

**Regular Meeting of the Hogback Management Plan Update Committee**  
**7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Nov 29, 2023**  
**Town Office, Marlboro, Vermont and via Zoom**

**Minutes**

The meeting was called to order at 7:32 pm.

Attendees:

- In person: Diana Todd
- via Zoom: Amanda Whiting, Eric Slayton, Mike Purcell, Pieter Van Loon

1. Preliminaries
  - a. choose a secretary to take minutes (Eric Slayton)
  - b. choose a Zoom host (Diana Todd)
  - c. start Zoom recording
2. Minutes of previous meeting (Nov 8, 2023) were approved without modification.
3. New topics to add to the master list of issues to consider during the update.
  - a. Be sure the plan includes the ability to close trails when necessary for any condition. (Diana )
  - b. Do we need to mark our boundaries? (Diana)
4. Continue discussion of Forest Management concepts.
  - a. Started with PowerPoint review (created by Diana) of information gathered and discussions on this topic to date, along with a few new questions. See attachment.
    - i. Pieter makes a point to clarify that we need to be using the appropriate descriptions for what the intention is. "Timber harvest" is the term for making money on timber. Pieter feels strongly that this is not something that Marlboro residents want to see happen on this land.
    - ii. Diana's questions - Who will have oversight of forest management practice? How will costs be covered? Conversation brings up points of time frame and ideas of who that person or committee will be.
    - iii. PowerPoint was well received and helpful. Pieter responds to Diana's presentation, feels this is a good exercise for committee to go through.
  - b. Key question to be resolved: Should the town be active or passive with management?
    - i. After September meeting, plan had been to have Sam Schneski, County Forester, and Pieter Van Loon do a detailed Forest Inventory and suggest management actions.
    - ii. Sam has made clear that he can't participate unless the project will result in an educational or demonstration project of active management.
  - c. Input from Eric and Amanda about active versus passive management.
    - i. Need for great caution if using an active plan. Passive, leave it alone as is. One option - focus active management on the historic ski trails as a place for restoration and habitat improvement.
    - ii. What happens if we ask Sam and Pieter to do the detailed forest inventory and then don't do any active management? Not clear.
    - iii. Both Eric and Amanda think it's worth doing the Forest Inventory to get more information.
    - iv. Expressed respect for the knowledge of those who have shared with committee.

- d. Pieter responds feeling this is an opportunity for an educational forest cutting plan.
  - i. Townspeople care way too much about Hogback to treat it as a quick source of income via a big logging project.
  - ii. Since the 2018-2019 Biodiversity Inventory, there are new climate change and invasive species issues, while also new science/practices to handle threats.
  - iii. Acknowledged that we can't guarantee how a plan will turn out.
  - iv. Noted that if we decide to NOT do any timber management then the forest is on a trajectory that was established by the last cutting, which was done in the mid 1980's.
  - v. That harvest was solely focused on generating income, not considering forest health, so the forest now is not on track for a healthy stand. The understory lacks variety. Deer browse is putting regeneration at risk. It is at risk to slip into an unstable condition.
  - vi. Active forest management would attempt to change that trajectory, and try to ameliorate problems caused by past harvests.
  - vii. Diana appreciated Pieter's input as a professional forester, and noted that the committee had not had any information about the earlier harvests and the assessment of their impact prior to now.
  - viii. Eric notes with appreciation the experience and commitment of committee members and guests to this important task and that feels the group is cohesive in this effort.
- e. Suggestion of visiting other town forests that Sam has managed to see examples of possible harvest plans. (The idea was well received. Diana will follow through.)
- f. Agreed-upon goal - improve resilience of the forest (not by specific vote, but by general tenor of the discussion).
- g. Additional discussion of costs - Who will cover the cost of any non-income generating project?
  - i. Options – Town general fund, HMCA Endowment. Mike – Could grants be pursued to support non income driven practices? Answer – yes.
  - ii. Mike – Could projects be done with volunteer labor? Answer - Perhaps some small projects.
- 5. Next steps
  - a. field trip to another town forest that Sam manages
  - b. Diana will continue to work on an overall rough draft of plan and present it to committee for review
  - c. next meeting December 13
- 6. Adjourn 8:58 pm

## 2023\_11\_29 HMPUC Powerpoint presentation

### Hogback Management Plan Update: Forest Management

#### Review

- information gathered to date
- discussion points

#### Pose some new questions

by Diana Todd, Chair, HMPUC for Nov 29, 2023 meeting

#### How are other towns handling this?

- For others, timber harvesting is allowed, but generation of income from timber is not a goal.
- Richmond, Andrews Community Forest: "Forest management for timber on municipal lands *can serve as a demonstration of responsible, sustainable forest management* . . ."
- Bolton, Preston Pond : among "purposes" is "To assure that any . . . harvesting of forestry resources . . . encourages the long-term, professional management of those resources . . . *in the event that harvesting is to occur*, the following objectives will govern . . ."
- Williston, Mud Pond Country Park: "*There are no current plans for timber harvesting*; however the WCC will continue to explore the feasibility of forest management activities."

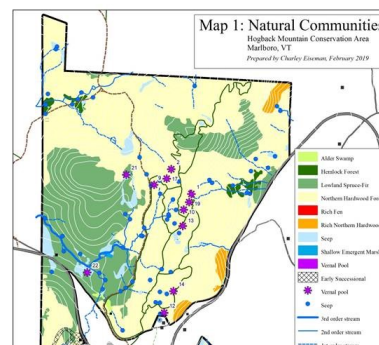
#### What does the current Management Plan say?

- under "Goals and Objectives"
  - item (b) – "maintenance of the Conservations Area's forest resources **through long-term professional management** which will endeavor to **minimize** to the greatest extent possible **any negative impact** of forestry activity on surface water quality, wildlife habitat, public recreational benefits, and other conservation values"
- under "Forest Management, Management Goals and Guidelines"
  - "The plan anticipates responsible periodic harvests of timber, under the direct supervision of a professional forester, **which will generate income that will help maintain the Conservation Area.**"

#### How are other towns handling this?

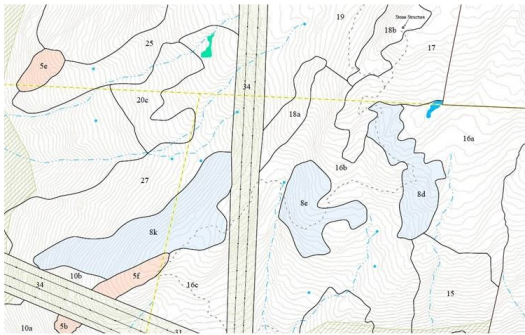
- For some, timber harvesting is a primary purpose:
- Barre Town Forest: "The Town of Barre will manage the Property as a municipal forest for wildlife habitat, *timber harvesting and management*, public recreation, education, and water quality protection.
- Stowe, Sterling Forest: "These objectives include . . . *sustainable timber management* . . ." (total of 8 objectives)
- Waitsfield, Scrag Forest: "*Timber management* and wildlife habitat protection are dual goals for the property . . . desire to maximize the education and demonstration opportunities of timber harvests . . ."
- West Windsor Town Forest (Ascutney): "Town Objectives . . . Manage it (the land) for public recreation, ecological integrity, wildlife habitat, education, *and timber.*"

#### Biodiversity Inventory

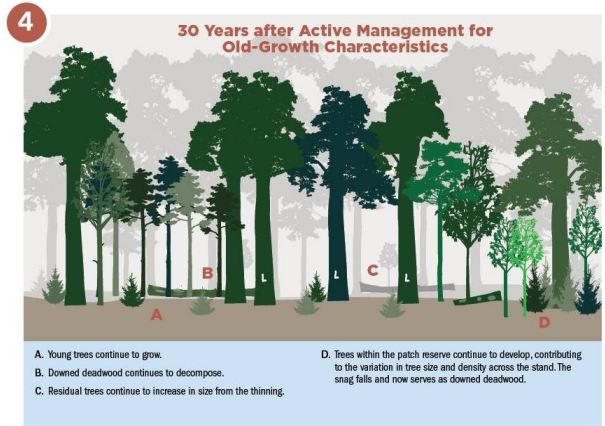
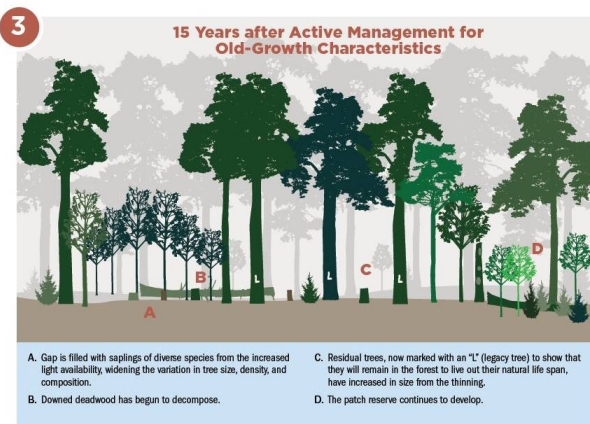
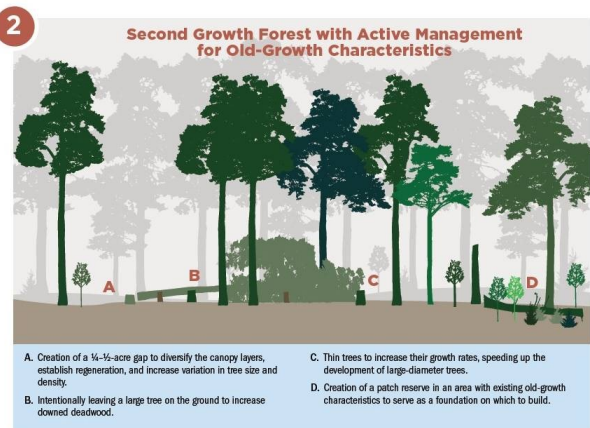
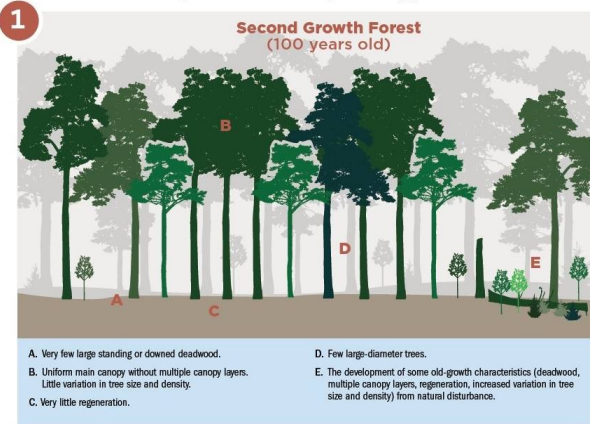


Forest Inventory

- Example suggested by Jenny Ramstetter, Deer Run Nature Preserve
- Nearly 40 different forest categories, some with multiple subtypes



## Example restoration of old-growth characteristics using the active management approach



## Potential Active Forest Management activities:

- Who will oversee and manage these types of projects?
  - The Management Plans for some towns call for hiring a professional forester to oversee work like this.
  - The existing Hogback Management Plan calls for using a professional forester.

## What a professional forester will do.

- Plan the activity, incorporating all necessary buffer zones and other requirements to protect soils, water quality, sensitive areas, etc.
- Mark the cut – tree by tree, or for patches, define the boundary.
- Figure out where to have the log landing.
- Write the contract for the logger.
  - what to cut, what to leave
  - where to cut, where to keep out of sensitive areas
  - how to protect recreation trails, old stone walls, foundations
  - what time of year the work may be done
  - what type of machinery may be used
  - what level of clean up is expected at the end of the job
- Help select the logger.
- Oversee the logger's work in the field.
- Handle the financial side – find buyers for any timber or firewood, receive payment from the mill, pay the logger, the trucker, the town.
- Take care of paperwork needed for the IRS.

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    - The County Forester (Sam Schneski) is willing to serve in this capacity if the project has a demonstration or education component.
- Even if using professional forester, someone from the town still needs to oversee the work of the forester.
  - The forester has to have a complete understanding of the priorities and goals the town has for the project.
- Who would be that town representative?
  - Select Board?
  - HPC?
  - HMCA?

#### Potential Active Forest Management activities:

- Potential costs
  - If the work includes a timber sale, that will generate income.
  - If the work does not include timber harvesting:
    - It will incur costs.
    - It may or may not generate income, depending on byproducts of the activity (saleable lumber logs? firewood logs?).
  - Is the town willing to spend money on improving the forest?
    - If so, where will the funding come from?
      - The general fund?
      - The HMCA Endowment?