

**Regular Meeting of the Hogback Management Plan Update Committee**  
**7:30 p.m. Wednesday, June 28, 2023**  
**Town Office, Marlboro, Vermont and via Zoom**

**Minutes**

Called to order at 7:37 pm.

1. Introductions and preliminaries – Members Present – In-person – Diana Todd, Mike Purcell. On Zoom - Pieter van Loon, Eric Slayton, Amanda Whiting. Members of the public - Nancy Anderson
  - a. choose a secretary to take minutes - Pieter
  - b. choose a Zoom host - Eric
  - c. start Zoom recording
2. Approve minutes of previous meeting.

The minutes from the June 14 meeting were approved as presented.
3. Review “Purposes” of the Conservation Easement.

We reviewed the Conservation Easement purposes document that Diana provided prior to the meeting. (See Attachment A.)
4. Review organized/summarized list of topics to consider during the update. Diana created a 4-page document summarizing all the topics that we identified at our previous meeting that we may want to review during the update. (See Attachment B.) The document will be updated periodically to include new topics that come up. At this meeting wildlife corridors, kiosks/mapping guidelines, and the governing structure for the property were added to the list. The committee agreed that the list is quite comprehensive.
5. Review structure of existing Management Plan and other samples; develop preliminary outline for the update.

Upon review and consideration of various ways in which to organize the material, it was decided that we will put off creating an outline until we have a better handle on what we will cover.
6. Discuss strategy for accomplishing the update work.

Seems a daunting task that may require the help of many more folks. It could be done through reaching out to area experts and grad or under-grad students. Another possibility is to create a draft through research and committee discussions and then get public input to help refine. Tapping people who are passionate about or have expertise in particular topics will likely be more successful at recruiting than blanket appeals through outlets like Front Porch Forum. Sam Schneski, Windham County Forester, can help us create the forest management section of the plan. Other folks we might ask include historical society members, former Marlboro College faculty, and HMCA board members.

We could have individual meetings dedicated to particular issues and have content experts in to get their input. We’ll consider holding some of these meetings as walks on the mountain rather than as conference room sit-down meetings.
7. Review key findings of the Biodiversity Inventory.

We ran out of time and decided to put this off until the next meeting.
8. Assignments for next meeting  
Pieter will contact Sam Schneski and let him know we are interested in him helping us out and that Diana will be in touch. She will share the Biodiversity Inventory with him, so he has that background on the property.  
All members will review the Biodiversity Inventory. [A link to it can be found on the front page of the Hogback website.](#)  
Everyone will review list of topics and come ready to help boil it down and start to create a structure for the plan.

9. Adjourn – 9:02 PM

## Attachment A

### Purposes of the Conservation Easement

#### Taking a closer look

Here's what is in the Conservation Easement:

I. Purposes of this Grant and Management Plan.

A. Statement of Purposes.

Grantor and Grantees acknowledge that the purposes of this grant are as follows:

1. As primary purposes, to conserve forestry values, wildlife habitats, riparian buffers, aquatic habitats, wetlands, soil productivity, and water quality on the Protected Property, and the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource values as these values exist on the date of this instrument and as they may evolve in the future, non-motorized, non-commercial recreational opportunities, open space values, and scenic resources associated with the Protected Property for present and future generations.

2. As secondary purposes, to conserve biological diversity, natural communities, and native flora and fauna associated with the Protected Property for present and future generations.

There's a lot packed in there. Here it is, re-typed, to visually break out the key points:

Grantor and Grantees acknowledge that the purposes of this grant are as follows:

1. As primary purpose:

- to conserve
  - forestry values
  - wildlife habitats
  - riparian buffers
  - aquatic habitats
  - wetlands
  - soil productivity, and
  - water quality on the Protected Property, and
  - the ecological processes that sustain these natural resource values . . .
- non-motorized, non-commercial recreational opportunities
- open space values, and
- scenic resources . . .

2. As secondary purposes:

- to conserve
  - biological diversity
  - natural communities, and
  - native flora and fauna . . .

What do some of these terms mean?

**Forestry values:** Here's what Jennifer Garrett of the Vermont Land Trust replied when I asked her for a definition:

"Forestry" – Forestry is the science and practice of establishing, managing, using, and conserving forests, trees, and associated resources in a sustainable manner to meet desired goals, needs, and values of the landowners and our society

"Conservation Values -- A property's "conservation values" are its certain features and attributes that provide a public benefit, and therefore are goals for protection and preservation when conserving land. These conservation values are the basis for the "Purposes" of the conservation easement. They can include wildlife habitats, biodiversity, water quality, public recreation, archaeological resources, scenic views from public roads ... and forestry.

"Forestry Values" (as an easement conservation value) -- resources, practices, and benefits associated with forest conservation and stewardship. Forestry values include the sustainable production of syrup and wood products (renewable resources that benefit the local economy and that supply the state with its own food, firewood, building materials, etc.), but they also include other forest stewardship goals such as forest conservation, wildlife habitat enhancement and biodiversity conservation, and wildfire management. The easements require that all forest stewardship practices protect soil and water quality, which are critical for healthy forests and ecosystems, so these are included in forestry values. We ensure these forestry values are protected in conserved forests through the requirement of a management plan (a forest management plan for harvests and commercial sugaring, and a general management plan for public access and other permitted activities).

**Open Space values:** Here's an informal definition from the Vermont Planning Information Center (VPIC):

"The term *open space* can mean many things – wooded hillsides, open farm fields, land set aside for natural, historic, and scenic resource protection or for public access and recreation, or all undeveloped land in a community."

from <http://www.vpic.info/Publications/Reports/Implementation/OpenSpacePrograms.pdf>

This doc encourages each town to develop its own definition of Open Space for their town plan, but Marlboro does not have a definition in its town plan. Here's a definition that VPIC gives as a sample, from the guidance doc listed above.

2006 Shelburne Open Space Conservation Plan: For the purposes of this Plan, open space is defined as an area of Shelburne's landscape that is essentially undeveloped, such as ridges, streams, woodlands, wetlands, shorelines, and agricultural lands. Open space lands typically have no buildings or other complex human-made structures in current service, except for active farms with barns and other agricultural structures. These lands may be in their natural state, serving important environmental and/or aesthetic functions, or they may be used for agriculture, forestry, and/or low impact recreation. Either way, they help maintain the condition and function of Shelburne's natural resources, which are essential to the Town's outstanding quality of life.

## Attachment B

### Topics to consider during Management Plan Update

- Getting public input
  - Survey
    - shouldn't be long
    - wait until we know what we're proposing before trying to draft a survey
  - Public meetings
    - on site meetings vs indoors meetings
    - have a first draft so that people have something to respond to
    - for some towns, open ended meetings (what are your ideas?) were too unfocused to be truly useful
- Document-wide issues
  - appropriate level of detail
    - many plans we reviewed were too long
    - current plan is uneven, lots of detail some places, not much in others
  - should we adopt zones?
    - recreation
    - special protection, non-harvest areas, very limited trails (foot traffic only)
    - general use – timber harvest OK, light recreation OK
  - should we be guided/refer to state-wide plans, like
    - Vermont State Wildlife Action Plan
    - Species of Greatest Conservation Need
    - Wildlife Linkage Habitat ratings and Wildlife Crossing Values
  - Should we define goals for each asset/each “purpose” in the conservation easement? (similar to West Windsor/Ascutney)
    - natural resources
    - recreation
    - scenic views
    - education
    - cultural resources
    - timber
  - Should we have specific action items for the next ten years?
  - What level of public awareness should be pursued?
    - original plan feared overuse
      - plan suggested NOT posting trails on statewide online trail resources
      - didn't plan for a sign on Route 9 to let people know they had found the right place
    - has overuse been a problem?
  - structure of the actual document
    - should we emphasize bullet lists or narratives?
    - Intro material
      - is there, or should there be, a Vision Statement for the conservation area?
      - identify objectives of the Management Plan (the plan, as opposed to the conservation area)
      - update history of the area – it's been 13 years

- summarize the conservation easement
  - how to order all the material?
    - emphasize Management?
    - emphasize purposes of the easement?
  - create an index
  - Supplemental material
    - Everything? or just key pieces?
      - full conservation easement
      - history of how the update was drafted
        - copy of survey and all responses
        - summary of comments from public presentations
      - biodiversity inventory
      - forest management plan
- Administration
  - All higher order statutes/policies apply
    - state rules (hunting, trapping, ATV's, what else?)
    - town policies
      - alcohol on town land?
      - metal detectors
      - any others?
  - Permits
    - use permits – incorporate existing system
      - need a clear explanation of when you need a permit
      - use by commercial organizations
        - summer day camps
        - tour groups
      - use by non-profits
        - schools
        - nature orgs, etc
  - Parking and access
    - Should there be a sign announcing the existence of the conservation area?  
There's nothing now. If you don't know it is there, you have nothing to clue you in.
    - access across commercial properties
  - Enforcement
    - how to get the word out about what's allowed and what's not
      - kiosks
      - website
      - signs on trails
      - signs at the boundaries
    - when there's an infringement
      - who gets notified?
      - who deals with the scofflaw?
  - Liability
    - Do we need to have signs saying "use at your own risk" at all kiosks and trail entry points?
    - Do we need a wildfire plan?

- Buildings
  - uses allowed
  - how to decide on potential future uses of buildings
- Collaboration with other organizations
  - HMCA – better define the roles of the two organizations
  - Molly Stark State Park
  - SVNHM
  - VAST
  - require periodic review of collaborations?
- Achieving the Purposes of the Conservation Easement
  - Forestry Values
    - water quality
    - soil health
    - climate change
    - vernal pools
    - wildlife corridors
    - RTE species (rare, threatened, endangered)
    - uncommon species
    - ecological protection zones
    - rich hardwood forest areas (id'ed in Biodiversity Inventory)
    - ESH project
      - did it meet objectives?
      - should it be renewed?
    - Invasives
      - plan for known invasives
      - how to decide about newly discovered invasives
    - Foraging
      - for personal use vs for commercial use
      - berries, fruit, fungi, flowers, ferns, leaves
      - boughs (balsam for wreaths), poles
    - No unauthorized cutting – covers many topics – should it be dealt with here or in each affected area?
      - no cutting to open ski lanes (except as part of authorized volunteer work days)
      - no cutting new trails without permission
        - no cutting to widen or “improve” trails except as part of authorized volunteer work days
      - no cutting to open shooting lanes for hunting
      - no cutting firewood (not even fallen dead?)
      - no cutting trees or poles (young trees) for woodworking or other projects
      - authorized cutting can include volunteer or contracted work
        - invasives control
        - trail building
        - erosion control
        - timber harvest
        - other forest products harvest
    - Timber harvesting

- who will decide when a timber harvest is appropriate?
    - what criteria will they use to decide?
    - what plans are needed before a harvest can occur?
      - what criteria must the plan meet? (defined in conservation easement – latest edition of state-wide best practices)
    - what non-timber things can/should be part of a harvest plan?
      - create ESH?
      - manage deer wintering areas?
      - “forestry with birds in mind” from Audubon
  - Maple sugaring
- Recreation
  - **what** types of recreation: what’s allowed, what’s not
    - any changes needed to the current approach to hiking, birdwatching, XC-skiing, snowshoeing, etc?
    - bikes
      - what about ebikes?
      - what about winter use of fat bikes?
        - OK to “groom” trail for fat bike use? (pack down snow)
    - backcountry skiing – can we learn anything from West Windsor/Ascutney approach?
    - horseback riding
    - drones
    - camping and campfires
    - target shooting (firearm and bow&arrow)
    - hunting
      - cover all types: rifle, muzzle loader, bow & arrow
      - tree stands? ground blinds?
      - specify that cutting veg to open shooting lanes is not allowed?
      - luring (salt licks, apples) allowed or not?
    - fishing – are there any fish-able streams? Should we mention it anyway?
    - trapping – state law requires trappers to get permission of landowner
    - dogs
      - leashes?
      - poop?
  - **where** types of activities can and can’t occur
  - **when** types of activities can and can’t occur
    - close trails during rifle season?
    - close trails during mud season?
      - close to bikes only?
      - or close to pedestrian, too?
  - trails
    - multi-purpose v. single purpose
    - process for approving new trails
- Cultural History/Resources
  - ski area artifacts
  - Bishop farm site(s)
  - scenic views



- is this where education topics should be addressed?