

Management Plan for Tucker Mountain Town Forest

Town of Newbury, Vermont

2020



Photo by Hollis Munson

Approval Signatures

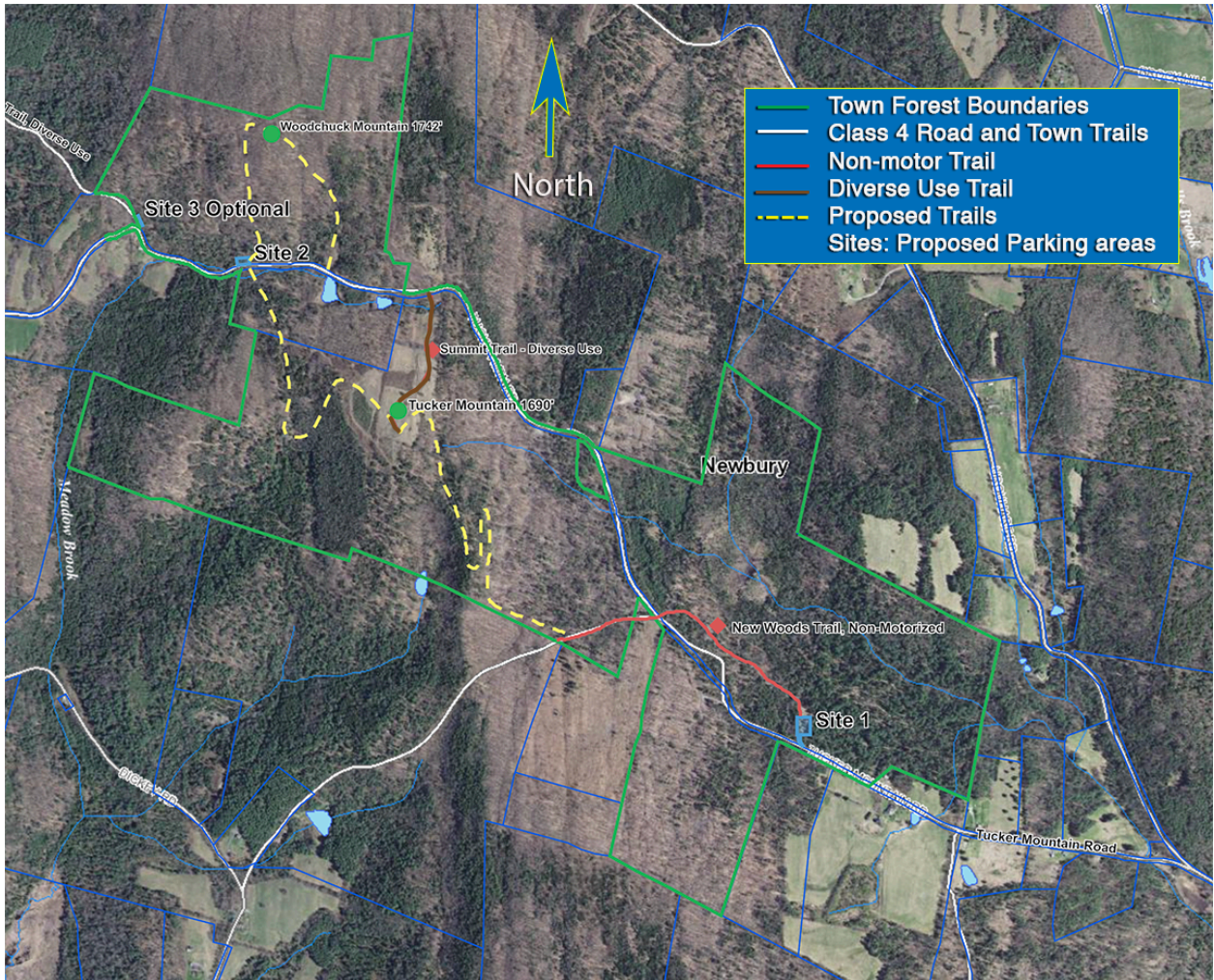
Select Board Chair

Date

Vermont Land Trust

Date

Property Map with Class 4 Roads, Town Trails, Trails, Proposed Trails and Parking Areas



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1. Overview

In December of 2018, the Town of Newbury closed on the purchase of 636 acres of land that includes Newbury’s beloved Tucker Mountain and the southern half of Woodchuck Mountain, now known as the Tucker Mountain Town Forest. The Town voted to contribute \$25,000 of tax dollars toward the purchase. The project was also funded with competitive grants from the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, the Open Space Institute’s Community Forest Fund, the Upper Connecticut River Mitigation and Enhancement Fund of the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation, the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation, the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) Forest Fund, Davis Conservation Foundation, Fields Pond Foundation, and over \$100,000 in charitable donations from the community.

The Tucker Mountain Town Forest Management Committee has been given the opportunity to lead in the stewardship of this property and to help sustain and improve it as a treasured natural preserve for our community.

The land is an important part of Newbury’s history. The top of the mountain was cleared by 1808, creating its famous 360-degree view. In his *History of Newbury*, Frederick Wells describes it:

“The highest cultivated land in town, long called the ‘Mountain Carter place,’ from which is a *prospect* of vast extent and variety, lies a mile or two northwest of the hamlet of West Newbury.”

Mountain Carter was a nickname for James Carter who built a homestead near the top. The name changed to Tucker Mountain when John Tucker bought part of Carter’s farm. For close to 150 years, farmers grazed cattle and sheep on the top meadows and lower down along its slopes. There are several cellar holes and many stone walls to be found and a private cemetery lies just beyond the eastern boundary.

Visitors are drawn by Tucker Mountain’s forests, wildflowers, grassy meadows, and magnificent views which include the White Mountains to the east, the Waits River Valley and mountains to the west, south

to Wright's Mountain and Mount Ascutney, and north to Woodchuck Mountain, the highest point in Newbury.

Families have driven, hiked, biked, skied, snowshoed, and ridden horses to the top from the time it was cleared. It's always been a popular picnic spot. Newbury and Bradford schools lead children up the mountain every fall to learn about their natural environment and deepen their attachment to nature.

The property is home for deer, moose, bear, beaver and numerous smaller animals. A vernal pool lies near the top and a year-round brook flows east through an expansive wetland of beaver ponds and swamps. Another brook flows west from a spring near the top.

The Town of Newbury will manage the Town Forest with the guidance of a seven-member Management Committee and help from the Newbury Conservation Commission. It is the goal of the Selectboard and the Committee that Committee members represent a cross-section of our community with a diversity of age, gender and interests. Other dedicated volunteers will pitch in to build trails, make signs, work on road improvements, and plan activities. The Vermont Land Trust, instrumental in managing the acquisition of the property, holds a conservation easement that provides guidelines and standards for protecting the ecological health of the Town Forest.

The Town Forest will provide opportunities for recreation and education—involving local schools and other conservation minded groups—and bring some income from well-managed logging operations. The project offers a new way for Newbury citizens to unify and bond for a common goal. Truly, it has already brought diverse members of our community together as we dream and plan for what the Town Forest will become. In 2019, 80 people volunteered for 12 volunteer day activities and community service days. Committee members and others have explored, walked and flagged the property boundary and have already put hands to the tasks of clearing trails, cutting brush and saplings from old stone walls, building kiosks, and removing invasive species. The Committee hired a tree cutter and brush-hog operator to open and maintain the views from the summit.

2. Vision, Goals, Process, and Responsibilities

a. Overall Vision for Community Lands

The Tucker Mountain Town Forest Management Committee envisions a Town Forest that is a natural refuge shared by citizens of Newbury and others to enjoy all kinds of outdoor recreation. It is seen as a catalyst for rallying our community as we engage in the stewardship of this land, coming together in planning and volunteering for work projects that improve and preserve the ecological health of the forest and enhance its recreational value. It will be a well-managed forest with trees of varying age and species, high open meadows that offer views in all directions and that support a variety of native grasses and wildflowers, and protected wetlands, brooks, beaver ponds, and at least one vernal pool. The Town Forest will remain a welcoming habitat for wildlife, including deer, moose, bear, beaver, amphibians, birds, fish and other species. The Tucker Mountain Town Forest will be a source of pride for Newbury and an attraction for visitors throughout the region.

The Town Forest will continue to be used for activities like hiking, skiing, snowmobile riding, hunting, bird watching and other wildlife observation, mountain biking, horseback riding and for responsible motor vehicle travel. New non-motorized use trails and signage will be added. Tucker Mountain Road and the spur road to the top of Tucker will continue to be used as trails and access for vehicles, although we will need to make major improvements to the spur road and the Class 4 Tucker Mountain Road. All trail access will be supported by trailhead parking areas and information kiosks with maps, notices, and posted regulations. It is important that one user group does not impinge another's use and enjoyment of the Town Forest. The Committee will promote cooperation between all user groups and will lead in managing any conflicts that arise.

Tucker Mountain Town Forest will serve as an outdoor classroom for students from Newbury Elementary, Blue Mountain School, Oxbow, and all neighboring schools as a destination for school field trips, outdoor learning and research projects, and community service. The property offers specific opportunities for high school students from River Bend Career and Technical Center to learn safe chainsaw skills, forest management, take on possible excavation projects such as road maintenance and repair, and sign making. Aside from skills and knowledge gained, educational endeavors will engender appreciation and respect for natural environments and the role humans play in preserving and nurturing them. Adults and families, too, will enjoy educational walks, talks and studies associated with the Town Forest.

The Committee encourages the creation of a 501(c)(3) “Friends of Tucker Mountain” group to help with organizing volunteers, activities and fundraising.

b. Goals for management

Preserve a healthy ecosystem.

- All aspects of managing the town forest will be planned and executed with the overall goal of preservation and improvement of the ecosystem. Forest management, road repair, education, signage, wildlife monitoring, and any other activities will be guided by what is best for the Town Forest ecology. The Committee will be guided by the conservation easement agreed upon and signed by the Town of Newbury and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT) [Addendum 1, Map Addendum 10]. We will seek help, advice and approval from VLT and their forester as needed.

Preserve the features of the property that users’ value.

- Preserve the 360-degree view from the top of Tucker Mountain by brush-hogging the meadows as needed (after August 1 to protect nesting birds and their fledglings) and clearing saplings where they are encroaching on the meadows. A small patch of meadow may be mowed for events such as weddings and for an area for viewing and picnicking.
- Improve access through road maintenance and building parking areas.
- Manage timber harvests conservatively with an emphasis on diversity of species and maturity, aesthetics, and wildlife habitat guided by a Forest Management Plan and Licensed Forester.

Repair erosional damage to roads and hillside

- The plan proposes modification and repair of the spur road from the height of land of Tucker Mountain Road to the summit of Tucker Mountain as a means of improving drainage and traffic control. The road will be designed such that it significantly reduces erosion and prevents vehicles from creating their own way through the delicate meadows.
- Current degradation will be repaired using methods recommended by our forester and other professional resources.

Establish good relationships with neighboring landowners.

- Communicate openly and transparently with our neighbors.

- Respect and help promote the ecological health of bordering land.
- Use signs and other educational tools to ask users to cooperate in showing respect for surrounding private land and especially posted land.

Establish new recreational trails for hikers, skiers, bikers and equestrians.

- Potential trails are described later in this plan. Volunteers will flag and map these trails and volunteer or paid consultants as well as our forester will make recommendations for fine-tuning these routes in consideration of ecological factors. These trails will be built, mapped and marked with signs and blazes. Trails will be built with the help of volunteers, including organized groups of school children.

Do all we can to get people into the woods: families, children, the elderly, and the disabled.

- Build parking areas that are easy to use with handicapped accessible parking and hard pack surfaces.
- Be sure any planned facilities are handicapped accessible.
- Lay out future plans for a handicapped accessible trail.
- Promote the Town Forest as providing inexpensive activity for anyone regardless of income level.

Avoid potential user conflicts by promoting respect and cooperation in kiosk messaging, “share the trail” signage, on the website and in other communications.

Continue to build community support and encourage a sense of ownership for the Town Forest through publicity, social media, public meetings and events, and volunteerism.

- The Committee photographs events such as volunteer days and publishes these photos along with a text story on their Facebook Page and sends the same material out to Friends of Tucker Mountain on an email list.
- The Committee has established relationships with local newspapers which publish stories and photographs showing volunteer activities, progress and improvements to the Town Forest, and report on other newsworthy events.
- Public meetings are conducted to include citizens in the development of planning initiatives, to discuss progress, and to gather feedback.

- The Committee plans to initiate an annual meeting and Tucker Mountain Town Forest celebration.
- Each year the Management Committee will be asked to write an entry for the Town's annual report. This will summarize work done and the status of the Town Forest, present the year's progress, and describe future plans. Town Meeting will also be an opportunity to speak about the report, answer questions, and thank the town for their support.

Promote the Town Forest as an outdoor classroom.

Education can create an understanding of the Tucker Mountain ecosystem, and it is a fundamental tool leading people to respect and love the Town Forest property so they will want to preserve and protect it. Education can help generate a cultural shift where disrespectful degradation of terrain and any other acts of vandalism are diminished.

- The Committee plans to increase school participation through field trips, field study projects, timber stand management training and community service such as trail building and maintenance.
- Newbury Elementary School has an annual fall field trip hiking to the top of Tucker Mountain, and sometimes they are joined by Bradford Elementary. Committee members and other friends of the Town Forest can arrange to help plan curriculum for the day and offer to join the students and help point out ecological and historical features of the Town Forest. Blue Mountain School and Oxbow will also be encouraged to make use of Tucker Mountain as a field trip destination.
- Committee members and friends can visit schools to present programs on Tucker Mountain history, geology, forestry, the ecology of the mountain and other Town Forest related topics.
- We will encourage middle and high school teachers to make use of the Town Forest as an educational resource.
- The Committee will involve River Bend Career and Technical Center in vocationally oriented projects like timber stand improvement, restoration of degraded landscapes, road excavation, and carpentry projects such as signage, picnic tables, and outhouse construction.

Encourage public education through organized walks, signage, presentations, and publications.

Offer displays at public events with information on history, ecology, and current projects.

- Organize walks led by geologists, naturalists, and historians.
- Provide trail signs with information on history and ecological features.
- Publish information on social media, the web page, and in print.
- Invite groups to join organized visits to logging sites where loggers and foresters discuss the operations and answering questions.

c. Development Process for the Management Plan

The previous owners of the property placed most of it into a conservation easement with the Vermont Land Trust in 1992. In 2015 the family began discussions with the Vermont Land Trust and the Town of Newbury offering to sell the land to the town at a reduced price if the town would agree to continue to protect it in accordance with a conservation easement with VLT.

The Newbury Conservation Commission was on board from the time the land sale discussion became public, organizing open forums with VLT and encouraging the purchase, informing Newbury citizens about the potential Town Forest, displaying maps and distributing information. Other interested citizens joined the effort. Some saw stewardship of the forest as an opportunity to support the ecological well-being of the forest property, and a chance to reverse destructive abuse by any irresponsible off-road vehicle drivers. Opportunities for recreation and outdoor education were also highlighted as benefits.

There was some opposition to the purchase, but when the decision to purchase came to a vote, it was clear most Newbury voters wanted to move forward with the Town Forest. This was confirmed in a petitioned re-vote.

The Selectboard appointed an Interim Management Committee who drafted an interim management plan according to the purchase agreement. The purchase was completed in December of 2018, with all

of the land coming under the protection of the Vermont Land Trust conservation easement. the Selectboard appointed a seven-member Management Committee.

Prior to drafting this management plan, the Management Committee conducted two public meetings and an on-line survey seeking input from the community about their vision for the Town Forest and the concerns they want a management plan to address [Addenda 2 and 3]. Citizens were asked what they value about Tucker Mountain, what improvements they would like to see, what activities should be allowed and what restrictions should be put in place, and what opportunities exist for education and other benefits. The opinions gathered in those meetings helped inform this report.

This plan will go to the Newbury Selectboard and the Vermont Land Trust for review. Once necessary changes are made, a new draft will be presented in public meetings where Newbury citizens will have an opportunity to suggest changes and additions. Any changes coming out of the meetings will be reviewed and approved by the Selectboard. Finally, the management plan will go to the Vermont Land Trust for their final approval. This plan will be reviewed and updated two years following implementation. Subsequent updates will happen every five years, always following a process of public input and review and Selectboard and VLT approval.

d. Responsibilities

The seven-member Tucker Mountain Town Forest Management Committee, supported and overseen by the Newbury Selectboard, will be responsible for ensuring management goals are met.

Orange County Forester David Paganelli has been engaged to serve as forester. He will be responsible for advising the Committee on management activities, including work on this plan. He will write the next forest management plan and help execute it within the guidelines set forth by the Vermont Land Trust in the agreed upon "Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions, and Public Access Easement" [Addendum 1].

The Committee will work closely with the Newbury Conservation Commission and look to them for resources, help and advice.

The Committee will rely on the Vermont Land Trust and their forester to approve and advise them on any work that impacts the ecology of the property.

The Committee will always seek to communicate with the community through public meetings including an annual meeting, email, social media, website and open committee meetings.

e. Financing

Although the Selectboard may choose to help fund any aspect of the development and maintenance of the Town Forest, it is not an expectation of the Management Committee. The Town is responsible for Tucker Mountain Road, a Class 4 Town Highway according to Vermont Highway Ordinance, Article 6:

6.3 Class 4 Town Highways. Class 4 highways are seasonal highways, which may be graded once during the summer season. Replacement/maintenance of bridges/culverts to a minimum standard is on an "as needed" basis. No winter maintenance is performed unless ordered by the Selectboard for an emergency or unusual circumstance. Abutting landowners/residents may be allowed to perform improvements/maintenance upon presentation of a detailed proposal to, and acceptance by, the Selectboard.

Any road maintenance beyond what the Selectboard may allocate, rebuilding and maintenance of the spur road to the top, the maintaining views from the top of Tucker, the development of parking areas, any construction on the property, and any similar operations will be scheduled using funds from non-tax sources as they become available. Proposed maintenance and improvements will happen over time only as funds permit.

The Management Committee believes that the Town Forest can be primarily self-financing. Among the sources of potential revenue that may be tapped are the following:

- Timber harvests.
- Grants from state and local, public and private sources.
- Private donations to a 501(c)(3) fund (e.g., from a Friends of Tucker Mountain group).
- Community fundraising campaigns.
- User fees, if any.

- Proceeds as deemed appropriate from sale on the commercial market of other properties owned by the Town.

For each timber harvest, an income sharing agreement should be developed by the Town and the Management Committee to determine the distribution of proceeds so that a substantial percentage will be available for the continued maintenance and development of the town forest.

Although not a direct income flow, the anticipated stimulus to economic development in the area will likely have an impact on increased tax revenue and local businesses. This includes any increase in tourism and the possible attraction of a Town Forest recreation area to families who are considering moving to Newbury and buying homes here. That attraction also encourages young people to stay in the area, improving the quality of life here in a way that makes them less likely to move away.

The town will continue to manage a Town Forest Management Fund as a repository for funds acquired through grants, donations, a percentage of timber harvest, and other non-tax dollars for the improvement and maintenance of the property.

3. Property Description

Tucker Mountain Town Forest is a 636-acre property that contains Tucker Mountain (el. 1690 ft.) and its environs, including the southern half of Woodchuck Mountain (el. 1742 ft.), Newbury's highest point. The lowest elevation of the property is around 1100 ft. Most of the land is forested with a mix of hardwood and softwood with patches left open for successional wildlife habitat. The predominant tree species are white pine, hemlock, balsam fir, red maple, sugar maple, yellow birch, beech, white ash and red oak.

The top of Tucker Mountain is well known for its open meadows lush with various grasses, wildflowers, wild strawberries, blueberries and blackberries. These open grasslands are ideal habitat for grassland birds such as bobolink and eastern meadowlark that have suffered severe decline in the last 50 years, due in large part to loss of habitat. The meadows offer a 360-degree view. To the east one sees New Hampshire's White Mountains from the Presidential Range to Mount Moosilauke. The Benton Range with Black Mountain, Sugarloaf, and the Hogsback are also clearly visible. The Waits River Valley and the mountains of Groton State Forest spread to the west. To the south is Wrights Mountain and a longer view to Mt. Ascutney, and Woodchuck Mountain rises to the north. The meadows were

originally cleared c. 1810 for agriculture and for years sheep and cattle grazed there. The previous owners hired brush hog operators to keep the upper meadows clear and open by a yearly or bi-yearly cutting. This year at the recommendation of the Committee, the Selectboard contracted for brush hog clearing and for thinning some trees, and volunteers have cleared brush along the meadow's stone walls, opening views that have been blocked.

To the east of the Tucker Mountain-Woodchuck Mountain ridgeline, the land is gentle with some level to moderately sloping ground. The western part of the property is more rolling with some steep to very steep ground. Ledge outcrops and surface stones are common, especially near heights of land.

The ridge divides the headwaters of two sub-watersheds to the Connecticut River. East of the two summits, the Halls Brook headwaters drain into the Connecticut. The west branch of Hall's Brook supplies a wetland of several inactive beaver ponds, dams and lodges. West of the summits, Meadow Brook begins at a small spring and drains to the Waits River before flowing on to the Connecticut. Along the course of Meadow Brook on the west side of the ridge are two man-made ponds. An intermittent brook originates on the southern boundary and joins Meadow Brook. Both Meadow Brook and the Halls Brook branch flow clean and clear with no signs of pollution.

There is one significant vernal pool near the top of Tucker and what may be a second, smaller pool has been identified. The land also contains several swamps.

The land reveals outcroppings of the sedimentary bedrock that form the base of these mountains. There are deposits of glacial till and rocky soils and glacial erratics of varying sizes are strewn about. These and fragments of bedrock were used to build the abundant stone walls that border reforested fields.

The history of the land is part of its fascination and attraction; many historical artifacts, such as stone walls and cellar holes, still remain. Much of the forest was cleared for agriculture in the early 19th century. There were at least two homesteads on the property and three that closely border it.

Two properties were combined when the land was transferred to the Vermont Land Trust and then to the Town of Newbury: the 494-acre Philip and Virginia Leach property, owned by their five children, and a 142-acre parcel owned by Edward and Deborah Leach, Philip and Virginia's son and daughter-in-law.

The owners offered the two parcels of land to the Town of Newbury at a rate much reduced from the appraised value if the town would agree to keep it as a public town forest and preserve it based on a conservation easement to be held by the Vermont Land Trust. The senior Leaches had previously protected the 494 acres through the VLT, but that agreement was redrafted at the time of the sale to the town. The 142 acres had not been protected until the sale to the Town of Newbury.

The forests of the 142-acre parcel which includes the south side of Woodchuck Mountain is of special note in that most of it has not been logged for 20-30 years and contains healthy stands of red oak, white pine and sugar maple.

The land has been managed with forest management plans drafted and overseen by qualified foresters. Most if not all of the original climax forest was cleared for crop land or pasture when the land was originally settled. Since reforestation, trees have been cut in many different areas over the years, with some stands cut several times. The first logging based on forestry principals was conducted in 1993. Several timber stands were logged prior to the sale in keeping with the owner's forest management plan, the goals of which, aside from timber harvest, were to nurture a forest of mixed species and stages of maturity and create small patches of early successional forest for wildlife habitat.

The town's Class 4 Tucker Mountain Road crosses the property east to west. The road has seen minimal maintenance on either end, although the Newbury road crew made significant repairs to the first mile of road entering the Town Forest from the east prior to the sale, establishing a series of stone gravel bars to abate erosion. The town also installed gates at either end which are closed during the muddiest season of the year to help protect the road. The road's middle section of approximately three miles of steep terrain has not been maintained. Regardless of its condition it is still used by 4x4 motor vehicles, snow-machines, hikers, skiers, mountain bikers, and equestrians. A 1/3-mile spur road, now part of the property, ascends steeply from the height of land on Tucker Mountain Road through the grassy meadows to the top. At present this road is unmaintained, with sections needing replacement or major repair.

In the forest southwest of the man-made ponds, there is a stand of enormous old legacy trees. Most of these are sugar maple, but there are a few large basswood and red oak. This would be one of many potential destinations for a non-motorized use forest trail.

The Vermont Land Trust had two Rapid Ecological Assessments done for the property in 2016. This two-part overview of the property identifies many of the land features mentioned above, makes recommendations for further investigation, and goes into some depth regarding geological features and soil types [Addenda 4 and 5].

a. Current uses of the property

The land has been managed for logging and the former owners kept it open for recreational use by snowmobiles, hikers, cross-country skiers, equestrians, vehicles, and hunters.

Logging has been somewhat aggressive on the Philip Leach portion of the property with five harvests in various stands since the last forest management plan in 2010. The Edwin and Deborah Leach portion has not been logged for over seven years and most stands in this part of the forest have not been logged for 20-30 years. The 142 acre parcel has had some history of tapping for maple sap but no trees are being tapped now. The Leach's in the past granted permission to a sugar maker who was tapping on State owned parcel, Woodchuck Mountain, to run a main sap line across their property. The sap line followed the property line down to the town road.

There are no habitable structures on the property.

4. Natural Resources

Tucker Mountain Town Forest is part of a large and important wildlife corridor extending from the 1500+ acre Fairlee Town Forest to the south, the Groton State Forest to the north, and the White Mountain National Forest to the east and beyond into Maine.

The Tucker Mountain forests provides habitat for a wide range of wildlife, providing opportunities for wildlife viewing, tracking, hunting, and education. Bears find an abundance of oak, beech, and berries on the slopes of Tucker and the adjoining Woodchuck mountains, while white-tailed deer find shelter from snow under conifer stands on the property's lower slopes. Food sources for wildlife are plentiful. Healthy red oaks in addition to moderately healthy beech stands provide a hard mast food source for rodents, deer, turkey, skunks, and bear. Logging activity in the last five years has created ideal conditions for berries. There are also a number of apple trees on the property. Striped maple, hemlock, and seeps provide browse and vegetation for herbivores during leaner times of year. Signs of moose are common and the land provides habitat for bobcats, weasels, barred owls, and many other species.

Deer and other animals graze on the grasses of the upper meadows. Grassland bird species may find suitable habitat here, and a breeding bird survey might confirm this. An objective of the most recent forest management plan is to provide and maintain a variety of habitats for wildlife.

The Eastern Brook Trout Joint Venture ranks the streams as having the highest possible scores for intact brook trout habitat. There is some beaver activity at one of the man-made ponds on the west side and many inactive beaver ponds on the east side, providing outdoor education and wildlife viewing opportunities. Vernal pools on the property offer amphibian breeding habitat.

An ecological protection zone (EPZ) has been established surrounding the large vernal pool southeast of the summit of Tucker Mountain. The pool is surrounded by forest including an old giant yellow birch that abuts an old stone wall. It is an active amphibian breeding site and a chorus of wood frogs creates quite a cacophony on a spring day. The secondary EPZ—a circular zone 500 feet out from the 100-foot primary zone around the pool itself—includes some of the high meadows at the top of the mountain. Protection of this EPZ is required by the Vermont Land Trust conservation easement as habitat for amphibians. The VLT has approved maintenance of pre-existing meadows within this EPZ.

The VLT rapid ecological assessment [Part 1, Addendum 4] mentions the possibility of another vernal pool on the south edge of the property that the Committee is in the process of assessing. If it is determined that there are breeding amphibians, another EPZ may be established to protect it.

5. Management Objectives

a. Public access and Recreation

Current Access

The Class 4 Tucker Mountain Road runs east to west through the Town Forest. This is the primary diverse-use trail in the Town Forest—hikers, snowmobiles, off-road vehicles and others all share this road. The road approaches the property on Tucker Mountain Road from West Newbury on the east side and from Bowen Road on the west side. Much of this road is in poor condition with washouts, exposed boulders, and bare ledge. The degradation in the last ten years or so has restricted access to the top of Tucker Mountain to off road vehicles. Prior to this, the road was passable for many more, less aggressive vehicles allowing a wider range of the populous to easily visit the top of Tucker Mountain and drive through what is the now Town Forest property.

The lower section of Tucker Mountain Road that passes through the east side of the property was repaired prior to its sale to the town following logging operations. The recent maintenance ends at the upper log landing about 1/3-mile east of the road's height of land. Along an approximately 300-yard section of this road west of that landing the road is nearly impassable due to erosion. It is the most degraded section of Tucker Mountain Road.

Most people park close to the eastern boundary of the property near a gate or at a school bus turnaround that extends onto private land. A few will park at the upper log landing.

Tucker Mountain Road on the west side of the mountain is in slightly better condition, but nearly impassable for most vehicles once it enters the Town Forest. There is no parking area along this section of road at this time.

Any and all motor vehicles other than snowmobiles are prohibited from December 1 to May 31 between two gates, one near the east side of the property and one near the west boundary as set forth in a travel restriction ordinance by the Newbury Selectboard. These gates were installed to protect the road during the muddiest time of year. When the ground is frozen and covered with snow, the gates are left open for snowmobiles. Whether the gate is open or closed, the road is used regularly by hikers, mountain bikers, occasional horseback riders, and cross-country skiers.

A spur road from the Tucker Mountain Road height of land to the top of Tucker Mountain is of major concern because its use has caused severe erosion in the grassy meadows. Where one section of road has washed out, vehicles created a new road next to it. When that new road washes out, a third road is created. At present, there is one hillside with four washed out roads, all in very bad condition. The Committee has taken moderate steps to direct traffic onto just one of these roads and these efforts are quite effective as a temporary measure.

Proposed Plan for Access

The Committee recommendation is to create a new parking area for 20 cars with room for a snow-plow turnaround on the east side of the property at the entrance to the log landing just east of the gate. The current, unofficial parking area on private property east of the gate will no longer be used for public parking.

The upper log landing on the east side serves well in its present condition as a parking area for five or six vehicles and improvement to this lot is part of the overall parking plan. This lot can be easily expanded if there is a need for more parking. At this time the Committee is not considering making any major improvements to the road on the east side. The Committee supports restoration of water-bars on the washed-out section beyond the upper landing using volunteer help or grant funding in order to try and prevent further erosion. We welcome any town maintenance of any section of Tucker Mountain Road.

On the west side of Tucker Mountain, the goal is to create a smaller parking area for five or six cars just west of the gate on the west boundary of the property where Woodchuck Road joins Tucker Mountain Road. This trailhead parking will have a kiosk.

The Management Committee intends to work with the Selectboard to improve and maintain the section of Tucker Mountain Road from the west gate to its height of land so that most vehicles can use it to access the spur road to the top of the mountain.

The Committee will manage the design and construction of a new spur road from the Tucker Mountain Road height of land to a small parking area for six to eight vehicles near the top of Tucker Mountain. The improved road will mitigate the severe erosion caused by washouts of the multiple roads currently existing and create good and easy access to the top. Funding for the planning, construction, and maintenance of this spur road will be sought through grants and donations.

The Management Committee is currently gathering estimates to create budgets for these projects. They have been approved for a grant from Recreational Trails Program of \$21,000 to construct two parking areas and a kiosk.

Current Trails

Present trails in The Tucker Mountain Town Forest include 1) the Class 4 Tucker Mountain Road which functions as a diverse-use trail, 2) the separate, unclassified, spur road to the top of Tucker Mountain from the height of land on the Tucker Mountain Road, 3) Old Boulevard and Woodchuck Trail which are classified as town trails, the lowest classification of a town road, and 4) a new non-motor use trail paralleling Tucker Mountain Road to the north from the log landing by the east gate to the Old Boulevard. The road and spur road are shared by all means of foot travel as well as motorized and non-motorized transport and there are rarely conflicts between these groups. The new trail is not designed

for motorized use. Part of Woodchuck Trail borders a section of the west side of the Town Forest. The Old Boulevard branches southwest from Tucker Mountain Road on the east side.

There are old skid roads on the property which are more lightly used and some will be further developed into a more organized trail system for the Town Forest.

Proposed Trails

The Committee plans to continue the new foot trail from the new parking lot on the West Newbury side of the mountain all the way to the top for hikers, mountain bikes and horses. Where it now reaches the Old Boulevard, it will continue up the Boulevard to the Town Forest boundary, then switch back up the side of the mountain to a ridge, head north and meet an old road that passes west of the vernal pool and continue to the top.

The committee will be seeking donations and grants to make major improvements to the diverse-use Tucker Mountain Road where it passes through the Town Forest and to do whatever excavation is needed on the spur road to reconstruct it and manage the erosion.

The Committee is also considering

- A foot trail from Tucker Mountain Road up the east side of Woodchuck Mountain to a viewpoint at the top. This will loop back along the west side of Woodchuck back to the road.
- A foot trail traveling southeast from a point on the west section of Tucker Mountain Road to the Tucker Mountain summit.
- Other trails will be considered for planning and construction. All trail building and maintenance will be consistent with our goal of managing the property for wildlife, environmental impact and respect for private property.
- During logging operations, we will work with our forester to develop skid roads with future trails in mind.

The State of Vermont is transferring land north of Woodchuck Mountain to Upper Valley Land Trust. In conversations, UVLT is enthusiastic about sharing trails between our property and theirs.

We will use signage and other means to encourage respect for private property surrounding the Town Forest wherever trails approach our boundaries and at the main kiosk information points.

See map on page 2: Map with Class 4 roads, Town Trails, and other Trails

Signage

Signage will include:

- Three kiosks, each with a map of the Town Forest, educational information, regulations, and other notices. One will be placed at the east gate, one at a west entrance parking area, and one where the spur road to the summit leaves Tucker Mountain Road.
- Signs where needed on town roads to direct traffic to the Tucker Mountain Town Forest.
- Signs marking trails and directional signs, boundary signs, and signs that warn users to respect private property and, where necessary, signs that prohibit entry.
- Signs on the meadows that discourage activities that cause erosion to the land and that remind people to remove their trash.
- Signs designating trails as multiuse, pedestrian, and multi-use non-motorized.
- Speed limits for motorized vehicles and signs warning vehicles to watch out for non-motorized users.
- “Share the Trail” signs that encourage cooperation between various user groups
- Summit elevation signs for the tops of Tucker Mountain and Woodchuck Mountain.
- Educational signs that identify and present information on historical homestead sites, explain geologic and botanical features, vernal pools, etc.

Facilities and warming hut

The committee will research composting outhouse construction and make plans for the construction of a facility at the main (east) parking area.

Newbury Border Riders snowmobile club has offered to build a warming hut for the Town Forest. The committee will consider this offer and discuss plans with them with the possibility of construction within the next two years.

Allowed activities

- The Town Forest allows hiking, cross country skiing, hunting and snowshoeing in any part of the property.
- Mountain bikes and horses are allowed on established trails as long as they are not causing significant erosion.
- Hunting is permitted with adherence to State hunting regulations.
- Wheeled motorized vehicles are permitted on Tucker Mountain Road and the spur road to the top. When there is sufficient snow cover, snowmobiles are allowed on the meadows as long as there is no damage to the soil.
- Fires are allowed in the established fire ring only. If fire danger is high, fires are prohibited.
- Leave No Trace overnight camping is permitted (no digging, no wood cutting, no fire).

Restricted activities

- All off-road vehicles require a valid registration from Vermont or any other state.
- Dogs are the responsibility of their owners and are to be kept on a leash or under the owner's strict control.
- Dog owners are responsible for picking up and removing their dog's excrement.
- During hunting season, signs will be posted warning non-hunters to wear bright colors and to keep dogs on leashes. Signs will also warn hunters to be alert for hikers and other users.

- Temporary tree stands or ground blinds for hunting are permitted two weeks before until two weeks after the specified hunting season with permission from any member of the Management Committee. Tucker Mountain Management Committee holds the right to establish ground blinds for wildlife viewing.
- Temporary stands or blinds for photography are permitted with permission from any member of the Management Committee.

Prohibited activities

- Any activities that are harmful to wildlife habitat, geological features, and the town forest environment are prohibited as establish in the Conservation Easement held by the Vermont Land Trust.
- Except for maintenance and emergency vehicles, all motorized vehicles are required to stay on Tucker Mountain Road and the spur road. Driving wheeled vehicles off-road on the upper meadow is strictly prohibited and will be treated as vandalism.
- No fires outside of the fire ring and no fires when fire danger is high, even if warnings are not posted.
- No trash is to be left in the Town Forest. It is the users' responsibility to remove all trash they bring in. Pack it in, pack it out.
- Illegal dumping will be prosecuted.
- No commercial harvesting of plants such as mushrooms, ginseng, birchbark, etc. without permission from the Newbury Selectboard.
- Installation of any memorials is prohibited. Contact the Tucker Mountain Town Forest Committee if you wish to memorialize a friend or family member through some other means. At the time of the property transfer to the town, the previous owners (the Leach family) reserved a section of land near the top for a family memorial and it does not fall under this rule.

b. Management for Timber and Other Forest Products

There are currently two Forest Management Plans completed for the original two parcels of land. The Leach Estate (494 acres acquired by Philip and Virginia Leach) forest management plan was written in 2010 [Addendum 6]. The Edward and Deborah Leach property (142-acre parcel) management plan update was created in 2018 [Addendum 7]. Timber inventories have been prepared for both portions of the property [Addenda 8 and 9]. The plan and inventories were prepared for the Leach family by Jeffrey Smith, Thetford Center, Vermont, of Butternut Forestry. As forester for the Leaches, Jeffrey is prepared to make available all reports and data.

The Management Committee and Selectboard together will decide how income from logging will be shared between Newbury's Town Forest fund and the general fund.

The Tucker Mountain Town Forest Management Committee and the Newbury Selectboard have appointed Orange County Forester David Paganelli as forester for the Tucker Mountain Town Forest. Working with the Committee, he will develop a new forest management plan that will consider and prioritize:

1. Maximize tree growth and health emphasizing diversity of tree species, different age classes
2. Creating and supporting wildlife habitat
3. Forest appearance
4. The impact of recreation
5. Sustainable and environmentally sound timber harvesting practices including the consideration of horse logging.

d. Invasive Species

Invasive bush honeysuckle is present on the property and steps are being taken to identify and remove it. Volunteers have made considerable progress in uprooting the bushes and this work will continue. Our approach is to avoid using herbicides but to pull the bushes and, if they are at seed stage, burn them.

Other invasive species have not been identified at this time, though hikers have reported seeing invasive knotweed.

We will be vigilant in monitoring for Invasive species both plant and animal, and will establish a reporting process that will allow the public to help.

c. Wildlife

Any human activity in the Town Forest will be managed with an eye to preserving and improving wildlife habitat and water quality. There will be no new trails developed for motorized vehicles in order to better preserve wildlife habitat.

With the help of wildlife experts, the Management Committee will establish a wildlife monitoring program. Game cameras will likely be placed at recommended sites. A data bank may be established whereby visitors to the mountain report sightings, tracks, scat, and other signs of wildlife. The Vermont Audubon Society forester has agreed to visit the forest and provide technical assistance on how to intentionally incorporate bird habitat considerations into our land management. Members of the community will be invited to join him.

Addenda [Requests to Tom Kidder, Chair tombkidder@gmail.com]

1. Public Meetings Summaries
2. Public Survey
3. Grant of Development Rights, Conservation Restrictions, and Public Access Easement
4. Newbury Town Forest Rapid Ecological Assessment Part I
5. Newbury Town Forest Rapid Ecological Assessment Part II
6. The Estate of Philip F. Leach Forest Management Plan and Map
7. Leach Property Forest Data and Plan (2018 Update: Edward and Deborah Leach Property)
8. Timber Inventory, Edward and Deborah Leach
9. Timber Inventory, Leach Family Property
10. Conservation Easement Map