HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the May 2019 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last submission in early March 2019.

* HMCA Director John Kohler died this spring. John had been on the Board less than a year, and had been working on ideas for winter activities. His passing was unexpected and we feel the loss.
* On March 2, HMCA and BEEC co-hosted an animal tracking event at Hogback with professional tracker George Leoniak. Almost 20 people participated, some coming from as far as Bennington and Westminster.
* In late March, the Trail Committee hiked to the true Hogback summit and marked several trees for potential removal to open summer views of Mt Olga (the fire tower) and the Massachusetts mountain range to the southeast.
* On April 28, Alex Wells of the Vermont Center for Ecostudies (VCE) led a hike to a vernal pool and demonstrated pool monitoring techniques. The event was co-sponsored by VCE, the Southern Vermont Natural History Museum, and HMCA.
* On May 6, HMCA Directors Todd, Widness, and Whiting and HPC Commissioners Purcell and Nevins joined Vermont Land Trust Stewardship Manager Jennifer Garrett on a bushwhacking hike around the southern portion of the conservation area. We explored the section of forest south of the fire tower that had been identified in the Biodiversity Inventory as Rich Northern Hardwoods. Many early spring flowers were in bloom there, including Blue Cohosh, Red Trilium, Yellow Violet, Spring Beauty, Trout Lily, and Saxifrage.
* On Monday, May 6, Ed Metcalfe informed the HMCA and HPC that an oil leak had occurred on his property at the red house that is situated between the gift shop and the distillery. The spill had been discovered on Saturday, May 4, and on Sunday, May 5, an expert recommended by the state visited the site and began preparing a mitigation plan. The oil has leaked downslope onto Rim Run (which is used as part of the VAST Trail and as a hiking trail). The conservation area boundary is just downslope from spill area.
* Plans for Marlboro Elementary School’s Hogback Day on May 31 are firming up. This will be the tenth year of MES Hogback Day. A special recognition of that milestone is planned.
* The new web site section on education has been completed and is now online.
* The multi-organization effort to develop a joint email list for promoting nature-themed activities has finally borne fruit. The Windham County Natural Resources Conservation District has agreed to maintain a joint email list and issue announcements twice a month.  All local town conservation commissions and nature-related organizations have been invited to submit announcements about their programs, talks, and tours for inclusion in the twice-a-month emails. HMCA has already submitted our spring and summer events, which were included in the first email.