

Meeting of the Hogback Preservation Commission
5 p.m. Monday, September 14, 2015
Marlboro, Vermont Town Office
Minutes

Call to Order – 5:00pm

Attendees: Mike Purcell, Lauren MacArthur, Ed Metcalfe, Christine Collela, David, Bob Anderson, Nancy Anderson, Diana Todd, Don Yanke

Minutes: May 11, 2015 and July 11, 2015 approved

Reports

Chair's Report

Mike is still transitioning into his role as Chair and hopes to meet with Hal ASAP to be updated on some of the details of the job. Hal and Mike will meet before November to talk through creating a budget since the November meeting is when we discuss the budget.

HMCA Report

1. The Tom Wessels talk and walk on August 6 was well received. About 55 people attended the slide show, and 25 joined the walk in the woods.
2. Two guided hikes focusing on ferns were offered this summer, led by Patti Smith and co-hosted by BEEC. About a dozen people attended each.
3. Four guided hikes are planned for fall, on these topics: history, mushrooms (co-hosted by BEEC), bird banding demonstration, and early ski lift technology. (There has been lots of participation in walks and events! HMCA is advertising in 3 newspapers, iBrattleboro, 3 Front Porch Forums, Facebook, the HMCA website and newsletter!)
4. The trail committee has installed the bridge at the stream crossing on the Douglas Trail and installed trails signs at all major intersections on the north-side trails. The north-side trails have been cleared of blowdowns and weed-whacked. Undergrowth at Saltman's Overlook has been cleared and a temporary bench installed. A rustic log bench has also been installed near the cliffs just below the Hogback summit.
5. Nancy Anderson staffed a table for HMCA at the Marlboro Fair. Bob & Diana helped with setup. Lots of positive feedback from folks at the Fair about the land and what's been happening there.
6. Bird banding stations have been installed at several locations in the former ski area by UMass researchers. They will be working most weekday mornings until Halloween.
7. The Lyndon State College research involving ticks, mice and Lyme disease continues. The only sign of this work are some small surveyor's flags near the ski area summit.
8. Phase 2 of the 10-year Early Successional Habitat project has gotten underway. Conner Hamilton was hired to create three openings on the Great White Way, which he accomplished in August. Five volunteer work days are planned. The first was on Sept 13 (the day before the HPC meeting) in somewhat inclement weather. 3 people attended.
9. Marlboro College Professor Jaime Tanner will be visiting Hogback with her Ecology class this fall to look at the ESH project sites. She will be assigning the class a project to come up with ideas for how we can assess the impact of the project.
10. HMCA has received federal non-profit status, pending submission of some additional minor documentation.

11. HMCA currently has 297 people subscribing to its email newsletter.
12. 391 people currently follow the Hogback Facebook page.
13. The Hogback web page has received over 3,200 visits since May 2015. (That's when we started tracking site visits.)

SVNHM Report – Things are going well and are looking forward to a visit from PBS this coming Thursday, 9/17/15. The restaurant across the road has been purchased by Pizzapalooza, but the plans are not verified.

Old Business

- **Biodiversity study** – Not much going on here. Still looking for qualified environmental scientists to assist with the study. We will follow up with Bill Gunther.
- **Audobon donation:** We need to request a check from Linda Peters for this and need Hal's advice on how this transaction usually takes place.
- **Snowmobile use in HMA:** Discussed with Don Yanke of the Stump Jumpers the issue of "poaching", unauthorized trail use by snowmobilers and plans for encouraging and enforcing correct VAST trail use by snowmobilers, particularly through increased signage and roping alongside the trail

Specific plans for improvement that Don has agreed to pursue:

- Change and increase signage
- Re-evaluate the ropes used and perhaps add more/change the way they are set up
- Talk to the National Grid about their access road to the tower and possibly installing a gate that allows National Grid and snowshoers and skiers through, but keeps snowmobiles out. (Many snowmobilers see the tracks in the snow on the access road and assume it's ok to go up there.)
- There will, at least, be a "Do Not Enter" sign installed on the National Grid access road.
- Re-iterate on Facebook and their website the etiquette and rules of using the VAST trails and the fact that land access privileges can be revoked if rules aren't followed
- increase law enforcement, especially via the Souther Vermont Task Force for Snowmobiling Enforcement (a group funded by VAST).

We agreed to let Don know as soon as we see that snowmobilers are violating rules.

We also discussed whether it is possible to open up access to the Tower for snowmobilers since the natural inclination of visitors to the area is to "reach the top" and we realize that people will go up regardless of signs and ropes. The consensus of the group, including Don, seemed to be that this would create other issues and might not be safe, especially for skiers.

Another idea was to use a color block on the map, indicating that Hogback is a conservation area and therefore a sensitive area.

Mike inquired about the landowner-VAST agreement for HPC to sign.

New Business

- Our HPC/HMCA budgets are due for review at the November meeting
- HPC will be submitting 2 budgets. Line items from HMCA (approved by HPC) and HPC budget to be included.
- Discussion re: Biodiversity Study. We need to start quantifying needs for expanding and clarifying our management plan. Reconnect with Bill Gunther re: grant money.

Next Meeting – Monday, 11/9/15, 5pm

Adjournment – 6:26 pm

Respectfully Submitted,

Lauren MacArthur

9/21/15