

Pinnacle News

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association

SPRING 2014

Two Land Acquisitions!

Please welcome the Bemis and Gaddes properties that expand WHPA's Ridgeline Reserve! Successful fundraising efforts for the Bemis piece over the winter months garnered enough contributions that we didn't have to broaden appeals to our wider Pinnacle family of supporters or the general public. Those contributions covered both the Bemis purchase from the interim holding group and the endowment expenses. Success there allowed a previous donation that was earmarked for acquisition to be used for the Gaddes piece. By closing on these properties, Pinnacle will fill in two critical gaps in its ever-growing system of trails and adjacent lands.

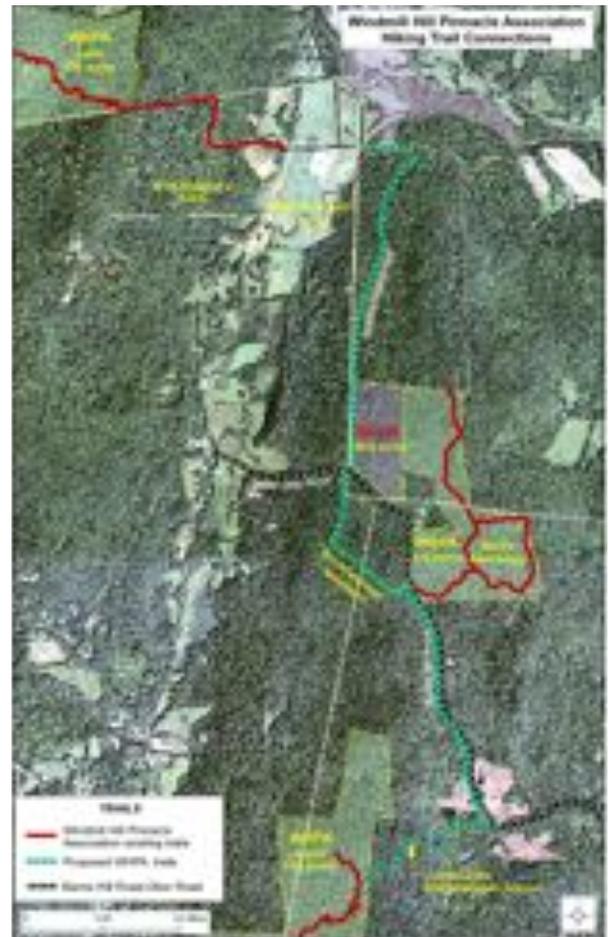
The Gaddes property is a steep 6.85-acre parcel 220 feet wide by 200 feet long that extends from the ridgeline down to Grassy Brook Road in Brookline. An important wildlife corridor from the ridgeline to points west, it includes a beautiful, roadside stream with moss-covered rocks.

The 34.46-acre Bemis property is perfectly positioned to link Pinnacle's Windmill Ridge holdings of around 1600 acres to the Athens Dome trails and 195 acres in Grafton. Located at the junction of Westminster, Rockingham, and Athens, the Bemis property sits adjacent to WHPA's 110.2-acre Stephen Martin Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary. The new parcel is significant in that its hemlock/oak/pine forest hasn't been harvested in the

recent past. The steep topography of the Bemis land dictates that the proposed public trail will be located along its western boundary, thereby effectively enlarging the adjacent wildlife sanctuary area by one third while adding approximately 2.5 miles to the present trail system whose regulations, unlike those of the Martin Sanctuary, do allow dogs.

Thank you to those Board Members and donors who so generously supported our initial appeal and quickly helped us achieve our immediate campaign goals.

Map shows the Bemis parcel at center right and its relation to present and proposed trails and WHPA properties.



INVITATION TO MEMBERS AND THE PUBLIC

Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association Annual Meeting Program and Refreshments

Sunday April 27, 2014
Westminster West Church

AGENDA

- 4:00 PM Refreshments. Reports and Minutes on view
 - 4:30 PM Business Meeting: Highlights, Purchases, Next Projects, Elections, Volunteer of the Year Award
 - 5:00 PM "Coexisting with Coyotes" by Chris Schadler, Vermont and New Hampshire Representative to Project Coyote
- For more information, visit www.windmillhillpinnacle.org

Recent Highlights

Trails. This winter's early and deep snowy conditions were not conducive to trail work, but some good activity was concluded in the fall and much planning done over the winter.

Athens Dome. The Eagle Scout project by Earl Grennan of Grafton to build a log lean-to shelter near the lookout above Creature Rock in Grafton is proceeding. Having received approval of his plans, Earl is organizing dates for cutting trees and stripping logs preparatory to construction.

Bald Hill. The hike for Bald Hill Board Members and the public on October 19 included the area for a proposed new Riverside Trail. Bald Hill and High School Forest Trail descriptions were completed and posted, along with an Introduction to the Bald Hill project, a large map, and "Rules and Courtesies" for users of the trail system. Three kiosks were upgraded with dark green paint and roofing.

Vernal Pool Tracking



The audience for the Vernal Pool Program and Training Session on March 11 at the Putney Library included a number of citizen scientists, as well as interested members of the public eager to learn more about the tiny, tough creatures that visit vernal pools to lay their eggs and then leave for their normal lives in the forest while their eggs hatch, grow, and transform. Brett Amy Thelen, Science Director of the Harris Center for Conservation Education – in her presentation entitled "What Are Vernal Pools and Why Should We Care?" – showed slides of ephemeral pools and their often-elusive inhabitants to help observers identify potential pool sites and individual species. Then Phil Hamilton, Research Scientist at the John H. Prescott Marine Laboratory of the New England Aquarium, explained the procedures involved in participating in the Vernal Pool Monitoring Project, sponsored since 1999 by the Putney Mountain Association and WHPA. The session was designed to help people identify life in the pools, show how to count egg masses, and review the reporting protocol. These sensitive creatures are an important part of the food chain, and their instinct to return to a specific short-lived forest pool is so strong that their breeding process often ceases if their pool, or the access to it, is eliminated. If you are interested in becoming a vernal pool monitor on Putney Mountain Association or Pinnacle lands, contact Catherine Cooper-Ellis at 802-869-1199. For further information on vernal pools and helpful identification aids, visit the website for the Vermont Center for Ecostudies and its Vernal Pools Mapping Project at www.vtecostudies.org/vpmp/.

From the Board

New membership software. An anonymous contribution allowed us to replace old software whose support feature was no longer available at a reasonable cost. Records are being transferred and updated. Please let us know your current email address and contact information. We do not share that information.



Legislative Day in Montpelier. A number of current and former Board Members went to VHCBC Legislative Day in Montpelier. Vermont Housing and Conservation Board [VHCBC] provides state funds for affordable housing and conservation projects and is a past funder of some WHPA land purchases. Past Pinnacle Board Member Libby Mills made a presentation for Putney Mountain Association's proposal to purchase additional property on the ridgeline in Putney. WHPA was also featured in the presentation because of our extensive holdings to the north. The session was a good opportunity to meet with officials and update them on our work.

Board Retreat. All current Board Members participated in a full-day retreat on March 29 to consider changes and additions to Pinnacle's Strategic Plan, due to be updated in 2015. According to Chairperson Susan Roman, "Smart and spirited discussions centered around three main issues that will shape Pinnacle's priorities over the next five years: the catchment area for ridgeline and contiguous lands, fiscal management policies and practices, and overarching governance matters." The facilitator for the productive day was again Debby Bergh, who has led two previous retreats. The Board now has a good head start on updating the plan to ensure Pinnacle's short- and long-term success and sustainability.



Examining a spotted salamander brought to vernal pool training

Schedule of Events: Weekend Strolls and More

For more information and directions, visit www.windmillhillpinnacle.org or contact the program person listed below.

April 27, Sunday, 1:30-3:30 PM. Hike to Champion White Ash. The largest White Ash in Vermont is located on Pinnacle property off Headwaters Trail. Forester Arthur Westing will lead a walk to the giant tree and discuss the factors that make its success possible. Meet at Holden Trail kiosk. Contact Arthur Westing at 802-387-2152.

April 27, Sunday, 4 PM. Coyote Program, Annual Meeting, Refreshments.

A short business meeting will be followed by Chris Schadler's program on "Coexisting with Coyotes." Schadler is a Wild Canid Ecologist, college professor, the Vermont and New Hampshire Representative for Project Coyote, and a former sheep farmer. Meet at Westminster West Church. Contact Bev Major at 802-387-5737 or beverlymajor65@gmail.com.



May 3, Saturday, 2-4 PM. Wildflower Walk with Libby Mills, Carol Westing, and Mary Lou Johnson. A favorite off-trail stroll at a new site to discover forest ephemeral spring flowers. Meet at Westminster West Church to carpool to the start. Bring camera and water. Register with Libby Mills at 802-387-5596 or libbym680@comcast.net.

May 11, Sunday, 7 AM. Early Morning Birding Walk. Richard Foye, birder extraordinaire, will help fine-tune your birding-by-ear skills on a walk from Holden Trail to the Latham Trail kiosk, where you will be shuttled back to the start. Meet at the Holden Trail kiosk. Register with Sarah Waldo at 802-387-6036 or sarah_waldo@hotmail.com.

June 21, Saturday, 9 AM-2 PM. Take a Kid for a Hike Day. Tony Coven will lead this hike to the Pinnacle lookout and back via the Holden Trail. We'll provide a mid-hike treat for all participants. Wear sturdy sneakers or walking shoes, and long pants to ward off ticks. Bring water, bag lunch, snack, repellent, sunscreen. Meet at Westminster West Church to carpool. Contact Tony Coven at 802-387-6650 for information and registration.

July 12, Saturday, 9 AM-2 PM. Over the Hill Hike! Tony Coven will lead this hike from north to south. Bring water, lunch, snack, insect repellent, sunscreen. Meet at Westminster West Church. Register with Tony Coven at 802-387-6650.

September 20, Saturday, 11 AM-4 PM. Accessibility Day.

This once-a-year opportunity for a vehicle ride to a special trail site will go to Paul's Ledges for lunch via an often rough road. Leaders will be Tony Coven and Bev Major. The popularity of this program and the need for four-wheel-drive vehicles make advance registrations a MUST for riders. Hikers do not need to pre-register. Bring water, bag lunch, and sweater or jacket for chilly weather. Meet at Westminster West Church at 10:45 AM or at Athens Dome Trailhead on Route 35, opposite Sleepy Valley Road, at 11 AM to carpool. Register with Bev Major at 802-387-5737 or beverlymajor65@gmail.com.

October 18, Saturday, 2-4 PM. Athens Dome Hike. Camilla Roberts will lead this occasionally steep 1.5-mile hike to Creature Rock, the Summit Lookout and shelter site, then down to Shortcut Road, past the edge of an old beaver wetland, and back on Ledge Road alongside tumbling Ledge Brook to the parking area. Creature Rock is a collection of house-sized boulders with small caves. The summit view looks to the east, towards Cambridgeport and Atcherson Hollow. Dress warmly, wear sturdy shoes, bring water. Meet at the trailhead parking area on Ledge Road, off Route 35. Contact Camilla Roberts at 802-869-1388 for information and registration.

November 8, Saturday, 2-4 PM. Bald Hill Hike. Randy Major will lead this moderate hike. Meet at the gate at the end of Cemetery Road in Westminster. Contact Randy Major at 802-387-5737 or majorrandy71@gmail.com.





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Permit No. 1



Pink Lady Slipper. Photo: Arthur Westing

Champion White Ash

The largest White Ash in Vermont resides majestically on Pinnacle property, off Headwaters Trail. Re-verified on this past New Year's Day by Windham County Forester Bill Guenther of the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation, the tree had grown in the ten years since its last measurement and now has a circumference of 205.2 inches and a height of 113 feet, thereby beating out two other giants in Westminster and proving that Nature and people thrive under the Pinnacle influence. Go on Arthur Westing's April 27 hike to the tree and see for yourself. See photo at right.

Wanted: Artists and Works for 2015 Winter Exhibit

The Pinnacle Association is hoping, in early 2015, to mount an art exhibit of paintings, drawings, sculpture, photographs, or other art inspired by WHPA lands and features. Please indicate the location for the work and your interest. See www.windmillhillpinnacle.org.

Wanted: Pinnacle Scenes

If you would like to share your great, high-resolution digital photographs of flora, fauna, views, or people enjoying themselves on WHPA lands, please email them to sjroman1948@yahoo.com. We may be able to use your photos in a future newsletter or post them on our website www.windmillhillpinnacle.org.



Shown here encircling the champion tree to estimate its size are left to right: Randy Major of Westminster, Libby Mills of Putney, Jenny Holan of Westminster, and Dick Heminway of Putney. Carol Westing of Putney is hidden behind the tree, and Arthur Westing is taking the picture.