

Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
BRCF Management Committee Meeting

May 3, 2023

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merrymeeting Lake Association meeting room

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/87224857322?pwd=Rld2Z2VjNHFXR0NkaGZBZGlRSlRXZz09>

Meeting ID: 872 2485 7322 Passcode: 796752

- 1) Introduction of Chad Fierros, SELT's new Forest & Wildlife Habitat Manager (5 min)
- 2) October 2022 minutes (5 min)
 - a) Approve minutes
 - b) Update status to any actions needed (quick review)
 - i. Update on SELT Board review and agreement with Birch Ridge Ranch
 - ii. All other actions from Oct 2022 discussed in items below
- 3) Open Committee positions (5 min)
 - a) Town of New Durham rep pending
 - b) Education rep, and Education & Outreach Working Group
- 4) Updates (20 min)
 - a) MMRG – update by Lorrie; Jenn Woodard, events coordinator
 - b) Powder Mill Snowmobile Club – season update by Mike
 - c) Trails working group – update by Matt & Yohann on items from October meeting
 - i. Trail maintenance volunteer status
 - ii. Activities allowed & not allowed for posting on kiosks
 - d) Accessible Trail funding – update on status
 - e) Cabin
 - i. Interior work completed, & interior needs remaining (new floor; electric wiring?; Solar lighting?)
 - ii. Exterior – sanitary facility needed; accessible access needed
- 5) 2023 planned work & budget review (20 min)
 - a) Forestry & wildlife habitat
 - i. Changes to approved EQIP practices
 - ii. MU-4 work, including stream crossing
 - b) Trails
 - i. MU-6 all season trail
 - ii. Sledding hill status
 - iii. Other?
- 6) Community & Private events on BRCF (15 min)
- 7) Management Plan review and recommendation for SELT Land Stewardship Committee to approve (30 min)
- 8) Discussion on site walks committee would like to have this year (5 min)
- 9) Other business? (15 min)
 - a) Report on April 28 woodcock evening
- 10) Next meeting TBD September 2023

Birch Ridge Community Forest Management Committee (MC) – 7th Meeting

18 October 2022, 6:00 - 8:30pm,
Town of New Durham Community Room & Zoom video

Draft Minutes

Participants: Charlie Bridges (Chair), Conner Breton (SELT), Debbie Goard (SELT), Yohann Hanley (SELT)

Lee Alexander, Mike Gelinas, Matt Murphy, Dennis Thorell, and Russ Weldon, Victor Piekarski

Via Zoom: Lorrie Drake, Brad Helfer, and Emma Tutein.

1. Minutes of 27 September 2022 MC meeting

- a. Approved – no changes
- b. Status of action items

Trail Maintenance Volunteers – Russ prefers to wait until spring to set up this group.

“No camping” issue - Earlier this month, there was evidence of a non-approved campsite occurring on the lower meadow east of the Cabin. This needs to be addressed in terms of preventing a non-permitted camping. A list of allowed and non-allowed activities (e.g., camping) on BRCF needs to be posted on the kiosks, and stated on the BRCF Trails Map (produced by SELT).

Proposed Sledding Hill – Yohann is still investigating necessary permitting.

Gravel for parking lots – Conner will coordinate with Mike.

2. Updates

a. Moose Mountain Regional Greenway (MMRG) – Charlie mentioned that Ron Gehl is coordinating the annual easement monitoring site visit to be conducted sometime in November.

b. Powder Mill Snowmobile Club (PMSC) – Mike reported that all planned activities for the new Camp Pride trail have been completed (e.g., seeding). He also asked if snowmobiles would be allowed on the Mid-Lake Trail. This was confirmed.

c. Trails Working Group – No report by Matt.

d. Accessible Trail Funding – Brian is looking into fundraising. Mike mentioned that one possibility may be a Recreational Trails Program (RTP) Grant from the State of NH. Mike will coordinate with Yohann. Conner will also get with Jon Martin for his input. It is possible that NRCS funding could possibly be used as well.

e. Ronda Fernald notified Debbie that she has resigned from the MC.

3. 2023 draft Budget Review

Debbie briefly explained what is listed in the table. One item to be added is \$400 for Bird Nesting boxes (Am. kestrel, wood duck/hooded merganser, & bluebird/tree swallow). Need to check to see if the approved NRCS funding can be used for these nest boxes.

Mike asked about the need for box culvert across the stream that drains the Beaver Impoundment. It could be another “open-bottom box culvert” that performs well at other locations in BRCF. Mike and Russ stated they willing to perform the installation. The total cost

(for concrete slabs) would only be \$1,500. Debbie stated that Jon Martin should be consulted beforehand.

Lee expressed some frustration about the lack of progress on this important stream crossing project. This was initially brought up at the first MC meeting (on 1 Dec 2020). It is also listed in the BRCF Forest Management Plan. Without a suitable stream crossing structure, the “Early Successional Habitat” and other forest management in MU #4 cannot be performed. The \$1,500 estimate for the concrete slab materials would comprise only 2% of \$55,757 NRCS grant that is shown in the 2023 BRCF line-item budget. If Mike and Russ are willing to perform the installation, then the go-ahead should be given without further delay.

Debbie stated that this was likely a more complicated bridge which necessitated consulting with Jon Martin. She also explained that SELT being able to find funding for the bridge would be determined during SELT’s budgeting process for 2023 as it needs to be taken into consideration with funds needed for management activities on SELT’s other properties.

4. Education & Outreach Working Group

This group has yet to be formed. A list of persons needs to be created who might be involved in providing recommendations for appropriate activities related to education and outreach. Charlie recognized that this is a gap that needs to be filled. Neither Laurie or Emma are available to take the lead on this WG. Potentially Rebecca DiGirolomo (NRCS) might be interested. Emma will look into other possible NRCS agents who may be interested. Debbie will also check with Zoe on a possible person. MMRG is currently without an outreach staff person.

5. Cabin Uses and Recommended Improvements

a. Architectural drawings - Matt provided a brief explanation about the architectural recommendations developed by Michael Teller (an architect). He mentioned that the primary focus was to improve safety, accessibility, and security. Significant changes included relocating the doors and creating a patio with stone pavers for accessible access to the Cabin. Lee suggested that a wooden deck might be better option than a stone patio. Russ agreed and mentioned that the structural integrity of the Cabin is an important consideration.

Matt mentioned that filling in the “pit” in front of the Cabin also needs to be done as well. Conner has looked into this with the State of NH. To fill it in may require an OK from the NH Dept of Historical Resources. In the meantime, Yohann offered to put a fence around the old cellar hole – if needed.

Charlie suggested that a future decision needs to be made if the wood stove should remain.

b. Proposed uses – Charlie mentioned that currently it is the PMSC and other visitors to the property that use the cabin as a warming site. Future uses could include accommodating those with mobility issues. Potential improvements include an all-season composting toilet, running water, sink, etc. Matt stated that the capacity (e.g., number of persons or maximum weight load) of the Cabin needs to be determined.

Charlie suggested that developing a list of appropriate uses would be an appropriate task for the Education and Outreach WG. Yohann will also explore this further.

In the interim, Mike will look into making the Cabin more weather tight.

c. Picnic table with a roof – There was broad agreement that the woodworking project that Mike constructed was terrific, and that the location in front of the Cabin is good.

6. Conflict of Interest Determination – Russ Weldon’s equestrian ride proposal

Debbie briefly reviewed Attorney Bob Eaton’s memo to SELT.

Russ verbally explained his plan is to establish an equestrian riding center (called “Birch Ridge Ranch”) on private property on Brackett Rd. that bordered BRCG (see p. 37-38 in the MC Meeting Packet).

The primary money-making activity would involve onsite riding lessons and events. He also intends to offer horseback riding on Corridor 22 within BRCF. He further explained that these would be a staff rider “led activity” with just one ride per day (5-10 horses).

Conner asked if there would be some effort to “clean up” horse manure. Russ explained the process.

Key questions:

1) Is this a “conflict of interest?”

Lee stated that Russ clearly has a “financial interest” does not believe that it met the criteria that a “conflict of interest” currently exists. He also pointed out since equestrian riding is a popular activity in NH State Parks (e.g., Bear Brook) and the NH Rail Trail System, it is appropriate recreational activity for BRCF as well.

There was considerable discussion about related topics including:

- the scope of Russ’s business plan
- possible conflicts with other activities (e.g., hiking or biking)
- removing horse manure on the trails

A motion was made and seconded that guided trail rides on BRCF by Birch Ridge Ranch created a conflict of interest for Committee Member Russ Weldon.

Vote of the MC: Yes – 6, No – 2, Chair abstained

2) Since horseback riding is considered an acceptable activity at BRCF, it is believed that guided trail rides are also appropriate.

Vote of the MC: Yes - 8 , No – 0, Chair abstained

3) Although the MC determined a conflict of interest exists, Birch Ridge Ranch can be allowed to offer guided trail rides on BRCF subject to conditions. One of the conditions is that Russ Weldon step down from the BRCF Management Committee.

Vote of the MC: Yes – 7, No – 0, Chair abstained

Recommended Action:

[Wording contained in PP Pres slide #13]

“The BRCF Management Committee recommends SELT enters into an agreement with Birch Ridge Ranch to allow commercial equestrian trail rides in accordance with the requirements of the conservation easement and Community Forest Program. Further, that Russ Weldon must step down from the MC. The agreement to be for no more than five years and will have parameters in place to ensure the activities are not detrimental to the natural resource values of the Birch Ridge Community Forest.”

7. Other business?

a. BRCF MC Field Trip/Site Visit (to MU #5 and #6)

- Debbie will send out a “Doodle Poll” to establish a suitable date (late Oct – early Nov)

8. Next meeting – TBD March/April 2023

Meeting adjourned at 8:50pm

Note: Grey highlights indicated action items.

Birch Ridge Community Forest

Work Plan 2023

Below is the work plan for 2023 at the Birch Ridge Community Forest. The work plan is driven by the Goals, Objectives & Strategies outlined in the 2023 update to the BRCF Management Plan. The budget, found after the work plan provides additional details in the planned work.

General

Place boundary signs along boundary where they are still needed
SELT staff conducts required annual monitoring visit as required of all fee-owned land
MMRG conducts required annual conservation easement monitoring visit

Property Access and Infrastructure

Identify additional public access to the BRCF – Objective IV

Apply for grant to begin construction of the All Access Trail (Strategy 1)

Evaluate the cabin and need for other public amenities – Objective V

Determine appropriate public and management uses for the cabin that are consistent with community needs, SELT's programmatic needs, SELT policies and funding sources (Strategy 1)

Assess the current condition of the cabin to support desired uses (Strategy 2)

Determine the need and approach for providing sanitary facilities (Strategy 3)

Recreation and Public Uses

Determine locations and use of additional trails – Objective 2

Apply for grant to begin construction of the All Access Trail (Strategy 1)

Maintain cooperative working relationship with Powder Mill Snowmobile club – Objective IV

Assess post-winter trail conditions with club and identify annual work (Strategy 1)

Evaluate status of temporary trails and determine necessary adjustments (Strategy 2)

Review agreement with Club governing use and responsibilities (Strategy 3)

Provide information to the public on recreation at the BRCF – Objective V

Update trail maps to reflect current trails (Strategy 1)

Installation of trail junction signs (Strategy 1)

Place trail blazes along public recreational trails (Strategy 1)

Create formal trail guide for paper and mobile use (Strategy 1)

Update kiosk panels and other relevant information in kiosks (Strategy 2)

Install kiosk at Brienne Road entrance (Strategy 2)

New trails approved by the BRCF Management Committee – Objective VII

Consider process to create sledding hill adjacent to the Birch Hill parking area (Strategy 2)

Education and Outreach

Education and Outreach by core partners – Objective I

4-6 programs annually conducted by SELT and MMRG (Strategy 1)

Formalize Outreach working group to:

- Assemble list of potential partnering organizations (Strategy 1)
- Determine efficient and cost-effective approaches to engaging partners (Strategy 2)

Determine policies and procedures for group activities – Objective IV

Review policies and procedures that apply to other SELT properties (Strategy 1)

Management Committee recommends a course of action to SELT (Strategy 2)

Scenic Views

Identify locations to establish and maintain scenic views along trails – Objective II

Maintain/create scenic views in conjunction with forestry and wildlife habitat work (Strategy 2)

Forest Management

Restore the former blueberry field area – Objective III

Begin to develop a prescribed burning plan (Strategy 3)

Investigate the process to conduct prescribed burning (Strategy 4)

Manage and monitor condition of log landings – Objective VI

Mow landings periodically to maintain herbaceous conditions (Strategy 2)

Wildlife Habitat

Maintain old-field habitat down-slope from the cabin = Objective I

Mow to keep open after September to protect ground nesting birds

Restore the former blueberry field area – Objective II

Begin to develop a prescribed burning plan (Strategy 3)

Investigate the process to conduct prescribed burning (Strategy 4)

Manage and monitor condition of log landings – Objective III

Mow landings periodically to maintain herbaceous conditions (Strategy 2)

Determine wildlife management recommendations for MUs – Objective IV

Incorporate wildlife management recommendations to be performed with forest silvicultural work (Strategy 2)

Establish and “Early Successional Forest” wildlife habitat focus area – Objective VI

Install a bridge to access the site (Strategy 2)

Move locations of early successional work in EQIP contract to MU 4 (Strategies 3 & 4)

Water Quality

Assess water quality and habitat conditions of perennial streams – Objective II

Support the existing water quality monitoring occurring on the BRCF (Strategy 1 & 2)

Identify stream crossings and culvert locations requiring repair or improvement – Objective III

Assess existing infrastructure such as culverts and water bars (Strategy 1)

Maintain infrastructure such as swales and ditches (Strategy 2)

Climate Change Mitigation

Seek opportunities to achieve connectivity to other conserved forest lands within the region to facilitate plant and animal dispersal and movement – Objective I

Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
Budget to Actual
As of April 27, 2023

Reporting Book:

As of Date:

Department:

Class:

ACCRUAL

04/27/2023

Land Management

Birch Ridge Community Forest

	Current Year	2023	Over / (Under)	Details
Total Revenue and Expenditures				
Operating Surplus / (Deficit)				
Expenditures				
Operating Expenses				
5210 - Printing and copying	0	30	(30.00)	Trail Guides
Total Operating Expenses	0	30	(30.00)	
Maintenance				
5532 - Mowing and Brush Hogging	0	2,050	(2,050.00)	Cabin area & trails
5538 - Road Maintenance	0	3,000	(3,000.00)	Birch Hill Road
5540 - Field Supplies and Tools	0	900	(546.00)	*Bird boxes/tools
5541 - Timber Tax	76	0	76.00	
Total Maintenance	76	5,950	(5,874.00)	
Total Expenditures	76	5,980	(5,904.00)	
Total Operating Surplus / (Deficit)	(76)	(5,980)	5,904.00	
Special Project Surplus / (Deficit)				
Special Project Revenue				
Private Funding				
8117 - Special Project Donations	6,414	0	6,414.00	
Total Private Funding	6,414	0	6,414.00	
Asset Transfer for Special Projects				
8610 - Grants Receivable Release	0	99,379	(99,379.00)	**NRCS funds
8658 - Short-Term Capital - DR Release	0	7,181	(7,181.00)	gate, kiosks, signs
Total Asset Transfer for Special Projects	0	106,560	(106,560.00)	
Total Special Project Revenue	6,414	106,560	(94,160.00)	
Special Project Expenses				
Project Management				
9413 - Wetland Scientist	0	800	(800.00)	For bridge permitting needs
9416 - Trail Consultant	0	500	(500.00)	Assistance with all season trail
9418 - Graphic Design	0	175	(175.00)	Trail map update design
9445 - Printing and Postage	0	320	(320.00)	Temporary trail maps
Total Project Management	0	1,795	(1,795.00)	
Stewardship				
9612 - Timber Stand Improvement (TSI)	18,667	11,247	7,420.00	EQIP work
9618 - Early Successional Habitat	0	55,757	(55,757.00)	EQIP work
9658 - Property and Kiosk Signage	0	2,441	(2,441.00)	Kiosk panels/trail intersection signs
9659 - Other Land Management Services	0	600	(600.00)	1 Gate installation
9660 - Lumber and Hardware	0	1,940	(1,940.00)	Kiosk materials/intersection sign posts
9662 - Gravel, Rock and Other Material	0	200	(200.00)	concrete for gates
9664 - Gates and Bridges etc	1,800	7,000	(5,200.00)	1 Gate and bridge by beaver pond
9668 - Other Miscellaneous	0	400	(400.00)	Permit for bridge if needed
Total Stewardship	20,467	79,585	(59,118.00)	
Total Special Project Expenses	20,467	81,380	(60,913.00)	
Total Special Project Surplus / (Deficit)	(14,053)	25,180	(39,233.00)	
Total Revenue and Expenditures	(14,129)	19,200	(33,329.00)	

For management purposes only. No assurance provided.

* Cost for bird boxes not yet removed (\$354)

**NRCS EQIP funds to SELT not yet added (\$12,400)

To: BRCF Management Committee
From: Deborah Goard, SELT Stewardship & Land Engagement Director
Date: April 27, 2023
Re: Requested changes in location to EQIP practices at Birch Ridge Community Forest

The following text is the request SELT sent to NRCS regarding a request to change the location of early successional habitat work planned from MU-1 to MU-4.

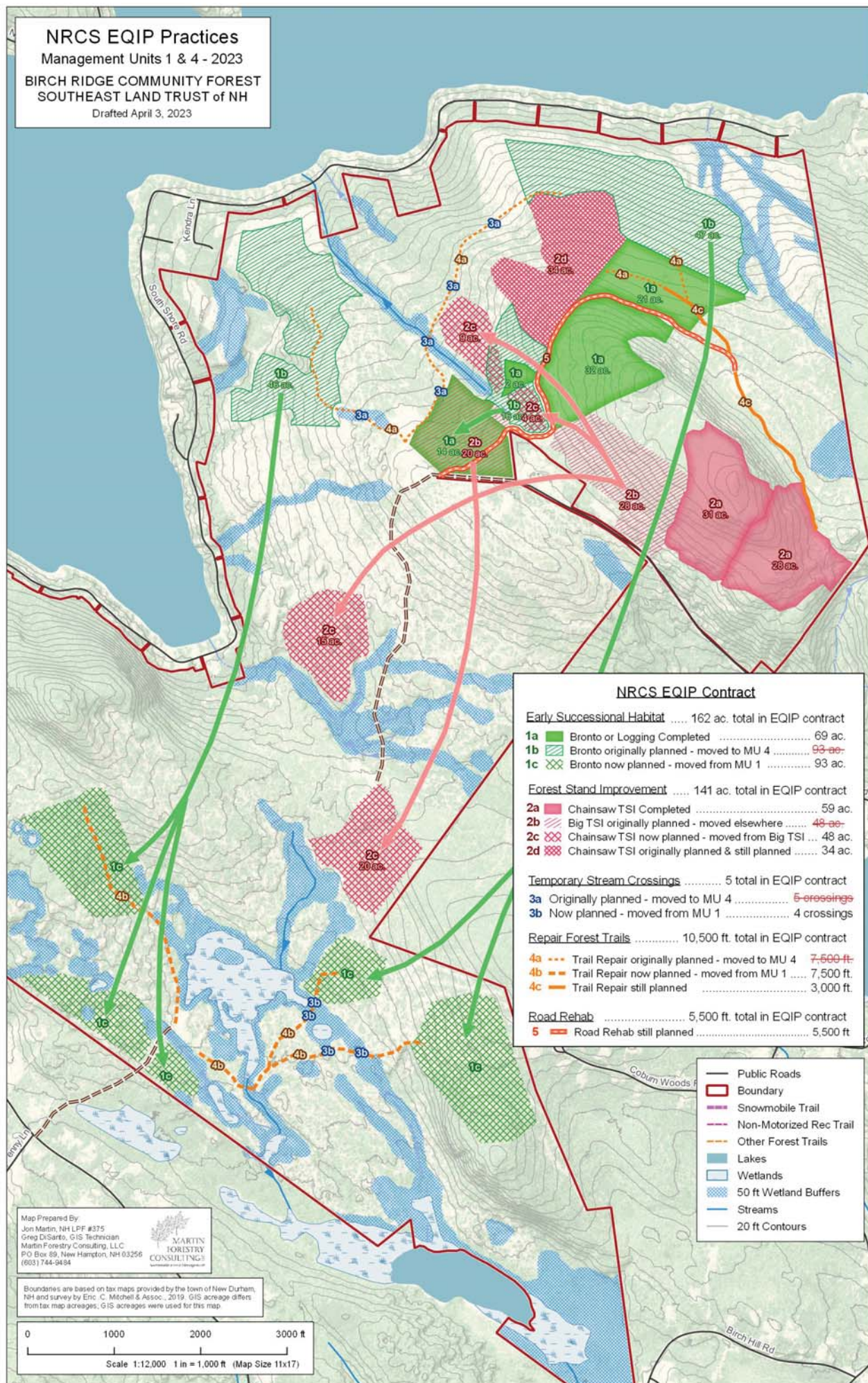
The completion of several EQIP practices over the past few years at the Birch Ridge Community Forest (BRCF) has restored old field habitat, reclaimed former blueberry fields, enhanced early successional habitat and promoted crop tree development. All of this was accomplished in Management Unit 1 (MU-1). Additional EQIP work has also been authorized for this unit. Two blocks of 46 and 47 acres that have been approved for early successional habitat practices remain. In reviewing the successful completion of the MU-1 practices to date we have determined that it is much too soon for additional early successional habitat operations in close proximity to the recently completed practices in MU-1. However, across the entire 2600+/-acre BRCF there are other stands whose forest and wildlife habitat resources can benefit significantly from the application of the already authorized EQIP practices. Of the 6 management units of the BRCF, MU-4 would benefit the most from shifting this work. Therefore, we request that the remaining 93 acres approved in MU-1 be shifted to forest stands in MU-4, as shown on the attached map.

The five blocks indicated on the map, totaling 93 acres, are all stands that were high-graded in the recent logging prior to SELT ownership. Across most of these stands few trees were left that have current or future value for either forestry or wildlife. However, given the variations in topography, soils and wetland distribution, there are pockets of desirable species of various ages scattered throughout. If our request to shift authorized acreage to MU-4 is approved, an excavator mounted bronto/shear will be utilized to create early successional habitat. Within these areas 5-10 pole sized hard mast trees will be left per acre to help seed in more desirable species in the treated blocks. Outside of the treatment blocks uncut pockets of trees around wetlands and steeper rock outcrops will be left to serve as an unmanaged buffer. Over time these areas will develop into uneven aged stands of white oak, red oak, white pine, birch and associated species. The end result in MU-4 will be good for both forest growth and wildlife habitat.

Along with the enhancement of forest resources, the suggested work in MU-4 will repair skid roads degraded by past harvest practices and improve management access to additional parts of the BRCF. In addition to best management practices dictated by the State of NH and NRCS, the terms of a grant through the NH DES Aquatic Resources Mitigation Program require a forestry riparian buffer zone of 100 ft around all wetlands, with no tree cutting or soil disturbance in the first 50 ft from the wetland. The remainder of the buffer can be managed by single tree selection or small group cuts. The buffer also applies to slopes greater than 35% and highly erodible soils.

As you evaluate our request, please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide additional information or if you would like to review the stands in the field.

NRCS EQIP Practices
Management Units 1 & 4 - 2023
BIRCH RIDGE COMMUNITY FOREST
SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST of NH
 Drafted April 3, 2023

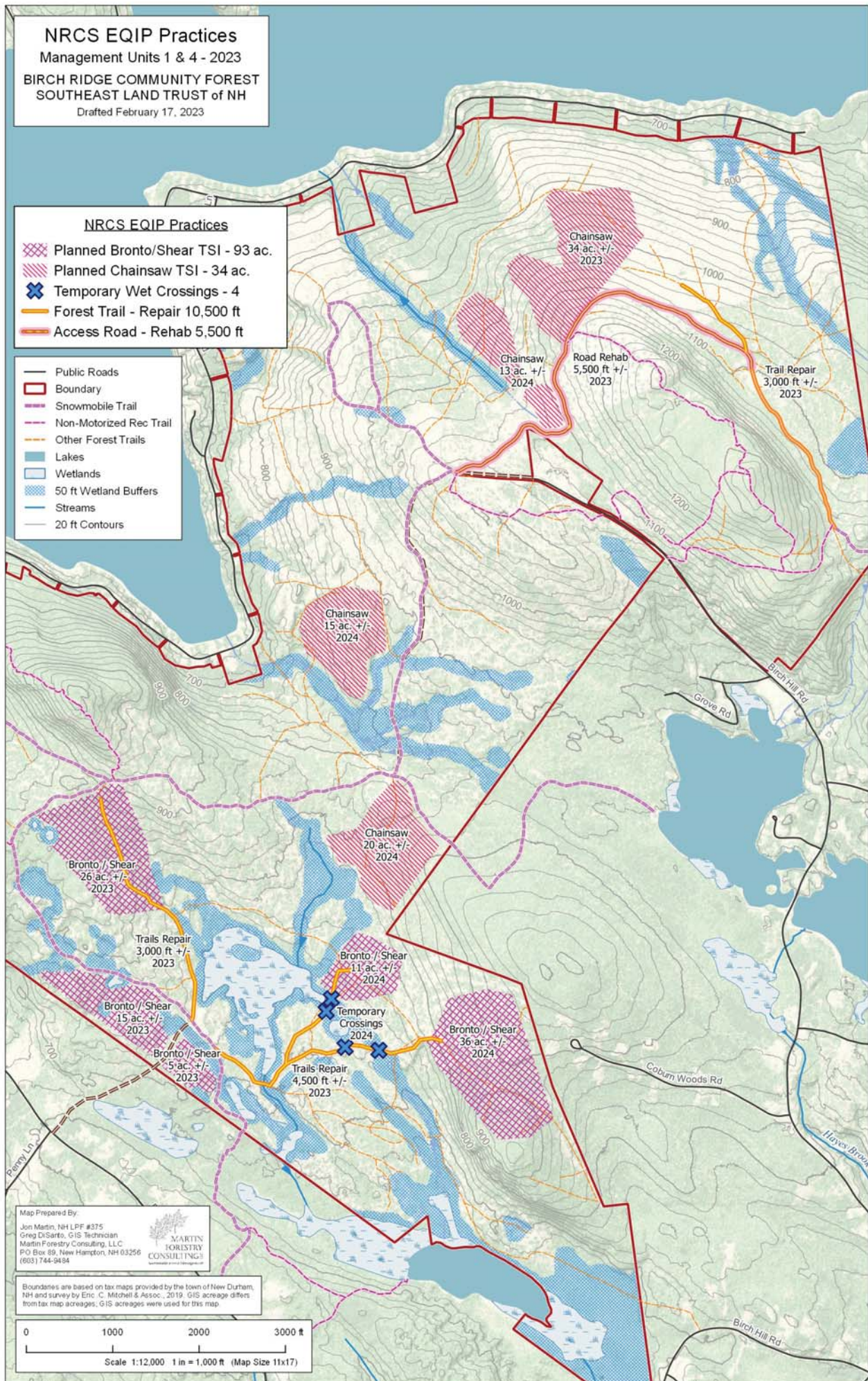


NRCS EQIP Practices
Management Units 1 & 4 - 2023
BIRCH RIDGE COMMUNITY FOREST
SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST OF NH
 Drafted February 17, 2023

NRCS EQIP Practices

- Planned Bronto/Shear TSI - 93 ac.
- Planned Chainsaw TSI - 34 ac.
- Temporary Wet Crossings - 4
- Forest Trail - Repair 10,500 ft
- Access Road - Rehab 5,500 ft

- Public Roads
- Boundary
- Snowmobile Trail
- Non-Motorized Rec Trail
- Other Forest Trails
- Lakes
- Wetlands
- 50 ft Wetland Buffers
- Streams
- 20 ft Contours



Map Prepared By:
 Jon Martin, NH LFP #375
 Greg DiSanto, GIS Technician
 Martin Forestry Consulting, LLC
 PO Box 89, New Hampton, NH 03256
 (603) 744-9494



Boundaries are based on tax maps provided by the town of New Durham, NH and survey by Eric C. Mitchell & Assoc., 2019. GIS acreage differs from tax map acreages; GIS acreages were used for this map.

0 1000 2000 3000 ft
 Scale 1:12,000 1 in = 1,000 ft (Map Size 11x17)

Management Unit 1 (North)
 + 3,000 ft of trail repair in 2023
 + 5,500 ft of access road repair in 2023
 + 34 ac. of Chainsaw TSI in 2023

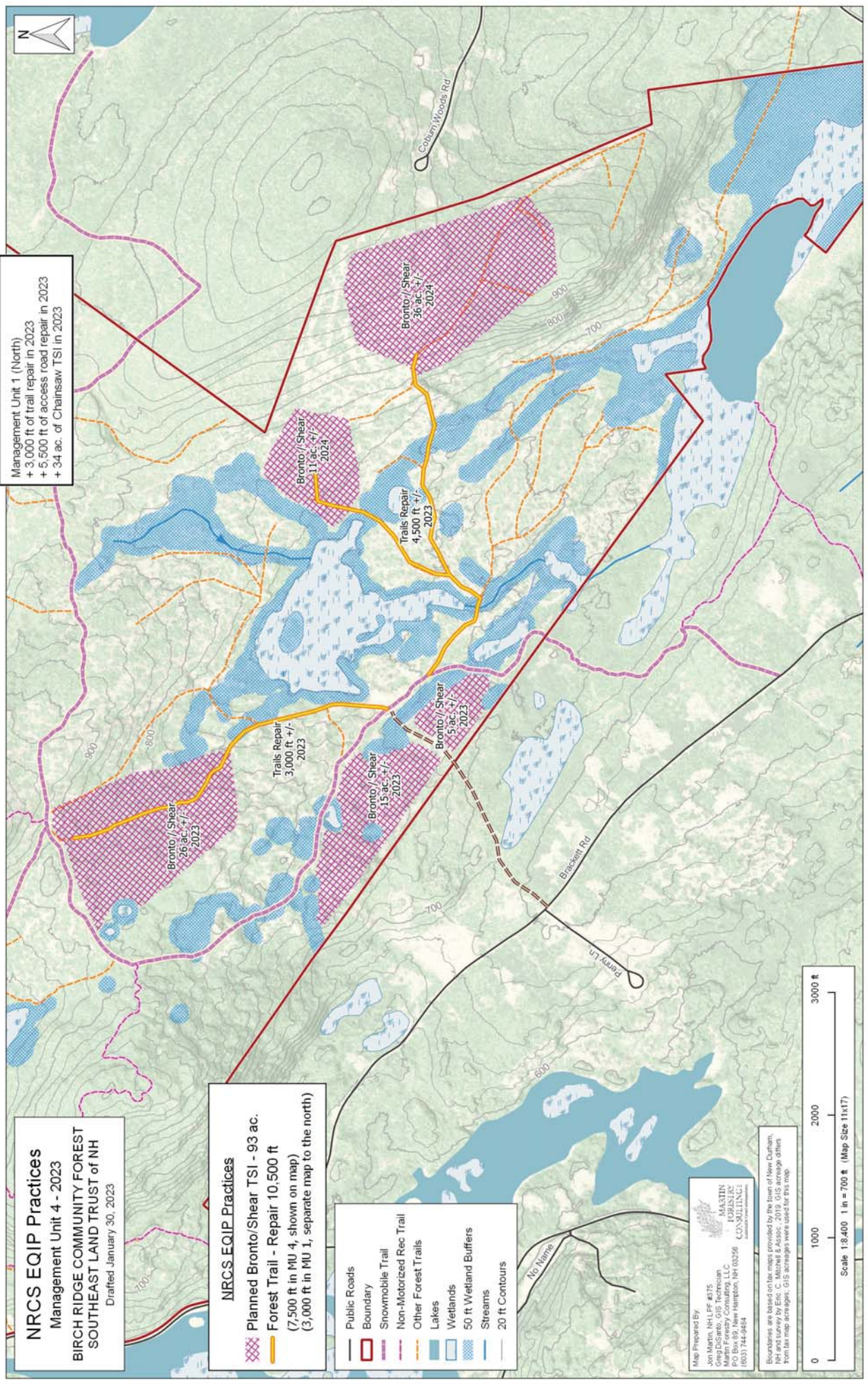
NRCS EQIP Practices
 Management Unit 4 - 2023
 BIRCH RIDGE COMMUNITY FOREST
 SOUTHEAST LAND TRUST of NH
 Drafted January 30, 2023

NRCS EQIP Practices
 Planned Bronto/Shear TSI - 93 ac.
 Forest Trail - Repair 10,500 ft
 (7,500 ft in MU 4, shown on map)
 (3,000 ft in MU 1, separate map to the north)

- Public Roads
- Boundary
- Snowmobile Trail
- Non-Motorized Rec Trail
- Other Forest Trails
- Lakes
- Wetlands
- 50 ft Wetland Buffers
- Streams
- 20 ft Contours

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Memorandum

To: BRCF Management Committee
From: Deborah Goard: SELT Stewardship & Land Engagement Director
Date: April 27, 2023
Re: Discussion on community and private uses on the Birch Ridge Community Forest

Over the last year, SELT has received an increase in the number of requests to use our properties for private events and activities. These requests range from bird tours, youth outdoor camps, educational walks, and weddings. As we consider these requests there are many factors we must take into consideration including legal restrictions on the land, funding sources, donor intent, impacts to the land, commercial vs. non-commercial, and staff capacity. Broadly speaking, as SELT receives and evaluates these requests we believe it is important to understand and evaluate the following:

- What the impact of the proposed activity is on the natural resources/conservation values of the property
- What the impact is on the ability for the public to use and enjoy the land while the event is occurring
- If the activity is in line with and/or conflicts with SELT's mission and values.

At the upcoming meeting, we are asking the Management Committee to consider what they envision in terms of events occurring at BRCF, with a current focus on the location around the cabin. While SELT has received specific requests for both community and private events and activities at BRCF, this discussion will not focus on specific requests, but uses in general. To prepare for this discussion, please consider the following:

1. What type of events does the Committee envision occurring at BRCF
2. At what frequency does the Committee see events occurring at BRCF
3. Do Committee members see community vs. private events as different levels in priority
4. What impacts does the Committee see events as having on:
 - a. The non-human communities on BRCF (plants, animals, etc.)
 - b. The use and enjoyment of the BRCF by members of the visiting public
5. What should SELT consider when determining if requested events be approved