

Property Overview, Regional Significance, and Management Summary

The Old Meeting House Hill road property located between Highland street and rte. 119 is an excellent acquisition for the town of Townsend. The property is approximately 236 acres in size. The property can be described as sloping gently from north to south, and has rolling terrain. The soils vary widely throughout the property, because of the rolling terrain. The low lying areas are poorly drained to somewhat poorly drained. The higher ground is described as being somewhat well drained to well drained. In terms of forestry use, this property has been well managed for timber production, and we see a well-stocked, healthy, productive forest thriving, due to past management practices. The property has an abundance of white pine and mixed hardwoods growing at various stages of development. This is an important concept to consider when thinking about overall forest health and bio-diversity. Having a number of different tree species at various stages of development, from seedlings (6-36" tall) to saplings (1-3" in diameter) to poles (4-10" in diameter) to sawtimber sizes (11" and up in diameter) is critical in terms of overall forest health and diversity. Long term sustainable forestry plays a critical role in maintaining diverse forest stands.

The property also serves as important habitat for wildlife. In southern New England these larger parcels are continuously being chopped up and lost to development. The variety of different stands found on the property play different roles in terms of habitat for various species of wildlife. The property contains stands of oak and mixed hardwoods, red maple swamps, red pine, and a white pine / hemlock stand. There is also a small grassy, wetland area found in the central portion of the lot. The largest stand on the property is an uneven-aged white pine and mixed hardwood type. From invertebrates to birds to small mammals and large browsers, such as deer, these types of large, open tracts of forest land are becoming more and more critical to wildlife, as they continue to disappear.

The property also serves as an important recreation area for the residents of Townsend. There is a good parking area at the end of the cul-de-sac on Meeting house hill road. The old town road that continues to the south toward rte. 119 serves as a trail head for hiking trails that exist on the property. More hiking trails could be constructed on this property in the future if the town desires. Log landing areas, and skidder trails often serve as good parking areas and hiking access after a forestry operation has been completed. Very little atv traffic has been noticed, which is unusual for a piece of property located in a populated setting.

In terms of forestry operations, the property is somewhat difficult to access, more so on the Eastern side. This is due to a wetland area that appears to originate from the red maple swamp in the north western section of the property. (Stand 3) The wetland is a long narrow strip that runs from the north to south, and develops a more defined channel

the further south it goes. It finally develops into a brook, and flows off of the property to the south. The town is interested in keeping some of the property in a “forever wild” type of setting, meaning no timber harvesting is to be conducted on those acres. This section of land that divides to the property seems to be a logical choice to serve as the “forever wild” area, due to its unique features. A road would then have to be constructed coming off of rte. 119 to gain access to the eastern side of the property. The eastern side of the property also has a few small intermittent streams running from north to south. Care needs to be taken when accessing this side of the property, in terms of timing a timber harvest. Harvesting should take place during a dry summer or during frozen conditions in the winter time, as to cause as little soil disturbance as possible. The stands on the western side of the property are easier to access due to their proximity to Meeting house hill road. The soils on this side of the property also appear to be well drained. Timber harvesting in these stand could take place in wetter conditions.

There are currently a few large, undeveloped, wooded tracts that abut the property. If possible the town should look into purchasing outright or at least purchasing the development rights to these parcels. The few hundred acres acquired would make the Old Meeting House Hill property more valuable now and for future generations, as well as greatly improve access.

Implementing this management plan will ensure that the health of this wonderful forested property is maintained and enhanced. Please see the individual stand descriptions and stand recommendations for more detailed information about the property.