



# Stewardship Monitoring Report

## *Property Information*

(1) Name of Property: **West Monitor Barn (aka Wheeler Property)**

(2) **Property Ownership:**

RLT     Private

If privately owned, record name and address of current owner:

**Name(s):** Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC)

**Address:** 1949 East Main Street, Richmond, Vermont 05477

**Contact:** Bradley Materick, VYCC Land Stewardship Specialist:  
802.434.3969 x149, [bmaterick@vycc.org](mailto:bmaterick@vycc.org)

(3) **Has there been a change in ownership since last report?**

Yes     No

If Yes, include recording information below:

## *Visit Report* .....

(4) **Date and Time of Inspection:** 2:00pm Monday 10/22/2007

(5) **If privately owned, was owner contacted prior to visit (if yes how)?**

Yes     No

I contacted Bradley Materick, VYCC Land Stewardship Specialist several weeks prior to the visit via email and telephone to schedule the inspection.

(6) **Did owner (or representative) accompany the monitor?**

Yes     No

Both Bradley Materick (VYCC Land Stewardship Specialist) and Keegan Tierney (VYCC Conservation and Community Leadership Program Coordinator) accompanied me on the monitoring tour.

(7) **Describe how the land is currently being used (in restricted area only). Give specific detail about agricultural and forest uses if applicable:**

The property covers approximately 233 acres. Most of the property is forested (upper elevations). There is little merchantable timber on the property. Lower elevations are primarily open field, agricultural (~35 acres of which ~25 acres are in corn production and 0.5 acres are being prepared for vegetable gardens and greenhouses), the West Monitor Barn and parking. Eight lean-tos have been installed along the west border where old field meets forest.

**(8) Monitor's best assessment of whether the terms of the conservation restrictions are being observed:** (if No, explain below or on attachment)  **Yes**  **No**

The property generally appears to be maintained in a manner consistent with common conservation restrictions. Several issues of concern noted previously have either been addressed or have begun to be to be addressed. These include:

**Trail maintenance:** VYCC has made significant improvements to the trail running up the west side of the property, installing at least a dozen water diversion structures to reduce the erosion and trail damage identified during previous monitoring inspections. These structures require yearly maintenance (removal of debris/leaves) and should be inspected yearly to ensure they function properly. Also, the new route that water will take through the property should be inspected in future years to ensure that it is not causing undue problems in its new water course. VYCC reports that it intends to install additional structures in the coming year along the west side trail.

Repair, rerouting, and potentially decommissioning, of some trails is *still* needed at some of the locations identified in the previous, 2005-2007 stewardship monitoring reports. Repairs at these locations (sites 1-4 on attached map) are needed to restore and/or maintain forest and water quality and to prevent further soil erosion on the property. VYCC should provide a written, time-sensitive action plan for trail repair before the end of the year.

**ATV Use:** It appears that ATV use has decreased with the installation of an additional gate and the increased VYCC presence on the property. In one instance in the summer of 2008, a VYCC crew leader chased down an ATV rider on the property and explained why ATV use was no longer allowed. As stated in the 2007 stewardship monitoring report, an ATV barrier is recommended at the northern end of the narrow—often wet—trail in the ravine between rocky ridges with significant wildlife sign (site #4 on attached map). Consider steps to reduce erosion here as well. Trails may require additional signage and barriers to prevent unwanted ATV usage.

**Field Maintenance:** Open field areas not under agriculture should be brush-hogged every third year as stipulated in the conservation easement (sec II.2) to prevent woody vegetation to maintain the open condition. This practice should be scheduled for 2009 (area #5 on attached map).

**(9) Did you note any possible violations of the terms of the conservation restrictions:** (if Yes, explain below or on attachment)  **Yes**  **No**

The property boundary encroachment by neighboring property owner (Mr. Craig Cowles) reported in the 2007 stewardship monitoring report remains unabated.

As identified in the 2007 stewardship monitoring report the survey monument engraved with the license number 695 and installed by VYCC in summer 2007 at the northeast corner of Mr. Cowles property (see site 6 in attached map) has either not been replaced or it has again been broken off. Its top was found under a nearby tree in Oct 2007 (figure 1) and immediately reported to VYCC leadership. It was supposed to have been replaced by summer 2008 but has not.

Mr. Cowles appears to continue to maintain a lawn north of the property line and north of a line of spruce trees planted to delineate the boundary (figure 2). This land could otherwise be included

in the acreage assigned to production agriculture. A vehicle trailer (most likely for ATVs/snowmobiles) is now parked north of the property line. This trailer is not the property of VYCC and should be removed immediately.

The following was included in the 2007 stewardship monitoring report and the recommendation remains:

Considering the terms of the conservation easement between VYCC and the Richmond Land Trust and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board, Mr. Cowles' previous history with boundary disputes, and his threats to take protected VYCC property via adverse possession (see 2005 stewardship monitoring report), VYCC should immediately inform Mr. Cowles in writing that he is unlawfully using VYCC lands. VYCC might discuss with RLT and VHCBC the possibility of giving Mr. Cowles a letter granting temporary permission to continue mowing the land, in order to guard against later claims of adverse possession. RLT should be copied on all correspondence with Mr. Cowles about this and related issues.

No other conditions were noted on the West Monitor Barn property that clearly appeared to be a violation of conservation restrictions were observed.



Figure 1. Broken survey monument at the northeast corner between the VYCC and Cowles properties 10/22/2007. As of 11/30/2008, the monument has not been replaced.



Figure 2. Encroachment on conserved VYCC property at border between VYCC and Cowles properties (to the right of the tree line). The vehicle trailer parked in this area had not been removed as of 11/30/2008.

#### (10) General Remarks:

- A) **Invasive Exotic Plants:** In 2007 the exotic, invasive shrub Japanese barberry (*Berberis thunbergii*) was found growing in the northwest portion of the property (site #7 on attached map) and the largest plants were covered with a blue tarp. As recommended in 2007, these plants and others in the area should be removed before they can spread and the surrounding area should be checked for additional plants. Follow-up monitoring should occur for two-three years to ensure that dormant seeds haven't sprouted. The infestation could not be found during a survey in the summer of 2008. VYCC should inspect this area again during winter 2008/early spring 2009 before leaf out to re-find the infestation and to record GPS points.

In 2008 Bradley Materick, VYCC Land Stewardship Specialist, identified another Japanese barberry site and the presence of buckthorn (*Rhamnus cathartica*), an invasive exotic tree on the property (site #8 and 9 on attached map). Actions were taken immediately to remove these plants. The locations should be monitored for the next two-three years to ensure the plants do not re-sprout.

Japanese barberry forms dense stands in natural habitats including canopy forests, open woodlands, wetlands, pastures, and meadows and alters soil pH, nitrogen levels, and biological activity in the soil. Once established, barberry displaces native plants and reduces wildlife habitat and forage. Prevention of seed production should be a management priority as birds readily spread seeds. Because barberry can re-sprout from root fragments remaining in soil, thorough removal of root portions is important. Manual control works well but may need to be combined with chemical in large or persistent infestations.

- B) **Property Management Plan:** Richmond Land Trust and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board should work with VYCC to ensure that the property management plan and forest management plan are implemented appropriately and in a timely fashion. VYCC should provide an updated implementation timeline by 12/31/2008.

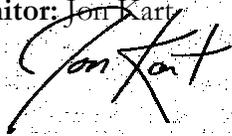
**(11) Attachments** (Note how many of each - leave blank if none):

2 Photos                      1 Maps                      \_\_\_ Drawings

\_\_\_ Other (describe \_\_\_\_\_)

**(12) Name of Monitor:** Jon Kart

Signature:



Date: 12/1/2008

# Stewardship Recommendations for the West Monitor Barn Property based on the 10/27/2008 RLT Monitoring Visit.

Base map from 2002 Wheeler & Farm Bureau Assessment by LIA Consultants

