

# Green Mountain College Natural Areas Policy

November 9, 2006

## Mission Statement

The Green Mountain College Natural Areas management mission is to support the college's environmental liberal arts mission of fostering the ideals of environmental responsibility and public service by: (1) maintaining, enhancing, and celebrating the recognized values and unique character of these lands and (2) applying regional and global conservation goals and principles of sustainable use to management of these lands.

## Definition

Natural Areas are lands and wetlands on the main campus maintained in a natural condition mainly by ecological processes with limited human intervention, excluding buildings, landscaped areas, pavement, parking areas, athletic fields, and managed farmland.

## Values

Green Mountain College Natural Areas are tremendous assets to the college because of the following recognized values:

- **Functioning Ecosystem** – Natural communities on campus support many native species and provide ecosystem services such as biomass production, decomposition, soil development, and stabilization during and resilience after disturbances such as floods.
- **Education** – These natural areas provide a variety of field sites on campus for faculty and students to use in courses, independent studies, and co-curricular service projects. As a major link along the Poultney Community trail system, these areas also hold great potential for demonstrating sustainable land use practices to the general public.
- **Research** – Floodplain forests, old fields in the early stages of succession, the Poultney River, insect and fish communities, and other systems provide subjects and settings for faculty and student research projects.
- **Social Setting and Personal Space** – Natural areas are the environments and backdrops for many college programs, club activities, and informal gatherings. Individuals looking for a beautiful and quiet place to think, read, or find solitude, often find it in these areas.
- **Recreation** – Recreational uses of natural areas contribute to student and community health and well-being. The community trail is maintained for a variety of activities, such as walking, and skiing in winter.

### Management Policy

The GMC Land Use Committee or a Natural Areas Manager appointed by the president or provost will coordinate management in keeping with the Green Mountain College Natural Areas management mission.

The Land Use Committee or Natural Areas Manager will:

- Encourage inventory, monitoring, and mapping of Natural Areas.
- Provide and maintain electronic access to all available Natural Areas data.
- Recommend management policy that promotes the Natural Areas Mission.
- Review all activities proposed for Natural Areas that would alter the ecosystem, or interfere with other uses.
- Facilitate trail planning and design, and interpretive sign development in Natural Areas.
- Facilitate communication with various campus constituencies including the Sustainability Coordinator and the head of Facilities and Maintenance concerning Natural Areas management and use.

The Sustainability Coordinator will:

- Work with the students and with Land Use Committee (and any Natural Areas Manager) to promote sustainable use of the land.
- Plan student activities to help carry out needed management such as trail maintenance and invasive species control.

Staff designated by the college administration will:

- Mow and clear fallen debris from established trails as needed, approximately 2 or 3 times per year.

Natural Area Users will:

- Promote the GMC Natural Areas mission by maintaining, rather than diminishing, the usefulness of these areas for their designated purposes.
- Communicate significant uses of Natural Areas to the Land Use Committee or Natural Areas Manager, and provide access to resulting reports and data.
- Obtain pre-approval through the Land Use Committee review process for:
  - Activities that significantly affect the ecosystem, permanently or temporarily.
  - Activities that may interfere with other uses of the area, or affect its value for future use.
- Adhere to the following rules and regulations governing the use of Natural Areas unless otherwise approved through the Land Use Committee review process:
  - Respect the Natural Area you are visiting.
  - Respect other users and maintain reasonable quiet.
  - Follow Leave-No-Trace principles – leave the area as you found it.
  - Use no motorized vehicles, except snowmobiles on marked sections of the Poultney Snowmobile Trail.