

Winter 2025 Quarterly Meeting, January 12, 2025, Northwoods Stewardship Center, Charleston, Vermont

Call to Order – NEKGMC President John Predom called the meeting to order at 1:00 P.M. The meeting's attendees were Cathi Brooks, Geoff Commons, Maric Casiere, Tom Grime, Sue Garcia Nofi, Linda Caamano, Victor Caamano, Morgan Driscoll, Steve Farrow, Beth Barnes, Liam Abate, Kevin Williamson, Paul Trojano, John Predom, Julie Rapczynski, Susan Winsor, Marcia Matson, Betsy Williams, Laura Williams, and Maria Young.

John Predom offered the following remarks for the record:

I started the new year reviewing photos from the past. Our section was created June 24, 2000, our first Facebook page April 3, 2011, our first website post August 19, 2012. The oldest photo on the website is dated December 5, 2009 with recognizable faces of Ben Rose, Dave Hardy, and Michael Chernick at Split Rock labeled "Scouting the Trail to Split Rock". Volunteers worked with Northwoods Stewardship and Vermont FPR in the creation of the Kingdom Heritage Trail, finalizing the trail in 2019. Throughout the history of this section there are photos of volunteers making trails, clearing trails, refurbishing fire towers, stacking wood, and leading hikes, some to places I had not heard of until viewing photos. Many familiar faces in these photos.

For the first time since I have been president the Annual Partners Hike was not organized; we are in a year of flux. The KHL corridor management plan is up for review, also ANR staff are in the very early stages of initiating a planning update process for all of the Kingdom Heritage Lands.

GMC's Governance Committee is reviewing its Director's structure and function at the club, and Section Bylaws are also being reviewed. Section Presidents and one other person from the section will be asked to go to a retreat this year to review and standardize bylaws. I recently posted a link to ours on the sidebar of our website, if you wish to review them.

Paul and I snowshoed the Mad Brook Trail in early December. We were surprised at the number of trees across the trail and estimated some 50 trees down. When you are out hiking the trails, please take note of the number of blowdowns, and send an email with trail name, number of blowdowns, and (if possible) estimated location.

We started 2025 off with two First Day hikes, one in Willoughby State Forest, and the other at Brighton State Park. We coordinated these hikes with Vermont State Parks and turnout has been good; it's a great way to bring community awareness to our club, and section.

Because of you, we will continue to do what we do in 2025, maintain trails, lead hikes, and help our friends and neighbors in any way we can. I look forward to our annual events; National Trail Day, NEKGMC Trail Work Day, Brighton Trails Day, Long Trail Day, participation at Westmore Mountain Challenge, Wood Stacking Weekend, the Golden Road Hike, and the Jean Haigh Memorial Hike.

Thank you all for your continued participation and volunteerism.

Secretary' Report – In the absence of NEKGMC Secretary Michael Chernick, NEKGMC Treasurer Paul Trojano presented the secretary's minutes from the Fall 2024 meeting.

MOTION [Brooks/Winsor] moved to accept the secretary's minutes as presented. Approved Unanimously

Treasurer's Report – NEKGMC Treasurer, Angela Smith submitted the following quarterly financial report:

In the absence of NEKGMC Treasurer Angela Smith. NEK President John Predom presented the

treasurer's report.

North East Kingdom Section ~ Green Mountain Club, Quarterly Financial Statement, As of January 12, 2025

Operating Account

Beginning Balance (as of 10/01/24) \$3,620.65

Income

Dues Sharing

Sept (posted 10/25/24) \$135.00

Oct (posted 12/23/24) \$30.00

Nov (posted 12/23/24) \$100.00

Deposit (Maps/Guides) \$68.50

Deposit (Posted 10/02/24) \$30.00

Expenses

Train NEK (Wilderness First Aid Class) \$260.00

Paul Trojano (Reimbursement) \$75.10

Ending Balance \$3,649.05

Certificate of Deposit

CD#1 ...4489/Matures 01/12/2026 @.40% \$1,613.24

CD#2 ...3785/Matures 06/27/2025 @.40% \$1,773.37

Grand Total All Monies \$7,035.66

Angela Smith ~ Treasurer

NEKGMC Vice President Paul Trojano explained that the sub \$10,000 level of our account explains why the interest rate is so extremely low.

Section Director to Main Club's Report – Cathi Brooks reported on the most recent GMC Board meeting.

The financial update notes that the GMC, based on the December 14 GMC Board Meeting. The Club is still experiencing a tight financial situation, in part due to rising health care expense increases. But the budget revision in September 2024 is a cushion and should enable the GMC to weather this situation. Contributions and grants are above the previous year and expenses are in line with budgeted amounts. On the positive side, the cash flow is supporting GMC's operational needs, resulting in a reduction on the reliance on the Club's line of credit.

Revenue (as of the latest report) totaled \$1.62 million, equaling 72 percent of the budgeted amount and 116 percent of the prior fiscal year's income. Contributions totaled \$469,000, equaling 55 percent of the budgeted amount and 104 percent of the prior fiscal year's level. Membership revenue stood at \$122,000.00, equaling 36 percent of the budgeted amount and 99 percent of the prior year's sum. Program revenue stood at \$881,000.00, equaling 89 percent of the budgeted total and 139 percent

compared to the prior fiscal year's sum. The Club received a \$100,000.00 grant to finance a GIS assessment of the LT system. Sales revenue stood a \$60,000.00, equaling 49 percent of the budgeted amount and 86 percent of the previous year's amount.

As for expenditures, the total amount spent was \$1.8 million, 103 percent compared to the prior fiscal year. Total personnel expenses were \$1.2 million, equaling 69 percent of the budgeted amount and 99 percent compared to the prior fiscal year. Total office expenses were \$239,000, or 76 percent of the budgeted level and 125 percent compared to the prior fiscal year. Total supply expenses were \$99,000.00, or 82 percent of the budget amount and 262 percent compared to the prior fiscal year. Vehicle expenses were \$54,000, or 61 percent of the budgeted amount and 114 percent compared to the prior fiscal year.

With respect to the balance sheet, the restricted cash on hand was \$141,000.00, there was \$541,000.00 worth of outstanding receivables, and the GMC Endowment stood at \$8.3 million. The value of construction in progress was \$1.7 million, including both the new Visitor Center/Office addition to the Waterbury campus and the Bromley Tower. Accounts payable were \$38,000, but this amount is decreasing as the new construction costs are paid off. Cathi noted that all of these large numbers are Main Club figures and not from the section.

On non-financial matters. Middlebury College donated a 1.5 mile LT easement to the GMC. Bromley Tower's construction is finished, and the multi-year and multi-agency Burrows Trail reconstruction on Camel's Hump was completed. Work on the new Waterbury Visitor's Center is nearly done. Occupancy will occur soon, and the facility will be dedicated on June 15. All privies have been converted to compost, as the last pit privy was eliminated.

As for the \$369,000.00 worth of funds available from the recent large bequest, possible uses of the money include \$55,000 for Wheeler, including ADA access improvements at both cabins and expanded wood stacking capacity. A new GMC Website is planned, and \$60,000.00 was raised from the 2024 Long Trail Day fundraising. Membership solicitations will be consolidated into an annual process, ending the more incremental monthly system now in effect. The latest external audit resulted in a positive assessment.

The Jean Haigh Cabin was occupied 49 percent of the time and Hadsel Mares 30 percent of the time, during the most recent reporting period.

Northwoods Update – Maria Young, Executive Director at the NorthWoods Stewardship Center – Maria welcomed everyone to NorthWoods and mentioned that many of today's attendees are Gold Star reporters. She provided an overview of NorthWoods. Noting its establishment in 1989 and the organization's mission to connect people through science education and action. There are four primary NorthWoods programs forest stewardship, education, conservation corps, and conservation science. She spoke of the work crews. Maria thinks of NorthWoods and NEKGMC as the organizations keeping NEK trails open. People do not always know what goes into maintaining a trail. She described specific steps. and characterized the process as awesome work. NorthWoods manages 1500 acres. It's a big chunk of land, a hidden gem.

NorthWoods connects with many organizations. and she named them. IT is still showing up across New England. But NorthWoods has a special mission to conserve its campus and keep it open to the public. Maria spoke of the largest onsite trails and its accessibility.

NorthWoods is appreciative of NEKGMC's role in the Westmore Challenge. 2024 was the first year that NEKGMC's role was formalized and assumed responsibility for the Mad Brook Trailhead Station.

Cathi Brooks and Maria discussed the options for the future KHT – FPR Management Plan.

NorthWoods has been seeking a more prominent role, now that it has more organizational stability, and

the plan is entering its renewal phase for the next 10-year term. Maria and GMC's Director of Trails were scheduled to meet again and discuss the future. A greater role for NorthWoods would give more eyes on the KHT.

Maria will be attending a meeting on the Monadnock access situation. She saw both hurdles and opportunities. She spoke of the projects at both Black and Wheeler Mountains, and all sides of Pisgah. The restored Bald Mountain Fire Tower project involved many volunteers. All of the necessary wood was brought up in one day. There was a general discussion on the steps of fire towers, Work was done on the Burke Mountain Red Trail, which Cathi complemented.

2024 was the first time NorthWoods was involved in a VYCC program, which involved workforce development. Maria also spoke of the need to identify priority projects for 2025. She hopes to spend more time in 2025 on the Westmore State Forest. Maria joked, where has Kevin (Williamson) not done (regarding trails)? Cathi suggested perhaps NorthWoods should receive NEKGMC trail reports, but Maria indicated NorthWoods is not ready yet to assume responsibility for all trail volunteers. The NEK Trails volume is ready for an update (probably this spring). There was a brief logistics discussion on Kevin's role in book sales. John Predom asked Maria concerning a new bridge that NorthWoods built on the Nulhegan. In 2025, NorthWoods will not have a crew on the Nulhegan. There is a large photo from the 2019 Jean Haigh Memorial Hike, which it was decided should remain at NorthWoods.

Lastly, there was discussion on dog etiquette on the All Persons Trail.

Elections Update – John Predom reminded everyone that section elections are occurring in April 2025. John Predom was told there is no quitting, although he stated that his position is available.

Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation Tentative 2025 Plans –

With Luke O'Brien away on a 10-day vacation, John Predom reviewed FPR's preliminary 2025 plans.

Luke O'Brien at FPR provided a preliminary outline of FPR's regional facilities and construction plans for 2025. In an e-mail to NEK Section Secretary Michael Chernick, Luke emphasized this is a tentative agenda and that none of these proposed activities has received funding.

Sentinel Rock SP Trail Maintenance and Bridge Construction, Sentinel Rock SP, Westmore

FPR staff will work with STC or NWSC to maintain the trail system at Sentinel Rock SP in Westmore. Work will include routine maintenance as well as improvements at two stream crossings. The crew will build approx. 600 ft of trail and construct a 16 ft bridge to bypass a chronically wet section of trail and the lower stream ford. A second stream crossing will be improved by adding stepping stones. Materials and tools will be staged at an existing access point and carried to the site. The bypassed section of trail will be closed and restored using on-site native materials.

Burke Mountain Trail Maintenance, Part 2, Darling State Park, Burke

In 2024, a NWSC Trail Crew completed 4 weeks of intensive trail maintenance on the upper Red Trail and West Peak Trail on Burke Mountain in Darling SP. Phase 2 work will focus on restorative maintenance on approx. 0.5 miles of the lower Red Trail and 0.25 miles of the Summit Trail. Work will include adding puncheon and step stones to chronically wet areas, and installing climbing turns and route adjustments to avoid fall line sections of trail. Other routine maintenance will improve existing stream crossings, waterbars, and sidehill to divert stormwater, stabilize tread, and protect mountain soils. The crew will use standard trail restoration practices to close unauthorized trails and restore impacted areas using native stones, coarse woody debris, and duff materials.

Black Mountain Climbing Access Trail Maintenance- Phase 2, Weyerhaeuser Timberlands, Averill

FPR will work with CRAG-VT and NWSC to improve rock climbing access trails at Black Mountain

in Averill. Work completed in Phase 1 included 3 weeks focused on corrective maintenance and adjustments to approx. 0.5-miles of trail at the south end of the Black Mountain cliffs. Phase 2 work will incorporate sustainable trail building practices to rehabilitate approx. 1000 ft of existing cliff base access paths used to reach climbing routes. This will involve minor adjustments to reduce slope and erosion, installation of stone retainers and steps, and restoration of social trails and impacted areas.

Seyon to Spruce Trail Maintenance, Groton SF, Groton

The STC will complete 3 weeks of trail maintenance work on the Seyon to Spruce (Darling) Trail in Groton SF. In coordination with both D4 and D5 staff, the crew will make tread and grade adjustments to reduce slope, avoid wet soils, and improve sustainability on roughly 1.25 miles of the 3.0-mile long trail. The crew will incorporate sidehill trail alignments, grade reversals, and climbing turns to improve drainage and improve existing waterbars to remove stormwater from the trail. Routine corridor work will clear blowdowns, remove debris, and re-establish appropriate height and width conditions. Trail markings and signs will also be renovated. Worksites will be restored using native materials (stone, duff, coarse woody debris) according to standard trail restoration practices. Maintenance may be spread over two work seasons.

Big Deer Mountain Trail Maintenance, Groton SF, Peacham

The State Trail Crew will complete 3 weeks of trail work to maintain approximately 1.0-mile of damaged trail at Big Deer Mountain in Groton SF. Work will include replacing approx. 250 feet of aged puncheon bridges, installing minor route adjustments on approx. 2000 feet of fall line trail, incorporating positive drainage, maintaining existing waterbars, stabilizing approx. 200 feet of gully erosion, and applying standard restoration practices to repair damaged areas, social trails, and work sites.

Seyon to Spruce Trail Bridge Replacement, Groton SF, Groton

The State Trail Crew will remove and replace two deteriorating pedestrian bridge spans on the Seyon to Spruce Trail in Groton SF. The existing bridges (one 12-ft, one 16ft long, both 32-inches wide, with handrails) are constructed with untreated softwood lumber and beginning to rot and deteriorate. The bridges will be disassembled and replaced with new pressure-treated materials. The 12-foot bridge will be replaced with a 16-foot span to address undermined footings. Existing footings will be shored up to support the structure and protect the streambank. Site disturbances will be addressed through standard trail restoration practices using on-site natural materials.

Mount Pisgah South Trail Restoration, Willoughby SF, Westmore

FPR will work with partner trail crews to complete substantial and focused restoration work on approx. 1.25 miles of trail- including an excessively steep 600-foot segment- on the upper Pisgah South Trail in Willoughby State Forest. Work will incorporate trail adjustments to reroute the trail away from its current 26 degree/50% slope to more sustainable sidehill alignments that incorporate natural features, grade reversals, and switchbacks. The resulting outcomes will redirect stormwater flow, decrease erosion, and reduce trailside impacts. Existing stonework such as waterbars, retainers, and steps will be repurposed and/or retrofitted to meet existing high use (i.e. expand 18" wide steps to 32"; extend waterbar lengths, etc.). Extensive site restoration work will be completed on closed trail segments, social trails, and impacted areas, using natural stone, wood, and duff materials, consistent with standard trail restoration practices. Additional work to maintain trail segments outside of the focus area will be completed as time permits.

D5 Shelter Maintenance

FPR will work with a contractor to complete priority maintenance of backcountry shelters in District 5.

This includes replacing, in-kind, old cedar shingle, asphalt shingle, and steel roofing materials at 5 sites: Darling SP Red Trail; Darling SP Bennett Road; Willoughby SF Bald Mountain; Victory SF Umpire; and Groton SF Peacham Pond shelters. All roofs need urgent repair/replacement due to water damage, storm damage, and age. Additional work, to be completed as time permits, includes stabilizing/rebuilding foundation piers, interior/exterior staining, and constructing/installing moldering privies, picnic tables, and benches.

Groton Nature Center Trails Maintenance, Groton SF, Peacham

Consistent with the renovation of the Groton Nature Center, the State Trail Crew will complete preventative maintenance to approx. 3.0 miles of trail surrounding the Nature Center, including portions of the Nature Trail, Hosmer Brook, Coldwater Brook, Telephone, Peacham Bog, and Little Loop Trails. Work will include maintaining trail width (tread width approx. 18-24 inches, corridor width 4-8 feet) and height clearances (approx. 8-12 feet) by removing and/or trimming back new growth; removing debris (brush, blowdowns) from trail corridors and drainages; and repairing bridges, signs, and signposts.

Owl's Head Trail Maintenance, Groton SF, Peacham

A trail crew will consolidate and perform corrective maintenance of trails at the heavily impacted and eroded junction near the upper Owl's Head parking area. Work will include minor trail realignment, stone check steps, and signpost installation to optimize foot traffic and consolidate unauthorized social trails into a safe, sustainable trail intersection. Impacted areas and closed social trails will be restored with native coarse woody debris, logs, and duff according to standard trail restoration practices.

Peacham Bog Boardwalk Reconstruction, Groton SF, Peacham

The Vermont State Trail Crew will replace the existing 800-foot floating, puncheon-style 'catwalk' at Peacham Bog in Groton State Forest. The Peacham Bog Natural Area is a unique domed bog and rare natural community with many sensitive plant species. It receives a high level of use from students, naturalists, and visitors to the State Parks within Groton State Forest. To best protect the resources and ensure visitor safety, the crew will remove and replace, in-kind, the rotted puncheon with locally sourced cedar planks and replace the existing observation platform. All work will occur within the existing footprint and all debris will be removed and disposed of off-site. 4 weeks STC time; \$6000 materials cost.

Bald Mountain Trail Maintenance, Willoughby SF, Westmore

A NWSC Trail Crew will perform corrective maintenance to address tread quality and erosion on the upper Bald Mountain Telegraph and Mad Brook Trails. Approx. 5 days will be devoted to installing waterbars, grade reversals, puncheon, and rock steps on the Telegraph Trail to improve approx. 1-mile of wet, steep and/or shallow-to-bedrock trail. Approx. 5 days will be spent renovating waterbars on the Mad Brook Trail. A 2024 assessment identified 89 waterbar locations requiring maintenance. Priorities include a combination of cleaning and reshaping, extending outlet ditches, and reinforcing stone armoring. All work sites will be closed out using native materials (stone, duff, woody debris) according to standard trail restoration practices.

WSF Equestrian Parking and Trail Construction, Willoughby SF, Sutton

FPR will work with the Vermont Horse Council and a contractor to develop an overnight parking and camping area for equestrians on the west side of Willoughby SF. The former clearing will be reclaimed and improved to accommodate 2-4 horse trailers and involve clearing saplings and brush, installing durable base material for vehicles and horses, and providing basic amenities such as picnic table, mounting block, hitching rails, and manure composting bins. Additionally, an eroded section of nearby

trail will be improved by removing and reconfiguring an existing culvert, installing drainage stone, and adding appropriate surface material.

Missing Person – Maria Young stated that the specifics of the incident are unknown. Law enforcement is investigating. She was extremely cautious in describing potential scenarios. As an aside, Maria mentioned a planned National Guard wilderness training in the area in early February.

Camps Update – NEKGMC Vice President and GMC Camps Committee Chair Paul Trojano reported the following. Paul gave a brief history of the Wheeler Pond camps discussing the GMC acquisition of the site. He discussed history of both camps, the demolition of Beaver Dam and its replacement with Jean Haigh. From the recent bequest to the GMC, the two Wheeler cabins will be the beneficiaries of \$55,000. The funds will provide for needed improvements at Hadsel Mares and new wood storage facilities at Jean Haigh. Paul provided driving directions and parking advice. He welcomed questions on the camps. Paul requested Wheeler days for the section to move wood. He hopes to work on the wood situation in February. The gnomes are being addressed, they are “armed and dangerous.” This comment was intended facetiously and referred to a trail adjacent to the GMC’s Wheeler property. It was mentioned that Bill Mares, the husband of Hadsel Mares recently died. Separately, according to the GMC Board report, Wheeler work will also include handicapped access improvements for the Jean Haigh Cabin.

Trails Update – NEKGMC Trails Coordinator Kevin Williamson reported not a lot happening at present, it being the middle of the winter. Pisgah South, Moose Bog, Victory Basin, and at least two other trails are in play (needing new caretakers for 2025). But its early. First effort will be with existing trail monitors, to determine if there is any desire for changing assignments, before offering these openings to the public.

Outings Overview – NEKGMC Outings Coordinator Susan Winsor spoke of hiking the Golden Road and that she experienced the nice new privy. No views, but its located at the base of Umpire. The section conducted the 5th anniversary Jean Haigh Mem Hike at Mt. Hor, and it required snowshoes. Susan lead a Mt. Gore hike before the roads were closed. There were good turnouts on both First Day hikes. There were spontaneous Bluff and North Branch. outings. John is interested in a Stone Dam hike in Victory Basin, but he does not wish to lead it. There are two ways to access this destination. John will do a Mount Laraway hike in February (willing to lead). Kevin Williamson also mentioned the Victory Hill hike, which is longer. There was a discussion of trail maintenance on one of the trails to Stone Dam via Victory Hill This was John’s first NEKGMC hike and Jean was not happy due to the snowshoeing conditions. There was discussion of the Black Fly Trail (not a fully established official trail. and with limited markers) over Goodwin.

Membership Update – In the absence of an NEKGMC Membership Coordinator John Predom reviewed the membership situation for September through November. He did not have December data as of the meeting date. For the past three months, 29 persons were added or renewed, including family memberships. Membership is going to be switched to an annual renewal system for everyone, as noted in the Main Club discussion. Victor will be assuming the NEK Membership Coordinator’s role. At the moment, the Main Club lacks a staff person assigned to the membership portfolio.

Other Business – Next meeting will be March 30. As for the location. John will check out the Island Pond Welcome Center. Paul Trojano will lead a Kettle Pond trip on a date to be determined. Its not hard and the elevation is flat. There was discussion of a moonlight hike at Owls’ Head. Susan Winsor said to get in touch with her on that proposal.

Adjourn – Paul moved to adjourn, and Victor seconded at 2:44 P.M.

Submitted by Michael Chernick, NEKGMC Secretary