



STONE VALLEY COOPERATIVE RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT AGREEMENT

March 2014

THE AGREEMENT

The purpose of a written agreement is to coordinate treatment of this unusual landscape among multiple property owners, multiple users, and multiple volunteer caretakers, toward protection of the resource and enjoyment by all. This agreement is the outcome of the first forum among many parties in twenty-four years.

This version of the agreement was begun in April 2013 with an informal meeting of the three main land owners, volunteer caretakers, and some interested user groups. Participating in discussion were representatives from Brookfield Renewable Energy, St. Lawrence County Planning Office, St. Lawrence County Soil and Water Conservation, St. Lawrence County Trail Board, Town of Colton, Town of Pierrepont, Town of Parishville, Adirondack Mountain Club, Raquette River Blueway Corridor, American Whitewater, and the St. Lawrence Mountain Biking Association. A draft of this agreement with attachments was developed in monthly meetings through 2013 until February 2014.

The agreement relies on consensus where possible or a statement of differences where they remain. Public and stakeholders' comments have been solicited and are attached.

This agreement will be delivered to the property owners as a resource for their management planning in this area. The work we have done is in no way meant to usurp the authority or short-circuit the standard procedures by which the property owners make land management decisions. We believe our discussions and the agreement enhance wise management of the area because of the amount of time and personnel we have invested discussing this specific area, resulting in a detailed list of goals, current problems, some early specifics on proposed developments, and identification of critical personnel in the area. (see Attachment 16, Comments of New York State Conservation Council).

STONE VALLEY COOPERATIVE RECREATION AREA—1989 DEDICATION



Left to Right: Cynthia Hennessy (Colton Historical Society), Mary Jane Watson (Colton Town Councilman), Tim Hennessy (Colton Town Supervisor), Joseph Kutsko (St. Lawrence County Forester), David Trithart (Adirondack Mountain Club-Laurentian Chapter), David Seymour, (Colton Town Councilman).

THE RECREATION AREA

Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area (CRA) is a natural area along the shores of Raquette River between the hamlet of Colton and Brown's Bridge, as indicated on map in Attachment 1 [SVCRAmap1.jpg]. It comprises all Brookfield Renewable lands between the hamlet of Colton and Browns Bridge on both sides of the Raquette River, and St. Lawrence County parcels 19, 26, 27, 28, and 33. The Town of Colton owns a parcel west of and contiguous to Lenny Road, just north of the transfer station. Lenny Road is owned severally by (from the north) the Towns of Pierrepont, Parishville, and Colton.

The mileage of trails on SVCRA at this time are listed in the following table. Additional trail mapping using GPS will increase its precision.

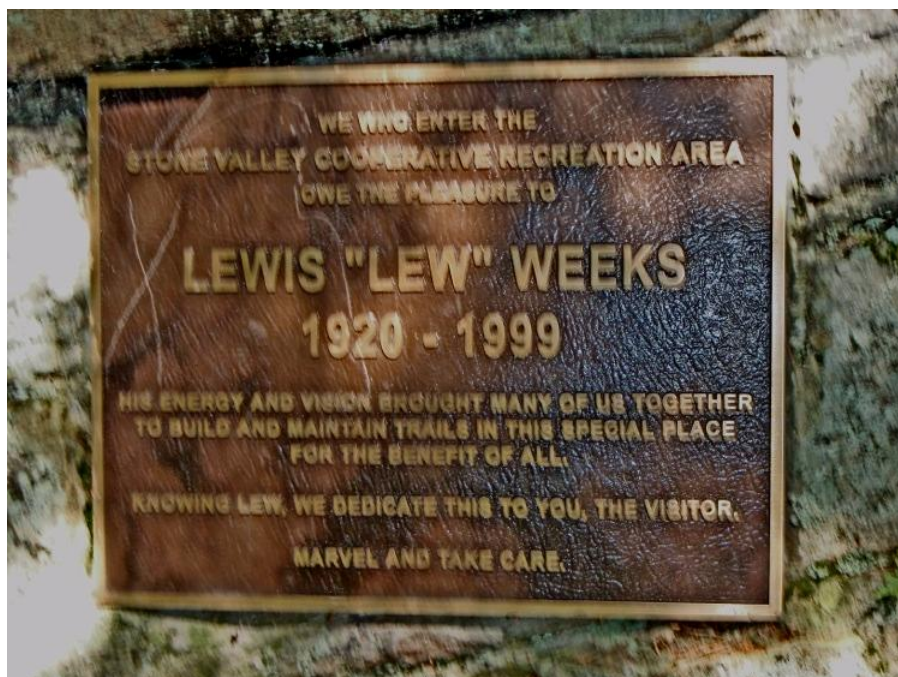
STONE VALLEY RECREATION AREA TRAIL SUMMARY

| TYPE OF TRAIL | LOCATION AND LAND OWNER | MILEAGE |
|--|--|---------|
| Hiking | East side of Raquette River on Brookfield and Town of Colton Property | 3.25 |
| Hiking/Kayaker Access | Between Lenny Road and Raquette River on Brookfield | 1.00 |
| Hiking | West side of Raquette River on Brookfield property | 3.50 |
| Hiking | O'Malley Brook trailhead on Lenny Road to trailhead near Transfer Station on County Land | 1.50 |
| Skidder Trails | North of Cemetery on County Land | 1.50 |
| New (2013) Mountail Bike | North of Cemetery on County Land in close proximity to skidder trails | 3.00 |
| Mountain Bike (Clarkson Express Trail) | Between O'Malley Brook and CR #58 | 1.00 |
| Mountain Bike Ledges Trail Loop | Between O'Malley Brook and CR #58 | 1.50 |
| | TOTAL MILES | 16.25 |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |

This area was a popular recreation area for generations before formal work began. Adirondack Mountain Club member Lewis Weeks of Potsdam collaborated with the property owner at that time, Niagara Mohawk, in the late-1980s, enlisting Adirondack Mountain Club Laurentian Chapter and St. Lawrence County Youth Conservation Corps workers, plus Niagara Mohawk materials and NYS Department of Conservation signs. See Attachment 10, "HistoricLetters.pdf". Trailwork began in 1989. A history of the project's creation was published in *Adirondack*, July, 1990. A history of the configuration of the recreation area, usually indicating its boundaries, may be seen in the series of maps published since 1989 by the property owners (Attachment 18, "pastBrochures.pdf").

In 1998 Niagara Mohawk applied for new licenses on the Raquette River, which took effect 2002-2004. Part of the settlement for those licenses included a recreation plan, which specified in License Article 404 (April 2004) the continued existence of the Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area on its land, as well as the construction of some additional recreational opportunities, such as a car-top boat and fishing access with parking at Browns Bridge, whitewater access off Lenny Road at roughly the midpoint, and six releases from the Colton dam for whitewater paddling events. The license created a Raquette River Advisory Council, made up of the signatories to the settlement and overseeing and funding environmental and recreational projects in the river's vicinity.

After 2000, the cooperating parties evolved. The town of Colton began assisting in maintenance by purchasing and storing tools. Other organizations began to participate in maintenance: Raquette River Blueway Corridor, St Lawrence Co. Mountain Bike Association, and SUNY Potsdam Wilderness Leadership students. The St Lawrence County Recreational Trails Board was formed, whose representatives include some of the caretakers of the area and whose mission is to coordinate and expand trails in the county. Since the SVCRA was formed, some trails have been added, others re-routed, and others (particularly mountain bike trails) created or proposed. Interpretive and advisory signs have been added and others are planned. A siren now sounds when water flow levels are adjusted.



RECREATION AREA PARTNERS

1. PROPERTY OWNERS (boundaries indicated on map, attachment 1)

Brookfield Renewable Energy - Brookfield Renewable (Erie Hydropower) currently owns the facilities covered in the Raquette River hydroelectric licenses. It annually funds the RRAC, supplies some material and machine work for trail, collects some trash, and monitors trail registers.

Brookfield Contact: Matt Johnson, Matthew.Johnson@brookfieldrenewable.com.

Also Steve Murphy, contact: Steven.Murphy@brookfieldrenewable.com

Also John Kurimski, contact: John.Kurimsky@brookfieldrenewable.com

Also Dan Daoust, contact: Daniel.Daoust@brookfieldrenewable.com

Assisted by the Raquette River Advisory Council (RRAC), composed of signatories to the settlement that led to Brookfield's current hydroelectric licenses.

RRAC serves to "Provide information and make recommendations on matters involving environmental health, including but not limited to issues concerning water quality, land use, flora and fauna, aesthetics, recreation, cultural and historical aspects. Review and facilitate the coordination of activities of its members having substantial interest and/or impact on environmental issues relating to FERC-licensed hydroelectric operations in the Raquette River corridor."

RRAC funds recreation facilities and environmental research within one mile of the river in the area of the licenses for Upper, Middle, and Lower Raquette River (Carry Falls to St. Lawrence River).

contact: Richard McDonald, rpmcdona@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Town of Pierrepoint, contact: Melanie Thomas, town clerk, pierrepoint@nnymail.com

Town of Colton, contact: Denny Bulger, Supervisor, townsup@townofcolton.com

Town of Parishville, contact: Connie Maguire, town clerk, tcparishville@yahoo.com

St Lawrence County. The county contracts with the Soil and Water Conservation District to manage its forest property. Dawn Howard is the manager. The SWCD also has a conservation district forester on staff. In Stone Valley, the SWCD manages logging, plans trails, and collects trash, especially "tires and toxics."

Dawn also staffs the St. Lawrence Co. Recreational Trails Board and currently chairs the St. Lawrence County Environment Management Council.

Contact: Dawn Howard, Soil and Water Conservation District, Dawn.Howard@ny.nacdnet.net. Also Deb Christy, County Trails Coordinator, dchristy@twcny.rr.com



2. VOLUNTEER STEWARDS (those whom the property owners have assigned specific duties in the area)

Laurentian Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADKL): led in the founding and building of the trail and the CRA concept. The chapter has approximately 400 members and serves the St. Lawrence County and Ottawa region.

The chapter regularly schedules outings and work parties on foot trails. It provides trail coordinator, and labor/expertise to maintain foot trails. It maintains a small budget for materials but also pursues outside funding, especially from RRAC/Brookfield.

Contact: trail coordinator Mark Simon, simonm@potsteam.edu.

St. Lawrence Co. Mountain Bike Association (SLMBA). Has developed a network of mountain biking trails in the Stone Valley area since 1998. Currently SLMBA manages and maintains mountain bike trails throughout St. Lawrence County, including those in SVCRA. Through partnerships with both private and public landowners SLMBA maintains over 50 miles of mountain bike trail with over 1000 hours of annual trail work.

Contact: Jim Akins, akinsacres@gmail.com

3. STAKEHOLDER GROUPS (an open list)

St. Lawrence County Fish Advisory Board

Racquette Valley Fish and Game Club, South Colton

St. Lawrence County Trappers Association

St. Lawrence Co. Recreational Trails Board, contact: Deb Christy, coordinator, dchristy@twcny.rr.com, and Dawn Howard, secretary, Dawn.Howard@ny.nacdn.net

St. Lawrence Co. Environment Management Council: contact: St. Lawrence Co. Planning Board, John Tenbusch, jtenbusch@co.st-lawrence.ny.us, and Dawn Howard, EMC chair.

American Whitewater, contact: Phil LaMarche, Lamarchep@canton.edu

Federated Sportsmen of St. Lawrence County

Region 6 Fish and Wildlife Management Board



MANAGEMENT GOALS

Maintenance and development by partners in this area strive to advance these outcomes:

- Healthy and abundant natural resources for timber, hydropower, and recreation
- Public has access for allowed activities
- High scenic values of forested landscape and river flow
- Harmony among users and owners
- Biological diversity, with emphasis on native species
- Interpretation and protection of geologic and historic features



MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

[Actions needed to realize goals above. From these objectives should be derived project plans that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable/Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound (SMART)]

Enhance public information about CRA... [goals 1,2, 4, 5, 6]

History of river and CRA

Wayfinding signage

Interpretive signs

Safety signs / messages. (recommendations to whitewater paddlers and visitors are in Attachment 6, "whitewaterAdvice.pdf")

Nearby information center at Colton Museum

Maintain / improve access to CRA and related spaces... [goals 2,4]

Parking areas / improvements on River Street, Riverside Drive, Lenny Road, etc.

Maintenance of access points and parking areas

Emergency access identified and marked

Handicap-accessible overlook

Handicap-accessible ramp and bathroom at information center at Colton Museum

Construct and maintain trails (guidelines for building and maintaining biking trails are in Attachment 6, "TrailGuidelines.pdf")

Minimize/reduce and mitigate human impact... [goals 1,3,4,5,6]

Trash and debris removal on land...partners working with volunteers on trail maintenance days and other designated clean-up days

Trash removal in water...boaters on specific days

Trash disposal at various sites...Brookfield dumpsters, town transfer stations, etc.

Minimize/mitigate unplanned ("social") trails

Repair trails and signage

Increase public awareness of land use ethics and rules... [goals 1,3,4,5,6]

Adopt user rules (see Attachment 5)

Publicize Leave No Trace ethic

Targeted information to boaters, spectators and other CRA users on days of special events (whitewater releases, et c.)



Enhance public safety... [goals 2,4]

Emergency preparedness and evacuation...protocols for land and water emergencies (e.g., posted phone numbers, access points, etc.)

Existing training in area for local responders in emergency situations...SUNY Potsdam, St. Lawrence University, etc.

Special teams/services...swift water team / training serving region

Deal with invasive plants... [goals 1,5]

Public education

Inventory, map

Control

Gather and report user statistics... [goal 2]

Trail counters

Trail registers

Promote tourism... [goal 2]

Scheduling of water releases for whitewater kayaking

Publicity of CRA, whitewater kayaking, etc.

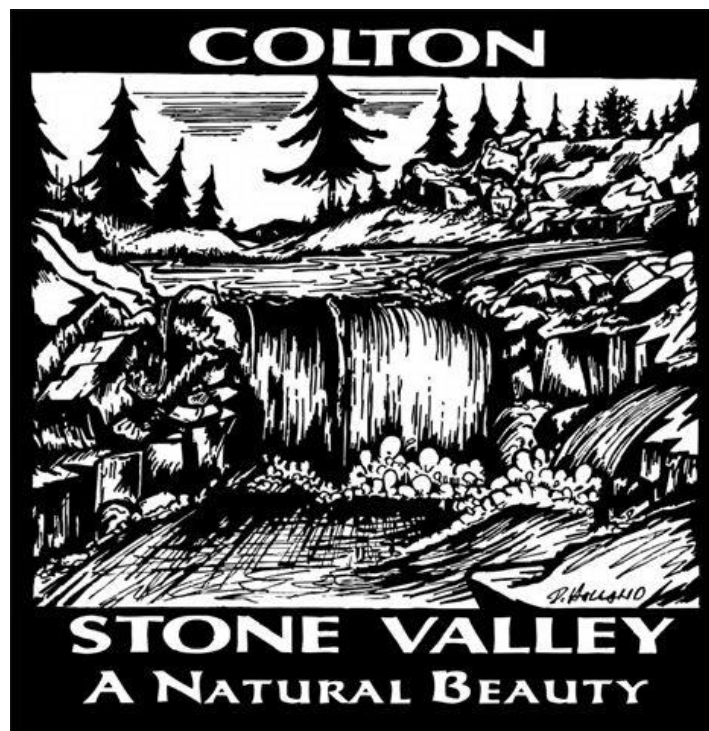
Hospitality including bathrooms, food and fuel, signage, etc.

Regional coordination (e.g., Beaver River, Grasse River, Raquette River Blueway Corridor, etc.)

On-site and nearby information about facilities

Online website(s) and other marketing by WPBS-TV (e.g., DVDs, shows such as Xpedition Outdoors, etc.)

Year-round use



CURRENT CONCERNS

Topics raised in discussions to date, with brief notes on actions proposed. Policy decisions will be made by the property owners following standard procedures.

1. Proliferation of diverse signage. Action to date: See attachment “Sign Policy.pdf”
2. Management of spectator behavior during whitewater releases. Congestion on small roads like Lenny Road. Keeping spectators on designated trails and away from danger spots. Action to date: See project description of whitewater enhancements, attachment 12.
3. Emergency rescue procedures, land and water, by local responders. No action to date by partners, but preliminary discussions have begun under the St. Lawrence Whitewater Parks project with representatives of American Whitewater.
4. Encountering Violations of user rules. Agreement to date: Should someone discover **a condition believed to be a violation of user rules, then: if the violation is in progress** or might jeopardize safety, call 911, followed by the property owner. If the violation is after the fact and stable, then call the property owner.



5. Some very aggressive alien species of plants are making their way into the area. These populations can easily increase in a very few years to the extent that they crowd out the natives on which the birds, insects, and other animals depend. We intend to inventory and control invasives. Action to date: Seeking qualified party to inventory and suggest remediation.

Threats noticed are:

- Tartarian Honeysuckle (*Lonicera tartarica*) - Shrub- very aggressive, has virtually extirpated from Central New York the native black raspberries, shrubby dogwoods, viburnums, and other forest edge and understory fruit bearers.
- European Buckthorne (*Rhamnus cathartica*) Small tree- rapidly spreading pest
- Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria officinalis*) - Mustard family alien- strongly alleopathic- inhibits native tree seedling growth
- Black Swallowwort (*Cynanchum nigrum*) is a recently arrived alien in the Potsdam area which is very damaging and difficult to eradicate once it gets a foothold.. It inhibits forest regeneration, is toxic to soil and other plants, toxic to Monarch butterflies, and forms tangled thickets which are difficult to walk through.
- Beech Thickets- American Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) while not an invasive alien was in the past a valuable member of the forest community. More recently Beech bark disease (an introduced problem), poor logging practice and woodland grazing have combined to produce Beech thickets. These can be attacked with herbicides, preferably in late summer as well as by cutting just after leaves fully emerge in the spring.
- Japanese knotweed
- Giant hogweed. Highly irritating to skin.

contact: St Lawrence Eastern Lake Ontario - Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management; Rob Williams, program coordinator, rwilliams@tnc.org, 315-387-3600 ext. 25.

6. To facilitate safe kayaking in Stone Valley, American Whitewater (AW), ADK, and Brookfield agree to two measures:

- a. publicizing suggestions on the AW website for kayakers launching and shuttling
- b. publicizing "Lucy's Hole," also known as the "midpoint," as take-out and providing loading space by keeping the grass down at a boulder-defined vehicle turnout nearby on Brookfield land at Lenny Rd.

7. Access for the elderly and others with limited mobility. Participants in the whitewater access grant have conferred with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation about access issues. The funded whitewater access development (Attachment 12) includes plans to build a viewing platform easily accessible from the southeast parking lot.

8. Increasing hospitality for visitors. Current proposals (e.g. Whitewater access project, Attachment 12) notwithstanding, there may remain additional demand for locally-available meals, fuel, sanitary facilities, trash collection, camping and RV parking

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENTS

Property owners authorize and supervise all developments in the SVCRA, following formal procedures. Nevertheless, discussions with this group may be useful to an applicant prior to formal application. We have drafted a “Project Description” form to facilitate discussion.

1. New cycling and foot trail on St. Lawrence County parcels 26 and 27 near O'Malley Brook. Construction begun in 2013 as a coordinated effort by St. Lawrence County, ADK-L, and SLMB. See project description, Attachment 2 (“SVCRAmap2.jpg”). See also map, Attachment 6, “O'MalleyBikeTrail.pdf”.

2. Whitewater Area Access Improvements, on Brookfield and Colton town property. See map attachment 3 (“SVCRAmap3.jpg”). See also project description, Attachment 12, “Whitewater.pdf”. Funding has been raised, a consultant has been engaged. Project to be reviewed by Brookfield.

3. New mountain bike trail on west side of river, on Brookfield property, from bridge over pipeline north to Browns Bridge, between the pipeline and the existing hiking trail. Proposed by SLMB. See map, Attachment 4, “SVCRAmap4.jpg” and project description, attachment 13 “WestSideTrail.pdf”. Brookfield’s regional compliance officer reports that mountain biking has been allowed on its lands already, but a new land use policy is under development so he recommends a letter to the corporation from cyclists requesting that mountain biking be listed as an allowable use. See also public comments on this proposal, Attachment 15, WTrailComments.pdf. To be reviewed by Brookfield.

4. Motorized access. Towns of Pierrepont, Colton, and Parishville have requested Brookfield to permit ATV access within the Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area. The pipeline road on west side has been indicated. Motor access was once common along that route, say proposers. Motor access would add economic benefit to the area, they add. The elderly and handicapped would have improved access, they note. Brookfield Land Use Policy permits motors under a special license, but since 2006 the company has posted against motors on its portion of SVCRA.

Action recommended: petitioners should address Brookfield through the Raquette River Advisory Council. See public comments on this proposal in Attachments 15 “MotorComments.pdf” and 17 “PublicMeetingNotes.pdf”



UPDATING THE AGREEMENT

We propose to reopen discussions of the agreement in no more than five years, in winter 2019, or sooner if any partners request.

ATTACHMENTS

- Att. 1: map of Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation area, "SVCRAmap1.jpg"
- Att. 2: map of planned trail near O'Malley Brook on county land, "SVCRAmap2.jpg"
- Att. 3: map of development plans on Town of Colton land at SE entrance to Stone Valley, "SVCRAmap3.jpg"
- Att. 4: map of planned route of mountain biking trail on west side of river between village of Colton and Brown's Bridge, "SVCRAmap4.jpg"
- Att. 5: proposed land user rules, by land owner, "UserRules.rtf"
- Att. 6: O'Malley Brook Bike Trail Project Description "O'Malleytrail.pdf"
- Att. 7 Brookfield general land use policy in New York, "BrookfieldLandUsePolicy.rtf"
- Att. 8 *Adirondac* article on Stone Valley, "Adirondac.pdf"
- Att. 9 Project Description Form "ProjectDescrip.docx"
- Att. 10 Historic correspondence "HistoricLetters.pdf"
- Att. 11 Signage Guidelines "SignageProposal.pdf"
- Att. 12 Whitewater Improvements Project Description, "Whitewater.pdf"
- Att. 13 West Side Bike Trail Project Description, "WestSideTrail.pdf"
- Att. 14 comments on W side bike trail, "WTrailComments.pdf"
- Att. 15 Comments re motorized use, "CommentsMotor.pdf"
- Att. 16 Comments from New York State Conservation Council, "NYSCCcomments.pdf"
- Att. 17 Public Meeting Feb 3 2014, notes, "PublicMeetingNotes.pdf"
- Att. 18 Brochures, Trail Guides, "OldBrochures.pdf"

