

Kassia Randzio, Chair
Carolyn Grodinsky
Fabienne Pattison
Dan Dickerson
Shelby Perry

Geoff Beyer, Parks Director
Alec Ellsworth, Parks Caretaker

Parks Commission
Tuesday November 19, 2019 / 6PM
Meeting Location: Montpelier Police Station Conference Room

Meeting Minutes

Commissioners: Kassia, Shelby, Fabienne, Dan, Carolyn

Staff: Geoff, Alec

Public: Dona Bate, John J Akielaszek, Eric Scharnberg, Judy Stermer Parrish, Jill Olsen, Chuck Eldred, Nolan Langweil, Kip Roberts, Kevin Mather, Caitlin Belcher, Tony Focos, Zack Porter, Celeste Porter, Meg and Heather Voisin, Cail Sanders Casserly

6:00 November 19 agenda - Shelby - motioned to shorten Pump track discussion by 5-10 mins. Carolyn second. Unanimous.

November 12 minutes - Carolyn - motioned to approve. Fabienne seconded. Unanimous.

6:03 Public Comment

Dona. Constituent (Liz Harrington) interested in a dog park, and interested in bringing together a small committee. Recommendation: Connect with Geoff to learn about history/background. Seek opportunities to engage in Parks Commission's ongoing and upcoming Greenprint discussions.

6:05 North Branch Trail Construction (staff w/ MAMBA)

Background: Spring 2018, the Parks Commission approved a proposal from MAMBA to build new multi-use trails in North Branch Park. Construction began summer 2018, continued fall 2019, with plans to be completed spring 2020. The trails are quickly becoming popular with mountain bikers, though some portions of trail construction will pose challenges for use by hikers and XC skiers.

- Update on current status/progress of 2019 trail construction (5 mins)
 - Communications suggestions (MOU):
 - Single, identified point of contact
 - Mutually agreeable list of upcoming milestones (ex. when machines will be in the woods)
 - Mutually agreed upon process and expectations that reflect the dynamic nature of trail building
 - Coordination on biking trail closures (clear signage - ex. when trails are closed to bikes, but not other users, etc)
- Review and discuss staff/MAMBA proposal for mitigating construction challenges to ensure multiuse intent, addressing walkability, XC ski access, etc. (15 mins)
 - Access for Multi-Users
 - Walkability - MAMBA has an idea of what a multi-use trail is that may be different than what the Parks Commission understood multi-use to mean. Multi-use

- concerns have been made clear to Sinuosity (trail builders) and everything to come will be less steep
 - MOU to outline better communication before and during the building process
 - Within the framework of RTP funding and permit requirements MAMBA will facilitate go-arounds as part of the 2020 build/and older builds as needed
 - MAMBA will support Parks-led plan for additional go-arounds as needed
 - Grooming/XC Access
 - MAMBA is interested in fundraising for a machine that could groom the NB trails that are too narrow for a snowmobile - they have volunteers available to help with the grooming as well
 - Look for opportunities for new groomer to be used in other locations
 - Parks staff should identify areas where winter grooming will deviate from summer trails
 - Within parameters of funding and permits MAMBA will help prep new trails for grooming where possible
 - This is also an opportunity for parks to communicate with parks users about proper use of winter trails for all users
 - Standardize signage
 - MAMBA Stewardship Activities
 - Trail maintenance and monitoring conditions
 - Signage needs updating (hard to see from a moving bike), will coordinate with staff
 - Implementing effective closures
 - will explore another kiosk, but the one on Cummings was donated
 - Kids Trail
 - MAMBA and Staff and Sinuosity jointly recommend moving the kids trail
 - The proposed site is an existing trail by the river and proposed pump track location that could be modified for safe sight lines
 - Opportunity to improve an existing trail with outside funding
 - Permit amendment is not done, waiting for approval from commission to pursue permitting
 - timeline for permitting is ~about a month
 - DECISION - punt to next meeting, since timeline is flexible
- Review and discuss MAMBA's plan for 2020 trail construction, including location, timing, and design (10 mins)
 - Map
 - 2018 was Cummings Street climb, Roll call climb and downhill (steep one)
 - 2019 was two connections, trail A climb and lower trail D (deviated from original plan due to time constraints)
 - 2020 will be remaining orange trails on map, these differ from original proposal because the trail builder has done some due diligence about what's on the ground and that changes

- Signage will be very important - the trail network is complicated and users may get lost, also for emergency responders - it can be hard to find people when they call
- Switchbacks are concerning for sightlines
 - MAMBA indicates that these switchbacks are advantageous for seeing coming pedestrians and other users because that built in parallel trail allows you to see oncoming traffic
- Does parks commission need to approve new map?
 - Yes, and probably should wait until staff has walked it
- Density of trails may be in conflict with with easement on NB Park, which is to protect wildlife habitat
 - MAMBA believes that these trails are substantially in the same place, and do not require new approval or new permits
 - Old map on parks website is a significant variation from the map presented today, so parks commission needs to verify which map was voted on before we can determine if the new map needs to be approved
 - MAMBA would like to go back to MOU and get a more solid agreement outlined and then bring that to commission

6:50 Expanded winter fat tire biking in Hubbard and North Branch Parks (Kip Roberts, MAMBA)

Background: The Parks Commission temporarily approved winter fat tire biking on select Hubbard and North Branch trails winter 2018-2019. MAMBA will present a proposal requesting that the Commission permanently allow winter fat tire biking. (See two attachments for more information: proposal and map)

- MAMBA presentation of proposed map, policies, anticipated costs, partnership (5 mins)
 - Grooming is the same as for XC Skiing, trail must be hard so bikes don't go through
 - MAP PROVIDED (Add to Minutes!)
 - Trail names are not labeled on the trail, so numbers were added to laminated signs in the park and intersections were numbered with signs to help in the event of emergencies
 - NB Park trails are similar to what was requested for last year, added some connectors, roll call uphill and downhill, and Gould Hill, and dropped short loop
 - Hubbard Park they are asking for the Tower Loop, seven fireplaces, and then parks connector to NB Park
 - On parks connector there is a deeded easement from the park to North Park Drive, then a verbal agreement to parallel North Park Drive with the groomer
 - CHECK EASEMENT LANGUAGE TO ENSURE BIKING IS A PERMITTED USE
 - Last winter biking in North Branch was very positive, skiers come up on you faster
 - SnowDog groomed trails will be very narrow, and probably not appropriate for skiing
 - Would limit trails to bikers and walkers only
 - SnowDog could groom some trails that are steep to make it easier for parks groomer to get up
 - might clear up some confusion on the Nature Center field loop by making it clear where the bikes go
 - SnowDog would be MAMBA-owned, and would like a use-agreement with parks staff

- Lower Long Loop would be closed to bikes in summer and open to bikes in the winter
 - signage needs to be very clear
 - connecting the parks for multi-use
- Recommended dates: December 1 - March 15 (weather permitting) and extendable to March 30th weather permitting
 - Target dates, these are flexible around snow cover/conditions
- Last year fat-tire tracks were everywhere, including the pond to tower trail, and this proposal could potentially intensify conflicts
 - Could trail be moved to Nature Center trail to provide a loop without adding user conflict
 - this trail goes through a deer yard and because of a deed restriction it cannot be groomed
 - Last year MAMBA reps said park connection was needed to be able to ride for an hour, but now that's no longer an issue. What is the appeal of this new network?
 - More connections to other trails, by going through the park to other roads that access other trails networks
 - Introducing more people to the parks, and people are getting exercise
- Existing signage in Hubbard Park regarding bikes is limited or missing, so adding signage about what is permitted where might help
 - adding signage around permitted and restricted uses is sorely needed
- Staff plan for grooming, maintenance, allocating expenses (5 mins)
- Questions/discussion (15 mins)
- Possible decision (5 mins) -
 - Which trails to open to winter biking
 - North Branch Park
 - Dan moves to approve fat tire biking in NB Park as shown in the presented map, Fabienne seconds. Contingent upon having clear signage, and some education around avoiding the trails being used by the ski program being run out of the Nature Center
 - Motion passes
 - Hubbard Park
 - Carolyn moves to allow winter biking in Hubbard Park as a pilot, contingent on an appropriate communications plan and signage which has been shared with the parks commission and approved by Alec and Geoff, Dan seconds, Carolyn retracts
 - Dan moves that we direct parks Staff and MAMBA to put together a communications plan and return to the December 17th meeting for approval of winter biking as shown in the map dated October 2019 and presented at today's meeting. Carolyn seconds.
 - Motion passes
- Comments from Zack Porter - Would like to share some observations from experiences on the trails as food for thought. The kids trail proposed for the "invasives trail" is a very beautiful spot adjacent to a beautiful wetland and it would be a shame if we were to fill or damage that wetland in any way. Perhaps there is a location that is already heavily impacted that could be looked at

as a more wildlife friendly alternative. As somebody who enjoys North Branch Park a lot, he has been disturbed by the size and nature of the trails that are being built there. They are big and “industrial strength” and there may have been some miscommunications or misunderstanding about what was being built, but they are not very inviting for people who are not riding on bikes. They are designed for high speed recreation. It is a calm and quiet park, and the trails are not conducive to that calm and quiet. The trail density is a concern, the number of trails that are proposed are shrinking and fragmenting the park. A deeply incised trail through the woods can have an impact not only on wildlife, but also on the trees themselves. Getting people outside is great, but adding too many people to the park is not helping wildlife.

- Other public comments: The proposed kids trail location is next to a significant wetland, and there may not be room for the kids trail there. We should not hurt that wetland.

Cummings Street Pump Track proposal (John Hollar, MAMBA)

Background: The Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association (MAMBA) is proposing to construct a bicycle pump track on a city-owned lot on Cummings Street across from the Cummings Street apartments. (See attached proposal for more information)

- TABLED UNTIL NEXT MEETING

7:50 Staff Update

- Discussion/Questions on written update provided by staff (5 mins)
 - Discussion of people congregating at the base of the trail to the park behind the statehouse
 - Discussion has been had with capitol police, staff and police have limited authority
 - people are harassing runners who may now avoid that section of the trail
 - TABLED - Staff will continue to work on this and provide updates
 - Great to see progress being made on the greenprint!
- Proposed MOU for working with partners and contractors in city parks - TABLED

7:55 Budget

- Review and discuss staff proposal
 - Budget determined by submitting everything that parks might want and then is discussed at budget congress in early December
 - Big increases are personnel costs (half time person goes up to full time), enchanted forest income decreases, re-allocating VISTA member, and more training opportunities for staff (under tools and operating supplies)
 - Expenses shown for FY 19, but not 20 or 21. Showing expenses makes the budget easier to understand.
 - Maybe making the increase in staff training a separate line item might make it more compelling, especially with a lot of new staff
 - Add a column to show % change, to show that the majority of change is new staff person
 - Advocacy needed to city council - this is a good opportunity to engage allies (MAMBA and others)

- Carolyn will head some outreach around the value of the parks and especially the added personnel in cooperation with Geoff and Alec
- Fab is resigning from her position because she is moving out of Montpelier, but plans to continue to be involved as a volunteer.
- Add grooming in another city to December Agenda
 - Geoff will explore partners and legality

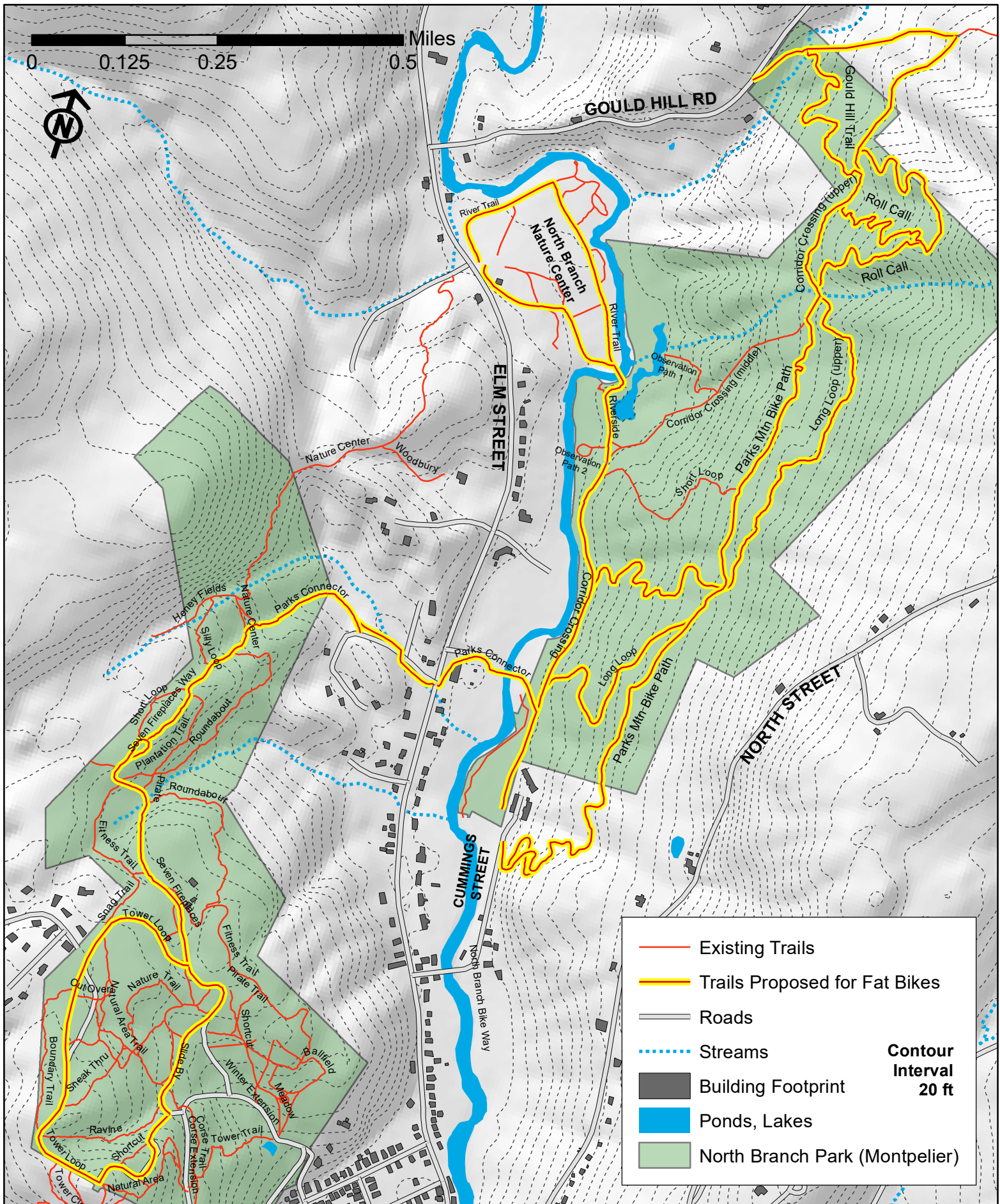
8:35 Adjourn

Unfinished Business

- Hubbard Park vegetation management
- Hubbard road mitigation
- North Branch pump track
- ADA improvements to Hubbard Park
- Budget
- Spring Hollow easement opportunity
- Kids mountain bike trail location
- Hubbard fat tire biking

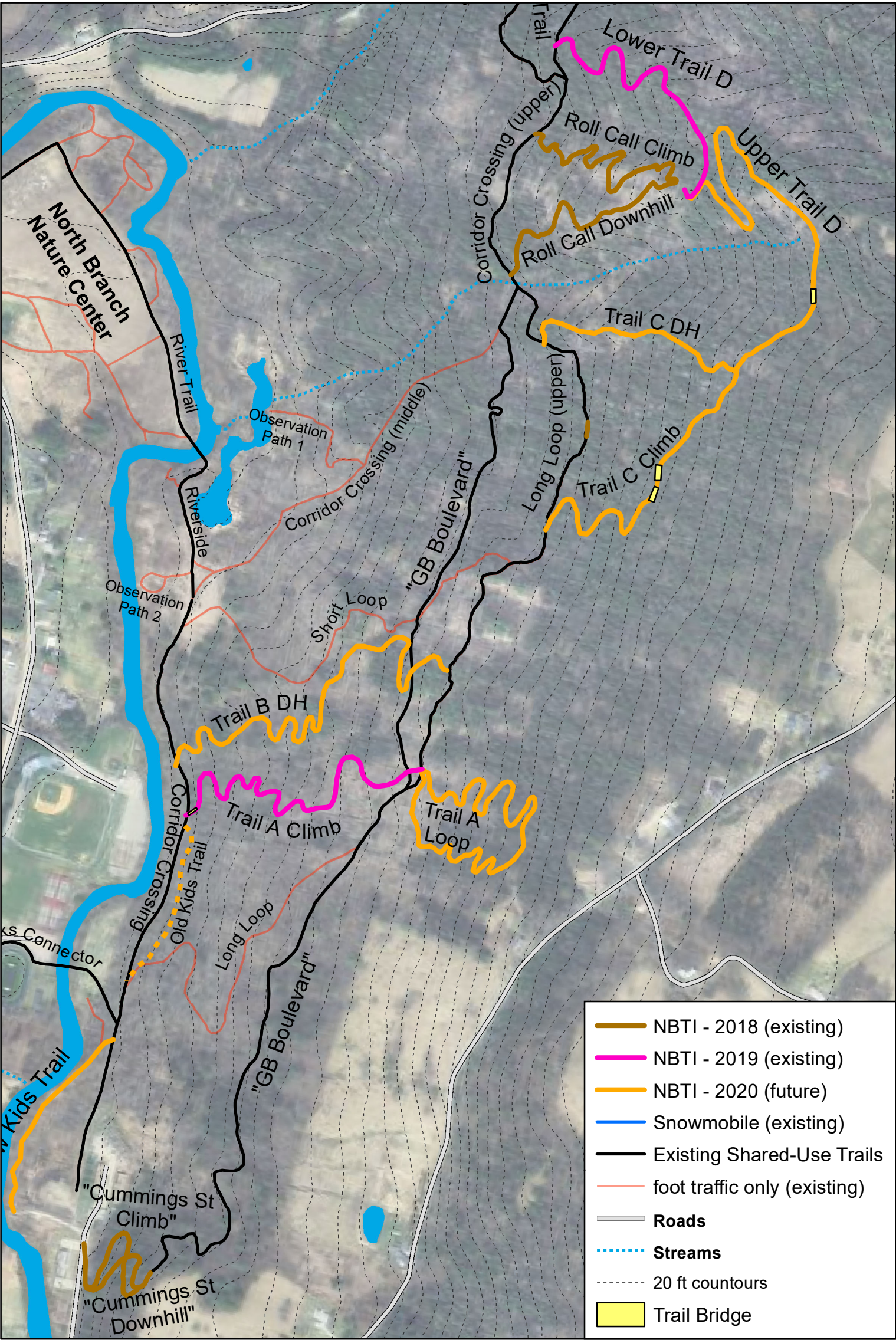
Policies in Progress

- Finalize memorial policy
- MOU for groups doing work in city parks (standards/policies)



Proposed trails for Winter Fat Biking in Montpelier Parks

Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association - Updated October 2019



North Branch Trails Initiative - Existing and Future Trails



Montpelier Area Mountain Bike Association
For planning purposes only - this is not a survey
Updated November 2019

