainable for snowmobiles and would be good x-country trail; this trail is heavily snowshoed & skied and there is conflict with snowmobiles
- Can’t hear due to 4-stroke engines coming so snowmobiles sneak up on the skiers
- Where can ATV’s legally ride?
- Horses need different infrastructure from other uses; mountain bikes and horses together on trail can be a problem; depends on level of use
- Suggest designating FR 58 for horses as well as mountain bikes; conflict not a problem on wider trails or roads; use turn around as parking area for trailers; also parking area for snowmobiles on FR 21
- Portion of Coolidge Connector trail (FT 347) not suitable for snowmobiles; needs waterbars (see map from meeting)

4. Existing supply and demand for trails

- Not enough horse trails in the Weston area; working with VT Horse Council
- MVTA/ PORC trails could converted easily to mountain bike trails; may be too wet for bikes; Jones Brook Trail too wet
- Connect IP horse trail with Castlebrook horse trail
- FR 313 would be good for horses; also some of the old logging roads in Glastenbury
- Little Michigan, Upper Michigan & Stone Place trails might be OK for mountain bikes; Utley Brook Trail is too wet.
- X-country and VAST trails in Weston/Peru area could also be used by bikers (see map from meeting)
- VAST trails in Windham/Grafton area could also be used by horses (see map from meeting)
- Connect existing horse trails in Stratton/Somerset area (see map from meeting)

5. Trail funding

- Bring more users in to the Green Mountain Forest by creating more mountain bike access
- Need committed trail users to perform maintenance

6. Unauthorized/illega uses of trails

- Patch Hallow; ATV coming out of Wallingford (south)
- ATV crossing through the Appalachian Trail near Spring Lake Ranch- make sure signs are cleared as to use and talk to Spring Lake Ranch (see map).
- There are several areas in the southern part of Vermont near the Massachusetts border where ATVs are crossing and using trails not permitting motorized vehicles. There is a culture of off-road vehicles (ORV) in that part of the State as well as in New York (see map).
- One land manager has successfully used blocks on his road to discourage ORV. He said it required persistency in order to achieve less use. He stated he returned to those sites to replace the blocks on the road but over time, the ORV stopped using his roads.
- Put boulders to stop ATV unauthorized access.
- Work with ATV clubs to allow them to use some crossings. We should forge a relationship with them and get them to police themselves.
• Rising need/desire for mountain biking on the Forest Service (see map for suggestions of trails)
• Discussion of ancient roads and use of them by an Outfitter and Guide taking clients out with their SUV in particular in the Woodstock area and causing resource damage. The town of Andover has identified their ancient roads and is in the process of reclassifying some roads from Class 4, to non-motorized use (except by Selectboard approval, ie. snowmobiles in winter) Town Trails. The remaining Class 4 roads have had motorized use restrictions applied to them as well. It was noted that if towns identify their ancient roads, they are responsible for maintaining them and making sure there are no resource damages caused by their use.
• Cutting trees and making ATV routes near AT/LT corridor near intersection with FR 273
• ATV crossing AT/LT near Whiskey Branch in Stamford

Side note: It would be good to keep a wildlife clearing north of Spring Lake Ranch by burning.