

BOYCE HILL STEERING COMMITTEE

MINUTES

April 21, 2022

Present: Liza Walker (VLT), Chuck Martel, Woody Dugan, Pete Colgan, and Lisa Koitzsch

Via Zoom: Sally Dwyer, Wendy and Ben Bridgewater, Mark Haberle (Mad River Valley Backcountry Coalition), Ross Saxton (Mad River Path), and Bob Kogut (Mad River Riders)

1. Ross Saxton, Mad River Path

Dogs

- Mad River Path is actively working on issues related to the challenges of dogs on trails.
- Community dog survey launched yesterday.
- Valley town rules state dogs should be leashed or under verbal command – leashed dogs ONLY on Mad River Path.
- Requiring dogs to be on leash necessitates some enforcement and clear signage. Not everyone will abide by the rule, but it will help with some of the issues.
- Hopes to get more consistent messaging for dog expectations throughout the Valley.
- Better in-person dog training opportunities needed.
- Possibility of a Mad River Valley dog park.
- Path has approximately 13 dog poop bag dispensers across the Valley. Most people use these properly, others forget to throw away the bags. Ross believes these bag dispensers work well and will be installing small receptacles for depositing used bags. Will be using A & J Recycling to empty the receptacles on a weekly basis with money budgeted in the stewardMRV program. Under-sized receptacles will have small openings to discourage larger trash from being deposited. Tops could be locked down.
- Ross invited SC members to participate in stewardMRV meetings.
- Portalets are working well on the Path. Putting them inside a shelter helps with potential vandalism, even if the shelter does not have walls. Frequency of cleaning is important – possibly once a week. Unsure if septic companies will go up Boyce Hill.
- Enforcement is a challenge but consistent education on a number of fronts (FPF, social media, temporary signage, articles, having a presence on the property) is key.

Trails

- Make use of volunteers for trail maintenance. Many people in the Valley willing to help.
- Main trail to top seems relatively low maintenance, be sure to include water bars and erosion control.
- Volunteers can bring their own equipment to work on trails, but Mad River Path would be willing to lend BH SC tools if needed.
- Can hire a consultant to design a trail to ensure minimized impacts on soil and wildlife. Ex. Scrag Mtn/Sinuosity.

Signage

- Don't over-sign an area but be sure to set clear expectations.
- Install a single post kiosk sign that matches others across the Valley.
- No more than a few clear signs at the gate will be helpful.
- Interpretive sign at the cellar foundation helps make a place-based connection.
- Reminder signs – can be temporary and friendly.

- Make sure signage is not invasive.
- Silhouette sign at the top viewpoint to name the peaks.

Landowner relations

- Good to maintain regular contact and check-in at least once a year with adjacent landowners.

2. Mark Haberle, Mad River Valley Backcountry Coalition

- July 2021 MRVBC sent a letter to SC with message similar to what Mark is presenting.
- MRVBC mission: Catamount Trail Association Chapter focused on enhancing opportunities for wintertime recreation. Establishing locally supported winter backcountry trails and terrain. Focus on environmental stewardship, mountain lands conservation, and backcountry safety.
- MRVBC sees opportunities and challenges on Boyce Hill. Opportunities: cross-country skiing, telemark skiing, snowshoeing, sledding, educational outings, and connection to Dowsville headwaters. Challenges: Number of people using the property, parking, dogs and waste, and impacts to neighbors.
- Property lends itself to more thoughtful engagement with the backcountry, the views, and the environment. Great way to re-connect with the land and not suitable for a focused hardcore backcountry zone.

Recommendations

- Establish and maintain network of trails for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing.
- Establish and maintain “snowfields and gladed zones” for skiers and snowboarders, mowing to maintain fun and safe conditions.
- Work to establish public connectivity to Dowsville.
- Limit and don’t expand parking and encourage people to carpool.
- Install signage in key locations to promote appropriate and respectful use. Possibly use transient signage.
- Provide dog poop bags and receptacles, and clear rules about dog management.
- Establish guidelines and procedures for when and how local groups can use the property for free outings and workshops. Ex. MRVBC Backcountry 1 workshop.
- MRVBC can help be a stewardship partner to Boyce Hill and would love to help in any way they can.
 - Have volunteer workforce that could help maintain the property.
 - Messaging on etiquette, responsible use, etc. via social media.
 - Educational programs focused on wintertime recreation.
- Mark presented a conceptual map of snowfields and glades, which the SC reviewed. Lisa asked Mark if he could forward the pdf to the SC, and he said he would check with the MRVBC Board and get back to us all. The map outlined three main ‘snowfields’ and three main “glades”. Snowfields would need to be kept mown regularly (to remove pungie sticks), and glades would be cuts made in more forested areas to allow skiers to pass through safely.
- Liza asked if the MRVBC had any priorities for any of the areas and if Mark had any knowledge of any other areas where snowfields are being maintained. Woody mentioned a location in Tunbridge with an ‘old farm’ skiing experience. Pete asked Mark to ask Steve if he could bring any examples to our attention.
- Pete acknowledged that building glades is not in the SC’s skillset. Wendy acknowledged that the ‘glade’ zones did not need to follow the map exactly but just needed to be an

area where some passages are cut for ski access. She also said that some of the areas could be allowed to grow back into islands of habitat, with management occurring in the surrounding areas.

- Woody asked about Snowfield #1 and what it would take to maintain this. Mark thought a consistent mowing pattern would be plenty. Wendy added that it might be a couple of tractor widths along the stone wall to keep this snowfield open.
- Liza asked if MRVBC owned a mower and mentioned the Town would need to incur the expense of mowing such large areas.

3. Bob Kogut, Mad River Riders

- Boyce Hill is a potential link to state lands and over to Waterbury. Long range Riders' goal, partially tied in to Velomont Trail, to link neighboring trail networks to each other. To get through the north side of the Valley, the Boyce parcel is close to state land and next to Boyden's old property where there is an existing trail network. The Riders are working with the new owners.
- Property has the potential of a nice mountain bike loop that could be a multi-use trail.
- Bikes/horses: Many trails, especially single-track trails built to limit erosion and mitigate water damage, constructed for mountain biking are not necessarily good for horseback riding. The two recreational activities can be compatible but usually better to have separate trails. A wider, gravel-based trail would be able to accommodate both. Many bike riders know how to respect horses and their riders on the road by talking upon their approach. Almost none of the trails maintained by the Riders get any use from horses.
- Bikes/dogs: Bob has been bitten by a dog while riding his bike. The Riders don't generally encourage dogs on trails they manage. Many dogs are not as well trained as their owner thinks they are. General rule is that dogs can be on the trails, so long as the private owners approve, but they should be leashed.
- Pete spoke about Boyce as an island and asked Bob if this would make the property less appealing to mountain bikers. Bob responded that the property is a beautiful place to ride and would be conducive to a well-built trail. It is a distance to drive for just one trail and the trail might be lightly used. Pete asked how the existing trail network in the Valley adequately meets the needs of mountain bike riders. Bob responded that this varies a great deal depending on the trail location. Riders looking more towards interconnection, improving trails, and creating more of a challenge. As an organization, interested in helping the Velomont project and interested in off-road connections between trails that already exist.
- Several levels of e-Bikes but Riders are in favor of allowing e-Bikes on their trails. There is no current policy for e-Bikes on State, US Forest Service, or local trails and the Riders are waiting for other land managers to set one. They don't really cause more damage to a trail than a mountain bike. If allowed, it helps people get out to ride who might no longer be able to.
- Woody asked about the Velomont Trail and mentioned a private landowner who was upset when a large group of riders rode on a trail on his land without permission. Bob reported there was no specific route through the Valley yet, although it will likely go through the new Trail Hub. The southern end will likely come through Roxbury State Forest near Blueberry Lake and will likely exit the Valley from the north near the Boyce parcel and Dowsville and go through Waterbury to Little River State Park. He stated the

trail will probably go through the Howe Block of Camel's Hump State Forest. Unknown how it will get from Waitsfield Village to N. Fayston.

- A trail managed by the Mad River Riders must be open to the public and mapped. The group currently manages approximately 55 miles of trails.
 - Trail signs and markers should be clear and not overdone.
4. Woody moved to approve the minutes from April 6, 2022, as amended by Woody and Corrie. Pete seconded, no further discussion, all in favor, motion was approved.
 5. **Next meeting date: Tuesday, May 3, 2022, 6:30 p.m.** Liza will be out of town.
 6. Tyler Miller, VP of Land Activation, Vermont Land Trust, will be a guest at our next meeting. He will help the SC understand and work through how to integrate indigenous history and future presence on Boyce Hill. Corrie will contact him to schedule this. Liza will send the SC Tyler's article as a helpful summary of how VLT is addressing these issues.