

Hinesburg, Vermont

**Interim Management Plan for the Carse Addition to
the Hinesburg Town Forest**



Revision: First Draft

This Plan has been approved by:

Selectboard Chair

Vermont Lant Trust

Date

Date

Contents

1. Overview & Summary	1
a. Introduction	1
b. Vision.....	1
c. Natural Resources	1
d. Management Goals.....	1
2. Vision, Process, and Responsibilities	2
a. Overall Vision for Community Lands.....	2
b. Development Process for the Management Plan.....	2
c. Responsibilities.....	2
3. Property Description	2
a. Property history	3
b. Current Uses of the Property.....	3
4. Natural Resources	3
5. Management Goals and Objectives	4
a. Public Access and Recreation.....	4
Access.....	4
Trails.....	5
Allowed activities during the Interim Management Plan period.....	5
Restricted activities.....	5
Prohibited activities	5
b. Timber & Other Forest Products.....	5
c. Wildlife	65
d. Rare Plants, Animals and Natural Communities	6
e. Water Features	6
f. Invasive Species	76
g. Education	7
h. Historic and Cultural Resources	7
i. Action Items	8
Appendices.....	9
Appendix A: Conservation Easement	9
Appendix B: Conservation Easement Map.....	9
Appendix C: Baseline Document Report, Vermont Land Trust	10
Appendix D: Ecological Assessment	10
Appendix E: Parcel and Trail Map	10

1. Overview & Summary

a. Introduction

Since the mid 1900s, Henry Carse owned and oversaw the management of a 1,000 acre forested parcel on Lincoln Hill Road in Hinesburg. Upon Henry's death the land became jointly owned by his descendants who in 2020 decided to sell the property. One of the current owners purchased approximately two thirds of the parcel that is located on the south side of Lincoln Hill Road. The Carse family offered to sell the remaining 291 acres on the north side of the road to the Town of Hinesburg rather than listing it on the open market. The land borders the 837 acre Hinesburg Town Forest (HTF) on two sides and has existing trails that cross uninterrupted into that forest. The Town expressed its interest in acquiring the land and combining it with the existing Town Forest. In this document the 291 acre parcel will be hereafter referred to as the Carse Addition (to the HTF). Funding the purchase requires conserving the Carse Addition and the existing HTF. With the leadership of the Vermont and Hinesburg Land Trusts, the Town pursued that opportunity and together the organizations put together the necessary funding to complete the purchase and conservation effort. The Town is grateful to the Hinesburg Land Trust (HLT), Vermont Land Trust (VLT) and Vermont Housing & Conservation Board (VHCB) and all those who worked on and donated to this project.

The Carse Addition connects the HTF to the 1,172 acre Fred Johnson Wildlife Management Area, and the 700+ acre parcel retained by the Carse family. Conservation of the HTF and Carse Addition and their connection to existing conserved land fulfill a significant need to retain valued natural areas to sustain wildlife habitat, water quality, and natural plant and forest communities. The conservation effort aligns with the State's Conservation Design Plan to protect Priority Interior Forest Blocks and Priority Connectivity Blocks.

The Carse Addition maintains outdoor recreation opportunities by retaining connectivity between the 15 miles of existing recreation trails in the Town Forest and 10 miles of trails on the parcel still owned by the Carse family.

b. Vision

The Town's vision for the Carse Addition is that it be used by the public as a place for recreation, quiet solitude, demonstration of sustainable forestry, water quality protection, carbon storage, and public education.

c. Natural Resources

The HTF and Carse Addition include over 3.5 miles of headwater streams, several vernal pools, wetlands, and areas of Dry Red Oak - White Pine Forest, an uncommon natural community in Vermont.

d. Management Goals

- The land will be managed in compliance with the Conservation Easement.
- Natural processes will be allowed to govern the ecosystems function on the parcel. To the extent possible, active management will be modeled on these processes.
- Access will be provided to the public for non-motorized, non-commercial recreational opportunities.

2. Vision, Process, and Responsibilities

a. Overall Vision for Community Lands

The purpose of this Interim Management Plan for the Carse Addition is to provide guidance for the stewardship and use of the Carse Addition from the date of its acquisition until the approval of an updated Management Plan for the entire Hinesburg Town Forest in 2023 (the “Interim Management Plan Period”). Until that time the Interim Management Plan will be an addendum to the 2012 Hinesburg Town Forest Management Plan.

The Carse Addition has diverse and functioning natural communities and wildlife habitat that include headwater streams, wetlands, vernal pools, and areas of Dry Oak-White Pine Forest, an uncommon natural community in Vermont. There are three existing trails on the property. The Town’s vision for the Addition is that it be used by the public as a place for recreation, quiet solitude, demonstration of sustainable forestry, water quality protection, carbon storage, and public education. The land will be managed in compliance with the Conservation Easement and in such a way to provide stewardship of the natural resources and non-motorized, non-commercial recreational opportunities.

b. Development Process for the Management Plan

This Interim Management Plan was written by the Hinesburg Town Forest Committee with consideration given to the Conservation Easement held jointly by the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) and the Vermont Land Trust (VLT).

Within the last year the public had several opportunities to learn about the acquisition and conservation project including an article in *The Record*, Hinesburg’s local newspaper, that is mailed to every resident, public meetings in August and November 2021, two warned Selectboard meetings, and multiple warned Town Forest Committee meetings. The Interim Management Plan will serve as the management plan for the Carse Addition until 2023 when a new version of the Hinesburg Town Forest Management Plan will be written and approved that includes the Addition. The Town Forest Committee held a warned Public Hearing on this Interim Management Plan before submitting it to the Selectboard for review and approval. HLT, VLT and the VHCB had an opportunity to review and recommend changes to the plan.

c. Responsibilities

The Selectboard has given the Town Forest Committee the mission of providing stewardship, in consultation with the Chittenden County Forester, of the Hinesburg Town Forest, including the Carse Addition. The Town Forest Committee is charged with implementing the approved HTF Management Plan.

The Town Forest Committee values its partnerships with the Hinesburg Trails Committee and the Fellowship of the Wheel (FOTW) who build and maintain trails and help communicate with the public. The Town website, Front Porch Forum, and *The Hinesburg Record* are important media for communication, along with the kiosks at trailheads.

3. Property Description

The property is located on the north side of Lincoln Hill Road in Hinesburg, VT. It adjoins and has become part of the Hinesburg Town Forest. The property is a south facing forested bowl with ridges on the east, north and west and a beaver influenced wetland on most of the southern boundary by Lincoln Hill Road. Access is via the HTF or Lincoln Hill Road.

The most notable features of the property are noted under Natural Resources, Public Access, and Recreation sections below.

The boundaries of the addition have not been painted, but an immediate Management Plan Goal is to locate and paint the boundaries.

In the interest of good neighborly relations the Town Forest Committee will connect with adjoining landowners to hear any concerns they might have.

a. Property history

Pre-European settlement the land was used by Indigenous people passing through the area for hunting and gathering.

A few settlers moved to Hinesburg before the Revolutionary War. The Town's population grew rapidly after the Revolutionary War. The area was farmed and grazed and used for timber through the 19th and early 20th centuries, as evidenced by old stone walls.

More recently, it has been used for timber and recreation.

It would be interesting to learn more specifics about the history and culture of the area.

One particular question of note is discussed in section 5. h. of this Interim Management Plan.

The Carse Land Company (CLC) sold its land on Lincoln Hill Road in Hinesburg, with the southern 700 acres being sold to a family member and the northern 291 acres being sold out of the family to the Town of Hinesburg. The Carse land had been managed according to a Forest Management Plan under Current Use enrollment. The land has been used recently for forestry and for recreation, including hunting. The former owners gave FOTW permission to build trails.

-Because it has remained undeveloped, the property has contributed to water quality protection and provided wildlife habitat.

b. Current Uses of the Property

The land is currently used for recreation, mountain biking, hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, bird watching, wildlife viewing and hunting. A VAST trail cuts through a corner of the property.

There has, within the last year, apparently been a bit of motorized dirt bike riding on the property. The Town Forest Committee will take steps to address and prevent this use which is out of compliance with the conservation easement.

Other than the trails there are no physical improvements on the property.

The land is located in the Rural Residential 2 zoning district, the purpose of which is: "To promote sustainable forest-based land uses (e.g., timber & fuel wood production, recreation, sugaring, biodiversity & wildlife habitat protection, etc.) on land so suited, and allow for low density rural development that preserves important natural and cultural resources. Forests, dynamic topography, and large blocks of conserved public land (e.g., Town Forest, Fred Johnson Wildlife Management Area) dominate this district, and help define a critical aspect of Hinesburg's rural character."

4. Natural Resources

The Carse Addition and HTF represent over eleven hundred acres of contiguous forestland in Chittenden County and in a Priority Interior Forest Block identified in the Vermont Conservation Design plan. The combined land includes over 3.5 miles of headwater streams, several vernal pools,

wetlands, and areas of Dry Red Oak - White Pine Forest, an uncommon natural community in Vermont.

5. Management Goals and Objectives

The goals for the management of the Carse Addition to the Hinesburg Town Forest (HTF) are to manage the Addition in such a way to provide stewardship of the natural resources and non-motorized, non-commercial recreational opportunities. These goals are consistent with the Conservation Easement and the current management goals of the HTF Management Plan. All of the goals are of equal importance, and therefore, do not represent any priority in the order they are presented.

- Use the forest as a model and example of the value of forests to the community, including promotion of educational and community uses that are compatible with other management goals.
- Protect water quality.
- Maintain and enhance ecological connections between the Carse Addition and the larger landscape.
- Monitor and respond to changes.
- Allow natural processes to govern the Carse Addition ecosystems and model any active management on these processes to the extent possible.
- Maintain the forest in at least its present parcel size and configuration.
- Demonstrate sustainable forestry practices that protect and enhance the ecosystem function and health.
- Protect and promote the natural and human made elements of historic and environmental significance for educational and cultural purposes.
- Protect and/or enhance habitat for native species, including game and non-game wildlife.
- Manage the allowed uses of the forest in such a way that they appropriately minimize the adverse effect on the rural residential nature of the neighborhood.
- Manage non-commercial, recreational opportunities that are not incompatible with the other management plan goals.

a. Public Access and Recreation

Access

The land has popular, multi-use trails for non-motorized non-commercial recreation. These trails connect to trails in the rest of the Town Forest, privately owned land to the south on the retained Carse lands (10 miles of trails), and to privately owned land to the north at the Sleepy Hollow Bike and Ski Center (20 miles of trails). The trails on the HTF and Carse Addition are the core connection in this statewide significant recreational destination of approximately 45 miles of connected trails. The Hinesburg Town Forest has access points on Economou Road and Hayden Hill Road, and the Carse Addition provides access on Lincoln Hill Road.

There is also a VAST trail on the property, connecting to the VAST network.

Hunting is allowed on the property according to State Regulations. An immediate Management Plan Goal is to establish Safety Zones around the residences on adjacent property. For the last few years the Town Forest Committee, in an attempt to use hunters as a management tool to prevent overbrowsing by deer, has closed the forest to non-hunting uses for portions of the deer hunting seasons. The Committee may continue to do so in attempt to maintain the ecological integrity of the forest.

Parking has been available on small pull offs on Lincoln Hill Road. At this time, the Forest Committee does not plan to develop a parking area.

A second immediate Management Goal is to build and install signs or small kiosks to identify the land as part of the Hinesburg Town Forest and indicate the trails and the permitted and prohibited uses.

Trails

There are three existing trails as indicated on the Parcel and Trail map in [Appendix E](#). Two, Dragon's Tail and Back Door are built and maintained by FOTW. A third, CPR, is in fact a well built trail, which the Town will formalize, maintain, and include on its Hinesburg Area Recreation Trail (HART) maps. The Town Forest Committee in collaboration with FOTW and the Trails Committee takes responsibility for managing any user conflicts, based on the uses that are permitted and prohibited in the Conservation Easement and Management Plan. Trails will only be added with permission of the Town Forest Committee. No new trails on the Carse Addition will be permitted under this Interim Management Plan. Any informal "social" trails will be assessed and the Town Forest Committee will decide whether to formalize them either as they are or in a modified form or decommission them.

As mentioned above, there is also a VAST trail that crosses the southeast corner of the property.

Allowed activities during the Interim Management Plan period

Non-motorized, non-commercial uses such as mountain biking, hiking, snowshoeing, skiing, bird watching, wildlife viewing and hunting are allowed.

Snowmobiling on the VAST trail is also allowed.

The Town and other groups, with the permission of the Town Forest Committee may conduct periodic, temporary, non-commercial, community, and public gatherings and events in the HTF.

Restricted activities during the Interim Management Plan period

Dogs may be walked if they are under the immediate physical or verbal control of their handlers (maximum of three dogs per handler). Sled dogs that are harnessed to a sled or wagon have no maximum number per handler. Dog owners must be responsible for picking up and safely disposing of their dog's feces in parking areas and trails.

Prohibited activities during the Interim Management Plan period

Motorized and/or commercial recreation is prohibited. Overnight camping and campfires are prohibited. Horseback riding is prohibited.

b. Timber & Other Forest Products

It is a high priority goal of the Forest Committee to hire a licensed forester to conduct an inventory and assessment of the Carse Addition. An Inventory and Assessment was approved in 2018 for the then 837 acre configuration of the HTF. Any inventory and assessment for the Carse Addition will be reviewed by the Chittenden County Forester and our conservation partners prior to review by the

general public and approval by the Selectboard. Until an approved inventory assessment exists, no timber harvesting will take place on the Carse Addition.

c. *Wildlife*

- Take opportunities to protect and enhance forest songbird habitat. Use *Silviculture with Birds in Mind: Options for Vermont Foresters in Northern Hardwood Forests* (Vermont Department of Forests, Parks, and Recreation and Audubon Vermont, 2011) as a guide and refer to 2009 Audubon habitat assessment.
- In northern goshawk nesting areas, follow management guidelines to protect and enhance habitat for this species found in *Focus Species Forestry: A Guide to Integrating Timber and Biodiversity Management in Maine* (Bryan, 2004).
- Consider all management activities within the surrounding landscape context (2500 acres). Work to create and/or maintain a forested landscape capable of supporting viable populations of species associated with a variety of forest types, successional stages, and patch sizes (horizontal diversity). Pay special attention to ensuring habitat for species whose life-history requirements include large areas of contiguous forest.
- Enhance vertical structure of forest stands where it is lacking to ensure nesting and foraging habitat for a diversity of breeding forest birds and other wildlife.
- Protect and enhance long-term hard and soft mast production in hardwood stands with significant beech, oak, hickory, cherry and/or apple densities.
- Maintain and regenerate inclusions of softwood cover in predominantly hardwood stands and inclusions of hardwood cover in predominantly softwood stands.
- Manage existing and potential deer wintering areas according to the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department guidelines.
- Retain a high percentage of trees >24" dbh (diameter at breast height) and at least 1 snag/acre >18" dbh where present. Plan for the recruitment of these sizes, types, and densities of trees into the future.
- Manage for coarse woody debris by retaining material that currently exists and allowing its accumulation where it is currently missing.
- Manage areas around vernal pools consistent with the requirements of the conservation easement.

d. *Rare Plants, Animals and Natural Communities*

The Dry Oak-White Pine natural communities and the three identified vernal pools will be protected as described in the conservation easement. Any forest management activities planned for these areas will require review and pre-approval by our conservation partners. If there is any uncertainty, the Forest Committee will contact VLT.

e. *Water Features*

Streams will be protected per the guidelines in the Conservation Easement. As a Management Goal the Town Forest Committee will seek permission to build a bridge or puncheon over the southern end of Back Door trail to reduce erosion and habitat damage to the stream/wetland caused by pedestrian and bicycle traffic.

f. Invasive Species

A stipulation of the contract agreement with a licensed forester to conduct an inventory and assessment will be that the assessment include documentation of invasive species found on the property. Invasive plant species have not been noted on the property, but the Town Forest Committee will remain vigilant by continuing to monitor for their presence.

g. Education

The HTF, including the Carse Addition, will continue to be used for educational pursuits that include elementary students, high school students, college students, graduate students, and community members. Demonstration forestry in the HTF also provides education to community members and to landowners interested in sustainable management on their own properties.

h. Historic and Cultural Resources

At this time there is no known record of significant historic and/or cultural features on the Carse Addition. Given the property's location on Lincoln Hill Road, the history of settlement in that area, and its proximity to the existing HTF, the history of human settlement on the Carse Addition is likely similar to that of the HTF. Significant information of historic and cultural features for the HTF can be found in the Cultural History section of the Landscape Inventory and Assessment, Hinesburg Town Forest 2006 document found on the Hinesburg.org website.

https://www.hinesburg.org/sites/g/files/vyhlf6691/f/uploads/lia_hft.pdf.

The Forest Committee will discuss making a similar assessment of the Carse Addition a Management Plan goal.

According to Elise Guyette, in *Discovering Black Vermont: African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790-1890* land on Lincoln Hill was partially cleared and settled by free blacks from southern New England in the 1790's. Several families, "... their children and grandchildren, their in-laws and friends, lived, farmed, loved and died in this remote place in northern New England. Here they learned to new ways of living for themselves and their descendants as members of a new class of people – free blacks. Although there were free people of color earlier in the eighteenth century, free blacks as a class had been unheard of in New England before the American Revolution."¹ The Town Forest Committee will contact Elise Guyette to see if she knows if the black settlers owned any of the land that is part of the Carse Addition.

There could be more work to engage with the Abenaki and describe their history in the region as well.

¹ GUYETTE, ELISE A. *Discovering Black Vermont; African American Farmers in Hinesburgh, 1790-1890*. VERMONT HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 2020.

i. Action Items

Public Access & Recreation	Target Date	Partners/Funders	Cost
Kiosks or other signage at Lincoln Hill Road	ASAP	Town Forest Committee, volunteers	Approximately \$500
Safety Zones	ASAP	Town Forest Committee	
Take steps to eliminate unauthorized (not snowmobile) motorized recreational use	ASAP	Town Forest Committee	
Assessment of informal trails	Spring 2022	Town Forest Committee	
Timber Management			
Hire a licensed forester to conduct an inventory and assessment of the Carse Addition	2022-2023	Contracted	\$4-5,000
Wildlife			
Identified as part of an inventory and assessment	2022-2023	See Timber Management above	
Water Features			
Consider constructing a bridge or puncheon over the stream near the southern end of the Back Door Trail	2022-2023	Town Forest Committee, Trails Committee, FOTW	\$1-2,000?
Invasive Species			
Identified as part of an inventory and assessment	2022-2023	See Timber Management above	
Education			
Kiosks or signs mentioned under Public Access and Recreation above			
Document the historic and cultural history of the Carse Addition	2024-2025	UVM Natrual Resources class project	\$0
Contact Elise Guyette to learn if this parcel was part of the Black settlement on Lincoln Hill	2022-23	Town Forest Committee	\$0
Boundary Marking			
Boundaries of the Carse Addition will be painted.	2022-2023	Town Forest Committee, volunteers	\$100
Contact adjoining landowners to hear concerns	2022-23	Town Forest Committee	\$0

Appendices

Appendix A: Conservation Easement

Appendix B: Conservation Easement Map



Appendix C: Baseline Document Report, Vermont Land Trust

Appendix D: Ecological Assessment

Appendix E: Parcel and Trail Map

