

CONSERVATION MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR WHEELER SOUTH PARCEL

A. Background

The Wheeler South Parcel has been acquired by the Richmond Land Trust as part of the Monitor Barn Project. The goal of the Monitor Barn Project is to restore the two historic Monitor Barns on Route 2 east of Richmond Village, to conserve key portions of the surrounding 1,000-acre scenic and agricultural landscape, and to promote productive uses of that landscape. The three primary parcels involved in the Monitor Barn Project are the Andrews Farm (600 acres), the Wheeler South Parcel (229 acres), and the Vermont Farm Bureau Parcel (170 acres). The Richmond Land Trust is working with two partner organizations, the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) and the Vermont Farm Bureau (VFB), to achieve the goals of the Monitor Barn Project. In addition, financial support for the project has been provided by numerous public and private agencies and individuals.

The Richmond Land Trust acquired fee title to the Wheeler South Parcel in July 2002. A conservation easement will be conveyed to the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board in October 2002. It is anticipated that ownership of the property will be transferred to VYCC in 2003. VYCC will use the property as part of the statewide headquarters and training facility it is developing at the adjacent West Monitor Barn site.

B. History and Description of Property

Located along the Winooski floodplain and adjacent uplands, the 229-acre Wheeler South Parcel has a long and distinguished agricultural history. It was once part of a 650-acre dairy farm featuring two historic Monitor Barns. The East Monitor Barn, currently owned by the Vermont Farm Bureau is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. The West Monitor Barn, currently being reconstructed by the Richmond Land Trust, has been determined to be eligible for the National Register. The Wheeler Family acquired the farm in the 1940s, and ran it as an active dairy farm until the 1970s. The Wheeler family has subdivided and sold portions of the original farm over the last 25 years, including a 170-acre parcel (directly east of the Wheeler South Parcel) to the Vermont Farm Bureau in 1994. The Wheeler South Parcel was also sold, but later reacquired through foreclosure by the Wheeler Trust.

The Wheeler South Parcel contains a diversity of landforms ranging from flat riparian areas and ancient river terraces to rocky cliffs and talus slopes. The southern one-third of the

site, with its gentle topography at elevations of 350-450 feet, is ringed by steep hills. The highest points are over 1000 feet in elevation and are found on the ridge that forms the eastern boundary of the site. The northern part of the parcel contains a gently rolling topography at elevations of 800-900 feet. The Parcel has 793 feet of frontage along Route 2.

Several small streams and their tributary drainages flow through the Parcel. The largest stream drains the southern two-thirds of the Parcel and exits the property in the southwest corner. Two other streams and numerous tributary channels drain the northern portion of the Parcel. The Wheeler South Parcel is composed of a diverse mosaic of forest, open areas, rock outcrops, and wetland habitats that are likely to support some 200 wildlife species.

The current uses of the Wheeler South Parcel relate to agriculture, forestry, and recreation. The Conant Farm of Richmond is currently leasing the 40-acre cornfield on the south end of the property. The rest of the old cultivated and pastured lands are not currently being used for agriculture, and the steep, forested hillsides have been managed for timber in recent years. A major power line corridor divides the bottom third of the Property from the upper two-thirds.

C. Responsibilities

The Richmond Land Trust will be responsible for managing the Wheeler South Parcel until ownership is transferred to the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. RLT's management of the property must be consistent with the terms and conditions of the conservation easement granted to VHCBC. VHCBC and RLT will be responsible for monitoring compliance with the conservation easement.

D. Gates and Boundary Marking and Posting

The parcel is currently not posted, nor are the boundaries marked. As part of a recent study by the UVM Land Inventory and Assessment Consulting Team, a number of property boundary monuments were field located and mapped by GPS. A Baseline Documentation Report has been produced with this information.

The final management plan for the parcel, to be produced jointly by RLT and VYCC, will address the issue of boundary marking and whether any gates are necessary to control access to the parcel. The parcel is currently used by the general public for recreational purposes, primarily by snowmobilers, hunters, and off road vehicles. As part of the management plan process, a careful assessment will be conducted to determine appropriate public uses of the property to protect its important scenic and natural features. RLT will seek input from neighboring landowners, the town of Richmond, and the general public as part of this process.

E. Current Physical Improvements to Property

Current physical improvements to the property are limited to the 40-acre agricultural field on the southern end of the parcel and old farm and logging roads that serve portions of the property.

F. Description of Proposed Physical Improvements to Property

No physical improvements to the property are proposed at this time. Future improvements may include a limited number of camp structures (lean-tos or tent platforms) that may be constructed by VYCC. The conservation easement also provides for a building envelope in the vicinity of the West Monitor Barn, within which VYCC may build additional structures as part of its headquarters and training center campus, with prior approval by VHCB. Such structures would also need to be authorized by the management plan then in effect for the property. Any such structures will be constructed within the four acre exclusion shown on the attached orthophoto.

G. Management of Property

No active management of the property is proposed at this time. The Richmond Land Trust and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps have signed a letter of intent which provides for eventual ownership of the Wheeler South Parcel by VYCC. Management objectives and responsibilities will be detailed in the final management plan to be prepared by Richmond Land Trust and VYCC. RLT will reserve the right to approve any periodic updates to the management plan by VYCC or other successors in interest.

H. Natural Features Inventory

A comprehensive natural features inventory of the Wheeler South and Vermont Farm Bureau Parcels was conducted by the University of Vermont's Landscape Inventory and Assessment Consulting Team (LIA) during the winter and spring of 2002. This inventory formed the basis for the Baseline Documentation Report prepared by the Richmond Land Trust. While the LIA team produced lists of wildlife and plant species found on the parcel, the report recommends that additional inventories be conducted to identify species not detected during the study period. Information from the LIA report and any subsequent inventories of the site will be included in the final management plan and updates to that plan.

A summary of the LIA team's natural features inventory is presented below:

Landforms - The Wheeler South Parcel contains a diversity of landforms ranging from flat

riparian areas and ancient river terraces to rocky cliffs and talus slopes. The southern one-third of the site, with its gentle topography at elevations of 350-450 feet, is ringed by steep hills. The highest points are over 1000 feet in elevation and are found on the ridge that forms the eastern boundary of the site. The northern part of the parcel contains a gently rolling topography at elevations of 800-900 feet.

Geology - Underlying the Parcel is bedrock of the Pinnacle Formation. This gray, coarse-grained rock of fairly uniform texture was first laid down as sediments in the early Cambrian period, 590-550 million years ago. The Pinnacle formation is found in outcrops across the property, mainly on steeper areas of the ridges that run north-south on both the east and west side of the parcels. While bedrock outcrops are common, in most areas bedrock is overlain by glacial till, a conglomeration of rock particles ranging from clay to silt, deposited by glaciers during the last ice age.

Soils - There are two main types of soils on the Parcel, those derived from glacial till and those derived from lacustrine, or lake-bottom, sediments. Above 500 feet elevation till-derived soils dominate. Most of these are of the Lyman and Marlow association and are generally stony to extremely stony loams with developed horizons and a pH of 5.0-5.5. Peru and Cabot soils are other till-derived soils found on the site. They are similar to Lyman and Marlow soils but are less well-drained. The topography where these soils are found is rolling to steep, and most of this land is forested. Numerous soil types derived from lacustrine sediments are found on the lower portions of the site. These soils are in the Hartland-Belgrade-Munson association and range from nearly level to steep, well-drained to somewhat poorly-drained, silt loams to loamy sands. The pH range is 5.5-7.5. These soils were almost all cleared for agriculture in the past and much of the area is still in active use.

Hydrology - Several small streams and their tributary drainages flow through the Parcel. The largest stream drains the southern two-thirds of the Parcel and exits the property in the southwest corner. Two other streams and numerous tributary channels drain the northern portion of the Parcel. Many of the smaller streams are intermittent or seasonal in nature, with water flowing only after heavy rains or during the spring snowmelt. Several springs and seeps are also found on the site. Many of these are associated with streams or are found along the contact between till-derived soils and lacustrine-derived soils. Some are also found in the gently rolling terrain of the northern part of the Parcel. This is the wettest area of the property, and a few vernal pools can be seen here in the spring. There is also a larger forested wetland and a small beaver pond nearby.

Forest Types - The forested hillsides that make up the majority of the Parcel are comprised of several different forest types, including Northern Hardwood Forest, Dry Oak Forest, Hemlock Northern Hardwood Forest, Mixed Conifer Plantation, Northern Hardwood Talus Woodland, Red Oak Northern Hardwood, Red Pine Plantation, Rich Northern Hardwood, White Pine,

White Pine Northern Hardwood Forest, and Hemlock Swamp.

Wildlife - The Wheeler South Parcel is composed of a diverse mosaic of forest, open areas, rock outcrops, and wetland habitats that are likely to support some 200 wildlife species. Ancient lake terraces underlying a cultural landscape of agricultural fields, pastures, orchards, and savannahs characterize the southern part of the property where small mammals and a suite of birds are common inhabitants. A mixture of moist deciduous and coniferous forests, dry hilltops interspersed with rock outcrops and forested wetlands characterize the northern sections of the tract. More reclusive birds and larger mammals, as well as a number of frogs and salamanders, find their niche here.

I. Conservation Management Plan Preparation and Update

The Conservation Management Plan has been prepared by Louis Borie and Walter Poleman. Louis Borie is a board member of the Richmond Land Trust and is currently the Chief Coordinator for the Vermont Environmental Board. Walter Poleman is also a board member of the Richmond Land Trust and is currently the Director of the Field Naturalist Program at the University of Vermont.

New information gathered as a result of additional inventories and other research will periodically be added to the conservation management plan.

Attachments:

Orthophoto

Map of Current Conditions

Current Conditions

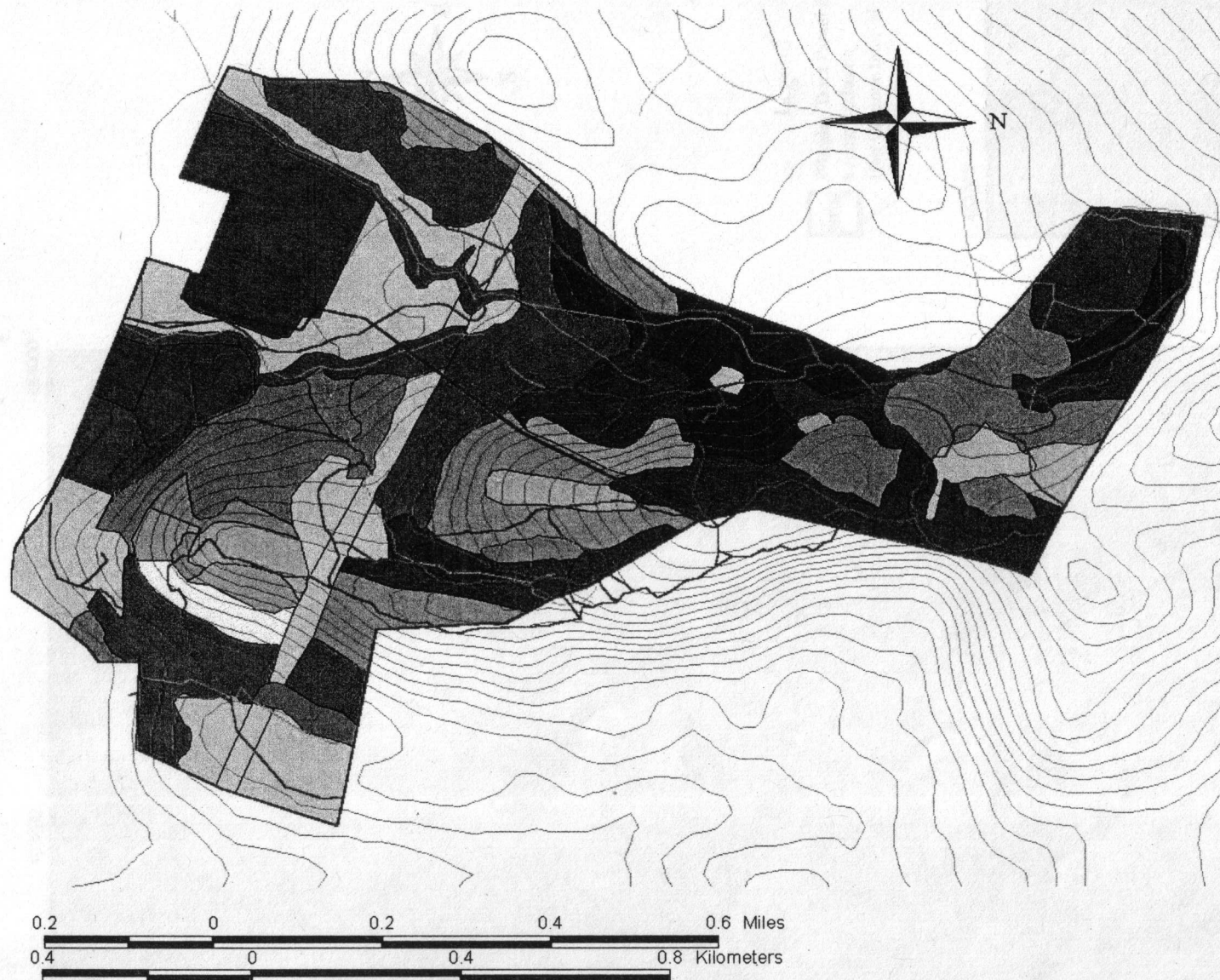
WHEELER and FARM BUREAU TRACTS

Richmond, VT.

LIA Consulting Team

1:8,000

May 2002



Legend

- Wheeler and Farm Bureau Tracts
- Contour lines (10m)
- Trails
- Streams
- Current Conditions**
- Active Agriculture
- Active use
- Alder Swamp
- Birch Aspen Forest
- Birch Swamp
- Black Locust and Red Pine Forest
- Dry Oak Forest
- Hemlock Northern Hardwood Forest
- Mixed Conifer Plantation
- Northern Hardwood Forest
- Northern Hardwood Talus Woodland
- Old Field
- Red Oak Northern Hardwood
- Red Pine Plantation
- Rich Northern Hardwood Forest
- Riparian
- Shrubland/ Powerline
- Temperate Acidic Outcrop
- White Pine
- White Pine Northern Hardwood Forest

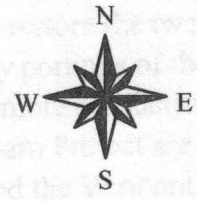
All Boundaries are Provisional

Data Sources:
Streams and DEM provided by
Vermont Center for Geographic Information.




Map Created by LIA Consulting Team

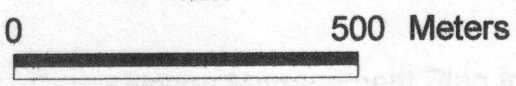
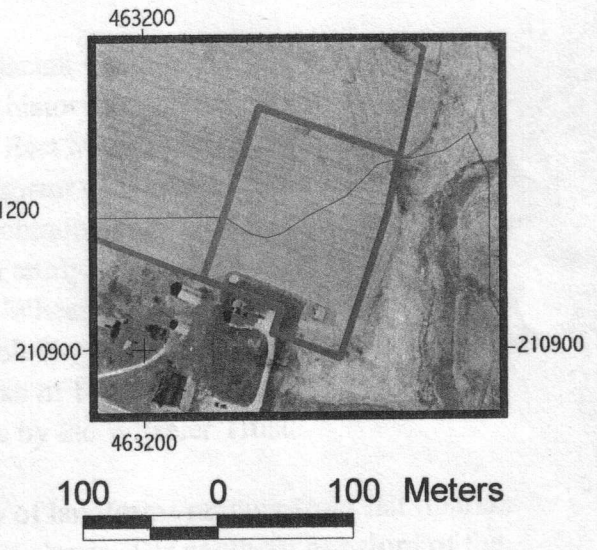
Figure 7

Wheeler Property



Legend

-  Wheeler Tract Parcel Boundary
-  4 Acre Exclusion
-  10m Contour Interval



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