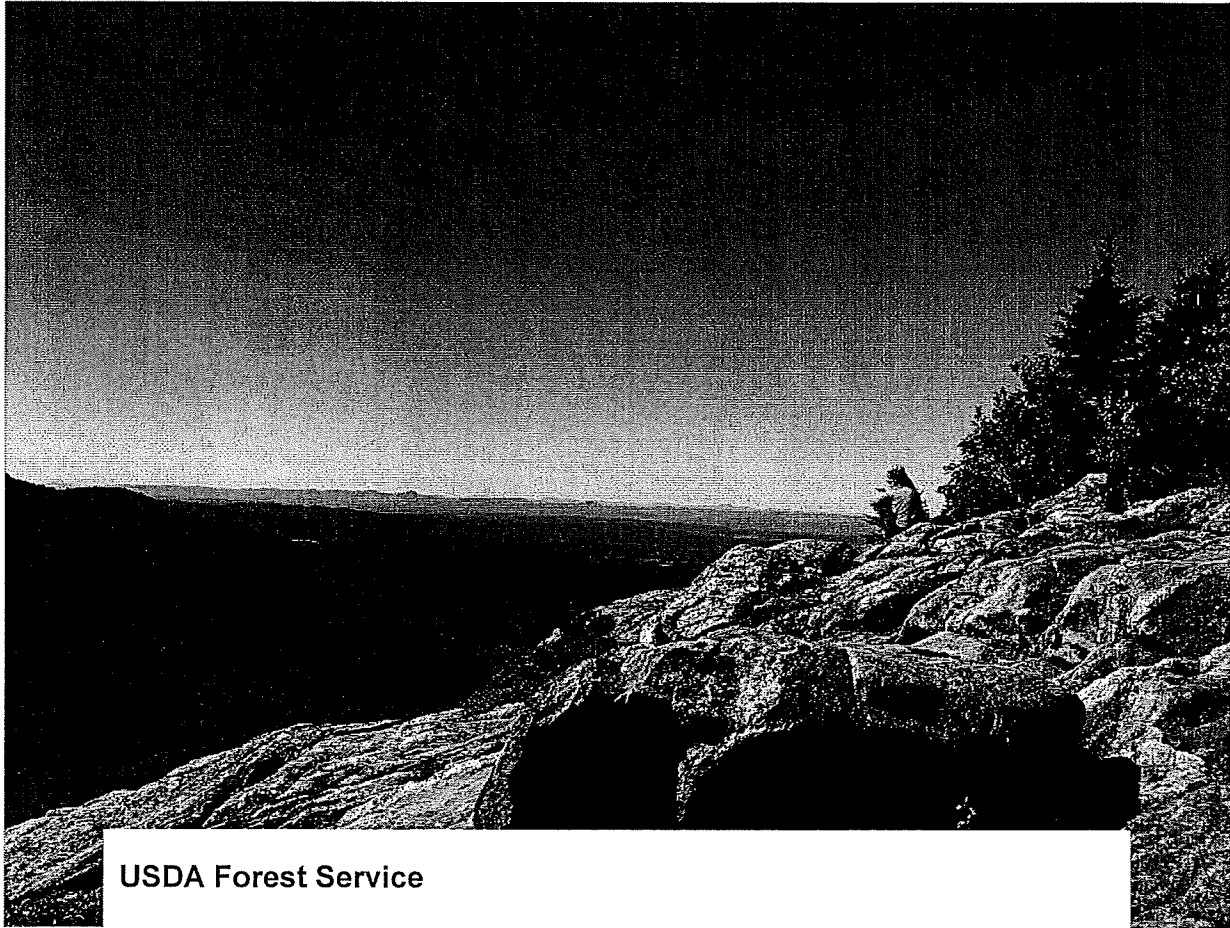




United States Department of Agriculture



USDA Forest Service

Green Mountain National Forest

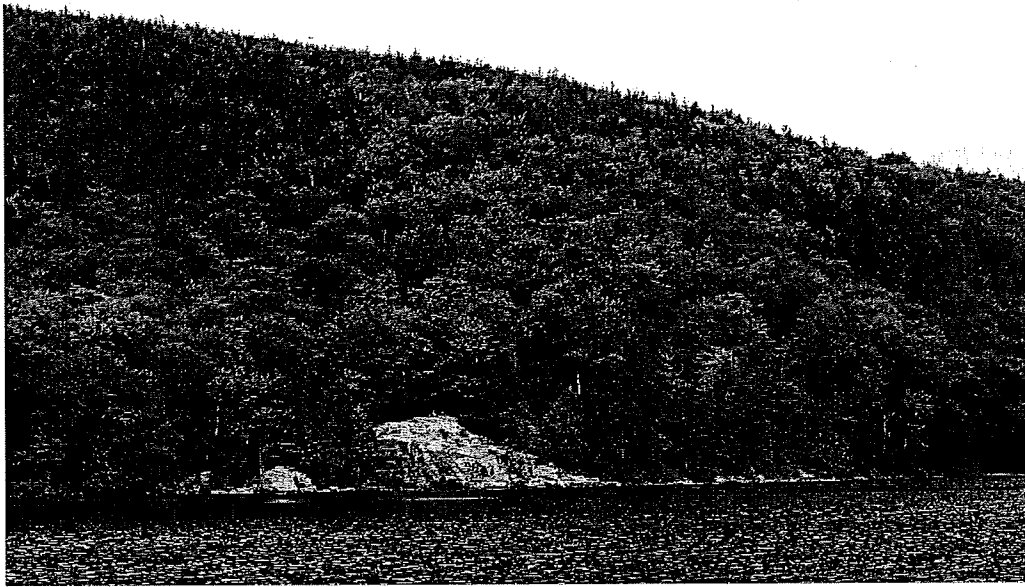
Town Meeting Report



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Green Mountain National Forest

Town Meeting Report

The employees of the Green Mountain National Forest (GMNF) depend heavily on support from many municipalities, volunteers, partners and contractors. The Forest would like to take this time to thank you and your community for the support and interest that you have shown in helping with the management of the approximately 400,000-acre GMNF. Receiving several million outdoor recreation enthusiast visits annually, these visitors seek enjoyment in a natural setting while providing critical benefit to our local economies. The GMNF is proud to be a part of Vermont and your town. It is truly one of Vermont's treasures and the largest contiguous public land area in the state. Forest staff work hard to achieve quality public land management under a sustainable multiple-use management concept to meet the diverse needs of all people -- people in your town as well as all of the visitors who come to Vermont every year. This has been another challenging year for many of us and we have worked hard to support our members of the public as changes have taken place.

An exciting change for the GMNF is the construction of our new Forest Supervisor's Office in Mendon. The former Rutland-based headquarters (231 North Main Street) for the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests has transitioned to a full-time virtual work schedule which will continue until our new office is completed on U.S. Route 4 in Mendon, Vermont. While our main phone number (formally for the Rutland Office) will remain the same (802) 747-6700, our mailing address has changed to: USDA Forest Service, Green Mountain & Finger Lakes National Forests, PO Box 220, Rutland, VT 05702. Please use this new mailing address and also visit our website for a current listing of Forest Service employees who can assist you throughout this temporary transition:
https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprd3838044.pdf.

The following is a brief summary of what happened in your National Forest throughout the past year:

Town Report from the Green Mountain National Forest

Land Acquisition

The GMFL acquired 28 acres in the town of Mendon in 2021 through the Rose Acquisition which was attained in June. We are currently working on acquisitions located in the towns of Chittenden, Killington, Mendon, Lincoln, Warren, Ripton, and Wallingford. We have two Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) Submissions for properties located in Arlington (Taconic Gateway/Murray Parcel) and Stamford (Roaring Branch) which we hope will be selected for funding in 2022. We have been supported by each of the town select boards for these parcels. The addition of these public lands would not be possible without the assistance of The Trust for Public Land, The Conservation Fund, and the support of our local communities.

Heritage Program

- The Heritage Program has welcomed a new Heritage Program Manager, Karen Bucher. She joins us from the Klamath National Forest in California.
- The Vermont Youth Conservation Corps assisted Heritage and Recreation Program staff to clear an overgrown cellar hole at the site of the Pier's Tavern in Ripton. An interpretive sign has been installed and will be unveiled by the Ripton Historical Society in 2022.



Photo 1 Before and after VYCC crew helps clear a cellar hole.

- Retired Forest Service personnel and volunteers assisted in shovel testing for cultural resources for an upcoming project on the Manchester Ranger District.
 - The Forest was visited by a Forest Service Enterprise Historian to photograph and document historic developed recreation resources for a Regional Recreation Historic Context for Region 9.
 - Historic artifacts from sites on the Rochester Ranger District have been loaned to Castleton University for 3D scanning by students and volunteers.
 - 25 Determinations of Eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) have been completed on structures throughout the Forest. A total of 22 were determined Eligible for listing on the NRHP, including AT/LT trail shelters, CCC-era road culverts, and CCC-era buildings.
 - Approximately 2,500 acres were surveyed for cultural resources during the 2021 field season.
 - The Heritage Program seasonal archaeological technicians located four previously unknown historic sites this field season, adding to the ever-expanding inventory of sites on the Forest.
- Town Report from the Green Mountain National Forest**

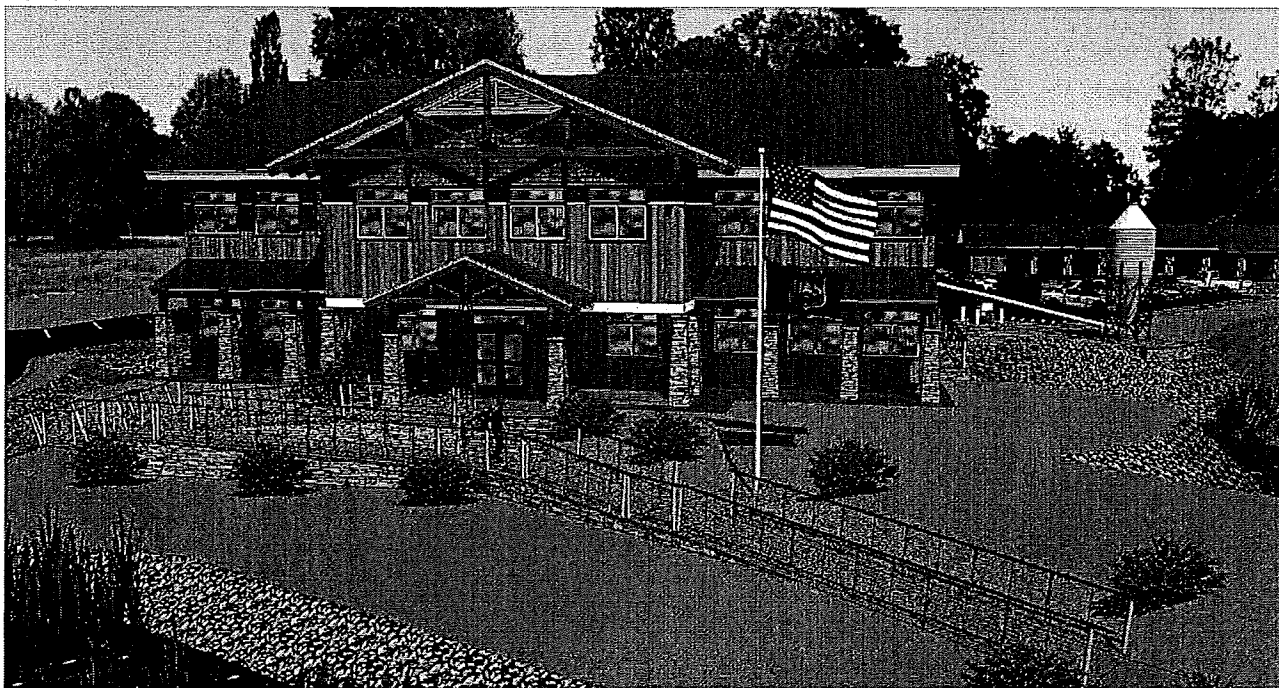
- The Heritage Program would like to thank the numerous volunteers that have taken the time this year to help protect, preserve, and identify the cultural resources in the Green Mountains!

Road & Facility Construction & Maintenance

In cooperation with federal, state, and local governments, private contractors, and non-profit organizations, the GMNF Engineering staff repaired and maintained many roads, bridges, and other facilities throughout the Forest. Some highlights are as follows:

Forest Facility Improvements & Maintenance

The GMNF completed the site preparation and utilities installation associated with their new administrative headquarters facility on US Route 4 in Mendon, Vermont. Work this year included the installation of roads and parking, drilling of a well, and connecting to local utilities including electric and sewer. The Forest also awarded a design-build contract for the office portion. The design has begun and construction of the building will begin in spring of 2022 with an anticipated completion in spring of 2023.



We also completed the installation of a new HVAC system in the Rochester Ranger District Office. The new system will not only improve the comfort of employees in the building but also the efficiency of the system including energy cost savings.

Forest Road Cooperative Aid to Towns

The GMNF completed important road improvement and maintenance projects in the towns of Goshen, Ripton, Rochester, and Brandon. Projects included road and parking improvements in the towns of Brandon, Goshen, and Ripton to improve access to the Moosalamoo National Recreation Areas. Progress has continued on the design of the West Hill Road Bridge in Rochester. The project is being complete through a partnership between the town of Rochester, Forest Service, FHWA Eastern Federal

Lands Highway Division, and the Vermont Agency of Transportation, and is scheduled for construction in 2022.

Forest Road Improvement & Maintenance Projects

The GMNF improved or maintained over 70 miles of National Forest System roads in the towns of Chittenden, Goshen, Granville, Hancock, Lincoln, Mount Tabor, Peru, Readsboro, Ripton, Rochester, Somerset, Stratton, Sunderland, Wallingford, Warren, and Woodford. Improvement work included the replacement of culverts and gates, stabilization of embankments, repairing storm damage, and the resurfacing of roads. Larger improvement projects included a bridge replacement on Forest Road 10 in Mt Tabor and a major culvert replacement on Forest Road 100 in Hancock. Maintenance work included grading, culvert cleaning, and ditch cleaning.



Photo 3 Construction work being done on the Forest.



Recreation Programs

The GMNF provides a great diversity of outdoor recreation opportunities, connecting people with nature in a variety of settings. Outdoor recreation is valued as both an important part of Vermont's economy and a crucial component of many Vermonters' and visitors' physical and mental well-being. We support communities by creating, investing in, and sustaining opportunities for everyone to access and to cultivate their relationship with nature. The Forest Service recreation program actively seeks to identify and understand people's connections and barriers to the outdoors to ensure the GMNF, has a place for everyone to feel welcome. The Forest Service encourages participation in outdoor recreational activities and asks users to recreate responsibly by: packing out all trash you bring in; adhering to site or trail closures; and seeking alternative locations when encountering packed parking lots or sites.

Forest-wide Activity

We have a strong and united constituency among our partners, local communities, and interested publics to support and maintain outdoor recreation opportunities. By joining together federal land-management agencies, state agencies, local communities, nongovernmental organizations, volunteers, and partners, we can address shared issues and align to provide services requested by the public. One example is the ongoing state-wide effort to develop an end-to-end mountain bike, backcountry ski, and hut network in partnership with the Velomont Trail Collective, Vermont Huts Association, State of Vermont Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps, Vermont Mountain Bike Association, Catamount Trail Association and Quantified Ventures. The long-term vision for the Velomont Trail and Vermont Hut network is to connect 23 communities from Canada to Massachusetts with huts strategically located along the trail for overnight use.

The following accomplishments highlight 2021 Recreation and Trail Program successes in acknowledgement of the outstanding collaborative effort exhibited between Forest Service employees, partner organizations, volunteers, state and local government representatives, and local businesses. The Forest Service relies on a community of collaboration and wishes to thank all of our partners, such as: Vermont Association of Snow Travelers (VAST), Vermont All-terrain Vehicle Sportsman's Association (VASA), Vermont Forests, Parks and Recreation, Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC), Ridgeline Outdoor Collective, Vermont Mountain Bike Association (VMBA), Green Mountain Club (GMC), Appalachian Trail Conservancy, town of Killington and the Killington Mountain Bike Club, Vermont Huts Association, Addison County Bike Club, Catamount Trail Association (CTA), Counseling Service of Addison County, Middlebury High School Diversified Occupations Program, Moosalamoo Association (MA), Blueberry Hill Outdoor Center (BHOC), Vermont Trail Trotters (VTT), Vermont Horse Council, and many more – including our dedicated campground hosts.

The Great American Outdoors Act gave the USDA Forest Service new opportunities to deliver benefits to the American public through major investments in recreation infrastructure, public lands access, and land and water conservation. These investments will enable communities to Build Back Better by contributing to economic growth and job creation in rural America. Through the support of multiple partners, three projects funded by the Great American Outdoors Act were completed or are underway, enabling improvement at 20 recreation sites on the Green Mountain and Finger Lakes National Forests.

With the help of the many hard-working volunteers and organizations we are able to provide a quality recreation experience in alignment with a strong environmental stewardship ethic. The following highlights capture large program accomplishments but represent only a portion of the annual work that is completed to develop, improve and maintain recreational opportunities on the GMNF.

Local Efforts

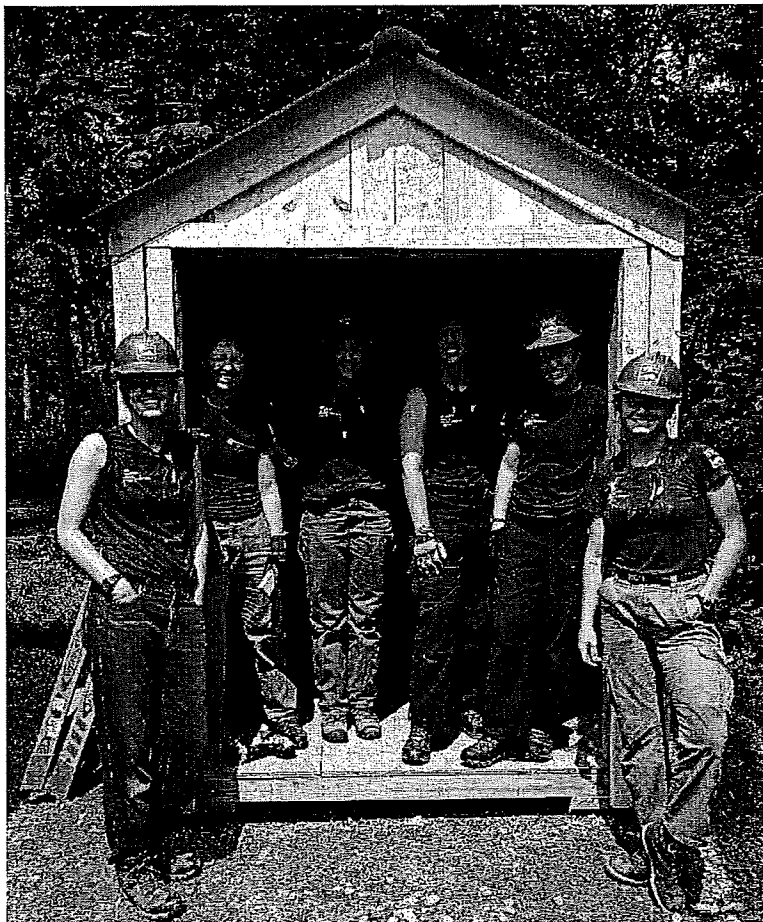


Photo 4 YCC Crew poses with newly built shed.

Brandon: Improved road and parking for Moosalamoo NRA at the end of Leicester Hollow Road. Installed a new kiosk at the Leicester Hollow/Chandler Ridge trailhead to improve visitor information.

Chittenden: Installed picnic tables at Lefferts Pond day use site. We are currently exploring options for reconstruction of the Lefferts Pond parking lot and improvement of the access road. Installed new picnic tables, kiosk, interpretive sign, lean-to, and equipment shed at Chittenden Brook Campground. Installed new wayfinding signs on the Chittenden Brook ski trails. Partnered with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to construct a new shed at the caretaker site at the Chittenden Brook campground.

Goshen: Worked with the Town to create winter parking pull offs on FR 32 near the entrance of the Voter Brook Road.

Goshen/Ripton: Resurfaced the campsites at Moosalamoo campground and increased the parking lot size to accommodate more visitors utilizing the trail system. Purchased and installed two bear resistant recycling containers at the Moosalamoo campground. Partnered with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps to construct a new shed at the caretaker site at the Silver Lake campground.

Granville: Removed invasive species along FSR 55 and near the Rob Ford Meadow.

Hancock: Utilizing the Great American Outdoors Act funding completed repairs to the Sucker Brook shelter including board replacement, a fresh coat of paint, and the old pit privy was upgraded to a new accessible composting unit.

Killington: Worked with partners to improve signage at Deer Leap.

Leicester: Constructed an exit driveway at the Silver Lake Trailhead parking area to reduce traffic congestion during peak use. Installed new picnic tables, equipment shed, and lean-to at the Silver Lake Campground. Replaced all the picnic tables utilizing the Great American Outdoors Act funding at the Silver Lake Campground. Partnering with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps a new shed was constructed at the Moosalamoo campground caretaker site.



Lincoln: Partnered with Green Mountain Club utilizing the Great American Outdoors Act funding to complete backcountry shelters along the Long Trail system. At the Cooley Glen shelter the entire roof was replaced in addition to rotten floorboards, and complete foundation repairs matching the historical character of the original shelter constructed in 1965.

Norwich: Continued to engage with communities members to resolve unauthorized trail issue.

Pittsfield: Utilizing Congressional funding trail construction continued on the Velomont mountain bike trail connecting the Sherburne trail system in Killington to the Rochester trail system. The GMNF is partnering with Vermont Huts and Vermont Mountain Bike Association to construct a hut to hut long distance mountain bike network from Massachusetts to Canada.

Ripton: Worked with the Moosalamoo Association and Catamount Trail Association to improve the Water Tower and Widow's Clearing trails. Installed new wayfinding signs on the Water Tower and Widow's Clearing trails. Installed new interpretive panels at the Robert Frost Wayside. Created an accessible trail connection between Robert Frost Interpretive Site and Wayside (in progress). Replaced kiosks and upgraded the recreation site signage at the Robert Frost Wayside picnic site. Improved the Kiosk appearance at the Chatfield trailhead by installing new interpretive sign panels and removed the snowmobile loading ramp. Partnered with Green Mountain Club utilizing the Great American Outdoors Act funding to complete backcountry shelters along the Long Trail system. Shelter maintenance was conducted, and older pit privies were upgraded to composting units. The Emily Proctor shelter was jacked up and the rotten log sills were replaced, new tent pads were constructed, and the old pit privy was upgraded to a new accessible composting unit. Visitor encounter monitoring zone data was completed for weekday use in the Breadloaf Wilderness on the Skylight Pond Trail area and in the Cooley Glen/Emily Proctor Trail Loop.

Rochester: Installed new kiosks at the Bingo Brook Campground. Installed picnic tables at each designated site in the Bingo Brook Campground. Installed new kiosk and interpretive panel at the Riverbend Observation site. Installed new kiosk and interpretive sign at the entrance of the Chittenden Brook Campground Road. Installed new interpretive sign at the Mount Horrid Overlook.

Salisbury: Improved interpretive signage at the Falls of Lana Route 53 parking area. Initiated scoping for a project to reconstruct the Falls of Lana Trailhead parking lot. Improved the Kiosk appearance at the Chatfield trailhead by installing new interpretive sign panels.

Warren: Improved south access trail to Blueberry Lake. Worked with the Mad River Riders and VMBA to implement drainage improvements and trail tread improvements at the Blueberry Lake trails. We are developing plans to pave the Warren Falls parking lot and work on site rehabilitation to improve visitor use patterns and reduce resource impacts. Provided a portable toilet at both Warren Falls and Blueberry Lake. Began experimenting with the use of coyote decoys to reduce impacts made by Canada geese. Installed picnic tables at Warren Falls and Blueberry Lake.

Wallingford: In partnership with GMC, a caretaker hosted visitors and maintained the Little Rock Pond Shelter and tenting area and maintained surrounding trails. All picnic tables were replaced at White Rocks Picnic Area as part of the Recreation Site Deferred Maintenance Reduction Project funded by the Great American Outdoor Act (GAOA).

Weston: A short hiking trail was added to the National Forest System off from Route 155 in the vicinity of the former West River Forest Civilian Conservation Corps Camp.



Mount Tabor: All picnic tables at Big Branch Overlook were replaced.

Peru: In partnership with GMC, a caretaker hosted visitors and maintained the Griffith Lake Tenting Area, Peru Peak Shelter, and surrounding trails. A Long Trail Patrol Crew worked on the AT/LT near Bromley for four weeks. In partnership with VAST, a trail bridge was replaced over Mad Tom Brook enabling the trail to reopen and provide a connection to Dorset. At Hapgood Pond Recreation Area, power was put in at the day use kiosk in preparation for an automated fee collection machine.

Winhall: In partnership with VAST, several miles of trail were repaired after a significant July rainstorm damaged tread, several culverts, and a bridge near the old Snow Valley ski area.

Stratton: In partnership with GMC, a caretaker provided onsite information and maintained back country facilities and trails at Stratton Pond and Stratton Mountain. Additionally at Stratton Pond, two new moldering privies were constructed, the foundation was laid for a new shelter at the Stratton View site, and trail tread work was performed by various GMC and volunteer crews throughout the summer. At Grout Pond Recreation Area, volunteers from CTA and Dutch Hill Alliance of Skiers and Hikers (DHASH) maintained trails for use by both hikers and skiers and a new pull-out was created at the entrance of the site in order to provide a more convenient location for information and fee payment. In partnership with VAST, several seasonal trail barriers were replaced in order to make trail opening and closing more efficient and safe.

Glastenbury: Repairs were made to the support cables on the Glastenbury Mountain Observation Tower. In partnership with GMC, a new moldering privy was constructed to replace the pit privy at Kid Gore Shelter.

Woodford: Melville Nauheim Shelter underwent repairs through partnership with GMC and the pit toilet at this site was replaced with an accessible moldering privy. A gate was installed on Little Pond Road as part of the Somerset Integrated Resource Project. Beginning in 2022, this gate will be closed from April 16-December 15 of each year to protect trails and wilderness resources in the area.

Stamford: In partnership with the Appalachian Trail Conservancy and GMC, supplies were airlifted to the new location north of the County Road for the shelter and privy that will eventually replace the Seth Warner Shelter. A new moldering privy was constructed at the site in 2021. A decrepit trail bridge was removed from the Sucker Pond trail.

Readsboro: In partnership with DHASH, additional maintenance was performed at Dutch Hill in order to maintain and improve conditions for continued and increasing back country ski use there.

Wilderness



Photo 5 Wilderness staff performing boundary maintenance at the George D. Aiken Wilderness, Woodford, VT.

Throughout 2021 the GMNF has experienced increased visitor use on the eight designated Wildernesses due to the pandemic. Americans have flocked to outdoor recreation amid COVID-19 restrictions, as the Wilderness encounter monitoring data indicates.

This year the Wilderness Stewardship Performance (WSP) scores on the GMNF increased significantly across all eight designated Wildernesses. WSP places heightened emphasis on the interdisciplinary responsibilities of wilderness stewardship and the potential linkages with other program areas. It seeks to foster improved integration and communication between program areas, to accurately reflect the collaboration required to steward our wilderness resource. Utilizing Great American Outdoor Act funds many shelters and privies along the Appalachian and Long Trail system were repaired and replaced thanks to our partnership with the Green Mountain Club and many volunteers who donated their time.

In 2020 the GMNF had a total WSP score of 378 points including all eight Wilderness areas out of a possible 800 points (100 points per Wilderness). In 2021 our Wilderness stewardship efforts increased (WSP) scores by 130 points to 508 thanks to our Wilderness program manager, Wilderness seasonal ranger, Society of Wilderness Stewardship Fellow, and our Recreation District staff. Seven out of Eight of the Wilderness areas are meeting baseline performance for preserving Wilderness character which requires 60 out of 100 stewardship points. This year the GMNF is partnering with the Society of



Wilderness Stewardship and we are hosting a Wilderness Fellow to complete eight Wilderness Character Monitoring Baseline Assessments reports, one for each Wilderness. Once the Wilderness character measures are finalized and baseline assessment reports are completed in five years the data included in the baseline will be evaluated again to track trends in maintaining Wilderness character.

2021 Wilderness Stewardship Performance Scores: (out of a possible 100 points total)

- **Big Branch Wilderness** 62 points located in Dorset, Mount Tabor, and Peru. Increased from 48 points in 2020.
- **Breadloaf Wilderness** 60 points located in Granville, Hancock, Lincoln, Ripton, and Warren. Increased from 48 points in 2020.
- **Bristol Cliffs Wilderness** 64 points located in Bristol and Lincoln. Increased from 48 points in 2020.
- **George D. Aiken Wilderness** 54 points located in Woodford. Increased from 42 points in 2020.
- **Glastenbury Wilderness** 68 points located in Bennington, Glastenbury, Shaftsbury, and Woodford. Increased from 46 points in 2020.
- **Joseph Battell Wilderness** 66 points located in Chittenden, Goshen, Hancock, Ripton, and Rochester. Increased from 50 points in 2020.
- **Lye Brook Wilderness** 66 points located in Manchester, Stratton, Sunderland, and Winhall. Increased from 48 points in 2020.
- **Peru Peak Wilderness** 68 points located in Mount Tabor and Peru. Increased from 48 points in 2020.

Bristol: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted to maintain opportunities for solitude. Dispersed recreation sites/campsites were monitored for impacts to protect natural resources while maintaining opportunities for unconfined recreation. Wilderness Rangers conduct campsite monitoring every five years to track trends with recreation use. Water quality samples were conducted and analyzed at the outlets of Gilmore Pond and North Pond to monitor air quality values.

Granville, Hancock, Lincoln, Ripton, and Warren: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted to maintain opportunities for solitude. Wilderness boundary maintenance was completed, and signs were painted marking boundaries along the trail system. Water quality samples were collected on Bear Wallow Brook to monitor air quality values. Backcountry shelters were repaired and older pit privies were upgraded to composting units. Cooley Glen shelter roof and floorboards were replaced and foundation repairs were undertaken. Emily Proctor shelter log sills were replaced and new tent pads were constructed. Sucker Brook shelter repairs to boards, painted, and a new privy was constructed. Water quality samples were collected and analyzed to monitor air quality values on George Brook, Grindstone Brook, and a tributary to Goshen Brook.

Chittenden, Goshen, Ripton, and Rochester: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted to maintain opportunities for solitude. Wilderness boundary maintenance was completed and signs were painted



marking boundaries along the trail system. Water quality samples were collected and analyzed on Smith Brook to monitor air quality values.

Dorset, Mount Tabor, Peru: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted along the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail and side trails in the Big Branch Wilderness and Peru Peak Wilderness. Invasive plant species were monitored and hand pulled along trailheads, the trail system, and shelters to prevent spreading. Water quality samples were collected on McGinn Brook and Lost Pond Brook to monitor air quality values. Trout were stocked in Big Mud Pond utilizing a helicopter in partnership with Vermont Fish and Wildlife. Wilderness boundary maintenance was completed and signs were painted marking boundaries along the trail system.

Manchester, Stratton, Sunderland, Winhall: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted along the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail and side trails in the Lye Brook Wilderness. Invasive plant species were monitored and hand pulled along trailheads, the trail system, and shelters to prevent spreading. Dispersed recreation sites/campsites were monitored at Bourn Pond for impacts to protect natural resources while maintaining opportunities for unconfined recreation. Trout were stocked in Bourn Pond utilizing a helicopter in partnership with Vermont Fish and Wildlife. Wilderness boundary monitoring was completed and a new sign was installed along the Lye Brook trail system in addition to painting boundary signs along the trail system. A carrying capacity study was conducted in partnership with the University of New Hampshire. Visitors were surveyed upon exiting the Lye Brook Wilderness based on their experiences, once the final report is completed management actions will be recommended to maintain Wilderness character.

Bennington, Glastenbury, Shaftsbury, Woodford: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted along the Appalachian Trail/Long Trail and side trails in the Glastenbury Wilderness. Wilderness boundary maintenance was completed and signs were painted marking boundaries along the trail system. Dispersed recreation sites/campsites were monitored for impacts to protect natural resources while maintaining opportunities for unconfined recreation.



Photo 6 Glastenbury Wilderness from the Fire Tower.

Woodford: Visitor encounter monitoring was conducted to maintain opportunities for solitude. Dispersed recreation sites/campsites were monitored for impacts to protect natural resources while maintaining opportunities for unconfined recreation. Water quality samples were collected on the West Branch of the Deerfield River to monitor air quality values. Wilderness boundary monitoring was completed and a new sign was installed along the trail system at the Woodford State Park boundary.

Special Uses

Recreation

After a year off due to Covid, all but four recreation special use permit holders are back up and running, providing recreational experiences to those who may not be comfortable or experienced enough to seek those experiences on their own. 20 Outfitters & Guides operated on the Forest this summer, and four endurance running events occurred, with all permits administered to standard. Four applications were processed to a decision.

Lands

The GMNF administered 92 Land Special Use Permits to standard along with four applications processed to a decision, including a proposal that will increase the reliability of electrical service in Vermont and one relating to the repair and safety of Goshen Dam.

Botany Program

Botanical inventory for rare plants and non-native invasive plants was completed in support of the following projects:

- Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project: 3,081.5 acres in the towns of Chittenden, Goshen, and Mendon. Additionally, the public was invited to join a virtual BioBlitz, hosted via iNaturalist. The Bioblitz ended in October of 2021, and as of that day, 442 plant species had been reported, not including the rare species mentioned below.
- Proposed small project sites in Dover (40.3 acres), Peru (19.6 acres), Readsboro (4.0 acres), and Ripton (11.2 acres)
- Robinson Integrated Resource Project implementation: 5.5 acres in Rochester
- Somerset Integrated Resource Project implementation: 84.9 acres in Somerset and Stratton
- South of Route 9 Integrated Resource Project implementation: 25.3 acres in Stamford and Woodford
- Monitoring rare plant habitat improvement projects: 87 acres in Leicester and 0.8 acres in Manchester

As a result of inventory in the Telephone Gap IRP area, several new populations or subpopulations of rare plants that are Regional Forester Sensitive Species (RFSS) were found in Chittenden, Goshen, and Mendon of the following species: eastern dwarf mistletoe (*Arceuthobium pusillum*), hairy woodmint (*Blephilia hirsuta*), summer sedge (*Carex aestivalis*), Schweinitz's sedge (*Carex schweinitzii*), long-bract green orchis (*Dactylorhiza viridis*) boreal bedstraw (*Galium kamschaticum*), ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*), Huron orchid (*Platanthera huronensis*), and bog chickweed (*Stellaria alsine*). Pictured here is the boreal bedstraw, found to be quite widespread at some of the higher elevations within the IRP area (photo by Melissa Green). One additional rare plant species – large-fruited sanicle (*Sanicula trifoliata*) - that is tracked by the state, but not RFSS, was also found.

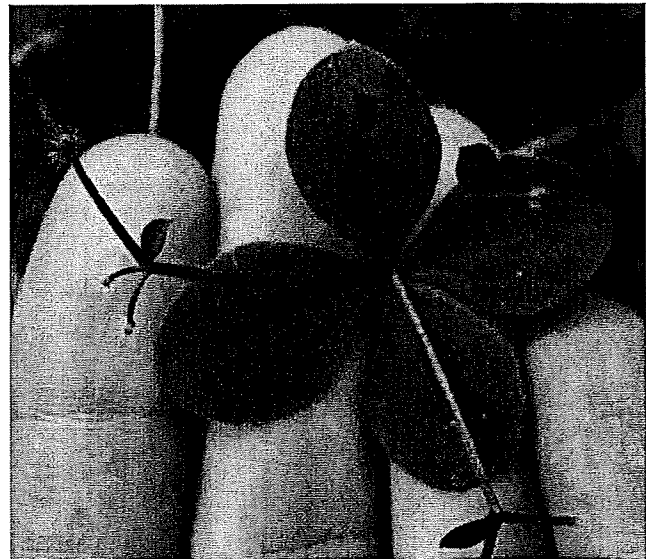


Photo 7 Boreal bedstraw

In addition to rare plant inventory, three subpopulations of Appalachian Jacob's ladder (*Polemonium vanbruntiae*) were monitored in Bristol, Lincoln, and Ripton, an ongoing effort led by local volunteer and conservation leader Warren King.



In support of the Upper White River Cooperative Weed Management Association (CWMA), of which the GMNF is a founding member, staff and the CWMA coordinator controlled the following non-native invasive plant infestations:

- Hancock: 6.4 acres of wild chervil on FR 39
- Granville: 52.2 acres of wild chervil on FR 50, 55, 101, and 207.
- Rochester: 31.4 acres of garlic mustard, wild chervil, and Japanese knotweed were controlled on Bethel Mountain Road, Bingo Road, Corporation Road, on or near Chittenden Brook Road, some of which extends into Chittenden, FR 62, and at the District Office.

Education and volunteer events were also held:

- In April, a webinar was provided on ecological landscaping for residents in all the Upper White River CWMA towns (Hancock, Granville, Pittsfield, Rochester, and Stockbridge).
- In June, wild chervil management direction was offered to residents and businesses in Rochester, Hancock, and Granville via Front Porch Forum.
- In November, a barberry control event was held on the mountain bike trails behind the Ranger Station in Rochester.

In addition to infestations controlled within the Upper White River CWMA boundary, many other small infestations were controlled by staff, contractors, volunteers, and partner organizations, including Green Mountain Club and Appalachian Trail Conservancy. While these infestations represent only a fraction of known infestations and many more are unmapped, they were chosen because they are in strategic locations or because they are relatively more feasible to control than others. A total of over 373.3 acres of the following species were controlled in these towns:

- Goshen: 0.6 acres of wild chervil and garlic mustard at the Brandon Gap parking lot along State Route 73.
- Manchester: 1.9 acres of several species at the District Office.
- Mount Tabor: 242.6 acres (mostly sparsely infested) of wild parsnip and other invasive species were controlled in the Old Job sale area, mostly along FR 10.
- Pomfret: 12.9 acres of mostly woody invasive species were controlled in maintained openings along the Appalachian Trail at Dupuis Hill, Dana Hill, Bartlett Field, Biggs-Peters opening, and Arms Hill.
- Ripton: 67.1 acres of mostly wild chervil were controlled at Chatfield Parking Lot, along FR 233, at The Robert Frost Preserve, at Steam Mill clearing, and along FR 67, stretching across Ripton, Goshen, and Hancock.
- Salisbury and Leicester: 2.5 acres of wild chervil along the FR27, road to Silver Lake.

- Shrewsbury: 1.8 acres of multiflora rose in a maintained opening along the Appalachian Trail.
- Somerset: 7.1 acres of wild parsnip, wild chervil, and goutweed along FR 71
- Wallingford: 0.5 acres of Japanese knotweed in the Bully Brook sale area.
- Woodford: 0.3 acres of several species at the trailhead for FT 301 (the Rose Barn site).

This year the Batten Kill Cooperative Invasive Species Management Association (CISMA), of which GMNF is a founding member, did not hire a coordinator, partly because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The steering committee provided one virtual education and outreach event, and one seed collection and invasive species control event at the Richville Road site in Manchester. The CISMA also incorporates parts of Rupert, Sandgate, Arlington, Shaftsbury, Dorset, Sunderland, Glastenbury, Peru, Stratton, and Winhall.



Photo 8 Wild apples on the Forest.

Forest Vegetation Management

Below is a list of accomplishments for calendar year 2021.

- Timber sales were sold in Hancock, Mount Holly, Peru, Readsboro, Rochester, Stamford, Winhall and Wallingford totaling approximately 11.8 million board feet of sawtimber and pulpwood.
- Timber sales were prepared in Goshen, Hancock, Pittsfield, Somerset, Stamford, Sunderland, Rochester, and Weston. These sales are associated with the Early Successional Habitat Project, the South of Route 9 Integrated Resource Project, the Robinson Integrated Resource Project, and the Somerset Integrated Resource Project.



- The Forest awarded contracts to remove damaged or diseased trees to prepare sites for reforestation on 294 acres in the Towns of Chittenden, Hancock, Peru, Readsboro, and Rochester.
- The Forest awarded contracts for timber stand improvement and crop tree release work on 109 acres of young forest in the Towns of Chittenden, Rochester, Searsburg, and Sunderland.
- Our staff cooperated with the Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation and Middlebury College in the maintenance of Butternut Seed Orchards in Brandon and Middlebury. Seedlings were cultured from disease resistant trees found on state, private, and National Forest locations and were cross pollinated to further research and efforts to develop disease resistance.
- In cooperation with the state of Vermont, Emerald Ash Borer monitoring has discovered a new infestation in the township of Stamford. Additional trap trees have now been established across the Forest to detect new infestations adjacent to existing areas.
- The Forest provided maple tapping opportunities to six permit and contract holders for almost 9,000 taps in the towns of Lincoln, Stockbridge, Pomfret, Wilmington, and Mount Tabor.
- Sold one timber sale and prepared two additional sales as part of the Robinson Integrated Resource Project. This project includes restoration activities and timber harvest on nearly 10,000 acres in Rochester, Hancock, Goshen, Pittsfield and Chittenden.
- Sold two timber sales and prepared one additional sales as part of the South of Route 9 Integrated Resource Project. This project includes restoration activities and timber harvest on nearly 8,000 acres in Rochester, Hancock, Goshen, Pittsfield, and Chittenden.
- The Forest sold one timber sale and worked on preparation of two additional sales for the Early Successional Habitat Creation Project. This project includes habitat creation and timber harvest on approximately 1,000 acres per year over the course of 15 years for an estimated 15,000 acres in total across Arlington, Dover, Glastenbury, Jamaica, Landgrove, Manchester, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Peru, Pownal, Readsboro, Searsburg, Shaftsbury, Stamford, Stratton, Sunderland, Wallingford, Wardsboro, Weston, Wilmington, and Woodford.
- The Forest developed proposed vegetation management activities for the Somerset Integrated Resource Project in Dover, Glastenbury, Stratton, Somerset, Searsburg, Wilmington, and Woodford.
- The Forest collected forest inventory data and conducted landscape assessment in support of vegetation management for the Telephone Gap project in Chittenden and Pittsfield.
- Permits were sold for approximately 77 cords of firewood, 750 (estimated) Christmas trees, 20 pounds of wild blueberries, and 840 pounds of wild apples. Additionally, 155 cords of firewood were made available through free use permits as part of COVID-19 pandemic relief.
- The Forest continued work in restoring native trees (including butternut, American chestnut and beech) with research partners. GMNF staff located “challenged” beech trees that appeared to be resistant to beech scale insect in order to test their resistance.

Environmental Planning

In calendar year 2021, Forest staff completed 14 site-specific National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) decision and analysis documents for multiple resource projects designed to implement the Green Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan). Although not a completed decision, a major highlight to note includes the completion of the Landscape Assessment for the Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Project located in the towns of Chittenden, Mendon, Killington, Stockbridge, Pittsfield, Goshen, Brandon, and Pittsford. The Landscape Assessment provides the existing condition, desired condition, and potential management activities to bridge the differences for multiple resources within the project area. The completion of the Landscape Assessment also initiated the public collaboration phase of the project which included five virtual public meetings and four field trips. The project will proceed in 2022 with the development of the proposed action, scoping, effects analysis, and environmental assessment.

Other highlights include:

- Two apple tree release projects located in the towns of Mount Tabor, Wallingford, Weston, and Stratton designed to release apple trees by removing over-topping tree species and pruning excess vegetative growth to restore their fruit production and overall vigor.
- Moses Pond Trail Bridge Replacement project located in the town of Weston designed to replace two deteriorating trail bridges on the Moses Pond Trail.
- South Fork of the Roaring Branch Stream Restoration project located in the towns of Sunderland and Glastenbury designed to cut down and position trees from the adjacent streamside to create large wood placement on approximately 2.1 miles of stream.
- Wild Wings Trail Improvement project located in the town of Peru designed to create safer skiing conditions and to allow for an increased variety of trail uses.
- Macintyre Permanent Opening Reclamation located in the town of Sunderland designed to remove trees on 21 acres from two permanent wildlife openings to allow for planned maintenance of the openings.
- Multiple special use permits issued for use of National Forest System lands such as utility right of way, private land access, and various recreation events and outfitter guide operations across the Forest.

Fisheries Improvement

Forest staff monitored fish populations throughout the GMNF in 2021. This monitoring is part of a long-term data collection effort to understand fish population trends on the Forest. Additional sites were sampled to support the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation. Streams in the following



Photo 9 Trophy trout stocking

towns were sampled during 2021 field season: Rochester, Lincoln, Chittenden, Pittsfield, Pittsford, Hancock, Ripton, Granville, Warren, Weston, Wallingford, Dorset, Arlington, Manchester, Woodford, and Peru. Additionally, Forest staff monitored sea lamprey spawning areas in the upper White River in the towns of Granville, Hancock, and Rochester. The Forest also maintains a network of water temperature monitoring sites across both districts.

The Forest Service continued to work with partners on identifying and eliminating barriers to aquatic organism passage in 2021. There are ongoing projects on streams in Rochester and Fayston that will be completed in 2022. Planning and design continues on multiple structures on the Mettowiee River in the town of Dorset. These projects restore connectivity to important aquatic habitat and provide infrastructure resilience to flooding. Project partners include Friends of the Mad River, the White River Partnership, USFWS, the State of Vermont, Trout Unlimited, and the Poultney Mettowiee Natural Resources Conservation District.

Stream restoration by reintroducing large wood material occurred, enhancing aquatic habitat along 4.0 miles of forested streams. Adding large wood material improves habitat conditions for aquatic organisms and restores stream processes. These activities took place on Corporation and Tunnel Brooks in Rochester and Hancock and Heather Brook in Searsburg.

Riparian planting occurred at multiple sites within the White River watershed to help restore aquatic habitat. The GMNF assisted the White River Partnership, and the Vermont Youth Conservation Corp, at sites in Rochester, Granville, and Hancock.

The GMNF, in cooperation with Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, continued the aerial stocking of native brook trout to high elevation ponds at Griffith Lake and Big Mud Pond in Peru and Mount Tabor, Stratton Pond in Stratton, Little Rock Pond in Wallingford, and Branch, Bourn and Beebe Ponds in Sunderland. Stocking these high elevation ponds supports a native brook trout fishery. Also in cooperation with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, GMNF staff stocked a newly designated Trophy Trout section in the Deerfield River in the towns of Somerset and Searsburg. Additionally, brook trout were stocked in Hapgood Pond in Peru.

Wildlife Habitat Improvement & Monitoring

Wildlife habitat was improved and maintained through maintenance of openings on the Forest, both permanent and temporary. Approximately 100 acres of upland openings were maintained by mowing, or mastication in the towns of East Dorset, Goshen, Granville, Hancock, Hartford, Lincoln, Manchester, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Pittsfield, Pomfret, Ripton, Rochester, Warren, Stockbridge, Salisbury,

Readsboro, Weston, Stratton, Woodford, and Winhall. Approximately 70 acres of permanent upland openings were maintained for blueberry production in Goshen, and permanent upland openings in Manchester and East Dorset. In addition, apple trees, which provide high-value wildlife food, were “released” by cutting competing vegetation in old orchards in Rochester, Dorset, Pittsfield, Mount Holly, Mount Tabor, Peru, Somerset, Stratton, Weston, Wallingford, and Stamford.

Wildlife biologists and technicians continued work with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife to monitor the populations and habitat requirements of bats since the advent of white-nose syndrome. Potential timber sale units within the boundaries of the Somerset and Telephone Gap Integrated Resource Projects (towns of Somerset, Stratton, Mendon, and Chittenden) were monitored to determine the species composition of the bats on the landscape.



Photo 10 Mowing an apple orchard.

Songbird surveys were conducted in the Lye Brook Wilderness in Manchester in partnership with the Vermont Center for Ecostudies. This is a long-term project monitoring changes in forest bird communities. Songbird surveys using new recording technology were conducted in wetlands associated with future chop-and-drop treatments and paired uplands. The objective is to monitor the songbird communities before and after chop-and-drop treatments are conducted. This summer was the initial pre-treatment survey season in Dover, Jamaica, Mount Tabor, Searsburg, Stamford, Sunderland, Weston, Wilmington, and Woodford. Peregrine falcon nest sites on the GMNF in Rochester, Salisbury, Stockbridge, and Wallingford continue to be monitored, and closures to protect sensitive nesting habitat continue seasonally from March 15th to August 1st each year at all sites except Wallingford. The peregrine falcon was removed from the federal list of endangered and threatened species in 1999 and the Vermont State list of endangered species in the spring of 2005; however, the species remains on the Regional Forester Sensitive Species list.

In a partnership with Forest Service State & Private Forestry, pollinator habitat was assessed on Forest Roads in Danby and Mount Tabor. Our objective was to understand the distribution of milkweed along Forest Roads and to develop management strategies allowing milkweed populations to persist while maintaining roadside brushing.

GMNF staff helped the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife wrap up a long-term black bear study in the vicinity of the Deerfield Wind Turbine Project site. The goal of this was to determine how the wind project may impact black bears and their use of the habitat surrounding the project site. Bears' collars were removed this year.

Soil / Water Monitoring

An agreement was renewed with the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, Department of Environmental Conservation to partner in monitoring water quality around the Forest to track long term trends as well as potential impacts from permitted forest uses. Under this agreement, the state monitored physical and chemical parameters (e.g., temperature, pH, metals, etc.) as well biological parameters (e.g., macroinvertebrates) at sites in the towns of Dorset (Mad Tom Brook), Readsboro (West Branch Deerfield), and Rochester (Bingo brook and Wing Brook). This work is part of the state's Ambient Biomonitoring Network and is in addition to the water quality monitoring completed in wilderness areas to inform air quality trends (see Wilderness section, above). Forest Soil Disturbance Monitoring was conducted at five sites within three timber sale units throughout the Forest to estimate forest management effects on soil and water resources. This included the Bully Brook sale in Wallingford, the Old Job sale in Mount Tabor, and Souphouse sale in Rochester. Monitoring was also completed at five of nine wetlands proposed to receive "chop and drop" treatments of woody material immediately adjacent to the wetlands. Monitoring included gathering baseline data on solar insolation, water temperature, air temperature, and ground surface humidity. This will help Forest staff determine if the proposed treatments will have effects on the aquatic, wetland, and upland habitat conditions that could impact wetland functions or values.

Research & Inventory Activities

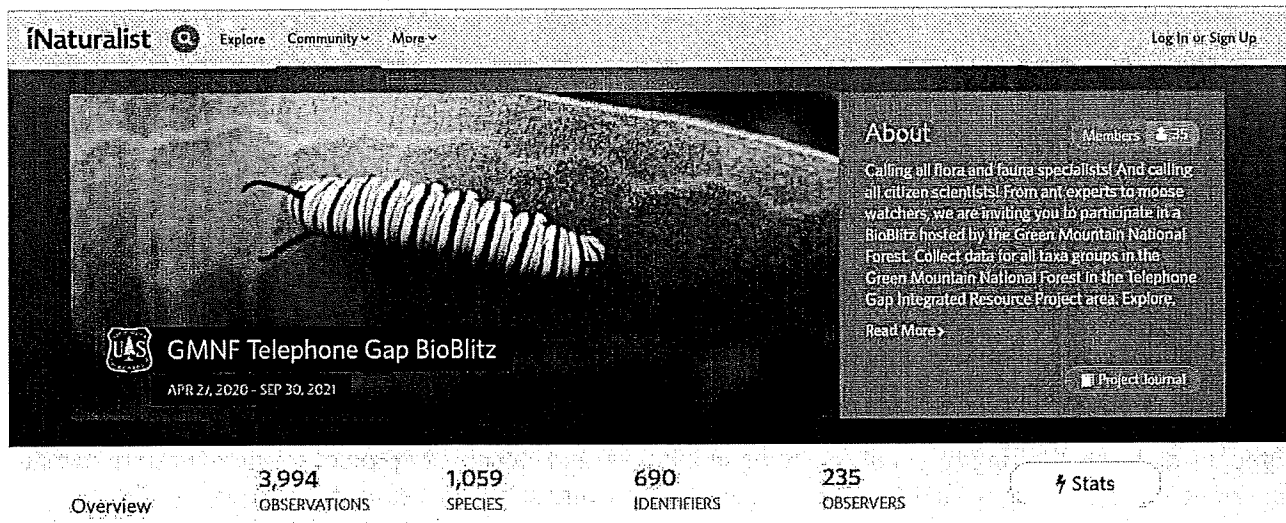


Photo 11 Telephone Gap BioBlitz Stats on iNaturalist.

The following research and inventory was approved and conducted on the GMNF during 2021:

- Dr. Luke Groff, Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife, led visual encounter, dipnet, and wading surveys at five wetland and pond sites in the towns of Mount Tabor and Wilmington. Wood frog, spotted salamander, green frog, and spring peeper were observed, and potential four-toed salamander habitat was identified.

- Dr. Jeffrey Munroe, Middlebury College, oversaw sampling below the talus fields near the Ice Beds Trail in the town of Wallingford to identify seasonal changes in water chemistry that would clarify the source of the water and flow pathways through the rock field. Data loggers recorded air temperature at several locations above and within the rocks, water temperature at the spring, and conductivity of the water at the spring. Lab and data analysis are underway and expected to conclude in early 2022.
- The Dovciak lab from SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry completed mycorrhizal soil translocation and seedling growth experiments on pre-established sites on the GMNF in the towns of Lincoln, Mendon, and Shrewsbury. All experimental materials and markings were removed and the sites were restored to pre-experiment conditions, concluding their field work on GMNF.
- Dr. Kate Buckman, Dartmouth College, led a community science effort to collect dragonfly larvae for mercury biomonitoring. During September and October of 2021, her group visited five waterbodies on Green Mountain National Forest to assess suitability for dragonfly larvae collection, resulting in collection of dragonfly larvae at one site in Ripton. This collection yielded individuals from three families: Aeshnidae, Gomphidae, and Cordulegastridae. The project is planned to continue into 2022, with expanded collection and analysis of samples.
- Green Mountain National Forest attempted to collect white oak acorns for inclusion in the White Oak Genetics and Tree Improvement Project, in communication with Dr. Laura DeWald, University of Kentucky. Due to the low mast production in 2021, collection efforts were unsuccessful but will be attempted again in future years.
- Dr. Paul Hapeman, Assistant Professor of Biology at Central Connecticut State University, led continuation of a research project studying the extent of occurrence of American marten (*Martes americana*) in southern Vermont and northwestern Massachusetts and key habitat features associated with their presence. Work on GMNF included the towns of Sunderland, Stratton, Glastonbury, and Somerset.
- Dr. Joe Spraker, Hexagon Bio, led opportunistic non-destructive sampling of soil, plant material, animal dung, lichen thalli, mushrooms, and decaying leaf litter to eventually isolate fungi and use a subset to sequence genomes to evaluate for small molecules of interest for further medicinal research and development. In 2021, collection occurred at 10 sites in the town of Woodford.
- Cameron McIntire led a collaborative effort between US Forest Service, Forest Ecosystem Monitoring Cooperative, University of New Hampshire, and Vermont Department of Forest, Parks, and Recreation to initiate a study of the interactive effects of tapping sugar maple and drought response. Initial sample collection occurred in 2021 in the towns of Rochester and Lincoln; sampling and analysis will continue in 2022.
- Spencer Hardy, Vermont Center for Ecostudies, conducted sampling of bees as part of the state-wide Vermont Wild Bee Survey effort sampling widely for common and rare species with particular focus on specialist species with known floral associations. In 2021, sampling occurred in the towns of Chittenden, Goshen, Ripton, and Stamford.



- Green Mountain National Forest staff and Vermont Center for Ecostudies personnel contributed to soil and faunal inventory at the Blue Ridge Fen Candidate Research Natural Area in the town of Chittenden. Surveys will be compiled into documentation for consideration for final Research Natural Area designation in 2022-23.
- The year-long virtual Telephone Gap BioBlitz to document biodiversity in an area including portions of the towns of Chittenden, Goshen, Pittsfield, Killington, Mendon, Pittsford, and Brandon using the iNaturalist platform (iNaturalist.org) concluded at the end of September. Citizen scientists collectively documented nearly 4,000 observations of more than 1,061 species in this interesting and diverse area.

Wildfire & Prescribed Fire Activities

Fire management personnel on the GMNF were very active this past season accomplishing nine broadcast prescribed fires and multiple pile burns while suppressing three GMNF wildfires. Prescribed fire treatment objectives were focused on hazardous fuel reduction in the Forest, improving wildlife habitat and reinvigorating blueberry patches. The following are the prescribed burns that were carried out and the wildfires that were responded to this past year.

Prescribed Fire Table:

Town	Activity	Name	Acres
Winhall	Prescribed Fire	Snow Valley	4.4
Mount Holly	Prescribed Fire	Tarbellville	21.1
Winhall	Prescribed Fire	Apple Orchard ABC	23.1
Wallingford	Prescribed Fire	Homerstone A	7.5
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	3P	17
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	FR30	30
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	FR31	38
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	FR10 Ragged Window	10
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	Ten Kilns Devil's Den	3.5
Mount Tabor	Prescribed Fire	Piles	15
		Total Acres	169

Wildfire Table:

Town	Activity	Name	Acres
Chittenden	Wildfire	Southside	1
Manchester	Wildfire	Spruce Peak	.10
Somerset	Wildfire	FR83	.10

In addition to prescribed fire that was performed in Vermont, numerous red carded individuals were involved with providing support directly or indirectly for the local wildfire season as well as supporting the national wildfire suppression efforts. This support included the mobilization of resources responding to wildfires and all hazard incidents throughout the nation, including assisting with the vaccination centers for the Covid-19 pandemic response. The fire crew also supported one military base in

Massachusetts and conducted prescribed burns on the Finger Lakes National Forest in New York State for 208 acres. The majority of all the prescribed burns were performed in the wildland urban interface.

The fire management staff would like to thank the dedicated firefighters from the volunteer and local fire departments that responded to and assisted in the suppression of the wildfires that occurred this past year on the GMNF.

Public Outreach / Conservation Education

Employees of the GMNF typically spend a significant amount of time each year at the Forestry building at both the Addison County Fair in Addison and the Rutland State Fair in Rutland. This year, we were able to participate in the Rutland State Fair and hope to participate in both the Rutland and Addison County fair again in 2022. These events allow our staff to answer questions about the 400,000-acre National Forest by the thousands of people that we typically interact with. We look forward to being in several parades and having our staff on site at community events that are being organized in 2022 as all of these venues are wonderful opportunities for us to discuss GMNF related issues with our partners and gather information from the public.



Photo 12 Forestry Building at the Rutland State Fair.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to disrupt plans for many in-person events over the past year, the Forest Service again worked with partners to find a way to bring forest-themed fun to kids at Boston Children’s Hospital in 2021. On June 23, the GMNF and our Urban Connections program teamed up with Seacrest Studios at Boston Children’s to host “nature” bingo. Kids played along remotely from their hospital rooms in Boston while our staff led the virtual event from Vermont. Forest Service employees provided clues for things you might find in the forest, and players marked them on their bingo cards. Winners were treated to their choice of Smokey Bear items. The special event

was made possible by Seacrest Studios, which broadcasts a weekly bingo game at Boston Children’s. The virtual bingo event was one more example of our growing partnership with Boston Children’s.

We are always open to working with local towns and other organizations that may be holding events that Smokey Bear or Woodsy Owl and our staff can be a part of. In May of 2021 we worked closely with Green Up Vermont to sponsor a “Green Up Day” kickoff event at Champlain Elementary School in Burlington. Woodsy Owl was the distinguished guest and was featured with the kids in their Tik Tok video – this was a nice way to celebrate Woodsy Owl’s 50th birthday. We also traveled with Smokey Bear to kick off the Safe Kids 301 bike race sponsored by CHAD (Children’s Hospital At Dartmouth) and New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon, NH. These are fun and exciting events that we love to participate in, so please reach out to us if know of something interesting taking place that we can be a part of.




Photo 13 Woody Owl visited Champlain Elementary students in Burlington.

In 2021 the GMNF partnered with Shelburne Farms to support the Forest for Every Classroom (FFEC) program which works to educate New England-based teachers about forest stewardship issues, provide tools to develop place-based service-learning curricula that meet current educational standards, and use local landscapes, resources and community to connect classroom learning to real world application. Another critical program that we are proud to support is the Vermont Envirothon. The Vermont Envirothon helps students focus on Vermont’s environmental issues related to forestry, wildlife, soils and water resources through real-world learning in a teamwork environment. We would like to thank the Vermont Association of Conservation Districts for coordinating this important program and the many agencies and natural resource and conservation partner organizations that work hard to make the Vermont Envirothon possible. The program provides an opportunity for hands-on field experiences and activities with professionals in the field and serves as a way for high school-aged students to actively learn more about the natural world around them.

Again, thank you for your support of your National Forest.

Together, we will continue to maintain and improve this valuable treasure for generations to come. Our Rochester and Manchester offices are open Monday through Friday from 8:00 AM until 4:30 PM. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, we ask that people call ahead of time (see office phone numbers below) to make an appointment for in-person services. You can also visit us and learn more about the GMNF at our website online: <https://www.fs.usda.gov/gmfl>. Like us on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/GreenMountainFingerLakesNF/> and follow us on Twitter: https://twitter.com/gmfl_nfs

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