

Parking Area and River Access Trail  
Ammonoosuc River Forest  
Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

To: Bethlehem Planning Board

Date: 3/15/2022

Project Overview:

In November 2020, The Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests (Forest Society) acquired and permanently protected the Ammonoosuc River Forest (ARF). This 270-acre property in the town of Bethlehem features 1.8 miles of frontage on the river and significant road frontage on Route 302. The Forest Society is seeking guidance from the Bethlehem Planning Board on any review and approval requirements as plans are being developed to create new public access infrastructure. The primary goals of these projects will be to create a gravel parking area and trails that lead to a shorefront access point (See Map 1). This will help support the quiet, non-motorized public enjoyment of the property and provide recreational fishing access to a scenic section of the river.

Public Parking Area: (Bethlehem Tax Map/Lot ID 420-004-002-001)

A new gravel parking area will be created using the existing driveway entry directly from Route 302. The parking area will have room for up to eight spaces and will be approximately 40' wide and 80' long. This is based on an 18' space length, 10' space width, and a 20' entry/exit lane (the driveway). This number of spaces will help limit the overall visitor capacity to the property and limit any potential effects on traffic at this location. Currently, this area is a flat open field (see Photo 1) and crushed stone will be brought to the site to flatten, form, and define the surface. This area is more than 50' from the closest stream, so does not appear to need any state-level permitting to proceed.

Signage would be placed near the entrance to the property and be visible from Route 302. Standard Forest Society property signs are placed on a single 6' tall 6'' x 6'' wooden post with the property name routed onto a 6'x1' board using 3'' white lettering. A Forest Society aluminum logo sign (18''x24'') is placed at the center of the sign (see Drawing 1). A kiosk will be placed at the parking area featuring a map and information about the property and will measure approximately 50'' wide and 6' tall. Several wood routed signs will be placed on posts directing visitors to a trail leading to the river.

Most Forest Society trailhead parking areas are not plowed during the winter and, currently, we do not have any plans to facilitate year-round parking access at this location. Currently, there is a

gate near the entrance to the driveway, but will be moved from its current location to a spot further down the driveway where it meets with the neighboring property. Forest Society properties are open to the public daily, dawn to dusk.

The actual parking area is almost entirely within the Forest Society ownership, but a sliver of the western edge will be on the neighboring property (Bethlehem Tax Map/Lot ID 420-004-002-006) (as seen in Map 2).

Trails: (Bethlehem Tax Map/Lot ID 420-004-002-000)

There will be a single trail leading from the parking area to the shoreline, divided into the following sections:

1. Parking Lot to Former Railroad Bed: This new trail will be approximately 500' long and 4' wide and will be partially located on property not owned by the Forest Society. This section does not cross any streams or wetlands, so will not require state permitting. The final route has not yet been determined.
2. Railroad Bed to Shorefront Path: This section will utilize an approximately 0.35 mile long section of a discontinued railroad bed that leads west toward the Shorefront Path (See Map 3). The terrain is even and flat through this section and will require only minimal surface improvements to accommodate regular visitor use. This section does not cross any streams or wetlands, so will not require state permitting.
3. Shorefront Path to Shorefront: This new trail will be approximately 100' long, 4' wide, and will lead directly to within a few feet of, but not up to, the reference line (ordinary high water mark) of the river (See Map 3). No trail improvements beyond minimal vegetation clearing of the trail corridor will occur beyond the reference line. This location was selected since it is the closest point between the former railroad bed and the river and would require the least overall impact to create. This location is also where visitors are most likely to approach the river (path of least resistance). The objective here is to ensure this location is adequately prepared for public use instead of trying to fix likely impacts (such as user-created trails, braided trails, degraded surface, etc.) in the future. Given that this new section of trail lies directly in the shore land buffer zone, state-level permitting is required. This construction is limited enough in scale to qualify for a Department of Environmental Services (DES) 'Shoreland Permit-by-Notification'. The Forest Society is in the process of drafting this permit application and will submit to DES in April once some remaining field measurements and site photos are taken after the snow has melted. This expedited permit has a standard 5-day turnaround for DES review and approval.

Each of these trails facilitate non-motorized pedestrian access to the property and may include typical trail obstacles and steep grades, which could present challenges to visitors with mobility disabilities.

All parking area and trail construction activities will follow accepted Best Management Practices to minimize soil erosion, river siltation, or other related concerns.

For any questions, please contact:

Matt D. Scaccia

Recreation & Community Relations Manager

Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests

54 Portsmouth Street

Concord, NH 03301

603-931-2442 (Work Cell)

[mscaccia@forestsociety.org](mailto:mscaccia@forestsociety.org)

Attachments:

Map 1: Overview of Planned Access Areas

Map 2: Aerial View of Planned Parking Area with Boundaries

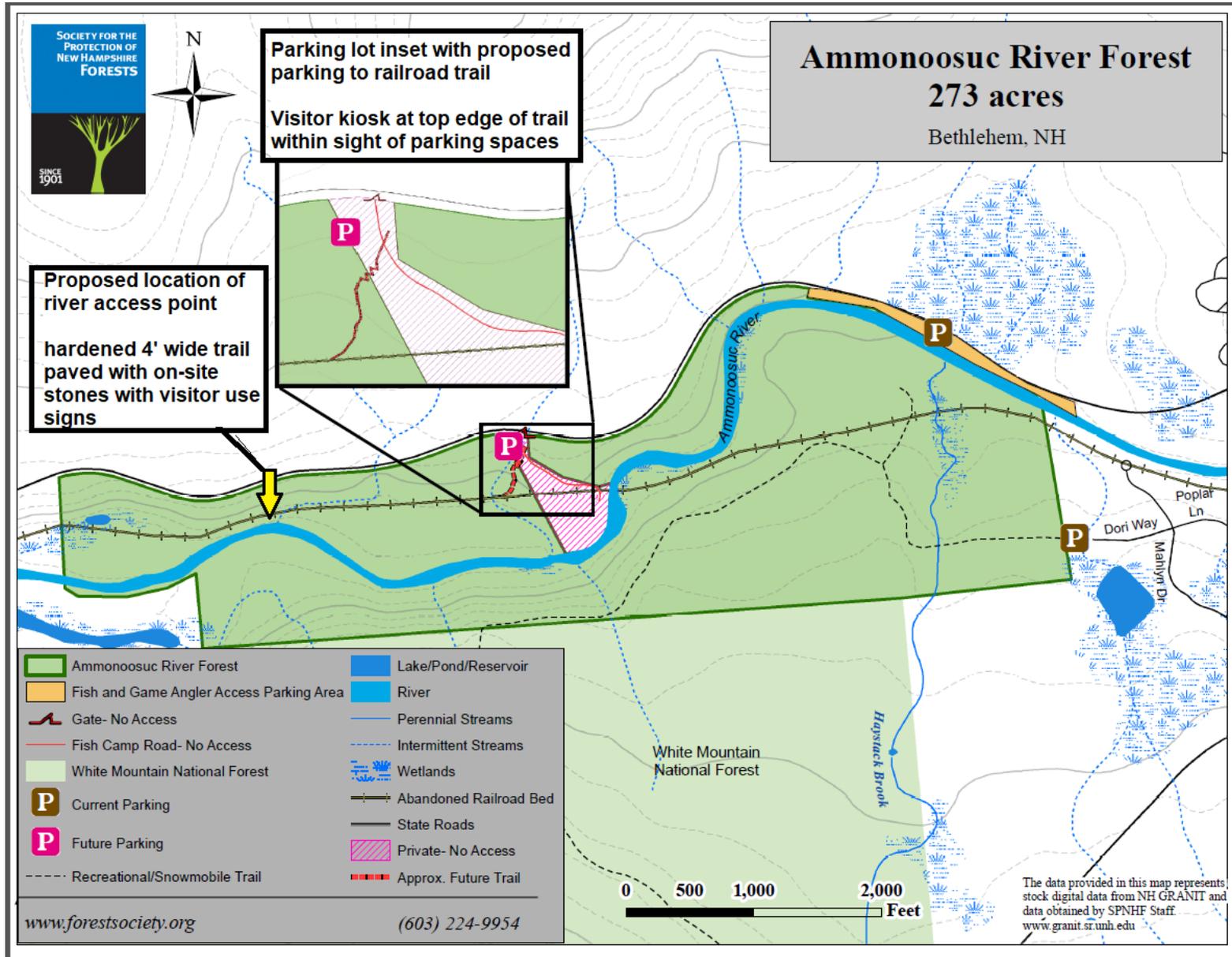
Map 3: Aerial View of Railroad Bed and Trail to Shore Access Point

Photo 1: Planned Parking Area

Drawing 1: Standard Forest Society Property Sign Specifications

Map 1: Overview of Planned Access Areas

2022



Map 2: Aerial View of Planned Parking Area with Boundaries



Map 3: Aerial View of Railroad Bed and Trail to Shore Access Point



Mercator Projection  
WGS84  
UTM Zone 19T  

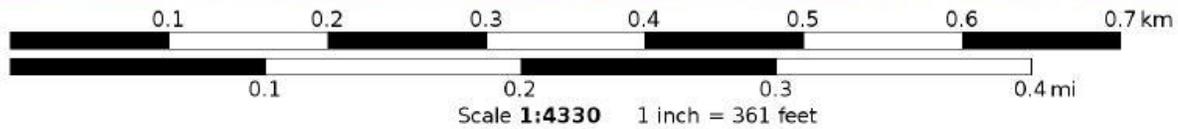



Photo 1: Planned Parking Area, Facing South from Route 302.

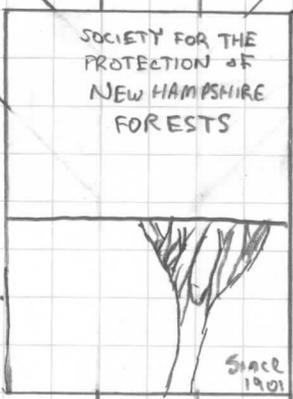


Brown stain, white lettering 3" tall  
on 2" x 12" board



6' x 1' approx face area

4" x 4" (PT wood)



SPNHF LOGO SIGN  
(aluminum)  
18" x 24"

overall sign height  
about 6'

6" x 6" (PT wood)

ground level

ground level