Meeting Notes
Vermont Trails Collaborative – Landscape Management Working Group
12/6/10 Public Meeting; Dover, VT

Attending:
Jim Sullivan, Jeff Nugent, Rick White, Tim Hunt, Malcolm Moore, Nicolas Wallaert, Kelly Pawlak, Tom Powell, Pat Bowen, Patrick Moreland, Steve McCleod, Jeff Burt, Tim Chock, Mike Percell, John Whitman, and Don Chambis

Facilitating/Note taking:
Melissa Reichert (USFS), John Bennett (Windham Regional Commission); Kate Walker (USFS), Bill Garrison (USFS), and Joan McCloud (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

General
- North Adams water supply lands (possible acquisition) (see map - GMC green circles)
- LT/AT corridor; Stamford opposed to public ownership – only piece of land that isn’t in Forest Service – National Forest System (NFS) lands ownership (possible acquisition)
- Development along Rocky Ridge, Klondike and County Roads; new phone, fiber optic and electrical service upgrades; > 1 mile County Road, 1.5 mile on Klondike
- VTrans District garage in Readsboro disrupted local snowmobile trail
- Mount Snow to Somerset (check if existing trail is across NFS lands under High Country Tours special use permit)
- Bennington ATV access to Sucker Pond Trail between County Road and Bennington Town Forest (see map)
- Propose primitive routes or primitive trails – addresses the issue that when the Forest Service purchases land, old roads, paths, etc., are not part of official trail network therefore there is no official maintenance, so informal local use is threatened (see detailed proposal)
- Designate FR 83 and Castle Brook for horse use
- Cross Town Trail - The Town of Dover (Planning Commission) is working on accessibility and erosion issues (see map).
- Is TransCanada maintaining the trail around the west side (and elsewhere) of Somerset reservoir?
- Need connectivity from Grout Pond to TransCanada trails via Hilltop Trail or West Trail
- Would like to develop summer trail system in the Dover area
- FR 325 to 374 should be biking trails, as well as horse trails

Access
- Trail head access – ensure they are plowed in the winter
- Bridge out at Sherman Station, therefore no way to cross river from Catamount Trail
- Parking at Cross Town Road trailhead
- Signage is up at Cross Town trail network
Standards for parking areas, plowing parking areas, e.g., 3 at Ascutney, Jamaica State Park also plowed
Unmarked Forest Service access from public roads to NFS lands – even where there is a right-of-way, e.g., Heather Brook Road, Medburyville
Mountain bike access to TransCanada land along west side of Grout Pond, west side and/or Hill Top trail; need formal Forest Service approval
Dover Planning Commission, parking, access to trails; at Dover Town Forest and NFS lands in Dover and Wardsboro
Need trailheads for horse trailers along Rte. 9
Looking for ways to get into backcountry areas – legal access over private land or areas that are not on snowmobile trails for a mile or so

Loop opportunities
- Glastenbury loop 20 mile (2 day) on LT
- Old Job, 10 or 12 mile loop
- Branch Pond snowmobile trail connector to LT to avoid walk back along Kelly Stand
- Working with Catamount and TransCanada to make loops

2. Ecological impacts from trails

- Lye Brook Wilderness has limited maintenance for erosion
- Does motorized vehicle use cause harm to wildlife habitat?
- Does snowmobile use have an effect on wildlife winter habitat and wildlife behavior?
- Trail use in wrong seasons, spring hiking; hard to get information out
- Snowmobiles have soil impacts
- ATVs ecological impacts on old Stage Coach Road and north of Sucker Pond
- There was a concern that trail use is happening during the wrong season (i.e., spring hiking). How do we get the appropriate information out to users about trail use during mud season? Drainage work needs to be completed early in the season before users get on the trails.
- There was a concern that snowmobile are causing soil impacts during low- to no- snow cover conditions.
- Putting mountain bikes on existing trails would cause ecological impacts because of existing drainage problems. If these existing trails were open to mountain bikes it would appear that mountain bikes were creating ecological problems. In some cases, alternate routes on higher grounds on either side of existing trails would be more sustainable.
- Although sometimes existing logging roads may not be the best orientation for a trail (i.e., it follows the fall line), a “single track” can be “serpentine” across the existing trail to better serve drainage needs and user experience.
- There is significant erosion occurring along the “Dorset Ridge Trail” due to ATV use.

3. Trail user conflicts  (Trail user relations)

- Suggest NEPA level of decision should be below formal Decision Memo
- Working with Catamount and TransCanada to make loops
- Minimize conflicts by working together
- User conflict between Forest Service log jobs and trails (Root Beer Ridge is one specific example)
• If the mountain bikers are allowed to work as a group with the horse people, the bike people can help out with trail maintenance which would reduce ecological impacts.
• Desire for more biking trails - also working with horse folks on trails
• Suggest speed limits on areas where the snowmobiles and skiers share the trail
• Waterbars from logging on Root Beer Ridge are a problem for skiing – when trails are used for logging it changes the character and is not restored to the way the trails was
• When culverts are removed it creates big gully that impacts the trail use negatively

4. Existing supply and demand for trails

General
• Encourage more approximately 20 mile loops
• Identify access points to public lands/trails
• Want more mountain bike and horse trails
• Will Redmill campground ever be open for permitted events?
• How do we address pre-existing recreational uses on newly acquired parcels of land? (i.e., blazed snowmobile trails on the “Dorset Ridge Trail”.) If we are not adopting the existing trails, we need to sign and/or “barricade” them closed.

Mountain bikes
• South half equestrian trails should also be OK for mountain bikes
• Mountain bikes should be allowed on horse trails in the Castle Brook, FR83, and Pine Valley area. Anything approved for horses would be suitable for a mountain bike.
• Desire for more biking trails - also working with horse folks on trails
• Open up the Dome and Stage in Readsboro for mountain bikes
• Open the Grout Pond West Trail to mountain bikes

Horses
• There are areas in Dover on NFS lands where people are already riding

Snowmobiles
• Branch Pond snowmobile trail connector to LT to avoid walk back along Kelly Stand

Maps
• Maps – road base data is outdated, whereas conserved lands data is current
• Valley Trail – GPS data to update Valley Trail
• FR 266 in Lamb Brook area - parts missing from map
• Need marking and maps for Dover NFS lands

5. Trail funding

• We could use mountain biker volunteers to flag out mountain bike routes then the Forest Service can go out and approve them.
• Recreational groups could be trained in non-native plants so that that can help report and track infestations.
6. Unauthorized/illegal uses of trails

- ATVs ecological impacts on Old Stage Coach Road and north of Sucker Pond
- Catamount Trail in Winhall off IP Road, sled tracks to Grout Pond and north of Kelly Stand
- Dover Town Forest illegal trail cutting (and crossing onto NFS land)
- Folks noted illegal cutting for motorized use in the Dover Town Forest area.
- ATV abuse of trails
- Dutch Hill not authorized by Forest Service or town
- Corridor 9 has illegal trails from camps to Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) system
- How do we know where motorized vehicles can be used and how we can police activity (as it relates to soil erosion)?
- There are ATV issues down on Old Stage Coach Road. It would be better to keep ATVs on the snowmobile trail to cross City Stream (aka Stamford Stream), rather than where they are crossing currently on Old Stage Road to get to Burgess Rd. It is muddy where the ATVs intersect with the AT/LT. (see map)
- South of Sucker Pond (where the school did a great job cleaning up), North of County, a trail comes into an unnamed pond and onto the AT creating a muddy area. (see map)
- There is significant erosion occurring along the “Dorset Ridge Trail” due to ATV use.
- Forest Service employees should formally report any illegal OHV activity so we can focus law enforcement in those areas or implement better travel management control.
- Catamount trail and snowmobile traffic north to Brookwood and Kelly Stand east of AT/LT
- ATV use on snowmobile trails – resource damage to trail structures
- ATV use on Dooney Rd to Dutch Hill Area
- Private snowmobile trails from camp off Corridor 9-Readsboro
- Occasional ATV use in the Wardsboro/Dover NFS lands area

NOTE: Sawmill and monument to a farmer killed by a bull in the Wardsboro NFS parcel. Also, there’s an old dam at Coy Swamp.