



## **Mt. Mansfield State Forest Long-Range Management Plan Amendment Re: Goodell House Renovation**

### **Long-Range Management Plan (LRMP) Process**

The Vermont Agency of Natural Resources (ANR) oversees state-owned land with various objectives, from safeguarding natural resources to facilitating public access. To achieve these goals, ANR develops long-range management plans (LRMP) for its state-owned lands. These plans are crucial for directing resource allocation and managing multiple uses, including decisions on recreational activities, timber harvesting locations and methods, and wildlife habitat management.

Periodically, ANR may propose amendments to these long-range management plans to reflect evolving management practices, usage patterns, or public interests. Similar to the initial LRMP development process, amending these plans involves public engagement and transparency. This includes providing access to proposed changes, presenting explanations of the proposed amendments, and offering opportunities for public feedback. ANR strives to incorporate suggestions that align with its land management policies and principles, objectives, and departmental missions.

### **Mt. Mansfield State Forest LRMP**

The Mt Mansfield State Forest LRMP (MMSF LRMP), established in 2002, directs the management of more than 45,000 acres of forest land across seven towns in three counties and contains the 880-acre Waterbury Reservoir and Mount Mansfield, the highest peak in Vermont at 4,393-feet. It holds substantial ecological, recreational, and scenic importance, encompassing two natural areas – Daniels Notch and Mt Mansfield – alongside extensive forested areas managed for purposes such as water quality, wildlife habitat preservation, sustainable forestry, and recreational activities including three State owned and operated campgrounds and the Waterbury Center Day Use Area. The Forest hosts two alpine ski resorts - Stowe Mountain Resort & Smugglers' Notch Resort and two Nordic ski centers – Mt. Mansfield Touring Center and Bolton Nordic Center at Bolton Valley Resort.

### **History of the Goodell House**



The Goodell House, constructed by Almeron Goodell who acquired the land in 1863, stands as a testament to 19th-century craftsmanship. Completed around 1870, the house features hand-hewn beams and handmade cedar shingles.

The communities along the Little River were acquired through eminent domain for the construction of Waterbury Dam by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the Civilian Conservation Corps following the severe floods of 1927 and 1934. All structures in the area were either destroyed or relocated when the land was designated for public use, except the Goodell House. Little River State Park, established in 1962, is owned and managed by FPR. The Little River History Hike, along which the Goodell House is located, is a popular walking tour for park visitors. Interpretive panels showcase remnants of the rural community that once existed in this location.

Since the Goodell House came into public ownership, there have been ongoing efforts to maintain the structure to preserve its historic significance. Volunteer groups and the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) have worked to seal the building, reducing the risk of vandalism, and have incorporated bracing to keep it standing. Recently, a tarp was placed on the roof to mitigate rot and water damage. The two-story colonial home, measuring approximately 20' by 25' with a 12'x12' attached woodshed/mudroom/outhouse, retains enough structural integrity to be renovated. However, these minor preservation measures are no longer sufficient to preserve the structure from rapidly escalating degradation. If immediate action is not taken to preserve the remaining elements, the structure will need to be demolished due to safety concerns. This would be a significant cultural loss for the State of Vermont.

### **Goodell House Rehabilitation Proposal**

FPR has been exploring opportunities to invest in the structure to either stabilize it as a landmark or renovate or restore it to historic condition. The Department has struggled to secure the funding required to undertake this effort. In 2018, Vermont Huts Association (VHA), a non-profit with the goal of developing a network of huts to support outdoor recreation throughout Vermont, approached FPR with a desire to establish a hut within the Little River/Cotton Brook area. FPR proposed reconstructing the Goodell House and VHA began the process of seeking funding.

An initial review and evaluation by DHP staff and construction contractors specializing in historic restorations it was determined that reconstruction would be required. The structure will need to be measured, disassembled, and catalogued to preserve its historical significance. Each piece would then be evaluated to determine if it is structurally sound and if it is important for carrying historic elements into the rebuild.



An architect that specializes in historic restoration and rehabilitation will be brought in to guide the process along with consultation and direction from DHP. These two resources will help ensure the historic elements of the Goodell House will be present in the rebuilt structure. A full rebuild that incorporates historical design aspects and materials where possible will also give FPR the ability to make improvements that will support modern-day efficiencies such as insulation, windows, and doors. The shape and look of the structure will be that of the original Goodell House containing as much salvaged material as possible.

The current location of the Goodell House is within 50 feet of a nearby stream and is just downhill of a 13-acre hardwood seep. It is located within Special Use Area #2 designated within the MMSF LRMP to be managed as deer winter area. Since the development of the MMSF LRMP in 2002, the deer wintering area has been more closely evaluated and adjusted to reflect on-the-ground conditions, making the Goodell House within the Special Management Area, but outside of the mapped deer wintering area.

Due to the proximity of sensitive habitats, the District 4 Stewardship Team conducted an assessment to explore alternative locations. A new location was identified approximately 600-feet downhill in an old gravel pit. Although the location is still within Special Use Area #2 and closer to the mapped deer wintering area, this location offers characteristics that would minimize wildlife disturbance compared to its current location. Situated in the footprint of an old gravel pit, the steep walls surrounding the proposed hut location would contain noise from human visitors more effectively than the current location, minimizing the area of disturbance.

The reconstructed Goodell House would make the structure available for four-season use, except during mud season or other times when temporary closures might be necessary for public safety or natural resource concerns. This structure will give users access to existing recreational opportunities, including a vast network of hiking trails, nearby mountain biking trails, and winter activities such as cross-country skiing, backcountry skiing, and snowshoeing. The mountain bike trails Hillfarmer, Highbridge, Stonewall, and Bear Run are designated for summer use only. Signage and educational materials will be provided to prevent winter use of these trails, as they pass near or through deer wintering areas.

No new trails or changes to the existing recreation corridor are included in this project. For example, there are no existing managed glades at this location. If there was a request for any new recreation infrastructure or uses it would have to undergo a new trail proposal process to ensure alignment with the LRMP in order to address environmental impacts and mitigation measures.

### **Proposed Operating Model**



The VT Huts Association, a non-profit organization working to increase access to outdoor recreation and actively support rural economies, will reconstruct and operate the Goodell House under a twenty-year cooperative agreement with FPR. This agreement will specifically define the roles and responsibilities of each entity, with FPR retaining specific rights as the owner of the land and structure while addressing roles such as managing reservations, signage, weekly maintenance of the structure and winter plowing. Revenue and financial management will be addressed through a license when the Goodell House is rehabilitated and operational.

Once the Goodell House is relocated and rehabilitated it will be available to the public for rental as a four-season hut. It's expected that the reconstructed Goodell House will be able to accommodate up to 10-12 people per night. The final maximum capacity limit will be determined during the design phase associated with the reconstructed structure.

Current structure goals envision a universally accessible trail route to the Dalley Loop Road with ADA accessible standards applied to the first-floor bedrooms, living area, kitchen space and a bathroom. The second story will be bunk rooms. Access to the hut will be via the Dalley Loop Road. Vehicular access to the hut is not contemplated at this time, except for Mobility Devices for persons with Mobility Disabilities, as guided by ANR's [Use of Mobility Devices on ANR Fee-Owned Lands by Persons with Mobility Disabilities](#) Policy.

Other envisioned features include heating by propane and a grey water system for managing wastewater. Drinking water will need to be brought in or filtered from a nearby stream.

### **LRMP Amendment**

To facilitate the relocation and reconstruction of the Goodell House into a four-season hut, FPR will need to amend the MMSF LRMP and is seeking public input. An amendment would allow for the relocation and proper management of the Goodell House as a four-season hut.



The above map shows the Land Management Classifications (LMCs) described in the 2002 MMSF LRMP with current recreation trails infrastructure. Below is the LRMP language associated with Special Use Area #2. Information about the other LMCs is described within the MMSF LRMP, which can be found on the FPR’s website (<https://fpr.vermont.gov/mt-mansfield-state-forest-0>). Information about Special Use Area #2 can be found on page 37.

To amend the MMSF LRMP to allow for the reconstruction of the Goodell House and its use as a four-season hut the following changes will need to be made:

Add implementation item “e” under Special Use Area #2:

- e. Rehabilitate the Goodell House to serve as a four-season hut only if:
  - The structure can be relocated to a gravel pit located approximately 600’ downhill of the current location, or;
  - The structure remains in its current location and resource impacts are addressed in site designs.

Add implementation item “J” within Intensive Use Area #1:



- j. Consider the relocation of the Goodell House and management of the structure as a four-season hut if site conditions review prove the location to be amenable to such impacts and use.

Add implementation item “J” within General Use Area #1:

- j. Consider the relocation of the Goodell House and management of the structure as a four-season hut if site conditions review prove the location to be amenable to such impacts and use.

### **Public Input Opportunities**

- a. Public meeting details: August 29, 2024, 6-8 pm, at the Best Western Plus Waterbury Stowe, 45 Blush Hill Rd, Waterbury, VT 05676
- b. Public comment period: August 29- September 30, 2024
- c. How to submit comments:
  - i. Fill out the form online: <https://forms.office.com/g/gEasDP8C80>
  - ii. Email: [ANR.StateLandsPlanning@vermont.gov](mailto:ANR.StateLandsPlanning@vermont.gov), subject line: Goodell House/MMSF
  - iii. Mail comments to: VTFPR Attn: Goodell House Comments, 5 Perry St., Suite 20, Barre, VT 05641-4265
  - iv. Call the Barre District office: 802-476-0170