

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

**Interim Stewardship Plan  
Lower Clarendon Gorge Property  
Clarendon, Vermont**



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in consultation with:  
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Leif Richardson, State Lands Ecologist**

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Lower Clarendon Gorge Survey Map

Copies of Grant of Development Rights, Conservation  
Restrictions, and Public Access Easement and Warranty Deeds

Letter and natural community map from Leif Richardson, ANR State  
Lands Ecologist

## Introduction

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 property acquisition and Long-Range Management Plan adoption. . This document is meant to codify existing stewardship practices of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) as they pertain to protecting new properties that may be currently used but are not actively managed, pending a comprehensive management planning process with public input. Maintaining existing roads, building gates, and marking boundaries protect the property from inappropriate uses without prescribing the future management of the property.

Each interim stewardship plan is tailored to fit the special features and legal restrictions that may occur on new ANR acquisitions

This document also means to capture the recent history and key features of the property from the perspective of the organization that worked to insure the long-term protection of the property.

## PROPERTY BACKGROUND

The State of Vermont, Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) acquired the Byrne property to conserve a significant portion of a unique geological area known as the Lower Clarendon Gorge located along the Mill River in the town of Clarendon Vermont. The acquisition was made possible by a grant of \$71,000 from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and an additional \$20,000 raised by the Vermont Rivers Conservancy (VRC) towards a total project cost of \$91,000.

While the Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation holds fee simple title to the property, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) holds a conservation easement insuring protection of the property in perpetuity.

The protected land involves a 24.9+/- acre parcel on both sides of the Mill River in the Town of Clarendon Vermont. The property is unique and significant in Vermont because of the presence of a Temperate Calcareous Cliff natural community type which is uncommon to rare in Vermont. Many of these cliffs harbor a variety of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species. (See attached letter from Leif Richardson) The site is listed in the Agency of Natural Resources inventory of important Waterfalls, Cascades and Gorges of Vermont and is also in the inventory of important Vermont swimming holes.

The parcel is partially forested with northern hardwoods dominated by sugar maple, beech and birch with small patches of white pine and northern white cedar along the edge of the gorge. There is also an area of old field in early stages of succession located above the lower portion of the property along old Route # 7 access.

There is an extensive network of walking trails to the swimming hole and along the top of the gorge created by people interested in the area. There is also a substantial network of existing ATV trails throughout the property.

## CONSERVATION OBJECTIVES

Special objectives for insuring conservation of this parcel by the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources during the interim plan will include:

- protection of the Calcarious Cliff community from overuse by swimmers
- conservation of critical fish and wildlife habitat
- conservation of non-commercial, non-motorized public recreational opportunities
- maintenance of the parking area and access trails
- conservation of scenic values
- protection of the property from encroachments

## LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

The property will become part of Vermont Agency of Natural Resources land system and will be managed in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board "Grant Agreement" and the "Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions, and Public Access Easement (i.e., conservation easement) held by Vermont Housing and Conservation Board.

In addition the protected property is subject to the following deed restrictions:

- 1) Central Vermont Public Service Corp. power line easement.

## INTERIM STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Until the long-range management plan has been prepared and formally adopted, there are certain activities that FPR will carry out during an interim period between acquisition and adoption of the long-range management plan. These property stewardship activities include: monitoring use, surveying and blazing property lines, maintenance of established recreation trails, and other activities (see complete list below) designed to protect the new property until the long-range management planning efforts are completed.

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

### Activities allowed during the interim period:

- surveying and boundary maintenance
- erecting and maintaining appropriate public educational and property identification signs
- erecting and maintaining gates or barriers as maybe necessary or appropriate to protect the parcel form encroachments and to maintain the integrity of the Calcarious Cliff Community.
- maintenance of existing hiking trails and trail head access areas.
- non-motorized use by the public for walking, swimming, hiking birdwatching, etc.
- resource inventories, resource analysis, and public input leading to the completion of a LRMP

### Activities that will not occur during the interim period:

- vegetative management including commercial timber harvesting
- construction of new roads and trails
- recreational development or erecting new structures other than for protection of cliff communities
- granting of new rights-of-way for driveway, trails or utility lines, etc.
- establishment of new land uses
- Use of all-terrain vehicles

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## LONG TERM MANAGEMENT

The Agency of Natural Resources will eventually draft a long range management plan for this parcel. Because the parcel is a “stand alone” component of the ANR lands system and contains resources that are considered to be unique and fragile, the parcel will be considered for designation as a Natural Areas under 10 V.S.A., Chapter 83 section 2607. Any future designation will require approval by the Governor.

The long-range management plan will consist of at least the following components:

- a. **General information** — pertinent maps, general description of property and overall purpose.
- b. **Existing conditions** — field inventories including vegetation types and natural community classification, soils, forest productivity classification, wildlife habitat conditions, recreational use, cultural use, archeological and historic resources, special constraints (natural areas; rare, threatened, and endangered species sites; deed; easement or other legal restrictions), emphasis zones, pertinent maps.
- c. **Conservation objective** (desired conditions) — 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, and public vision (including public input and ANR responses).
- d. **Implementation** — a description of how the parcel will be managed to achieve the conservation objective. It includes active management strategies such as recreation or wildlife enhancements, timber harvesting, new parking, etc.

LIST OF ATTACHMENTS:

1. Lower Clarendon Gorge Map
2. Copies of Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions, and Public Access Easement and Warranty Deeds
3. Letter and Natural Community Map from Leif Richardson, ANR State Lands Ecologist

ANR      Agency of Natural Resources  
VRC      Vermont Rivers Conservancy  
FPR      Forests, Parks and Recreation (Department of)  
ISP      Interim Stewardship Plans  
VHCB     Vermont Housing and Conservation Board





Nongame & Natural Heritage Program

December 3, 2001

Jeff Meyers  
Vermont River Conservancy  
P.O. Box 157  
Montpelier VT 05602

Re: Clarendon Gorge Project

Dear Jeff:

I am writing to follow up on my November 2 evaluation of natural communities at Clarendon Gorge in Clarendon. I conducted a botanical inventory and collected global positioning system (GPS) information. I've used this information to add information to a digitized orthographic photo to give you an idea of where the interesting biological features I found are located.

A 1000'-wide band of Calcium-rich bedrock passes through the property (the area between the purple lines shown on the attached orthographic photo). This rock is exposed in cliffs and bluffs along the shores of Mill River, some as high as 40' tall. On the sunny north side of the river, these areas of open rock support a large but heavily disturbed example of Temperate Calcareous Cliff natural community (see attached). A sparse, 5-15' assemblage of shrubby woody plants occurs, including white pine (*Pinus strobus*), white ash (*Fraxinus americana*), American basswood (*Tilia americana*), hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), choke cherry (*Prunus virginiana*), shrubby cinquefoil (*Potentilla fruticosa*), bush honeysuckle (*Diervilla lonicera*), Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*), common buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), and Morrow's honeysuckle (*Lonicera morrowi*). The latter three shrubs are troublesome invasive plants often found in disturbed natural communities influenced by calcium-rich bedrock. Herbaceous plants found on the cliffs include ebony sedge (*Carex eburnea*), wild columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*), harebell (*Campanula rotundifolia*), Kalm's lobelia (*Lobelia kalmii*), narrow-leaved mountain mint (*Pycnanthemum tenuifolium*), stiff aster (*Aster linariifolius*), silverrod (*Solidago bicolor*), hairy woods grass (*Brachyeletrum erectum*), and walking fern (*Cystopteris bulbifera*). Weedy herbaceous plants, including self-heal (*Prunella vulgaris*), St. John's wort (*Hypericum perforatum*), and timothy grass (*Phleum pratense*), were common. Two uncommon to rare plants were found these calcareous cliffs, wheat grass (*Agropyron trachycaulon*) and wall-rue (*Asplenium ruta-muraria*). These are both ranked S3 by the Nongame and Natural Heritage Program, meaning that more than 20 occurrences are known statewide. Positions of these collections are marked by blue and red stars, respectively, on the attached ortho-photo.

Temperate Calcareous Cliff natural community examples are uncommon to rare in Vermont. Many of these cliffs harbor a variety of rare, threatened, and endangered plant species, and this

site may support other species which would not have been apparent in November. Calcareous cliff communities are threatened by a wide array of impacts from people. This example has been heavily disturbed by swimmers, who walk along the rim of the cliffs to jumping spots. This activity does not appear to be regulated, and many unofficial trails snake through the woods above the cliffs. If the Agency of Natural Resources acquires this land, management activities should protect this fragile resource. This can probably be done without prohibiting all cliff-jumping.

I'm sorry it took so long to get this information to you! Please contact me if you have any questions about this site visit.

Sincerely,

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State Lands Ecologist  
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Fax: (802) 241-3295  
Email: [leif@fwd.anr.state.vt.us](mailto:leif@fwd.anr.state.vt.us)

cc:

