

Hogback Management Plan Update Committee
7:30 p.m. Wednesday, July 26, 2023
Town Office, Marlboro, Vermont and via Zoom

Minutes

Convene: 7:37pm

Attendees: In person: Diana Todd, Mike Purcell. Via Zoom: Sarah Grant, Eric Slayton, Pieter Van Loon, Amanda Whiting

- **Preliminaries**
 - Mike Purcell named to take minutes.
 - Amanda Whiting named to manage Zoom features.

- **Approve minutes of previous meeting:** Approved

- **Add any new topics that have arisen to the master list.**
 - Procedure agreed on for updating the master list:
 - HMPUC meetings will start with an opportunity for committee members (or guests) to suggest new items for the list.
 - New ideas, both those presented at the beginning of the meeting and those that come up during the meeting, will be added to the list and ***shown in bold italics***
 - The list will be dated based on the meeting date where the most recent ideas were added.
 - If/when changes are made to the list, it will be appended to the minutes of that meeting. The list will also be maintained as a self-standing document available in the “Topics to Consider” folder in the Google Drive “HMPUC file cabinet.”
 - New topics added to the list at this meeting primarily arose during recent HPC and HMCA discussions of proposals by Deerfield Valley Stump Jumpers for repairs to the Quonset Hut and to the nearby culvert, and for a Jan 2024 ride-in and BBQ.
 - See ***bold italic*** items in the Appendix to see the new items.

- **Continue discussion of potential management zones.**
 - Re-explored the concept of zones.
 - Does having a no-harvest zone mean that everything else is “yes-harvest”?
 - Doesn’t the entire conservation area deserve special protection? Would identifying zones for particular uses mean some areas receive less protection?
 - If we are overly prescriptive, will we tie the hands of future managers in the face of unexpected situations? Examples might be climate change or introduction of pathogens.
 - Reviewed where the idea of a no-timber-harvest zone came from.
 - Review of management plans from other towns showed frequent use of zones, and usually one of the zones was a no-harvest zone.
 - The Biodiversity Inventory included a recommendation that for the health of the forest and its plant and animal communities, no “management” was needed other than control of invasives.

- The Management Plan should not *require* that all the invasives identified in the Biodiversity Inventory or by others *must* be controlled. Considering the possibilities of volunteer or professional efforts, we should try to offer guidance on how to pick the most important and potentially effective battles.
 - Are there any commonly accepted standards of practice for control of invasives that can be referenced in the Management Plan?
 - The Management Plan should require that any efforts to control invasives should be documented.
 - Other aspects of the Biodiversity Inventory
 - The final section includes recommendations for future research. These could be adopted into the Management Plan as suggestions for scientists or scholars who might want to do research on Hogback.
- **Develop plans for the next several meetings**
 - What's the best way to work as a group, to move forward on this big project?
 - Suggestion: continue to sort and group the topics to be considered, then pick some relatively straightforward issues to tackle first. That will help us develop procedures for coming to agreements and actually drafting portions of the doc.
 - Plan for Aug 9 meeting
 - All committee members to review the list of topics and consider how to group them in the revised Management Plan.
 - At the meeting we will try to reorganize the master list of topics into more useful categories, and identify subject areas to tackle first.
 - Plan for Aug 23 meeting
 - Invite Sam Schneski, County Forester, to attend and help us understand forest management and timber harvest options.
- **Adjourned at 8:47 pm.**
 - Next meeting will be on Aug 9, 2023.

APPENDIX

2023_07_26 Topics to consider during Management Plan Update

The date above refers to the most recent past HMPUC meeting where new topics were brought up.

*Items that are new since the previous edition of this doc are shown in **bold italics**.*

- 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)
 - ***Should a no-harvest area have a goal of becoming "old growth"?***
 - 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
 - **current MP doesn't give details of when permits are needed. Should it?**
 - need a clear explanation of when you need a permit
 - **should there be a max group size allowed?**
 - **should large groups be required to develop a safety plan or have a safety officer, like is required for using some public buildings or public spaces? For example, ask Bob Milligan, HMCA Director**
 - **should permits be given only for educational activities?**
 - **for non-educational activities (e.g. weddings mentioned in existing MP), should they be limited to specific locations?**
 - **should nighttime activities be allowed?**
 - use by commercial organizations
 - summer day camps
 - tour groups
 - use by non-profits
 - schools
 - nature orgs, etc
 - **Currently, HMCA and SVNHM are not required to get permits for activities they host except for a few circumstances (e.g. having open fires). Should this policy continue?**

- 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
 - ***establish overall philosophy for all buildings – Repair and preserve them? Tear them down? Let them decay on their own?***
 - ***Should there be specific plans in the Management Plan for some buildings? Benedict Cottage? First Aid building? The Castle?***
- Collaboration with other organizations
 - HMCA – better define the roles of the two organizations
 - Molly Stark State Park
 - SVNHM
 - VAST
 - require periodic review of collaborations?
- Review the existing map and mapping data policy
- Management Structure
 - roles of SB, HPC, HMCA
 - MOU already exists between HMCA and the town
 - do HPC Rules of Procedure need to be included in the MP?
 - funding sources
 - National Grid lease
 - endowment held by HMCA
- 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
 - **any work done to control invasives should be documented**
 - **are there any standard practices for invasives control that should be referenced?**
- 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
 - **Should harvests be designed as demonstration projects? Examples – best practices, or to benefit certain wildlife (beavers and snowshoe hares were examples given)**

Run trail all the way up to Route 9 (now used as the VAST trail)?

- Cultural History/Resources
 - ***Should historic sites be given special protection similar to buffer zones for vernal pools and other sensitive areas?***
 - ski area artifacts
 - Bishop farm site(s)
 - scenic views
- ***Education***
 - ***Should recommendations for future studies from Biodiv Inv be included in the Management Plan?***