HMCA Activities Update

by Diana Todd

for sharing at the November 2018 meeting of the HPC

A summary of what HMCA has been doing in the interval since the last submission in early September, 2018.

* Trail Committee: Marlboro College professor Todd Smith contacted us to see if we had a project that college students could tackle as part of the college’s community service day on September 27. Mike Purcell and Malcolm Moore worked with Todd to organize a project to paint the “Castle” (the lift operator/ski patrol building at the top of the main T-bar lift line). The exterior has been painted and looks great!
* Charley Eiseman submitted his second progress report about the Biodiversity Inventory he is conducting. He has finished his spring and summer site work. Included in his submission was a map showing his GPS tracks. He has indeed covered every corner of the Conservation Area! This winter he will do animal tracking. By late winter or early spring he will submit his final report.
* Jack and Diana went on a buckthorn hunt on Oct 22, focusing on the sites where we removed tree-sized buckthorns earlier this summer, and where Charley Eiseman had reported finding and uprooting invasive plants. We found only three small buckthorns, a very encouraging sign.
* ESH project. Four work days were scheduled
  + Sept 22 - High winds made it feel unsafe to be felling trees, even the modest sized ones on the Practice Slope, so the six-person volunteer work crew opted to do a bit of trail work instead. We walked the Cross Mountain Trail to the Bishop Trail, clearing blowdowns and whacking back overgrown ferns along the way. At the older, smaller, uphill Bishop cellar hole, we stopped and cleared fallen trees and brush and removed some decades-old beer cans and bottles. We returned via the Rim Run, doing modest trail work as needed.
  + Oct 7 - A very efficient four-person crew made dramatic progress in clearing the big copse still covering the bottom of the Practice Slope.
  + Oct 21 - A three-person crew finished up work on the bottom copse, leaving some nice oak specimen trees as well as the young spruce. Blueberries were observed coming in thickly along the section near the Tower Trail that was cleared last year.
  + Nov. 3 - Because the work on the Practice Slope was done, the three-person volunteer crew decided to spend the morning visiting all three slopes that have been cut, and the two that are scheduled to be cut next. We found only one invasive plant - a large multi-trunked buckthorn growing on the Practice Slope. The growth on the Great White Way is ideal - a perfect example of rejuvenated early successional habitat. The Meadow has some nice patches of ESH, but also large swaths of tree-inhibiting hay-scented fern, which was already there before we initiated cutting. The Practice Slope has some areas of very thin soil and ledge, which only supports growth of moss and low shrubs. There are patches of fern and blackberry, and also the aforementioned patch of blueberries. We felt that Sugar Slope and Ripperoo don’t offer as much terrain suitable for ESH as the three slopes that have already been cut. We reached out to Charley Eiseman for his ideas - he said has some thoughts and will be presenting them in his final report.
* The Financial Advisory Committee assessed the risks and benefits of taking advantage of a one-time option to upgrade the interest rate on the $95,000 CD of Hogback funds held by the Town. It matures in June of 2021 and is currently earning 1.5%. Current rates are 3%, so taking advantage of the option would double the interest. However, if there is a need to cash in the CD early, the penalty will also double. The FAC will make a report to the HPC at their November meeting.
* The web site is receiving an average of 37 visits per day.