HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the November 2017 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last submission in early September.

1. HMCA presented a talk about our ESH program at the Windham Regional Woodlands Association Annual Meeting, held this year at Molly Stark State Park on Sept. 9.
2. HMCA held a “Save the T-bars” work day on Oct 1. Only 19 T’s were still in the Quonset hut - out of what likely was 40-60 originally. Those 19 were saved and are now stored in the Anderson’s barn. Four of the heavy metal retractors were also retrieved and stored. In addition to saving the T’s, the crew cleaned up the main room in the warming hut, hauling out about 6 big contractor-size bags of trash. The main room is now tidy and relatively clean, with two picnic tables and benches.
3. Fall work days have started for the ESH project. Session #2 was rained out, but despite that, excellent progress has been made in opening the former Practice Slope.
4. Diana, Malcolm, Jack and Amanda toured the four largest buildings in the Conservation Area on Monday, Nov.6. The roof is still leaking at Benedict Cottage. The First Aid Building is in dire condition, with serious leaks. The Castle looked tidy and relatively stable, with new roofing on one side, plus new plywood floor and ceiling where the worst rot had been. Two windows are not currently covered, so water is getting into the building. There is no front door, so water gets in there, too. We noticed some new, large painted graffiti on the lift operator cabin at the top of the shorter of the two twin T-bars (on the Tower Trail).The Quonset Hut is still tidy, but water is clearly coming in through the missing front wall. The kitchen and bathrooms have not yet been cleared of debris.
5. Alan Baker has offered to help HMCA set up a web page that provides GPX and KMZ files that users will be able to download to their cell phones and use as digital gps maps.
6. HMCA prepared their 2018 budget request, essentially the same as for 2017, except it does not have a request for Biodiversity Inventory funding. The plan is to get some actual bids for the job before submitting a request to the Select Board via the HPC.
7. Online items:
   1. In early November, Diana saw from a photo posted online that there was large painted graffiti on the exterior of the shelter at the top of the fire tower. She notified Ethan Phelps of VT Forests, Parks and Recreation. He was grateful to have been notified, and will try to have the Molly Stark crew paint over the graffiti if they can fit it in before their last work day on Nov 18.
   2. Diana noticed that Hogback was listed on a “free camping spots” site. The listing stated that the free camping was in the big paved parking lot. Ed has granted permission for people to stay there. Diana added a “review” that emphatically stated that there is no camping allowed in the woods or anywhere in the conservation area, that the free camping is just an overnight spot for RVs in the parking lot.
   3. Diana found a web site where users are invited to post info about hikes. Listings for Hogback in Marlboro were mixed up with listing for a Hogback Mountain hike near Brandon on Forest Service land. Diana left a comment trying to sort out the confusion.
   4. The HMCA website has been averaging over 30 visits per day since early September.