Wolcott Forest Stewardship Committee

General meeting notes - Thursday, February 13, 2025
6 pm – 8 pm

Attending: Gordon, Roger, Dave, Luke Hardt, Bradley
Online: Cate, Maxfield, "kcochran"
Quorum? yes

1. Call to order (6:05 pm)
2. Organizational actions
    a. Amendments to agenda
        i. Luke Hardt re: condition of logging roads
            1. Will discuss with the new trail map, under new business
        ii. Proposal for forest work from Dave
            1. **Will submit proposal to Jack for review**
    b. Approve minutes from last meeting
        i. **Moved: Roger**
        ii. **Second: Cate**
            1. **Passed unanimously**
    c. Welcome new committee members – Mike Green, Maxfield English
3. Public comment
    a. none
4. Ongoing
    a. Status report from TPL (6:10 pm)
        i. Soil remediation update
            1. From Vermont Agency of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, forwarded by TPL:
                a. "The SMS has reviewed the Corrective Action Construction Completion Report for the Wolcott Community Forrest Site (SMS# 2023-5368) and has determined activities completed comply with the approved Soil Management Plan. I am recommending this site for closure. A Certificate of Completion

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> will be drafted, and pending management approval, will be issued to the Town of Wolcott."

b. Trail building update from Sinuosity (6:20 pm)
    i. No update until Spring 2025
c. "No Motorized Vehicle" signs (6:30 pm)
    i. Roger: **I'll order them then notify Dave**
    ii. Gordon: Spoke with neighbors, who is sure that they know who was riding their ATV up there; may be interested in volunteering; low key approach of hanging the signs will probably be enough

5. New business (6:40 pm)
    a. Updated proposed trail map
        i. Gordon: Jack and I took a walk a couple weeks ago; Jack seemed to agree with the route; he sent some additional research, but it has not yet been added to the map; (passed around a rough map as displayed on the iPhone); still needs to be formally reviewed by the stakeholders; more importantly the logging roads are degraded and need work done, a team with the proper equipment; Luke suggested it could be combined with forest management activity; any new trails should be constructed well, erosion resistant etc.
            1. Luke: although there was some confusion, current use still applies for this parcel, and should apply, in my view; work needs to be authorized; erosion risks need to be addressed; management could bring in some income for the town as well as opening it up for designated uses; some funds will be made available

this year for reclamation of roads, building landings, etc. [shows several pictures on his laptop]

i. **Roger: send me those pictures and I will be sure to share them with group**

b. Maxfield: looking at shoring up all forest access roads regardless of use, or just the relevant paths?

c. Luke: would be nice to do all of them, but that's a high bar; that would be a large project, for sure; should focus on roads with direct runoff, undersized culverts; want to distribute the water so that it can't move material easily; will help protect the surface of the trail; need to replace the 4" culverts, that plug easily, with water bars; otherwise, the trails will be mud pits, head walls

d. Gordon: is the location info still attached to the phone data? If yes, great. If not, we should identify the exact sites and clarify what we should plan to do

e. Luke: sounds good; we need to tirage these roads before we use them, get the drainage flowing properly, and stem the current trend of erosion; in summer of 2025, loggers will have access up to $30K per parcel to do this type of work, as new funding will be available; their will be supervision from the state for the use of the

approved funds, to ensure it was spent appropriately

f. Gordon: would the logging work have to be linked to the road fixes?
    i. Luke: yes, I believe so
g. Gordon: having looked at the forest management plan, is there scope for management activities in that area? It has been cut already.
h. Luke: maybe not, but the previous work was not well done; and the roads were not closed out properly; we inherited the problem, but we can fix it; should take out suppressed reserve trees that serve no purpose; we do qualify for some grant programs, for recreational trail management
i. Gordon: although it wasn't prescribed under the FMP, it isn't precluded either
j. Luke: absolutely, because those roads were not closed out; if they were, we wouldn't have the issues that we inherited
k. Dave: there used to be money available to fix problems, but not to actually build roads. Is that program still available?
    i. Luke: you're referring to EQUIP program; available to private landowners, but I don't think we qualify; we do qualify for RTP recreational trails

grants, which we can use to reclaimate existing forest road infrastructure (application due in the fall); are there silvicultural recommendations in Emily's plan?

1. Gordon: nothing required in next 10 years, except maybe stand 8 where timber stand improvement could be beneficial
2. Luke: not sure why she didn't; probably waiting on the town to state their own management objectives
    a. Gordon: our objectives are recreation and forest health, with revenue generation/forest management were our lowest priority, but not precluded

2. Gordon: on top of the hill, there is a bunch of diseased beech, ash trees that are vulnerable to the ash borers; probably not much money up there; may need to look at other options as well, as well as review other sections of the parcel that have problems with access roads
    a. Dave: the whole Bourne parcel would be costly to get logs out of it; the north and east sides

are steep, and there's a lot of water; it would be a lot of travel and access issues to get a few ash trees out; if I was to do it, I'd seek access through the adjacent private land, and do a select cut with a flat approach

b. Luke: true, you would need economy of scale to make it work; certain scale of cutting requires permitting; (review of FMP, discussing Emily's report of stand health)
    i. Gordon: we need to go through the details offline and boil down
    ii. Luke: bottom line, the hardwoods are overstocked
    iii. Dave: waiting the discuss the "pine plantation" with Emily; otherwise, ready to move that forward
    iv. Gordon: there's pressure to do other activities, some funding about to be made available, Sinuosity may be planning to do work in the recommended areas; let's take this under advisement, as it's compatible with our trail plans
    v. Luke: any silviculture should take place before the trail work, as it would disrupt any trail infrastructure

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vi. Roger: what we need is a clearer picture, more specific picture, of where we should lay infrastructure

1. Luke: we can determine that by looking at the stocking charts and identifying areas that are in decline; that's our signal to create an entry

c. Dave: is the FEMA buyout complete? The sugaring lines?

i. Gordon: I believe so, yes

d. Dave: what about the sugaring lines?

i. Roger: the lines are permitted to stay in use

ii. Gordon: as they lay, the sugaring lines are not in the way

iii. Dave: if we want to get equipment up there, there ways to make it accessible, but we have to get those pieces in place

3. Gordon: trails will be open by mid-summer, at our current schedule; I have no problem with developing an integrated plan, and making the work visible; if we want to hold off on any trail building, how long do we hold off?

a. Luke: only "winter ground" in the forest, so there would not be any summer work; Emily should write up a prospectus; the type of work and processes have to be determined, such as

what and how to execute the sale (would take about a day); establish a transparent ranking system; then solicit loggers and review the bids; sign a contract; then establish the oversight and layout; would likely be cutting a lot of junk, silvicultural goals, that has low value if any;

4. Dave: large scale loggers are not wanted, by all accounts; would have to be a small operator; may be hard to find someone who is motivated to take the job
5. Luke: there are a few people out there; the grant money would really sweeten the deal for most loggers
6. Luke: we have to measure and quantify what we have for the grant proposals and draw up the specifics for submission

ii. Gordon: there are a lot unanswered questions, but we can move forward once we take an inventory of the clear issues (a few months away)

1. Cate: any other forest management funds available for this work?
    a. Gordon: we do have roughly $20K available that we could consider for this use
    b. Cate: we should move forward this summer even if don't get the grant
    c. Luke: sure, we can make a list, flag it, and post the work request, look for someone with a small machine for a few days, maybe from the community

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2. Roger: **I'll move forest management discussion to Ongoing on our agenda, and we'll check in regularly**

b. Design review (with Bradley H.) – logos, signs, kiosks, displays, website

c. Bradley [review of website layout]
    i. Call to action: guided walks, until spring when construction begins again

d. Upcoming events, ideas:
    i. Gordon: guided walks (1 or 2 per month)
    ii. Luke: guided walk focused on silviculture, maybe the mapped deer yard between pond and Elmore Pond Road (End of March), seeps fauna
    iii. Dave: harvesting
    iv. Sign painting event
    v. Trail naming
        1. Check with Sinuosity
    vi. Open invite for speakers
    vii. Outdoor skills
        1. **Date selection, networking, find speakers: Roger**

e. Follow up meeting, website and poster
    i. Tuesday, Feb 18, 7pm – 8pm

6. Adjourn (8 pm)