

GREATER GOOSE POND FOREST STEWARDSHIP PLAN COMMUNITY FORUM #1 SUMMARY NOTES

On April 17, 2018, a Community Forum was held to share information on the Greater Goose Pond Forest Stewardship Plan Project and to gather information and ideas from the community on future use and management of the forest area. Over 110 individuals participated in this event, which was held at the Parks and Recreation Center on Washington Street. Following a review of the project, participants were divided into small groups and asked to discuss questions posed around three themes: Forest Ecology and Wildlife; Recreation and Use; and Education and Outreach. Each of these small group discussions were facilitated and summary notes were recorded.

The information shared by participants will be used by the Consultants overseeing this project to inform the creation of recommendations for the Forest Stewardship Plan.

A summary of the information collected during these small group discussions is included below.

I. FOREST ECOLOGY & WILDLIFE

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- ***What does stewardship mean to you?***
- ***What resources do you value most in the forest?***

The feedback received from discussions around these questions is summarized below:

- Stewardship was defined in multiple ways, a summary of what stewardship means to people generally is included below:
 - Active in service to the natural world
 - Being a responsible user
 - Management Plan in place that ties in to education, encourages wildlife habitat, builds public awareness
 - Mindfully maintain land for current enjoyment and future generations
 - Reflect interdependency with natural world
 - Respect for others
 - Working forest that is self-sustaining economically
 - Planning for the future
 - Providing a future for the land
 - Caring for the land
 - Understanding and support
 - An organized plan
 - Prioritization of land use concerns
- Groups discussed actions or areas that impact or relate to stewardship of the forest. A summary of these thoughts are listed below:
 - Greater ecological diversity and improved habitat diversity.
 - Timber management is important for wildlife habitat.
 - Maintaining wildlife corridors is important.
 - There is a need to minimize wildlife disruption.
 - Old habitat edges are on powerlines.
 - Trails need to be managed to minimize effect on wildlife habitat.

- Need to identify species that need habitat management.
 - There is concern regarding the impact of tree cutting and its effect on wild lands.
- Caring for and improving the conditions of trails in the forest.
 - Develop “friends of Goose Pond” to help with trail clearing and involve groups such as the Student Conservation Association, NEMBA, and mountain bike associations to help with trail maintenance.
 - Address erosion issues in the forest along mountain bike trails.
- Education is important for building respect for the forest.
 - Partnerships and collaboration with schools, land trusts, organizations, and other volunteers to do educational programming and signage in the forest.
 - People protect what they know and love.
 - There should be mobile apps for sharing info about the forest.
 - There should be clear instructions for adjacent land owners.
 - There should be more creative signs that do not get vandalized.
- Enforcement of rules to minimize impact of users on the forest.
 - Enforce / police the “no swimming” rules in Goose Pond
 - Some noted there is a need to reconsider the swimming ban.
 - Enforce rules regarding pets (e.g. pets on leash, picking up pet waste)
 - Control trash and partying. Consider more waste barrels, installing signs at access points, implementing fines for littering/partying.
 - Parking on the roadway should be patrolled. New parking locations should be evaluated.
- Evaluation of the number of people / level of use that the forest can support without impacting the environment. Some feel that more users is positive, while others feel that there should be limits on the number of users.
- Climate change considerations should be incorporated into stewardship planning/management.
- Control for invasive species
- Individuals discussed the resources they value most in the forest. A summary of their feedback is included below:
 - Value all equally
 - Wildlife and animals such as: Newts, deer, bull moose, birds
 - Clean and clear water
 - Vernal pools
 - Flora, plant life such as: red oaks, mushrooms
 - Peace and quiet
 - Trails
 - Drummer Hill
 - “It’s a gem”; beautiful trails; polite trail users

II. RECREATION & USE

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- ***How do you use the forest?***
- ***How could your experience in the forest be enhanced?***

The following is a summary of the ways that the forest is being used?

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|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Biking | ▪ Wildlife |
| ▪ Birding/Bird watching | ▪ Blueberry picking |

- Connecting to nature
- Creating memories with family and friends
- Dog walking
- Hiking
- Enlightenment
- Exploring
- Fishing
- General exercise
- Great family area
- Meditation
- Mental wellness
- Mountain Biking / Mountain Biking year round
- Mushroom hunting
- Photography
- Picnic
- Playing
- Running
- Sitting on dock
- Snowmobiles
- Snowshoeing
- Social
- Solitude
- Walking/Walk year round
- Wildlife tracking
- Wildlife watching
- Winter activities
- XC Skiing

The following is a summary of how people noted the experience in the forest could be enhanced?

- Improved communication about the forest using city website
 - Alert the public about tree blow-downs
- Improved safety
 - Signage with phone numbers to call
 - Increased patrols
 - Patrol for homeless camps
- Improved trail markers/blazing, color identification
- Sharing trails information on the City website and having trails maps available with current trail info as well as the All Trails App on the website
- Update trail map to share with rescue team for Keene Fire and Police Department
- More maintenance of trails (focus on trail design, drainage, new trails for mountain bikes, more main trail maintenance, and more family friendly hiking trails)
- Balance between different uses, and balance between improving access and keeping it the way it is today
 - Caution for expansion
 - Leave it the way it is
 - There has to be a "too much" point
 - Be sensitive of creating a "too familiar" feeling
 - Sensitive to conservation needs
 - Keep the nature aspect of Goose Pond and Drummer Hill
- Maintaining diverse pockets for wildlife
- Allowing for or having uses such as: Boating, Camping, Ice Skating, Kayaking/Canoeing, Swimming, Dog Park, Geocaching, Outdoor yoga
- A donation bin
- More educational information and programming
- A kiosk at trailhead with history, trail map, with the ability to grab map
- More trash bins in the parking lot
- Connect Goose Pond Forest to the rail trails
- More parking at the trail entrances
- More accessible trails
- Parking meters

III. EDUCATION & OUTREACH

Participants were asked to respond to the following questions:

- ***How can the forest serve as an educational resource?***
- ***What programs or events would you like to see in the forest?***

The feedback received from discussions around these questions is summarized below:

- There is an opportunity to use the forest as a place to host guided, educational walks or hikes on an array of topics for diverse ages. Some ideas shared for walk topics include: amphibians; geology; mushroom identification; a tour of cellar holes; and birds.
- There is interest in having opportunities for “self-guided” educational walks/hikes of the forest. Signs, brochures or phone applications could be used for leading these self-guided walks.
- There is an interest in continuing to use and expand use of the forest as an outdoor learning laboratory.
 - Although college classes and some local primary/secondary schools currently use the forest as part of classroom curriculum, there is interest in having more opportunities for youth to be exposed to the forest through:
 - school field trips
 - after school programs (e.g. working with YMCA children programs)
 - organized youth mountain bike outings
 - activities such as treasure/scavenger hunts
 - There is interest in having demonstration areas with signage in the forest to display good forest management practices with educational information
- There is interest for having space (e.g. an outdoor classroom, an area of picnic tables, or a clearing in the forest with stumps) in the forest (or nearby) to hold year round programs and for teachers to use or for families to gather.
- A suggestion was made for hosting an orienteering program
- The suggestion for having organized camping for youth or groups in the forest was shared in multiple group discussions.
- There is interest in hosting events in the forest such as:
 - Those geared towards families with a focus on younger children to orient them to the forest
 - Seasonal, themed events that are supported by the City
 - Art show that features the forest but could be hosted at the library or a public space
 - Sporting events such as cross country runs, snow shoeing, cross country skiing on old roads
 - Coordinated mountain bike rides
- There is an interest in having quiet and small events that do not exceed a manageable size.
- There is an interest in partnerships with scout programs, church groups, etc. for maintaining the trails and for sharing information with the general community.
- It was suggested that the Harris Center and Monadnock Conservancy be used as a source of ideas for programming.
- It was noted that there needs to be transportation provided for events (e.g. shuttle from the YMCA).
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- Groups identified parking as a challenge. There are not enough spaces available in the main parking lot off East Surry Road and at the Gilsum Road entrance to the Forest. There is

also a need to make parking more accessible for users. It was suggested that any new parking should not impact private property.

- It was suggested that there is a need for facilities, such as bathrooms and electricity, to accommodate school groups or other groups using the forest.
- An individual suggested the creation of a skills park, an area where youth and/or adults can learn basic mountain bike skills.
- With respect to trails, some discussed interest in having trails that are appropriate for children to learn and explore; some feel that there should be trails of varying degrees of difficulty for mountain biking; some think the mountain bike trails should be separated from walking trails; some feel that accessibility for different users with respect to age and mobility should be considered.
- It was suggested that information on the forest and its trails be better promoted online via the City website and/or creating a social media page for the Forest. The information to be shared could include trails maps, smart phone apps that promote trails like Trail Fork and Trail Find map, the NEMBA mountain bike trail map, etc.
- Information on the forest's highlights, features, and history should be shared via maps/brochures/website/and programming.
- It was expressed by multiple individuals that there is a need for improved wayfaring signage in the forest. However, it was also expressed that too much signage may deter from the user experience.
- In addition to wayfaring, it was suggested that there could be interpretive/educational signs throughout the forest to identify areas that are environmentally sensitive or to share information on the past land use/history.
- Signs should be maintained and updated.
- There could be an inventory of the forest's resources (e.g. inventory of stone walls) that is made available via the City website or a phone app that can serve as a virtual kiosk.
- There should be kiosks at the forest's entrances that have trail maps and pamphlets with a trail map that visitors can take. Kiosks could also display educational information about what lives and grows in the forest and why it is important to Keene.
- An educational tool for different age groups could be created to share information on things like vernal pools and other topics for families and schools to use.
- It was suggested there could be education (either through info on the website, via programming, or on signs or kiosks in the forest) on topics such as:
 - the history of the land;
 - how trails are built; how to enjoy nature in a respectful and sustainable way;
 - a history of the pond and how it came to be;
 - what is a conservation easement;
 - how Goose Pond fits into the larger landscape;
 - how users (walkers, bikers) should interact with each other;
 - when/how to protect trails and the pond, species in the forest.
- There is an opportunity to cross promote the mountain biking resources like the forest and biking resources like the rail trails and pathways in Keene.
There is an opportunity to cross promote Keene's hiking opportunities with the Region's hiking resources.
- UNH and Coop Extension could hold teacher trainings on topics like GIS.

- Creating hiking groups could be a way to connect people together for hiking.
- It was suggested that a long term, multi-generational study of the forest be conducted to monitor change over time.
- There is strong interest in keeping parts of the forest “wild” and in keeping events and programs of a small group size and facilities limited (if any) to ensure that the forest remains a quiet and tranquil environment. There is a concern for the potential impacts that may come with events and programming in the forest.
- It was noted that “education is good stewardship.”
- It was suggested that the forest become an area for “Green Up Keene” stewards.
- There is a need to consider money/funding for maintenance of the forest.