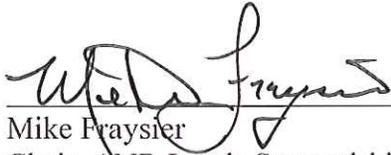


WILLOUGHBY STATE FOREST
Long Range Management Plan Amendment

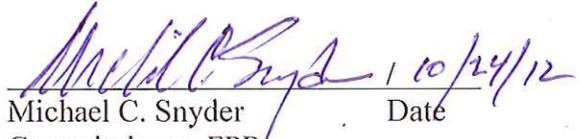
Enhancements to Cross Country Skiing Trail Network at Bartlett Mt.
September, 2012



Mike Fraysier
Chair, ANR Lands Stewardship Team

19/26/2012

Date



Michael C. Snyder
Commissioner, FPR

10/24/12
Date

Willoughby State Forest

Proposed Long-Range Management Plan Amendment

The current long range management plan for Willoughby State Forest identifies some management considerations for the cross-country ski trails that were built in a portion of the Forest in 2001 to accommodate early and late season training and racing by area high schools ski teams. Activity on these trails has broadened to include regular grooming for both classical and skate skiing, and increased visitation by the general public. The ski trails are being maintained by the Memphremagog Ski Touring Foundation (MSTF) under a cooperative agreement with FPR. FPR has been approached by the MSTF to expand the network of trails and to address the management considerations that have grown out of the expanded use. FPR is responding by proposing an amendment to the Long-Range Management Plan to address the gradual changes that have occurred and MSTF's request for additional trails.

The Bartlett Mountain area of the forest has been and continues to be a popular spot for year-round dispersed forms of recreation. The area is well accessed from Route 5A and two forest roads, Bartlett Mountain Road and the CCC Road. They are both open to motorized traffic during the summer and fall. The CCC Road is a four-mile long gravel surfaced road that was built in the 1930s by the Civilian Conservation Corps stationed at Camp Number 55. The remains of this camp are located in the forest and are still evident today. The CCC Road is a major artery running through the forest connecting State Routes 5 and 5A. Motorists sometimes use this route as a short-cut connector between Routes 5 and 5A. Gates have been installed at either end of this road to protect the road from damage during spring break up. It has been our goal to have these roads open for public traffic from Memorial Day weekend through snow fall.

There is a parking lot at the easterly terminus of the CCC Road on the west side of State Route 5A. Directly across from this parking lot there is another lot on the easterly side of State Route 5A. These two lots provide trailhead parking to the Mount Pisgah hiking trail and also serve as winter parking and a point of access to the Mount Hor trail and the Bartlett Mountain area. These parking lots are plowed during the winter as a courtesy by the Vermont Agency of Transportation.

The trailhead for the Mount Hor hiking trail is located about 1.25 miles from State Route 5A heading westerly on the CCC Road. A vista offering spectacular views of Lake Willoughby and the Willoughby Cliffs is located about 0.6 miles from State Route 5A just west of the easterly junction of the CCC Road and the Bartlett Mountain Road. This area of the forest offers opportunities for a casual walk, snow shoeing, cross-country skiing and mountain biking. The roads provide a corridor for the occasional horseback rider and are used by dog-sledders during the early winter months for training.

In recent years Willoughby State Forest has seen increased use by cross country skiers of all levels. The availability of skiable terrain and plentiful snow has contributed to the popularity of the area. Originally skiers used the existing forest road corridor loop around Bartlett Mountain. This route posed safety concerns because a section of the route serves as a Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST) corridor trail. It also posed undue physical challenges to beginners and younger skiers because of its length and a couple of steep climbs. In order to relieve these problems and safety concerns area high schools requested that the Department consider alternatives. In June 2001 a new 5.5- kilometer cross-country ski trail system was designed and developed on the east side of Bartlett Mountain. This new trail system utilized existing infrastructure that included portions of the CCC Road and the Bartlett Mountain Road as well as some woods trails. These trails are gated at the four terminal points along the CCC Road and the Bartlett Mountain Road to prevent vehicular traffic during the summer months. This trail system offers a training and race course for local high school cross-country ski teams that now accommodates the needs and abilities of all high school student skiers. As many of the groomed trails overlap each other, the total distance of groomed terrain is approximately 5.75 miles (see attached map).

Beginning in 2006 the trails were groomed for public use by a private contractor associated with the Memphremagog Ski Touring Foundation (MSTF). Funding for trail grooming has been provided by FPR through an in-house recreation trails program grant, MSTF membership fees, and donations from the skiing public. In addition, MSTF has provided liability insurance and informational signage. MSTF's requested improvements and additions to the ski trails include:

- An additional loop around Bartlett Mountain utilizing existing roads (1.4 miles)
- A reroute of the "connector trail" to avoid ecologically sensitive areas
- A temporary/seasonal bathroom facility at the parking lot
- Additional signage encouraging other recreationists to use the trail system in a way that maintains the quality of the groomed trails

Additional improvements of cross-country skiing at Willoughby State Forest that may be suggested by MSTF for consideration in the future:

- A temporary/seasonal warming facility
- Identification and mapping of ungroomed backcountry trails

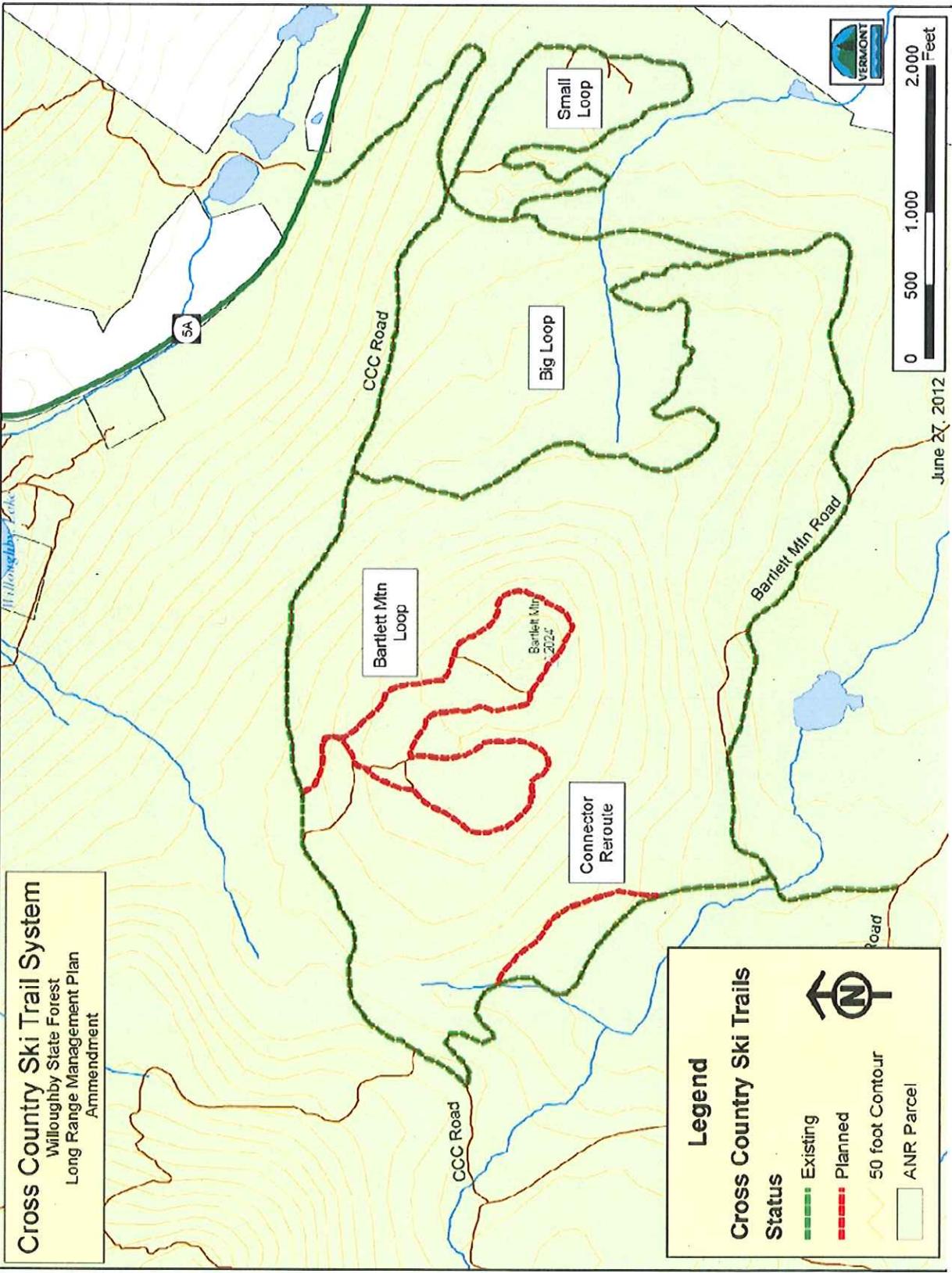
MSTF has been and will continue to be a helpful partner in managing and improving cross-country skiing activity at Willoughby State Forest. The specifics of this partnership will be detailed in a Memorandum of Understanding between MSTF and FPR.

The Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation has worked cooperatively since 1998 with area high schools and the New England Nordic Ski Association (NENSA) in accommodating requests to hold cross-country ski races and practice sessions in this area of the forest. All trails are open to the public except during race events.

A segment of one of the trails passes through a "Key Mast Area", being a beech stand. Key mast areas are described and addressed in the appendix section of this plan, (See Ecological Assessment - Wildlife Habitats and Species Assessment). This trail system will be managed to protect the wildlife values associated with this particular beech mast stand.

A section of this trail system also passes through a historic district that was identified after the trail system was constructed. Recreational activities in this area should not impact the historic resource due to restrictions placed on how this trail system will be managed.

The easy access and availability of parking lends this area of the forest to receive low to moderate levels of use year-round. One is most likely to encounter motorists and pedestrians at any time from spring through fall. Moderate contact with other users is likely mid-week, with higher concentration expected on weekends during this time of year. Use tapers off during the winter months, as this road is not plowed. High concentrations of use do occur during cross-country ski race events and practice sessions.



Cross Country Ski Trail System
 Willoughby State Forest
 Long Range Management Plan
 Amendment

Legend

Cross Country Ski Trails

Status

- Existing
- Planned
- 50 foot Contour
- ANR Parcel

June 27, 2012

