

RICHMOND LAND TRUST

EXISTING CONDITIONS

LOWER GORGE PRESERVE

A. Geology and Soil

STEWARDSHIP PLAN 1998-2008

PURPOSE AND POLICY FOR THE PRESERVE

The Lower Gorge Preserve was established in 1995 to preserve the wild character of the land, to conserve habitat for native wildlife, fish and plants, to protect the spectacular geologic features of the Huntington River, and to provide public access to the Huntington River for swimming, fishing, picnicking, hiking and enjoyment of the outdoors. The preserve is for day use only, and persons using the premises do so at their own risk.

The Preserve was purchased from the Huntington River Corporation November 9, 1995 (Recorded in book 95, pages 472-474, Town of Richmond) (Appendix 1). It is listed as LAND, 19.7 acres, WOODED, T in the Grand List. All restrictive covenants and conditions set forth in the Conservation Restrictions (Appendix 2) for this property apply to uses of the property.

Management responsibility for the Preserve is assigned to the Richmond Land Trust through a Stewardship Agreement with the Vermont Land Trust (Appendix 3). The Richmond Land Trust will manage the property with assistance from neighboring property owners and the Town of Richmond.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESERVE

The Preserve lies on the south side of Dugway Road approximately 1 mile southwest of Jonesville and 0.5 miles east of the well-known Huntington Gorge. The Preserve encompasses approximately 3,000 feet of frontage along the north bank of the Huntington River and 19.7 acres of dense forest and river shore ledges. The forest canopy is dominated by mature eastern hemlocks and white pines, with lesser amounts of yellow birch, white birch, white ash, American beech, and sugar maple. Most of this forest lies on a steep, south-facing slope above the river. Soils are thin and rocky with numerous bedrock outcroppings. The slope is moderate at the eastern end of the Preserve and most level ground is found here. A mid-slope terrace lies midway between the eastern and western ends of the property. (See maps, Appendix 4, and photographs, Appendix 5).

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See Appendix 6 and maps, Appendix 4.

## EXISTING CONDITIONS

### A. Geology and Soils

The bedrock underlying the preserve is predominantly a silvery, green metamorphic rock known as schist. Rich in minerals such as quartz, sericite, albite, chlorite and phyllite, the schist bedrock is part of the extensive Underhill Formation which underlies much of the northern Green Mountains. The rock was formed over 450 million years ago from ocean bottom sediments that were subjected to tremendous heat and pressure during tectonic events that formed the Green Mountains.

The surficial material which mantles much of the bedrock is predominantly glacial till, an unsorted and unstratified mix of clay, silt, sand and boulders transported and deposited by glacial ice. The majority of the till on the site is derived from the local schist bedrock. The coarse gravelly beach deposits that overly the till in certain areas provide evidence that a pro-glacial lake once covered much of the Huntington River valley.

Most of the soils on the steep rocky surface of the preserve are classified by the Soil Conservation Service as **Lyman very rocky loam** (30-60% slope) (Appendix 7). Due to the nature of the schist-based till in which they have formed, these soils have a low natural fertility and a moderately low moisture capacity. Surface runoff is quite rapid due to the steep slope and the low permeability of the subsurface till.

### B. Vegetation

See Appendix 8

### C. Wildlife

See Appendix 9

### D. Uses of the Property

Past uses of the property include: swimming, picnicking, hiking and timber management. There are no known abandoned residential structures or foundations on the property. An abandoned woods road historically provided vehicular access to the river where there was a small parking area just off Dugway Road near the eastern Border. A second main access point is at the western end of the property via a gated private drive owned by Lawrence Cross of Colchester, VT. An Environmental Assessment (Appendix 10) disclosed a dump site on Preserve land behind an adjacent house. This was thoroughly evaluated and found to be free of toxic products (appendix 11) It was removed in September, 1996. Currently the property is used for fishing, swimming, bird-watching and hiking.

## ACTIVITIES NOT PERMITTED ON THE PROPERTY

- \* Overnight camping
- \* Fires
- \* Consumption of alcohol or illegal drugs
- \* Nudity
- \* Discharge of firearms
- \* Use or disposal of glass containers
- \* Pets running free
- \* Motorized vehicles
- \* Cutting, uprooting, collecting or disturbing vegetation except for designated trail clearing and maintenance or collection of wild edibles in a non-injurious manner.
- \* Killing, injuring, harassing or collecting of wildlife except as permitted under fish and wildlife statutes of the State of Vermont

## STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES

### A. Management Authority

The Stewardship Agreement authorizes the Richmond Land Trust to oversee management of the Preserve. The Land Trust has established a Preserve Management Committee which includes neighboring Dugway Road residents, members of the Richmond Land Trust, and representatives of the Richmond Select Board, Conservation Commission and Police Department. The responsibilities of this committee are to work with the Stewardship Committee of the Richmond Land Trust to: a) develop a Stewardship Plan, b) review the Plan at least every five years and revise it as necessary, c) to implement management activities and d) to monitor the use and condition of the Preserve and compliance with conservation restrictions on the property. The Plan and any revisions will be subject to the approval of the Richmond Land Trust, and the holders of conservation restrictions to the Preserve, the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board and the Vermont Land Trust.

### B. Boundary Marking and Signs

Property corners of the preserve should be permanently marked with concrete, PVC pipe, or metal or plastic survey stakes. Signs welcoming and warning users to the Preserve are maintained at the eastern and western access points. Signs outlining Preserve use guidelines are posted and maintained at other main access points on Dugway Road. Appendix 12.

### C. General Monitoring

The Preserve Management Committee oversees the Preserve and members conduct periodic inspections of the property to collect litter, maintain main access trails and address problems that arise. A Stewardship Committee member will complete a monitoring report (Appendix 13) yearly. There is a general trash cleanup each Green-Up Day (1st Saturday in May) on the Preserve.

### D. Trails

A short access trail begins at the eastern end of the property and follows an old roadbed down to the Huntington River. A second river access trail descends steeply to the river at the western border of the Preserve, and a third route to the river is located approximately midway between the other two. No vehicles are permitted on these trails, and winter use is discouraged because of the steep slopes. Plans for an east-west trail along the river have been abandoned because of the steep terrain and the threat of erosion.

### E. Parking

No Parking facilities currently exist on the Preserve. Users park along Dugway Road, and parking is monitored by the Richmond Police Department (Appendix 14).

### F. Research and Education

The preserve is available for ecological and forestry research and education by any educational institution or other group. Such use is encouraged, and specific permission is not required. The Richmond Land Trust requests that copies of reports of research conducted on the Preserve be given to the Land Trust.

### G. Special Restrictions

Except for emergencies, no vehicles of any kind are permitted on the trails because serious erosion problems and serious injury could result. Use of the trails during winter months is not encouraged because of danger caused by steep slopes, frozen ground and ice.

Compiled by Stewardship Committee members Christopher Fichtel, wildlife biologist, 1995, and Walter Poleman, Field Naturalist, and Warren Beeken, August 1998.