

Rock River Preserve
Management Plan
[DRAFT] Adopted July XX, 2021
Rock River Preservation, Inc.

I. Purpose

This management plan covers the approximately 25.82 acres of land adjacent to Rock River in Newfane, Vermont owned by Rock River Preservation, Inc. The plan is intended to be used by Rock River Preservation Inc. and the Vermont Land Trust, which holds a deeded conservation easement on the 4.5 acre portion of the property purchased by Rock River Preservation Inc. in March 2007 from Connecticut River Watershed Council. Although only the original 4.5 acre portion with conservation easement requires this plan, the intention is to create a uniform, comprehensive plan to apply to and manage the entire 25.82 acres.

II. Rock River Preservation Inc.

Rock River Preservation Inc. (RRP) was incorporated in August 2005 in response to this parcel of land being offered for sale. RRP is comprised of the users of the popular swimming areas at Rock River. RRP believes that the best stewards of the land are the users, who visit the land on a daily basis throughout three seasons and have an interest in protecting access to and the traditional uses of these swimming areas.

III. Property Description

The property that is the subject of this management plan consists of the original two parcels conserved in 2007 and an additional 21.32 acre parcel acquired by Rock River Preservation in 2018. The three adjacent parcels of land approximately total 25.82 acres: Approximately 4.5 acres off the north side of Depot Road in Newfane, Vermont and 21.32 acres of land located off the south side of 55 Grimes Hill Road. The land is vacant and unimproved. The combined parcels are designated as Parcel D290.4 on the Newfane Grand List and the Newfane Property Tax Maps. Access to most of the property is via footpaths, particularly 'Town Trail Number 11'. The land is largely forested, with a mix of hemlock, hardwoods, and white pine, and includes a long frontage along the Rock River with many scenic spots. The river shore includes rocky outcrops, rocky shoreline, and a few sandy areas that are used as beaches by visitors. There is a deeded emergency access on a woods road accessed from Grimes Hill Road through the adjacent D-290, currently owned by Vince Mulford. A fifty-year non-development clause is in the deed of the Grimes Hill Road parcel, which was negotiated with the Swartz Family, from whom the parcel was purchased in 2018.

A Grant of Development Rights and Conservation Restrictions (referred to as a "conservation easement") on only the original two parcels totaling 4.5 acres purchased in 2007 is held by the Vermont Land Trust, with its principal office in Montpelier, Vermont. The Southeast Regional office is located at 54 Linden Street, Brattleboro Vermont (Phone 802-251-6008). The Grant is recorded with the deed as part of the Newfane Land Records.

IV. Site Management

A. Vegetation and Topography

No alterations to the area's vegetation or disturbance of its topography are permitted, except in accordance with a written plan to address erosion, invasive species, or other environmental concerns. Trees and other vegetation are to be left in as natural a condition as possible.

B. Physical Improvements to the Property

Permanent structures are specifically prohibited by the conservation easement. Physical improvements will be limited to those that become part of a written plan to address erosion or other concerns. Any such improvements should be undertaken only for the purposes of supporting continuing public access to and the traditional uses of the land.

C. Monitoring the Property

RRP will monitor the property on a regular basis, and will address littering, dumping, trail damage, erosion and other activities that may limit access or the traditional uses of the area, or affect water quality. RRP shall, upon request of the Vermont Land Trust, report the results of monitoring inspections to the Land Trust.

The Rock River Watershed Stream Geomorphic Assessment Phase 2 Report, completed by the Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District in 2007, provides guidance in addressing issues of erosion, including the loss of stream bank at what is commonly called the third swimming area, where the river and trail turn sharply to the left as the trail goes up river.

D. Public Use and Information

1. Access:

Access to this land should be made known and available to as many who are able and interested to use it and as the land's carrying capacity will allow. Typical access is along Town Trail No. II, which is experiencing erosion down river from the parcels owned by RRP. RRP may work in cooperation with other landowners or community groups to address erosion and safety issues on that part of the trail. RRP will encourage the public to access designated trails and paths, and block off new trails that may lead to erosion. If the traditional access along the town trail is curtailed, access may be established through the south end of parcel No. 1 (see survey), which has frontage along Depot Road.

2. Emergency Planning and Coordination:

Responses to law enforcement, fire control, and search and rescue emergencies are fundamentally the responsibility of local, state, and federal agencies. RRP has no legal authority to respond to emergencies, but it may

play a role (for example, through its "River Stewards" program) in educating recreational users, partners, and the public about the land so as to reduce problems of this kind.

3. Hunting and Trapping:

Although hunting and trapping are traditional uses of forest lands, both on public and private lands, they are activities that pose concern for the safety of recreational users on this land. Hunting and trapping will only be allowed by owner permission. Designing, constructing and posting signs should be coordinated with the Vermont Department of Fish and Wildlife.

4. Motorized Vehicles:

There shall be no operation of motorized vehicles on the property except for property management and for emergency purposes, and excepting that non-commercial recreational snowmobiling may be permitted at the discretion of RRP. There shall be no all-terrain vehicle use permitted on the property except for emergency or management purposes. RRP may permit motor-driven wheelchairs or all-terrain vehicles for use by **disabled persons** on the property. All-terrain vehicles include motorized four-wheel, three-wheel and two-wheeled or tracked vehicles.

E. Parking

A tradition of parking had been practiced at the south end of Parcel No.1 for a number of years until the Town of Newfane erected barriers at that location, which are in place from spring to fall. Parking is prohibited at this site while the barriers are in place.

Users of the swimming areas at Rock River, as well as users of the West River, commonly park along Vermont Route 30 near the intersection of Depot Road in the Town of Dummerston. RRP will take an active role in processes established to address issues related to parking in this area, including those efforts of the Water Quality Division of the Agency of Natural Resources of the Vermont Department of Environmental Conservation, Vermont Agency of Transportation (V TRANS), Windham Regional Commission, and the towns of Newfane and Dummerston.

F. Camping

Overnight camping is limited to the portion of the parcel not subject to the conservation easement. Campers are directed to resources such as the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics for proper protection of land and water assets. Camping is nowhere permitted in the riparian zone (i.e., below the mean annual high water line). This policy shall be monitored and enforced by individuals designated by RRP.

V. Management Plan Update

This plan will be reviewed and updated on a five-year cycle beginning on the first anniversary of the date of transfer from Connecticut River Watershed Council to RRP.

VI. RRP Contact Information

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VII. Survey maps attached