



STONE VALLEY COOPERATIVE RECREATION AREA MANAGEMENT PLAN

**December 2013
DRAFT**

THE PLAN

The purpose of a written plan is to coordinate treatment of this unusual landscape among multiple property owners, multiple users, multiple managers, toward protection of the resource and enjoyment by all.

This version of the plan was begun in April 2013 with an informal meeting of some owners, management partners, and interested user groups. A draft of this document with attachments was developed in monthly meetings until December 2013. It was agreed then to publish this draft for comment, adjust it based on comments, then the partners would sign it. This agreement is treated as a work in progress and may be amended, as explained below in “Updating the Plan.”

Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area – 1989 Dedication



Left to right:

Cynthia Hennessy (elbow) (Colton Historical Society), Mary Jane Watson (Colton Town Councilman), Tim Hennessy (Colton Town Supervisor), Joseph Kutsko (St. Lawrence County Forester), David Trihart (Adirondack Mountain Club / Laurentian Chapter), Joe Zagrobelny (Niagra Mohawk), unknown child, Dave Seymour (Colton Town Councilman)

THE RECREATION AREA

Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area (SVCRA) is a natural area along the shores of Raquette River between the hamlet of Colton and Brown's Bridge, as indicated on map 1 [SVCRAmap1.jpg].

This area was a popular recreation area for generations before formal work began. Adirondack Mountain Club member Lewis Weeks of Potsdam collaborated with the FERC property-owner at that time, Niagara Mohawk, in the late-1980s, enlisting ADK Laurentian Chapter and county Youth Conservation Corps workers, plus Niagara Mohawk materials and DEC signs. See Attachment 10, "HistoricLetters.pdf". Trail work began in 1989. A history of the project's creation was published in *Adirondac*, July, 1990.

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 continued existence of the Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area on its land, as well as some additional recreation opportunities, such as six whitewater releases from the Colton dam. The license created a Raquette River Advisory Board, made up of the signatories to the settlement and overseeing and funding environmental and recreational projects in the river's vicinity.

After 2000, 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, SUNY Potsdam Wilderness Leadership students. The St Lawrence County Recreational Trails Board was formed, whose representatives include some of the caretakers of the coop area and whose mission is to coordinate and expand trails in the county. Since the cooperative recreation area was formed, some trails have been added, others re-routed, and others (particularly mountain bike trails) planned. Interpretive and advisory signs have been added and others are planned. A siren now sounds when water flow levels are adjusted.



RECREATION AREA PARTNERS

OWNERS (boundaries indicated on Attachment 1, "SVCRAMap1.jpg")

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. Its use of those lands are guided by a land use policy (attachment 7, "BrookfieldLandUsePolicy.pdf", currently under review for update.)

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

Also Steve Murphy, contact: Steven.Murphy@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. Signatories include NYDEC, U. S. Fish and Wildlife, Trout Unlimited, St. Lawrence County, Adirondack Mountain Club, Trout Unlimited, and American Whitewater.

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, DEC, rpmcdona@gw.dec.state.ny.us

Town of Pierrepont, contact: Melanie Thomas, town clerk, pierrepont@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@twcnny.rr.com

MANAGEMENT PARTNERS (Groups with standing 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



USER GROUPS (open list, under development)

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

Fish and Wildlife Advisory Board, St. Lawrence County

Fisheries Management Board, St. Lawrence County

Racquette Valley Fish and Game Club, South Colton, NY

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

St. Lawrence County Mountain Biking Association, contact: Mike Klein, mike@wearonearth.com

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

St. Lawrence County Trappers



MANAGEMENT GOALS

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

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



MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

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

- History of river and SVCRA
- 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 SVCRA, 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

1. Proliferation of diverse signage. See attachment "Sign Policy.pdf"
2. Management of spectator crowds during whitewater releases. Congestion on small roads like Lenny Road. Keeping spectators on designated trails and away from danger spots. See "Whitewater Improvements" attachment.
3. Emergency rescue procedures, land and water, by local responders.
4. Encountering Violations. Should one discover a condition believed to be a violation of user rules: if the violation is in progress or might jeopardize safety, one should call 911, then 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.

Threats noticed are:

- a. 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.
- b. European Buckthorne (*Rhamnus cathartica*) Small tree- rapidly spreading pest
- c. Garlic Mustard (*Alliaria officinalis*) - Mustard family alien- strongly alleopathic- inhibits native tree seedling growth
- d. 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.



e. 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.

f. Japanese knotweed

g. Giant hogweed. Highly irritating to skin. contact: St Lawrence-Eastern Lake Ontario Partnership for Regional Invasive Species Management (SLELO-PRISM)

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

- a. publicizing suggestions on the AW website for kayakers launching and shuttling; see Attachment 5, "UserRules.pdf".
- 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. Motorized access. Towns of Pierrepont, Colton, and Parishville have requested Brookfield to permit ATV access within the Stone Valley Cooperative Recreation Area. Motor access would add economic benefit to the area, say proposers. Currently, Brookfield Land Use Policy excludes motors from company land. FERC and Brookfield are both concerned about safety and security issues on that route. Other avenues to the hamlet may be explored.



PLANNED WORK IN THE SVCRA

1. New cycling and foot trail on St. Lawrence County land near O'Malley Brook (approved). Construction begun in 2013 as a coordinated effort by county, ADK-L, and SLMBA. See Attachment 2 ("SVCRAmap2.jpg"). See also Attachment 6, "O'MalleyBikeTrail.pdf". A bridge to span O'Malley Brook will be a separate work project seeking approval in 2014.
2. Whitewater Area Access Improvements, see attachment 3 ("SVCRAmap3.jpg"). See also Attachment 12, "Whitewater.pdf". Approved and funded.
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 SLMBA. See map, Attachment 4, "SVCRAmap4.jpg" and attachment 13 "WestSideTrail.pdf". To seek approval in 2014.



UPDATING THE PLAN

We expect to return to this plan in no more than five years, spring 2018, or sooner if any partners call for a discussion.

This plan relies on a consensus where possible, or a statement of differences where they remain. The partners produce and distribute the plan, and other user groups' comments are solicited and attached. Any partner in this agreement may call for a discussion to revise the plan. The property owners, however, make final decisions concerning their lands.

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 general1313 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"