

Winter Quarterly Meeting, January 22, 2023,

NorthWoods Stewardship Center- East Charlestown, Vermont

Call to Order – NEK GMC President John Predom called the meeting to order at 1:10 P.M., thanking the volunteers. He spoke of volunteering as a hike leader and referencing the GMC “Hike Leaders’ Guide.” John emphasized that a trip need not be in the NEK. Kevin Williamson noted a trip is not limited to hiking (mentioning cross country skiing, snowshoeing, canoeing, and biking). Cathi Brooks mentioned the availability of taking a first aid course with Andrea Kane, with section subsidization.

Secretary’s Report – NEKGMC Secretary Michael Chernick highlighted the minutes of the October 1, 2022 fall quarterly meeting.

MOTION [Brooks/Barnes] moved to approve the secretary’s minutes as submitted.

Approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report – NEKGMC Treasurer Angela Smith submitted the following report, which Michael Chernick summarized in Angela’s absence.

Northeast Kingdom Section ~ Green Mountain Club

Quarterly Financial Statement

As of January 14, 2023

Operating Account

Beginning Balance (as of 09/30/22) \$5,136.72

Income

Dues Sharing

July (posted 10/18/22) \$161.25

August (posted 10/20/22) \$173.75

September (posted 11/15/22) \$111.25

October (posted 11/15/22) \$183.75

Expenses

Local Donut LLC \$124.00

Cathi Brooks (Deposit on T-shirts) \$305.00

John Predom (Coffee) \$26.50

Kingdom Embroidery (Remainder on T-shirts) \$305.00

Ending Balance \$5,006.22

Certificate of Deposit

CD#1 ...4489/Matures 01/12/2023 @.40% \$1,593.99

CD#2 ...3785/Matures 06/27/2023 @.40% \$1,755.16

Grand Total All Monies \$8,355.37

Angela Smith ~ Treasurer

Beth Barnes inquired on the mechanics of dues sharing and a short discussion on the reports from Main Club ensued.

Director's Report – NEKGMC Director Cathi Brooks reported on the most recent Main Club Board meeting, conducted via Zoom. The Club continues to follow any State COVID guidelines. A new 5-year strategic plan is in development. The GMC's auditing firm recently issued a clean audit. Finances are looking good. The Club's revenue is tracking above the 2022 level compared to this point last year. The Club continues to offer supportive activities for Ridgeline Society members. The Capital Campaign's goal of \$4,000,000.00 was achieved. The Herrick Building reconstruction project at Waterbury headquarters will start during 2023. Despite challenges of inflation and supplies, the original Herrick Building budget remains as the Board adopted. Construction on the new Wheeler Pond Camp continues, as well as renovations on Hadsel Mares. Northern LT construction continues as part of a five-year effort to bring conditions on this segment of the trail to the level of the federally protected segment to the south. The 2022 field season was extremely busy catching up on the COVID related backlog. Finding crew leaders was challenging, but ultimately successful. The GMC closed on the Judevine parcel and transferred 1.25 acres of the LT to state, with the Club's retention of a trail easement. The GMC and the Watermaan Fund held an outdoor stewardship session on Mt Mansfield.

An extensive membership survey was recently completed, and Cathi Brooks distributed a copy for viewing. According to the survey, the Club's membership is becoming older. Key topics on members' perspective on participation in GMC activities were surveyed. For example, 92 percent of survey respondents thought the LT was important. One interesting point, some members did not find section membership was important.

Cathi Brooks reported a much-needed new road sign is being installed at the car entrance to the Waterbury headquarters on Route 100.

Closer to home, she reaffirmed the new camp at Wheeler Pond will be named in Jean's honor. Six new parking spaces are being constructed across the road from the camps.

This past summer's LT Day, Club-wide, raised over \$49,000. The NEKGMC again was the most successful LT Day fundraiser. This year the LT Day is scheduled for Aug 19. The Burrows Trail reconstruction project on Camel's Hump continues this summer as a cooperative effort of several trail-focused organizations. The 2022 effort resulted in extensive trail improvements with more planned for 2023.

Appointment of Outings Coordinator – Susan Winsor has volunteered to serve as the NEKGMC's Outing's Coordinator. John Predom listed recent section trips. He reminded everyone that leaders have discretion to determine whether a participant is equipped and able to participate in a hike. He also asked for volunteers and stressed the option of S.L.O.T.H. (Sauntering Ladies on Therapeutic Hikes) (less stressful) events.

NorthWoods Stewardship Center (NWSC) – NorthWoods Executive Director Maria Young, today's meeting host, thanked everyone for supporting the organization, which was established in 1989. NWSC has approximately 15 full-time staff and expands to over 100 in the summer, including youth crews.

The organization hosts school groups, a summer camp, and is looking to leverage conservation experience from youth and adults. She commented the NWSC experience for young people is very meaningful. NWSC is committed to fostering the next generation of conservation and stewardship leadership.

The NWSC headquarters site in East Charleston encompasses 1500 acres, including forestry demonstration projects. NWSC seeks to eliminate economic and social justice barriers to participation, in its activities. The new conservation barn recently opened. Looking ahead, the organization will continue to invest in trails. A new main lodge entrance and bringing the lodge into ADA compliance is planned. Linked to the ADA proposal is a plan for an all-person trail. The Camel's Hump collaboration with GMC (Burrows Trail) continues. The NWSC also participates in the Kingdom Heritage Trail (KHT) Partnership hike.

This year, NWSC will partner with the White Mountain National Forest on the Franconia/Saco loops, as well work in the Green Mountain National Forest and at Cow Mountain Pond. There will be locally based crews, and their assignments will include work in the Nulhegan Refuge. NWSC has constructed many of the refuge's boardwalks and has work on the Northern Canoe Trail. There was further discussion of camping sites that have involved NWSC's construction participation. The second edition of the "Northeast Kingdom Mountain Trail Guide" has been issued under NWSC's exclusive auspices.

NEKGMC has volunteered at the annual Westmore Challenge. Maria mentioned the NEK Challenge Facebook page. NWSC has now hired a full-time communications person. 2022 was the first offering of the Jean Haigh scholarship for the Westmore Challenge. Ami English was the 2022 recipient of this scholarship.

Maria Young stated there is not a formal NWSC volunteer program, nor is one immediate planned.

Forest, Parks, and Recreation (FPR) Update – FPR Recreation Specialist Luke O'Brien thanked everyone for helping to keep the trails' program alive. FPR is now focused on state trails' resources. He appreciated reports on trail problems posted on Facebook. Luke has just received news of projects to be funded in 2023, but there were not as many as he had hoped. Unfortunately, the financial request focused on staff and limits project opportunities. There is some funding for crew projects, including two weeks of NEK roving crews, supporting work on Bluff Ridge. The boardwalk at Brighton State Park will be replaced. There will be work on the Peacham Bog Trail and improved access for a fishing access.

There are new recommendations for limiting tower access for safety reasons, but miscellaneous safety repairs to multiple towers is planned. The roof on the Bald Tower has been replaced. To complete all the tower work initially proposed in the NEK would cost \$2.8 million. This amount will be revised to below \$2 million. Bald's construction is based on the 1933 design and Monadnock's and Burke's were built on the 1937 design. Initially major revisions will be made at the Burke and Bear Mountain towers. Treads will be replaced on Bald's tower. Luke is hoping the Bald tread project can be achieved through volunteer-community participation.

This past field season, Luke oversaw the renovation of seven lodging shelters, largely as a forestry staff project. He is trying to develop a funding source for trail work on Burke as well as the Long Pond Trail on Bald. Luke suggested a couple of trail maintenance outings with the NEKGMC. There will be a bunch of trail work at the south end of Lake Willoughby. CRAGVT (a rock climbing organization) will probably be granted corridor management status for rock climbing on Black Mountain. The KHT (formerly Champion) Corridor Management plan is up for overall review in two years. FPR is starting to think ahead on the specifics of the next corridor proposal. The Plan is scheduled for signing in 2025.

There is a growing awareness of human impact on wildlife, but Luke also pushes back a little bit in the

belief that humans can be separated from nature. The key is finding the right balance. There might be a hard end goal on the number of trails, whether prospective or to stop at the current number. He is trying to remove all bias and determine the impact of all trails from a landscaping and site perspective.

Camps – Paul Trojano, the Main Club Camps Committee Chair (and the NEKGMC Vice President) reported, as had Cathi Brooks, on the Main Club Board's approval, at its June 2022 Annual Meeting, of a motion to name the new Wheeler Pond Camp in Jean Haigh's memory. But the specific name will be decided later this winter. Plywood stacking at Wheeler Pond has been completed. At the next Camps Committee meeting, he will advocate for expanding the existing Wheeler firewood storage area and to build a new one, after the new camp is completed. But, he will also suggest that the stored high-quality wood would be limited for heating (and not outside pit fires). Luke O'Brien suggested securing separate camp firewood for the outdoor pits. Renovations for repairing Hadsel Mares should be finished by Feb 1. The GMC, ideally, would modify the two camps to offer ADA compliant.

Luke commented on the need for a tenting site proposal on the KHT. One site is on Weyerhaeuser land another on Sweet Tree. Weyerhaeuser has a resource concern. Sweet Tree may be more willing, but the U.S. Forest Service holds an easement, which may prove problematic.

Trails – NEK Trails Adoption Coordinator Kevin Williamson reports, assuming all current adopters return this coming season, he is optimistic that nearly full coverage will be available. The only certain problem is the Wheeler Pond Trail. The meeting's attendees discussed the crossing at Beaver Dam. In response to an inquiry, Kevin Williamson reviewed a listing of trail adopter duties. He stated he hopes to arrange a spring trail workday at Cow Mountain Pond. Maria Young mentioned that bringing out a group of young students to perform trail work requires adult supervision.

Membership – (John Predom reporting for NEKGMC Membership Coordinator Beth Barnes who needed to leave the meeting early). At present, the NEKGMC has 296 enrolled members. Beth is working with Discover Newport to list hiking as a local heritage activity. Jesse Holden is interested in an all-day KHT event in October. But this would cause a Moose season conflict. The members had questions on insurance coverage and other details. Permitting from GMC, the town, and FPR would be required.

NEK Appreciation Day – Cathi Brooks wishes to recognize a few section volunteers at an annual section event. The future of the Main Club's Volunteer Appreciation Day is uncertain. She is working with Kingdom Embroidery in Lyndon to design a gift for the honorees. Luke would love to support a Volunteer Appreciation Day. The event could feature information on trail training activities. No budget for the event has been approved. It was mentioned that April is Nation Volunteer Month. The section decided on Sunday April 16, and a committee will be developed, including Andrea Kane and Luke O'Brien, to organize the event.

NEKGMC Membership Incentives – John Predom had posed the question whether after an individual has attended a set number of trips a membership would be required. Attempting to incentivize membership was discussed with different approaches. Maximizing membership promotion at more opportunities both in person and digital, such as at organized events or trailheads was discussed. In response to this challenge to increase the percentage of hike participants, who are section members, several persons offered written comments as follows:

Paul Trojano: I think if someone who wasn't a member came on group hikes, a gentle prompting about membership will either coax them into joining or stop joining group hikes altogether. The macro concept to me, aside from all your poignant comments, is how to sustain our section both financially and with "young blood".

Cathi Brooks: Very well said, I joined years ago when I was looking for people to hike with and loved the camaraderie I found also. I had supported AMC for several years, but switched after finding GMC. I have a good friend who does pamphlets for groups including Kingdom Trails. I also liked the idea of having contact info on maps.

Andrea Kane: There was a lot of exuberance around the topic of non-members going on hikes, and I never had a chance to finish my thought in the meeting today, so I want to be clear I initially joined the GMC out of obligation to support the trails financially, rather than a desire to hook up with hiking partners. Then I had young kids, and I started a GMC Young Adventurer's Club for the Bread Loaf Section. Then I heard of an opening on the publications committee and that fit with the freelance writing I was doing at the time. Then we moved back to the NEK and Jean roped me in with her charm. (I believe her words to me were, "Why haven't you joined the NEK Section yet?") But the reason I stay involved to this day – and look forward to a long future with the section – is because of all of you. My point is that there are lots of reasons people get involved and stay involved, but whatever brings them to one of our events – be it a meeting, an Eat N Greet, or a hike, I don't think it makes any sense to turn them away for not yet being members. Especially when the sense of camaraderie with the section is so strong. How could they resist your charms? WWJD? (What would Jean do?) I say we approach every interaction with the assumption they do want to get involved, then keep 'em coming, hope they have a fun and memorable time, get their email addresses, invite them to take a role with this or that ("Have you led a hike yet? Oh wait, are you a member yet?") and if they still don't join, let them know their dues are overdue. I don't have everyone's email who was at the meeting, but wanted to be sure at least you all knew what I meant.

Sue Winsor: Very well said I tend to agree. I lead hikes to get people the experience of hiking. I myself did not become a member until after numerous hikes. Promoting on the hikes is good and I do that. I wonder if a simple handout with levels of membership and some of benefits would be helpful.

Invitation to Jean Haigh Descendants – It was decided that the first stay at the new Wheeler Pond Camp should be offered to Jean Haigh's family with recognition of Jean at a dedicatory event.

Taylor Series – A Zoom facilitated virtual Taylor event will be held on February 16 hosted by our section. **The 'American Alps' in Washington's Northern Cascades;** Adam and Ruthie LaRoche of Franklin, Vermont, spent ten days in August hiking and backpacking in Washington State's northernmost wilderness, the North Cascades. .

Next meeting – The next NEKGMC meeting (the Annual Meeting) will take place on Sunday March 26 at the Burke Mountain Club in East Burke, time and pre-meeting outing to be determined.

Adjournment– The meeting adjourned by mutual consent, without a motion, at 3:58 PM.