



Fairlee Town Forest Trail Report - 2022

The purpose of this report is to describe the current condition of the main roads and trails in the Fairlee Town Forest and to make suggestions on how to protect and improve the condition of these assets. Attached is a map with individual trail segments numbered. This map will be needed to understand the recommendations.

This report is indifferent to the various types of recreation that occurs within the town forest. All forms of recreation can have a negative impact on roads and trails, depending upon volume of use and the time of year. Due to this, all forms of recreation must be managed. There are problems within the Fairlee Town Forest that have been created by use, lack of management, and lack of maintenance over a long period of time.

There are a large number of recommendations. Some will require the use of excavation equipment to create a series of waterbars. Other work can actually be done by hand and volunteers. Some of the larger items will require engineering and will be expensive; it is likely best for the tax payers to apply for grant monies to fund the work.

1. Cross Mountain Trail North – Long-term undesired vehicle traffic from Mill Pond Road through to Bald Top Road has caused rutting and erosion. It is recommended that this trail be waterbarred in its entire length from Chestnut landing to Mill Pond Road. This will require coordination with Chris Long. An excavator is needed to complete this work. It is recommended that this trail only be used for foot travel.
2. In coordination with Chris Long, it is recommended that a gate be erected along Mill Pond Road. This entrance and the entrance to Wetlands Trail (#6) are some of the worst

undesired trail abuses on the Fairlee Town Forest. The type of gate will need to be discussed and budgeted. High quality tube steel gates, which are used on industrial timberland are effective but quite expensive. It is recommended that grant funding be pursued as an option. Ideally, this gate remains closed except when Chris Long has the need to open it, or in the case of an emergency.

3. This gate is at the entrance to Chestnut Landing. This gate is temporary but has been slowing undesired traffic. Depending upon the configuration of other gates, this gate may not be needed, perhaps it is adequate, or maybe it needs to be improved.

4. Beaver Trail – This trail is very steep and not well suited for vehicle use. It is recommended that this trail be closed, especially for ATVs. It is recommended that the easterly half of the trail be waterbarred with an excavator while waterbarring Cross Mountain Trail North. The western half of the trail should be waterbarred when working on Wetlands Trail. Once the waterbars have been put into place, trees could be felled to deter access and signs should be removed.

5. Wetlands Trail – Evidence of mud trucks, ATV's, mountain bikes, motorized dirt bikes, and horseback riding were all noted during the fall investigation. A significant amount of erosion has occurred from Bald Top Road to Mill Pond Road. To use the internal log landing will now require a significant amount of work due the historic damage from trucks and ATVs. A large mud hole was created from mud trucks on Brushwood Community Forestland off of the main access road. The entire length of the trail should be thoroughly waterbarred as soon as possible. This is a very high priority.

6. With coordination with Brushwood Community Forest, install a gate along Mill Pond Road. It is recommended that this gate remain closed year-round except during emergency, maintenance, or forest operations. It is recommended that access be restricted to foot travel only, as the site is too remote to be effectively monitored and managed. Again, high-quality gates are expensive and grant funding options should be examined and likely applied for.

7. Howdy's Trail – Waterbar the remaining length using an excavator. In the northern reaches the trail is heavily trenched and it will take ditching and filling to get the trail height out of the low point.

8. Presently there is a gate at the junction of Fairlee Town Forest and private land that is managed by Terry Lewis. People have busted through the gate from time to time. This gate may be sufficient and perhaps it is not. This should be monitored overtime and potentially replaced with a higher quality gate if it is deemed necessary.

9. This small tear drop trail portion on Howdy's Trail is wet. Trucks cannot take the dry route because it is too narrow so they have driven through this relatively short mucky section. This section should be closed by felling trees and placing some boulders at either end. This is a relatively easy and quick fix.

10. This short bypass section of Howdy's Trail is a steep ephemeral drainage, which typically would only have water in it during mud season or right after a precipitation event. Although it dries seasonally, it is still not a good place for a trail of any type. This bypass can be closed easily by felling trees at both entrances. Trails should avoid running in the trough of a valley whenever possible.

11. Old Echo Mountain Trail – At the moment there are no significant problems. There are not enough waterbars, but there is not a lot of use by ATVs, hiking, or any other recreational uses. The next time logging or any other equipment is in the area, it would be ideal to install additional waterbars into the trail system. The present state is acceptable. Additional waterbars could be dug by hand but it is not pressing.

12. Knox Mountain Road – The very top of Knox Mountain Road, above where the Limlaw logging operation and close out occurred, the trail system could use a handful of waterbars. These could be put in by hand with volunteers and hand shovels. It would not require a lot of work, but would be beneficial.

13. South Bald Top Trail - This trail runs down a steep entrenched valley that is quite rocky. The trail runs within the trough of the valley. It is not recommended that this remain a trail, with the exception of maybe emergency use. This trail is too hazardous for basically anything but perhaps walking. Trees can be felled to block the entrance of the trail and the signs should be removed.

Fairlee Fire and Rescue needs to maintain the ability to get an ATV to the top of Bald Top. It is possible that this trail will need to be designated and improved for this purpose. It is not recommended that this trail be used for anything more than that.

14. Exposed Culvert on South Bald Top Trail – It is recommended that this culvert be removed. This crossing should not be used unless it is improved. Trees should be felled on either side of the culvert to dissuade from using the crossing. If the South Bald Top Trail is determined to be important emergency trail to Bald Top, this culvert should be brought up to Acceptable Management Practices standards.

15. Fern Trail – Like South Bald Top Trail, this trail goes steeply up through a jumble of rocks. This also runs in the trough of the valley. It is not recommended that this remain

a recreational trail. Trees should be felled across the entrances of trails and the sign should be taken down.

Fairlee Fire and Rescue needs to maintain the ability to get an ATV to the top of Bald Top. It is possible that this trail will need to be designated and improved for this purpose. It is not recommended that this trail be used for anything more than that.

16. Knox Road Gate– It is recommended that a parking area with a high quality gate be established along Knox Road shortly after entering the Town Forest. This would allow access to be restricted to acceptable periods of the year. This would allow for Knox Road and log landings to fully green up and will protect them from erosion. Grant money should be investigated. The Forest Board has been working with the other owners along Knox Road to place the gate at the bottom of the hill, just above the last houses.

17. Bald Top Road Gate- It is recommended that a gate, or possibly two gates, be considered along Bald Top Road and the junction with Howdy's Trail. This would be for the very same reasons as discussed above, to control access during certain time periods. Peter Ackerman would obviously need to have complete access to Bald Top Road.

18. Improve the stone ford on Howdy's Trail. This crossing is presently open without a culvert. Consult with the Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation on the specifics. Grant money should be investigated.

19. Replace the culvert with a stone ford at the bottom of Cross Mountain Trail. Consult with the Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation on the specifics. Grant money should be investigated.

20. The culvert leading up to Peter Ackerman's camp is likely too small. It is recommended that a discussion occur with Peter. The culvert should either be replaced with a stone ford or a larger culvert. Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation must be consulted, and it must be properly engineered. Grant money should be investigated.

21. According to Rick Dyer the culvert on Bald Top Road is undersized and should be replaced with a bridge or perhaps a stone ford. Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation must be consulted, and it must be properly engineered. This is a major expenditure and grant money should be pursued.

22. According to Rick Dyer the culvert at the base of Howdy's Trail is also too small and should be replaced with a bridge or perhaps a stone ford. Vermont's Department of Environmental Conservation must be consulted, and it must be properly engineered. This is a major expenditure and grant money should be pursued.

23. While Todd Dunham was waterbarring southern part of Cross Mountain Trail, it became apparent that a spring occurs in a low point of the trail very close to a steep section of the trail where it drops off to the stream. It is not ideal regardless of whether the use is by foot or ATV. It would be ideal to armor the waterbar with rocks. There should be plenty of stones within gathering distance and this task could be completed with volunteers in a couple of hours.

There are likely additional trails and segments of trails that could use attention and regular oversight. Using the conclusions from the recreation meeting this fall, it may make sense for the Forest Board to periodically review additional trail segments.

I sincerely hope that this report is helpful.

Respectfully,

Markus Bradley