HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the September 2017 meeting of the HPC

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

1. Summer programs:
   1. The “Hike the Real Hogback” walk on July 2 attracted 21 people. Some faint user-made side trails are appearing in the far reaches on the north side. It doesn’t seem to be a big problem but we should keep an eye on that area. There is no longer any view at all from the “summit.” Should we cut a tree or two here and there to open some narrow slots in the foliage to highlight key views?
   2. Six people came to help clear growth and debris from the Bishop outbuilding foundations on July 15. Bob Anderson brought his tractor with chipper attachment. The huge amount of debris that was cleared was reduced to several modest piles of chips.
   3. Over 110 people attended the July 23 summer evening meeting featuring Susan Morse’s illustrated slide show about catamounts. Many attendees filled out a short survey. Key finding: More people found out about the event from print newspapers than any other single source. Posters came in second. Emails, the web page, and Front Porch Forum also reached many people.
   4. The August 5 animal tracking event with George Leoniak had to be cancelled due to bad weather.
2. Bishop Site: Bob Anderson has volunteered to be responsible for monitoring the area around the Bishop homestead. He will plan and lead volunteer work parties, recommend signage and other interpretive aids, and keep an eye on that location year-round. He has mowed the access trails at the Grant Road entrance in support of the Bishop site.
3. VLT visit: Jennifer Garret of Vermont Land Trust visited Hogback on the afternoon of July 19. Diana Todd, Mike Purcell, and Patti Smith joined her. Jennifer told us that every year VLT reviews all the properties for which it holds easements . The reviews are boots-on-the-ground in some years and are done using up-to-date aerial photographs in other years. She reviewed the draft RFP written by the Biodiversity Inventory Working Group and said VLT supported the idea of having the inventory done. She reminded us that the conservation easement gives equal importance to public recreation and to wildlife/habitat protection.
4. ESH:
   1. The yearly mid-summer 360 degree photos documenting the regrowth every 100’ were taken on Meadow and the Great White Way over the 4th of July weekend.
   2. Phase 3 of the 10-year plan starts this fall, focusing on the Practice Slope. Stakes marking the 100’ stations have been set and 360 degree photos of the pre-cut condition were taken. The edges of the planned cut have been marked.
   3. Four work days are planned for fall: Sept 10, Oct 9, Oct 21, and Nov 12.
5. Benedict Cottage: On Sept 6 members of the HMCA BoD and the HPC toured Benedict Cottage to see if it was suitable for storing T-bar retractors. Conditions were worse than anticipated. Deterioration is setting in, including a serious leak in the roof.
6. HMCA Directors: Jack Widness of Wilmington has accepted the invitation to serve as an HMCA Director. He will be formally elected at the October HMCA BoD meeting.
7. Outreach: Over the summer the web site has been averaging 28 visits per day. Our Facebook page currently has 701 “likes.” Paper maps are being distributed at the kiosks and are appreciated by hikers.