Meeting Notes
Vermont Trails Collaborative – Landscape Management Working Group
11/29/10 Public Meeting; Manchester, VT

Attending:

Bob Whitney (Green Mountain Club - GMC), Ruth Ann Barrick (GMC, MVTA), Jim Hand (The Nature Conservancy-TNC), David McDevitt (TNC), Lee Krohn (Town of Manchester), Carol Barringer (Manchester Bike Club), Justin Morrison (Swedish Ski Club), David Squires (Alpenrose Inn), Bill Badger, Robert Tobia, Jenn A. Pugliese, Lisa Thornton (VT Dept of Forests, Parks and Recreation), Firm Sherwood, Herb Ogden (GMC), Rich Heilemann, Joe Miles (Manchester Mountain Bike Club), Kim Mertens, Anna Deschamps, Jess Ferrara, Ryan D. Rusch, Jeremy Krohn, Steve McCloed (LMWG), Fred Hartmann (Friends of the West River Trail), Tom Butland, Wayne Krevetski (GMC), Marge Fish (GMC), Bruce Herforth (MVTA), Andron Reed, Blu and Marilyn Kinney, Rick LaDue (Equinox Preservation Trust), David Quesnel, Amanda Milkin (Green Mountain College), Annika Metcalf (Green Mountain College), Elaine Eisenbraun (Merck Forest & Farmland Center), Betty Steiner, Keld Austrup (GMC), Monica Stillman, Lyndsay Strange, Ryan Comar, David Minkl, Susan Sargent (EHT/TNC), Doug Fontein (Tinmouth Land Trust), Jim Harding (Green Mountain College), and Ashley Staron (GMC)

Facilitating/Note taking:

Melissa Reichert (USFS), John Bennett (Windham Regional Commission); Jim Henderson (Bennington County Regional Commission), Carol Burd (USFS), Donna Strout (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
   • Multi-use trails that connect across new National Forest System (NFS) lands from Emerald Lake to Dorset Hollow
   • Merck to Mad Tom via Dorset Peak and Emerald Lake
   • Favor connection to Taconics
   • Connection to “Smokey House” property in Danby
   • Forest Service (NFS lands) strip 450’ wide from Emerald Lake to Rte. 30 in Rupert
   • Mad Tom Brook Trail re-opening
   • Unofficial trails on private property, especially as it changes hands (acquisition possibilities)
   • More need for higher elevation yet flat terrain trail (following contours)
   • Small parcel private landowners and their fear of liabilities to trail users; more public relations are needed (address liability concerns through education/policy to encourage trail connectivity)
   • “Unofficial” trails on private property; how do you keep friendly relations?
   • Trailheads on private property; how to maintain their longevity; i.e., keep a house from being built through them?
Trails from Equinox to Merck Forest
- Manchester Bike Club would like to connect Equinox to Merck Forest; most likely around 1500’ elevation would be accessible while avoiding residential uses.
- Equinox to Merck connection!
- Equinox to Merck; The Nature Conservancy rates as high priority for ecological diversity in NE

Access
- Parking at trailheads tends to be limited, especially around the Class 4 Roads (as far as they plow); winter parking very difficult.
- Lye Brook Road should be plowed all the way to the end at the parking lot; this is a very important tourist attraction
- LT Rte. 11/30 parking is plowed by VAST; the State should maintain this parking lot!
- Three Maple Road to Beartown – no place to park
- “Rocking Stone” access to Equinox
- Parking at trail heads, especially at end of Class 4 Roads

Loop opportunities
- Cross country ski trails might be possible mountain bike trails in off-season (Utley Brook, Little Michigan, Stone Place) specifically around Peru and Landgrove; make connections/loops to the north
- Weston - Moses Pond Trail, Devils Den Trail need to be opened up to mountain bikes and connected to the Utley Brook area trails
- Rootville Road past Prospect Rock to the power line to the 4WD trail should be open to mountain biking
- Utley Brook - possibly restore loop capability

Beaver dams
- Weston and everywhere there is beaver damage; AT from Rte. 30 to Bromley there is a new beaver pond where trail needs lots of work; also Branch Pond in Lye Brook where water is waist deep; Catamount Trail has been re-diverted at many spots; Little Michigan & Jones Brook, too.

2. Ecological impacts from trails
- Old Forest Service policies should be revised to prove that mountain bikes are destructive
- Need education on how to build and maintain trails
- Little Michigan erosion concern
- Trail design and manuals (to prevent impacts)
- Is there a potential that the AT/LT could be closed during the hiking season due to ground conditions? Answer: Sometimes it is.
- Trail closures are not weather related just blocks of time – want to know if trail closures can be more weather related
- General concern about non-native invasive plants from The Nature Conservancy
3. Trail user conflicts  (Trail user relations)

- Pine Hill Park in Rutland as example - demonstration for multiple trails use interest and success
- Utley Brook access lost 2 miles of trail to logging
- Manchester area, like Pine Hill or East Burke, for multiple uses and opportunities for maintenance; emphasis on single track “paths” that don’t require environmental manipulation
- Clarity of allowed uses and rules of the road; e.g., right-of-way for ascending or descending, for skiing, biking, hiking, horses, etc.
- Lack of conflicts
- A lot of trails are impacted by logging on private lands
- Appreciation of this forum for interested people
- Middlebury trail shares bikes and hiking in some areas and it works okay
- Some VAST trails are partially suitable for ATV use

4. Existing supply and demand for trails

General
- Mountain biking/skiing/running – most of the higher elevation trails are too difficult for the average person to access
- Observed motorcycle status of roads; common set of signage; availability/allowed access for motorized access
- Manchester area, like Pine Hill or East Burke, for multiple uses and opportunities for maintenance; emphasis on single track “paths” that don’t require environmental manipulation;
- Skiers and hikers - more high elevations
- Identifying existing trails with potential for additional uses, e.g., horses and bikes
- “Plonking” – backcountry observed trials - motorcycle, low speed, light weight, low pressure; ride over obstructions, not around
- Look at abandoned roads like one near Griffith Lake Hotel for potential trails
- Sucker Pond snowmobile trail could be used for other uses

Mountain bikes
- Landgrove/Peru group would like to open more mountain bike trails on NFS lands
- Not enough mountain bike trails on the GMNF
- There are not any trails built specifically for mountain bikes on the GMNF (especially south half)
- Weston - Moses Pond Trail, Devils Den Trail need to be opened up to mountain bikes and connected to the Utley Brook area trails
- Mountain bikers feel like outcasts on the GMNF
- Rootville Road past Prospect Rock to the power line to the 4WD trail should be open to mountain biking
- Potential for summer use in White Rocks for mountain biking
- Management at Equinox – loss of mountain biking
- Mountain bikers under-represented on the GMNF; not one trail built for mountain biking; bad rap from past Forest Service perspective
Maps
- GMNF should update the existing trail maps to show trails on newly acquired lands
- In general, the GMNF needs to update their trail maps; add new trails and delete old, no longer used, trails
- Existing trails and networks in use but not formally designated
- Forest Service has trail – Catamount in Winhall - French Hollow to Bromley, not shown on map
- IP Road is open to mountain bikes though not shown on maps

5. Trail funding
- Funding sources; facilitated by multiple uses
- Trail funding should be used for multiple uses especially for features like bridges and trail heads
- Volunteers; too much Forest Service red tape
- Suggest recruiting volunteer help with user surveys
- Forest Service spent $10 million for roads and trails (stimulus funding); replaced bridges; built mountain bike trail at Sky Point and one underway
- Volunteer – recruiting and prioritized lists through organizations
- Develop an information clearing house
- There were questions related to trail design and manuals for trail design such as for mountain bikes, Green Mountain Club (GMC) trail manuals, and Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) trail manual – these manuals do exist.
  - How much red tape does a group have to go through to construct and maintain a new trail on NFS land?
  - Groups need to work collaboratively to do trail work on NFS lands – use volunteers to help maintain trails

6. Unauthorized/illegal uses of trails
- There is ATV use on the Bucklin Trail in the Brewer's Brook area