

DRAFT
Kingdom Heritage Lands Corridor Management Proposal
Vermont Association of Snow Travelers

Background

VAST has managed snowmobile trails across the Kingdom Heritage Lands (KHL) since before their conservation (1998) and the designation of Corridor Managers (2002). Since 2002, VAST has acted as Corridor Manager for snowmobile trails in accordance with the original Kingdom Heritage Lands management plans and easements.

The Vermont Association of Snow Travelers has been responsible for maintaining the Statewide Snowmobile Trail System (SSTS) throughout Vermont since 1967. The SSTS consists of 4,700 miles of groomed corridor trails and approximately 1,500 miles of secondary trails that traverse the state in all directions connecting trails in Canada to Massachusetts and trails in New Hampshire to New York. VAST is made up of 128 local snowmobile clubs who maintain the network of trails that make up the SSTS. It is our goal to provide a statewide snowmobile trail system second to none and to provide a quality snowmobiling experience to our members.

The VAST membership varies each year but ranges from 20,000 to 45,000 and averages around 25,000 members from all across the United States and Canada.

Current Status

Location

The Kingdom heritage Lands are a crucial part of the SSTS, hosting almost 180 miles of potential trails. In addition, this area is frequented by a large portion of VAST members due to its remote qualities, beautiful scenery and typically abundant snowfall.

All snowmobile corridors across the KHL are managed by VAST are shown below. The exact location of trails, however, has changed and will change over time as various resource constrains, user conflicts, or management needs cause slight changes in the network. While the total potential trail mileage is currently 177 miles, closures for logging operations or other management purposes reduce the total open in any given year. In addition, the total mileage available in any year is limited to 150 miles across the three ownerships in accordance with the Conservation and Public Access Easements on the Plum Creek Private Timberlands and West Mountain WMA.

There are approximately 104 miles of VAST trail located on lands owned by Plum Creek Timber Company, 34 miles of trail within the Silvio O Conte Fish & Wildlife Refuge, 28 miles of trail within the West Mountain Wildlife Management Area, and 11 miles along the VELCO Power line

within the West Mountain WMA and the Silvio O. Conte Fish & Wildlife Refuge. This network of trails is made up of main corridor trails (VAST #96, 97, 98, 102, 106, 111, 114, 2000) and other crucial connecting and alternate trails that help to disperse traffic off from these main routes and connect to other key locations in the Northeast Kingdom.

User Requirements

In order to operate a snowmobile on the SSTS a member must comply with the following requirements, in accordance with Vermont Statutes Annotated; Title 23, Chapter 29:

1. The snowmobile must have a valid VT registration with decal visibly placed on left side of cowl, the windshield, or the tunnel as well as a valid VT Resident TMA decal to the left of the registration; OR a valid state or province registration with a VT Non-Resident TMA to the left of the registration (left cowl).
2. Operator must have proof of liability insurance.
3. Snowmobiles must be equipped with one or more operational headlight, red rear light, a fully functional brake in good mechanical conditions and an efficient muffler.
4. The operator must be a member of a VAST Snowmobile Club and Association which has received land owner's permission with: Proof by Card-VAST personal I.D. decal on machine-VAST, or must have written permission of each land owner's property on which machine is operated.
5. The operator must be 16 years of age; OR if under 16 years of age, must be under direct supervision of a person 18 years or age or older and must have in their possession a valid Snowmobile Safety Course Certificate from VT or other state/province.
6. The operator must be 16 years of age to operate across a public highway.

Personnel

This network of trails is maintained by a core group of volunteers from five of VAST's 128 local snowmobile clubs: Brighton Snowmobile Club, Inc, Canaan Border Riders, Inc, Northeast Kingdom Snow Blasters, Lunenburg Polar Bears Snowmobile Club and the Connecticut Valley Sno-Riders, Inc. in cooperation with state lands staff from the Vermont Departments of Forest Parks & Recreation and Fish & Wildlife, and the private landowners and/or their agents. Oversight is provided by the VAST Trails Administrator.

Infrastructure management

The majority of the SSTS is located on existing gravel roads or skid trails. Trail construction and maintenance tasks include clearing trees, mowing, installation and maintenance of water crossings, and earthwork as necessary. These activities are carried out in accordance with VAST's Guidelines for the Development for Snowmobile Trails Manual. ANR will approve all maintenance/construction work prior to the work taking place.

All machinery used in trail construction and maintenance will be cleaned of vegetation and soil before use on the Kingdom Heritage Lands to prevent the spread of invasive plants.

In addition to the snowmobile trail corridors discussed above, VAST is also responsible for the winter plowing of three parking areas on the Kingdom Heritage Lands: Stone Dam, Dennis Pond and Maidstone Lake Roads, in cooperation with ANR.

Gates to prohibit vehicular access gates will be locked open at the beginning of the snowmobile season and locked closed at the end of the snowmobile season. Gates are owned and managed by ANR, but may be opened by VAST in the beginning of the season and closed by VAST at the end of the season.

User management

The Closed season for snowmobiles in Vermont shall be defined as the time from April 16 to December 15. This wording is contained within The Vermont Statutes Annotated, Title 23: Motor Vehicles, Chapter 29, § 3201.

The designated speed limit on all state lands is 35 MPH.

Snowmobile trails may be co-located with other uses. ANR reserves the right to use or allow others to use any part of the WMA or Private Timberlands as may be legally provided for.

Trail signage shall be posted by VAST according to the signing guidelines outlined by the International Association of Snowmobile Administrators

Communication and collaboration

VAST and the local clubs will contact the St Johnsbury District Stewardship Forester (presently, Louis Bushey) for any matters related to corridor management. In addition, VAST will maintain a list of club contacts for land managers on each of the three ownerships to refer to.

An annual meeting held in September convenes VAST, ANR, Plum Creek, US FWS, and the local snowmobile clubs to discuss ongoing issues including unauthorized use, gate openings and closings, proposed maintenance projects, management activities and other related items. This system works well in keeping open lines of communication between all involved parties.

On occasion a section of trail must be relocated to accommodate a timber harvest or other management activity. The relocation is marked out by VAST, Plum Creek, and/or ANR, reviewed by all interested Partners and given final approval by ANR (and the landowner, in the case of the Private Timberlands) prior to any work taking place.

Proposal for future management

We propose that the location and management of snowmobile corridors on the KHL continue largely as they are now.

Trail management practices will remain largely the same, though VAST and ANR are working to update VAST's Trail Construction and Maintenance Manual, which may provide new guidance on some practices.

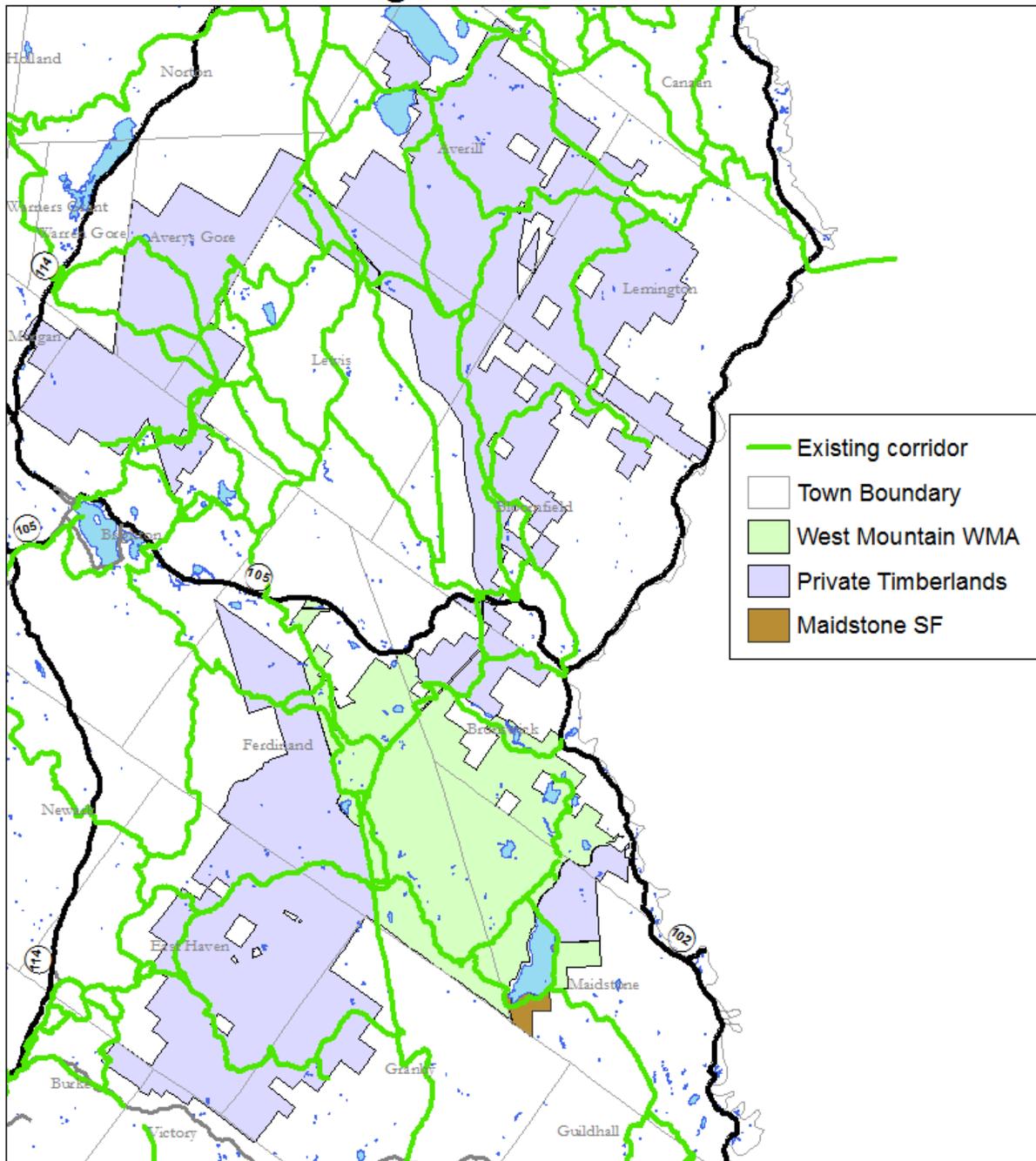
Coordination has been effective and should continue, particularly the annual Kingdom Heritage Land Meeting held in September.

Corridor locations are generally effective, and should be maintained, with the following proposed changes (see map below):

1. **Trail 98/Dennis Pond.** Relocating a section of VAST trail 98 out of the "core area" on the east side of the WMA, as part of the West Mountain Wildlife Management Area Long-range Management Plan. VAST is amenable to this relocation so long as the trail is not lost or moved into a lower snow area or other area where additional issues arise. This relocation will be implemented collaboratively between VAST and ANR.
2. **Trail 98A/Maidstone Lake Road.** Relocating trail 98A off of the Maidstone Lake Road, from EX 532 to trail 98 near Brown's Mill and the existing parking area on Maidstone Lake Road. The Maidstone Lake Road creates approximately 2 miles of travel along the plowed and sanded roadway in an otherwise high snow area. The new trail would cross portions of West Mountain WMA and the Private Timberlands, using primarily existing skid roads.
3. **EX40-401/Madison Brook-South America Pond Rd.** Improving the EX40-EX401 area. Ex40 is one of the area's busiest intersections, EX 401 is a challenge due to a blind hill and turn, and both are impacted by winter timber harvesting at times. Relocating a short section of 102 from the VELCO line south of EX401 and connecting directly to EX40 may resolve some of the issues in this area.

In addition, a future trail may be considered connecting trail 102 to the Silvio Conte National Wildlife Refuge Nulhegan Basin Division Visitor Center, contingent on the NWR's ongoing planning process.

Existing VAST Corridors



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Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department
2015

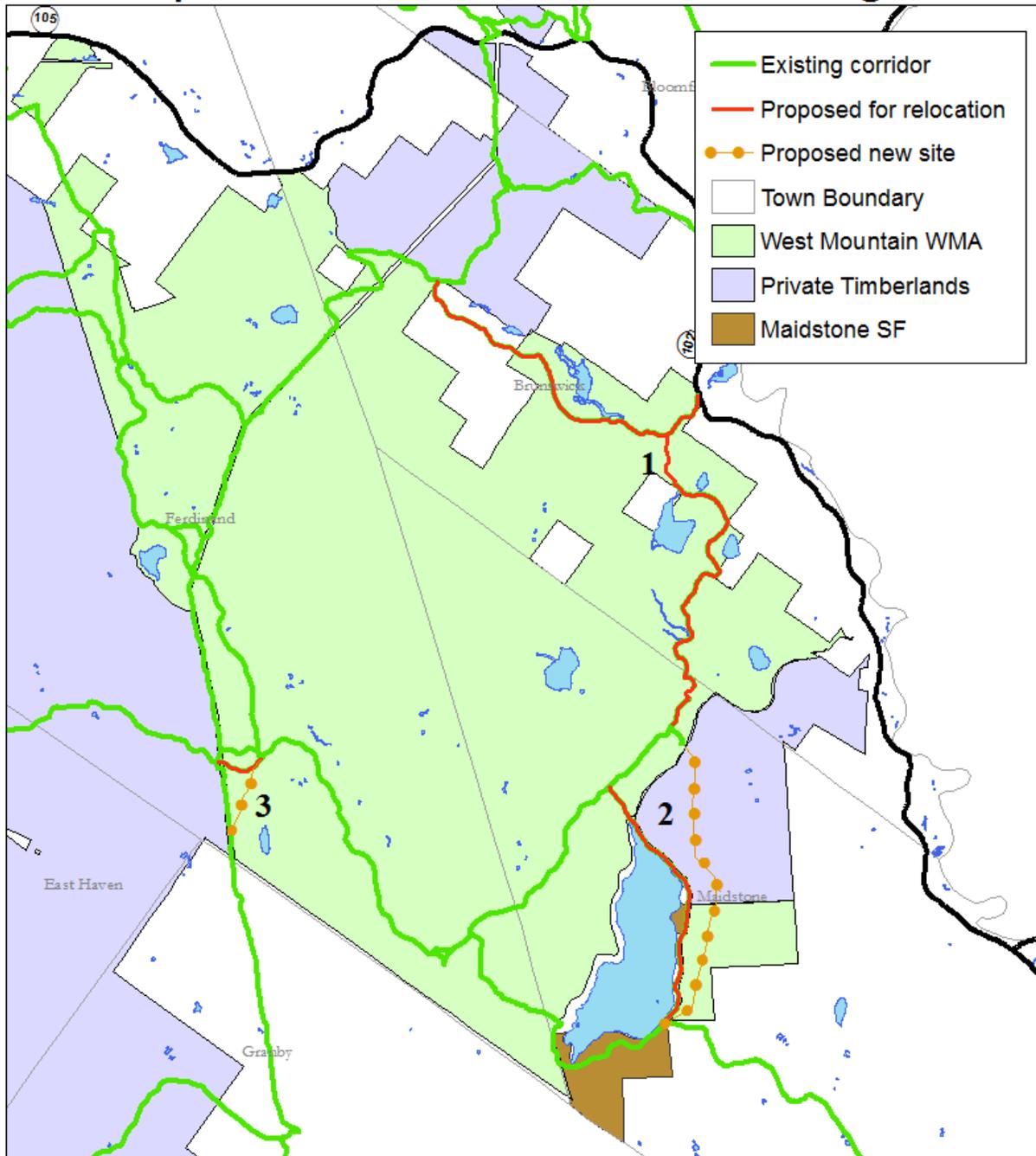
0 2.5 5 10 Miles



For planning purposes only. Not survey accurate.



Proposed VAST Corridor Changes



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0 1 2 4 Miles

For planning purposes only. Not survey accurate.

