



# Town of Dorset

**Outdoor Recreation Department**

**Master Plan 2021-2026**

**Released January 2021**

**Amended January 2022**

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**OUTDOOR RECREATION DIRECTOR**

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**PART ONE**

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# **THE SETTING**





Pinnacle Tower in Autumn

## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

The Outdoor Recreation Department is a major community asset that repays residents' investments every single day. Thanks to the Department's lands and programs, residents enjoy higher property values, improved neighborhoods, and enhanced lives as they exercise, play, and relieve stress in a greener and more beautiful and sustainable community environment. The creation of the Department is a testament of the Town's dedication to providing optimal outdoor recreation and leisure opportunities to Dorset and surrounding communities.

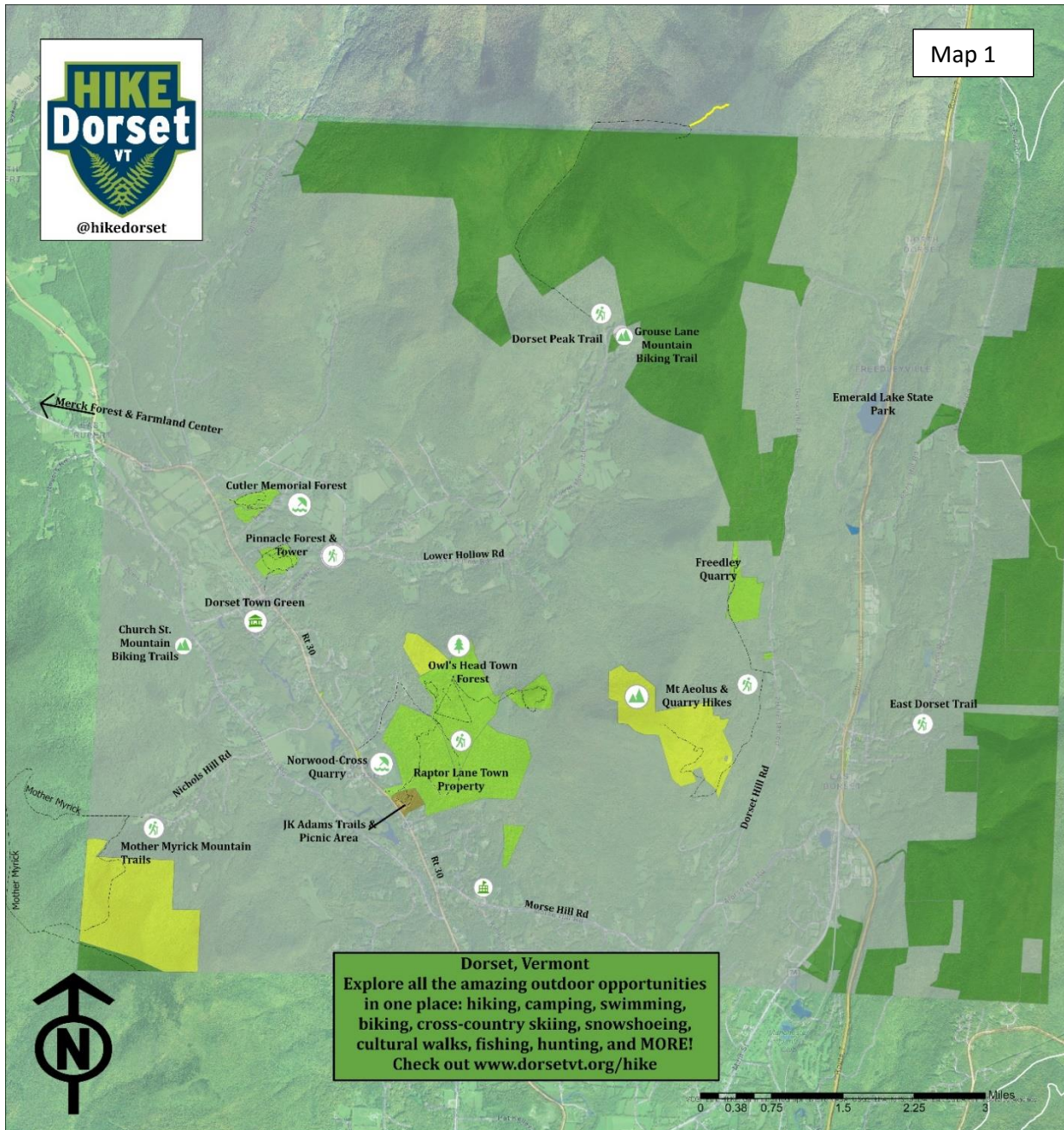
The 2021 Dorset Outdoor Recreation Master Plan is intended to help today's leadership and residents make empowered decisions that will help the community maintain and enhance the Department's programs, events, trails, properties, and facilities from 2021 through 2026.



# Overview of Dorset

## Location

With a 2020 population of INSERT 2020 CENSUS INFORMATION HERE, Dorset is a small community in the southwest corner of Vermont in Bennington County. Located approximately 95 miles southwest of Montpelier (the capital of Vermont), the town has an area of 30,656 acres or 46.04 square miles. Town of Dorset properties with Outdoor Recreation opportunities are included in Map 1.



## Brief History of Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department

The Outdoor Recreation Department for the Town of Dorset was created formally in October 2019. Before creating the department and role of Outdoor Recreation Director, most of the Recreation development was volunteer-based and informal. In 2016, the Town partnered with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, the Vermont Land Trust, and the Dorset Historical Society to expand the Town Forest and develop a trail network that highlights the historical Gettysburg Quarry. The abundant natural, scenic, and historical resources are a significant part of why people live and recreate in Dorset. The creation of the Department was a direct result of the needs to maintain, manage, plan, and expand the overall network of resources in Dorset. Currently there is only one, year-round position in the Department: a part-time Outdoor Recreation Director.

## About the Master Plan

### Purpose

This plan will provide the Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department with a five-year master plan. The plan will provide standards for levels of property and recreation services and facilities in the town, along with developmental priorities and implementation strategies. It will assist the town to more accessible services and meet identified deficiencies and shortfalls in the system for the future.

The Master Plan documents the public and stakeholder input obtained throughout the planning process. Community input provides a vital framework for confirming the Master Plan's goals. By compiling a diverse range of community feedback, information, and measurable goals, the plan will be able to meet the community's needs and priorities.

### Community Engagement

A critical piece of the master plan process is the community engagement process. Community engagement is essential to effectively deliver a community-oriented outdoor recreation system. Community engagement was carefully planned to create a successful outcome for the Master Plan to maximize the effectiveness of the plan for groups that utilize the Department's services. Due to COVID lockdowns, some of the large public engagement workshops were cancelled and other methods of information gathering was necessary in order to keep the public safe. As COVID regulations continue to affect public engagement, this Master Plan is unique in creation and release.

Community engagement during the planning process included the following key elements:

- **Stakeholder Interviews**

Between January 5 and February 27, 2020, the project manager interviewed key stakeholders in the community. These stakeholders were identified in consultation with the Town Manager and Conservation Commission. These included Merck Forest and Farmland Center staff, the Recreation Department at the Forest Service, the Dorset Conservation Commission, the forestry management consultants, the Vermont Land Trust, Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Dorset Village Library, Dorset Historical Society, locally owned businesses, the Dorset community school system, the Long Trail School, and individuals throughout the community.

- **Public Surveys**

An open public survey was released January 18 and was opened to submit until March 1. The survey was available both digitally and physically and all submissions were collected accurately. The survey was created by the Outdoor Recreation Director with collaborative input for appropriate questions for optimal, statistically representative survey results. By the close of the survey, there were 236 responses, which was very sufficient for a representative valid sample. Paper surveys were available at the Town Offices, the Dorset Village Library, and the H.N. Williams Store along Route 30. Posters with the survey website link were posted throughout the community at large for the entire timeframe of the public survey.

- **Online Engagement**

The public was kept informed about this ongoing community input study on the [dorsetvt.org](http://dorsetvt.org) Town Website and the survey was available through an open Google Form webpage easily accessible online at <https://forms.gle/9Lyc6bgvUHKff7f66>. Survey was closed as of March 1. Additionally, the Manchester newspaper featured the survey in an edition available both digitally and physically. GNAT TV featured an interview with the Outdoor Recreation Director concerning the public input study in March 2020 and online forms were available to print on the town website.

- **Public Engagement Workshops**

Due to COVID, only two open public engagement events occurred during the extent of the public input study. The Focus Group Workshop was held at the Dorset Village Library on March 10, 2020 and an open forum booth was featured at the Town Meeting on March 2, 2020. The remaining public engagement input opportunities occurred in person at Cutler Memorial Forest and Owls Head Town Forest while respecting safe social distancing practices and engaging with public users in real time as they recreated on the properties. The engagement included informal interviews by the Outdoor Recreation Director. The Outdoor Recreation Director also utilized email communications with Dorset residents and virtual forms of communication like Instagram Direct Messenger. Several large public engagement workshops had to be



cancelled due to COVID-19, but information vital for the master plan process was gathered creatively despite the challenges brought on by the ongoing pandemic.

## Town of Dorset Outdoor Recreation Survey

Please fill out this survey for the community needs assessment. Thank you!

**\*Required**

1. Email address \*

\_\_\_\_\_

2. What is your most frequent outdoor recreation activity in the Dorset area? \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Bicycling on trails
- Bicycling on roadsides
- Hiking (trails)
- Walking (roadsides, sidewalks)
- Non-motorized Winter Activities (ex. skiing, snowshoeing, snowboarding)
- Motorized Winter Activities (ex. snowmobiling)
- Hunting
- Running on trails
- Running on road/sidewalks
- Outdoor sports (ex. golf, baseball, soccer)

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

3. What is your highest priority for the Dorset Outdoor Recreation department? \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Improved/Extended Hiking trails
- Improved/Extended Bicycling trails
- Nature and Outdoor Programs
- Outdoor Events at Town Properties
- Non-Motorized Winter Activities
- Motorized Winter Activities
- Playground(s)
- Dog Resources (ex. dog park)

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

4. Where do you recreate most in the Dorset area? \*

*Tick all that apply.*

- Pinnacle Tower Trails
- Cutler Memorial Forest
- Owl's Head Town Forest
- Dorset Quarry (swimming hole)
- Dorset Peak
- Mt. Aeolus
- Mountain Bicycling Trails
- National Forest Areas/Trails
- Outdoor Sports areas (ex. golf course)

Other:  \_\_\_\_\_

5. What do you want for the future of outdoor recreation in Dorset and surrounding areas?

\_\_\_\_\_

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This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

Form 1



Cutler Memorial Forest

## Chapter 2

# PLANNING FRAMEWORK

Dorset’s recreation programs, events, trails, properties, forests, and facilities are tangible ways to shape the community as a whole and serve the public. Small communities like Dorset need to continuously evolve in ways that reflect ongoing changes to the social, economic, and environmental processes. In order to encourage economic stability, population diversity, income generation, employment and housing opportunities, and accessibility for all,

collaboration between local organizations, government, and residents must guide that evolution. This section summarizes the most up-to-date plans in Dorset's development.

## Pioneer Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan

The 2021-2026 Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan is the first master plan to be created for the Town of Dorset. The plan will not only provide a five-year framework for the Outdoor Recreation Department, but also a procedural foundation for future Outdoor Recreation Master Plans in the future of the Department. Future projects, programs, trails, facilities, events, and forest management will depend on a consistency in planning and reliable staff. COVID-19 pandemic health and safety measures will also dictate what is possible in the upcoming years.

## Dorset Town Plan January 2020

According to the Dorset Town Plan (2020) the plan is a comprehensive long-range plan for the Town of Dorset. It states the goals, objectives, and policies to guide the growth and development of the town. The plan includes detailed objectives, viable background information, and every facet from transportation to education. A copy of the plan can be obtained in paper version from the Town Offices in East Dorset or online at <https://dorsetvt.org/town-docs--info.html>. The Outdoor Recreation Department's Master Plan should analyze and utilize the information from the Dorset Town Plan in order to keep within the overall needs and objectives of Dorset and adhere to the policies and budgetary allotment.

## Raptor Lane Master Plan September 2020

The primary goal of this plan was to release the 12+ month study of the newly (2018) acquired Raptor Lane Property. The property is directly connected to Owls Head Town Forest, a 286-acre forest owned by the town land, open for recreational use to residents and visitors. Raptor Lane adds 328 acres to Dorset-owned property. The plan includes an expansive environmental assessment, the Raptor Lane Committee suggestions for short-and long-term land use, and the community input survey results. Although still in the beginning phase of development, the Raptor Lane Property has great potential for a wide range of recreational and community uses.

The Raptor Lane Master Plan directly connects to the Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan because a large percentage of the land use will be for outdoor recreation development. In 2020, a small VYCC (Vermont Youth Conservation Corps) crew built a 0.5-mile planned trail on Raptor Lane property that leads to the main Owls Head Town Forest trailhead. A brand-new parking lot area was also built in October 2020 at the new trailhead at Raptor Lane. The trail



and parking lot connect the Owls Head trail network to Raptor Lane. Also, in the summer of 2020, a short accessible access trail was built between JK Adams Company property and Raptor Lane. This wide, gravel hardened accessible trail will make access to Raptor Lane and Owls Head easier during the winter season. Future outdoor recreation projects are planned for 2021-2026 as laid out in this Master Plan. Results from the environmental assessment, community survey, and committee conclusions will determine the appropriate boundaries and scope of outdoor recreation projects on the Raptor Lane property.

## Owls Head Town Forest Management Plan 2017

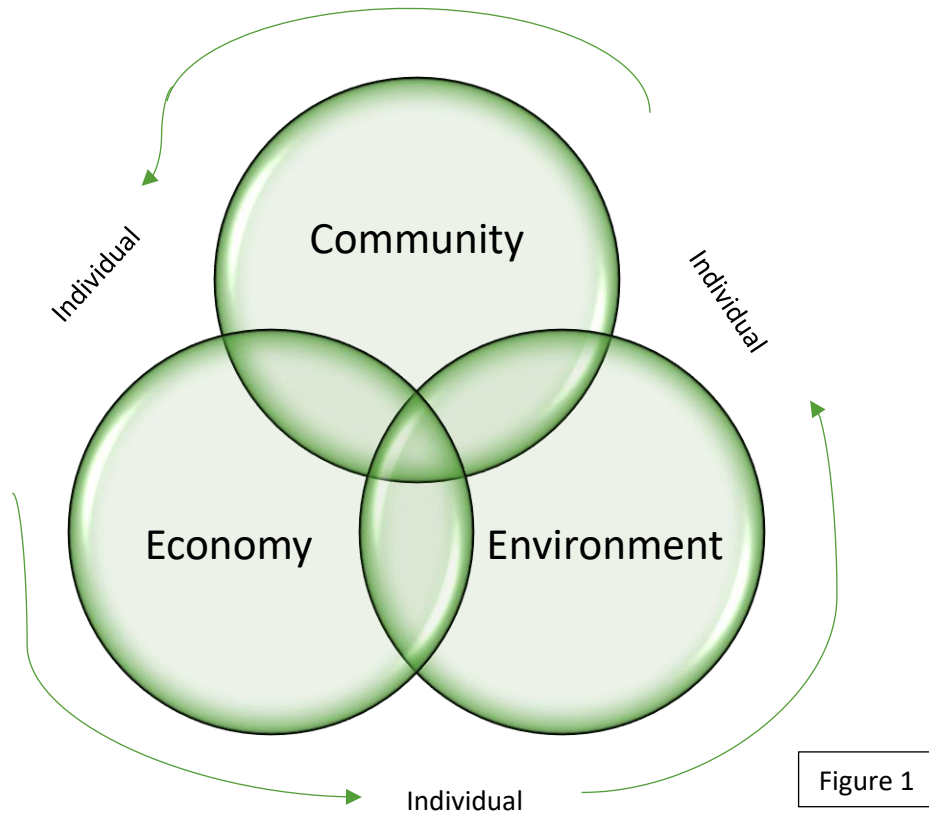
In 2017, Calfee Woodland Management LLC created a detailed community forest plan for Owls Head Town Forest. The plan includes thorough background information and the historical, ecological, recreational, educational, and silvicultural management of the property. The plan breaks down sections of the forest and appropriate action for each section depending on the type of environment that is prevalent. The objectives included protecting recreational usage, expanding recreational usage, managing a portion of the property for forest products to fund non-commercial management activities, allowing hunting, providing a space for educational opportunities, decrease invasive species, and promote long-term ecological health—among other objectives. The entire plan is available through the Outdoor Recreation Department. The plan is a vital part of the master planning process regarding the current and future management of Owls Head Town Forest.

## Draft Management Plans: Pinnacle Forest (2009) and Cutler Memorial Forest (1996)

In 2009, a draft plan was made for the management of Pinnacle Forest by Calfee Woodland Management LLC. The draft plan includes the history of the property, suggested management actions, community input results, and future projections of use. The plan is being used for background context for the plan and as a guide for future land management in Pinnacle Forest. In 1996, a draft plan was made for the management of Cutler Memorial Forest by Calfee Woodland Management LLC. Due to the age of this management draft, the plan can only be used to glean historical information and relevant ecological information that still holds true today. There are valuable notes about the river and watershed biology, wildlife habitat, and recreational uses available on the property. Both documents hold value for the background information needed to create the Master Plan for future Dorset recreational development in Pinnacle Forest and Cutler Memorial Forest. Many of the objectives from the plans have come to fruition.

## The Benefits Approach

Dorset's parks, forests, trails, facilities, and programs add charm to the community, increase property values, and provide a balance between nature and development.



An outdoor recreation master plan that adapts a narrow perspective, viewing the Department as a separate entity to the broader community systems and organizations, will be ineffective to the town holistically. The four distinct elements illustrated in Figure 1 and listed below should be fostered within the community-wide recreation system.

- **Benefit #1: Individual Development**  
 Accessible natural resources and outdoor recreation provides a well-balanced and healthy community. Nationwide studies have shown that green spaces like forests, parks, and outdoor facilities increase the mental and physical health in towns and cities. Especially in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic, healthy and safe outdoor recreation opportunities are more vital than ever before. Across the United States, public lands are being used at all-time high rates with increases that impact all areas of natural resource management. Maintaining and improving the current infrastructure, adding new trails and facilities, and

planning for all possibilities are all vital in meeting the needs of individual residents. The Outdoor Recreation Department's services and offerings play a significant role in providing Dorset with assets for healthy living and keep Dorset a safe town.

- **Benefit #2: Community Building**

A strong recreation system is one of the most effective tools in building a sense of community and improving quality of life. Public lands and parks provide a place for community engagement and participation. It also provides vital outdoor resources for local schools and education groups to incorporate natural spaces into living classrooms. Volunteer groups and partnerships with other local organizations like Merck Forest and Farm Center, the National Forest, the Nature Conservancy, Dorset Village Library, JK Adams Company, and other private landowners are important parts of building a strong system and network. Programs also facilitate social interactions and with COVID-19 regulations in place, appropriate planning for 2021 and onward is vital for safety and disease prevention. These planning implications hold particular import in Dorset as many residents are part-time and/or second-home owners from other towns, cities, or states in the US.

- **Benefit # 3: Economic Enhancement**

Parks and forests improve property values, attract people to live and work in the community, and persuade retirees to stay or come to the area. Natural resource and recreation areas and opportunities also attract visitors who contribute to the local businesses and tourist markets.

- **Benefit #4: Environmental Stewardship**

Natural areas retain and filter storm water; serve as buffers between compatible land uses; lend definition to neighborhoods; provide links between residential areas, parks, and schools; provide outdoor learning spaces for children; and protect wildlife and fish habitat while providing recreational opportunities close to home. Appropriate land management will reduce invasive species spread, increase wildlife diversity and health, increase carbon sequestration, improve air quality, and protect large areas for future generations. Existing forest management plans in action (i.e. Owls Head Town Forest Plan) outline the unique biological features to be preserved and should be considered carefully in the ongoing implementation process.

# 3 > 4 > 50

VERMONT

## TIP SHEET

### Healthy Communities

EASY STEPS TO CREATING A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



More than half of Vermont adults (60%) are above a healthy weight, making them more susceptible to chronic disease. Communities that are built to support physical activity, safe walking and biking, use of public transportation, and easy access to fresh foods are essential for good health.

#### KEY STRATEGIES FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

1. **Add health-supporting language to the town plan**
  - Restrict the sale of tobacco near schools and playgrounds.
  - Require green space, gardening space, or sidewalks in new housing and commercial development.
2. **Define action strategies**
  - Support mixed use development that includes no smoking ordinances in public areas
  - Create bicycle and pedestrian infrastructure.
  - Maintain smoke-free parks, recreation and open space.
  - Increase access to healthy foods.
3. **Design “complete” streets and roadways**
  - Consider the safety of all road users: walkers, bicycles, wheelchairs, public transportation, and cars.
4. **Maintain and promote places to be active**
  - Include parks, recreation facilities, and open spaces.
5. **Increase access to healthy foods**
  - Dedicate space for community gardens and farmers markets.

#### THE IMPACT ON HEALTH

Healthy community design makes it easier for people to live healthy lives. Healthy communities see:

- Two-fold increase in daily recommended physical activity in walkable communities.
- 35% increase in physical activity when inviting, safe environments for exercise exist.
- Lower overweight and obesity rates with access to fresh and healthy foods.
- Reduced secondhand smoke exposure and increased quit success with smoke-free places.

*“As the community garden flourishes, a sense of community has developed among neighbors. Families are eating vegetables when they were not previously.”*

#### MORE RESOURCES

Visit [healthvermont.gov/3-4-50](http://healthvermont.gov/3-4-50) for more resources, including:

*Active Living & Healthy Eating: Healthy Community Design Resource*

*Complete Streets: A Guide for Vermont Communities*

[healthvermont.gov/3-4-50](http://healthvermont.gov/3-4-50)







## Chapter 3

# DORSET FOREST, PARK, AND RECREATION SYSTEM

The Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department manages 726.4 acres of forest and parkland and currently offers a limited range of programming and events for Dorset residents. As a Department in its infancy, the scope of future programs, events, facilities, trails, outdoor recreation expansion, and community land networking is seemingly endless. The Town has an area of 30,656 acres with a wide variety of land and waterways from mountains and hills to

streams and rivers. The department includes Cutler Memorial Forest, Pinnacle Forest and Tower, Owls Head Town Forest, Raptor Lane Property, and the Freedley Quarry Property\*. Beyond the Town owned properties, the department also partners with other natural resource organizations including Merck Forest, the Nature Conservancy, the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF), NATS (Mountain Biking Group), VAST, Vermont Land Trust, and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. Many of these partnerships are new and developing as the program gains a foothold in the community. Public engagement and community input are vital aspects of further department programming and development.

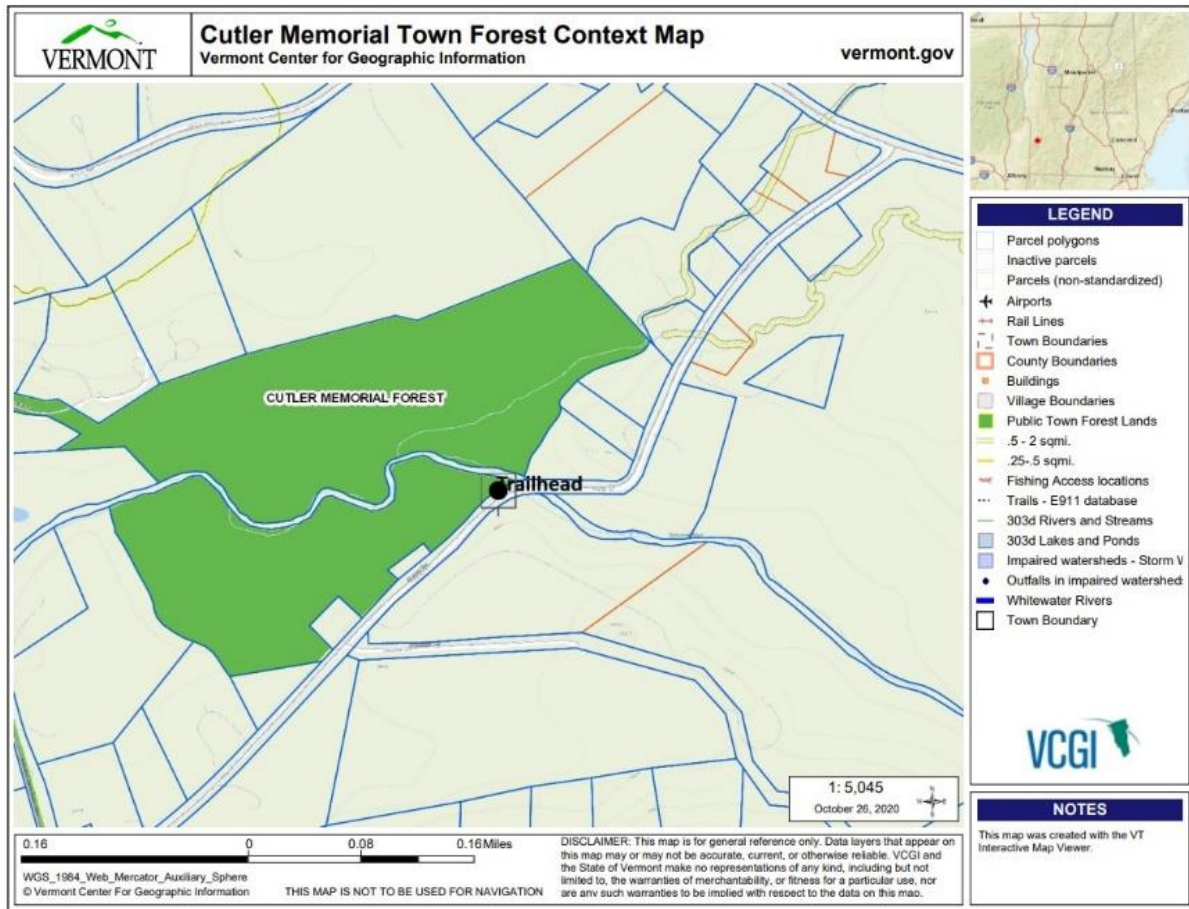
There are approximately 12 miles of trail within the town-owned property network and over 65 miles of trails if extended to other accessible trails on Merck Forest, National Forest, Nature Conservancy and Vermont State lands. Mountain biking specific trails are located off Grouse Lane in the Dorset Hollow, 3.9 miles currently going up the mountain, and off Church St. near the Dorset Green (Humphrey’s and Bunker Loop trails). Horseback riding is possible on wider, more hardened trails throughout the trail network and on certain trails at Merck Forest. The Rail Trails in Rupert, VT and in Manchester, VT provide less strenuous and multi-use paths for users. A brand-new multi-use trail at Owls Head Town Forest opened in the summer of 2020 in Dorset.

## Parkland

Parkland in Dorset provide a wide array of diverse settings for many uses. The following sections will outline the features, size, current uses, and maps for each property owned by the Town of Dorset. Another section will expand upon other providers in the area and what they offer residents of Dorset. See appendices for larger versions of all maps in this document.

<b>Parklands &amp; Forest Properties</b>	Cutler Memorial Forest.....	34 acres
	Pinnacle Forest.....	42.1 acres
	Owls Head Town Forest.....	282.6 acres
	Freedley Quarry Property* .....	36 acres
	Raptor Lane Town Property.....	328 acres

\*Freedley Quarry Property is not technically owned by the Town, it is in a legal limbo and would need go through a formal process of aquisition



Map 2

## Cutler Memorial Forest

Cutler Memorial Forest is a 34-acre parkland forest that is located off Peace St. approximately 2 miles from the Dorset Green. The park has no signage roadside but can be found on Google Maps, the Dorset town website, and through the Overview Map posted at various town kiosks. Cutler was donated to the town in 1976 by Mrs. Isabella Cutler. The Mettawee River runs through the south-central part of the parkland and offers tranquil water vistas, mature hemlock stands, and a medium-sized parking area that accommodates about 10 cars. Prior to 2020, use at Cutler was mostly local Dorset residents who came nearly every day, often with their dogs. However, after making it a point on Google Maps and with COVID-19, the number of visitors increased enormously. The parking area was regularly filled throughout the spring and summer months and cars were often parked along the road to access the parkland. Uses at Cutler include swimming, fishing, hiking, picnicking, and photography. The main trail is a 1-mile loop that begins at the parking lot and has over 12 bridges in total. The land slopes down to the river and run-off saturates the soil, making hardened trails hard to maintain without wooden



walkways and bridges. There are two small spur trails off the main loop. One of the spur trails (Yellow Marked) is an access point for the local Long Trail School and is used nearly every day by school groups to utilize the land as an outdoor classroom for all grade levels. Although a relatively small parkland, Cutler is heavily used by both residents and visitors. There are three benches (all positioned for COVID social distance regulations), two picnic tables (also far apart), and a small standing grill. The trails at Cutler are low-impact and accessible to most people, regardless of age or fitness level. The access to water for swimming and fishing, location near the Dorset Green, and gentle trails all contribute to the popularity of the site.




**HIKE Dorset VT**

Do you have any praises, suggestions, questions or comments?

Please Email:  
hikedorset@gmail.com

Thank you for visiting Cutler Memorial Forest!

 @hikedorset



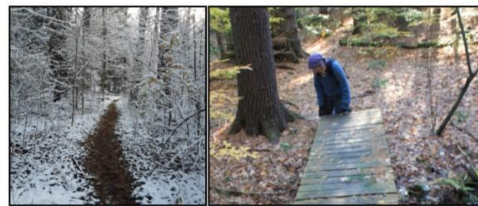
**HIKING CUTLER MEMORIAL FOREST**

**Dorset, Vermont**

[www.dorsetvt.org/hike](http://www.dorsetvt.org/hike)



Cutler Memorial Forest was donated to the town of Dorset in 1976 by Mrs. Isabelle Cutler. Today it is home to several gentle walking trails and a popular destination for families, nature lovers, fishing enthusiasts, and dog walkers! Please enjoy the forest as a steward and leaving nothing but footprints behind.



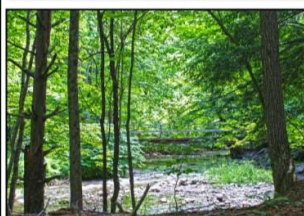
Cutler Forest is beautiful during every season of the year. Recently repaired bridges!

**Full Blue-Orange Loop:**  
Distance: 0.9 miles  
Hiking Time: 30-45 minutes

From the Trailhead take the **blue trail** over the main large bridge and continue right over another bridge. Continue following the trail through the mixed conifer stand and over several more smaller bridges. The trail blazes change to orange. Continue following orange blazes as the trail climbs slightly into a hardwood stand and follows an old fence line. There is a short trail on the right that leads to Mystic Lane blazed green. Continue over many more bridges along the orange trail until the large bridge is back in sight. Enjoy the beautiful Mettawee River, diverse forest, and wildlife along the gentle trails at Cutler.

**Fishing at Cutler:**

**Licenses Are Required**  
Any person engaged in fishing, hunting, or taking any wild animals must be properly licensed, except as listed below under exceptions. Wild animals are defined by law as ALL animals, including birds, amphibians, and reptiles, other than domestic animals.  
Visit <https://vtfishandwildlife.com/fish/fishing-regulations>



**Cutler Memorial Forest**

**Hiking Trails**

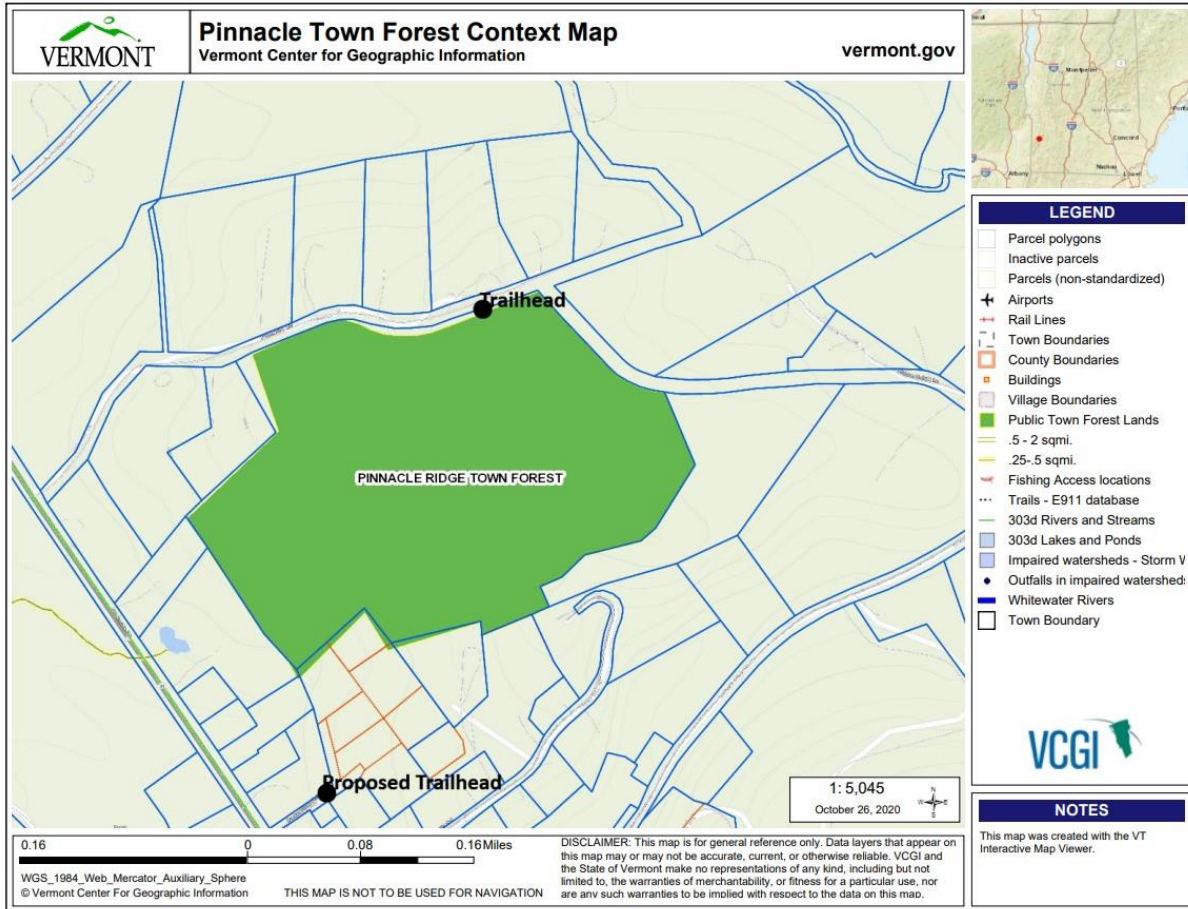
- Blue Trail: 0.12 miles
- Orange Trail: 0.2 miles
- Yellow Trail: 0.16 miles
- Mystic Lane Shortcut

**METTAWEE RIVER**

IVY border to the downstream edge of the Route 153 bridge in Pawlet.	Pawlet	Rutland	1	12
From the downstream edge of the Route 153 bridge in Pawlet upstream (approximately 25 miles) to the downstream edge of the first bridge on Dorset Hollow Road and including tributary: Flower Brook upstream (approximately 1,000') to the downstream edge of the Route 30 bridge in Pawlet.	Pawlet	Rutland	1	12 46
<b>THROUGH length limit:</b> 10" to 14" protected slot (all fish 10" to 14" must be released); <b>daily limit:</b> 2 trout, only 1 greater than 14".	Dorset	Bennington	1	12
First bridge on Dorset Hollow Road, in Dorset, to headwaters.				

Check out [dorsetvt.org/hike.html](http://dorsetvt.org/hike.html) for more hiking information in the Dorset and the surrounding area!



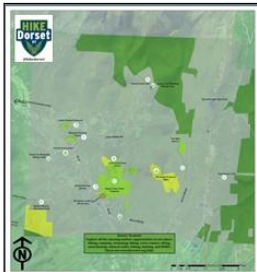


Map 3

## Pinnacle Forest Park

Pinnacle Forest is a 42.1-acre parkland forest that is located off Pinnacle Lane (private road) approximately 1 mile from the Dorset Green. The park has no signage roadside but can be found on Google maps, the Dorset town website, and through the Overview Map posted at various town kiosks. Pinnacle was donated to the town in 2005 by Margaret and Robert Keeler. Historically owned by Miss Cecelia deNottbeck, a notable Dorset resident, the property includes a stone tower built in 1910. Cecelia deNottbeck commissioned this tower to be built to look like an English ruin, in memory of her childhood. The tower has been repaired many times and stands tall and stable today, 110 years later. The Pinnacle is technically the name of the hill, with the tower on the top of it. There are two large vista views that have been maintained throughout the years, but the once bare hill is now forested with mainly hardwoods and some lingering pines. There is a network of trails at the parkland, with a 1-mile loop circling the property and close to many of the neighborhood properties. The other trails lead either to the tower or to a road. Many landowners have made connection trails to their private homes to Pinnacle. The trail to the Pinnacle is less than 0.5 miles to the top from the parking area. The

parking area at Pinnacle is quite small, accommodating 4-5 vehicles. With the parking area also off a private road, access to Pinnacle is more difficult for residents and visitors without knowledge of the park. There is a footpath that leads directly to the park from the Dorset Green but currently cannot be advertised as a main access. The main uses at Pinnacle include hiking, dog-walking, photography, picnics/group outings, and historic site visitors.



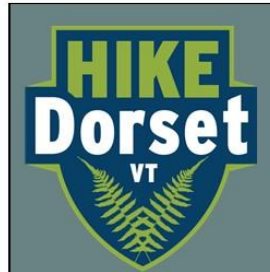
Do you have any praises, suggestions, questions or comments?

Please Email:  
hikedorset@gmail.com

Thank you for visiting the Pinnacle Tower and trails!



@hikedorset



## HIKING PINNACLE FOREST TRAILS

Dorset,  
Vermont

www.dorsetvt.org/hike



Did you know there is a castle-like tower just minutes from the Dorset town Green?

The Pinnacle Tower was built in 1910 Miss Cecelia deNottbeck, the great-grand daughter of John Jacob Astor. She had the stone tower built at the top of the hill to replicate a "ruin" from the English landscape. 2010 marked the 100th year that the tower has stood on the hill above Dorset Village.

Dorset acquired the 35-acre forested property in 2005 through the generosity of the late Robert & Margaret Keeler.



View from inside the tower.



A magical sight in the midst of the woods.

**Pinnacle Tower Hike:**  
**Distance:** 0.4 miles  
**Elevation Change:** less than 100'  
**Hiking Time:** ~30 minutes  
From the small parking area (there is a kiosk and large map), take the **blue trail for the most direct way to the tower**. A hike of **0.4 miles** ascending gently will bring you to the tower and lookout area. From the tower, the blue trails continues down the hill and connects with the orange loop. The orange loop is 1 mile total and leads back to the parking area from either way.

### Special Considerations:

The Pinnacle Forest property is in the center of several residential areas and homes are visible through the woods along the trails. Please be respectful to private properties and remain on the designated trails.

**Please keep dogs on leash and remove any pet waste while hiking.**

Thank you for keeping Dorset properties beautiful!



View from top of Pinnacle Hill

Hiking is a powerful health choice!

Exercising outdoors can help:

Lower Blood Pressure

Strengthen Relationships

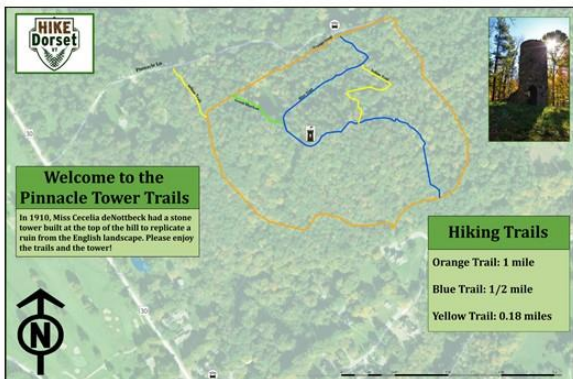
Weight Loss

Decrease respiratory disease risks

Reduce Anxiety

Build Muscles

Improve Heart Health



### Welcome to the Pinnacle Tower Trails

In 1910, Miss Cecelia deNottbeck had a stone tower built at the top of the hill to replicate a ruin from the English landscape. Please enjoy the trails and the tower!

### Hiking Trails

Orange Trail: 1 mile

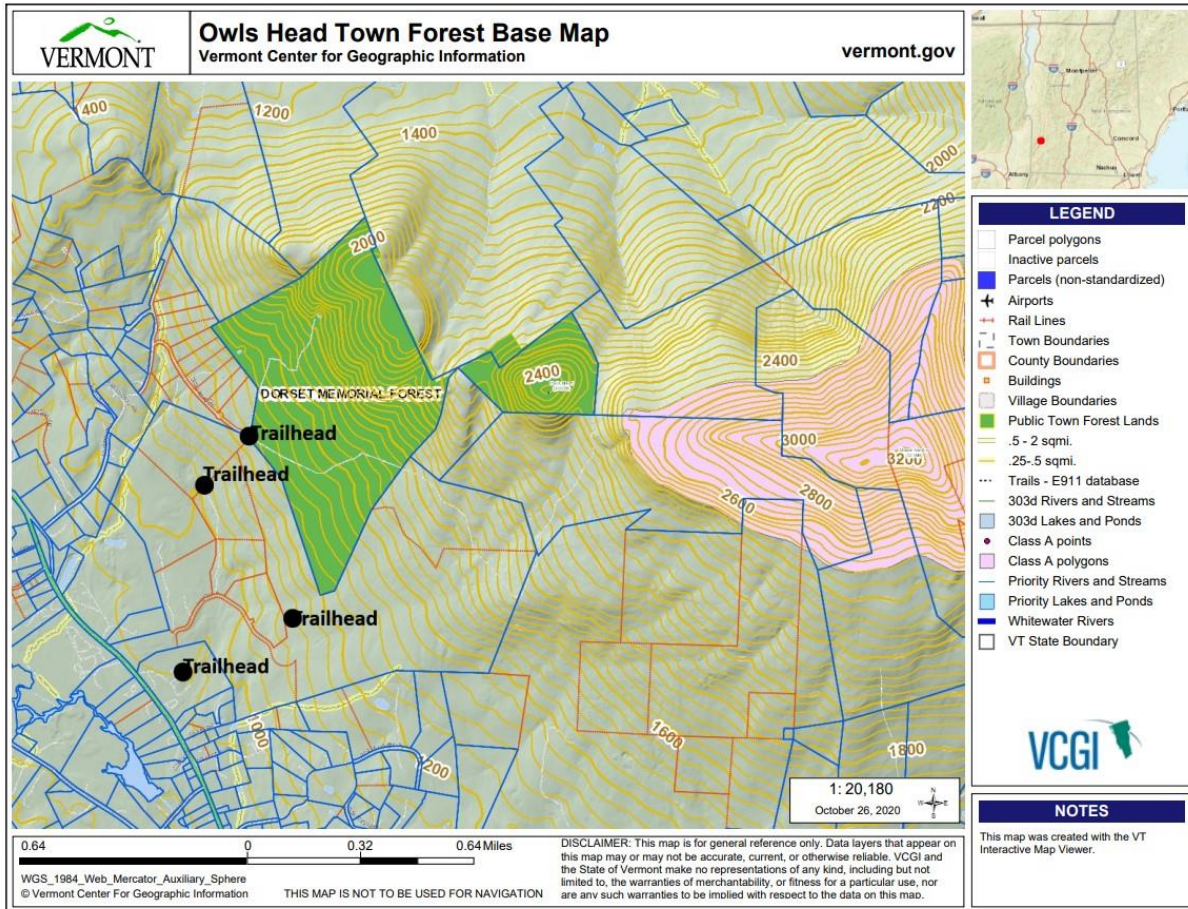
Blue Trail: 1/2 mile

Yellow Trail: 0.18 miles

**NO CAMPING, FIRE PITS, LITTERING, OR ALCOHOL ON PROPERTY.**

Please call the Bennington Sheriff Dispatch: 802-424-900





Map 4

## Owls Head Town Forest

Owls Head Town Forest is a 282.6-acre town forest that can be accessed in several different ways. The property was acquired through a diverse group of government agencies and private parties: the US Forest Service Community Forest Program grant, Vermont Housing and Conservation Fund, Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation, and public support from 174 private donors. There is a parking lot and trailhead on the Raptor Lane property, a parking lot and trailhead off Ken’s Camp Road/Black Rock Lane, and access via JK Adams Factory and Store parking area. There is signage off Rt 30 at Raptor Lane and Black Rock Lane. The signage for Owls Head is significantly better than other town properties in Dorset. The Dorset town website also features Owls Head Town Forest information and maps for users to download or print. Dorset was gifted 30 acres on top of Owls Head from the Dorset Science Club in 1963. In 2016, the town purchased 260 more acres to expand the forest and protect the Gettysburg Quarry and other historical quarries in the same area. The forest currently has 5.5 miles of trail with 1 mile of additional unfinished [marked] trail that circles Owls Head and leads to Gilbert Lookout. According to the Community Forest Plan (2017), Owls Head Forest has many assets including historic sites, forest products, ecosystem services, wildlife habitats, scenic views, and recreational and educational opportunities. Among communities of Ash-Hickory-



Oak, Dry Oak-Hickory-Hophornbeam, and Rich Northern Hardwood Forest, Owls Head also has Temperate Calcareous Outcrop and Temperate Calcareous Cliff communities (both uncommon). The property has five historic quarries, several expansive scenic viewpoints, a multi-use trail (new for 2020), hunting allowance, and educational signage for visitors. Recreational vehicles (except for snow mobiles), camping, fires, and littering are not allowed.

**Other Hikes in Owls Head Town Forest:**

**NEW! Multi-use Pathway:**  
Directly accessible from main trailhead. Bikes welcome!

**Lower Prince Quarry Hike:**  
Begin at the Trailhead, take the **orange** on the left. At first foundation turn left and follow the trail 0.25 miles to the Lower Prince Quarry.

**Klondike Quarry Hike:**  
Begin at the Trailhead, take the **yellow trail** on the right, follow 1 mile (turning left at the Santa Claus). This route is a more gradual hike and easier way to reach the Quarry and Art's Bench! Beautiful route through the lower parts of Klondike Quarry.

Owls Head Town Forest was made possible by:

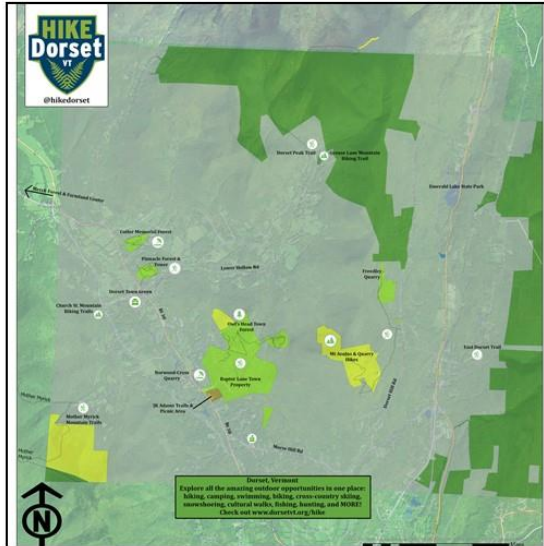
**HIKING OWLS HEAD TOWN FOREST**

Main Trailhead  
www.dorsetvt.org/hike

@hikedorset

**Did you know Dorset is home to over 20 miles of hiking trails?**

The Town developed a trail network that illustrates the historical, cultural, ecological and recreational values of the Town Forest. The **Town Forest Trailheads** are located off Raptor Lane off Route 30 or Black Rock Lane/Ken's Camp Road (both private roads). Please respect the neighbors on these roads. **New in 2020! Trailhead off Raptor Lane and Multi-use Path**

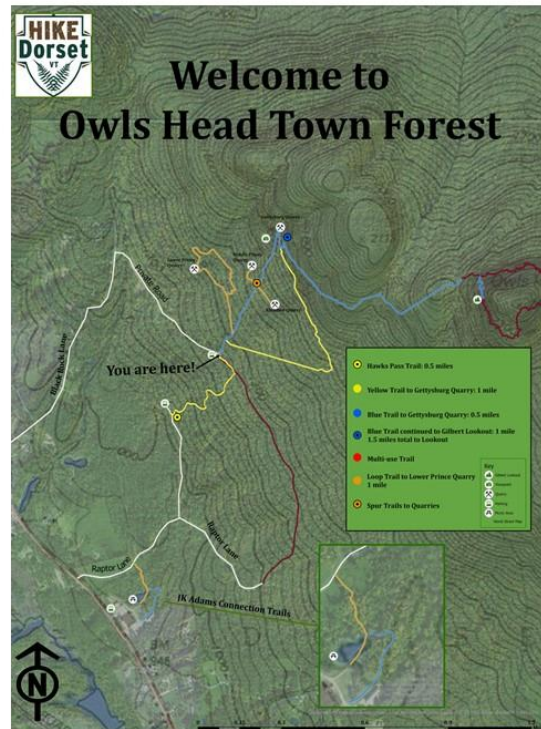


**Hawk's Pass Hike:**  
Distance: 0.5 miles  
Hiking time: 15 minutes  
Trailhead is off Raptor Lane and leads directly to the multi-use trail and main Owls Head Trailhead.

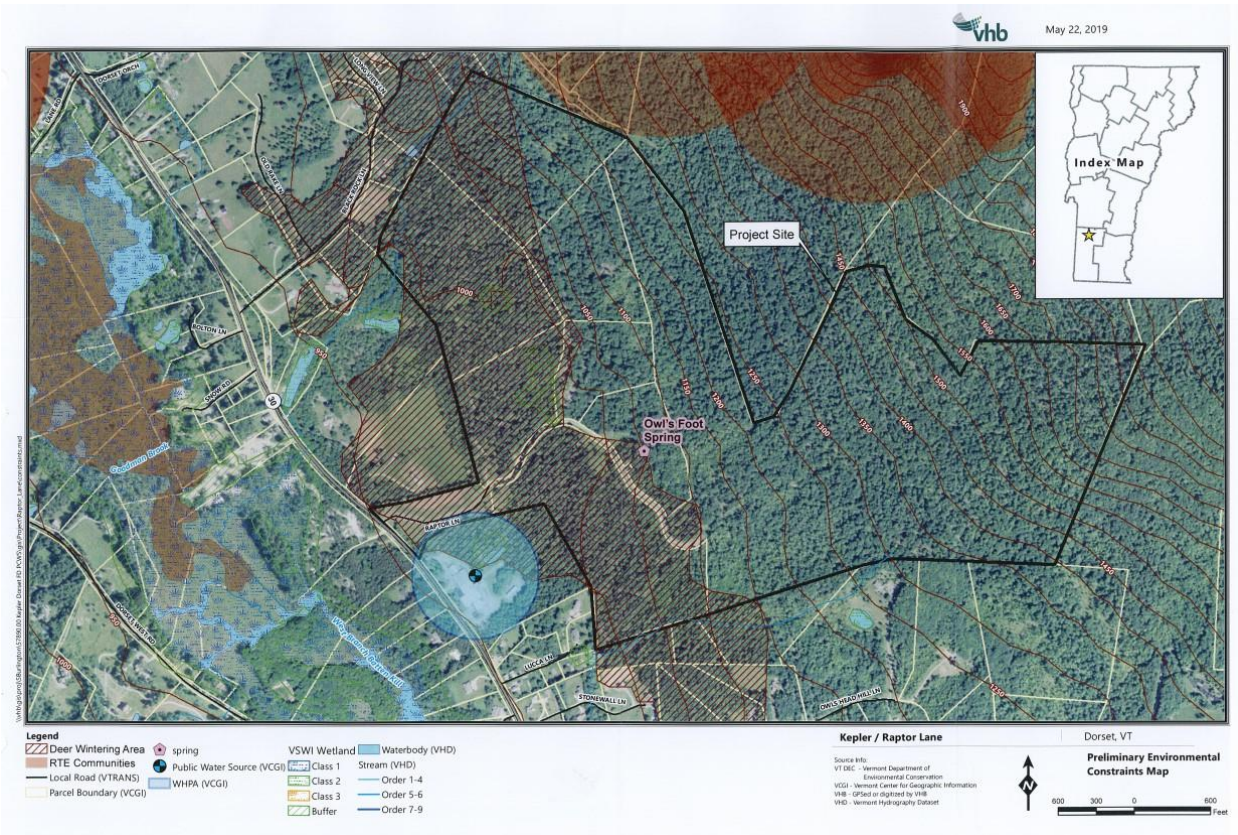
**Gettysburg Quarry Hike:**  
Distance: 0.45 miles  
Elevation Change: 800'  
Hiking Time: 40 mins/ 25 mins return  
From the Trailhead take the **blue trail** on the left. A hike of 0.45 miles ascending steadily will bring you to the Quarry. Just before the Quarry is a side trail leading to the quarry lookout. Be sure to take a seat on **Art's Bench** and enjoy the view of Dorset Valley.

**Gilbert Lookout Hike:**  
Distance: 2 miles  
Elevation Change: 1,260'  
Hiking Time: 2 hrs./ 1.25 hrs. return  
From the Trailhead take the **blue trail** on the left. Follow the blue trail beyond the **Gettysburg Quarry** for 1 mile. Arrive at **Gilbert Lookout**, an outcropping of rock with views as far as the Adirondacks. Be sure to see the "**Gilbert Lookout**" plaque that has called the lookout home since 1945.

Email [hikedorset@gmail.com](mailto:hikedorset@gmail.com) with any questions!





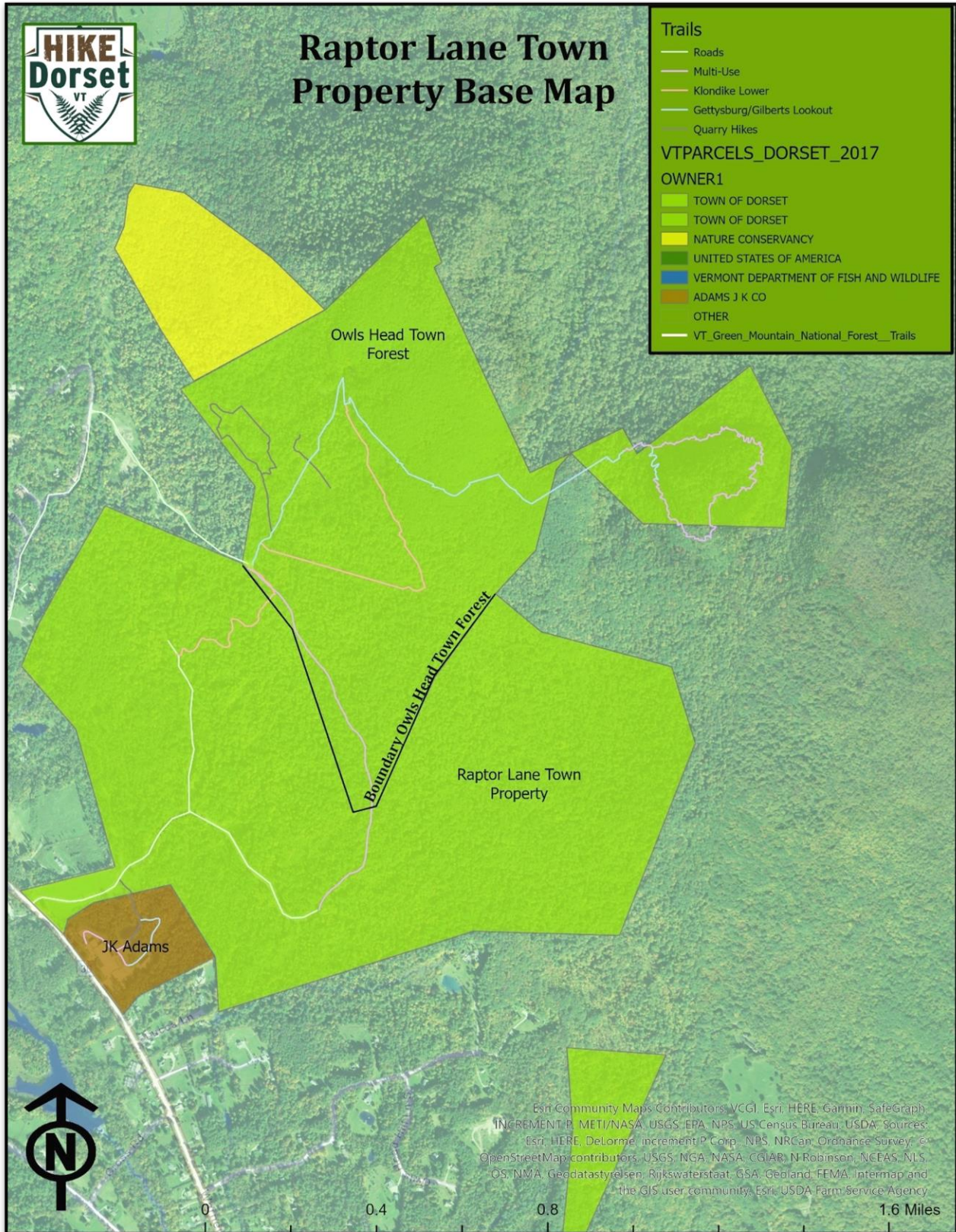


Map 5

## Raptor Lane Town Property

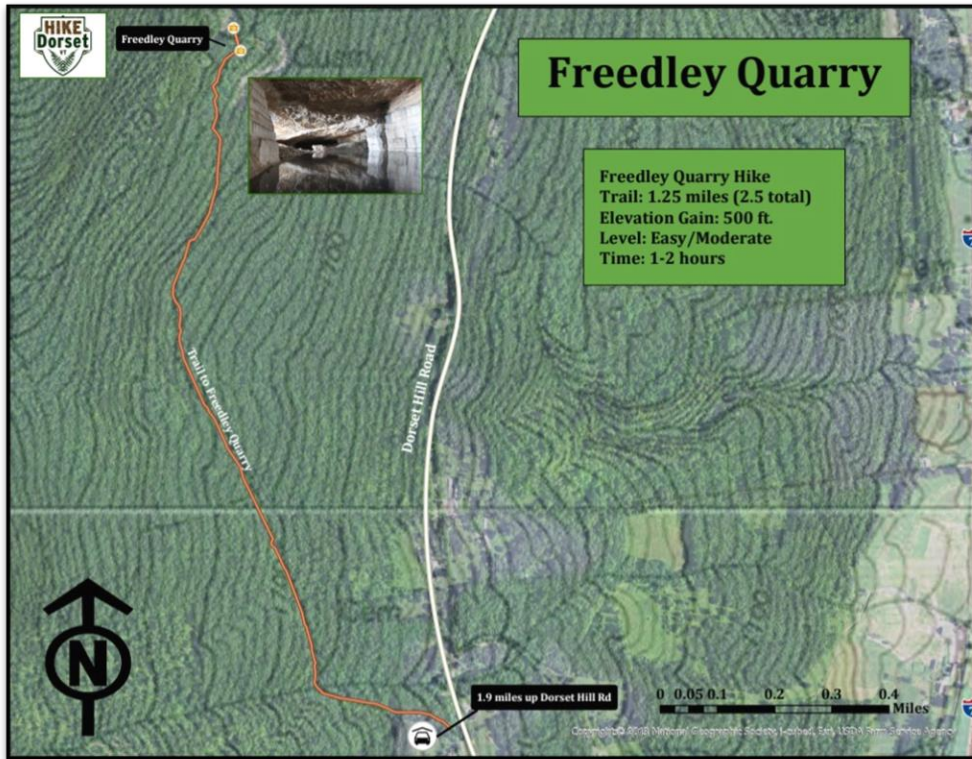
Raptor Lane Town Property is a 328-acre property located off Rt 30, 1.8 miles south of the Dorset Green. Dorset purchased the property at a bargain sale in 2018. The property consists of 8 lot subdivisions. As the newest property acquired by the town, Raptor Lane is still in the beginning stages of planning and development. A committee was formed, a community input survey was distributed, and a detailed environmental assessment was completed before a formal Master Plan was released in September 2020. Currently the property includes a parking lot and trailhead for the Hawks Pass Trail (new 2020 trail) that is a 0.5-mile trail that connects to Owls Head Town Forest. The trailhead has a brand-new kiosk with maps, brochures, and town forest information. In addition, a connection trail from JK Adams property was built in 2020 to connect the two properties. This connection system allows recreators to park at JK Adams year-round and access both Raptor Lane and Owls Head Town Forest. Raptor Lane also has direct access to the multi-use trail to the south, but the access is uphill and rough gravel. Raptor Lane is a property that opens a multitude of future outdoor recreation opportunities, future recreational facilities for residents, and economic and housing possibilities that will be an essential element in the future development of the community.





Map 6

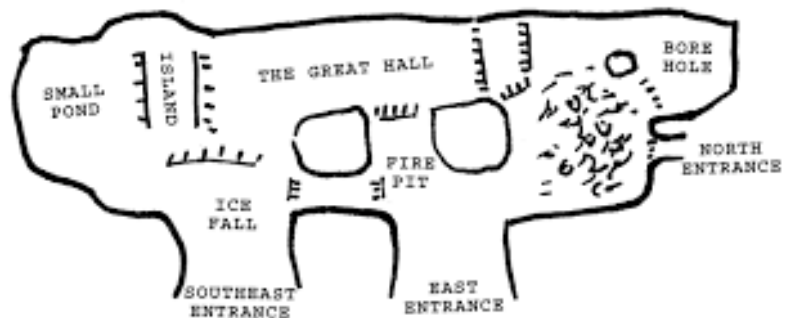




Map 7

## Freedley Quarry Property

This property is in an ownership “grey area”. It is listed as Town of Dorset property on parcel databases because of a technicality. There is not a clear future for this parcel. However, the road leading to the quarry is a right of way and the parking area off Dorset Hill Road is accessible to recreators. There is a small kiosk (erected 2020) that displays detailed hiking maps of the area that came from the Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department. The Freedley Quarry has great historic value. It is heavily used by ATVs, 4WD vehicles, and hikers. It abuts National



Forest Service property and has scenic views of Dorset and surrounding mountains. The quarry draws visitors but is heavily affected by litter and crude spray paint graffiti.

## Other Providers

The Town of Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department is not the only provider in the overall system of park and recreation services in the community. Organizations from the public, private, and nonprofit sectors all play a role in offering facilities, land, and/or programs for residents and visitors.



### Merck Forest and Farmland Center

Merck Forest and Farmland Center (MFFC) is a 3,200-acre property that was created by George Merck in the 1940s when he began purchasing parcels of farmland in the west Rupert area. His writings express his intent “to provide a variety of educational experiences, especially for young people, that all may learn to appreciate the natural world, some may come to feel at home in it, and a few may develop skills for careers in farming, forestry, and land management.” MFFC has over 30 miles of trails, eight (8) remote cabins for nightly rental, dispersed camping (\$5 per night), hunting allowance, a working farm with horses, pigs, chickens, and sheep, and regular educational programming open to the public. Entry and parking at MFFC are free. The property is located 5 miles northwest of the Dorset Green. MFFC and the Outdoor Recreation Department in Dorset plan to work together in the future to create collaborative programs, literature, and community engagement projects for the greater southern Vermont area.



### Dorset Field Club

The Dorset Field Club began in 1886 with a group of golfers who summered in Dorset and laid out a 9-hole golf course. The course has undergone significant changes over the years and is now an 18-hole course with a club house, seven clay tennis courts, golf simulator and fitness center. Members also have free access to the Barrows Inn (in Dorset) outdoor pool during the summer. The Dorset Field Club is a membership-based recreational facility with



fees. There are different levels of membership and a limited number of memberships available in each level.

## Emerald Lake State Park

Emerald Lake State Park is a 430-acre property in East Dorset off US Rt 7. The park surrounds a 20-acre lake named for the emerald color of its waters when viewed from above. The lake offers recreational opportunities including non-motorized boating, paddling, canoeing, swimming, and fishing. The park has 66-campsites and 37 lean-tos. There is a seasonal snack bar and boat rental facility (canoes, kayaks, row, and pedal boats). The park also has 5 miles of hiking trails. Emerald Lake State Forest is on the east side of US Rt 7 directly across from the park. The Town of Dorset provides Free Day Entry to Dorset residents, available at the Town Offices.



## Green Mountain National Forest

The Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) encompasses large areas in Dorset. In the Northeast of Dorset, near Dorset Peak, there are 3,218-acres of Remote Backcountry Forest GMNF land. This area has a large network of trails, mostly old logging roads, and a newer section of mountain biking trails off Grouse Land in the Dorset Hollow. The area is popular for different recreational activities including snowmobiling, but there are regulations in place that are available for review on the GMNF website. There are another 2,277 acres in southeast Dorset (Green Mountain Escarpment) that include part of the East Dorset Trail. The East Dorset Trailhead is in East Dorset off Mad Tom Road and follows the Mad Tom Brook. The trail was washed out by heavy rains and flooding soon after being completed. Large sections of the trail were destroyed by the water and are unrepairable. There are tentative plans in place to re-route the trail and re-open the East Dorset Trail, but it is early days. Forest Service lands offer a wide variety of recreational activities including fishing, hiking, hunting, biking, picnicking, horseback riding, camping, backpacking, and winter sports. There are opportunities for the GMNF and the Town of Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department to collaborate on trail and recreation projects.



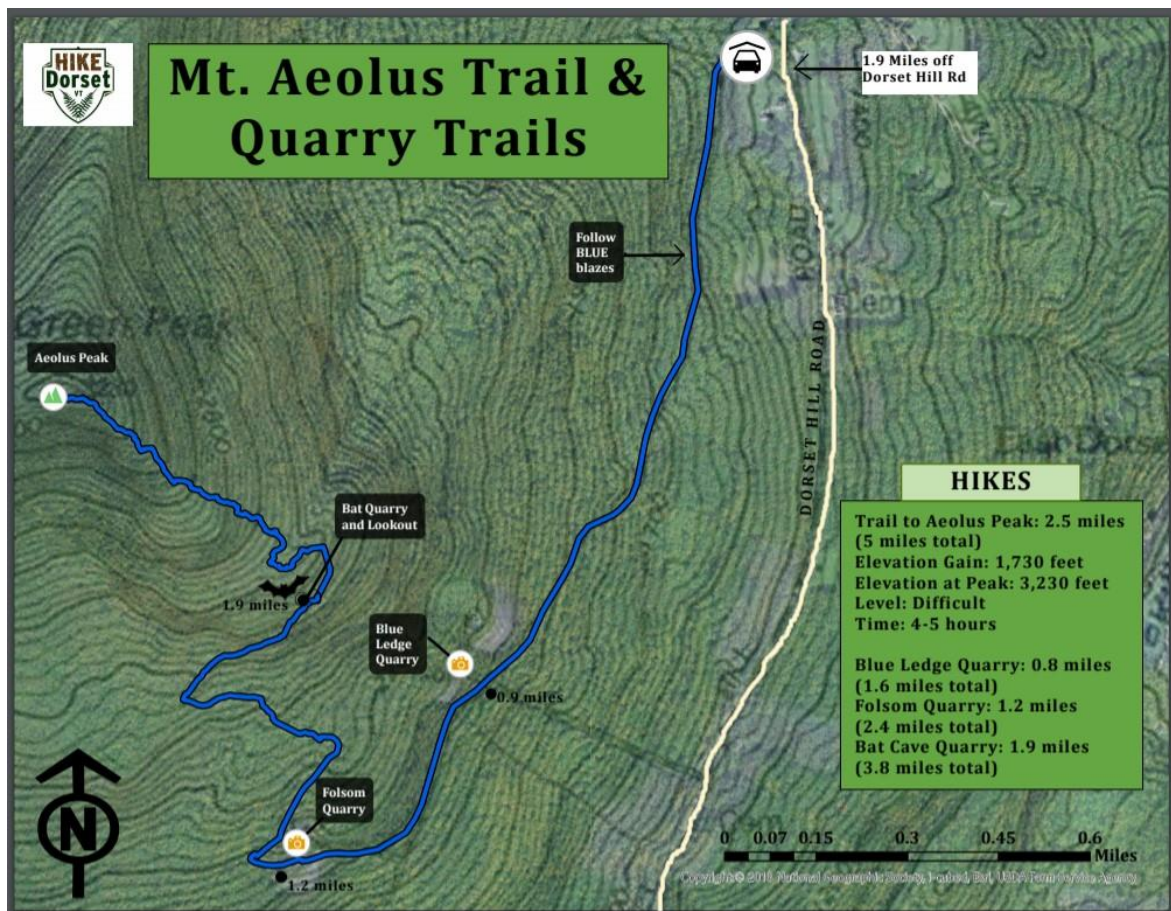
## Nature Conservancy

The Nature Conservancy owns several large areas in Dorset: the Aeolus area, the Black Rock area, and the Mother Myrick Mountain area. The

Aeolus area is most easily accessible via the Dorset Hill Road parking area. With cooperative effort, the Outdoor Recreation Department created maps for both the Aeolus area and Mother Myrick to help hikers safely access the trails and resources. The Black Rock area is located just northwest and abutting Owls Head Town Forest and is 39-acres.

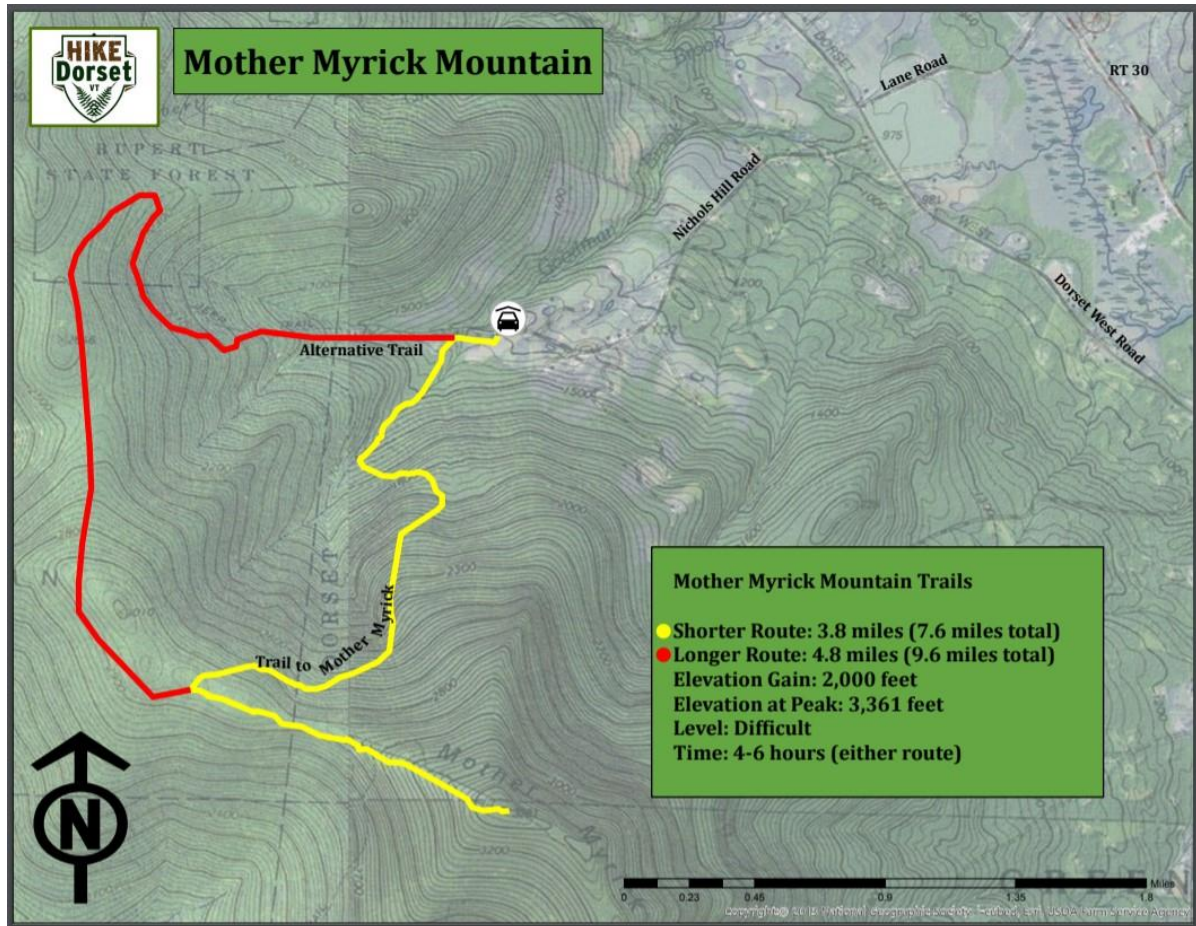
See Map 8 for the detailed map for Aeolus and Map 9 for the detailed map for Mother Myrick. Both maps are available on the Dorset Town website.

Nature Conservancy properties are managed by staff, with field managers in Poultney. Limited staffing with large areas of land make it difficult to maintain trails or provide up-to-date signage, so the town of Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department can be a collaborative partner in certain tasks that enrich recreational opportunities for Dorset residents. Uses that are generally allowed on Nature Conservancy lands include hunting, hiking, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, non-motorized boating, swimming, fishing, and wild edible harvesting. Access is free.



Map 8





## Manchester Parks and Recreation Department

Manchester, the closest neighboring town to Dorset, has a population of about 4,500 and offers a wider selection of recreational opportunities. The Recreation Department through Manchester offers sports facilities & fields, playgrounds, a skate park, multi-use walking trails, a dog park, community garden, outdoor swimming pool, park house, ice skating rink, and programming. Noteworthy: COVID-19 has limited much of the programming, accessibility, and resources for the Manchester Parks and Recreation Department in 2020.



Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park, also known as the Rec Park, is a 95-acre park that encompasses most facilities and programs in Manchester. It is located 5.9 miles south of the Dorset Green on Rt 30. Residents of Dorset receive reimbursement for the difference between resident and non-resident fees at Manchester Parks and Recreation programs.



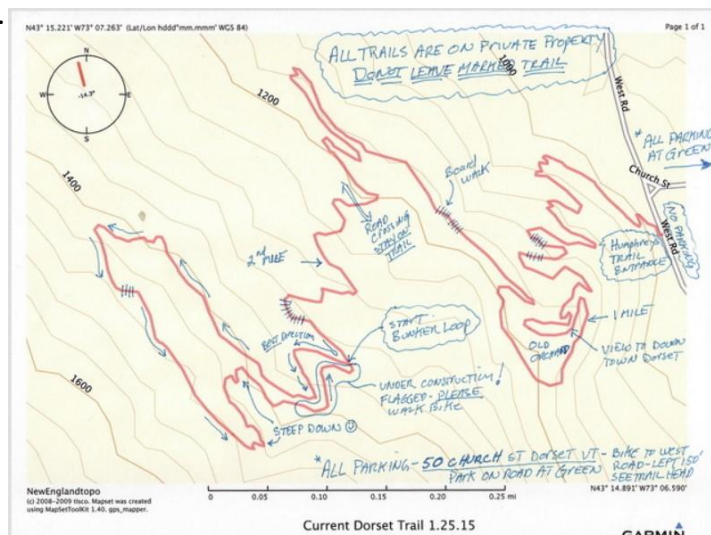
## Northshire Area Trail Systems

Northshire Area Trail Systems (NATS) is a non-profit group dedicated to creating and improving mountain bike trails in the Dorset area. The best known NATS trail system is the Dorset Trail System off Church Lane in Dorset 3/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile from the Dorset Green. There are two trails - the entry trail Humphreys, which winds up the hill about 2.5 miles and then branches off onto the Bunker loop, which adds another 7/10<sup>th</sup> of a mile, and reconnects to the Humphreys trail. The short Bunker Loop is considered Intermediate according to the Mountain Bike Project (<https://www.mtbproject.com/trail/7010076/bunker-loop>) while the Humphreys trail is considered Difficult according to the Mountain Bike Project (<https://www.mtbproject.com/trail/7010075/humphreys-trail>). These trails are located on private property. See Map 10 for Church St. mountain biking trail system. Larger versions of mountain biking trail maps are available on the town website and the appendices of this document.

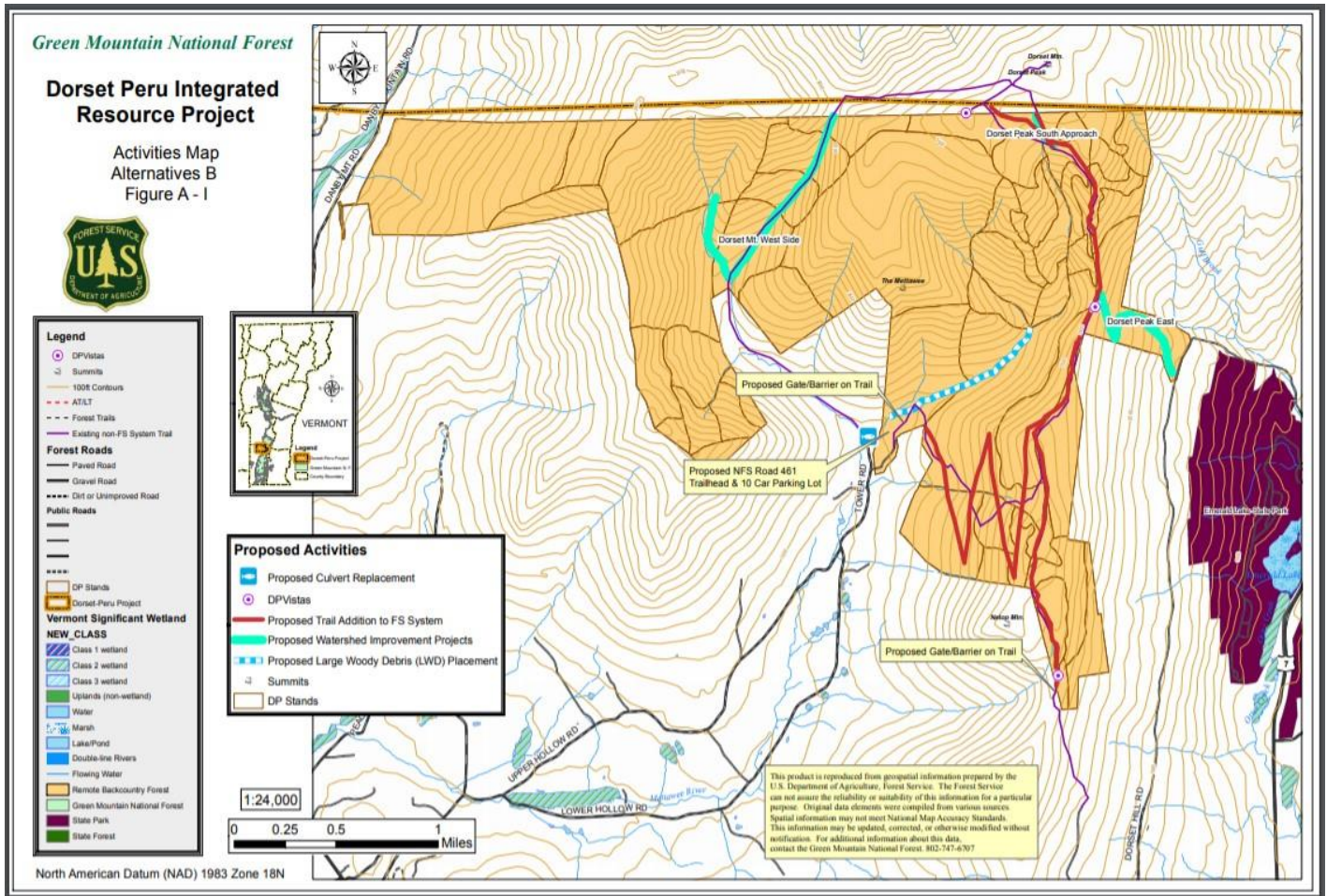


Another newer mountain biking trail is in the Dorset Hollow off Grouse Lane. The trail was built by NATS in cooperation with the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) and climbs approximately 5 miles to the summit of Netop Mountain. According to Trail Forks (<https://www.trailforks.com/trails/dorset-hollow-trail/>), the trail is Intermediate, but NATS members who built the trail consider the trail Difficult. The trail is located on GMNF property. See Map 11 for Dorset Mountain trail system. The mountain bike trail is the red line.

The Outdoor Recreation Department in Dorset directly partners with NATS and helps to fund future projects for mountain biking trails in Dorset.



Map 10



Map 11

## Multi-use/Rail Trail Systems

The Town of Dorset has one, town-owned and managed multi-use trail at Owls Head Town Forest. The trail is 0.5 miles with room to be extended with donation-based funding. There are two other multi-use rails to trail paths in the area: the Manchester Rail Trail and the Delaware & Hudson (D&H) Rail Trail. The Manchester Rail trail (5.5 miles roundtrip) can be accessed from MEMS on Memorial Ave, the Dana L. Thompson Memorial Park (aka Manchester Rec Park), the Riley Rink at Hunter Park, or a parking lot on North Road across from Squires Road. The trail could be extended all the way to Dorset Village School in Dorset, connecting Manchester and Dorset. The extension would need to follow Kelleher Road to Morse Hill Road in south Dorset. More information can be found at: <https://bikemanchestervt.com/bike-routes/bike-paths/>





The D&H Rail Trail is 19.8-mile section of former railroad bed in Rutland and Bennington counties leased to the Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation by the Agency of Transportation for use as a recreational trail. The trail is in two sections – one between Castleton and Poultney, the other between West Pawlet and Rupert. The two Vermont sections are separated by a portion of trail in New York. The D&H Rail Trail is a multiple use trail open to pedestrians, bicyclists and horseback riders in the summer and snowshoers, skiers, and snowmobiles in the winter. The closest access points from Dorset include a parking lot and trailhead in Rupert, 10 miles from the Dorset Green and in West Pawlet, 14 miles from the Dorset Green. More information can be found at: <https://fpr.vermont.gov/dh-rail-trail>



Map 12



## Houses of Worship & Schools

Dorset has two churches and two schools. The churches provide large rooms for community engagement events like community dinners and large tag sales. The schools provide recreational facilities for school-age children from elementary to high school. The Outdoor Recreation Department in Dorset provides outdoor programming for classes from both Dorset Village School and Long Trail School.



## Dorset Historical Society

The Dorset Historical Society, located on the Dorset Green, provides historical programming for residents and visitors to Dorset. Yearly historic hikes, led by an historian, are quite popular each year. In addition, before COVID-19 limitations (2020), monthly community engagement events were hosted through the Dorset Historical Society and included local Dorset hikes. The Dorset Historical Society partners with the Town of Dorset regularly on a variety of different projects. The Outdoor Recreation Department will also be partnering with the Dorset Historical Society for projects in the future.

## Dorset Village Library

The Dorset Village Library is located on the Dorset Green and provides a growing variety of programming for children and adults. The library is partnering with the Outdoor Recreation Department to host natural resource programs for both children and adults. Due to COVID-19, 2020 restrictions affected the library's accessibility, programs, and services.

# Organizational Structure

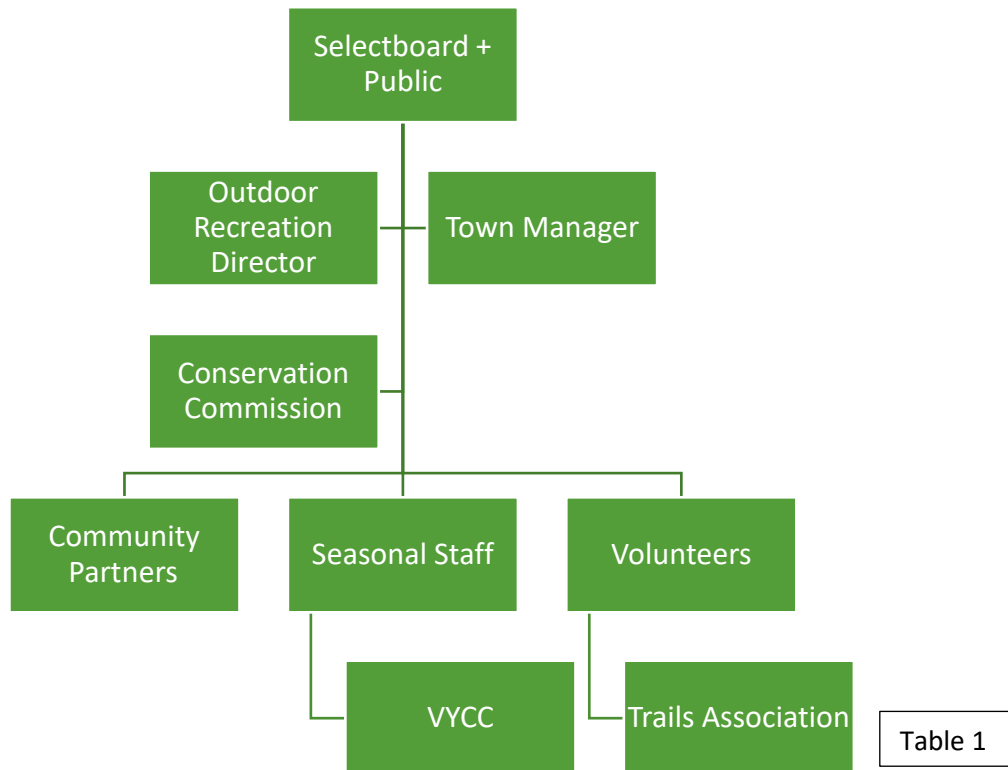
An overarching goal of the Master Plan is to investigate the Department's role as a provider of park and recreation services in the community and to make recommendations about the structure of the Department as it forms to allow for greater effectiveness.

The Department currently has one division and is directly under the Town Manager. The Conservation Commission also works to work with the Director to give in-depth community guidance and direction for the Department. The current staff includes a year-round Outdoor Recreation Director (part-time from October 2019) and one summer position as of 2020. Going forward into 2021-2026, the Department plans to employ 2-3 part-time seasonal employees

during the summer months. In addition, the Master Plan presents the possibilities for the Department if the Outdoor Recreation Director position is made full-time in 2021.

Because of the extremely limited staff, volunteers and local partnerships are essential to provide the best services to Dorset. Before the creation of the Department in 2019, the main volunteer network for outdoor recreation projects in Dorset was through the Conservation Commission and individual resident volunteers. The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) worked on various projects during the summers of 2016-2020, working on building bridges, expanding the trail networks, and creating scenic lookouts. Volunteers working with the Director from 2019-present have been essential in completing new trails, repairing extensive drainage systems at Cutler and Owls Head, trail maintenance, bridge repairs at Cutler, and various other projects.

The future departmental structure for Outdoor Recreation will continue evolving as projects are presented, planned, and executed in the next five years. Seasonal staff needs will be assessed each year and projects planned accordingly. Volunteer group events will depend on COVID-19 restrictions and community involvement. Projects and programs will be prioritized as staffing allows.



# Chapter 4

## COMMUNITY TRENDS

Examining the key issues and evolving trends of the community provides a critical backdrop to the research findings and helps create an accurate, comprehensive depiction of community needs. Exploring the key issues and trends relevant to outdoor recreation in Dorset will set the stage for the strategic recommendations of this Master Plan.

### The Dorset Population

According to the 2020 Dorset Town Plan and 2010 U.S. Census, the population of Dorset is 2,031 persons. This number does include some seasonal residents who maintain residency here even though they are not year-round residents. COVID-19 has impacted the percentage of seasonal residents in Dorset in 2020 and increased their length of stay significantly. The long-term impacts of these changes are yet to be firmly determined.

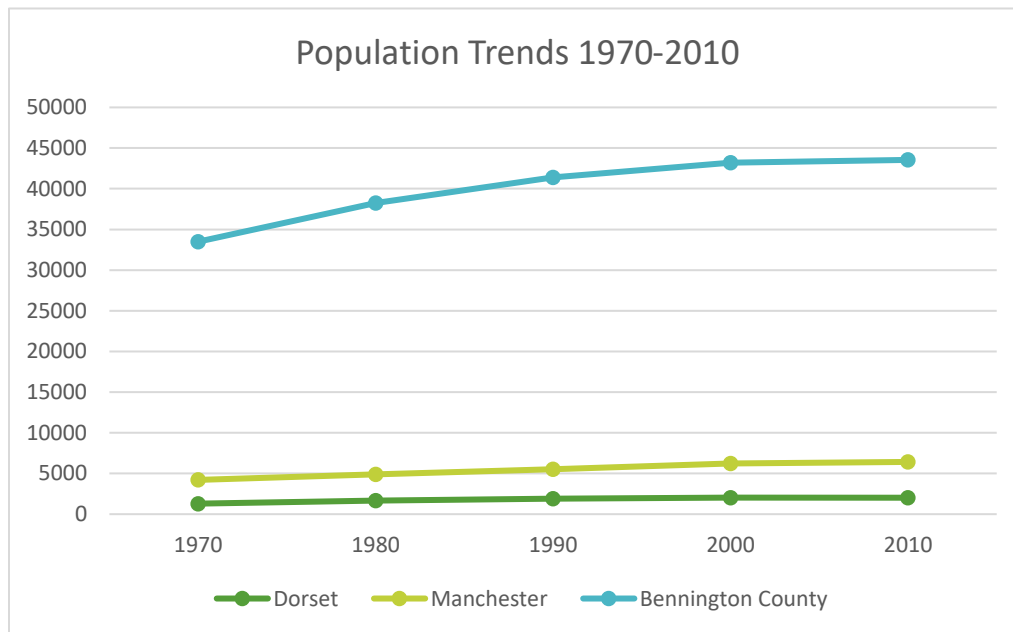


Figure 2

The population in Dorset was almost constant from 1930 to 1960, with substantial growth from 1970 to 2000. As detailed in the 2020 Dorset Town Plan, straight-line projection based on current population trends are possible: 2,026 for Dorset in 2020, at a projected growth rate of



-0.245% per decade (like 2000-2010 growth patterns) or 2,154 at a projected growth rate of 6.1% per decade (like 1990-2000 growth patterns).

According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 63% of homeowners in Dorset are 55 years of age or older. This trend, if continued, will impact the overall economy and development in Dorset. An older population also increases the need for increased pedestrian and bicycle safety in high-traffic areas. There are studies that suggest the region's population may increase due to climate change and public health. In order to accommodate a more diverse population, housing for working class people needs to be addressed and created for a sustainable future.

## Dorset Development Patterns

Dorset is a small, peaceful town in the southern county of Bennington, Vermont. There are over 100 commercial businesses in Dorset. 46 establishments provide professional and business services, leisure, and hospitality and financial activities. 32 establishments are in construction, manufacturing, and natural resources sectors. The town has two excellent schools, historical buildings, community engagement facilities and events, and publicly accessible natural resources. Dorset aims to maintain a safe, beautiful, and thriving community for both residents and visitors. The 2020 Dorset Town Plan goes into more specific detail regarding economic development in Dorset.

The natural resources in Dorset are a significant draw for new residents, real estate establishment, tourism, and economic growth. The scenic mountain vistas, diverse forests, historical quarries, and buildings all contribute to the overall attraction of Dorset living. Outdoor Recreation is an important part of the daily lives of Dorset residents and visitors. The health and wellness of the community is significantly impacted by the opportunities that people have to exercise and move outdoors. By expanding trails, connecting trails and pathways, creating safe roadside walkways, and partnering with other local stakeholders, the Outdoor Recreation Department will be playing a vital role in the health, both mental and physical, of the town. Studies find that living in a green environment has positive health effects like reducing levels of stress and increasing physical activity.

The simplest form of outdoor recreation, **walking**, has been shown to have many health benefits for older adults: managing weight; controlling blood pressure; decreasing risk of heart attack; boosting good cholesterol; lowering risk of stroke; reducing risk of breast cancer and Type 2 diabetes; avoiding need for gallstone surgery; protecting against hip fracture; preventing depression, colon cancer, constipation, osteoporosis, and impotence; lengthening lifespan; lowering stress levels; relieving arthritis and back pain; strengthening muscles, bones, and joints; improving sleep; and elevating overall mood and sense of well-being. (Godbey, G., 2009)

Spending time outdoors and amongst green spaces like parks and forests has positive mental and physical health benefits. As the survey for this Master Plan demonstrates, the community understands the importance of outdoor activity in promoting community health.

According to the Vermont Department of Health (2012), Bennington County was #10 of 14 counties in the ranking of Health Outcomes.

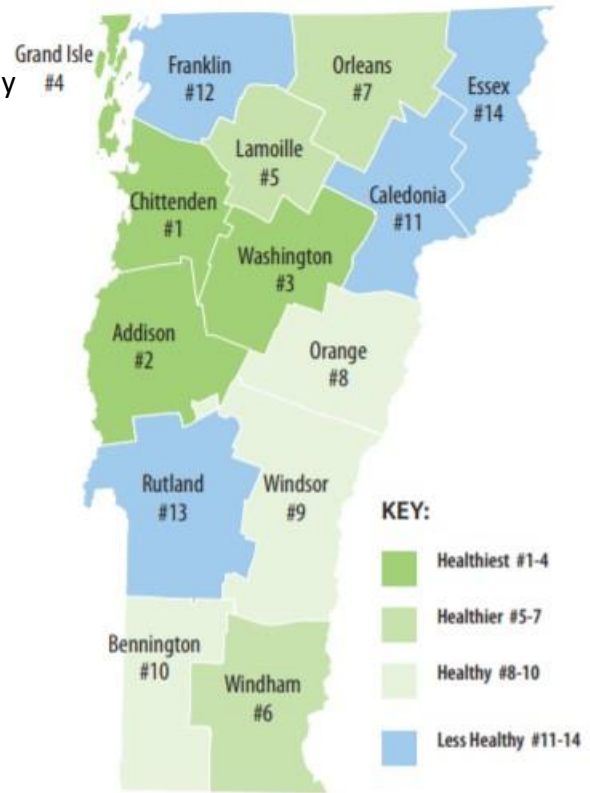
See Table 2 for more details. This Master Plan will outline future projects and programs that will directly affect the health of the community and county.

## Recreation Trends

The variety of outdoor recreation opportunities in Dorset are quite diverse. These include hiking, biking, horseback riding, roadside running, trail running, recreational vehicle driving, climbing, camping, birdwatching, wildlife photography, fishing, hunting, snow sports, swimming, and more. Tourism in Dorset is a vital part of the economic stability of the community and outdoor recreation activities are a significant draw for visitors. Expanding the Outdoor Recreation Department will not only give residents more resources to pursue their outdoor recreation activities of choice, but also increase tourism and economic growth.

For Dorset visitors looking for outdoor recreation activities, there is one private campground in Dorset that allows both RVs/Campers and tents. Merck Forest and Farm Center, 5 miles from the Dorset Green, offers \$5 nightly tent camping and \$50-\$70 nightly cabin rentals. Emerald Lake State Park has a campground open seasonally. Forest Service properties also have camping opportunities. Nightly stays at one of the hotels or inns in Dorset start at about \$200 and above.

Park lands and forests owned and managed by the town provide opportunities for programs for learning



**Health Outcome Rankings, by County**  
 Rankings are based on a combination of morbidity measures (poor or fair health, poor physical health days, poor mental health days, low birthweight) and mortality (premature death).

Table 2

County Health Rankings 2012 • data 2002-2010

**COVID-19 Pandemic:**  
 With the global pandemic in the forefront of 2020 public health priorities, consideration to how much outdoor recreation can positively impact local health is an important factor for the Master Plan.

and environmental stewardship. Programs started in 2020 were successful and more outdoor events and programs will be planned for 2021-2026 to meet the needs of the community. Unique conditions due to COVID-19 restrictions will heavily impact the group and community engagement events.

## Chapter 5

# NEEDS ASSESSMENT



View from Dorset Peak Fire Tower

Accurately assessing community needs is one of the fundamental parts of planning. Informed by data about the community based on previous sections of this document, timely and appropriate decisions need to be made about how to meet the Dorset community's needs. Demand is determined by various community input study methods and research. Supply is determined by policy guidance, available resources, department budget, and organizational structure.

## Needs Assessment Methods and Findings

The Master Plan for the Outdoor Recreation Department in Dorset required varied public input and gathering that input was the first priority of the process. The public input phase included the following:

- An accessible (both online and paper) survey
- Stakeholder interviews
- Stakeholder meetings
- Collaborative meetings with natural resource organizations
- UVM Town Forest Planning team support and mentorship
- Long Trail presentation for students and staff
- Long Trail student volunteer survey drive weekend
- Focus Group meetings
- Local Media interviews



With the COVID-19 pandemic regulations, limitations for interactions stalled many of the planned meetings and group events during this phase [after March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2020], but the study still gleaned a great deal of input and valuable community involvement. Stakeholder interviews, which followed a series of ten questions, served as a tool to develop in-person connections in Dorset and learn more about local needs in a one-on-one or small group setting. The interviews took approximately one hour per participant but longer when conducted in group settings (Dorset Historical Society and the Dorset Conservation Commission).

Informal Interview for Small Groups or Individuals  
Public Input Study 2020  
Master Plan: Outdoor Recreation  
Town of Dorset

- 1) All information about the individual(s):
  - a) Name
  - b) Age
  - c) Occupation
  - d) Time living in Dorset
  - e) Why do they live in Dorset? (Why did they move here if that is the case?)
- 2) How do you like to recreate?
- 3) How do you like to recreate in Dorset and the surrounding area?
- 4) What do you want for the future of Dorset?
- 5) How can Dorset's natural resources be utilized differently?
- 6) What do you think Dorset needs? Now and in the future?
- 7) How do you feel about visitors/tourists?
- 8) Why do tourists come here?
- 9) What do you think about the current demographics/diversity in Dorset? How can we increase diversity?
- 10) What else would you like to discuss?

Form 2

## Stakeholder Interviews and Meetings

Stakeholder and community input meetings were a vital part of the information gathering and perspective study of the needs in Dorset. Because the Department currently has only one year-

round employee, the Outdoor Recreation Director, all meetings were led and organized by them. The stakeholder meeting at Merck Forest and Farm Center with the full-time staff provided a platform of future partnership that will enable the Outdoor Recreation Department to gain more visibility with visitors at Merck and open up opportunities to collaborate on projects and programs. There were also several interviews with individual Merck employees to gather more insight and information. The stakeholder meeting with the Forest Service Recreation Department provided a solid base of understanding about budget limitations, land-use allowances, and how each organization can support the other going forward into the future.

The stakeholder meeting and interview with the Dorset Conservation Commission delved into very Dorset-specific property needs and concerns. Because of the increase in privately owned and posted properties throughout the town (both East and West sides of Dorset), it is essential that healthy relationships between local landowners and the town are fostered. The Conservation Commission includes local business owners and resource managers who have a long history of community involvement and outdoor recreation experience.

The stakeholder meeting and interview with NATS (Northshire Area Trail System) mountain biking group provided a biking-specific perspective on future trail extensions and developments in Dorset. The group has worked with the Forest Service to create more mountain biking trails in the area and will continue to work with them to expand the trail system. The group will also be working with the town to create bike trails in Owls Head Town Forest. The vitality of a successful collaboration with NATS is essential for the mountain biking community in Dorset.

In addition to all these community input study strategies, the Outdoor Recreation Director also met with UVM Outreach Forester in February 2020 at Hinesburg Town Forest (Hinesburg, VT) and in Dorset in March 2020 in order to gain insight on Town Forest planning and the overall process of creating a master plan. Kate Forrer, the Outreach agent, was able to provide mentorship, research data, and an in-depth planning toolkit created specifically for Vermont township planning. These resources are available at <https://vtcommunityforestry.org/>. After COVID-19 restrictions were enforced, a series of town forest and recreation planning webinars were created by UVM and Kate Forrer and the Outdoor Recreation Director participated in each webinar (3 total in June 2020).

## Community Input Survey

The community input survey was opened to the public on January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and kept open for response until March 10<sup>th</sup>. Signage was created and distributed throughout the community to maximize visibility. The link for the online form was available on the town website and social media accounts. Paper copies of the survey were also available in various locations throughout Dorset and East Dorset, to expand the accessibility of the survey to everyone. The survey was announced in the local newspaper and formally at the annual Town Meeting at the Dorset Village School. A survey drive was organized by the Outdoor Recreation Director and executed by energetic high school students from Long Trail School with great success. Each park land and forest in Dorset included signage for the survey. The Outdoor Recreation Director always kept paper copies of the survey and engaged in-person with hikers and recreators while working on various trails and land projects throughout the scope of the study. The following tables reflect the results from the survey. To see copy of survey questions, refer to page 8.

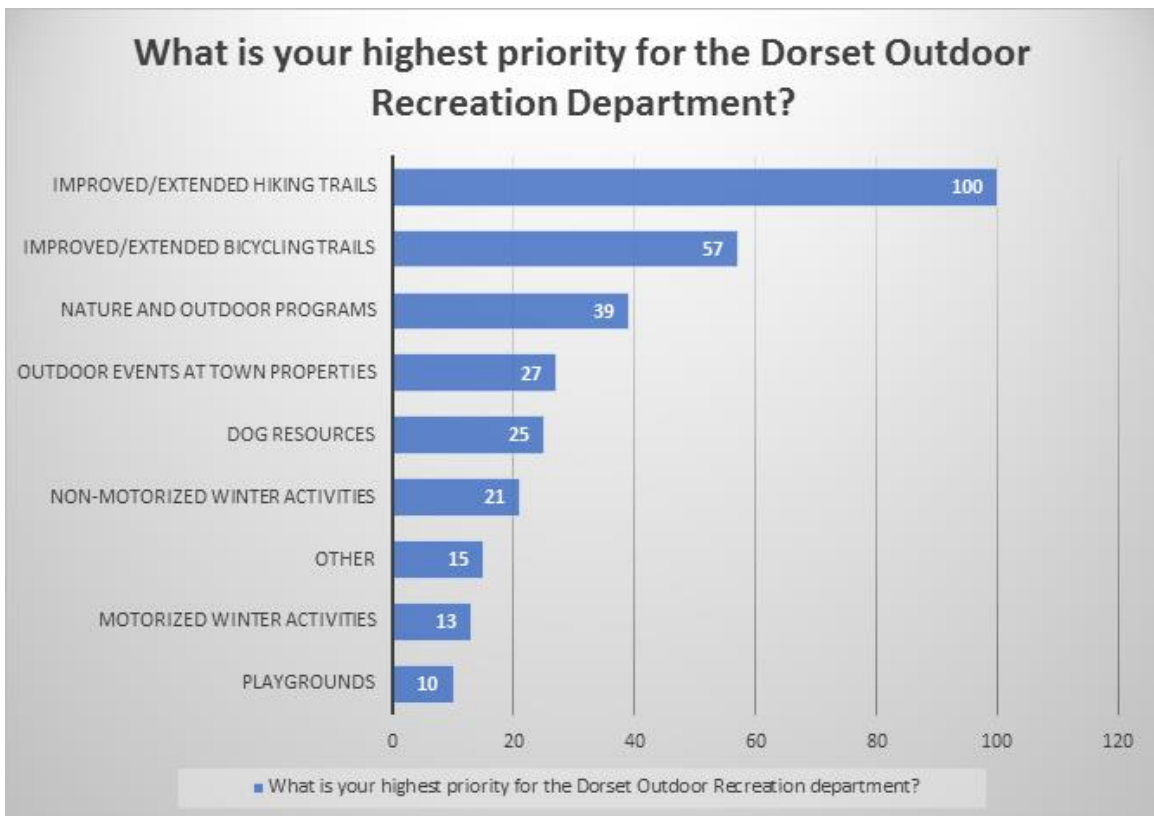


Table 3



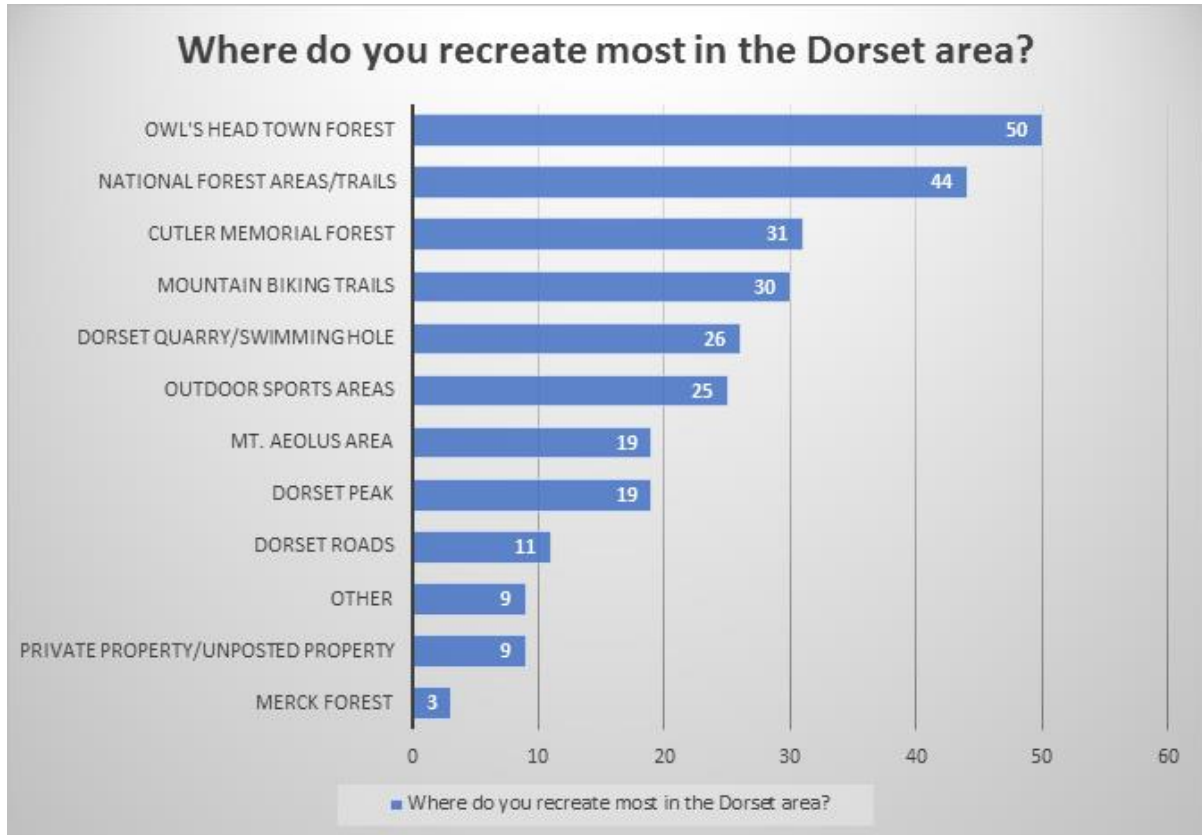


Table 4

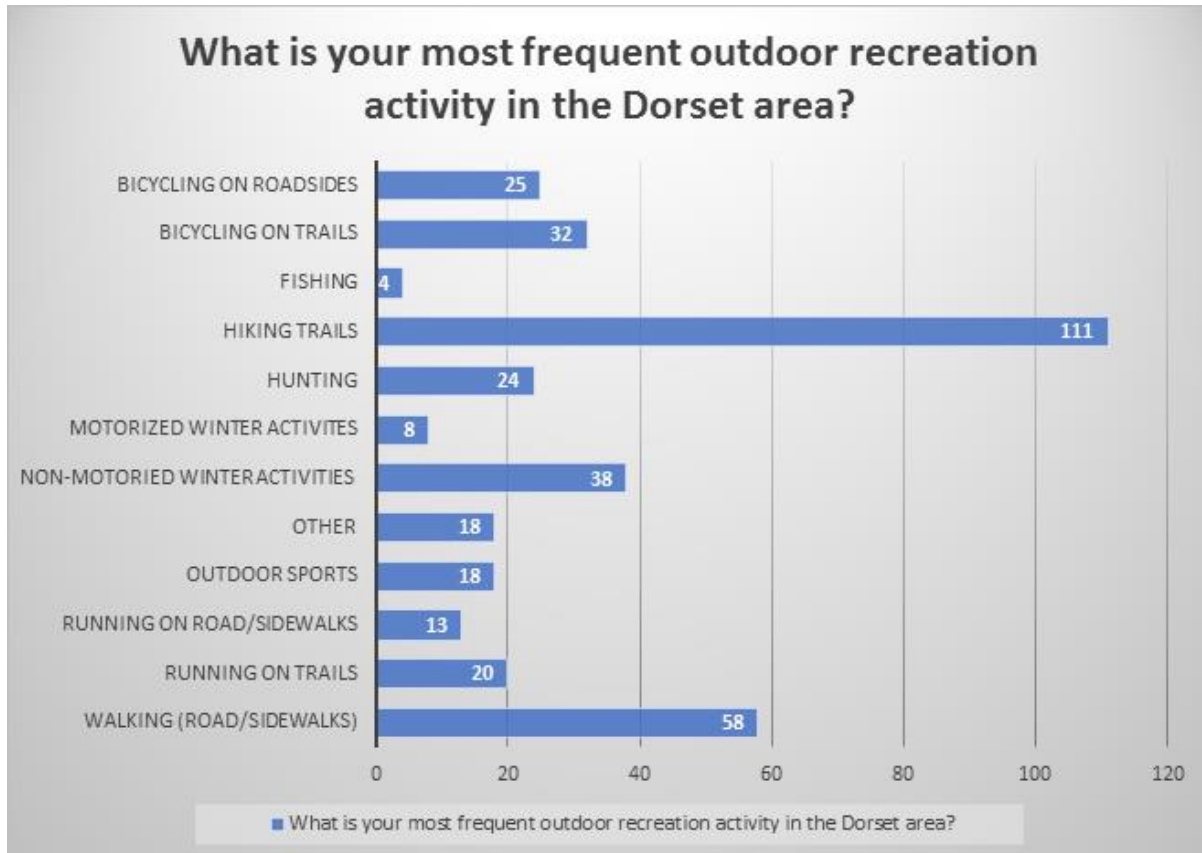


Table 5

Data Collected from 01/19/2020-03/10/2020  
Data Collected using Google Forms online and through paper surveys at the Dorset Community Library, Dorset Town Office, and H.N. Williams Store (Dorset)  
Total Respondents: 236  
Dorset Population (2018):  
2,031 Total Responses: 369 (Survey allowed multiple choice)  
Emails collected: YES

## Community Input Survey Results

Upon the closing of the survey, there were 236 respondents and 369 responses (multiple choice was allowed). The first question: What is your most frequent outdoor recreation activity in the Dorset area?

- 30% of responses were “Hiking Trails”
- 16% of responses were “Walking (Road/Sidewalks)”
- 15% of responses were “Biking on Roadsides” or “Biking on Trails”
- 10% of responses were “Non-Motorized Winter Activities”
- 6.5% of responses were “Hunting”

The second question: What is your highest priority for the Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department?

- 27% of responses were “Improved/Extended Hiking Trails”
- 15.5% of responses were “Improved/Extended Bicycling Trails”
- 11% of responses were “Nature and Outdoor Programs”
- 7% of responses were “Outdoor Events at Town Properties”

The third question: Where do you recreate most in the Dorset area?

- 13.5% of responses were “Owls Head Town Forest”
- 12% of responses were “National Forest Areas/Trails”
- 8.5% of responses were “Cutler Memorial Forest”
- 8% of responses were “Mountain Biking Trails”
- 7% of responses were “Dorset Quarry/Swimming Hole”
- 6.5% of responses were “Outdoor Sports Areas”

With 236 respondents out of a community of 2,031 people, the response rate was 11.6%, a very high rate for a small community. In comparison to other Master Plan Community Input surveys across the country, 200-300 respondents are average for towns or cities with over 30,000 residents. The high rate of survey responses reflects a community invested in their Outdoor Recreation Department and the future of outdoor recreation development in Dorset.

## Analysis of Written Responses in Survey



View from inside Pinnacle Tower

### Special Note:

**The responses from the 2020 survey were all collected before COVID-19 restrictions state and nationwide. Changes in outdoor recreation use increased heavily, part-time residents returned and stayed in Dorset longer, and lesser used park lands became much more popular and thus more hardened.**

**These special conditions will be considered in the recommendations of this Master Plan.**

There were 124 written responses to the survey: nearly half of the completed surveys. The last question of the survey was an optional written response section. 35.5% of the written responses were focused on extending, improving, and expanding the trail networks in the area. The comments reflected a need for more trails and more trail connectivity to make them longer and easier to access. In addition, there were quite a few responses that asked for connection between Dorset and Manchester that included multi-use travel between the towns that would include walking, running, bicycling, and non-motorized winter recreation. Throughout the written responses, there were concerns of signage and accessibility to information, maps, and locations.

17.7% of responses were focused on bike trails, road bike safety, and improving the mountain biking network in Dorset. 10% of written responses were focused on the Department providing more community events, educational programs, opportunities, and gatherings. The remaining 37.8% of the written survey responses were highly diverse, ranging from rock climbing to motorized recreation. Throughout the analysis of the written comments, the responses greatly matched the multiple-choice results from the previous questions in the survey. Trails (hiking, biking, and multi-use), programs, and non-motorized recreational pursuits stand out in the results. Many additional comments reflect a community desire to voice their desires for the future of outdoor recreation in Dorset. Every response was reviewed and important for the public input study. However, to succeed in completing projects on a realistic timeline, the most repeated and common suggestions and comments will be prioritized.

## Community Engagement Events & Meetings

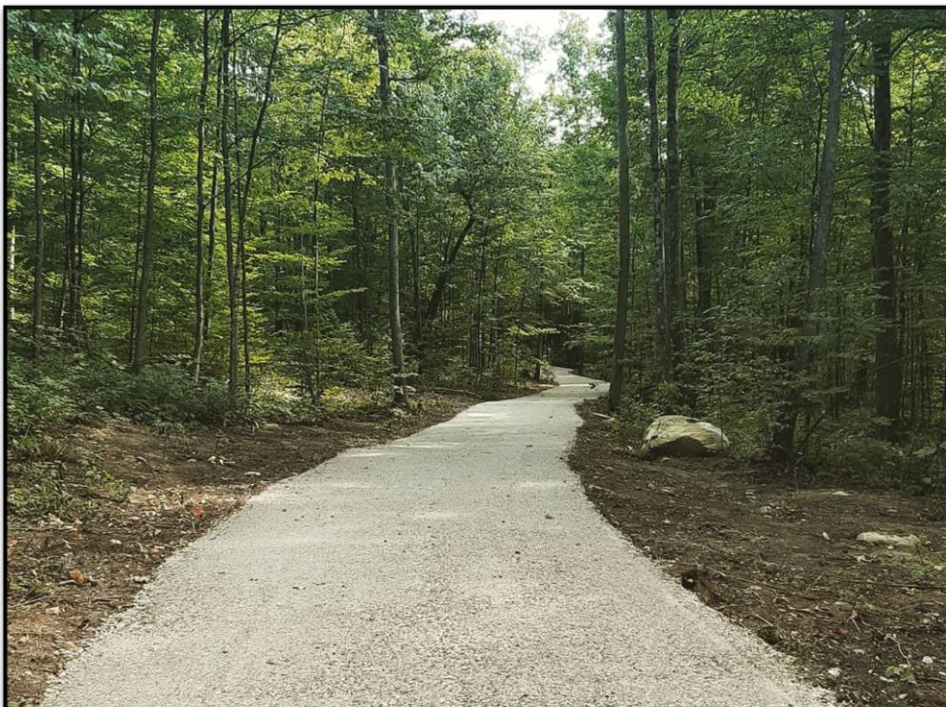
The main community engagement meeting was a public focus group meeting held on March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020. The meeting was held at the Dorset Village Library and included a large round-table discussion, lively debate on user group conflicts, engagement materials provided by the UVM Town Forest Planning resource bank, and future collaborative planning. Due to COVID-19 restrictions being enforced heavily within days of this meeting, the other large group meetings



planned for March and April were cancelled. The focus group meeting gleaned valuable community input and opinion, as well as a building block for the future Trails Association group.

As an alternative to large group community engagement events for public input, new strategies needed to be developed during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the most effective ways to gather community input for the future developments of the Outdoor Recreation Department was through in-person (social distanced) interactions at park lands and forests. The Outdoor Director, while conducting normal work on town lands, would engage in informal interviews and discussions with community members about their visions for Dorset and recreational needs. These discussions took place mainly between May-October 2020. Throughout these micro-engagements, most input was asking for more trail connectivity, better signage, and mountain biking trails. Community members who used trails in Dorset regularly (1 or more times a week), desired a wider network of trails. New users tended to want more information, maps, and online presence to find existing places to recreate. Older adults tended to focus more on accessible trails that were shorter and easier to traverse while younger adults and children asked about places to swim. Cutler Memorial Forest was the most heavily used during these informal engagement discussions, although Owls Head Town Forest was also a good place to safely engage with the public.

The consistency of response with in-person engagements, surveys, stakeholder interviews, and natural resource partner meetings has made prioritization for the 2021-2026 plan straightforward. In addition, direct and measurable hardening taking place at park land areas like Cutler and Owls Head shows that more infrastructure like picnic tables, a pavilion, and other facilities need to be built to reduce harmful hardening and keep the public safe during the pandemic health crisis.



Multi-use Path at  
Owls Head Town  
Forest opened  
summer 2020

PART TWO

**THE PLAN**



View Mother Myrick Mountain Looking Towards Owls Head

## Chapter 6

# COMMUNITY VISION AND GOALS

Through engaging in stakeholder interviews, public meetings, surveys, benchmark community analysis, and national trend research, the Dorset Outdoor Recreation Department has identified six goals that will advance the community needs. Chapter 6 will layout these goals and address how each will impact land use in Dorset, expanding out from town owned properties. The Master Plan will include suggestions for policy and long-range actions the Department should take to achieve these goals. To be successful, the Plan will need support and commitment from the Department, town, other government agencies, non-profit partners, local businesses, user groups, and the general population. The foundation of this new Outdoor Recreation program in Dorset is being built on the Department's mission. The Plan will be updated annually throughout the next 5 years to keep current with the needs of the community and within the scope of resources available to the Department.



## Dorset Outdoor Recreation Mission Statement

The Town of Dorset's Outdoor Recreation Department will provide services, resources, and programs necessary for the well-being of the community through the provision of green spaces, forests, trails, and a diverse range of recreational opportunities while working in cooperation with other service providers in the community.

## Master Plan Goals

Six goals emerged from the community input study and research process as the foundation for future action and decision-making for Dorset's Outdoor Recreation Department. This plan is unique as it is the first to be created for the newly formed Department. The six goals are:

- 1. Maintain Existing Park Lands, Forests, Trails, and Facilities**
- 2. Expand Town Trail System to Improve Connectivity and Provide More Opportunities for Recreation**
- 3. Provide High-Quality Programs, Events, and Recreational Opportunities**
- 4. Continue to Improve the Infrastructure, Facilities, Signage, and Maps for Recreation Users in Dorset**
- 5. Follow the Community Forest Management Plan and Design and Execute Proper Invasive Species Control in Town Forests**
- 6. Be Responsive to Development and Redevelopment Opportunities that enhance the System**



These goals align with the overall scope of the Outdoor Recreation Department and the mission, making the goals relevant to the Department in executing its purposes for the community. Community, stakeholder, and partner organization collaboration are key for implementation and the success of this Master Plan.



Kiosk at the Dorset Hill Road Parking Area in East Dorset

## Goal #1: Maintain Existing Park Lands, Forests, Trails, and Facilities

### Description

The maintenance of existing trails, forests, facilities, and lands was an important value of stakeholders and the public. According to both the stakeholder interviews and the community survey, the continued improvement and maintenance of existing recreation in Dorset should be a high priority for the Department.

### Priorities

Town owned and managed properties are the top priority for continued maintenance and quality for the Department. However, the Department supports other partners in Dorset like the Nature Conservancy, GMNF, Vermont Land Trust, and the Vermont Department of Forest, Parks and Recreation to help provide the best possible outdoor recreation opportunities in Dorset. In 2020, the Outdoor Recreation Director helped to create quality hiking maps for Nature Conservancy properties at Folsom Quarry and Mother Myrick. In addition, they flagged the trails to ensure a safer hiking experience to users in the area. The Dorset Peak Trail, a heavily used trail with no signage or blazing, was also blazed in 2020 by the Department to help facilitate safe hiking experiences.



## Cutler Memorial Forest

- Ongoing boardwalk and bridge repairs and replacements
- Ongoing drainage and ditch repairs to protect soil and retain trail quality along with general trail maintenance/clearing regularly
- Picnic Tables and seating in safe distance for COVID and areas for swimming and picnicking



## Pinnacle Forest

- Ongoing summer mowing on Yellow Trail, sections of the Blue Trail, and around the tower
- Ongoing trail maintenance, widening, and observations
- Continued vista pruning and cutting for the two main viewpoints on the top of the hill, around the tower



## Owls Head Town Forest

- Annual drainage repairs along the Yellow and Blue trails due to slope of trails and according to the Forest Management Plan
- Ongoing trail maintenance, widening, trail checks, repairs, re-routes
- Continued vista pruning and cutting for the main viewpoints



## Raptor Lane Town Property

- Ongoing trail maintenance, widening, trail checks, repairs, and re-routes
- Continued mowing of Pond Trail section
- Continued monitoring of needs and scoping for future trails



## Freedley Quarry

- Monitor Class 4 Roadway to Quarry (town-owned)
- Continue cleaning up excessive litter at quarry and in the parking area by creating Adopt-a-Trail program and recruiting volunteers as in 2019/2020
- Collaboration with Forest Service to create gate to protect land



As seen in the previous table, each town-owned property has annual and regular maintenance prioritized for the next five years to continue providing the best resources for the people of Dorset. Because the Department currently only employs one year-round staff member, ongoing maintenance depends heavily on volunteers and community engagement events.

Recommended Strategies include:

- Continue promoting and recruiting community volunteers
- Continue the formation of the Trails Association and Adopt-a-Trail program for consistent volunteer network support
- Allocating an appropriate percentage of the yearly budget to maintaining and purchasing the necessary tools and machines to perform work efficiently
- Hiring dependable, reliable, and flexible seasonal staff members who are trained or easily trainable for all projects planned
- Planning seasonal staff work accordingly to maximize the work done under a limited schedule
- Continue promoting projects, fundraisers, and volunteer opportunities on social media and the town website
- Continue utilizing the Conservation Commission's community knowledge and insight to maximize the resources available to the Department
- Changing the Outdoor Recreation Director position from part-time to full-time to maximize professional presence, efficiency, and future developmental success
- Utilize best recreational work practices for long-term results in keeping maintenance costs and time most efficient
- Utilize acceptable natural management
- Continue promoting educational collaboration with organizations who can provide valuable skills to the staff and volunteers in the Department
- Continue working with the Long Trail School to promote student involvement in community enriching outdoor management projects
- Continue implementing COVID-19 safe procedures and policies for public and staff safety
- Continue utilizing flexible work planning that can adapt to changes in weather, volunteer availability, staff resources, and changing priorities
- Continue promoting community awareness on public safety, like leash policies at park lands and group hiking sizes
- Connect trails on private ownerships

## Goal #2: Expand Town Trail System to Improve Connectivity and Provide More Opportunities for Recreation

### Description

The outstanding responses to the community input survey and community engagement events reflected a strong desire for more trails (biking, hiking, and recreational vehicle) in the Dorset area. In addition to more trails, there was also a high percentage of responses asking for more connectivity amongst the established trail networks. Due to the popularity of roadside walking in Dorset, there is also a need for public walkways that would provide right of way and safety for pedestrians. In early response to these results, trail expansions have already been started in 2020. A new multi-use trail was built at Owls Head Town Forest (0.5 miles) and is primed for expansion once funds are obtained. JK Adams, a company in Dorset owned by Malcolm Cooper, has supported adding trails to connect to the Raptor Lane Town Property. Two new trails were built in 2020 that connect the JK Adams public parking area to the Raptor Lane Town Property: The Pond Trail and the Lovers Lane Trail, both on the updated hiking maps for Dorset. In addition, another trail was built by a VYCC Crew in July called Hawks Pass. The Hawks Pass trail includes a brand-new parking lot, trailhead kiosk, signage, and 0.5 miles of excellent trail that leads directly from the new trailhead to Owls Head Town Forest. All this work was done in response to the needs of the community and with the available resources provided through the Outdoor Recreation Department and Town of Dorset.

### Priorities

Trail expansion in Dorset is a complex goal due to the fragmentation of town properties, percentage of land on Forest Service or Nature Conservancy lands, and privately owned parcels that need property owner permissions to develop trails on. Building new trails also require environmental assessments, route planning, route development, and work hours and resources to physically build. Beyond that, maps need to be created and published, signage needs to be installed, parking determined, and trails maintained.

Recommended Strategies include:

- Building relationships with private landowners and obtaining permission to build trails or connect trails on private plots
- Planning routes for new trails in collaboration with the NATS mountain biking group and other experienced mountain bikers
- Planning routes for new trails during the winter and off-season to maximize efficiency during peak trail building season [summer to autumn]

- Working with the Forest Service and Nature Conservancy to repair existing trails and build new trails by planning and proposing trails for Ranger approval and support
- Continue the formation of the Trails Association and Adopt-a-Trail program for consistent volunteer network support
- Creating prioritization list of properties that need more trails or can best accommodate trail expansions
- Working with private landowners to obtain permission to utilize historic rights-of-way or access to Class 4 roads or town owned trails that go through private/posted properties
- Working with land managers in Dorset who have successfully managed private parcels and can facilitate successful land use agreements
- Continue to use best recreation work practices to build the most sustainable, long-lasting, and environmentally sound trails possible
- Continue to build trails that are multi-use and can accommodate different recreation users
- Continue to explore the possibilities of developing pathways alongside busy roadsides (Rt 30)
- Explore trail extension from the Manchester Rail Trail to the Dorset Village School
- Collaborating with natural resource partners and stakeholders to create realistic projects in cohesion with organization priorities
- Explore the possibility of building a boardwalk wildlife trail at the Dorset Marsh
- Continue working with VYCC crews to build new trails planned and plotted by the Outdoor Recreation Director



Volunteer helping to build Pond Trail at Raptor Lane



Kiosk and bridge built for the new Hawks Pass trail at Raptor Lane





### Cutler Memorial Forest

- Potential new river walk trail along the Mettawee to connect to the main Orange loop trail
- New large bridge to connect river trail to main trail (would need permit)
- Update Trail map with all additions



### Pinnacle Forest

- Potential connection trail from Pinnacle to the Hollow the town owned cooridor
- Cooperation with local landowners to provide access to Pinnacle via the Dorset Green



### Owls Head Town Forest

- Mountain Biking trail for young bikers planned by NATS to be built
- Mountain Biking trails for intermediate-advanced riders to be planned and built in forthcoming years
- Fully planned and partly completed re-route trail from the blue trail to the Gilbert Lookout for VYCC planned 2021/2022



### Raptor Lane Town Property

- Scope out more areas for potential trails
- Scope out possibilities for biking trails
- Route trails according to the environmental assessments done for Raptor Lane's Master Plan



### Freedley Quarry

- Mapping of Class 4 trails accessible for recreation vehicles
- Maps for recreation vehicles available to users online
- Collaboration with Forest Service to create gate to protect land and prevent illegal use of Forest Service property and potential repair of existing trail from Freedley to Dorset Peak (and beyond)

## Goal #3: Provide High Quality Programs, Events, and Recreation Opportunities

### Description

Since the Department was created in the autumn of 2019, there have been a variety of programs offered for the public. However, because of COVID-19 restrictions, programs planned from March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2020 were limited or cancelled due to the pandemic. In September (2020), a series of small, safe, and socially distanced programs began in partnership with the Dorset Village Library. Looking ahead with COVID under consideration, programs will be planned with the library, Long Trail School, Merck Forest, and independently as a Department with flexibility. The community input study reflected a high percentage of respondents asking for more programming and community events through the Outdoor Recreation Department. Events like community picnics, volunteer days, film festivals, potlucks, group hikes, and such are tentative to public health and Vermont state regulations concerning COVID-19. Under a positive outlook, 2021-2026 will include the Department holding events and providing excellent outdoor education programs for all ages.

### Priorities

Participation in the programs in 2020 was moderate and social media postings, word of mouth, and posters helped to boost community participation. Under the strict and unforeseen regulations in place due to a worldwide pandemic, the main priority is public health and wellness. Once COVID restrictions are lifted throughout the state of Vermont, more arduous communication of events and programs will be implemented, and surveys conducted to determine what the community specifically wants and what days and times are best for the majority of respondents.

Recommended Strategies include:

- Working with organizations like Merck Forest, the Dorset Library, the Dorset Historical Society, and others to collaborate to create events and programs for the public
- Working with local schools to create educational programs that are field based and hosted at town properties
- Working with local schools to create educational programs that bring outdoor stewardship, wildlife and environmental science, and other related subjects into classrooms
- Organizing and strategically advertising community events that include film nights, picnics, potlucks, litter clean up, trail work, volunteer efforts, and other community building activities for Dorset

- Building and creating interactive trails or adding interactive participation to existing trails (silviculture/forestry, Dorset history, Pinnacle history, Quarry history, natural sciences, botany, birding, etc.)
- Creating, distributing, and assessing community input on programs and events through surveys and community engagement focus groups and events
- Creating social distance safe, COVID regulation programs until pandemic crisis restrictions are lifted statewide

## Goal #4: Continue to Improve the Infrastructure, Facilities, Signage, and Maps for Recreation Users in Dorset



Kiosks at Cutler and Pinnacle



### Description

Preliminary action to the Master Plan creation process included an incredibly detailed assessment of the town properties, Dorset natural resource organizations, Forest Service properties, Nature Conservancy properties, outdoor recreation areas, forests, and existing facilities and infrastructure. Immediate needs included trail clearing, bridge repairs and replacement, drainage repairs, signage replacements and updates, map making and design for each property, property literature creation, online map publication, Google map point publications, public engagement, town-insight research, stakeholder enrichment, and professional networking. These activities were essential in creating the background needed for the Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan.

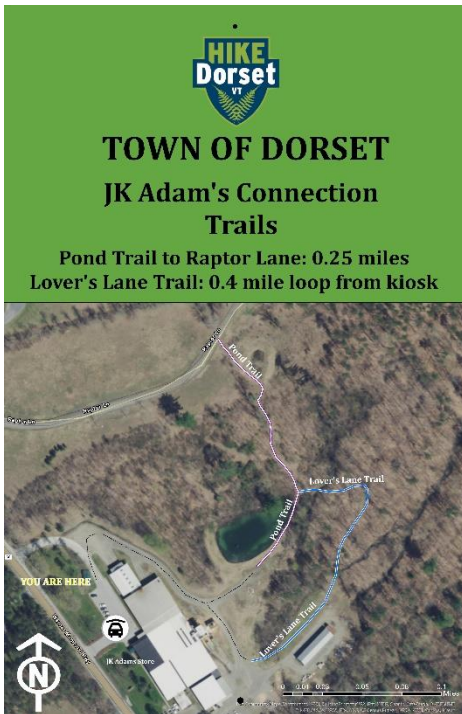
### Priorities

Between the assessments done throughout the background research process and the results from the community input study, there was a clear need for maps, signage, improved facilities, and added infrastructure. Immediate action was taken, and the suggestions outlined in this Master Plan reflect the additional needs Dorset has for the best possible Outdoor Recreation Department and resource allocation.



Recommended Strategies include:

- Continue improving trail signage and blazing for user safety
- Place signage on Peace St and Pinnacle Lane to improve visibility and awareness of Cutler Memorial Forest and Pinnacle Forest
- Eventually replace the current roadside signage for Raptor Lane Town Property with a larger, more permanent sign to indicate location
- Design and build pavilion at Raptor Lane Town Property for wide variety of activities from picnics, small gatherings, film showings, programming, educational events, fundraising, and other purposes
- Build and place more picnic tables at various locations (depending on need and social distancing regulations)
- Create an informational kiosk at the Norcross Quarry for the high volume of visitors to have alternative places to recreate while in Dorset
- Improve the access to Class 4 Road/Trails within Dorset for recreational vehicle users by creating maps that would be easily available online
- Consistent assessment of needs throughout the recreations system to best serve the community
- Supporting other organizations in appropriate projects that would improve Outdoor Recreation for the Dorset community
- Supporting community groups and/or projects that would improve Outdoor Recreation for the Dorset community
- Add more trail information signage where appropriate depending on need
- Work with volunteer group to build and maintain an outdoor ice-skating rink at the East Dorset town office park for 2020/2021 (sign-up requirements due to COVID-19 restrictions)

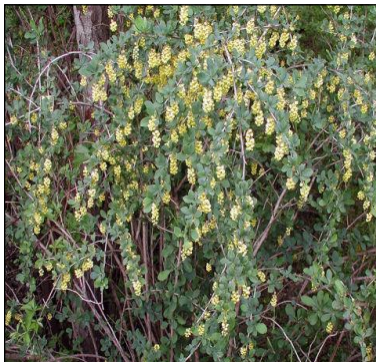


## Goal #5: Follow the Community Forest Management Plan and Design and Execute Proper Invasive Species Control in Town Forests

### Description



Bush Honeysuckle



Common Barberry



Common Buckthorn

In 2017, a forest management plan was created for Owls Head Town Forest. The plan outlines the recreation, education, ecologic, historic, and silviculture resources of the property. The plan also recommends the management actions for the property. In order to manage Owls Head, Raptor Lane, Cutler, and Pinnacle, proper action must be taken. Although there are not land management plans officially created for the other town properties, smaller scale management planning should be implemented to best protect the natural resources in Dorset. Unofficial plans were made for Pinnacle and Cutler, but they were not published and need to be revised and updated. Non-native, invasive species in all properties are a large concern for the overall health of the forest ecosystems, both present and future. A good example of proper invasive management set by the Town will also provide living education to Dorset residents with private property.

### Priorities

As stated in the description, non-native invasive encroachment is a large problem taking over southern Vermont forests. In Dorset, invasive species that are prevalent include, but are not limited to, common buckthorn, honeysuckle, Japanese barberry, common barberry, burning bush, bittersweet, and autumn olive. Other management policies include limiting public access to sensitive or rare ecosystem areas, proper trail building to protect wildlife and water-areas, and monitoring of high-impact quarry areas to protect from damage and vandalism. In spring 2020, there were several acts of vandalism on Town owned properties, most likely due to COVID-19. Freedley Quarry experiences high rates of vandalism, spray painting, littering, and environmental abuse. All

areas that are accessed with recreational vehicle users experience higher rates of environmental abuse and vandalism. In order to reduce instances of vandalism and damage, action should be taken.

Recommended Strategies include:

- The Outdoor Recreation Director to obtain their Forest and CORE applicator licenses through the state of Vermont in 2021
- Host volunteer events for invasive control management
- Host educational programs in the field to teach about invasive identification and damages
- Change the Outdoor Recreation Director position from part-time to full-time to accommodate the increase in responsibilities due to invasive control and environmental damage
- Hire part-time/seasonal staff during the busy summer season to enable more work to be done each year in response to the needs in Dorset
- Follow the plan outlined by Calfee Woodland Management for Owls Head Town Forest
- Review and update the plans for Pinnacle and Cutler Forests for proper environmental management
- Monitor the rate of species spread and success of control methods annually to plan for subsequent years of invasive management
- Use proper and effective signage to inform users of the allowed means of recreation in all properties
- Support other organizations like GMNF, the Nature Conservancy, the Vermont Land Trust, and other natural resource management stakeholders in upholding high standards of environmental protection
- Provide educational resources for private citizens to learn more about property management, environmental sustainability, diverse land use tactics, and ecosystem protection
- Ensure that all new trails built, both biking and hiking, are built using best practices to protect all ecosystems, wildlife, and watersheds
- Utilize social media influence to encourage environmental stewardship to recreators in Dorset
- Practice smart signage (or NO signage) near sensitive ecosystems to help reduce improper access, camping, fires, and other damaging human behaviors



## Goal #6: Be Responsive to Development and Redevelopment Opportunities that enhance the System

### Description



View from Pinnacle Tower

The Town of Dorset is creating this Master Plan in order to maximize the effectiveness of the Outdoor Recreation Department. According to the community input study conducted, residents of Dorset want more recreation opportunities and an expansion of the program throughout the community. However, this will require more staff, volunteer, and stakeholder partnership work going forward. Trail building is both expensive and resource demanding. Map creation and signage design and installation also require time and resources. As COVID-19 restrictions and conditions remain in place and with an unknown future ahead for United States citizens as a whole, public health is the most important concern in the nation. With so many limitations for recreation and leisure, outdoor recreation is projected to continue growing in popularity in 2021 and beyond. In 2020 alone, the amount of recreation and public land use in Dorset changed dramatically and management needs have expanded. As the Master Plan is reviewed and considered annually these next five years, changes will be made to accommodate an ever-evolving community.

### Priorities



Mettawee River at Cutler

In order to keep the Master Plan relevant to the needs of the community, more community input will be necessary. With the unique social limitations of the current pandemic, in-person meetings may or not be possible in the next few years, so virtual meetings will be necessary until things change. Surveys can be made and distributed online, which is the most effective method regardless of national health. In addition to community input, consistent Departmental review and program monitoring will be essential to maintaining the best possible standards. The creation of the Trails Association will also give the Department a strong group of dedicated people who can support projects and open up more project possibilities. As the Association forms and grows, more opportunities for outdoor recreation in Dorset will arise.

## Conclusion

The six goals presented in this chapter provide a framework for addressing the needs of the Outdoor Recreation Department for the Town of Dorset that is informed by community input and overall community planning guidance. Monitoring the effectiveness of the policies and long-term goals is important to the success of the Department, and efforts to evaluate implementation should be rooted in quality data. Combined with the ongoing involvement of the Selectboard, Conservation Commission, stakeholders, and the community at large, the Department’s policy framework and action plan can be adjusted on a regular basis to ensure the continued provision of quality facilities and services.



Photo from Gilbert Lookout in Owls Head Town Forest

# Chapter 7

## FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK

### Introduction

The Outdoor Recreation Department for the town of Dorset is a very new Department that has formed out of a need for more structured management of outdoor recreation in Dorset. The Department budget is determined by the Selectboard. With a limited budget, the Department needs additional donation support in order to provide everything outlined in this Master Plan. Fundraising, private donations, and community group funding efforts will all be valuable ways to raise money for important trail projects, facilities, programs, and other outdoor recreation activities for the town residents. In addition, grant programs and applications through the state of Vermont can also open up doors for further recreational development in the area.

### Implications for the Outdoor Recreation Master Plan

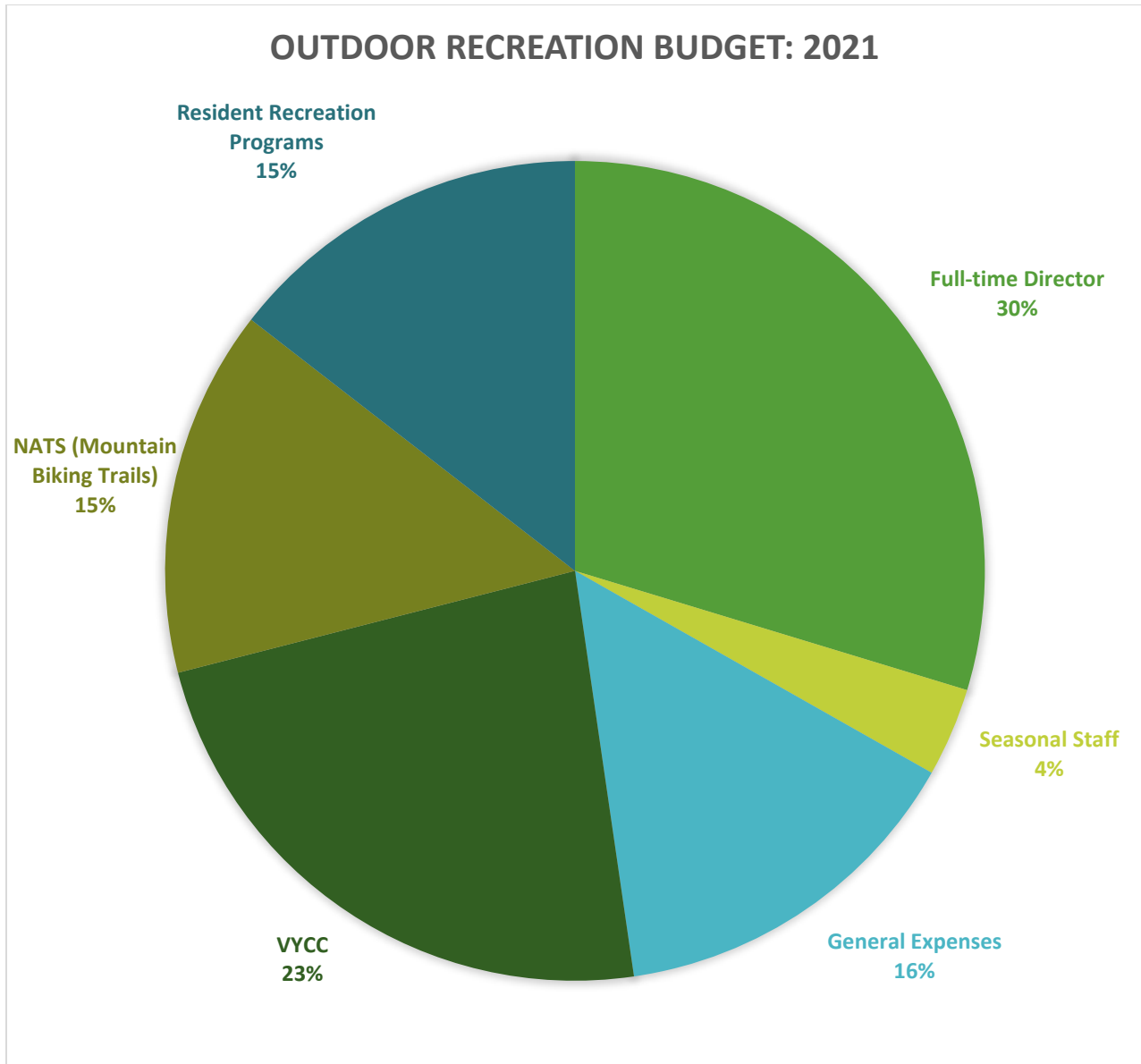
Funding for the Department is primarily through tax revenue, private donations, stakeholder donations, and low-cost land acquisition opportunities (i.e., Raptor Lane). In order to accommodate a growing Department and succeed in creating more recreational opportunities in Dorset, more funding will need to be acquired through:

- Private donations
- Fundraisers
- Community Group Funding Events
- Grant Programs
- State Funding Opportunities
- Stakeholder Support

Projects, new trails, trail improvements, and other Departmental programs must be strategically prioritized and completed

The Projection Budget for 2021 for the Outdoor Recreation Department and programs is a total of \$172,000. See figure below for a breakdown of the funds:





\*This budget is Selectboard approved and now pending 2021 Town Meeting vote

Figure 3\*

With COVID-19 restrictions unknown for summer 2021, the VYCC percentage of funding of 23% could be impacted due to limitations of crews. In 2020, for example, the VYCC program provided a 4-person crew for 3 weeks, which reduced the planned spending projected for 2020 VYCC. This is a possibility for 2021 as well. In the event that VYCC funding is changed to a lower percentage, the seasonal staff budget could increase in order to complete outstanding trail construction work. Strategies for revising the budget will always be in motion as COVID-19 restrictions keep the future unknown for programs like VYCC and community events.

In 2020 there has been a photo contest to calendar fundraiser that involves collecting donations for future trail development in Dorset. Those who donate for this fundraiser will receive an 8.5x11 calendar featuring the winners of the 2021 Hike Dorset Photo Contest.



Cover Photo for the 2021 Hike Dorset Fundraiser Calendar. Taken at Gettysburg Quarry in Owls Head Town Forest

## Chapter 8

# IMPLEMENTATION

### Moving Forward

With the acceptance of this Master Plan, the Outdoor Recreation Department commits to the goals, policies, actions, and initiatives contained herein. The Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan identifies the goals that the Department will use for implementation of an annual “strategic action” planning process that will be an integral part of the annual work plan and budgeting process. With this master plan as a guide, the Department’s strategic action planning process includes:

- Reviewing potential initiatives for the next five years
- Developing an evolving action plan
- Establishing a deliberate, planned annual process of evaluating the current year's action plan with updated planning for the following years

This approach is adopted to ensure that the Town of Dorset's Outdoor Recreation Department Master Plan is a living document that does not sit on a shelf but instead is actively used to improve the overall system that reflects the stated goals of the community well into the future.

## The Annual Action Planning Process

The action planning process is simple in its approach. The purpose of this deliberate process, which begins prior to budget formation and in concert with the Selectboard, is to make mid-course adjustments in a yearly action plan in order to make the most effective use of resources that meet community need. The Annual Action Planning Process is depicted in Figure 4 and includes the following:

- Review the Master Plan
- Review current year Action Plan and update status
- Update the Needs Assessment, including review of local participation and population data, national recreation and park trends, findings from community engagement, levels of service, and the next year of the Action Plan
- Develop and secure approval of next year Action Plan in tandem with budget request to the town
- Implement Action Plan

The Action Plan presentations will take place at the end of the year Selectboard Meeting in December of each year from 2021 to 2024. These will also be a tool of yearly review of actions taken place, program development, and Departmental successes and challenges. With an unknown future in public health and engagement, new ways of managing public properties for optimal recreation use is essential going forward.





Figure 4

## Conclusion

The framework for facility, trail, forest, park, and program improvements will be directly tied to increases in funding. The constrained plan includes some upgrades to existing parks and additions like the pavilion at Raptor Lane and interactive trails with signage at Cutler and Pinnacle. The forecast for programs and events is unclear in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the constrained plan, ensuring that resources are directed toward the programs of highest community benefit is paramount. The Department will make trade-offs between current programs to develop new ones and enhance programming that aligns with community priorities. Action and Vision Alternatives demonstrate a greater change in programs and services to meet community needs. Alternative funding sources allow for broader participation and increased levels of service. The Action Plan is simply the implementation strategies and plans put into action with actual additions to the recreation system in Dorset. This includes building new trails, improving existing trails, building new infrastructures, creating programs for children and adults, and developing ways to incorporate community support in both financial and physical involvement.

# Chapter 9

## YEAR IN REVIEW: 2020

From October 2019 throughout the year of 2020, the first full year of the new Outdoor Recreation Department in Dorset, there was a great deal of work accomplished. With only one year-round employee working part-time, the Department has extraordinary room for growth and expansion in the coming years. Work accomplished from October 2019 to December 2020 include (but are not limited to):

- All town-owned property trails were maintained, widened, and repaired as needed throughout the seasons
- All town-owned property trails were mapped and transcribed into usable maps on signage for each park and/or forest AND available online on the dorsetvt.org website
- All town-owned properties were given kiosk updates to improve signage and maps for visitors
- Three new kiosks were built (by the Outdoor Recreation Director) at Raptor Lane Town Property, JK Adams Kitchen Store parking area for the new connection trails, and the parking area at Dorset Hill Road leading to Freedley Quarry and Folsom/Bat Cave/Aeolus Mountain
- New brochures were designed and distributed to appropriate properties and widely used by visitors
- A new trail was planned and mapped for building by the Outdoor Recreation Director at Raptor Town Property: Hawk's Pass Trail
- Hawk's Pass Trail, a 0.5-mile connection trail from Raptor Lane Town Property to Owls Head Town Forest, was built by a VYCC crew in July of 2020
- The Outdoor Director built a new bridge on Hawk's Pass Trail post-completion and created clear signage for the parking area and trailhead

- In support of other natural resource management stakeholders in Dorset, the town helped support re-blazing trails on Nature Conservancy and GMNF properties for hiker safety and enjoyment
- In support of other natural resource management stakeholders in Dorset, the town created clear hiking maps for areas previously unmapped and posted these maps on the town website for hiker safety and enjoyment
- In support of other natural resource management stakeholders in Dorset, the town worked with NATS mountain biking group to open up trail opportunities in Owls Head Town Forest for 2021-beyond
- In collaboration with JK Adams and Malcolm Cooper, the town planned two new trails to connect JK Adams public parking with the Raptor Lane Town Property
- Two new trails were built and completed by the Outdoor Recreation Director, volunteers, and a seasonal part-time employee connecting JK Adams and Raptor Lane Town Property: Pond Trail and Lovers Lane Trail
- A new trail was blazed and marked at Cutler Memorial Forest along the river past the main bridge after the huge increase in users in 2020
- A complete community input study and Master Plan was organized, arranged, managed, and executed with the leadership of the Outdoor Recreation Director for 2021-2026
- Natural education programs were and hosted by the Department at Cutler Memorial Forest, Pinnacle Forest, and the Dorset Village Library focusing on Tree Identification, using I-Naturalist, fungi in forest ecosystems, leaf abscission, winter animal tracks, and using GIS maps with Caltopo on smart phones
- Over 100 hours of volunteer work was recruited and conducted from October 2019 to December 2020 by volunteers from Dorset and the greater Bennington county area under the supervision of the Outdoor Recreation Director
- New drainage and rock work for trail repairs and erosion-prevention were installed at Cutler Memorial Forest, eliminating the water and soil damage that had been a long-term problem at the park
- All drainage and water-bars on the trails at Owls Head Town Forest were cleaned, repaired, and improved in order to reduce the soil erosion and damage on the older, steep trails at the forest



- New historical signage was designed and installed at Owls Head Town Forest to highlight the history of the area and educate visitors
- New signage was installed at Raptor Lane Town Property along RT 30 and along the road to the new trailhead at Hawk's Pass Trail
- 16 new boardwalk bridges were built (234.5 feet of bridges in total) at Cutler Memorial Forest to replace old and rotting bridges. The remaining 6 boardwalk bridges were repaired as needed to make the trails safe and accessible to all visitors (42.5 feet of bridge repairs in total). All work completed by the Outdoor Recreation Director and volunteers
- All town-owned properties had signage posts and COVID-19 regulations installed in order to keep the public safe and informed so that trails and parks could stay open during the pandemic
- New trails and trail extensions have been planned and/or mapped for future development in the Dorset area
- Vital relationships have been fostered between the fledgling Outdoor Recreation Department and stakeholders in the Dorset area
- A new multi-use trail was built in 2020 in Owls Head Town Forest and will be maintained by the Outdoor Recreation Department (and hopefully extended pending available funding)
- Began a new Hike Dorset Trails Association with 6 current members and developing a brand-new group to help support the trail systems in Dorset and increase volunteer and community engagement
- Created and managed an Instagram account for @hikedorset with 600 followers (and growing) to enhance program visibility and increase ways for user communication with the Department
- Created and managed a photography contest for a 2021 Hike Dorset calendar for fundraising for future trails in Dorset

- Created and designed a calendar with the winning photographs from the 2021 Hike Dorset calendar contest for printing and distribution-along with marketing for the fundraiser
- 2021 Hike Dorset Calendar fundraiser is currently (as of mid-December 2020) in action and collecting donations for the program
- Limited vista pruning for Pinnacle Tower viewpoint along with mowing around the tower was all completed throughout the mowing season
- Vital trail repairs along the blue trail to Gilbert Lookout at Owls Head was completed and new stone steps installed at this repair area (switchback at 0.5 miles to lookout)
- New stone steps installed at Cutler Memorial Forest along the blue trail (previously a dangerous steep section leading to a bridge)
- Dorset-wide assessments for future trails and trail networks for the town
- Public engagement and reporting at various town-owned properties throughout the year to gain insight on needs, trends, and property uses
- Winter 2020/2021 outdoor ice rink will be built with volunteer coordination and collaboration in East Dorset at the Town Office Park
- Collaboration and connection with Merck Forest, the Historical Society, the GMNF, and others have been fostered to expand program opportunities for Dorset residents
- Programming was planned and prepared for Long Trail School in order to provide stewardship and natural resource education to the students, but COVID restrictions forced these plans to be postponed for a safer time

# Chapter 10

## YEAR IN REVIEW: 2021

From January 2021 to the end of the year, the Outdoor Recreation Department has grown and changed. In January 2021, the 5-Year Master Plan was completed and released for public record. In March 2021, the Outdoor Recreation Director position was voted from part-time to full-time by the Selectboard and then the town in the yearly town-wide vote. The full-time transition began in May 2021. Throughout the summer, despite record high rainfall, a part-time crew was able to complete all planned projects for the season, a VYCC Crew was able to complete a new re-route trail, and the NATS group completed brand new sustainable mountain biking trails! The high rainfall did postpone certain planned projects like invasive management in the town forests, but those projects can be continued successfully in 2022.

- 5-Year Master Plan was completed and released to the public in January 2021. Master Plan was presented for review to the Conservation Commission
- The Outdoor Recreation Department managed the free Youth Ice Skating Rink in East Dorset until the thaw at the end of winter. The rink was regularly used and enjoyed by local young people throughout the frozen season



Ice Skating Rink at the Firehouse in East Dorset



- Summer [part-time] crew positions were posted in late January 2021-end of February 2021 and opened for application online through the town website. There were 9 applicants total and all candidates were interviewed. 5 applicants were chosen for the part-time crew positions for summer of 2021
- The Selectboard and the Town of Dorset officially voted to approve the Outdoor Recreation budget which included making the part-time Rec Director full-time starting in May 2021
- The Trails Association volunteer group came together in May to clean ALL the drains and ditches on the blue trail from the old parking lot to Gettysburg Quarry
- The Outdoor Rec Director gained her Pesticide Applicator (Forestry) license for invasive management in town forests through the State of Vermont
- The Outdoor Rec Director gained her Master Gardener certification through the University of Vermont for future gardening programs and community garden development
- All existing trails in the Town of Dorset property network were regularly maintained, mowed, cleared, widened, and repaired as needed throughout the year. Trails Association volunteers helped support trail maintenance by reporting any and all problems to the Rec Director
- The Outdoor Director built a new bridge (10 feet long) on Lovers Lane trail, one of the JK Adams connection trails that are part of the Raptor Lane network
- In preparation for the VYCC Crew, the re-route trail to Gilbert Lookout was assessed in the winter, spring, and early summer to confirm the correct route and plan for the crew to complete the work. The route was also blazed in red and added to the Owls Head Map so hikers could use the route if they desired. The red route was used regularly and helped to establish use for when the old route is closed
- In order to prevent users from driving on Ken's Camp Rd, which is temporarily closed due to construction, signage was installed to direct drivers to Raptor Lane to access Owls Head Town Forest from Rt 30

- A large, new sign was installed along Rt 30 at the entrance to Raptor Lane that directs the public to Owls Head and other trailheads for Raptor Lane and Owls Head Town Forest access
- A new parking lot was constructed at the end of Raptor Lane that allows accessible access to the multi-use trail (built in 2020) and all the Owls Head Town Forest trails
- The Northshire Area Trails Systems (NATS) mountain biking group volunteers helped to build brand new sustainable multi-use [mainly for mountain bikes] trails in Owls Head Town Forest using hand tools, rented excavator, and forestry tools (i.e., chainsaws, etc.)
- The Town of Dorset and Outdoor Recreation Department contributed \$30,000 to the multi-use/mountain biking trails and \$20,000 was fundraised by NATS in order to build the trails in 2021
- The multi-use/mountain biking trails built in 2021 included: "Alan's Trail" -- .94 Miles, Downhill Trail -- .78 Miles, Beginner Trail -- 1.9 Miles\* (mileage is approximate)
- NATS volunteers planned 4 more miles of multi-use/mountain biking trails to be built in 2022 pending funding
- The Conservation Commission (CC) collaborated to obtain legal permission from five landowners in Dorset in order to open a new trail for Pinnacle Forest that would allow hikers to access Pinnacle from the Dorset Town Green. Due to the small parking area on Pinnacle Lane (a private road), Pinnacle Forest needed additional access in order to accommodate visitors. The route planned required legal access permission because 0.2 miles of the planned trail goes through private properties. Kevin O'Toole, one of the CC members, facilitated the legal process of getting permission. The Town was granted permission to build the trail and create signage under the strict agreement that users would NOT park on Dorset Village Lane
- All trails at Cutler Memorial Forest were repaired (including drainage) and widened before the summer season to prepare for high use
- In collaboration with the Dorset Historical Society, the Outdoor Recreation Department created 6 interpretive history signs to be installed at Pinnacle Forest for a permanent history walk in the forest. All the historical information was fact checked by the Dorset Historian before signs were printed

- In August 2021, the interpretive history walk was officially opened at Pinnacle Forest. The permanent interpretive signage includes historical information about Cecilia deNottbeck, the original owner of the property, natural history information of the area, and environmental education
- In June 2021, the new Dorset Green connection trail was completed by the summer crew. The trail is 0.3 miles and begins at Dorset Village Lane and ends at the Orange Loop trail in Pinnacle Forest
- In July 2021, the new Riverside Trail was completed by the summer crew. The trail is 0.5 miles back and forth and meanders along the southside of the Mettawee River to the edge of Cutler Memorial Forest
- In July 2021, the Orange Trail in Owls Head Town Forest was fully repaired by the summer crew. The 1-mile Orange Trail at Owls Head needed extensive repairs due to water damage and initial trail design flaws. The trail was repaired, widened, and additional blazes were added in order to accommodate the increase in hikers in Dorset Town properties
- In August 2021, 50% of a new connection trail was built by the summer crew. The trail connects the Yellow Trail and the previously dead-end Klondike Quarry trail
- In October 2021, the Klondike Quarry Trail was completed by the Outdoor Recreation Director and fall trails assistant. The trail is 0.2 miles and includes a 16-foot ladder feature and 56 feet of pressure treated boardwalk [due to the saturated soil condition of the quarry]
- In May 2021, reports of heavy use and environmental abuse at the Class 4 Road leading to Freedleyville Quarry led to the gate at the end of the Class 4 road to be locked shut. Groups of over 50 4WD vehicles were driving up to the historical quarry and leaving trash, tires, and various waste at the quarry and vista area. Due to these impacts, a landowner closed the gate, and the Town of Dorset allowed the closure, which was within the legal parameters of the Town. Due to this decision, there were dozens of complaints made by 4WD recreators from Vermont and other surrounding states. Users created a side access point around the closed gate and the Town blocked this access point. Because of the outcry by 4WD recreators, the Town began to consider options for managing use and 4WD access to the Class 4 Road and the Freedleyville Quarry and vista. In addition to the damage to the road and quarry, 4WD recreators were also driving past the quarry and accessing Green Mountain Nation Forest (GMNF) lands illegally. An ethical use group in collaboration with Tread Lightly reached out the

Outdoor Recreation Department and Town of Dorset to volunteer to finance and manage limited 4WD Recreation on the Class 4 Road and around the quarry

- After a series of meetings, field visits, an in-person demonstration of ethical use in Plymouth, VT, research, Selectboard presentation, and collaboration with Tread Lightly representatives, the Town of Dorset and Outdoor Recreation Department formally approved the request for the 4WD access management to be given to Tread Lightly. This collaboration will include Tread Lightly creating appropriate signage, financing repairs to the bridge at Squirrel Hollow, providing volunteers to clean up all the trash and waste at the quarry, and raising funds from donors to do project like covering the graffiti
- As of October 2021, Tread Lightly will be managing the limited access 4WD recreation use at the Class 4 Road off Dorset Hill Road and around the Freedleyville Quarry as partners to the Town. This agreement is open to amendment and closure if management is unsuccessful, or use becomes abusive and environmentally damaging
- The Outdoor Recreation Director led the following programs at Pinnacle Forest: Pinnacle History Walk (twice), Tree Identification Walk (twice), Autumn Leaf Identification Walk (twice), Invasive Species Workshop, and iNaturalist Program
- The Outdoor Recreation Director led the following programs at Owls Head Town Forest: History and Hiking: Gettysburg Quarry, Red Fox Autumn Science Field Trip Day, and Historian Walk with the summer trail crew
- The Outdoor Recreation Department collaborated with the Dorset Village Library to promote and host the nature programs throughout the summer and fall seasons
- Throughout the year, the Outdoor Recreation Director was available to respond to emails, Instagram messages and phone calls from residents and visitors about trail conditions, trail recommendations, and other Hike Dorset information
- Throughout the growing season (May-September) the Outdoor Recreation Director and a Trails Association volunteer kept the paths mowed at Pinnacle Forest. They also mowed around the Tower as needed
- In the winter of 2021, the Outdoor Recreation Director installed 3 dog waste stations. Two of the dog waste stations were installed at Cutler Memorial Forest, which is heavily hiked by people with their dogs. One of the stations was installed at Pinnacle Forest. The Director regularly emptied the waste baskets and refilled the stations with poo bags



- In the summer of 2021, the Outdoor Recreation Department contributed a dog waste station at Emerald State Park. The Rec Department will take over managing the waste station during the off-season (November-April)
- In the summer of 2021, a permanent map sign for Pinnacle Forest was installed at the Dorset Green in order to direct hikers to the Dorset Green Connection trail
- In the summer of 2021, the signpost on Rt 30 next to Dorset Village Lane was restored, prepped, and painted to show the new Pinnacle Forest connection trail. The sign was created by Wood Signs from East Dorset and kept the format, font, and coloring of the Dorset Green signage
- Throughout the 2021 summer season, the Rec Director stained all the signposts, kiosks, and trail posts with dark brown (park signage brown) in order to keep all signage consistent and attractive to the public
- The summer crew assistant leader began May 17<sup>th</sup> and worked until August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2021. Nadia Cox, the crew assistant, began with two weeks of training and field work one-on-one with the Outdoor Recreation Director. The success of hiring a college student with previous experience was significant
- The summer crew included 4 teenagers from 14 years old to 16 years old. Three of the teen hires and the crew assistant were all local hires from Dorset/Greater Dorset area. One teen hire was from another state (Indiana)
- The summer crew began working on repairing all the remaining water bars and drainage, building new water bars as needed, and appropriate rock work on the blue, yellow, and orange trails in Owls Head Town Forest
- The summer crew's second project was clearing the shrub/invasives at the edge of Pinnacle on the south end of Pinnacle Forest Town Property. This project was part of the accessibility agreement between a landowner and the Department for the trail to be built
- The summer crew's third large project was building the 0.3-mile trail from the Dorset Green to Pinnacle Forest (Orange Loop). A small trail already existed but needed to be widened and re-routed in order to be opened to the public. In addition to the trail, the crew also helped to construct a bridge over a waterway on the trail

- The summer crew's fourth project was building a 0.2-mile trail (0.4 back and forth) along the Mettawee River at Cutler Memorial Forest. The trail was planned and mapped in the fall of 2020 and assessed in the winter and spring of 2021. The trail follows along the river until the edge of Cutler Memorial Forest and is called the Riverside Trail
- The summer crew, in addition to building the trail at Cutler, also assisted in breaking down several dams in the river that impede fish movement and natural geomorphology of the river. The section of the Mettawee at Cutler Memorial Forest is the longest section of the river that hasn't been altered by humans
- The summer crew's fifth project was to repair, widen, and improve the orange loop trail at Owls Head Town Forest. The trail was originally built quickly and needed extensive work to become more passable and walkable for recreators. The trail will need more repair work in the upcoming years, but it is in much better condition now
- The summer crew's sixth project was to repair the most damaged and eroded sections of trail [0.4-miles] between Gettysburg Quarry and the Gilbert Lookout (not counting the last 0.2 miles, which is now closed)
- The summer crew's final project was to build the Klondike Quarry trail. The crew was able to complete approximately 50% of the trail work before the end of the season
- In addition to the trail and forestry work done by the summer crew, the Outdoor Recreation Director also conducted several educational workshops (trail building, outdoor stewardship, Owls Head Town Forest history) and collaborated with Emerald State Park to have a field education day at the park with the property manager
- The Pond Trail [Connection trail between Raptor Lane and JK Adams] needed more gravel and surface work due to heavy use from the work ATV and hikers and horseback riders. Work was conducted in July 2021
- Due to heavy horse use on Hawks Pass Trail and on the Pond and Lovers Lane trails, \*No Horses\* trail signs were installed at the Pond and Hawks Pass Trail to minimize the heavy negative trail impacts caused by horses, especially during wet or muddy conditions
- The re-route trail for Gilbert Lookout in Owls Head Town Forest was officially chosen as the VYCC project for 2021. The VYCC Crew was a young adult crew of 5 people who worked and camped in Owls Head for 3 weeks in order to complete the 1-mile re-route trail that goes around Owls Head, summits Owls Head, and leads to 2 lookout points

- One of the landowners who owns a property connected to Owls Head agreed to allow access for the Outdoor Recreation Department (ATV trail) in order to move supplies for the VYCC Crew up and down the mountain. The access trail lead nearly to the camping area for the crew and made it possible for the VYCC to camp and work efficiently to maximize the trail work. This agreement was very effective and successful, allowing the crew to complete the trail work planned
- In order to use the ATV trail to access Owls Head, the Outdoor Recreation Director needed to clear 0.3 miles to lengthen the existing trail in order to bring the ATV (and supplies) as close to the camping area as possible. This was part of the agreement with the landowner. The Director used a chainsaw and hand tools to clear the trail and marked it with blue flagging tape
- The VYCC Crew completed the 1-mile re-route trail to the Gilbert Lookout with 5 crew members in 3 weeks at \$1,000 per week per crew member with a project total of \$15,000
- Appropriate seasonal signage was posted for muddy season (certain trails closed for the spring mud) and hunting season
- Regular Instagram posting and engagement for the @HikeDorset page which has 1,045 followers as of December 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021
- A new Recreation Shed/Garage was built from materials from Jamacia Cottage Shop in Jamacia, Vermont. The shed is 12'x24' with a green corrugated metal roof and is located across the building site for the new town offices on Raptor Lane. The entire build was done by the Rec Director and volunteers from the Trails Association and Conservation Commission
- The Trails Association Volunteer Group has grown from 6 members in 2020 to 12 members in 2021
- Created and managed an Instagram account for @hikedorset with 600 followers (and growing) to enhance program visibility and increase ways for user communication with the Department
- Limited vista pruning for Pinnacle Tower viewpoint along with mowing around the tower was all completed throughout the mowing season

- Collaboration and connection with Merck Forest, the Historical Society, the GMNF, and others have been fostered to expand program opportunities for Dorset residents
- The Outdoor Recreation Department was selected to apply for the ERSA Grant [Enhancement of Recreation Stewardship and Access] through the State of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. For this grant, the Department requested the amount of \$70,000 to be used for building 4 miles of new mountain biking trails in partnership with NATS. The application was submitted at the end of November 2021 with collaboration from the NATS group volunteers, the Town office, and letters of recommendation from community members. The grant award announcements are planned to be released during the week of January 10<sup>th</sup>, 2022

## Chapter 11

### Action Plan 2022

As outlined in Chapter 8: Implementation, an annual yearly review and Action Plan are to be done each year. The proponents of the Action Plan for the Outdoor Recreation Department for 2022 is open to amendment, additions, and changes depending on the needs of the community and resources available.

#### The Annual Action Planning Process

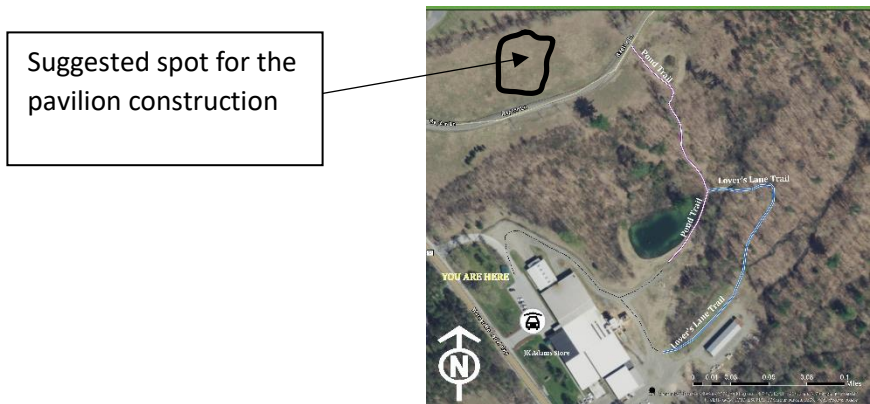
1. **Mountain Biking Trails in Owls Head Town Forest:** NATS group volunteers and paid contractors plan to build 4 miles of mountain biking trails in the summer of 2022. The planned trails are mapped and blazed and will be part of the mountain biking trail network in Owls Head Town Forest/Raptor Lane Town property. The trails will be intermediate flow (2-way) and downhill. The budget for these trails is \$120,000. The Town can match up to \$50,000 and the Outdoor Recreation Department has applied for a \$70,000 grant award through the state of Vermont. If awarded, the trails can be completed on schedule in 2022. These trails are



2. **Hiking Trails in Owls Head Town Forest:** Plans for trails in Owls Head for 2022 include continuing to repair trails throughout the existing network, add two boardwalk bridges on the Hawks Pass trail, clean and repair ALL drainage and water bars in the existing trail network, install appropriate signs for multi-use trail intersections (i.e., mountain bike trails that cross hiking trails), and build a new trail between Raptor Lane and Owls Head Town Forest. The new trail planning will begin in the winter and be re-assessed in the spring to properly place the route away from waterways and other negative features for trail sustainability. The old route to Gilbert Lookout will need to be firmly blocked with dead trees and debris to keep hikers from continuing to use the trail. The new re-route trail will need a bridge installed near the Gilbert Lookout to make the trail safer and more sustainable for long-term use. All trails will need annual widening.
3. **Hiking Trails in Pinnacle Forest:** No new trails are to be built in Pinnacle Forest in 2022. However, a section of the forest that leads to Lower Hollow Rd provides an opportunity for public use if landowners along the route will allow it. The existing trails will be maintained and mowed throughout the season as needed. The Dorset Green connection trail will also need to be maintained and managed in order to honor the access agreements with landowners.
4. **Hiking Trails in Cutler Memorial Forest:** After the new Riverside trail was completed in 2021, the trail was immediately used heavily by recreators. The success of the trail has led to a need for a bridge to be constructed to connect the trail to the entire network in order to create a loop. The bridge will need to be designed and appropriate permit/permissions will be required before construction begins. If the bridge can be built in 2022, it could be a VYCC project. No new trails are planned in Cutler for 2022, but that could change depending on community needs. The existing trail network will be maintained throughout the season as needed.
5. **Hiking Trails at Raptor Lane Town Property:** As of 2021, the Raptor Lane property includes part of the Hawks Pass trail, the Pond Trail (connection to JK Adams), and part of the new mountain biking trail network. Current plans for 2022 include creating a new trail that connects Raptor Lane and Owls Head, similar to the Hawks Pass trail. The trail will need to be planned and designed over winter and spring in order to create the most sustainable long-term trail.
6. **Freedleyville Quarry/LT 6 & LT 7:** Going forward into 2022, the Class 4 Road (Legal Trail 6) access and management of the route to Freedleyville Quarry and vista point will be managed in partnership with Tread Lightly. The partnership fostered in 2021 includes the organization and volunteers to install appropriate signage, lock-access for the gate, and group limitations for low-impact 4WD recreation. The partnership was created in order to accommodate 4WD Recreation in Dorset to be inclusive and promote ethical vehicle recreation practices. The partnership is dependent on Tread Lightly honoring their agreement and the parameters the Town required. The organization will also be repairing the bridge on Squirrel Hollow (Legal Trail 7) and plan to install high-end cameras that will record all ingress and egress on the trails to manage any illegal or

restricted access or actions. This plan is a trial endeavor and if unsuccessful, is subject to change or cease action all together. See Page 98 for more details on Legal Trails in Dorset, VT.

7. **Ice Skating Rink at the East Dorset Firehouse:** Plans to rebuild and manage the kid’s (and young adult) outdoor ice rink outside the East Dorset Firehouse are underway for the end of 2021 (weather permitting) and into the winter months of 2022. The majority of the construction will be conducted by the Outdoor Recreation Director and their seasonal assistant as well as the Town Manager and any volunteers willing to help maintain the rink throughout the frozen season.
8. **Pavilion at Raptor Lane Town Property:** There are tentative plans for a medium-large sized pavilion to be constructed at a vista point on Raptor Lane Town Property in 2022 \*pending budgetary support, potential grant allowance, and/or fundraising efforts\*.



The pavilion would provide a space for residents and visitors to host picnics, family/friends’ events, small gatherings, and other community events for positive social engagement. It would also provide a hub for user groups like hikers, mountain bike teams/groups, and outdoor town meetings. The pavilion would be an ideal venue for educational programs, workshops, seasonal job training, and more. It could also be an area in connection with the projected future community garden.

9. **Community Garden at Raptor Lane Town Property:** There are tentative plans for a small community demonstration and community harvest (i.e., all members of the Dorset/East Dorset community would be welcome to harvest from the garden). The garden would be moderate in size, fenced and managed mainly by the Outdoor Recreation Director and Garden Volunteers from the community. The garden would also feature berry bushes and small fruit trees (potentially) and provide a space for Garden Workshops, Garden education, and school group opportunities for cultivation education. This project is pending land preparation, community engagement, volunteer network creation, and a water source. The water source is the most important detail as there is no water source for the projected site as of 2021.

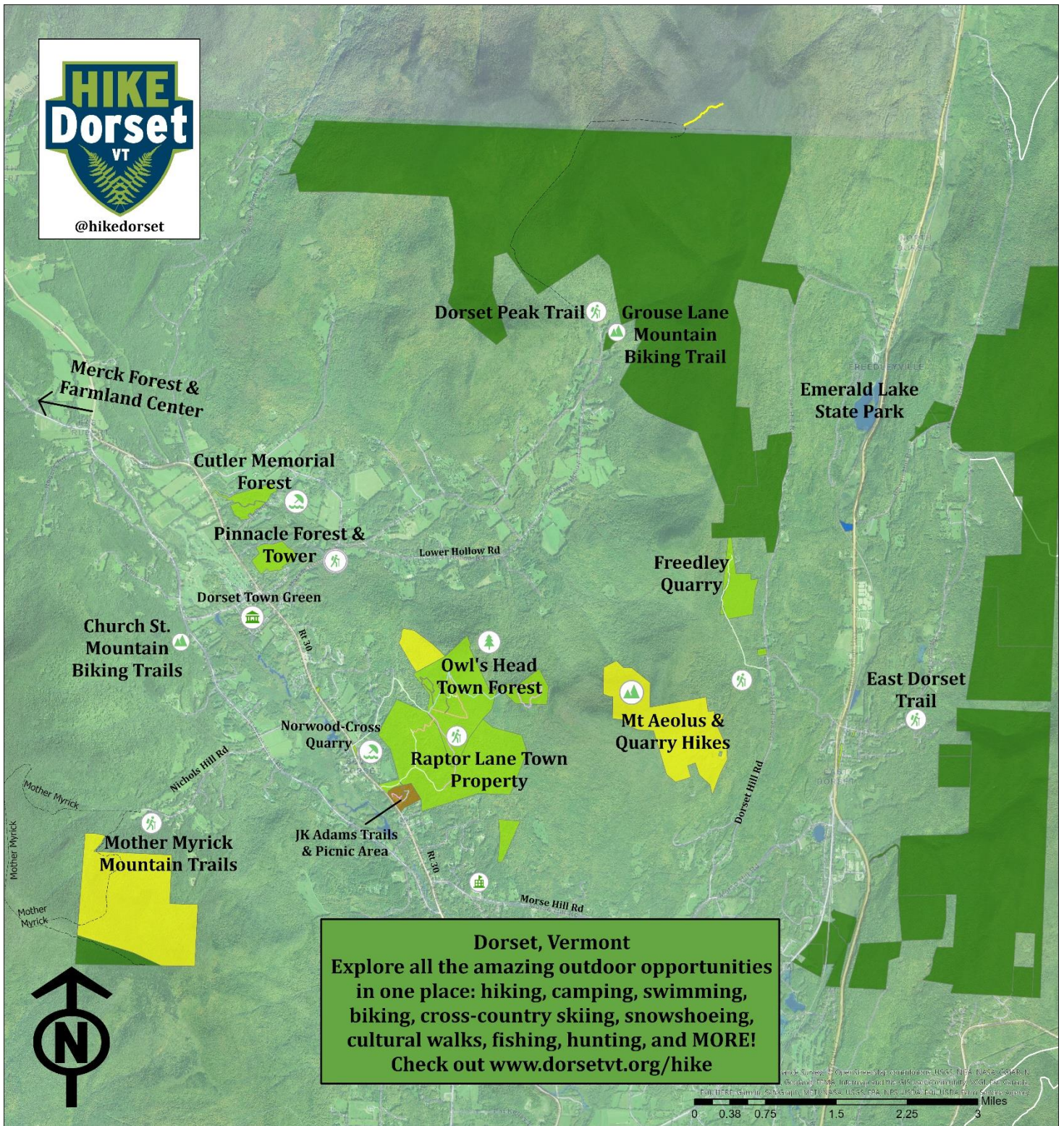
10. **Mountain Bike Team and Bike Share Program:** In order to accommodate and support the BBA Mountain Biking team, the Outdoor Recreation Department has agreed to allow the team to store a number of mountain bikes in the new Recreation Garage during the mountain bike team season in 2022. In addition to this, the Department is committed to creating a bike share program that would allow users to borrow a mountain bike during the day and return it after use. Bike share programs allow people who do not own a mountain bike to enjoy the activity without the financial commitment to purchasing a mountain bike. Bike share programs are successful throughout the state and accommodate people of all socioeconomic backgrounds and/or vehicle size, etc.
11. **Naturalist Programs:** The Outdoor Recreation Director plans to lead nature, history, and forest/wildlife programs through the Dorset Library, the Dorset schools, and more in 2022.
12. **Trail and Infrastructure Maintenance:** All town properties will be maintained to the high standards of the Department throughout 2022 as with previous years. The maintenance will be conducted by the Outdoor Recreation Director, the summer trail crew, and the Trails Association Volunteer group. Kiosks, signage, and other infrastructure will also be maintained and improved as needed throughout the year.
13. **Invasive Plant/Scrub/Tree Management:** As the Outdoor Recreation Director now holds the appropriate Vermont State pesticide application licenses, invasive species throughout Owls Head, Pinnacle Forest, and Cutler will be combatted according to legal and regulatory requirements in order to reduce the dangerous spread of invasive plants like Knotweed (present at Cutler, Pinnacle and Owls Head), honeysuckle (present at all properties), buckthorn, burning bush, garlic mustard and MORE. Invasive encroachment is becoming an increasingly large problem throughout the state of Vermont and the Eastern United States. These invasive plants have few (if any) natural enemies and aggressively spread through root suckering, seed coverage, and other rapid ways of propagation. The Outdoor Recreation Department has, with the help of volunteers, been able to record the current status of spread and has careful plans to address the management and removal of these invasives. Pulling invasives like garlic mustard can be highly effective and requires many volunteers and heavy effort. Stump treatment and basal bark methods are most appropriate for honeysuckle, buckthorn, and burning bush. This effort will be ongoing and continuous throughout the years of the Master Plan and beyond into the next 5 years after 2026. Invasive control is a vital part of sustainable management of Town Forests and properties for now and the future.
14. **Partnerships:** Currently the Department has partnerships existing with Red Fox School, Long Trail School, the Dorset Historical Society, Merck Forest, Vermont Forest, Parks and Recreation, Tread Lightly [4WD Non-profit], VYCC, Green Mountain National Forest, Discover Dorset, local businesses in Dorset, and NATS mountain biking [non-profit] group. Going forward into 2022, the Department plans to foster more partnerships and continue fostering existing partnerships. Partnership projections include the Green Mountain Club, the Manchester Recreation Department, the Vermont Hut Association,

Burr and Burton Academy, and Hildene. The Department will plan to collaborate in programming, workshops, map development, volunteer support, special events, group hikes, and other projects as needed.

15. **Other Projects as Needed:** 2022 Projects are not limited to the list above. As needs arise throughout the year, additional work will be added to the project list in order to best serve the community and greater Dorset area.



# APPENDICES







# Cutler Memorial Town Forest Context Map

Vermont Center for Geographic Information

vermont.gov



0.16 0 0.08 0.16 Miles

WGS\_1984\_Web\_Mercator\_Auxiliary\_Sphere  
© Vermont Center for Geographic Information  
THIS MAP IS NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION

DISCLAIMER: This map is for general reference only. Data layers that appear on this map may or may not be accurate, current, or otherwise reliable. VCGI and the State of Vermont make no representations of any kind, including but not limited to, the warranties of merchantability, or fitness for a particular use, nor are any such warranties to be implied with respect to the data on this map.

1:5,045  
October 26, 2020



### LEGEND

- Parcel polygons
- Inactive parcels
- Parcels (non-standardized)
- Airports
- Rail Lines
- Town Boundaries
- County Boundaries
- Buildings
- Village Boundaries
- Public Town Forest Lands
- 5 - 2 sqmL
- 25 - 5 sqmL
- Fishing Access locations
- Trails - E911 database
- 303d Rivers and Streams
- 303d Lakes and Ponds
- Impaired watersheds - Storm V
- Outfalls in impaired watershed
- Whitewater Rivers
- Town Boundary

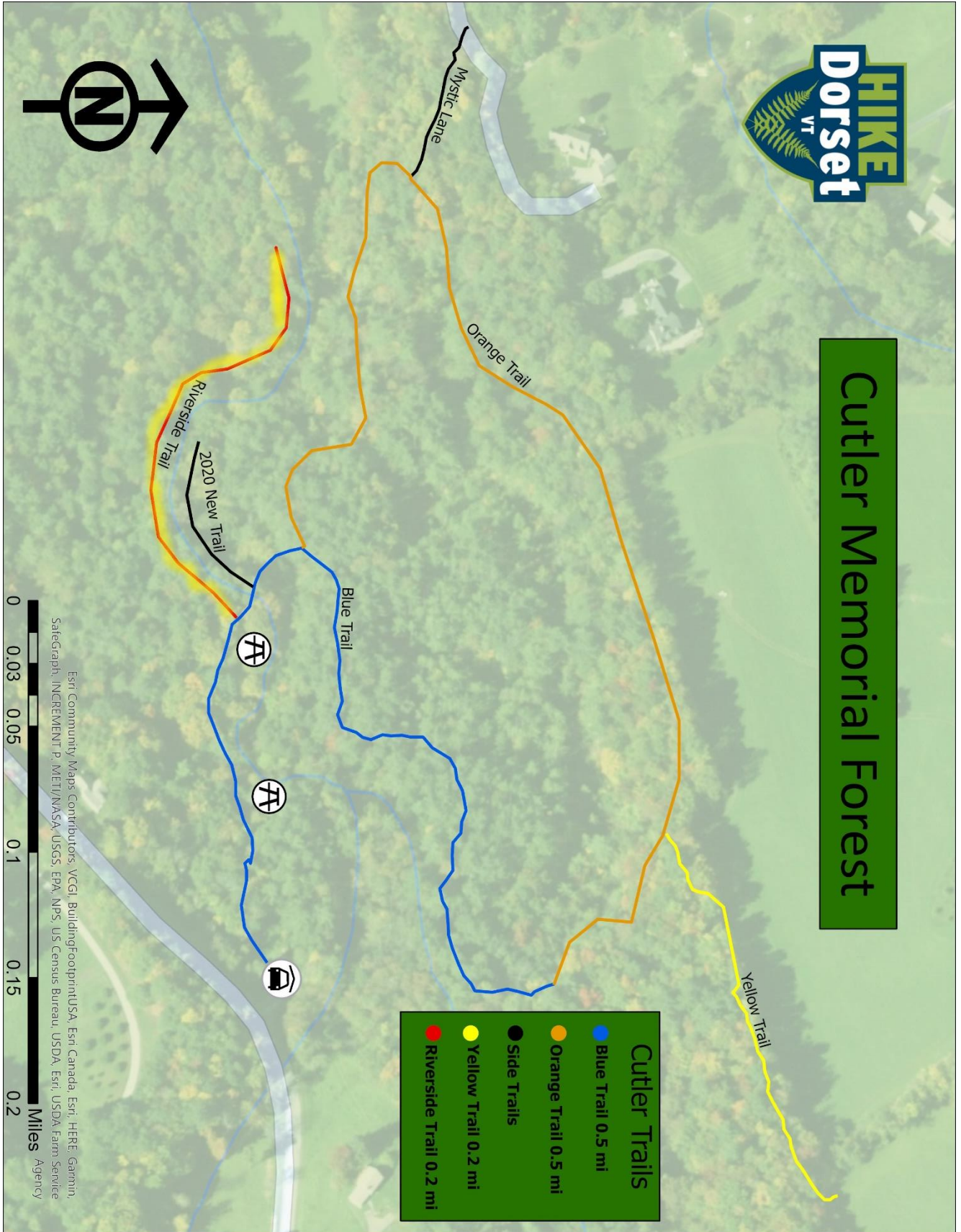


### NOTES

This map was created with the VT Interactive Map Viewer.



# Cutler Memorial Forest



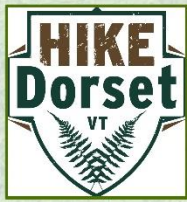




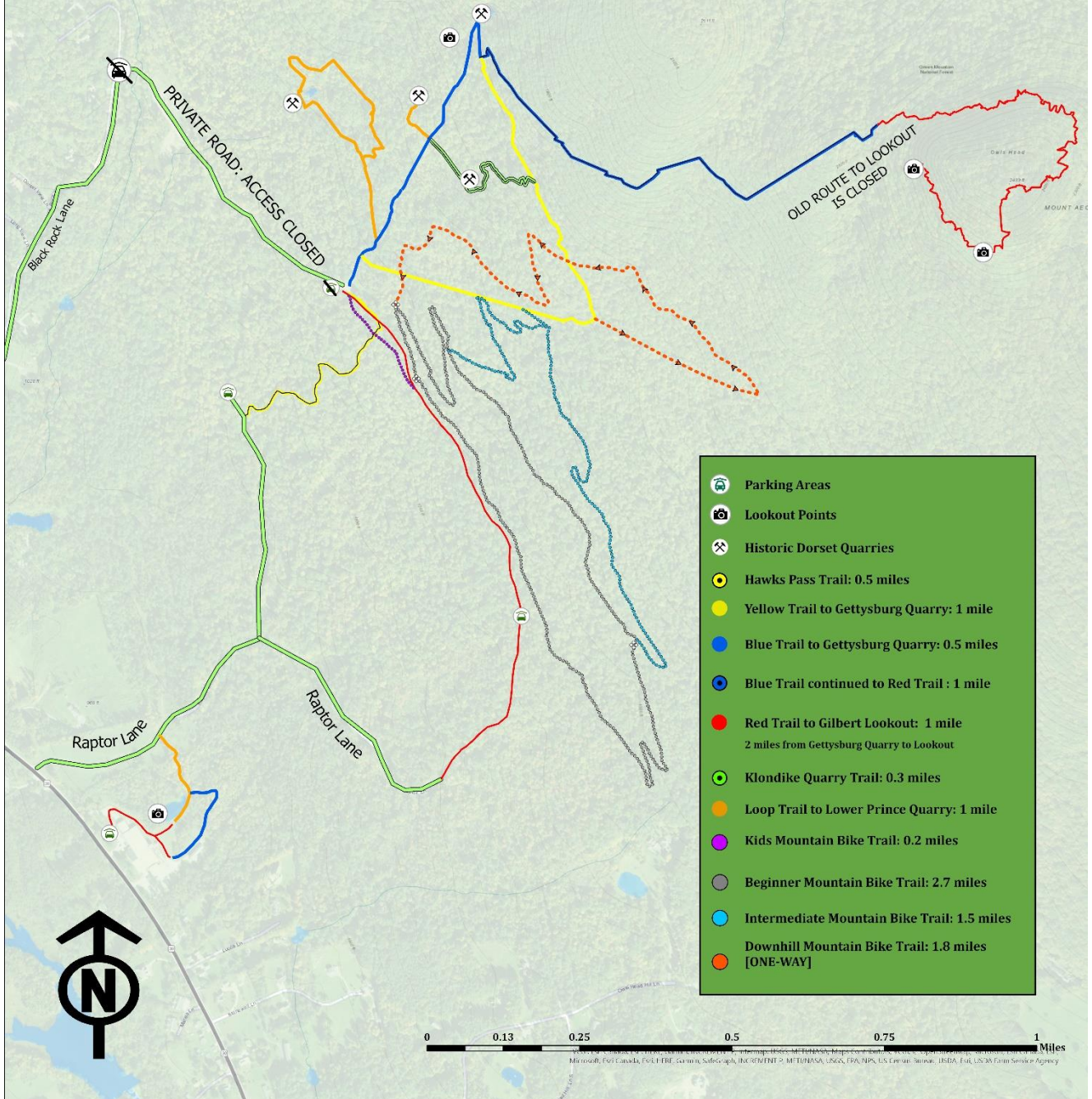
# Pinnacle Forest



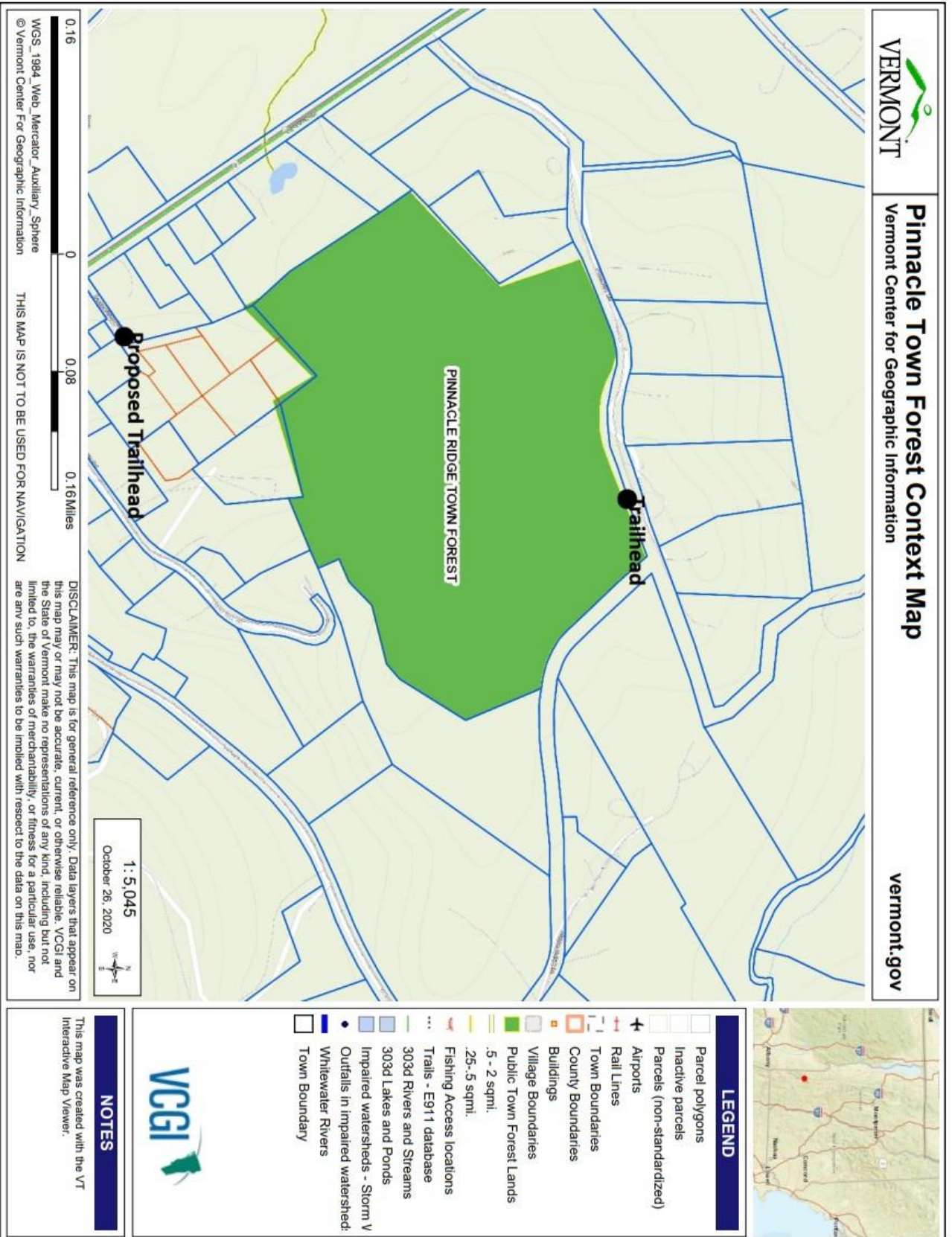




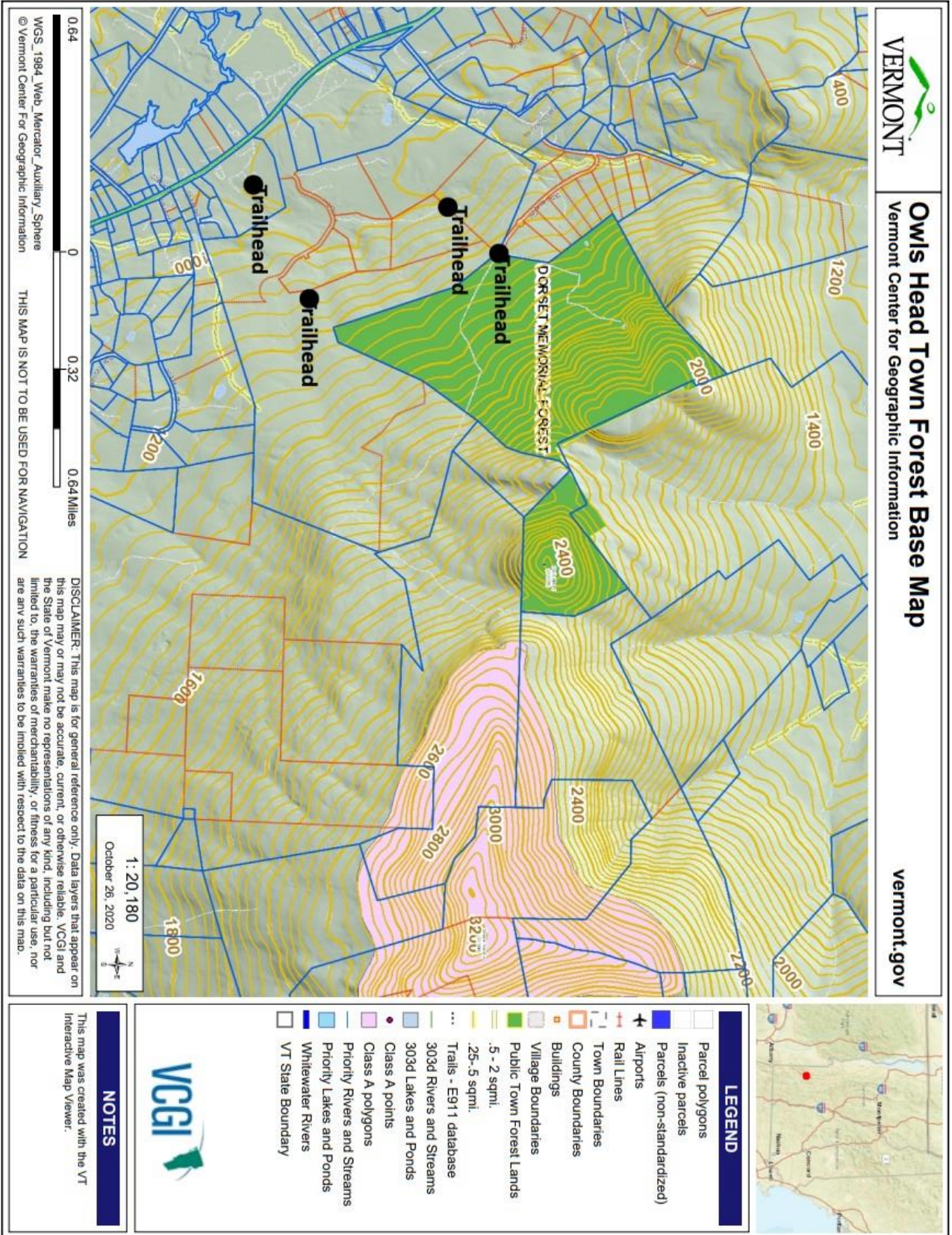
# Welcome to Owls Head Town Forest





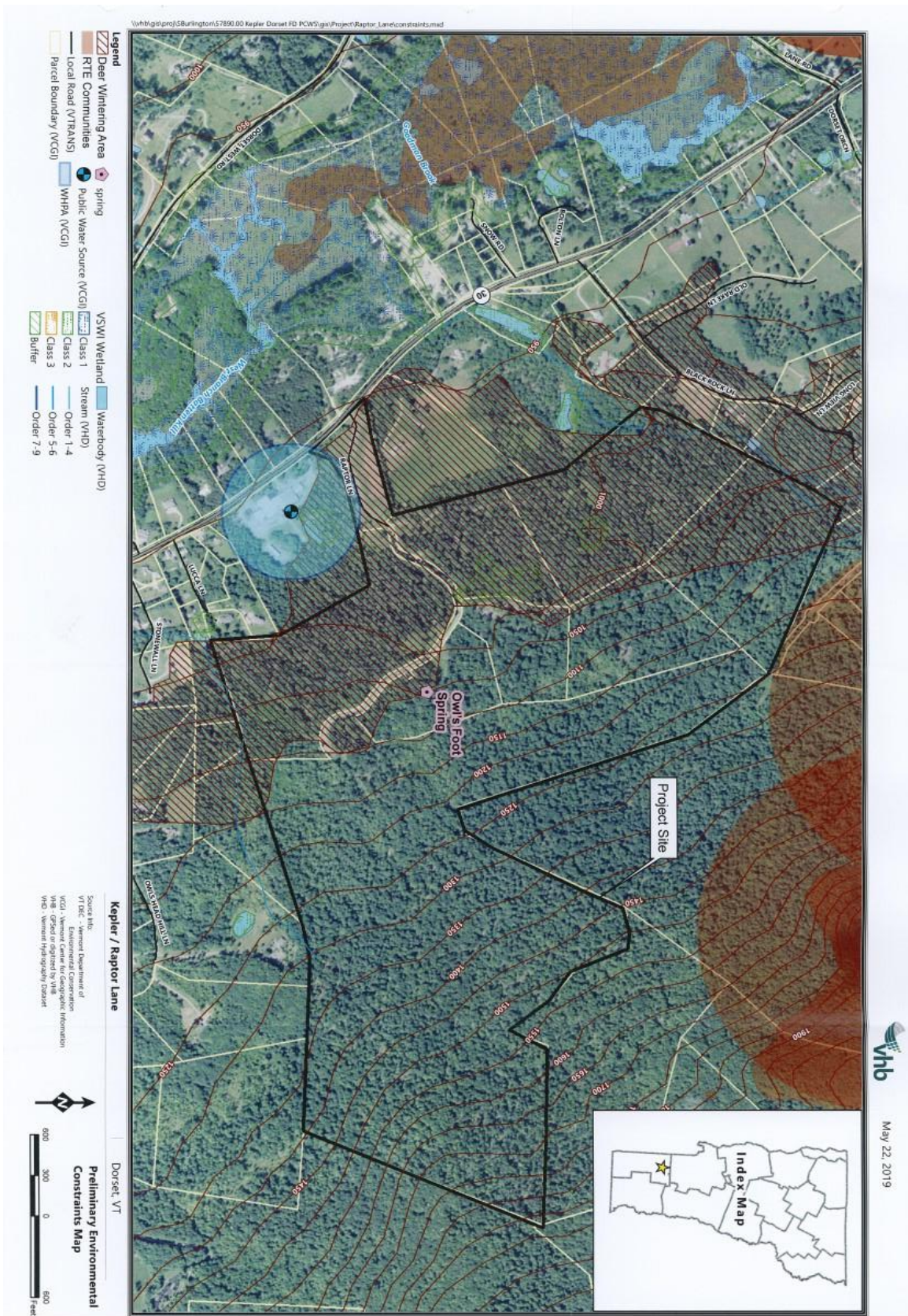






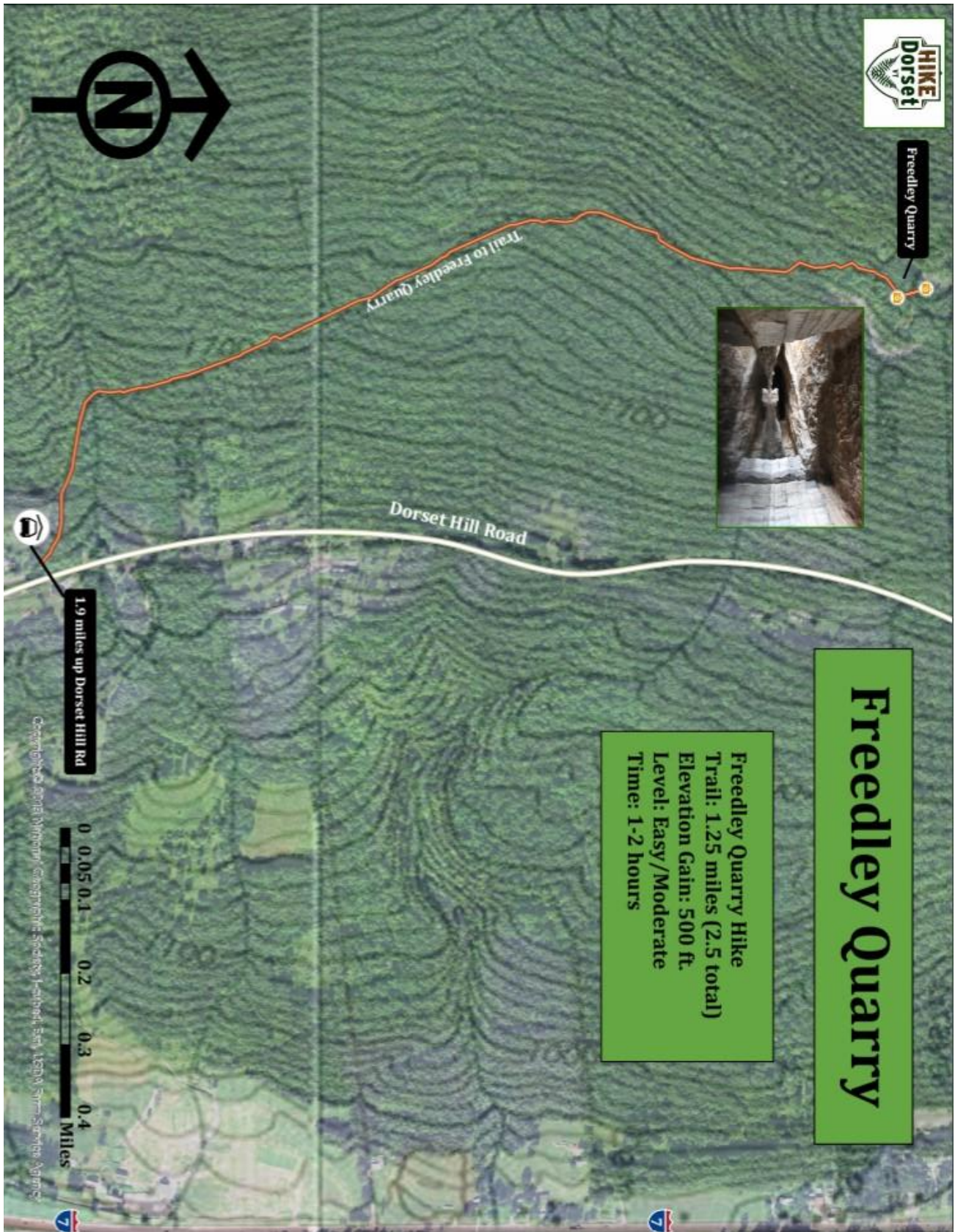
Owls Head Town Forest Base Map





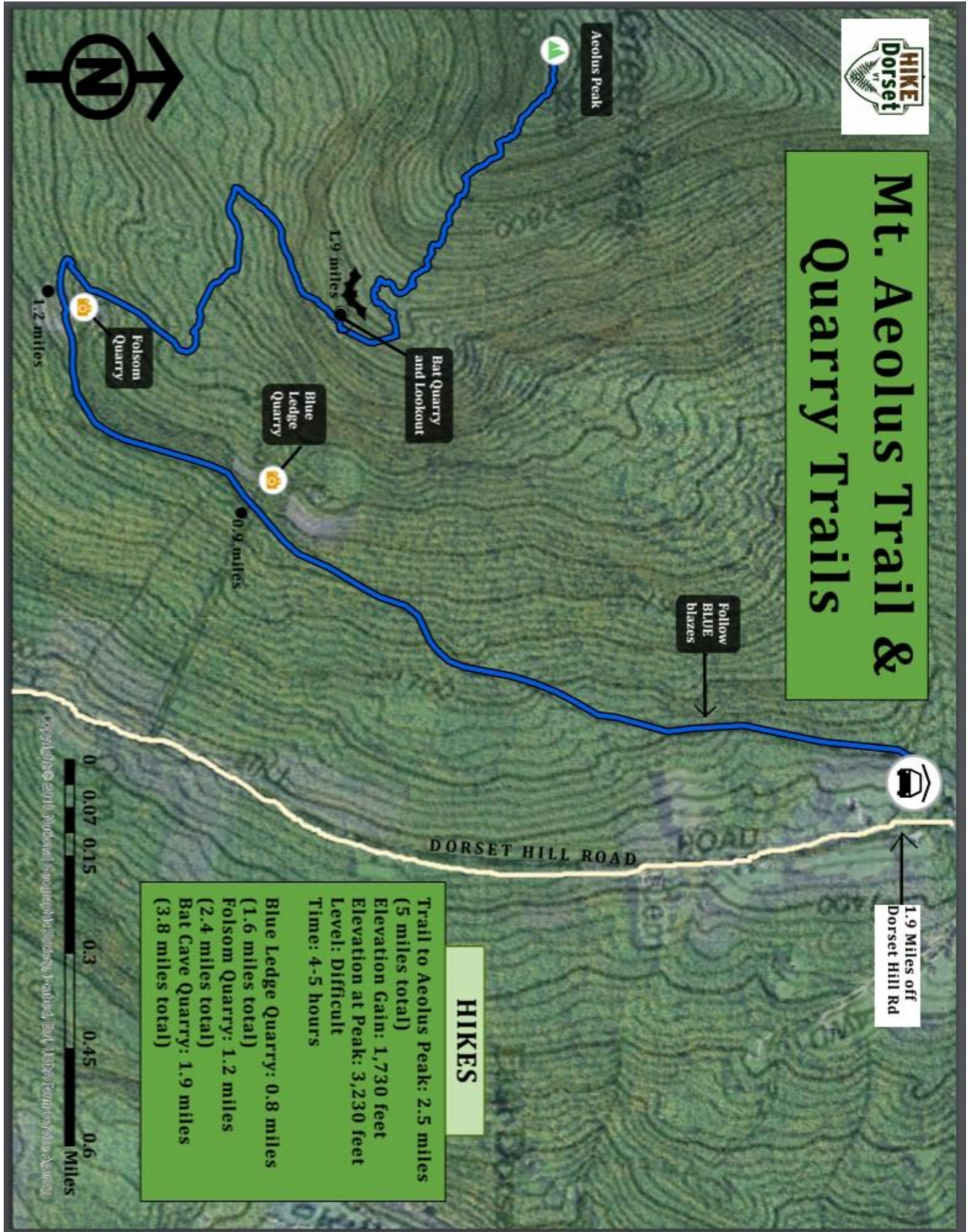
Raptor Lane Town Property Base Map





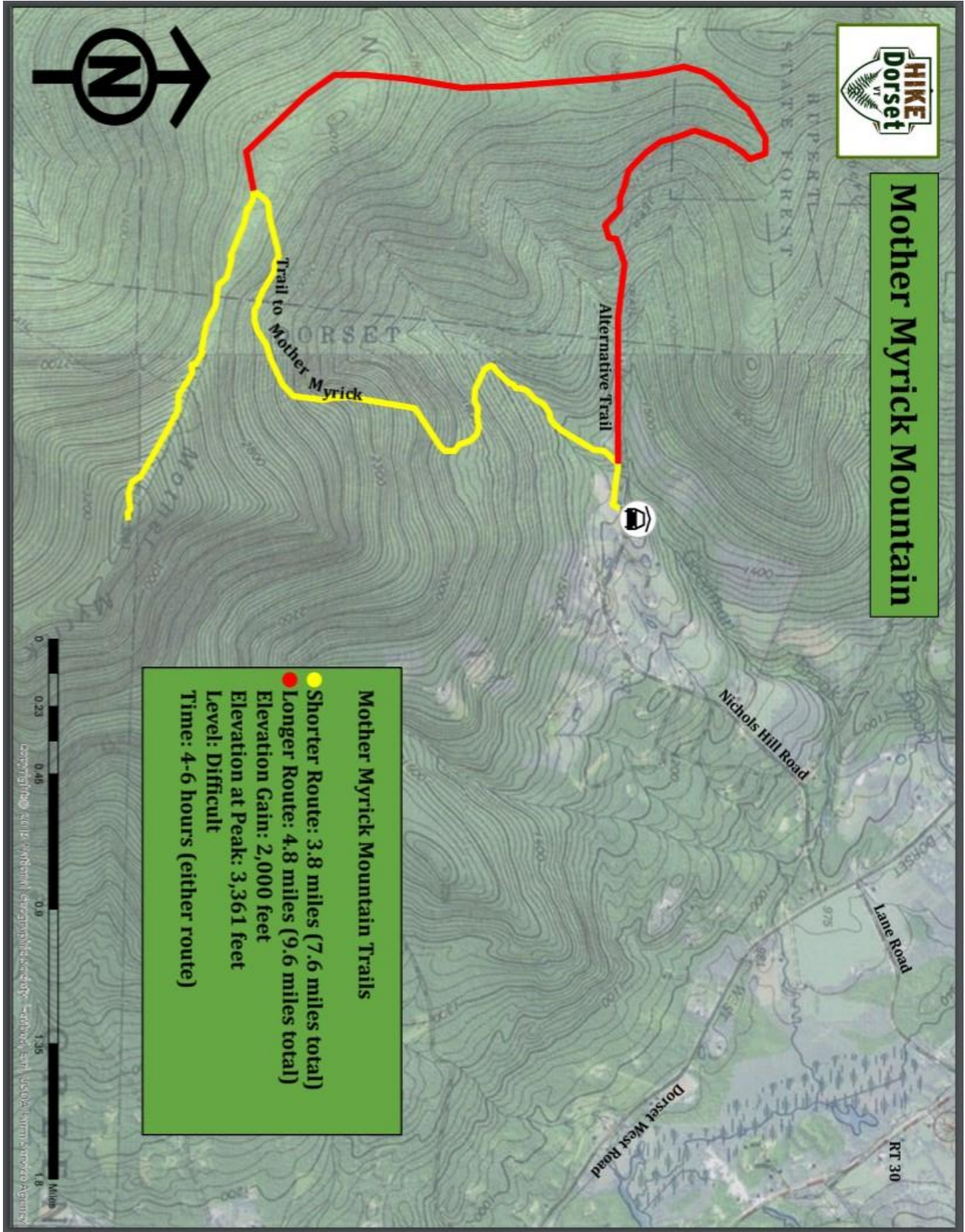
Freedley Quarry Hiking Map





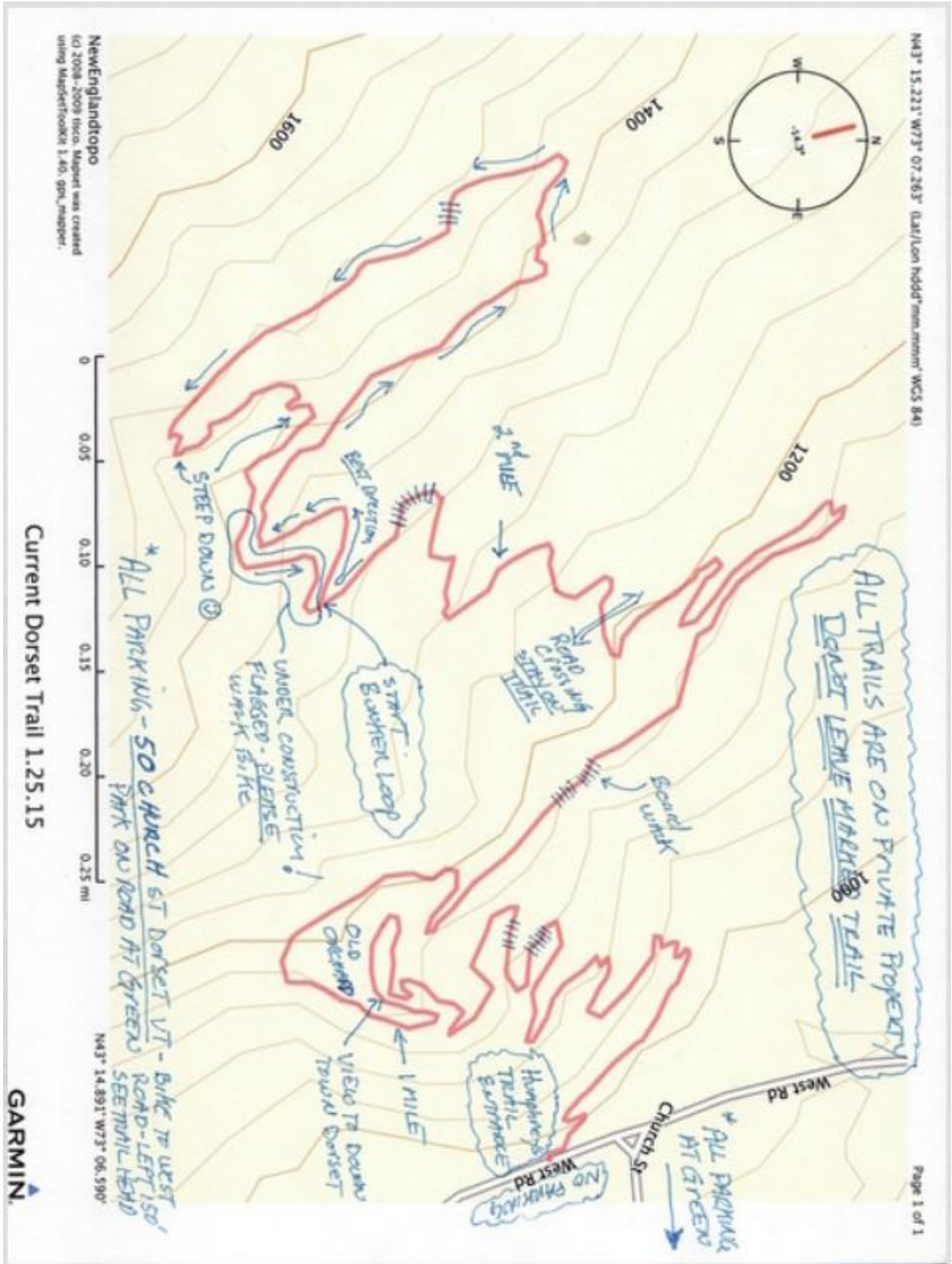
Mt. Aeolus Hiking Map





Mother Myrick Mountain Hiking Map

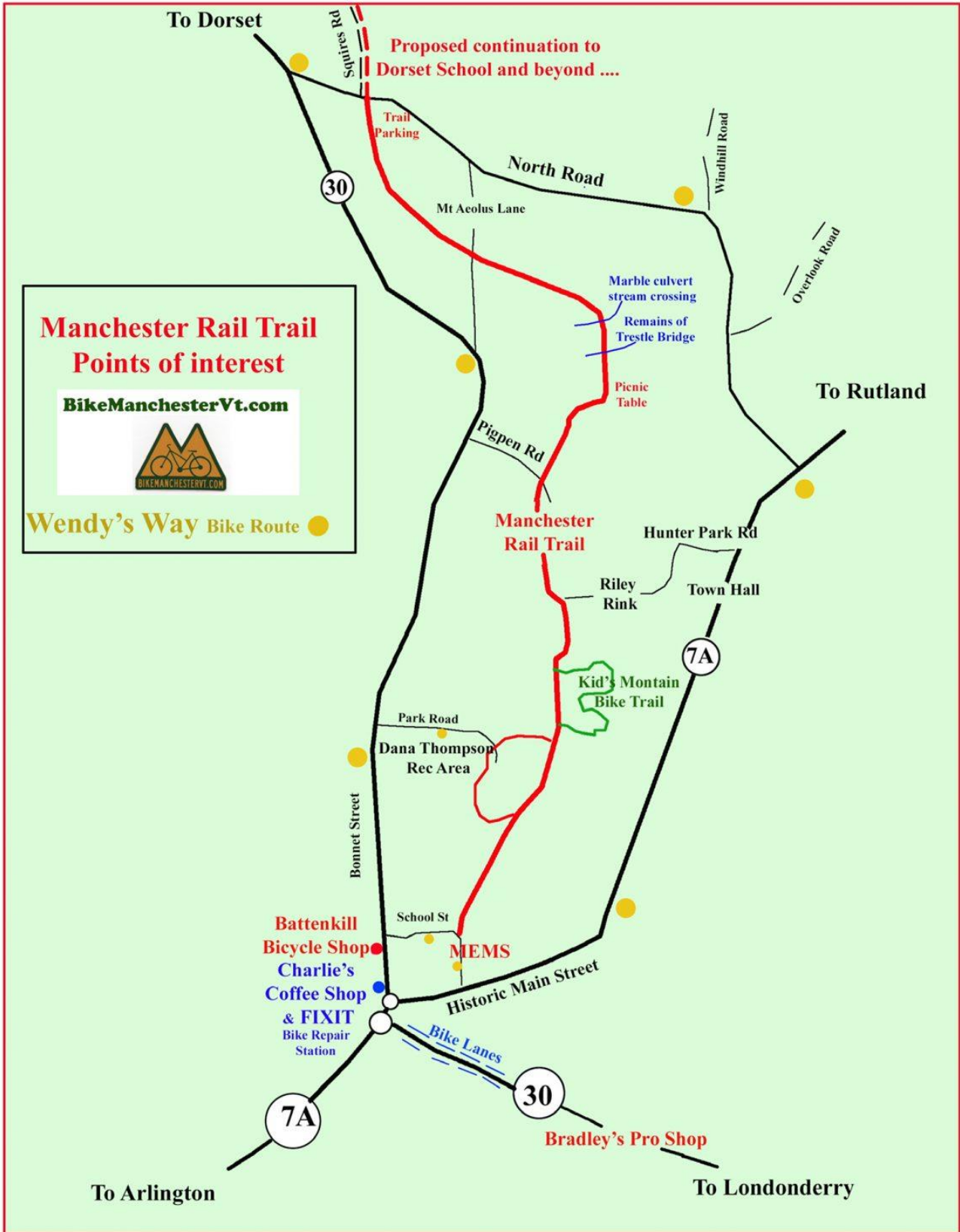




Church Street Mountain Biking Map

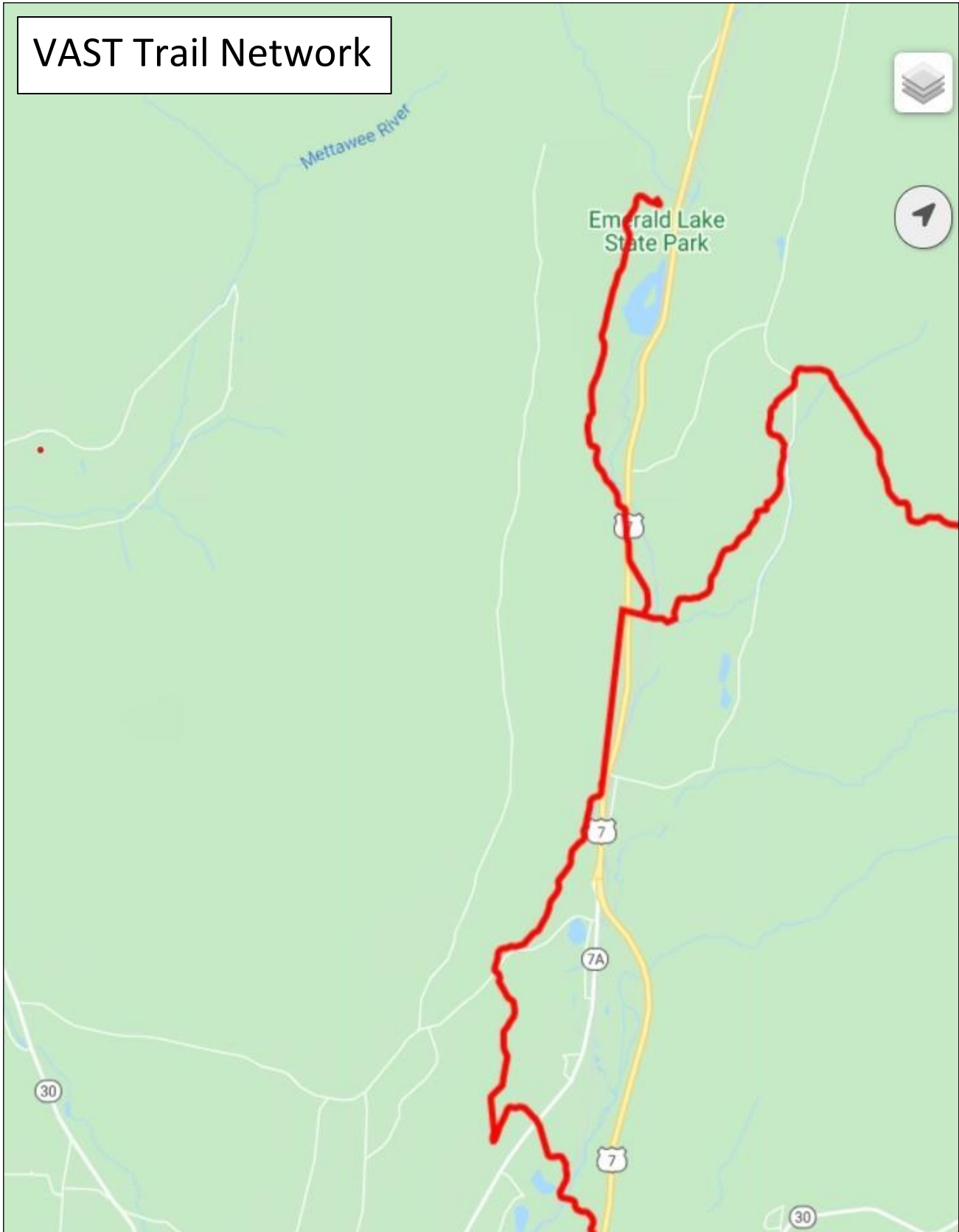






Manchester Rail Trail Map





VAST Trail Network in Dorset\*

\*According to stakeholder interviews with local VAST trail users and the GMNF Recreation Manager, the VAST trails within Dorset (and throughout Bennington county) are no longer being consistently groomed and maintained for snowmobiles. The VAST system in Dorset needs to be properly prepared and maintained for safe access. Proper maintenance going into 2021-2026 will be in the priority list for the Outdoor Recreation Department and other natural resource management stakeholders in Dorset. Community involvement, fundraising, and volunteers will be necessary to re-open these VAST trails for snowmobile use.

According to the community input survey, responses for motorized winter activities was the second lowest in outdoor recreation activities. However, these users are not limited to Dorset residents. VAST trail snowmobile use is often done in larger scale networks and a user may start on a trail in Manchester and move through Dorset or other surrounding area trails. In addition, **all recreation users should be included in the Master Plan and considered for inclusion.** By providing safe and accessible trails for snowmobiles, ethical use will also be encouraged and reduce environmental impacts.

- Impacts to wildlife

Snowmobile noise and activity disturbs wintering wildlife - causing stress, elevated energy expenditures, and changes in habitat use. In turn, these impacts can displace wildlife from their preferred habitat or even reduce an animal's chances of surviving the winter.

- Impacts to aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems

Pollution from snowmobile exhaust accumulates in the snowpack and is released during spring snowmelt, elevating the acidity of nearby surface waters.

- Soil and Vegetation Damage

Snowmobiles cause significant damage to land cover through direct physical injury to plants and increased erosion in areas with inadequate snow cover. Snowmobiles compact the snow, affecting vegetation growth and development later in the year.

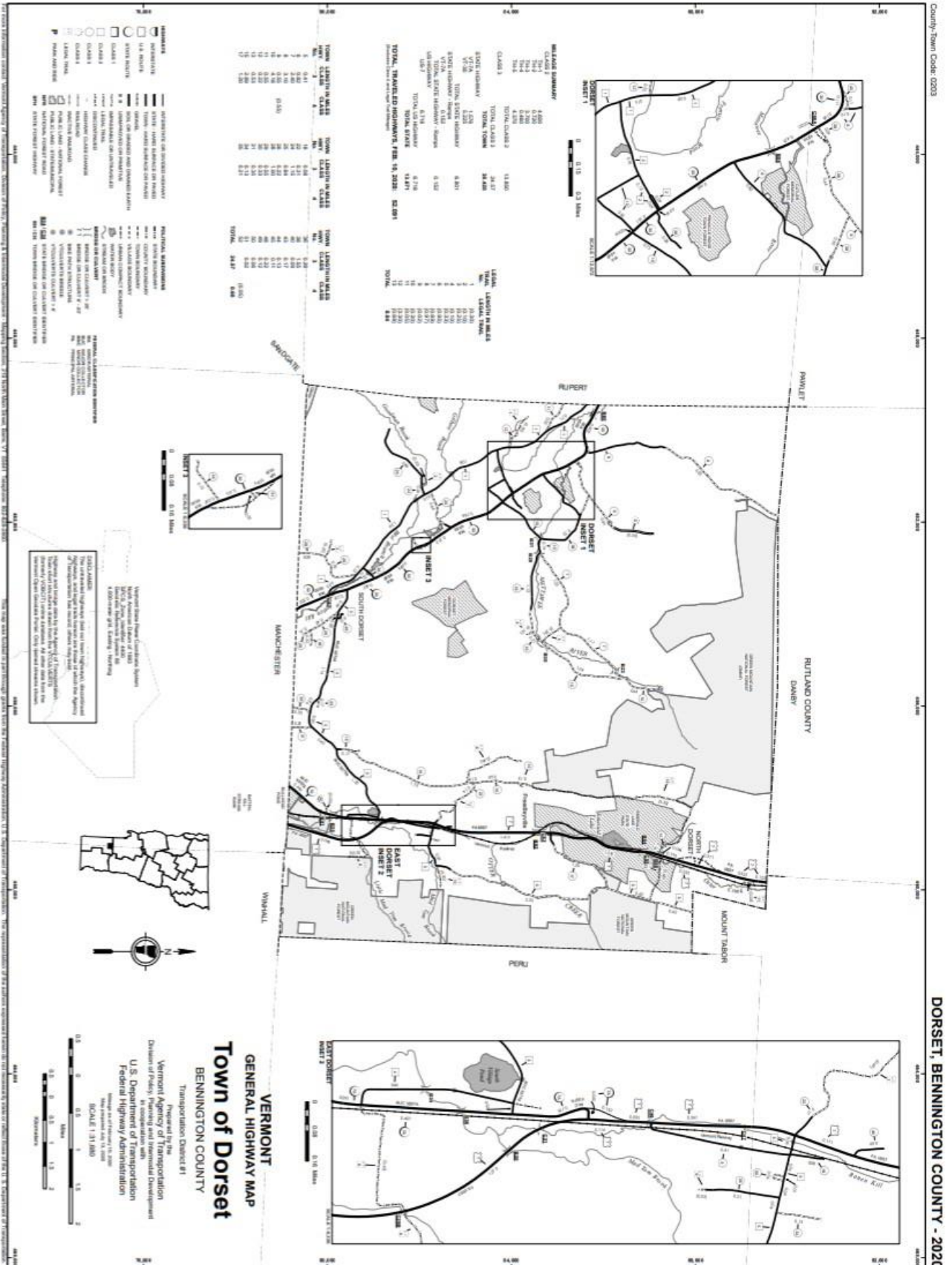
- Impacts to air and water quality

Snowmobile exhaust contains dangerous levels of airborne toxins including nitrogen oxides, carbon monoxide, ozone, aldehydes, butadiene, benzenes, and extremely persistent polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons. These pollutants degrade air quality and alter snow chemistry.

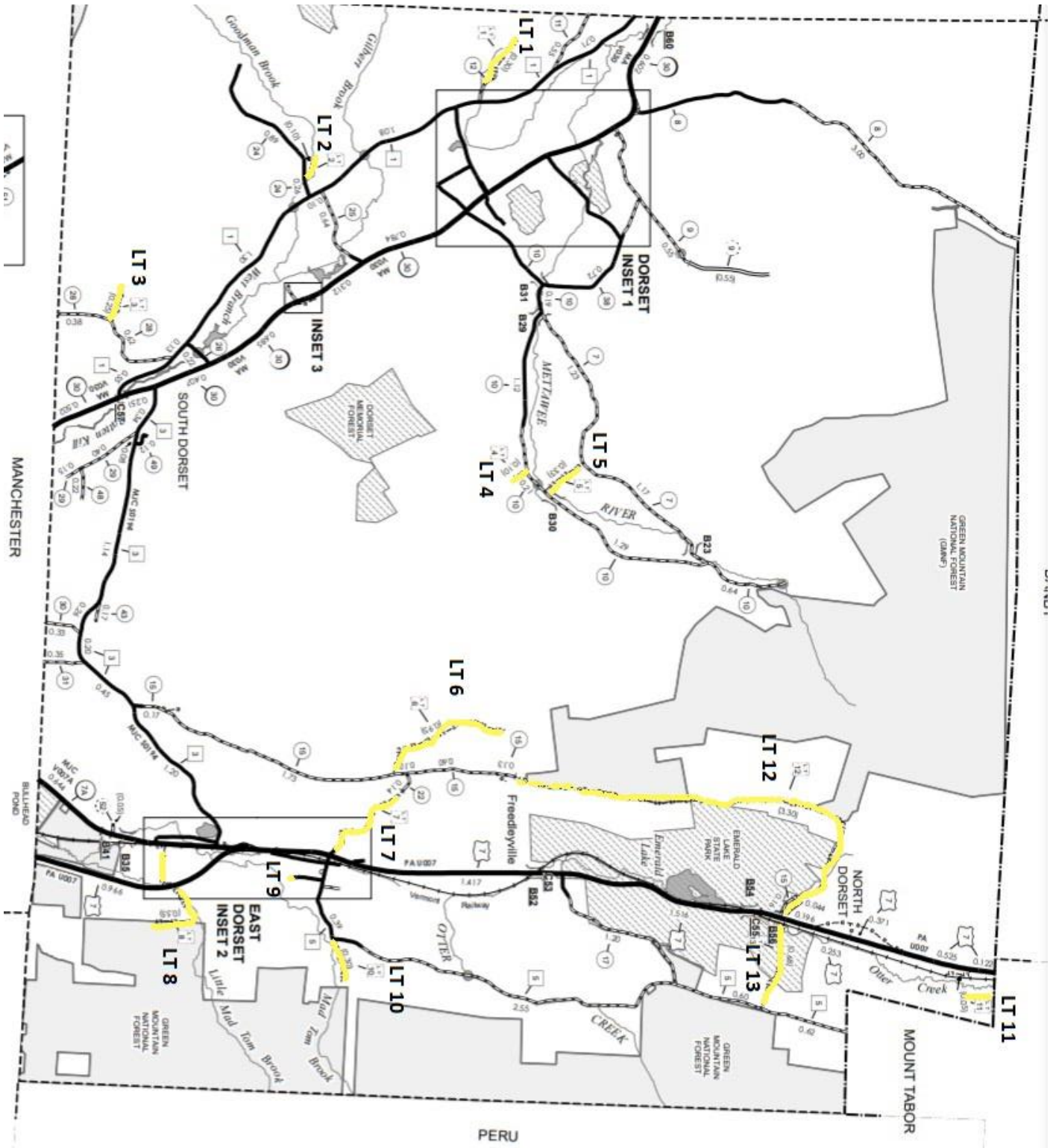
- Noise Pollution

Snowmobiles are loud and can be heard across vast distances, severely affecting the winter soundscape. This noise disturbs wildlife and is a primary factor in non-motorized/motorized user conflict.

<https://winterwildlands.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Environmental-Impacts-from-Snowmobile-Use.pdf>



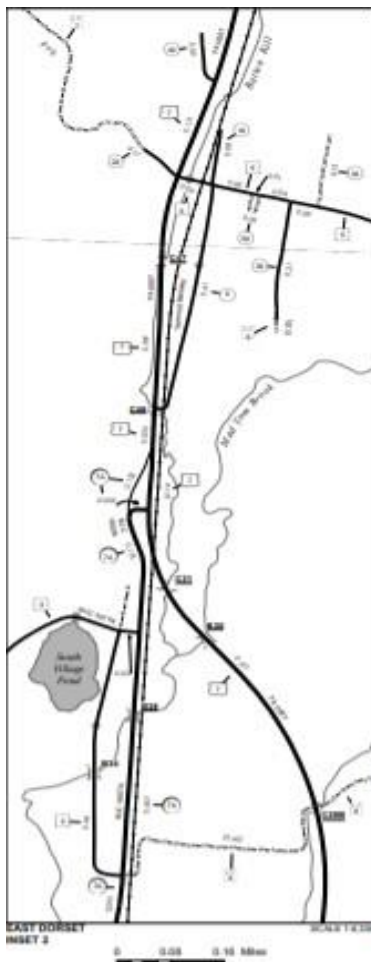




Legal Trails in Dorset\*\*

**MILEAGE SUMMARY**

<b>CLASS 2</b>					
TH-1	4.600				
TH-2	0.720				
TH-3	3.700				
TH-4	0.460				
TH-5	4.370				
	<b>TOTAL CLASS 2</b>	<b>13.850</b>			
<b>CLASS 3</b>					
	<b>TOTAL CLASS 3</b>	<b>24.57</b>			
	<b>TOTAL TOWN</b>	<b>38.420</b>			
<b>STATE HIGHWAY</b>					
VT-7A	1.576			1	(0.30)
VT-30	5.225			2	(0.10)
	<b>TOTAL STATE HIGHWAY</b>	<b>6.801</b>		3	(0.25)
<b>STATE HIGHWAY - Ramps</b>				4	(0.10)
VT-7A	0.152			5	(0.33)
	<b>TOTAL STATE HIGHWAY - Ramps</b>	<b>0.152</b>		6	(0.95)
<b>US HIGHWAY</b>				7	(0.69)
US-7	6.718			8	(0.97)
	<b>TOTAL US HIGHWAY</b>	<b>6.718</b>		9	(0.02)
	<b>TOTAL STATE</b>	<b>13.671</b>		10	(0.30)
				11	(0.05)
				12	(3.30)
				13	(0.68)
				<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>8.04</b>
<b>TOTAL, TRAVELED HIGHWAYS, FEB. 10, 2020:</b>		<b>52.091</b>			
<small>(Excludes Class 4 and Legal Trail Mileage)</small>					



\*\*Legal Trail System in Dorset are included in the Vermont Transportation Map database and the attached maps are from the Vermont Department of Transportation (2020). As shown in the map above, all legal trails are highlighted in yellow. These trails are legal to use for recreational vehicles, hiking, snowmobiles, and other recreational access. Strategies to improve legal and environmentally sustainable recreational vehicle usage in Dorset include assessing all these legal trails for use and consider mapping and maintaining them for public UTV-access. This will be an ongoing process that requires community engagement and environmental impact assessments.

Maps available at:  
[https://maps.vtrans.vermont.gov/Maps/TownMapSeries/BENNINGTON\\_Co/DORSET/DORSET\\_MILEAGE\\_2020.PDF](https://maps.vtrans.vermont.gov/Maps/TownMapSeries/BENNINGTON_Co/DORSET/DORSET_MILEAGE_2020.PDF)