

Southeast Land Trust of New Hampshire
BRCF Management Committee Meeting

October 8, 2024

6:00 pm – 8:00 pm

Merrymeeting Lake Association meeting room

Join Zoom Meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81045010702?pwd=U6XActngmbhMMmdcHBappQ6j0uaR4H.1>

Meeting ID: 810 4501 0702 Passcode: 775449

- 1) May 2024 minutes (10 min)
 - a) Approve minutes
 - b) Update status to any actions needed (quick review)
- 2) Updates (30 min)
 - a) MMRG
 - b) Powder Mill Snowmobile Club
 - c) July Public Input Session
 - d) Cabin issues
 - e) 2024 budget update (see enclosed)
- 3) Work plan for 2024 (see enclosed Work Plan 2024 update) (20 min)
 - a) Work done to date
 - b) Work remaining for 2024
- 4) Planning for 2025 (see enclosed memo) (45 min)
 - a) Trails
 - b) Forestry & Wildlife habitat
 - c) Volunteer status and needs
 - d) Events
 - e) Draft Budget
 - f) Other
- 5) Other business? (15 min)
- 6) Next meeting November 7th 6 pm to 8 pm

Birch Ridge Community Forest Management Committee (MC) – 10th Meeting

7 May 2024, 6:00 - 8:30pm,
Merrymeeting Lake Association Meeting Room - Zoom video

Draft Minutes

Participants: Charlie Bridges (Chair), (SELT), Debbie Goard (SELT), Chad Fierros (SELT), and Yohann Hanley (SELT), & Kay Emery (SELT Seasonal Staff)
Lee Alexander, Ethan Fulk, Mike Gelinias, Cathy Orlowicz, and Dennis Thorell
Via Zoom: Lorrie Drake, Brad Helfer, & Matt Murphy

1. 1 November 2023 Minutes

a. Approved

b. Update status/reminder for any actions needed

- Yohann will continue to work on developing a site plan for parking at Cabin and the Accessible Trail. This includes a site visit with Mike Gelinias. Also, a letter needs to be sent to MMRG since they are the easement holder.
- Charlie will contact Fred Quimby on water quality
- Other items will be covered during this meeting.

2. Updates

a. MMRG – Laurie gave a brief update.

b. Powder Mill Snowmobile Club – Mike mentioned that poor snowfall this past winter significantly limited snowmobile activity by (by 50%) compared to “normal years”. Heavy wet snow was worse in the lower altitude areas. Assessing trail damage is ongoing.

3. 2024 Budget and Work Plan for 2024

a. Presentation of final 2024 budget

- Debbie provided a brief overview (see PP slide #4). No significant changes to what was originally planned. Just a minor modification for TSI/Habitat work in MU-4.

b. **2024 Work Plan** – Project status and expected timing (see separate section in meeting packet)

- Chad and Debbie provided an overview (see PP slides #5-10).
- Some repair/modification needed for some culverts. Mike will likely submit a proposal to NRCS and State of NH RTP for repair work.
- There is a need to address some ground seepage occurring on lower Camp Pride Trail.
- BRCF Trail Guide is nearly complete. Memorial Day is the target date. Will be posted on kiosk, download pdf, Trail Finder, and AMC Trail Guide.
- Mike mentioned that any trails on Camp Pride property are closed during the summer season.

- c. Education and Outreach by Core Partners (see PP slide #14)
 - UNH Forest Farming Research – Linear Gap Experiments. Waiting for more details...
- 4. All Access Train update: timing for raising funds and planned work
 - Yohan mentioned that he plans to submit an \$80K RTP proposal for accessible trail plan, which requires a 20% match. It is expected that ~\$130K will be needed to complete the entire project. The expectation is to get a grant this year and start construction next year. He expects that the total length will be about 4,000 linear feet.
- 5. Planning for 2025 and beyond: forestry and wildlife habitat management
[see PP slides #22 - 25)
- 6. Public Events and Special Use permit form
 - a. Summary from Charlie
 - Charlie mentioned that he received input from five (5) members. This includes:
 - + liability insurance coverage
 - + permission forms
 - + compliance with permit conditions (who will oversee/confirm?)
 - + compliance with policies more important than frequency
 - + ID examples of appropriate vs. inappropriate events
 - Most felt this was appropriate and that the application form should capture the necessary information to evaluate and address concerns.
 - It was felt that public events should be a priority over private events,
 - b. Discussion – Charlie will compile submitted input into a memo and circulate for further review.
- 7. Runoff from BCRF during storm events
 - a. Discussions with neighbors & Town
 - Debbie described some of the runoff events that occurred to adjacent property owners during this past winter. Several storms caused significant issues (e.g., due to frozen ground and extraordinary heavy rainfall events). These problems were mostly due to previous logging operations before BRCF was acquired.
 - b. Planned actions – Yohann will evaluate ditching and draining that would lessen the impact for some sites. Debbie is also contacting various persons to get more information about the best way to address this issue.
- 8. Community/Public Input and Conservation work in New Durham - Update

Three ways to get public input for Phase 3:

 - Public Input session
 - Survey (sent out)
 - Meetings & presentations

Focus will be three-fold: what has been done, what is going on, and what is planned for the future.

Debbie will plan a public input session and perhaps site visits for the public to attend.

9. Other business

- Will need to update the BRCF management Plan to include Mt. Jesse and submit to USFS by April 2025. Charlie and Lee will work with SELT on preparing a draft.

- There is a wasp/hornet issue in the Cabin that needs attention. Yohann will investigate.

Cathy reported that the Town is willing to cover the cost of signage related to historical interpretation.

10. Next meeting: TBD September 2024

Birch Ridge Community Forest

Work Plan 2024 – Updated 10/3/2024

Below is the work plan for 2024 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.

General

Place boundary signs along boundary where they are still needed

Update:

South Shore Road boundary work was completed by Kay (seasonal land steward) during the summer. Several encroachments were found, with the most significant being a lawn encroachment with boulders noted on the 2019 survey. Southern boundary of MU-5 and MU-6 has not been visited yet this year.

SELT staff conducts required annual monitoring visit as required of all fee-owned land

Update:

The monitoring visit focused on South Shore Road, as well as several visits along internal trails/roads and was completed in late June and early July. LCHIP also conducted their own monitoring visit during the summer, with no issues/follow-up received.

MMRG conducts required annual conservation easement monitoring visit

Update:

MMRG has not contacted SELT regarding easement monitoring in 2024. SELT was in touch with MMRG regarding wetland buffers associated with Early Successional Habitat work in the spring with no issues.

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)

Update:

SELT has been notified that we have been accepted for an \$80,000 RTP grant for 2025. There is a required 20% match of funds (\$20,000 in cash, in-kind, or time) for a total of a \$100,000 budget. Current projection is that the total project will be between \$120,000-\$130,000. Funds will be released in or after June of 2025 and no reimbursable work can be done before then.

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)

Update:

The BRCF Management Committee has had continuing discussions regarding future uses of the cabin. To date, the main uses remain a warming shelter for winter use by the snowmobile club and a place to get out of the weather for visitors.

Recreation and Public Uses

Determine locations and use of additional trails – Objective II

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

Update:

SELT has been notified that we have been accepted for an \$80,000 RTP grant for 2025. There is a required 20% match of funds (\$20,000 in cash, in-kind, or time) for a total of a \$100,000 budget. Current projection is that the total project will be between \$120,000-\$130,000. Funds will be release in or after June of 2025 and no reimbursable work can be done before then.

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

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

Update:

Mike traversed Corridor 22 removing rocks from the trail and cleaning/tending ditches and water bars. A washed-out culvert was replaced with improved ditching. In the section of trail beyond the north landing in MU-1, dips were improved, and a culvert installed to try and address saturation on the trail. Many other ditches, dips, and water bars were addressed throughout the property.

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

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

Update:

Yohann will set up time with Mike and Nick from PMSC this fall to review the existing agreement and sign a new agreement.

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

Update trail maps to reflect current trails (Strategy 1)

Finalize installation of trail junction signs (Strategy 1)

Enhance 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)

Update:

All kiosks have been repaired and updated with current maps (5/24) and appropriate name and narrative signage. Intersection signposts and signs have been installed across the property, as well as improving and updating trail blazing to reduce confusion. The BRCF trail guide and map are available online and in hard copies. SELT recently received the pamphlet holders to put the maps in several public access locations in New Durham (town hall, library, post office, general store, B&B)

New trails approved by the BRCF Management Committee – Objective VII

Develop a new hike/bike trail across MU-5, per trail inventory and assessment study (Strategy 5)

Update:

The Reuben Webster Trail connecting Corridor 22 above the Brienne Road entrance across the ridgeline to Corridor 22 above the upper end of The Lookout Trail was cut and blazed in July of 2024. The trail is signed and open to the public but has not been added to the public map yet. The maps will be updated in 2025.

Comply with the easement terms pertaining to improvements – Objective VIII

Provide MMRG with updated trail maps, including designated snowmobile trails (Strategy 2)

Update:

An updated trail guide was sent to MMRG on October 3rd.

Education and Outreach

Education and Outreach by core partners – Objective I

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

Update:

Chad and consulting forester Jon Martin led a wildlife habitat tour in MU-4, highlighting the EQIP work done in 2023 and 2024. The tour touched on the interplay of wildlife habitat and silviculture and was very well-received by the attendees.

Formalize Outreach working group to:

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

Update:

This has not been worked on yet this year.

Contact potential partners and stakeholders – Objective II

Determine ways the BRCF can be used by research institutes as a living laboratory (Strategy 3)

Update:

UNH Regionally Adapted Agroforestry Systems (ADAPT) research project funded with SELT as one of 12 cooperating landholders (see this [short article](#)). Planning and design for specific forest farming approach to be conducted in February 2025 and established within two years.

Dennis, Charlie, Lee, Jon, and Chad reviewed management recommendations for MU-5 & MU-6 this past summer. We identified an area along the broad ridge in MU-6 that contains an expansive, fairly flat, unhealthy beech forest that would be a good place to conduct experimental forestry practices or unconventional stewardship.

SELT was connected with UNH faculty (via NHFG biologist Patrick Tate), which led to BRCF being selected as a site for an ongoing/upcoming research project surrounding habitat use and mortality of fishers in NH.

Establish a mechanism to inform the stakeholders on BRCF activities and status – Objective III

Develop maps and information to post on SELT web page (Strategy 1)

Establish links to partner/stakeholder web pages (Strategy 2)

Update:

SELT's website landing page for BRCF continues to be updated with information regarding trails and other activities on the property. SELT also provides informative communications separate from the website regarding planned, current, and upcoming work on all New Durham properties.

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)

Update:

SELT's Board of Directors recently approved an updated Policy on Public Use of SELT lands which is being provided to the BRCF Management Committee. The Management Committee also has continued conversations regarding requested group uses of the Community Forest.

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)

Update:

Annual, late-season mowing was conducted to maintain views and open areas. The viewshed from Birch Ridge will likely not be burned due to insufficient fuel loading, so bronto work can be planned for the near future, maybe 2026 or 2027, to maintain the view.

An area along Corridor 22 (L6-7), just before crossing the boundary to the abutting Mt. Jesse property may be re-cleared with a bronto (EQIP), which would provide views to the NW.

Forest Management

Restore the former blueberry field area – Objective III

Begin to develop a prescribed burning plan (Strategy 3)

Update:

The 2023 NRCS EQIP application (for implementation in 2024) did not pan out for getting a contractor to write a burn plan for the small area of Birch Ridge. It is included in 2024 application (for implementation in 2025). The sole Technical Service Provider (TSP) for NH is Bill Edwards of Star Tree Wildfire Protection out of NJ. This is one of two contractors mentioned by folks on the NH Prescribed Fire Council and is the more expensive one.

Chad met with Chris O'Brien (Prescribed Fire Coordinator with DNCR) and John Neely (former Assistant Fire Management Officer at WMNF) this summer to discuss how SELT can best get fire on the ground. The best options seem to include USFWS funding and the (possible) 2025 NH/ME Training Exchange (TREX). Liability could become a holdup, as SELT does not have Standard Operating Guidelines regarding prescribed fire. This will be reviewed/addressed as SELT explores the avenues above.

Next steps are to contact Bill Edwards and coordinate the writing of the burn plan, hopefully having it finished by spring 2025 with implementation to be coordinated thereafter. Worth noting that pursuing burning on the Mt. Jesse tract may be most successful. John Neely also mentioned that having a Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) in place can help when pursuing funding for burning.

Investigate the process to conduct prescribed burning (Strategy 4)

Update: See above.

Manage and monitor condition of log landings – Objective VI

Mow landings periodically to maintain herbaceous conditions (Strategy 2)

Update:

Annual, late-season mowing was conducted to maintain views and open areas.

Wildlife Habitat

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

Mow to keep open after September to protect ground nesting birds

Update: See above.

Restore the former blueberry field area – Objective II

Begin to develop a prescribed burning plan (Strategy 3)

Update: See above.

Investigate the process to conduct prescribed burning (Strategy 4)

Update: See above.

Manage and monitor condition of log landings – Objective III

Mow landings periodically to maintain herbaceous conditions (Strategy 2)

Update: See above.

Determine wildlife management recommendations for MUs – Objective IV

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

Update:

Final Early Successional Habitat (ESH) work was completed in MU-4 this past spring. Work was done well and meets objectives. The final six acres of Forest Stand Improvement (FSI), of the total ~48 acres to be done in 2024, will be completed by the October 8th meeting. Chad will conduct some seeding and mulching of a few areas, which in combination with the FSI work, will close out the current NRCS EQIP contract.

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)

Update:

We believe this work is continuing through the ongoing water quality monitoring done by others.

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

Assess existing infrastructure such as culverts and water bars (Strategy

1)

Update:

Chad is currently working on submitting the final required DES Aquatic Resource Mitigation (ARM) reporting for the three concrete waste block culverts. See update above regarding other

culvert replacement/improvements.

Maintain infrastructure such as swales and ditches (Strategy 2)

Update:

See update above regarding maintenance of culverts, water bars, ditches, dips, etc. led by Mike and PMSC with RTP grant.

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 1

Update:

Work is ongoing with SELT and partners as well as other land trusts to conserve land in this area which will increase connectivity for plant and animal dispersal and movement. Included in this is work to add to the BRCF which would connect the current BRCF with land owned by NH Fish & Game and SPNHF in Middleton.

MEMO

To: BRCF Management Committee
From: Deborah Goard, SELT Stewardship & Land Engagement Director
Date: October 2, 2024
Re: 2025 work planning for BRCF

At the upcoming October meeting we will begin to discuss the work plan for 2025. Previous work planning was done for the period of 2024 through 2030 in the BRCF Management Plan.

As we plan for work to be done throughout 2025 during the October and November meetings it would be helpful for Management Committee members to review the [Management Plan](#) to be able to see what is left to do that was previously planned for.

At the October meeting, we will discuss work the SELT staff anticipates being done and that the Committee would like to see done in 2025. SELT staff will then incorporate the discussion with the overall work plan and budgeting process for SELT. At the November meeting the Committee will be presented with the draft final work plan and budget.

2025 Trails & Recreation Planned Activities	2025 Forestry / Wildlife Planned Activities
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All Access trail• General trail maintenance, including mowing trails and around cabin• Signage for cellar holes / cabin area• Updated trail maps	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mow landings• Coordinate with snowmobile club for access road ditch maintenance• Coordinate with snowmobile club for hardening Corridor 22 beyond north landing in MU1• Apply to NRCS for access road & bronto work (including L6-7 viewshed)• UNH agroforestry research plot preparation• Burn plan for blueberry barren

Birch Ridge Community Forest 2025 Draft Budget-Updated 10/03/2024

Activity/Code	Expense	Comments	Source of Funding			Notes
			SELT	NRCS-EQIP	Other Grants / Funds	
5210 · Printing & copying	\$720	4 new kiosk maps	\$720			Updating kiosk
8600 · Property Taxes	\$2,300	based on assumed cost of \$2,200 in 2024 with increase	\$2,300			
5532 · Mowing & Brush Hogging	\$450	1.5 hrs/month May-Oct around cabin = 9 hrs @ \$50/hr	\$450			
	\$1,000	trails \$50 per/hour for 20 hours	\$1,000			
	\$200	large landing by cabin if doing while mowing trail 1 hours	\$200			
	\$350	mow cabin 7 hours both side of stone wall \$350;	\$350			
5533 · Snowplowing	\$0	assume 5 storms @ \$75 each for Merrymeeting Road parking lot				Volunteered time est. \$350
5538 – Road Maintenance	\$3,000	Maintenance of Birch Hill Road	\$3,000			
5538 – Road Maintenance	\$20,000-45,000	Corridor 22 repair on Young tract (MU 6)	\$7,000-15,000	\$13,000-30,000		
5540 - Field Supplies and Tools	\$500	Adding tools to those stored in New Durham	\$500			Continue for 2025
9418 - Graphic Designer	\$300	Map design	\$300			
9419 – Other Professional Consultant	\$2,500	Burn plan	\$1,550	\$950		USFWS grant funds possible
9618 – Early Successional Habitat	\$13,000	Bronto work along Corridor 22 and Young access road	\$4,500	\$8,500		
9654 – Trail Construction	\$141,200	All Access Trail	\$11,000		\$130,200	\$80,000 – RTP; \$25,000 – other grant; \$5,200 volunteer time
9659-Other Land Management Services	\$10,000	Costs for UNH research site preparation			\$10,000	
Total expenses	\$220,520		\$40,870	\$39,450	\$140,200	

* Note: Budget expenses do not include staff time