HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the March 2019 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last submission in early January, 2019.

* An ad hoc HMCA/HPC working group on emergency planning for Hogback was formed. The group:
  + Organized and hosted a meeting with local emergency responders (Marlboro EMT and Fire Dept personnel, Wilmington Fire Dept personnel, and Deerfield Valley Rescue staff) . HMCA shared maps and information about trails and trail heads. The first responders discussed the roles each group would play in the case of a winter or summer rescue, or a search for a missing person.
  + Signs about the risks and responsibilities that backcountry skiing entails were researched. The “Vermont Backcountry Ethics” poster that was developed by the Catamount Trail Association in conjunction was adopted and adapted for use at Hogback. Signs were printed and installed at the three primary entrance kiosks (two on Route 9, one on Grant Road.)
* HMCA, along with SVNHM, co-sponsored a training event on vernal pool monitoring. The VT Center for Ecostudies provided the training, as part of a state-wide program to document and monitor vernal pools. The indoor training, at the Museum, was scheduled for Wednesday, Feb 27, but bad weather forced a postponement to Thrusday, Feb 28.
* HMCA co-hosted an event planned and organized by BEEC (Bonnyvale Environmental Education Center): Tracking in the Field with George Leoniak. Held on Saturday, March 2, the event was part two of a three-part series. The other events will be held at non-Hogback locations.
* On Feb 28, Charley Eiseman submitted the draft of his Biodiversity Inventory. It is currently being reviewed by the joint HMCA/HPC Working Group.
* Plans are well underway for spring and summer events on Hogback. Expected events include:
  + Spring trail clean-up work parties
  + Two Bishop site work days
  + A wildflower walk led by Allison Turner
  + A bird walk led by Cherrie Corey
  + Mike Clough has agreed to be the speaker at our annual Summer Meeting, which is an evening program held indoors. Details haven’t been worked out yet. Mike may bring some of the live birds from the Museum.
* The Education Committee has begun work on an addition to the web site. The Education tab will feature information about three levels of education:
  + K-12
  + Education for Everyone
  + Research Projects on Hogback
* Tracks indicate skiers, boarders, snowshoers, and hikers have been enjoying Hogback this winter.
* There haven’t been any reports of snowmobiles using trails that are off-limits. The snowmobile club has closed the VAST trail on the northern half of the Conservation Area. Rumor has it that this is because a landowner to the north has revoked permission.
* The National Grid has used a snow-cat/Bombadier-type vehicle to access the communication tower at the Mt Olga summit. It looks like they carried up new gas cylinders to power their equipment.
* Molly Stark news:
  + The new metal-grid steps on the fire tower, installed by Molly Stark State Park last summer, have proved to be a big improvement. No more ice and snow build-up on the treads! Climbing to the lookout perch is much, much safer.
  + Spencer Crispe re-created the “Mt Olga” sign that he had made several years ago, which had vanished. With permission from the park, he has installed the replacement sign on the kiosk at the summit.
* Visits to the web site have slowed, with an average of about 15 visits per day over the last two months.