

CONNECTIONS

THE NEWSLETTER OF COLD HOLLOW TO CANADA FOREST LINK



PHOTOS: JOANNE WAZNY

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KEEP ON TRACKING

By Charlie Hancock

Greetings Friends, and welcome to the Summer Edition of our quarterly newsletter. Not too much to report on from this end as the early spring has had everyone busy outside, whether putting the garden in or getting a jump on the wood pile for the coming year. Our **Keeping Track** monitoring program teams are geared for their summer transects (run between June 15th and July 31st) to continue our work monitoring those areas of core habitat in our region to establish the presence of resident mammal species of concern, including black bear, fisher, moose, bobcat, lynx, mink and otter.

As this project enters its third year we're starting to amass more and more data to better inform our local planning efforts to protect areas critical habitat and the connectivity zones between them (our "Functional Pathways") in the region. Check out the data posted so far under the *Tracking Wildlife in the Northern Greens* tab at our website, www.coldhollowtocanada.org. Don't forget that you can always find past issues of our newsletter, information on present and future programs from CHC, and the low-down on upcoming events in our region on the website as well.

Speaking of upcoming events, CHC is currently organizing a Trackers Summit in Montgomery for the end of the summer to get all of our **WildPaths** and

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CHC STEERING COMMITTEE

Bakersfield:
Forrest Dunnivant
and Mary Schwartz

Enosburgh:
Nancy Patch

Fletcher:
Corey Brink

Montgomery:
Charlie Hancock, Chair

Richford:
Bill McGroarty and
Lenny Tamulonis



Keeping Track volunteers together for an afternoon of workshops, friendship, good food (everyone knows trackers throw the best pot lucks) and fun. Trackers—if you haven't already responded to our call for dates please do so. We'll get the date of the event up on the website as soon as possible so anyone else interested in attending can come join us to see what the excitement's all about.

We hope you enjoy this edition of the newsletter. Enclosed, we'd like to share another conservation success story from our region (this time in Richford), a discussion on public recreation on private land, and the scoop on an invasive invader. Thanks!



JOANNE WAZNY

HOW DO YOU SAVE A FOREST? ONE PIECE AT A TIME

By Bill McGroarty

In May of this year, the people of the state of Vermont assured the protection of “one of the five most important wildlife travel corridors in the Northern Appalachian Mountains.” This evaluation of the value of the property was made by the Two Countries, One Forest group (a cross-boundary environmental consortium) and was endorsed by the Green Mountain Club as well as conservationists and wildlife/outdoor enthusiasts throughout New England and Canada.

The deal, struck between the Trust for Public Land (TPL); the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (VTDFPR) and Vermont Peak Properties (VPP) was “the missing link in the 13,000 acre cross-boundary protected wildlife corridor stretching from Quebec’s Sutton Mountains into Vermont’s Jay State Forest.” (*Long Trail News—Summer 2012*) The property, known as Jackson Valley or Canada View, sits between Rte. 105 and the Canadian border and is accessible to foot traffic from a parking area just off Rte. 105.

The negotiations to buy the property itself or the development rights to it took over five years and generated an impressive number of studies, reports and analyses. It was truly an exercise in patience and perseverance, and all of the players involved deserve our appreciation.

The following is a brief summary of the main components of the agreement.

PROPERTY

Acreage: 976.3 acres

Owners: Vermont Peak Properties, LLC
Managing Partners Joe Pollender
and Carol Sullivan

Appraised Valuation: \$1,025,000

Cost of Development Rights: \$585,000

FUNDING

The Trust for Public Land put together funding from: the Forest Legacy Program, the Open Space Institute, the Oakland Foundation, and the Fieldstone Foundation. This funding purchased the conservation easement that permanently protects this property from development. The holder of the easement is the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation.

OBJECTIVES OF THE EASEMENT

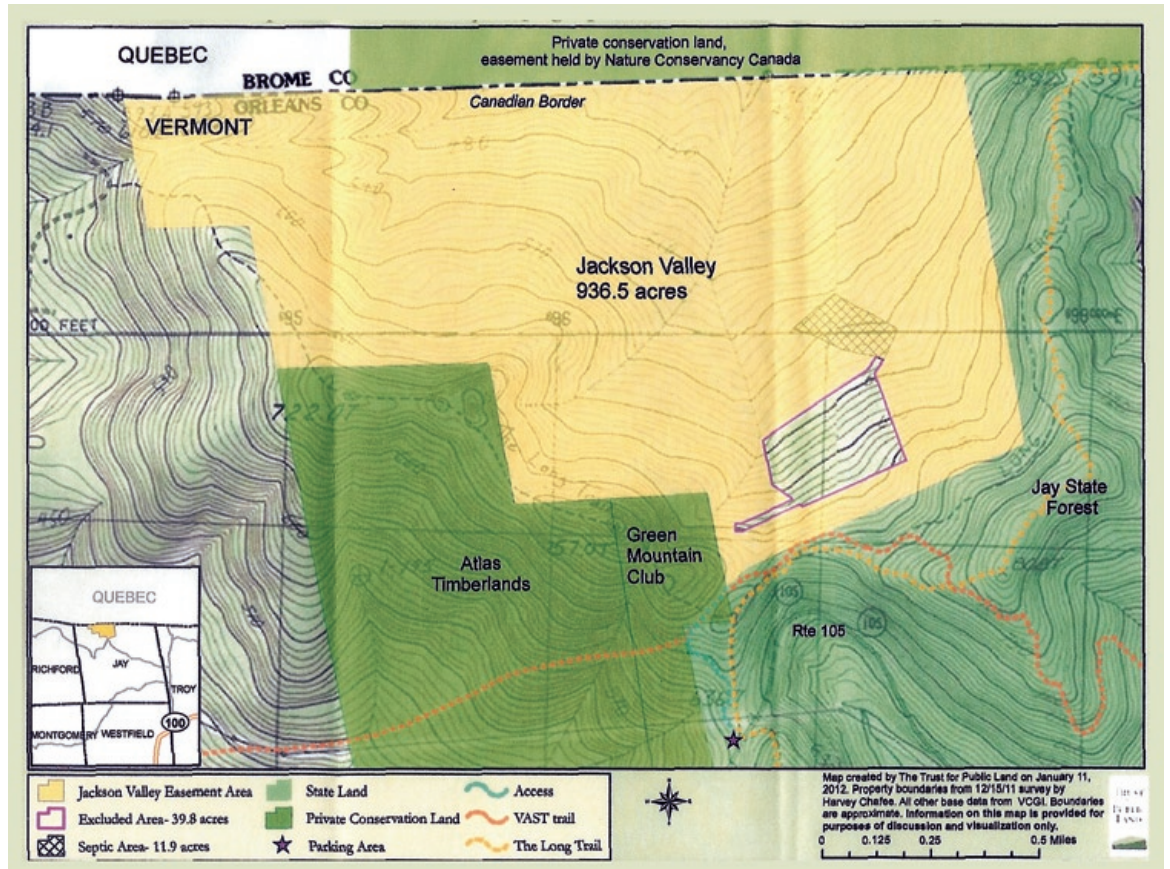
- protect, maintain and enhance wildlife habitat
- protect biodiversity in high elevation spruce-fir forests
- provide for habitat connectivity and wildlife corridors
- secure pedestrian public access to regionally important recreation area
- promote economically sustainable management of forests and a healthy local forest products industry

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JOANNE WAZNY

Jackson Valley Topographic, Access & Recreation Map



MANAGEMENT OF THE PROPERTY

Vermont Peak Properties retains ownership of this land and can:

- continue to run a sugaring operation on the property, and
- continue to harvest timber on the property in conformity with a forest stewardship plan developed by a professional forester and ok'd by the Vermont State Forester. This plan must be updated at least every ten years. Logging road construction and harvesting/skidding operations all must comply with regulations entitled "acceptable management practices for maintaining water quality on logging jobs in Vermont."

- The owner (VPP) has also reserved the right to expand development on a 50 acre parcel already containing a small chalet style cabin. Expansion cannot exceed 10 bedrooms.

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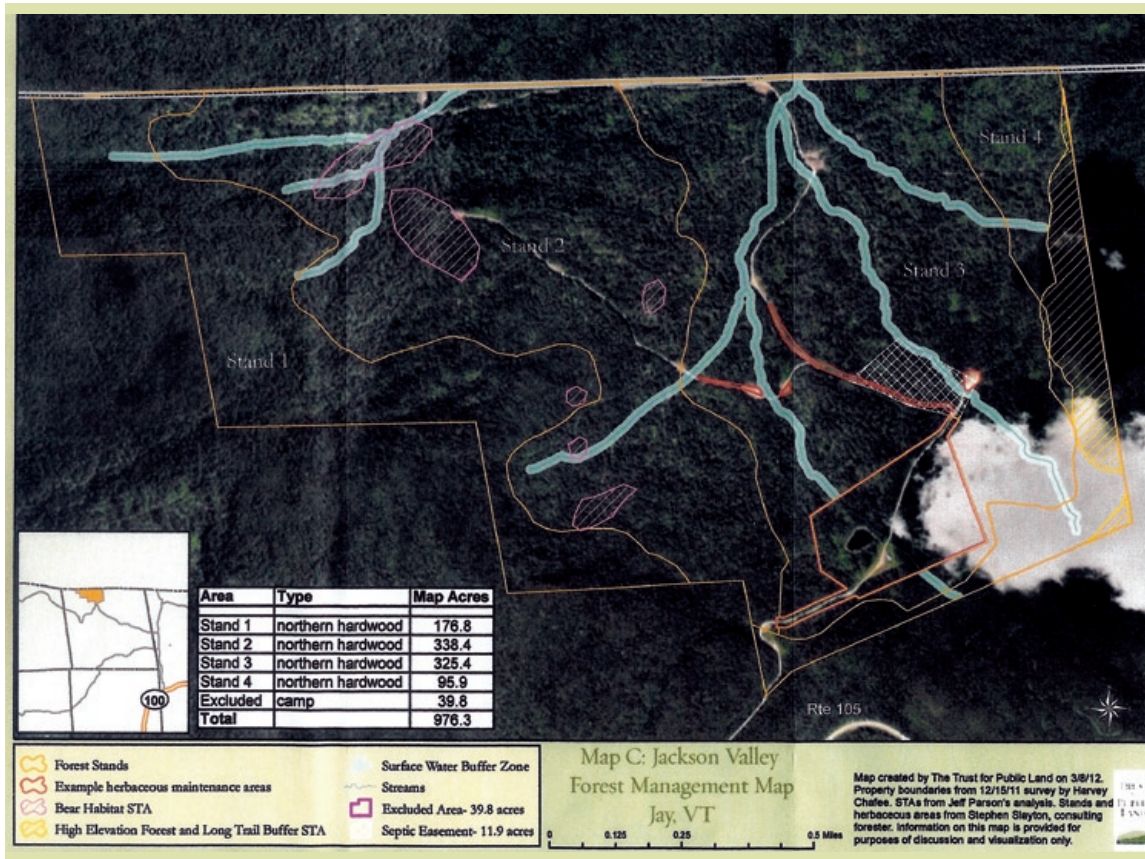


Jackson Valley Forest Management Map

SUMMER
2012

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THE PROCESS

I had the opportunity to sit down with Joe Pollender, one of the two managing partners in VPP, and discuss his reaction to the purchase (development rights) process. His overview of the experience was positive but that it took way too long. I asked if he would do it again with other properties and he said that he would if the process could be shortened. He also stressed that he was very impressed by the professionalism and demeanor of the TPL staff that he interacted with during the whole negotiation. When I asked Joe about the tax benefits of such a deal he said that he didn't think that there would be much advantage but that he hadn't received the tax bill yet.

Joe was very candid in saying that he is a businessman and that his first obligation is to his business partners. However, I consider Joe a friend and I know that he took a great deal of satisfaction out of preserving this piece of property during his

ownership tenure. That is not to imply that VPP didn't do well with this deal but the fact that he stuck with it for five long years says much for his intent to protect a very special tract of forest.

Given the exceptional value of this property as:

- wildlife habitat,
- a watershed whose streams are an important headwater for the Missisquoi River,
- the final link in a 13,000 acre cross-boundary wildlife corridor,
- a 1,000 acre recreational gem, and
- a working forest providing jobs and taxes to the local economy—

I would say that it was a win-win deal for everybody. Bravo to the Trust for Public Land and Vermont Peak Properties for your dedication and perseverance.



PUBLIC RECREATION ON PRIVATE LAND

By Nancy Patch

Our Vermont forests offer a multitude of recreational activities including hunting, fishing, hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing, camping, mountain biking, horseback riding, snowmobiling, as well as canoeing and kayaking in our rivers and lakes. We are second only to Alaska in per capita income from outdoor recreation. Demand for all kinds of recreational activities is increasing. With this increasing demand there also comes an increase in potential conflicts. Can we love our forests too much? Forests are also becoming more fragmented or exist in smaller parcels, and there is a growing concern from the public that more and more land is being posted.

Backwoods recreation is part of the long history of Vermont and New England, but our tradition of public use of private lands has an even longer history. In early New England, hunting and fishing on private land was considered a democratic right

as fish and wildlife do not recognize property boundaries and they belong to no one. The act of hunting and fishing has been considered a sport for at least the last 1,000 years as well as a means of sustenance. In medieval England large game reserves were set aside by the king and taking the king's deer was a serious offense. Later on the English Game Laws defined hunting as an aristocratic privilege and eventually extended into the commons and extinguished all ancient rights of usufruct (enjoying the use of another's property). In the new world, the colonists reinstated the right of commons, creating the tradition of private land being open to all for hunting and fishing. Perhaps it is time to consider once again the public use of private lands, and what it means to limit access.

Recreation today is of course more than just hunting and fishing. In 1825, John Muir declared "Thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people are beginning to find out that going to the mountains is going home; that wilderness is

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JOANNE WAZNY



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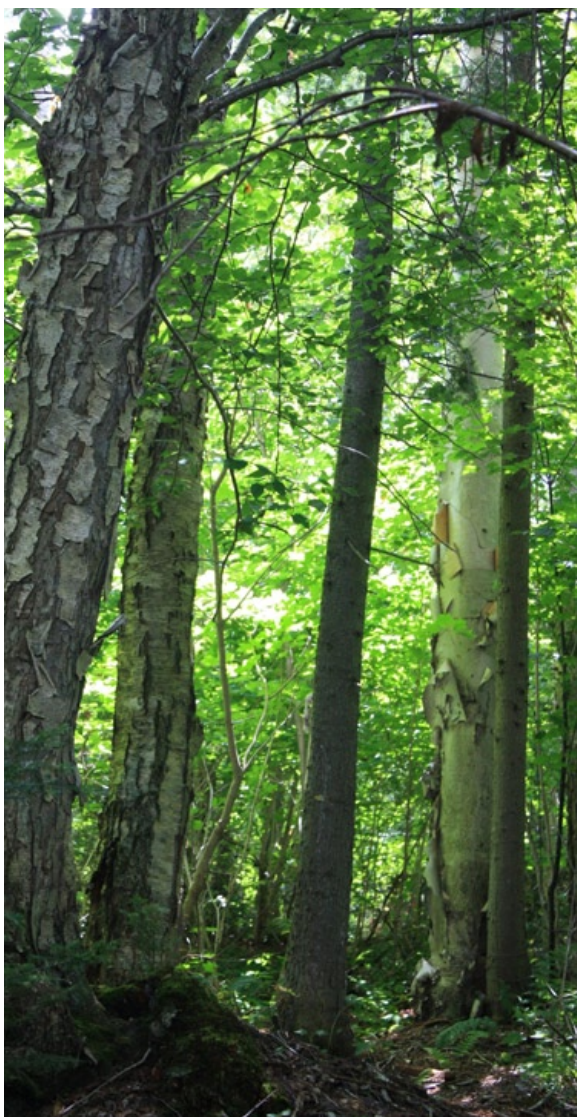
a necessity, and that mountain parks and reservations are useful not only as fountains of timber and irrigating rivers, but as fountains of Life.” From these words and the work of Muir and others, our National Forests and Parks were created. But the majority of Vermont, about 80%, is in private ownership. Our forests are an important resource to protect, but if no one is allowed in, then their importance to society as a whole could diminish.

In some areas, primarily where forests are more fragmented there are other pressures as well. The over browsing by white tailed deer in some areas in Vermont is severely limiting the ability of our forests to regenerate and threatening the sustainability of the forest resource. The problem of over browsing can also be exacerbated by the spread of invasive species which the deer do not eat, and the stress of climate change. With an increase in deer numbers, invasive plants, and warmer temperatures we are also seeing an increase in the spread of ticks and Lyme disease. Encouraging hunting on your property could help keep the system in balance. After all, humans are the only significant predator of deer in the north woods. (More on this in an upcoming article).

The conundrum is how do we keep access to our forests democratic but also protect private property rights? Why do people post their land? There are many reasons, sometimes people move here from places that do not have the tradition of open access. Privacy is the number one reason people buy land in Vermont and posting keeps it private. Another reason is disrespect of private property by users of the forest. Some recreational activities these days have a very high impact on the environment. Littering, noise pollution, and erosion can be significant problems.

I would advocate that landowners consider some form of public use for the more low impact sports such as hunting, fishing, and dispersed pedestrian access. Local user groups can also start a dialogue with landowners to allow other forms of recreation that require trail use. Getting written permission

from landowners and forming an agreement to limit use to designated trails and to maintain those trails will go a long way. The Montgomery Mountain Bike Club, *The Grateful Treads*, has such a policy that so far seems to be working well. In some cases, landowners may choose to restrict public use of their property and this they have a right to do. There have been many abuses to private property and when this happens, one cannot expect the landowner to continue to be tolerant of public use. But, mutual respect and a recognition that our forests are part of our communities may end up being the best way to protect our forests and keep them whole.



JOANNE WAZNY



OUR FORESTS ARE UNDER ATTACK

By Nancy Patch

We have an enemy that is sneaking up on us. It is quiet, it seems benign, even masquerading as beautiful and aromatic. It has fooled many of us, including the birds and the bees. But don't be fooled, this thing is a menace and can change the world as we know it. This thing is a plant and is one of the many invasive species that has become an expensive and difficult problem to deal with throughout Vermont. If you love the natural world, are interested in protecting wildlife habitat, in growing timber, or producing sap then you should help us fight back against it. What is it you ask? It is the dreaded *honeysuckle*.

I pick this one plant of the many invasive species we have in Franklin County because in the CHC region it is the one that is spreading most rapidly, but is still in numbers that we can control. If we don't act fast then we may lose this opportunity to keep it out of our forests and save a lot of heartache

and dollars later on. Because it is still in manageable numbers we can keep it that way. But because it is in relatively small numbers, most people do not even know what it looks like or care that it is here. But if you go to southern Vermont or even into the Champlain Valley—once pointed out to you—you will see how pervasive it has become.

Honeysuckle, like many of the successful exotic invasives changes the soil's chemistry, out competes native vegetation, and diminishes wildlife habitat. The berries that it prolifically produces are gorged by migratory songbirds in late summer and fall before they head south for the winter. All berries are important to birds for migration, but these berries do not contain the nutrition that the birds need. It is like the bird is eating only potato chips and gummie bears. These plants can also take over the forest understory eliminating the natural regeneration. It could cost upwards of \$600/acre to successfully regenerate a forest taken over by honeysuckle.

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Honeysuckle berries



Honeysuckle flowers

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

But, right now, honeysuckle in Bakersfield, Belvidere, Enosburgh, Fletcher, Montgomery, Richford and Waterville is generally limited to along the rivers, roads and field edges. If everyone on their own property were to remove these shrubs along the edges of the forest we could get ahead of this problem. The town road crews should also be made aware of what they look like and remove them along the roadsides. Conservation Commissions can initiate this dialogue with the town road crews.

The plant once established is difficult to eradicate, but caught early it is quite doable. Honeysuckle is quite shallow rooted and pretty easy to pull out of the ground, especially if you can use a tractor, 4 wheeler, or truck and wrap a chain around it. It can also be removed with a weed wrench. At a minimum, cutting the plant that is in flower will prevent the plant from producing fruit, which is harmful to birds and easily spread, though it will sprout back when cut. Chemical controls can also be used successfully. The Vermont Nature Conservancy along with Vermont State Forests, Parks and Recreation are lead organizations that are spreading the word about these plants

and how to control them. Funding to control invasives is also provided through The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS). There is help out there if you ask for it, but we need your help to start the conversation.

Note: Five species of Honeysuckle (Bell, Japanese, Amur, Morrow, and Tartarian) are on the Vermont Noxious weed List and are prohibited from sale or distribution in Vermont. This plant was once a popular nursery plant until it was discovered to be highly invasive and to cause harm to the native flora and fauna.



Honeysuckle shrub

THE NATURE CONSERVANCY

UPCOMING EVENTS

BAKERSFIELD CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the last Thursday of every month at 7:00 PM in the Town Hall Building, 40 East Bakersfield Rd, Bakersfield.

ENOSBURG CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the fourth Monday of every month at 7:30 PM in the Emergency Services Building, 83 Sampsonville Rd (Rte 105), Enosburg Falls.

MONTGOMERY CONSERVATION COMMISSION

Meets the first Wednesday of every month from 5:30 to 7:30 PM at the Montgomery Town Office, 98 Main St (VT Route 118), Montgomery Center.

RICHFORD CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

Meets the fourth Monday of the month at 6:00 PM in the upstairs conference room of the Arvin A. Brown Public Library, 88 Main St, Richford.

WILD AND SCENIC RIVER STUDY COMMITTEE

Meets the third Thursday of every month from 7:00 PM to 9:00 PM. Locations vary so visit www.vtwsr.org for up-to-date information.

Martin and Lynx in Vermont

Wednesday, July 18th at 7pm at the Craftsbury Public Library. Presentation by Jillian Kilborn, Wildlife Biologist from Island Pond and manager of the 25,000 acre Connecticut Lakes Natural Area for NH Fish and Game. Sponsored by the Hosmer Pond Watershed Initiative and the Craftsbury Public Library.

Game of Logging: Chainsaw Safety Training

Sponsored by Vermont Coverts with support by the Montgomery Conservation Commission. Saturday August 18th, 8am–4:30pm. Cost is \$160. Fills up fast, so reserve your spot now. For everyone—beginners to seasoned pros. For more information or to register contact Lisa Sausville: lisa@vtcoverts.org or 802-388-3880.

Missisquoi River Basin Association (MRBA) Third Annual River Fest

August 25th at the Montgomery Recreation Fields, 4–11pm. Not to be missed.



JOANNE WAZNY

**Don't forget to check coldhollowtocanada.org for updated Upcoming Events*