



Update

F.O.P. Newsletter, Summer 2011, V. 25, No. 2

Annual Picnic Date Oct. 1, 2011

From the President

Greetings, As the saying goes in New England, if you don't like the weather, wait a few minutes. It certainly was a roller coaster of conditions this spring! I have found myself contemplating taking refuge in the basement to get away from the oppressive heat and then a few days later, ready to make a dash to the lower realms to escape a potential tornado! In light of what is happening in the rest of the country, we have been fortunate, so far! The high winds and rain have kept us busy in the Park. There are still trails that need clearing after the final ice storm. It is a challenge to stay on top of the work. Norma Reppucci, the Park Manager, is full time at Pisgah, but is just one person and often without a reliable state vehicle. She is fortunate to have the long time support from a mid-week crew: Bob Miller, Gil Cameron and Jerry Goslant, with help from Jeff Scott when his schedule allows. These guys have been helping with a wide variety of tasks in the Park, often providing a truck for hauling materials and/or providing better access to trails. Scott Blodgett has been another great support to Norma, bringing not just a strong back, but providing heavier duty equipment necessary for a number of tasks.

On the second Saturday of each month, at 10:00, people meet for a work day at the Kilburn Trail parking lot. We generally work from 10 to 2, but are happy to receive any time that is offered! John Herrick is the Trails Committee Chair and can be contacted at 603-256-6301. We have tools and take on a variety of tasks on a given day. There are also times during the rest of the month when a number of us are out tending to needs in the Park. If you have time to spare, we would love the help! Pisgah relies a great deal on volunteers for its care and the more people who chip in, the more we can get done. There are Council members actively involved in the care of the buildings; educational and historical aspects of the Park; fund raising; Park events and the publication of the Update. There are many ways in which folks can be an active part of taking care of this wonderful place. We have a lot of fun when we are out there working in the Park and would love to have you join us! Hinsdale Honor student, Autumn Denyou joined us last month, bugs and all! Feel free to contact any of the Council members. Contact information is available at our web site, www.FriendsofPisgah.org.

Speaking of bugs, as everyone knows they have been out! The black flies have faded but mosquitoes seem to be just hitting their stride! Unfortunately, they will be with us 'til the chill winds start to blow. I would like to take this opportunity to appeal to folks to consider physical blocks for sun and bugs when venturing into the Park for a swim. Products we put on our skin come off in the water and can have deleterious effect on aquatic life. Hats and shirts can be sprayed and left on shore. I have dedicated clothing for just such purposes, adding a headband and a kerchief when it's too hot for a hat. I have found a fly swatter to be very effective in deterring deer flies, who will be joining the ranks soon enough! And I am a strong promoter of hiking/running in the rain, for keeping bugs at bay; it is such beautiful time to be in the woods!

On the matter of the Pisgah State Park Management Plan, an FOP Council sub-committee met with individuals at DRED, at the end of June, to create a working agreement between FOP and the state. This issue of the Update has been held back so we might report on the meeting from the FOP viewpoint. Also, check the web site for any new developments. Enjoy Pisgah, this resource we are so fortunate to have, and please join us in its care! See you on the trails.

Kathy Thatcher

Update is published occasionally during the year by Friends of Pisgah, Inc.

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State of New Hampshire Management Plan for Pisgah State Park

On June 16, 2011 George Bald, Director of the Division of Resources and Economic Development of the State of New Hampshire signed the long awaited Management Plan for Pisgah State Park. The document is 153 pages long and has a file size (pdf format) of over 10 mb. It is interesting reading but will take some time to digest. Below are some excerpts from the Management Plan.

“Vision and Guiding Principles

... the Pisgah State Park Steering Committee adopted a set of guiding principles ...” Relative to those principals, the following is stated: “The State of New Hampshire and its partners will manage Pisgah State Park to protect and enhance its inherent natural, cultural, and recreational resources..., it must:

- Maintain and/or enhance the backwoods character of the park
- Maintain the informal, remote, and dispersed qualities of the property
- Maintain a reasonable balance of uses, especially between motorized and non-motorized uses, on the property
- Avoid conflicts with enjoyment of the primary uses allowed on the property, especially those which depend upon a quiet and peaceful setting for a more solitary experience
- Maintain or enhance the separation of uses, especially motorized and non-motorized uses, which may conflict with one another
- Contribute to the local quality of life” ...

“Facility Management

Pisgah State Park is an undeveloped park with basic public facilities scattered throughout. The visitor center and interpretive barn are developed public facilities which serve as a contact and administrative center. Roads and trails traverse the park providing a transportation network for non-motorized and motorized access. Other facilities include parking lots, scenic vistas, heritage sites and dams.” ...

“Park Buildings

Visitor Center

The ... Visitor Center ... was constructed in 1996 by the Friends of Pisgah and gifted to the State. In previous years the Visitor Center was open and staffed by the Friends of Pisgah volunteers many Saturdays, Sundays and Holiday Mondays. ... Management Alternatives ... Entering into an agreement with the Friends of Pisgah or other partner for the operation, maintenance and upkeep of the facility... The [Parks] Department will not maintain an office at the property. The Department will consider entering into an agreement with a partner organization for the operation, maintenance and upkeep of the facility. If an agreement is not ... reached by fall of 2011 the Department will close the building to public use, and turn off the utilities, and secure the facility for the winter.” (Ed. Note: underlining added for emphasis.)” ...

“Recreation Use Management ...

Management Alternatives

DRED proposes no major changes to the current trail management policies. ...

Actions

- DRED will enter into a hiking trail maintenance agreement with partner organizations to formalize the trail maintenance responsibilities
- DRED will continue to provide technical assistance on trail maintenance needs and solutions and help coordinate volunteer trail activities in the park
- DRED will work with partner organizations, as needed, to improve trail signage on the hiking trails and general information available on kiosks” ...

“Management Direction and Implementation

The State of New Hampshire and its partners will manage Pisgah State Park to protect and enhance its inherent natural, cultural, and recreational resources. ... DRED will promote and encourage programs in Pisgah State Park to facilitate visitor enjoyment and local education initiatives. DRED will promote the benefits and opportunities offered by state parks to local nongovernmental organizations, and primary, secondary, and post-secondary schools, and encourage these entities to integrate Pisgah State Park into their curriculums. Moreover, these entities will be encouraged to design programs that enhance public value of the Park, for example through status and trend monitoring or development of informational brochures. DRED will also take specific actions to educate the public about Pisgah State Park.

- The Natural Heritage Bureau will develop a Biodiversity Guide
- The Forest Management Bureau will periodically conduct stand visits coincident with timber harvests
- The Division of Parks and Recreation will provide public use and recreation information for the property.
- Approach a ‘Friends’ group about maintaining and staffing the existing exhibits”

Editor's Comments

The thrust of the document is apparent from this single page excerpt. The State expects someone else to spend the money to maintain the Park. It appears that a single employee will be responsible for the Park but the state may not have an office in the Park. It is not clear how contact may be made or maintained with the State by the general public! It appears that the exhibits so painstakingly acquired by the FOP will remain the responsibility of the FOP. If the Visitor Center and Barn are to remain open year round, the FOP must bear the cost. Pisgah State Park likely will revert to a lesser supervised park more like it was after it was first created and management rules established. It is unfortunate that, after so many years of volunteer effort and private donations of funds, land and historic items to Pisgah, the Park facilities may no longer be readily available to the folks who live here in Southwest N. H. It will be interesting to see how the management plan, when implemented, really affects Park users.

If any reader is interested, the State management plan in its entirety can be read at or downloaded as a pdf file from the following link: <http://www.nhdf.org/library/pdf/Pisgah/Pisgah%20Management%20Plan%20-%20Approved%20Version.pdf>

Matt Donachie

Comments About the Presentation and Adoption of the Pisgah State Park Management Plan

As a member of the Pisgah Park Management Plan Steering Committee I wish to thank the editor of the Update for this opportunity to respond to some items within the Pisgah State Park Management Plan. I will be limiting my response due to the constraints of time in reading the entire document as well as having difficulties accessing portions of the Plan on-line. I have also attempted to review a hard copy that was to be sent from the state to my local library, but has yet to arrive. Please note that the Steering Committee was set up to work with the State in the development of a Management Plan! I was disheartened, to say the least, to see there was no Executive Summary included in the Plan. The Executive Summary had been a specific request by the Steering Committee. I thus was under the impression it would be included. The purpose of an Executive Summary is to give people an option to reading the entire document. This 153 page Plan document should have contained an Executive Summary.

I would also like to give some background to the statement on page three of the Management Plan referring to the request from the FOP in Feb. '06 asking permission to harvest timber to provide revenue for Park operation. In 1989 a Pisgah State Park Forest Management Plan was prepared by the State, submitted by the then Director of the Division of Forests and Lands (DFL), John E. Sargent. Obviously, movement had already been made towards doing timber harvests in the Park. The Friends of Pisgah responded to the Forest Management Plan, based on a letter dated April 26th, 1990, from Thomas Miner, Administrator, Forest Management at DFL, inquiring at that time, as to whether the timber sale revenues would be going back to Pisgah. The response was it was a legislative matter which had already been discussed.

Both FOP inquiries were in direct reaction to Pisgah not getting the necessary resources to keep up with the Park's maintenance and, in particular, to continued staffing of the Park with a full-time Park Manager. Over the years, FOP has requested Iron Rangers, permission to sell goods out of the Visitor Center and inquired about the possibility of corporate sponsorship, all to no avail. Pisgah State Park has always struggled with the fact that no fees are collected and thus has therefore been considered by DRED to be a financial burden. The inquiry regarding timber sales was to support unmet needs of the Park, which has been a long term problem. It is my understanding that the FOP was informed that any monies earned from timber sales go into a general fund and could not be targeted for use in Pisgah. [Note: Funds from other Parks also go into a general fund].

My second response is to a statement on page five of the Management Plan: "The final job of the steering committee was to oversee the final completion of the proposed plan and recommend it to George Bald, the Commissioner of DRED. In making the recommendation of its acceptance by DRED, the steering committee would be confirming that multiple interests had participated in the development of the plan being proposed best serves the public under present conditions." The Steering Committee came together for the last time in Hinsdale, a meeting set-up in response to a request from the public to allow for public comment. The Commissioner as well as other department Directors and Administrators was in attendance. After the meeting, the Steering Committee was told we would receive revisions to the plan and could send responses to the Revised Draft, to the state. I never received any response from the state regarding my concerns with the Plan, and we (Steering Committee) never came back to the table as a Committee to recommend the plan as presented.

Kathy Thatcher, Member, Steering Committee

Meeting with Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED)

After the FOP Council meeting in late 2010 with DRED Director Bald, a follow-up meeting was scheduled for the February Council Meeting. Unfortunately, the meeting was postponed after the double dose storms of February 1 and 2. The meeting was reset for later in February but personal factors for Director Bald forced another postponement and several more delays. A meeting relative to Pisgah was held with DRED managers in late June. A report on that meeting follows.

Meeting with DRED Managers

The situation of State plans relative to Pisgah Park is still somewhat fluid. On June 30, 2011, 4 FOP Council Members, Gary Montgomery, Bob Miller, Matt Edson and longtime member John Summers met in Concord with a half dozen DRED Employees, including Brad Simpkins, Chris Gamache, Bill Getas, and Gail Wolec in an informal but productive meeting. Commissioner Bald was not present.

FOP had forwarded to DRED a 10 point agenda for discussion and FOP concentrated on this agenda. The meeting revealed that the State does intend to shut down the FOP-donated buildings during the winter months but will keep them open in the summer through the end of September. FOP would be able to use the Visitor Center and the upper floor of the barn. The resulting economic savings to DRED will be considerable as in the off-season, the buildings would be winterized, no plowing would be done and the Old Chesterfield Rd entrance would be gated at the Information Board where it was for many years after the creation of the Park. Exact timing for late spring/early summer opening in the future is not certain yet.

It was suggested that FOP work with DRED to maintain roads and trails including bridge repair where necessary. FOP deems this to mean only hiking trails with other trails maintained by other volunteer groups or clubs, e.g. those which might support ATV, Mountain Biking and Equestrian usage for the Park. A source of gravel for road work has been identified and the State apparently plans to rent a gravel crusher for FOP to process the stone and may lend the use of a large dump truck to move the material if FOP cannot provide such a truck. The State also agreed to provide FOP with lumber for bridge construction/repair starting in the fall. A Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) for Pisgah Park's relation with FOP is to be provided by the State for review by FOP in about 3 weeks. The barn has been accepted by the state and no longer belongs to FOP. Assuming certain conditions of insurance and other details are resolved, FOP would be able to maintain its historical collection in the barn. In addition, if the MOA is signed by FOP, the many historical furniture and other items/artifacts donated by FOP members and other friends of the Park will continue to be able to be displayed in the Visitor Center for viewing by Park visitors when the Visitor Center is open.

The essence of the meeting was that DRED claims to be doing its best to meet the desires and aims of potential users from southwest New Hampshire and wishes to use the demonstrated talents (and funds) of FOP and its members to ensure an acceptable management of the Park for maximum use by the public. We will be providing more information about the developing character and operational mode of Pisgah State Park. In the next few months, please go to the FOP web site (see www.friendsofpisgah.org) to check for updated information. The fall newsletter due out around the end of October should have an up to date summary of the state of the Park and the activities of FOP in continuing to try and maintain the character of this wild and extensive open space.

On the Trail

Kilburn Pond Tracks and Other Signs of Wildlife, March

Twenty-six (26) people met at the Kilburn Trail Head on Route 63 in Hinsdale at 10:00 am, Saturday, March 19, 2011 to look for critter tracks and other wildlife sign with Jeff Littleton, expert tracker and field ecologist from Moosewood Ecological. Twenty-four wore shoe shoes as the snow was soft off the beaten path. Along the way, we observed browse sign from deer and snowshoe hare on red maple saplings, as well as feeding signs from pileated woodpeckers. We also discovered deer incisor scrapes on young hemlock saplings. We discussed the importance of hemlock as both a winter food source and critical habitat for wintering deer.

At Kilburn Pond, we observed old and fresh beaver chew on many hardwood trees, as well as some conifers. Most of the old chew was found on hemlocks. This activity indicates that the habitat has become less than optimal for beavers and they are getting desperate for food. More than likely, these hemlocks were among the last trees that the resident beavers fed on before abandoning Kilburn Pond many years ago. However, beavers have recently returned to Kilburn Pond, presumably over the past couple of years. Fresh chew was observed on red oak, red maple, beech, and a small white pine that had fallen during the recent ice storm. Art Whipple remarked that he has only seen beaver feeding on white pine in the spring. Other sign includes fresh chew on twigs found in the pond or on the edge, old tracks, and a beaver canal.

Beavers are known as a keystone species. This means that their influence on the environment is disproportionate to their body size. In other words, a medium-sized mammal such as the beaver has a major effect on changing ecosystems. Known as the “sacred center of the land” by Native Americans, beavers create habitats for many species, including fish, mammals, turtles, snakes, frogs, songbirds, and waterfowl. As such, beaver serve a significant role in maintaining biodiversity in our region. They can change a stream into a mosaic of various habitats such as ponds, marshes, swamps, and alder thickets. After beavers have abandoned a pond and the dam deteriorates the stream returns and a beaver meadow is created. Given enough time the beaver meadow can eventually return back into a forest.

Beavers live in family groups or colonies, and an active lodge could have up to 10 individuals. This includes the breeding male and female and 2 litters of kits (newborns and kits from the previous year). Each litter has an average of 2-4 kits and the young remain with the group for 2 years. Beavers mate for life and mating occurs during mid to late winter; the young are born in the spring. At this point the 2 year old beavers disperse in search of their own habitats. Unfortunately, this is the time of year that most road kills occur since the young are dispersing. Finding new habitat can be tricky as beaver are very territorial and will aggressively defend their habitat against intruders.

While we did not locate the active lodge we feel as though it must be close to the dam where most of the fresh activity was observed. Since beaver are inactive for various parts of the winter, only to emerge on warm days, it can be challenging at first to determine if a lodge is active or not. However, upon closer inspection one can determine if beavers are present. One clue to look for on snow covered lodges is a hole in the top. This is the vent that allows fresh air to circulate in the lodge and the hole is created in winter by the heat of the beavers inside. Another good clue that can be easily observed is their cache located in the water next to the lodge. This consists of many upright limbs sticking out of the water and serves as a winter food source. It can look very similar to shrubs sticking out of the water. Be careful not to get too close to the winter cache as the ice can be thin!

After searching for wildlife sign and our discussion on beaver life history we returned to the parking lot around 1:00 pm.

Jeff Littleton

(Ed. Note: Per the Management Plan for Pisgah Park, beaver are the only mammals which can be legally trapped in the Park. Also, see Update V 15, No 1 for a discussion of beavers by Patti Smith)

April Trail Maintenance

Wendy Jacobs, Gary Montgomery, Kathy Thatcher, John Herrick and John Hudachek gathered at the Kilburn Trailhead on a warm, sunny April morning for our monthly trail maintenance. Given reports of trees down across the Kilburn Trail the crew headed down the west side of Kilburn Pond.

After removing trees across the trail down to the Kilburn Dam, we crossed the stream below the dam and bushwhacked east to the east leg of the Kilburn Trail. We then proceeded north on the Kilburn Trail clearing numerous downed trees and limbs before returning to the Kilburn trailhead

May Trail Maintenance

On our May 14th trail work day, we headed in from our usual meeting spot, the Kilburn parking lot, and made our way to the Pisgah Ridge Trail. Our focus was on Pisgah Ridge Trail heading north to Baker Pond Trail and then on to the Davis Hill Trail, eventually taking us back to the Kilburn parking lot. John Herrick, John Hudachek, Wendy Jacobs and I were joined by Hinsdale Honor student Autumn Denyou who donated her time that day. Thanks to Matt Edson for enticing her to join us! The usual blow down trees were cleared along the way. We had loppers with us and did our share of clearing along the trails, though the mosquitoes can make it a challenge at this time of year! As I stated earlier, if there are folks out there who would like to help with the trail work but can't make our 2nd Saturday, please don't hesitate to give me a call and I'm sure we can find a mutual time. Heaven knows, there is always work to do on the trails!

Kathy Thatcher

Let's Keep the “Wild” in the Pisgah Wilderness, Pisgah Natural Area or Pisgah State Park

However You Think of It, Be Vigilant in Protecting It!

Some Images from Our Winter and Spring Trail Season

Come and join FOP on our monthly hikes or special hikes (see www.friendsofpisgah.org). Enjoy lots of fun outdoors in the Park. Most work/hike days last a maximum of 2 hours. On the trail we will do some cleanup work, check the state of the trail and relax at lunch, most times at some choice stopping spot



On Break at Kilburn Pond. Wendy Jacobs, Gary Montgomery, John Hudachek and Kathy Thatcher



Break at Kilburn Pond



Wendy Jacobs, Autumn Denyou and John Herrick Taking A Break



On the Trail. Wendy Jacobs, John Hudachek and Gary Montgomery



John Herrick Checking Tree Root Depth of a Blow Down. Gary Montgomery and Wendy Jacobs Watching



Jeff Littleton (far right) Lecturing Along the Trail



Gathering for Jeff Littleton Guided Hike



Wendy Jacobs, Autumn Denyou and Kathy Thatcher Keeping a Log Warm

Getting Around On Foot, Snowshoe or Cross Country Skis in Pisgah – Part IX

Challenges for Some Hikers

In the past few months, there have been folks who have lost their way along the Kilburn Loop Trail. I will not do a trail description, as I have done so in the past (Update V. 13, No. 1 Winter 2009) but would like to share some thoughts on traveling that route as the Kilburn Loop typifies the challenges that can occur in a park some 13,500 acres in size. The loop can take three hours, so make sure you start early enough. The markers are blue diamonds but I have gone in and added orange ties in areas where I felt signage was lacking. Remember the State has drastically cut manpower at the Park in the past years and it is a lot of work for the Manager who is the only employee in Pisgah. We will get in and get more diamonds up on the Loop but for now the orange ties can help guide the way.

There are different philosophies on trail marking; some people feel less is better, some subscribe to always being able to see the next marker. I know people do not want the woods to become cluttered with signage, but we want to make sure that folks have reasonable guidance as they wander through the Park. Whether you begin your journey at the low end of the loop or the high end, either direction you will be traveling up and down hill equally. This can make for a longer journey for some. We all want to be mindful of our fitness levels when choosing a hike. Referring to a map before heading out and carrying one with you is very important. We do need to do more work on signage and update the maps, but the maps that are available in the boxes at the trail head [FOP tries to keep them supplied!], and at our web site and the state web site are good guides to the trails. We would like to provide colored maps but the cost is prohibitive. You can always color your own for quick reference.

The Kilburn Loop, unfortunately, can be challenging during bug season, to say the least! So be forewarned. As many folks know, I do subscribe to hiking in the rain, [within reason], to keep the bugs at bay and it is a beautiful time to be in the woods! Do keep the Kilburn Loop on your list of things to do, it is a beautiful trail and well worth the time.

Kathy Thatcher

Mammals In Pisgah?

Do you know what you might run into during a trip in the Park? No telling what will be seen but we do know that the Park contains moose, deer, bear, bobcat, raccoon, opossum, wood chuck, porcupine, fox and coyote, to name the more prominent larger mammals. No doubt there are others not mentioned. Smaller mammals include chipmunks, squirrels, voles, fishers, maybe pine martens, bats and more. Of course, to see all these mammals you will have to be lucky and spend much time in the Park, perhaps off the regular trails. Jim Bearce a former Park Manager once reported seeing a coyote pack take down a deer. One almost always sees squirrels but bear are more apt to be seen on the merge of the Park with private land, near bird-feeding humans. Bobcat are seen rarely. A family that lives on the boundary over in Ashuelot reported a fierce fight between a bobcat and raccoon one evening over a half dozen years ago. I have seen blood and bobcat tracks plus rabbit tracks in our farm field. Norma Reppucci came down to verify them for me. I have seen a bobcat cross Old Chesterfield Rd about a mile below our house. Wood chucks, deer, raccoon and opossum are fairly common sights on our 20 acres of land near the Park. So, we can safely assume the Park is the haven for such critters. If you have any tales of, or comments about, mammals you have seen in the Park, please send them to me using matt1932@myfairpoint.net.

Friends of Pisgah, Inc.
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First Class Mail

Join or Renew Your FOP Membership

Please use the form below and send to the address shown if you wish to join FOP, renew membership or give one as a gift. The Friends of Pisgah maintain a nominal dues structure with the intent being to encourage as many individuals and families as possible to join. Over half of the student/single/family dues provides for printing and mailing the Update and the Annual Picnic notice, as well as for the fine food at the picnic. Dues are: student - \$10, single - \$15, family - \$20, group (club) - \$30.

Cut here -----

Date: _____	<u>Category</u> (Check applicable boxes)	<u>Willing to Assist On Committee for:</u>
Name(s): _____	<input type="checkbox"/> New	<input type="checkbox"/> Annual Picnic
Address: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Renewal	<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Programs
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Gift	<input type="checkbox"/> History/Archaeology
_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Student (\$10.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Membership
Phone: _____ (Home)	<input type="checkbox"/> Single (\$15.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Newsletter Articles
Phone: _____ (Work)	<input type="checkbox"/> Family (\$20.00/address)	<input type="checkbox"/> Planning & Strategy
E-mail: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Group (\$30.00)	<input type="checkbox"/> Fund Raising
	<input type="checkbox"/> Donation \$ _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Relations/Park Info
Questions? Call Kathy Thatcher (603-363-4482) or John Hudachek (603-363-8897)	Name/Address of gift giver	<input type="checkbox"/> Rails to Trails Advisory
Send form and check to:	_____	<input type="checkbox"/> Trails/Maintenance
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