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NEWS AND EVENTS AT HOGBACK MOUNTAIN

Newsletter #7

November 2009

Windham Foundation Grant: The HMCA is pleased to announce we received a \$10,000 award from the Windham Foundation of Grafton, Vermont towards the purchase of Hogback. The funds will be matched by the Pew Charitable Trust, making a generous contribution as we advance towards our final goal. (Sara Anderson)

Field Trip with Tom Wessels: Not long ago I had read his fascinating book, “Reading the Forested Landscape” and now I was going to meet the man who wrote it.....on a field trip!.....at Hogback!

I was recently invited to join Marlboro College Professor Jennifer Ramstetter’s ecology class as a guest on a field trip with Tom Wessels to Hogback Mountain to glean a better understanding of what the forested landscape today can tell us about what it was doing yesterday. We were joined by a dozen or more junior high students from Marlboro School who arrived on site under the tutelage of Tim Hayes and Rachel Boyden. Each of the classes had earlier been confronted with questions about aspects of the landscape on earlier trips to Hogback. This was an opportunity to see the landscape through the extremely practiced eye of an expert.



Tom Wessels

Photo by Philip Johansson

Our trip through the woods was an ecological detective story of the first magnitude. And Professor Wessels proved to be a formidable chief inspector. At each turn a question was posed for the students to offer an answer. After listening to varied responses, Tom shared his view and summarized the clues that led him there. As were the others, I was enthralled: the irrefutable logic of his observations now seemed so obvious, but had nonetheless required unmasking by his very experienced eye. Seen through the eyes of someone like Tom Wessels, the forest is suddenly much more than a tranquil and bounteous assortment of plants and trees; it is a rich history text, complete with graphic illustrations and dates. It is necessary only to know the language and Professor Wessels speaks it like a native.

If you enjoy the outdoors and you find an opportunity to listen to Tom Wessels, I urge you to drop everything, save the birth of your firstborn, to go hear the Professor speak. I hope that we can have Professor Wessels speak at one of our events in the not too distant future.

Professor Wessels is a terrestrial ecologist whose interest includes alpine, desert and forest ecosystems. With over 30 years of teaching experience, he is also the author of four books as well as a new field guide which will be appearing in the spring of 2010. He is presently Professor of Ecology at Antioch University New England. (Bob Anderson)

Education and Hogback: Events such as the one above are happening with increasing frequency as area educators seize upon the resource that is Hogback Mountain. The HMCA directors feel that education is a paramount objective in the conservation of Hogback and will endeavor to support an educational outreach in whatever way possible.

Fundraising Update: Strong support for the conservation of Hogback Mountain continues with over \$1.5 million raised to date. We continue to be in a race against the clock with our January 31st deadline and need \$ 48,000 more to earn our Pew match.

Foliage Walk: The morning of October 10 was a squeaker. Would the rain stop in time for the planned foliage walk with Barbara Cole? It did, and we were off..... Whatever sunshine was missing was more than offset by Barbara's measured ebullience and the broad grasp of the natural world she brings to any gathering.

After setting off for the fire tower, Barbara stopped near the summit to illustrate how a barren rock face slowly regenerates vegetation. In Barbara's deft explanation, this large but ordinary horizontal rock face became an exquisite tableau that neatly illustrated how minute acid excretions from growing lichen ate miniscule pockets in the smooth face which in turn trapped blowing soil particles. At first a simple moss sprang to life in that tiny soil pocket, then a more complex moss form and a little farther over, small bushes had taken root, overtaking the underlying moss,

I've passed this rock face numerous times in the past, without much notice beyond the scarring from snowmobile ice cleats that probably scrubbed the vegetation in the first place. But now with explanation, this simple rock face was a veritable blackboard illustrating a slow, natural progression that underscored nature's relentless urge to regenerate.

If the expected fall brilliance suffered from lack of sunlight during our trek, the light Barbara shone on just a few of Nature's myriad mysteries was more than satisfying, certainly for this writer. (Bob Anderson)

Trails and Trail Work: Efforts to develop the hiking and cross-country ski trails on the north side of the Hogback Conservation Area are proceeding rapidly. A 1.4 mile loop with a shorter

cut-through has been cleared and is ready to be marked with color-coded blazes in the next week or two. This portion of the trail will be ready for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing when the powder starts to fly.

Future plans include an out-and back trail that may eventually lead up to the summit of Hogback Mountain. A small section of this has been cleared and more has been flagged out. A bridge crossing some wet areas is also in the works and a number of other wet sections require attention.

Thanks go out to Bob Anderson and Hal Himmelstein who have put forth a great deal of effort in the last few weeks in order to have this trail marked and cleared for the winter. Joyce St. Jean has been instrumental in helping clear the trails and with laying out the extension towards the summit. A number of other volunteers have helped with clearing. Please contact Jason Saltman at jts1662@yahoo.com if you are interested in becoming involved. There is much work to be done both in the coming weeks and next spring. (Jason Saltman)



Photos: Clockwise from top: A section of trail passing a nice rocky outcrop; Part of the main loop with an interesting piece of quartz; The junction at the main loop (pointing left) and the loop started by the Marlboro Elementary School students (pointing right). Photos by Jason Saltman

Please see Jason's trail map at the end of the Newsletter.

The October 3rd Hogback Celebration: So many people, so many memories, such a wonderful evening helped us celebrate Hogback in all its glory as a fantastic ski area for families from near and far. There were those who warmly remember those Hogback years with the Douglas, Hamilton and White families manning the Alpenglo, the Gift Shop and Museum and the Skyline Restaurant. Hogback old-timers, and a few not so old, Dick Hamilton, Walt Harrington, Bruce Cole, Karla Bills, Sally White and others shared some of their Hogback memories with us. We were again reminded of what a special place Hogback was for so many of us who skied there, worked there, hiked there or simply stopped to admire the view.

The Gala also kicked off the final fundraising campaign that will see us reach our overall goal of \$1,737,000. This goal secures the land and provides the town of Marlboro with a Town Forest, a place for wildlife to flourish as well as recreational and educational opportunities for all. We were pleased to share the evening with Tom Curren and his wife Cathy who trekked all the way from Danbury, N.H. to share both the evening and the Pew Charitable Trusts' support of the Hogback endeavor, and with Joan Weir, our liaison with the Vermont Land Trust, our partner in this endeavor.

It was so fitting to have the celebration in the Skyline Restaurant building, that was thoughtfully provided by owner, Ed Metcalfe. He had a display that illustrated some of his accomplishments and dreams for his part of the mountain and Rockhopper Outdoor Education Director, Mike Clough, had a museum wildlife display. A video played with old ski scenes and around the room there were old pictures, a vernal pool informative display, historic and up to date information about Hogback lands and ownership, pictures of flora and Marlboro Elementary School children's pictures from their recent day of activities on the mountain. Tables held Hogback memorabilia with an old T-bar and a couple of the early home-made splints for broken legs.

While enjoying light refreshments we listened to great music from the MacArthurs with its now fourth generation family member, Avah, attending and banging her spoon in concert with Dan, Megan, Gary, Mom Robin and Dad Tyler Gibbons' lively music.

Artist Susan Bull Riley generously contributed a beautiful painting, "A Summer View from Hogback Mountain" to our cause and The Hogback Mountain Conservation Association members were able to secure this painting and present it as a gift to Bob and Nancy Anderson as a way to thank them for the initiation and overwhelming support they have given to this project. Quoting the Andersons: "We will treasure this picture of Hogback always, both for its own sake and for the memories of all the good times we have had working with each and every one of you on this incredible project to conserve the Mountain. Thank you so much – it is a truly wonderful and thoughtful gift."

Filmmaker Alan Dater recorded this evening's activities on DVD and if you would like to borrow one to see or to show to friends, let Bob Anderson know. (Barbara Cole)

Upcoming Events: We're planning several events for the winter season although the dates are not fixed yet.

We hope to have at least one tracking event this winter after the holidays. We're also planning at least one snowshoe event and one cross-country skiing event.

The focus of the snowshoeing and skiing events is primarily fellowship, accompanied by mild exercise and the tranquility of Hogback Mountain in winter. The pace will be unhurried, unchallenging and uncompetitive. If you've never done it before, it will be a great place to start as there will be folks on hand who can share a couple of pointers. One of the things we want to try out is the new trail cut this summer and mentioned elsewhere in the Newsletter

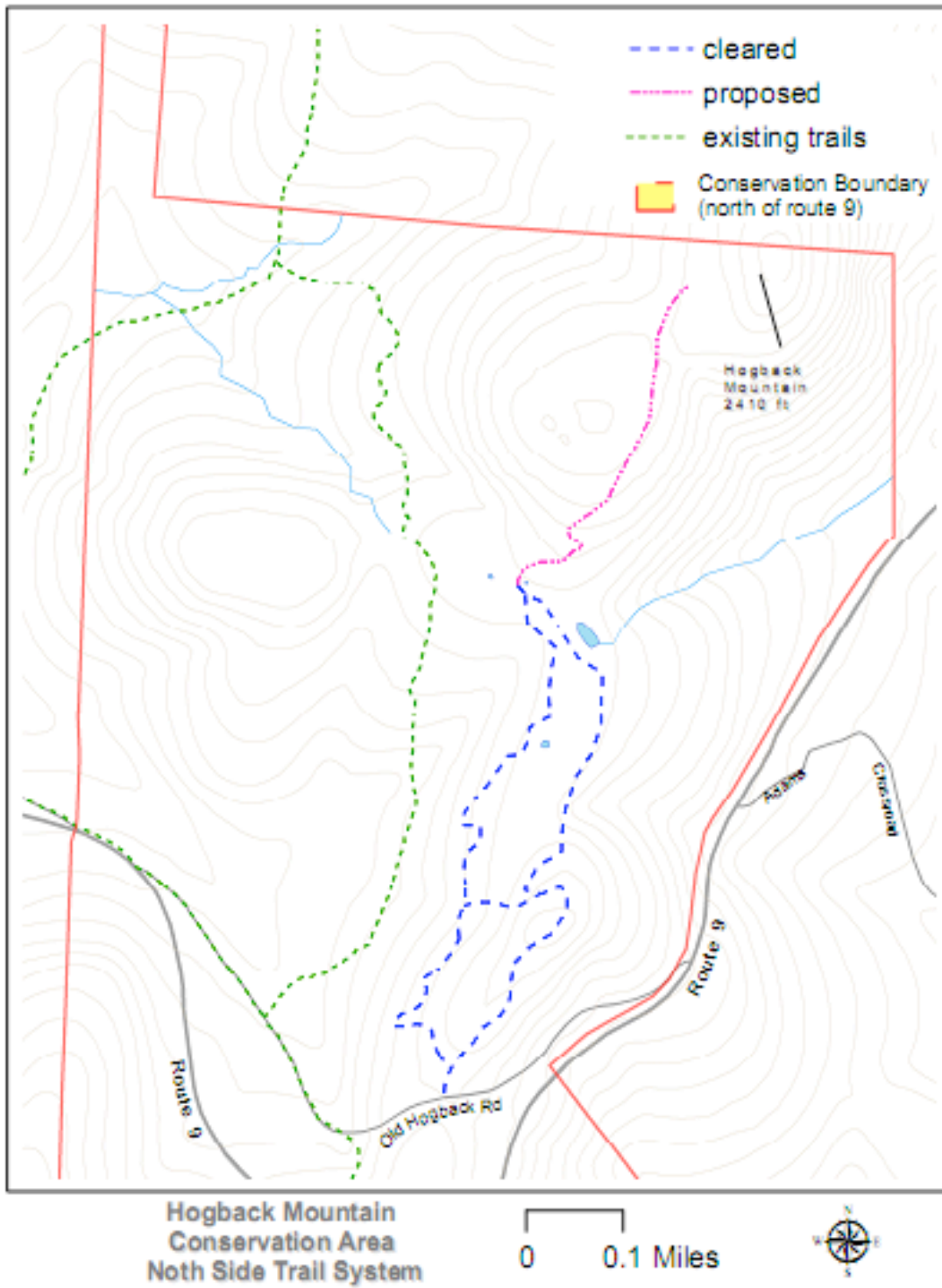
Hogback Mountain 2010 Calendars for Sale: The Marlboro Historical Society's annual calendar for the upcoming year features 12 captioned photos of the old days of skiing at Hogback, and is now available for sale at \$10 each. Those of you who live locally may find them at the Marlboro Town Office, the Hogback Gift Shop, Vermont Artisans in Brattleboro, and at Sweeties Deli. For those from afar, you may place an order by writing a check payable to The Marlboro Historical Society and mailing it to Forrest Holzappel, P.O. Box 66, Marlboro VT 05344 – \$11.50 per calendar includes shipping and handling within the U.S. - and indicate quantity desired and what postal address to use. The calendar is bound to bring back fond memories and can be enjoyed all year long, and it also makes a nice holiday gift. Order soon!

Summary Calendar of Events

Winter Events - To Be Announced Soon

Our continuing thanks to the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum and Hogback Gift Shop for gracious use of their facilities in support of many of our events.

(Bob Anderson)



Trail Map by Jason Saltman, Nov 4, 2009