

Minutes of Regular Meeting of the Hogback Management Plan Update Committee 7:30
p.m. Wednesday, Aug 23, 2023
Town Office, Marlboro, Vermont and via Zoom

Minutes

Convene: 7:35 pm

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

1. Preliminaries
 - a. choose a secretary to take minutes - Pieter
 - b. choose a Zoom host - Diana
 - c. start Zoom recording - Diana
2. Diana noted for the record that there was no meeting on Aug 9, 2023 due to a lack of a quorum. 3. Minutes of previous meeting (July 26, 2023) were approved unanimously.
4. Had a discussion about the difficulty in getting a quorum for meetings. Some of the members who have not made a number of meetings may be asked if they can commit to coming in the future. If they can't, it may make more sense for them to just come as members of the public.
5. No new topics have come up that people thought should be added to the master list of issues to consider during the update.
6. Continued the discussion on how to accomplish the actual writing. Writing a long, complicated document by committee has special challenges. Diana talked to Staley McDermet, member of the Marlboro Planning Commission, about how that committee writes the town plan. Each member gets a section to write and brings it to the commission for feedback. There is no preliminary discussion among all members. This probably works well because the Town Plan update is based on making changes to a standard-format document. We anticipate that the Hogback Management Plan will require extensive revision and reorganization, so this approach may work for us, but only once there is a solid outline in place. Another possibility is to have a primary writer (Diana) and she writes chapters based on input from and consensus agreement from the committee. This could also work. We would like to still utilize the idea brought up by Amanda at and earlier meetings of recruiting people with expertise in relevant subjects to help the committee think through the issues and then draft appropriate language for inclusion in the Plan.
7. We reviewed Diana's first draft of introductory sections. We thought the changes were appropriate and made only small edits. It seems this sort of process could work for future sections. See attachment.
8. One goal for the meeting was to review master list of topics to consider during update; reorganize topics if needed to create more useful categories; select several categories or topics as the first ones we'll work on; and assign tasks. Focusing on the need for a working outline, in order to explore two different ways to organize the information:
 - a. Diana will take the VLT document "Components of a good management plan" and distribute our topics in the master list under the appropriate VLT section header.
 - b. She will also reorganize the topic list using a numbered/lettered outline format to make that structure more evident.
9. Develop plans for next several meetings.
 - a. At the Sept 13 meeting, review the two documents mentioned above. Committee members who can't attend the meeting are asked to send Diana their notes prior to the meeting.
 - b. Sam Schneski will attend our Sept. 27 meeting.
 - c. Mike Purcell and Eric Slayton will invite Jennie Ramstetter to attend a future meeting to discuss the potential benefits of not harvesting timber in the conservation area.
10. Adjourned – 8:22 PM
Respectfully submitted – Pieter van Loon

Appendix to 2023_08_23 HMPUC minutes

completed.

Section heading: History of Property and management planning process draft 2023_08_18; bold are changes made at 2023_08_23 meeting

Proposed new text

The Hogback Mountain Conservation Area was created in 2010 when the nonprofit Hogback Mountain Conservation Association (HMCA) donated 585.5 undeveloped, conserved acres of wetland and upland forest to the Town of Marlboro. HMCA had been founded in 2006 in response to commercial plans to develop a large parcel of undeveloped land on both sides of Route 9 at the western edge of the town, which included the former Hogback Ski Area.

In 2007, HMCA assembled a group of public spirited “conservation buyers” who agreed to purchase the property and hold it for two years while HMCA, with the support of the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) worked to finance a conservation solution. In early 2008, a fundraising campaign was launched to raise \$1,737,000 to cover all costs associated with the purchase of the land, its conservation and stewardship through permanent conservation easements, and establishment of an endowment to cover future operating expenses. Monies were raised from numerous individual private donations; a contribution from the Town of Marlboro; numerous private foundation grants; a Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) grant; and state and federal grants.

Having raised the necessary funds, HMCA purchased the land from the “conservation buyers” and granted a conservation easement on the property to VLT and VHCB. At the 2009 Town Meeting, the Town voted to authorize the Selectboard to accept title to the property, and on March 13, 2010 the transfer of ownership was

Compare to text of existing Management Plan

The Hogback Mountain Conservation Association (HMCA), a group of concerned citizens of the Towns of Marlboro and Wilmington, Vermont, was formed in 2006 in response to commercial plans to develop approximately 591 acres of critical wetlands and upland forest which comprise the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area located in Marlboro, Vermont. The Conservation Area is bisected . . . (lengthy description of physical property)

In 2007, HMCA assembled a group of public spirited “conservation buyers” (Long View Mountain Group, LLC) who agreed to purchase the property and hold it for two years while HMCA, with the support of the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) worked to finance a conservation solution. In early 2008, a fundraising campaign was launched to raise \$1,737,000 to cover all costs associated with the purchase of the land, its conservation and stewardship through permanent conservation easements, and establishment- of an endowment to cover future operating expenses. Monies were raised from individual private donations including major leadership donations; a significant contribution voted by the citizens of the Town of Marlboro at its 2008 Town Meeting; numerous private foundation grants including a large matching grant from the Pew Charitable Trusts (Northeast Land Trust Consortium); a Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) grant; a watershed protection grant from the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources; and federal funding from the Transportation Enhancement Act for the 21st Century

(TE-21).
Proposed new text

History of management planning

As the Conservation Area was being created, the Hogback Preservation Commission (HPC) was formed by the Selectboard to set and revise policy for the management of the Conservation Area. The first Management Plan was created by the HPC in 2010, incorporating public input that had been generated by the HMCA during informational meetings about the planned conservation area. The plan has been modified and added to since then, most recently in 2014.

In 2018-2019, HMCA contracted biologist Charley Eiseman to do a detailed Biodiversity Inventory of the Conservation Area. The purpose of the inventory was to better inform management decisions for the land. For example, are there any rare, threatened or endangered species on the property? Are there any areas that deserve special protection? The HPC and HMCA intended to do a major update of the Management Plan in 2020, to incorporate findings from the Biodiversity Inventory as well to address items that hadn't been covered in the original plan, respond to new types of uses, etc. The update was put on hold as the country dealt with the covid pandemic. Work on the update got underway in earnest in summer 2023, with a subcommittee of the HPC, the Hogback Management Plan Update Committee, drafting a revised plan.

(Info will go here about public input, reconciliation, etc. Include list of "stakeholders" who participated in the process.)

Compare to text of existing Management Plan Planning Process

An Interim Management Plan was developed by the Hogback Mountain Conservation Association as a template for the eventual drafting of a final Management Plan, which is the responsibility of the Hogback Preservation Commission – the group ultimately charged with ongoing policymaking and management of the Conservation Area. Voters at the 2009 Marlboro, Vermont Town Meeting overwhelmingly voted to authorize the Marlboro Selectboard to accept title to the Conservation Area property once HMCA raised the funds required to purchase the property from the current owners, and once the necessary conservation restrictions, access easement, and development rights were conveyed to the Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board. Title was conveyed to the Town of Marlboro on 31 March 2010, and the Selectboard has approved the management structure, funding mechanism, and general use enforcement procedures as outlined in this Management Plan (see Administration section for details).

It is crucial that the various stakeholders with an interest in the future of the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area be involved in all phases of the planning process as work proceeds. These stakeholders include the Town of Marlboro's Selectboard, Hogback Preservation Commission, Conservation Commission, and Planning Commission; the Hogback Mountain Conservation Association; Marlboro citizens and non-resident second home owners, especially those whose properties are adjacent to the Conservation Area and who are likely to be impacted by activities occurring there; local education institutions; trail user groups such as the Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), the Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA), the Vermont Horse

Council, and the Brattleboro Outing Club (BOC); and interested and involved residents of adjacent towns in the Southern Vermont region.

Section heading: Property description and landscape context
draft 2023_08_18; changes made at 2023_08_23 meeting shown in bold.

Proposed new text

The Conservation Area is bisected by Vermont Route 9, the major east-west travel corridor in Southern Vermont, which connects Brattleboro to the east with Bennington to the west. This route is designated the Molly Stark Scenic Byway. A significant stretch of the acreage along both sides of Route 9 is not part of the Conservation Area, but is owned by a variety of commercial establishments.

The approximately 200 acres of the Conservation Area on the south side of Route 9 include the site of the former Hogback Ski Area, a beloved family run ski area from the mid 1940's to the mid 1980's. Openings where the former ski runs existed provide spectacular views to the south and east. The southern acreage is contiguous with Molly Stark State Park, where a 1.7-mile hiking loop from the park connects with the Conservation Area. The southern portion also contains a significant wetland that drains into the Green River.

The approximately 400 acres on the north side of Route 9, leading to Hogback Mountain – at 2,410 feet the highest point in the Town of Marlboro – contain a variety of habitats, including mixed hardwood forest, lowland spruce-fir forest, and numerous small wetland features like seeps and vernal pools. The upper-elevation wetlands play an important role in both aquifer replenishment and wildlife sustenance. ~~particularly critical with regard to breeding bird habitat.~~

The Conservation Area is significant as the

headwaters for both the Deerfield and Green Rivers. As part of a mosaic of large, mostly wooded, contiguous pieces of relatively wild land in Southern Vermont, the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area is home to a variety of mammal species including black bear, moose, bobcat, and fisher that require sizeable blocks of interconnected land as travel corridors.

Compare to text of existing Management Plan

(this section was originally in the “Project History”)

The Conservation Area is bisected by Vermont Route 9 which connects the eastern town of Brattleboro with Bennington to the west and has been designated the Molly Stark Scenic Byway. The approximately 200 acres on the south side of Route 9 provide some of the most spectacular views found anywhere in New England, most notably of New Hampshire's Mt. Monadnock to the east and Massachusetts's Wachusett Mountain to the south, and have a storied history as a beloved family-run ski area from the late 1940s to the early 1980s. The southern acreage is contiguous with Molly Stark State Park, where a 1.7-mile hiking loop from the park connects with the Conservation Area. The park has 34 in-season camp sites for visitors. The approximately 400 acres on the north side of Route 9, leading to Hogback Mountain – at 2,410 feet the highest point in the Town of Marlboro – contain a variety of upper-elevation habitats, including a sizeable tract of mixed hardwood forest. The upper elevation wetlands play an important role in both aquifer replenishment and wildlife sustenance, particularly critical with regard to breeding bird habitat. The Conservation Area is significant as the headwaters for streams and rivers in the region. The Deerfield River and Green River watersheds originate within

the pristine mountaintop acreage of the Conservation Area. As part of a mosaic of large, mostly wooded, contiguous pieces of relatively wild land in Southern Vermont, the Hogback Mountain Conservation Area is home to a variety of large, charismatic mammal species including black bear, moose, bobcat, and fisher that require sizeable block of interconnect land as travel corridors.