**Vermont Monitoring Cooperative Lye Brook Wilderness Area Subcommittee Meeting Agenda**

**Wednesday, February 18, 2015, 9:30am-3:30pm**

**Green Mountain National Forest Headquarters**

**231 N. Main St, Rutland, VT**

**Meeting Notes**

In attendance: Angie Quintana-Jones, Jen Wright, Ralph Perron, Carol Knight, Melissa Reichert, Diane Burbank, Jared Serpico, Seth Bigelow, Jim Duncan, Judy Rosovsky, Jim Kellogg, Heather Pembrook, Carl Waite, Mim Pendleton, Bennett Leon, Thom Villars, Ethan Swift, Sandy Wilmot, Josh Halman

Meeting Objectives:

* + Provide brief summaries of past research in the Lye Brook Wilderness Area
  + Identify future research needs and the resources needed for the research
  + Develop a strategy to accomplish the research
* **Wilderness Program Performance Elements (Jen Wright, GMNF)**

The new elements shift focus to forest character. There are 19 new elements with a scoring system of ten possible points each. There are four mandatory administrative elements, and we’ll have to choose an additional six for each wilderness area, for a total of 100 possible points for each WA. The Forest Service may offer funding opportunities to help achieve better scores in the program.

Action item: Jen will send out the descriptions of the Wilderness program and elements and solicit input on element selection, and coordinate a teleconference to discuss them further on Wed, May 20, 1:30–3pm.

* **Forest Health Monitoring (Sandy Wilmot, of VT Dept. of Forests, Parks, and Recreation)**

Sandy presented a summary of the aerial surveys of the Lye Brook Wilderness Area for disturbance events and Forest Health Monitoring with on-the-ground plots, as well as ozone bioindicators.

Action item: Sandy will contact the Stratton Ski Area to discuss forest health monitoring.

* **Long-term Ecosystem Monitoring Project (Diane Burbank, GMNF)**

Diane provided an overview of the LEMP Project, which has 1 of 20 Forest-Wide plots located in the Lye Brook Wilderness Area. The plots were selected to be representative of the Dominant Natural Communities- 80+ year-old stands with little to no disturbance in the past 30 years. The next round of sampling is scheduled to begin in 2018. We have to work on our strategy for sampling woody vegetation, since we ran out of time last year.

Action Item: Angie will coordinate a meeting to discuss 2017 data collection with all those present who indicated interest. Please contact Angie if you were not at this meeting but would like to participate.

* **VMC Long-Term Soil Monitoring (Thom Villars, NRCS)**

Data was collected in 2002, 2007, and 2012, and some analysis has been completed in the two Lye Brook Wilderness Area sites out of the five total project sites. The project was designed to detect trends in soils due to acid deposition and climate change. Plot corners in the LBWA are marked with underground brass monuments, with subtle stone cairns above ground. In 2012, the researchers started burying magnets enclosed in plastic in the pits they sampled. The protocols may be on the VMC website. In the Lye Brook plots, there are well-defined spodosols over dense glacial (lodgment) till (Cd horizon). One lesson learned: the same person should write every soil description, or maybe two people who are well calibrated. They had some lumping/splitting data disagreements when too many people wrote descriptions.

* **Tree Growth Studies (Seth Bigelow, Independent Research Scientist)**

Seth summarized his study in a Lincoln Pond Hemlock Stand in Huyck Preserve, in Rensselaerville NY, titled, “Using tree rings and tree neighborhoods to understand growth in a changing climate.”

Action Item: Seth (lead) will contact Kerry Wood at Bennington College (also in BCSF) and propose tree growth assessment in conjunction with soil data from LEMP and LTSM soil data.

* **Lake Water Quality Monitoring (Heather Pembrook, VT Dept. of Environmental Conservation)**

Heather summarized the monitoring completed by the VTDEC in the Lye Brook Wilderness Area. There are 34 years of seasonal water chemistry data for Bourn and Branch Ponds. Macroinvertebrate surveys were intended to be done every 5 years, but due to time and budget limitations, they were done in 1986, 1993, and 2005. The group expressed interest in temperature monitoring in LB lakes or ponds with more color, as measured by Pt-Co units and inorganic monomeric aluminum. It’s unknown whether the color is from organic or mineral sources.

Action Item: Heather (lead), will draft a monitoring plan with Kelly M. and Angie. Heather will send Bourn & Branch Pond water chemistry data (nutrients) to Carol Knight and Angie Quintana-Jones. Jim Kellogg will gather and send the data he’s collected on possible Stratton Pond enrichment.

* **Recreation Use Impact on Lye Brook Wilderness Area Ponds and Public relations strategy discussion for resource protection (Jen Wright and Carol Knight, GMNF, Heather Pembrook and Jim Kellogg, VT DEC)**

There was strong interest from the group in a site management plan including a public outreach strategy for Branch and Bourn Ponds, and follow-up monitoring. Management ideas included:

* + Post a sign at one point at Branch Pond where most traffic crosses.
  + Designate trails and campsites designated, and provide sanitary facilities.
  + Close the site temporarily for rehabilitation.
  + Hire a caretaker.
  + Survey campers to learn about use and start a dialogue.
  + Form a group of parties interested in restoring the ponds

Action item: Jen Wright, Carol Knight, and Diane Burbank will initiate work on a site management plan, collaborating with interested parties, the public, Green Mountain Club, and UVM LANDS program, keeping potential WSP funding in mind. Jen will coordinate a field trip on August 19, 2015 to the area.

* Forest birds and reptiles/amphibians have been surveyed in the Lye Brook WA in the past by Jim Andrews and Chris Rimmer. Jim Andrews stated at the last subcommittee meeting in December 2015 that he would be interested in continuing his work, but needs funding.
* A Geomorphic Assessment in 2007 listed areas needing rehabilitation.

Action Item: Ethan Swift will share this with Dan McKinley and Angie Quintana-Jones, and coordinate site visits to sites needing revisiting since TS Irene.

* The top choice from the informal priorities survey was to synthesize all the information we have in the Lye Brook Wilderness Area.

Action item: VMC staff (lead) will work on a grant to NSRC and look into hiring a grad or work-study student to start compiling a list of what we know, and who has information.

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| Save the Date for upcoming meetings: |
| * Wednesday, May 20, 1:30-3pm: Teleconference about the Wilderness Stewardship Program * Wednesday, August 19: Field Trip to Branch and/or Bourn ponds   (Jim Kellogg to plan another field day that week- details to follow)   * Wednesday, November 4, 2015: Lye Brook Subcommittee Meeting in Montpelier |

/s/Angie Quintana-Jones, 3/5/2015