

Town of Northfield, Vermont
Town Forest Stewardship Committee
Minutes of June 20, 2023

I. ROLL CALL : Russ, Jeremy, Colin present. Nelson, Blake. Caroline joined at 6:35. Michael McGrane (NU), Ray Crowder (town resident).

II. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (SCHEDULED): None.

III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES: May 24, 2023 (Joint Meeting)
Deferred until such time as there is a larger group.

IV. UPDATES & DISCUSSION

a. VOREC Grant

1. Implementation Committee

Hawk Watch clearing happened last fall. First invasive pesticide treatment happened the end of May, with another planned for late July. There is a possibility to remove a couple of the trees obscuring the view and there is still money in the budget to take care of them. Russ is hoping to put together a work party to go work through the brush piles to create paths allowing for continuing maintenance and remove some of the taller stumps left standing. Possibilities include the weekends of July 22-23 or 29-30.

2. Wayfinding Signage

Maps and way-finding signage examples are under development. There will be a presentation on 7/25 to the Selectboard with opportunities for public comment.

b. Joint NCC/TFSC Meeting Debrief

Deferred until such time as there is a larger group.

c. Trail Work updates

It would be good to communicate with the community more proactively about what work is being done. There is some concern about liability with community members doing work on municipal land without waivers, etc. As community members bring issues to light it would be good to capture contact information for notifications of upcoming trail work days.

Nelson did a bunch of clearing at the change of the seasons and things are in pretty good shape. Jeremy repaired some decking on the bridges to take care of loose boards.

The water department mowed paths throughout the Cheney.

Work needs to happen at the crossing at the Beaver Pond where the effects of Spring rains are leading to trail erosion in the area where the PMT used to travel along the south and east side of the Beaver Pond Complex.

d. Trail Maintenance Budget Discussion

The TFSC would like to establish a trail maintenance budget within the town budget. In parallel, the group would like to assemble a proposal for to request ARPA funds be allocated to replace the two lower PMT bridges in kind and replace the third with a longer, taller bridge. Jeremy will work with Jeff to assemble a formal proposal.

e. Town Forest Infrastructure Inventory and Conditions

Jeremy would like to assemble a catalogue of infrastructure within the TF. Current assets include the three bridges, potentially the gate at the southwest corner of the Cheney. Old gate at Butternut junction headed towards Woods Road. We'd like to photograph all of these assets and use them to help build out a longer term maintenance plan and budget.

f. Paine Mountain Trail Race

Michael came to the TFSC to talk about the upcoming Paine Mountain Trail Race. Michael is the head coach for XC at NU, in his third season there.

Learned that there isn't currently a home XC course (the only sport at NU without one), but there is plenty of property that would lend itself well to the creation of a home XC course. There was one 20 years ago, but it was previous to a lot of construction. There isn't now a good spot on campus center, but they're looking to put one together on the West side of the river. The first home meet will be 10/14/23 with an anticipated participation of 5 invited teams. NU is looking to expand the trail network on the West side of the river.

To help raise funds for the new course, NU is planning to put on a renewed version of the Paine Mountain Trail Race on September 22. Funds raised would ultimately be used for trail creation and maintenance for both the NU network and the Town Forest network.

Originally, Michael had hoped to put on a longer race that incorporated the summit, but given the timing of the event (late afternoon/early evening on Friday of Homecoming weekend) they decided to hold a shorter event, about 3.5 miles, to the anchor and back down. The race will occur entirely on Shaw Center trails, including portions of those trails that cross onto municipal property for which NU has been granted access in perpetuity for use and maintenance. The NU XC team will be on course throughout the event and will sweep and clean trails after runners are off the course.

In the future, Michael hopes to put on longer races, to include trails that cross into the Town Forest and will reach out to the TFSC at that point to collaborate.

V. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (UNSCHEDULED)

VI. OTHER BUSINESS

VII. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Colin, Russ second, 4-0-0