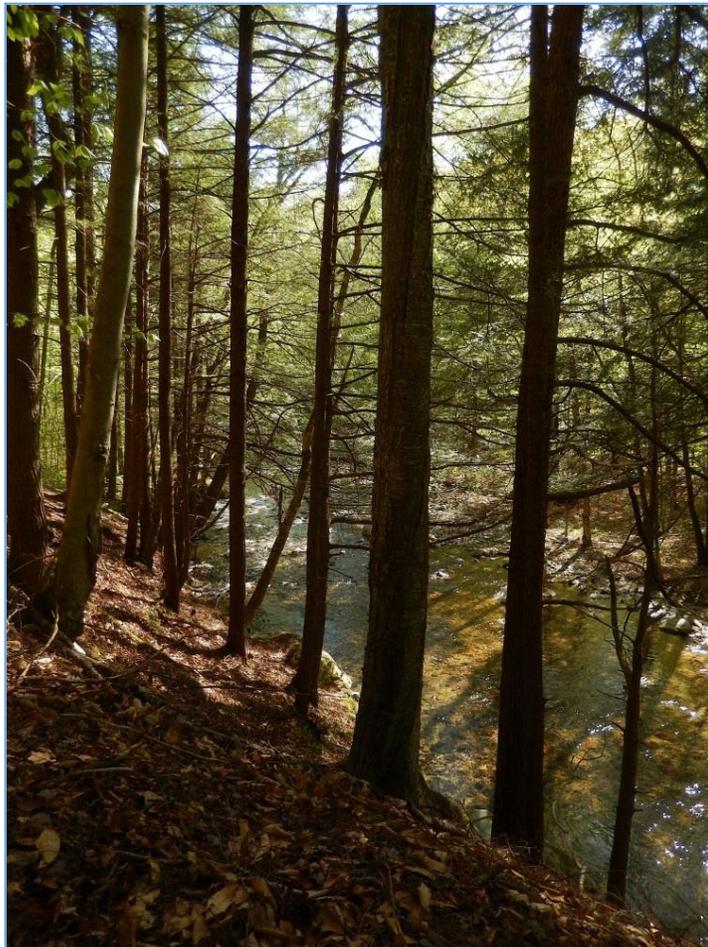


**Vermont Agency of Natural Resources
Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation**

**Interim Stewardship Plan
Jim Jeffords State Forest**

January, 2016

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In consultation with:

Kris Hammer – Vermont Housing and Conservation Board - Easement Holder
Kate Wanner and Rodger Krussman – Trust for Public Land - Project Partner

Interim Stewardship Plans

In general, Interim Stewardship Plans (ISPs) are designed to guide the interim stewardship of new Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) properties in the time period between the property acquisition and long-range management plan adoption. Each Interim Stewardship Plan is tailored to fit the special features and legal restrictions that may occur on new ANR acquisitions. This document is meant to codify existing stewardship practices of ANR as they pertain to protecting new properties that may be currently used, but not actively managed. They articulate how ANR will care for such lands until a comprehensive management plan process with public input has been completed. Maintaining existing roads, installing gates and barricades, and marking boundaries protect the property from inappropriate uses without prescribing the future management of the property. This document is also meant to capture the history and key features of the property from the perspective of the organization that worked to insure the long-term protection of the property.

I. Property background and Description

This property is an assemblage of three different ownerships to create a parcel of 1,346 acres featuring public access, landscape connectivity, river frontage, riparian areas and resultant flood mitigation and connection between Aitken State Forest and Coolidge State Forest.

The Jim Jeffords State Forest as a whole is a high priority for the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation because of its landscape connectivity, wildlife habitat, recreation values and aquatic values. Due to its geographic location and nine miles of forest roads, the acquisition will enhance the State's ability to manage and increase public access to Aitken State Forest and the western side of Coolidge State Forest. The property is within the view-shed of the Appalachian Trail and the Long Trail, and is a popular destination for hiking, skiing, snowmobiling, and other recreational uses. It has been popular with hunters, who have seen access to land decreasing with all private parcels surrounding the property currently posted to trespassing, including hunting. VAST, through its local club, the Shrewsbury Snow-Birds, maintains seven miles of groomed snowmobile trails on the property that are part of a large loop between Coolidge State Forest, Aitken State Forest and Rutland City Forest.

Vermont Agency of Natural Resources' major focus to conserve riparian corridors to enhance flood resiliency will be aided by the protection of an intact floodplain, 190 acres of riparian areas, 18 acres of wetlands, and 6 miles of streams and rivers on the Property, including 2 miles of the North Branch of the Cold River, a popular wild trout stream, and considered a Critical River for aquatic connectivity and aquatic habitat. This acquisition is part of a larger conservation effort to conserve a landscape-scale bear corridor through central Vermont between the two units of the Green Mountain National Forest. In addition to protecting habitat and connectivity for black bears, the property also provides habitat for bobcat, moose, fisher, deer, and at least 8 bird Species of Greatest Conservation Need. This acquisition will complement and help protect the significant investments VHCN has put into the fee acquisitions of 2,667 acres of Coolidge State Forest in Shrewsbury and the 16-acre Warner Swimming Hole, adjacent to

the southwest corner of the property on the Cold River. The property is also adjacent to Brown Bridge, designated as a National Historic Landmark in 2014.

II. Conservation Objective

This property will be managed by the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation as the newly created Jim Jeffords State Forest.

III. Long Term Management

Management activities on Jim Jeffords State Forest will be guided by a long-range management plan. The long-range management plan consists of at least the following components:

- (a) General Information: pertinent maps, general description of property, overall purpose for protecting the parcel.
- (b) Existing Conditions: field inventories including vegetation types and natural community classification, soils, forest productivity classification, wildlife, fisheries, water, recreation, cultural, archaeological and historic resources, special constraints (natural areas, Rare, Threatened and Endangered species sites, deed, easement or other legal restrictions) and emphasis zones; pertinent maps.
- (c) Conservation Objective (Desired Condition): ideally, what the land will look like or how it will be used at the end of the planning period, as determined by the goals, objectives, agency and department missions, easement provisions and public vision.
- (d) Implementation: a description of how the parcel will be managed, taking into consideration all existing conditions (roads, trail, inholdings), and to achieve the Conservation Objective; it includes active management strategies such as recreational or wildlife enhancements, timber harvesting, new parking, etc.

IV. Interim Management

Until a long-range management plan is completed for Jim Jeffords State Forest, there are certain activities that **FPR will carry out**. These property stewardship activities will include maintenance on trails and erosion control (see complete list below), and are all designed to protect the new property until the long-range management planning efforts are completed.

Lists of **activities that will not occur** until after long-range management plan adoption are also included below. Activities are restricted on lands without long-term management plans for both internal ANR policy reasons and legal conservation restrictions.

Legal Restrictions on Jim Jeffords State Forest:

The property is subject to a Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions and Public Access Easement held by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) signed and recorded in the Mendon and Shrewsbury records.

Potential Sensitive Features:

The property includes 2 miles of frontage on the Cold River.

Appropriate activities allowed during interim period:

- Revegetating pre-existing log landings and other disturbed areas including tree planting
- Carrying out erosion control work on pre-existing roads and trails
- Erecting and maintaining appropriate signage
- Erecting and maintaining necessary gates
- Appropriately responding to trespass and encroachment situations
- Surveying, boundary maintenance and marking
- Maintaining necessary pre-existing roads and trails and using them for stewardship access
- Conducting FOREX inventory and other information gathering tasks necessary to prepare the long range management plan
- Working with towns to manage parking in areas where it currently exists.
- Construct, repair, maintain or replace fencing for protection of forest regeneration
- Use by the public for existing dispersed pedestrian recreational purposes (e.g. bird watching, cross-country skiing, fishing, hunting, snowshoeing, trapping, walking)
- Manage invasive species on roads, trails and landings to limit their spread into interior forests

Activities that will NOT occur during the interim period:

- Ground disturbing activities not related to the above
- Construction of new parking areas
- Vegetative management including timber harvesting
- Construction of new roads and recreation trails
- Establishment of new land uses

- Recreational development (new trails or other infrastructure except for improving parking lot)
- Erection of new structures (tent platforms, permanent restroom facilities, kiosks, etc.)
- Granting of new rights-of-way for driveways, utility lines, etc.
- Recreational use of All Terrain Vehicles (ATV's)
- Collection of admission fees for non-commercial, public use of the property

Completed by:



Kate Willard
Lands Division Section Chief

Date:

March 22, 2016

Attachments:

Map of the property acquired

Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions and Public Access Easement