

Jenne Town Forest Management Plan 2024

1. Introduction

This document is the Management Plan for the Jenne Town Forest Property, in Hartland, VT, located adjacent to Cady Brook Trail off Jenneville Road. The parcel is an irregular hexagon shape comprising 24 acres and is managed by the Hartland Conservation Commission. The Conservation Commission has drafted this document in collaboration with Windsor County Forester Hannah Dallas.

This Management Plan ("Plan") will discuss the history of this property, identify its resources, and provide for the use and management of the land in a fashion that is consistent with, and advances, the purposes of the Conservation Commission and Town of Hartland. Two overarching goals will drive decision-making: 1) Promoting old-growth characteristics as well as the overall ecological health of the Forest, and 2) Exploring possibilities for the recreation and education of Hartland residents.

The Plan has been prepared in April 2024, and is intended to stay in effect until a subsequent Management Plan or Amendment to this Plan proposes a change. Plans will be reviewed every ten years or when conditions change that require an update to the Plan.

2. Vision statement

Through careful planning and collaboration with Hannah Dallas and the Selectboard, we envision that Jenne Town Forest will become a healthy, thriving ecosystem, as well as a source of recreation and education for the residents of Hartland, VT. A healthy forest will support a healthy and diverse wildlife population.

3. History

The Jenne Town Forest was donated to the town in 1983 by Ruth and Alfred Jenne. Alfred's son, longtime Hartland Town Clerk and current Hartland Selectboard member Clyde Jenne, notes:

"My great-grandfather purchased the Whitaker property in 1872 from Maria Whitaker, who owned the land which now comprises the Town Forest. The cellar hole... is where her house was. When more of the land was open, it was used as pasture for young stock, oxen and dry cows. When my father and aunt donated the land (in 1983), they were in the process of selling the family homestead and they and I agreed to donate the property. Prior to that, there had been an Article on the town warning to acquire either by gift or purchase land for a town forest. This article was mandated by Statute. The purpose was for the town to use it as a productive forest and recreation area."

Davison study and report

In July 1996, Scott L. Davison (an Antioch New England graduate student in Environmental Studies) wrote a comprehensive report entitled, “ The Hartland Town Forest Project Report and Natural Resource Inventory”. The project was initiated by the Hartland Conservation Commission (HCC) to develop a management plan for the use and preservation of the Hartland Town Forest and to design a self-guided nature trail to interpret the natural history of the property.

The report contained a Summary of Management Objectives and Activities; Base Maps (Topography, Trails, Soils and Cover Types); Natural Resource Inventories and Species Lists including Vegetation, Mammals, Birds, Amphibians, and Insects; General Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations, among other information.

Davison’s Recommendations were as follows:

- “This site holds wonderful prospects for study and recreation by local schools and interested civic groups. The possibilities for continued research on the existing and additional marked plots can extend indefinitely. There are opportunities presented for further historical study of the site as well, providing valuable addendums to such a publication as "In Sight of Ye Great River: History and Houses of Hartland, Vermont"
- “We must rely on more information and research to figure out what the site looked like when the first settlers came to Hartland and what it might look like in the future.”
- Davison and the Conservation Commission members, at the time of his project, recommended that the town use the forest for educational purposes, including the idea that we might invite area teachers to the site and suggest/offer/invite programs for education.

4. Current condition of the land

Windsor County Forester Hannah Dallas walked the Town Forest with HCC members Robyn Mosher and Will Moore in early November 2023, and subsequently submitted a thorough and detailed forest management plan. A summary is provided below.

Most of the forest is evenly aged, around 85-100 years old. The trees that populate the forest all took root after the property had been cleared for agriculture. Diversity of tree species is high, with white pine being the most abundant, followed by eastern hemlock, white ash, sugar maple, paper birch, yellow birch, red maple, and quaking aspen, with a smattering of a handful of other species.

Hannah raised several concerns regarding the composition and health of the forest. Invasive plants like barberry, burning bush, honeysuckle, and phragmites are a major problem, crowding out native plants and shrubs that would otherwise thrive. Beech bark disease is present, and while emerald ash borer, hemlock woody adelgid and hemlock elongate scale are not yet present in the forest, they're already present in Windsor and so it's expected they'll soon be here as well.

Because of its agricultural past, the forest floor does not have a healthy layer of duff (crumbled dried remnants of dead leaves), and features mud just below a surface layer of leaves. This is rife with worms, which is a sign of an unhealthy forest.

Deer browse of the understory is also a detriment to forest health, as it prevents native species such as red oak from establishing itself and creates opportunities for invasive species.

5. Management Objectives

In order to meet the goal of promoting old-growth characteristics and the overall health of the forest, we propose the following objectives:

- Having high variability in horizontal and vertical forest structure
- Preserving large legacy trees. Promoting high species diversity.
- Establishing a high volume of coarse woody material in various stages of decay (including standing dead trees or "snags," as well as felled leaves and fallen branches/boughs)
- Establishing healthy soils

In order to meet the goal of utilizing the Town Forest as a resource for recreation and education, we propose the following objectives:

- Create a walking trail through the forest, employing posts with scannable QR codes stationed at points of interest. This trail could be based on the trail that was built in the 1990s but has since become overgrown (see image at the end of this document).
- Purchase a new picnic table (metal?)
- Dispose of the old, destroyed picnic table and associated debris
- Establish educational programming/opportunities, such as bird and tree identification and flora and fauna resident in the forest, including fungi
- Use the town forest to educate the public about various topics, such as:
 - The threat posed by invasive species, and how to identify them
 - What an old-growth forest is, why old-growth forests are important, and how to promote old-growth characteristics
 - How climate change affects the ecosystem of a forest

Other considerations

There has been discussion among the Commission that signage is needed for the entrance to Cady Brook Trail, marking the entrance near Jenneville Rd. This signage would serve to both mark the beginning of the trail and to alert the public that motorized vehicles are prohibited on the trail unless permitted by the Town Manager.

It might be advisable to explicitly state that any commercial use, such as logging or other resource extraction, is strictly prohibited, although I don't know what mechanisms might exist to enforce this. This might be unnecessary, as nothing approaching the size of a logging truck could fit on Cady Brook Trail.

As in all of Hartland's public lands, dogs are only allowed in the Town Forest if they are on a leash.

6. Timeline

First steps

- Research the feasibility and cost of creating/re-establishing educational walking paths through the forest, accessible from the Cady Brook Trail
- Research the feasibility and cost of purchasing a new picnic table, as well as disposing of the remnants of the old one, which was destroyed
- Mark the boundary of the property
- Collaborate with Hannah on developing educational programming
- Collaborate with Hannah on educating Commission members on steps we can take to promote old-growth characteristics and forest health (eg girdling, removal of invasives)
- Inventory plants and animals, especially ephemerals and invasives
- Identify legacy trees, marking them "L."
- Install new signage at the trailhead on Cady Brook Trail and at the Town Forest

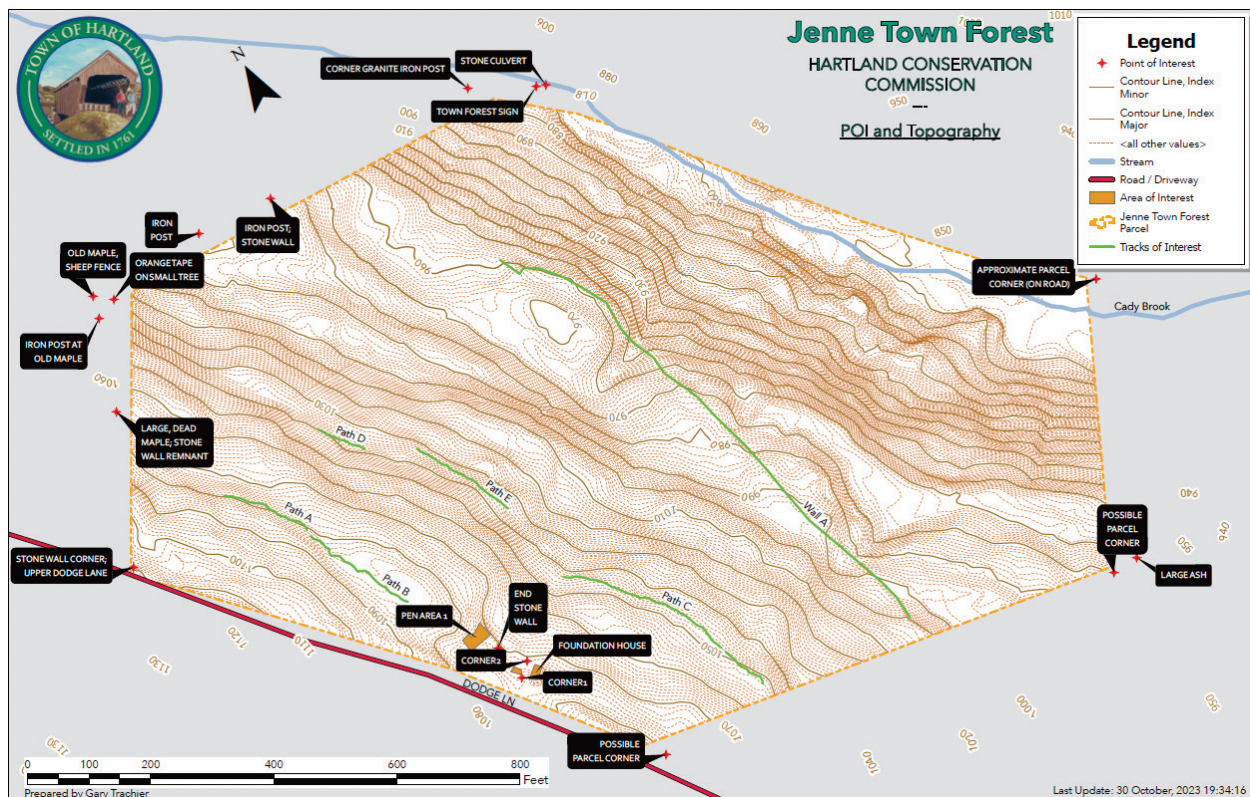
Intermediate objectives (3-5 years)

- Find a solution to the problem of limited parking for Cady Brook Trail and the Town Forest
- Create a walking trail through the forest, employing posts with scannable QR codes stationed at points of interest. This trail could be based on the trail that was built in the 1990s but has since become overgrown (see image at the end of this document).
- Install new picnic table
- Develop a plan for controlling invasive species, and recruit Hartland citizens to participate in identification/removal of invasives
- Enact an outreach/marketing campaign to promote awareness of the Town Forest and its inherent opportunities for Hartland citizens

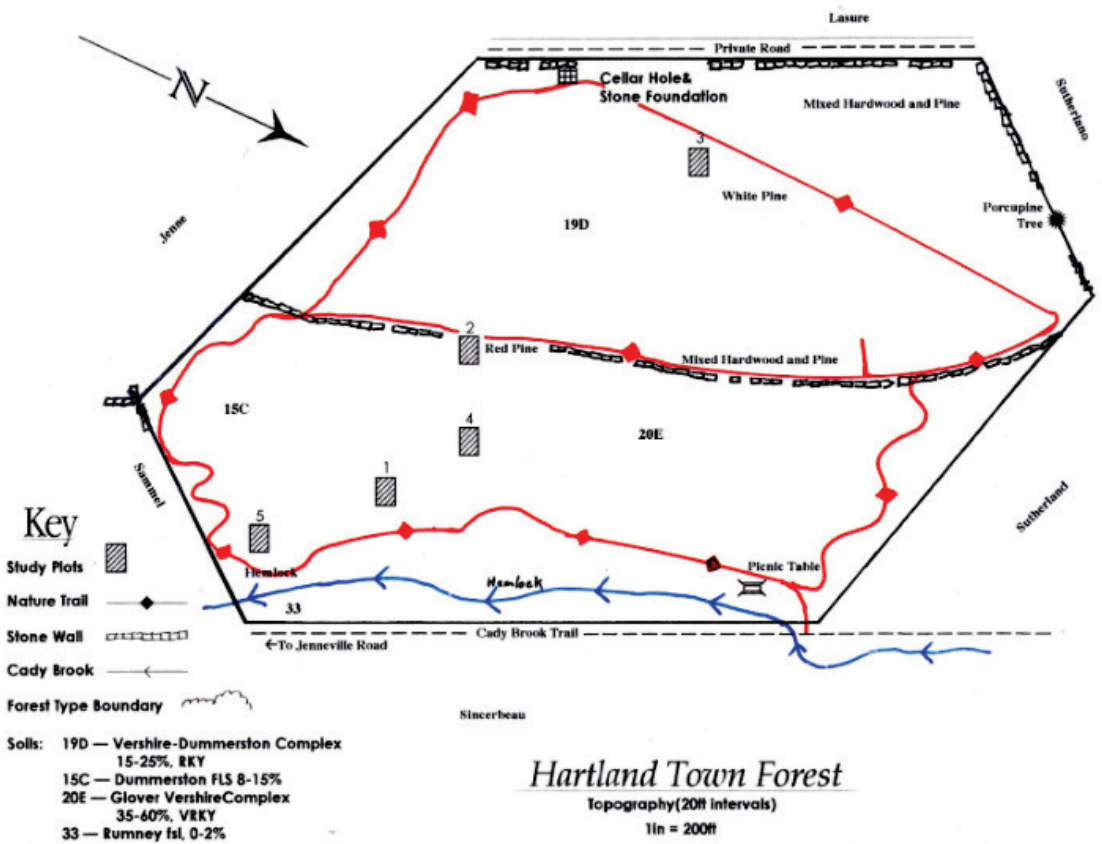
Longer term objectives (5-10 years)

- Apply group selection on 10% of the land. This entails harvesting groups of trees to establish new pockets of regeneration. This will help in moving the forest to a more healthy uneven-age structure.
- Release crop trees (removing competition for trees targeted to thrive).
- Girdle 5 trees per acre
- Prevent/limit erosion by felling large trees along steep slopes to stabilize their banks of soil
- Enhance forest health and resilience by ensuring native regeneration by creating deer-proof physical barriers around young native individuals (using felled older trees)
- Continue to clear out invasive species
- Prevent/limit erosion by felling large trees along steep slopes and allowing them to remain in place there, slowing down the movement of water to stabilize the banks.

Below, please find several relevant images and maps of Jenne Town Forest.



JTF—Topography + points and areas of interest (Credit: Gary Trachier)



Davison map showing now-overgrown walking trails (Credit: Scott Davison)