

**Missing Links Conservation Stewardship Plan  
Putney Mountain Association III (former Evans and King Properties)  
Dummerston, Vermont**

Prepared by:  
Putney Mountain Association  
PO Box 953  
Putney, VT 05346

***Purpose***

**Goal of the Stewardship Plan**

This plan is intended to be a guiding document for the stewardship of the former Evans and King parcels in Dummerston, Vermont. The land will be owned by the Putney Mountain Association, Inc. and will be managed as a unit within the context of the PMA-owned portion of the Windmill Hill Nature Reserve and Trail. PMA has worked with the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association since the mid-nineties to conserve the 16-mile Windmill ridgeline for the benefit of wildlife habitat protection and public access to trails for recreation. The stewardship objective for this unit is to maintain a natural area providing low-impact, sustainable opportunities for outdoor recreation while preserving important wildlife and plant habitat and natural resources, including woodland habitat for bear, deer, moose, furbearers such as fisher and bobcat, and other wildlife, winter deer yards and seasonal movement corridors for black bear. PMA will transition the Evans parcel from the timber management regime of the previous owners to a natural area.

The objectives of the Acquisition Grant are to conserve wildlife habitat, scenic resources, plant habitat, educational opportunities, and non-commercial public recreational opportunities, as well as the ecological and biological health of the Protected Property. These parcels are also crucial to the extension of PMA's portion of the Ridgeline Trail south to town-owned Prospect Hill in Dummerston. This will be achieved through four donated Trail Easements, both north and south of this land. The stewardship plan shall be exercised to accomplish these objectives.

The purpose of the Stewardship Plan is:

- 1) To contribute to the implementation of the policies of the State of Vermont designed to (a) foster the conservation of the state's wildlife and habitat, plant habitat, forestry resources and other natural resources through planning, regulation, land acquisition, and tax incentive programs and, (b) contribute to the implementation of the policies of the State of Vermont designed to conserve the recreational resources of the state and encourage the use of recreational resources.
- 2) To conserve wildlife habitat, forest values, scenic resources, non-commercial recreational opportunities, educational opportunities, and plant habitat associated with the Protected Property and the ecological and biological health of the Protected Property for present and future generations.
- 3) To provide the public with recreational and educational opportunities in a scenic and healthy natural setting through low-impact, low-density, non-motorized, recreational activities.
- 4) To ensure that the Protected Property will be owned in perpetuity by a qualified nonprofit, public or other entity approved by Grantees.

***Description of Property***

The Putney Mountain Association (PMA) III property comprises two abutting parcels ("King" and "Evans") in Dummerston that were recently acquired by PMA. The two parcels meet along a legal trail that connects Hague road on its western end and Evans road to east. Together, these parcels cover 58.5 acres of forestland. The terrain is variable, ranging from rolling to steep. The property's elevation ranges from 810 feet at the western boundary, to 1120 feet at the southern boundary. Most of the northern part of the property slopes southward from an unnamed 1500-foot hilltop off-property to the north. This slope includes some areas of exposed bedrock. Conversely, much of the southern parcel slopes northwesterly from a 1200-foot hilltop off-property to the south. These slopes meet along a prominent stream channel just north of the legal trail.

The PMA III property is underlain in its northern portion by phyllite and quartzite of the Northfield Formation and its central and southern by calcium-rich, easily weathering bedrock of the Waits River Formation.

The land is entirely forested with a mix hemlock, white pine, and northern hardwoods. Eastern hemlock is a major canopy component throughout much of the tract. Other common canopy species include black birch, American beech, sugar maple, and white pine. The subcanopy includes striped maple and beech. The northern Evans parcel was enrolled in Vermont's Use Value Appraisal Program (UVA or "Current Use") before it was acquired by PMA, and a 10.3 acre portion of it was thinned in 2019. A small volume of firewood quality trees was logged for the owner's use. It has been re-enrolled in UVA, changing it from 'Forestry' to 'Conservation'.

The PMA property has a few small seeps, but otherwise, it has no significant wetlands. An unnamed headwater tributary to the West River traverses the property along a ravine, flowing from the northeastern boundary in a southwesterly direction to Hague Road. The stream joins another tributary just off property, then continues downslope, ultimately joining another tributary at East-West Road, before entering the West River just south of the West Dummerston Covered Bridge. Other smaller streams drain the south-facing slope from the northern boundary into this stream.

The PMA III property has landscape-level attributes that provide critical ecological function on a statewide level, including interior forest and riparian areas that provide well-connected habitat for wildlife. The Vermont Conservation Design (VCD, 2015), a landscape-level conservation prioritization from Vermont Land Trust and the Vermont Agency of Natural Resources, places the property in a 6,705-acre unfragmented forest block that is considered both a Highest Priority Interior Forest Block and a Priority Connectivity Block. VCD also identifies the stream on this property to be one of Vermont's Highest Priority Surface Waters and Riparian Areas providing Riparian Wildlife Connectivity. Its low to mid elevation setting on calcareous bedrock makes it a Responsibility Physical Landscape Feature (i.e., a feature that occurs more commonly in Vermont than in other regions, and which Vermont has a responsibility to protect).

### **Drafters of the Stewardship Plan**

This stewardship plan was drafted by the Putney Mountain Association Board in consultation with the Vermont Land Trust. Plans for the small parking area on Hague Road were developed in consultation with the Town of Dummerston and PMA applied for, and received, two permits from the Development Review Board after an online public hearing.

### **Audience of the Stewardship Plan**

This Stewardship Plan, a requirement of the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board acquisition grant and Vermont Land Trust conservation easement, addresses both issues related to public use of the property and steps necessary to balance the resource attributes and human uses of the property, monitoring for invasives and soil erosion issues. Putney Mountain Association and VLT will consider the Stewardship Plan a guiding document. The Stewardship Plan will be submitted to Dummerston Select Board and the Dummerston Conservation Commission. It will be reviewed and updated every ten years, or if changes in the land use occur that may need to be addressed in the plan.

### ***Physical Improvements to Property***

#### **1. Parking Area, Kiosk and Boundary Marking**

A small parking area, 35' X 35', to accommodate 3-5 cars will be maintained on the Evans parcel off Hague Rd. Volunteers have leveled out the parking area. The existing driveway slopes gently off the road and drains

well. If it should become muddy with use, gravel will be added as necessary. A sign from the road directs hikers to “Trail Parking.” The Missing Links Trailhead and new connecting trails will provide Dummerston access to 41+ miles of trails from Prospect Hill, Dummerston to Grafton, VT (see map). The Windmill Ridge trail system includes lands owned by the Putney Mountain Association, the Windmill Hill Pinnacle Association, and crosses several privately-owned parcels with donated Trail Easements. A small kiosk will be constructed at the end of the driveway. Signage on the kiosk will indicate use restriction to low-impact recreation and prohibition of motorized vehicles except for snowmobiles on the woods road and mobility-impaired access. PMA property boundaries will be marked.

## **2. Trails**

A new trail from the parking area will extend north across the Evans parcel to connect to our new trail on the Mayo-Brown Trail Easement and eventually to the PMA trail from Holland Hill. It will also connect to a Trail south to a high point on the King parcel and eventually on to trails across several trail easements connecting to Prospect Hill. The connecting trails will be built over the next two years. The trails will be developed with careful regard for habitat protection and according to standards outlined in the US Forest Service Trail Construction and Maintenance Notebook (USDA 2007 Edition). Four or five steps will be built on a steep section of the King parcel.

General ongoing stewardship practices for the trail system by volunteers will include:

- Provide routine trail maintenance (removal of overgrowth and fallen logs, cleaning of drainage structures, marking and signage where necessary);
- Monitor trails for erosion, braiding, invasive plants, motorized use, and other problems and fix as necessary;
- Relocate trails that have become detrimental to the habitat protection objective.

The trails will be used for low-impact, non-motorized, recreation: hiking, snowshoeing, etc. Mountain bikes and horseback riding will be allowed; riders will be asked to stay off the trails during muddy periods. Although snowmobiles will be allowed on the existing woods road, they will not be allowed on the new trails due to the narrow trail width, tight switchbacks, and difficult terrain. Motorized vehicles, on existing roads or trails only, may be used for emergency purposes and, in limited instances, for wildlife and plant stewardship, erosion control, and trail maintenance. Motorized personal assistive mobility devices for use by persons with mobility disabilities as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act regulations will be allowed.

### ***Stewardship of Property / Habitat Protection***

The property will be managed to maintain the aesthetic value of a multi-age forest, and to maintain and enhance diverse wildlife habitat and allow carbon sequestration. Vegetation buffers along the stream corridor will maintain shade for cooling water.

PMA will monitor, and control, as feasible, non-native invasive species such as the relatively small patch of Japanese barberry bordering the stream on Evans. A single apple tree on the Evans parcel, currently suppressed beneath adjacent trees, may be slowly released and pruned for fruit production for wildlife.

Cutting/removal/harvesting of native plant will be prohibited, unless specified in the management plan.

Hunting in season will be allowed with the written permission of PMA. Trapping (which by law requires landowner permission) will be restricted due to the small parcel size, its proximity to neighboring housing, and focus on recreational trail and educational usage, in order to ensure public safety.

Fallen trees, unless across a trail, will be left on the ground to provide coarse debris and species habitat.

The PMA stewardship committee will monitor the property for illegal activities such as dumping, prohibited uses of the property, damage to signs, etc.

### ***Stewardship Plan Update***

After purchase of both parcels is completed, public input will be solicited from local community members and the town of Dummerston prior to submitting the final management plan. This Interim Stewardship Plan shall remain the plan of record until it is replaced by a Stewardship Plan approved in writing by the Grantees.

The PMA III Stewardship Plan will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary. This process will include a thorough investigation of the property, particularly of ecologically-sensitive areas and possible trail routes. The Putney Mountain Association Stewardship Committee will make management decisions based on these findings and may consult with the Vermont Land Trust stewardship staff and conservation biologists. After final approval, the Stewardship Plan will be attached to the updated main body of the Putney Mountain Stewardship Plan.

### ***Organizational***

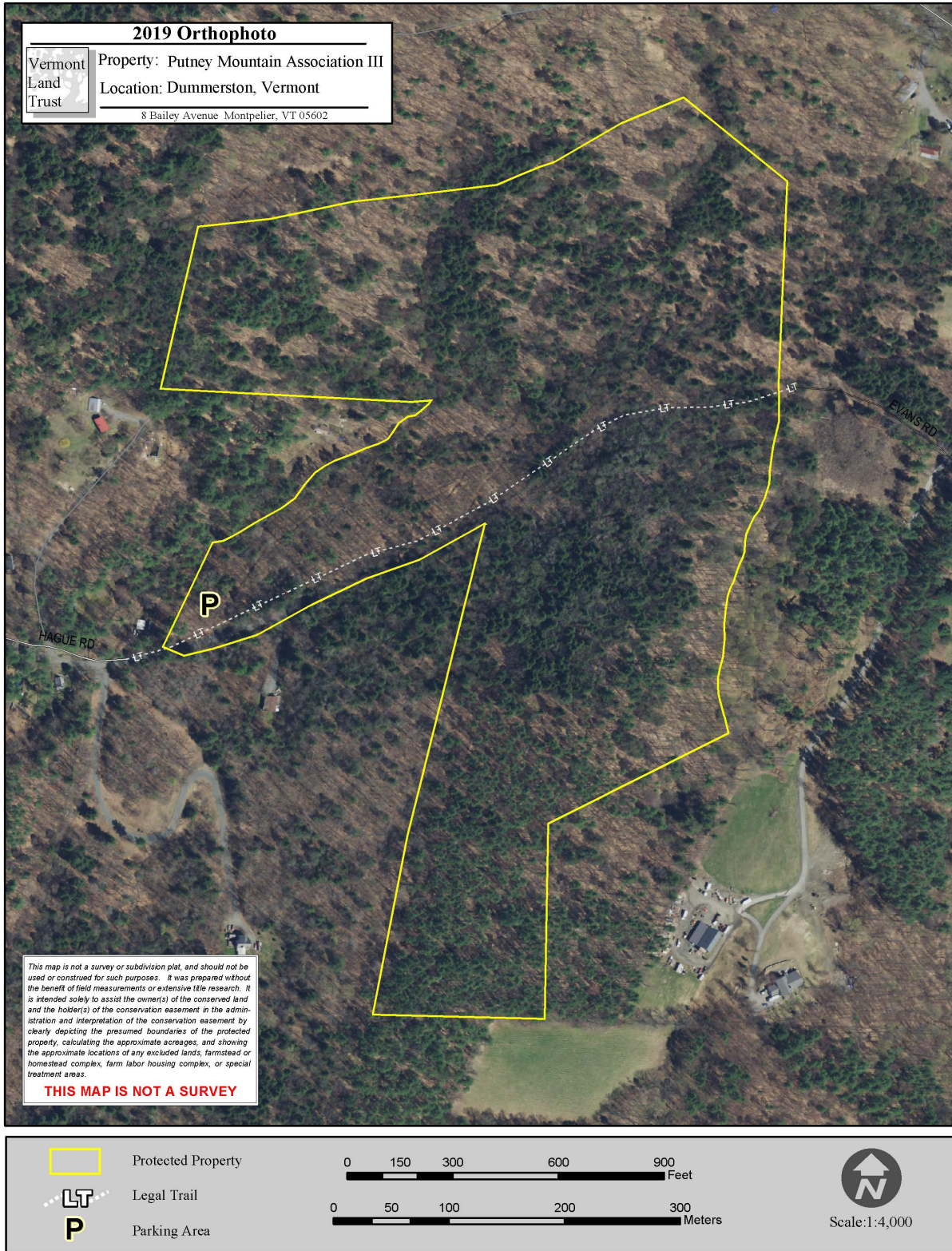
The Vermont Land Trust and VHCB co-hold the conservation easements on the property. All subsequent management and operational details are to be handled by the Putney Mountain Association Board.

### ***Contact Persons***

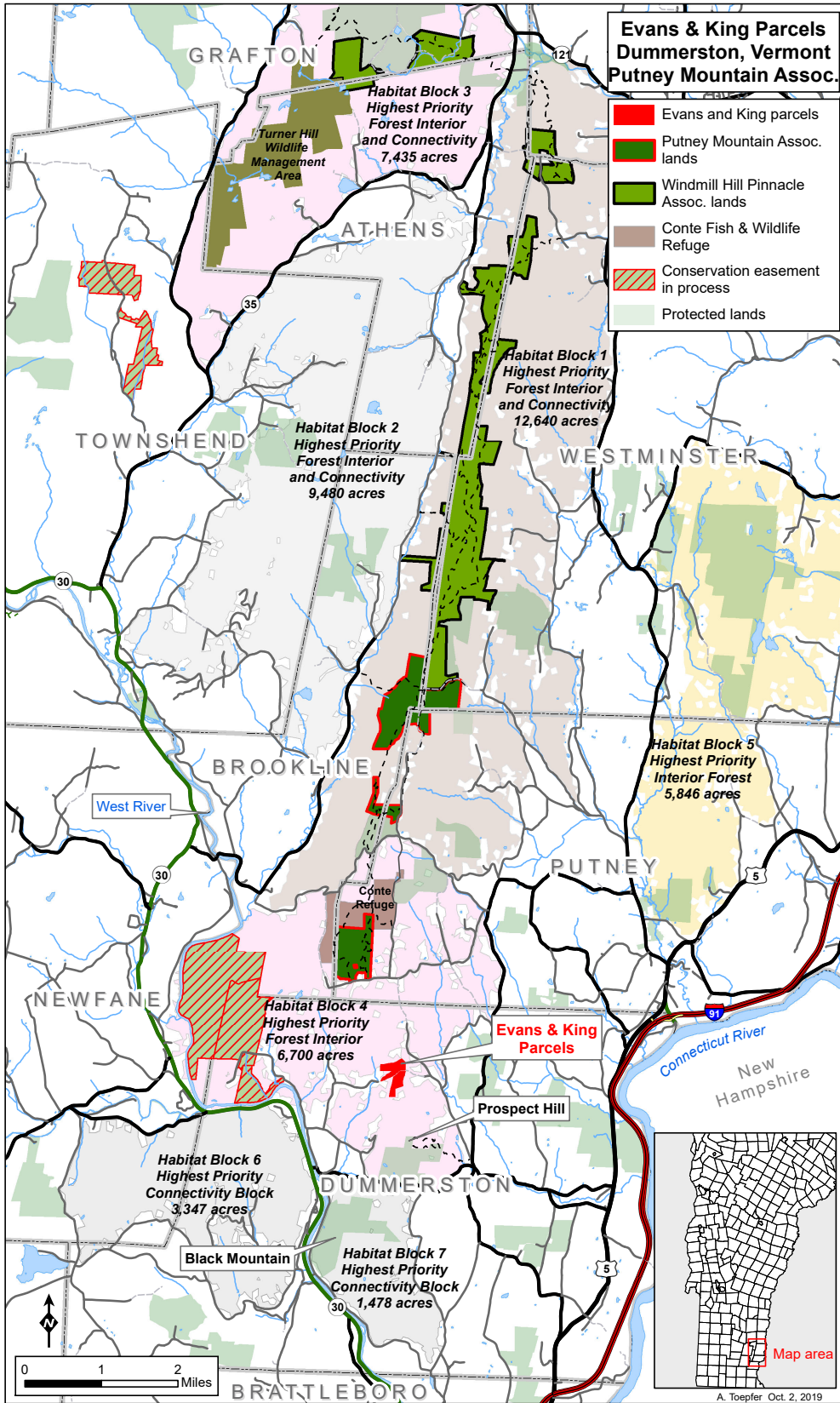
Geordie Heller, Co-Chair, 802-387-4535, [geordieheller@gmail.com](mailto:geordieheller@gmail.com)  
Cat Abbott, Co-Chair, 802-380-4156, [catabbott1@gmail.com](mailto:catabbott1@gmail.com)  
Richard Fletcher, Trail Chief, 802-387-6017, [rafletch5@gmail.com](mailto:rafletch5@gmail.com)  
Pat Shields, Acquisition Chair, 802-387-8595, [patashields@gmail.com](mailto:patashields@gmail.com)  
Andrew Morrison, Forester, 380-1980, [mr.a.morrison@gmail.com](mailto:mr.a.morrison@gmail.com)

### ***Attachments***

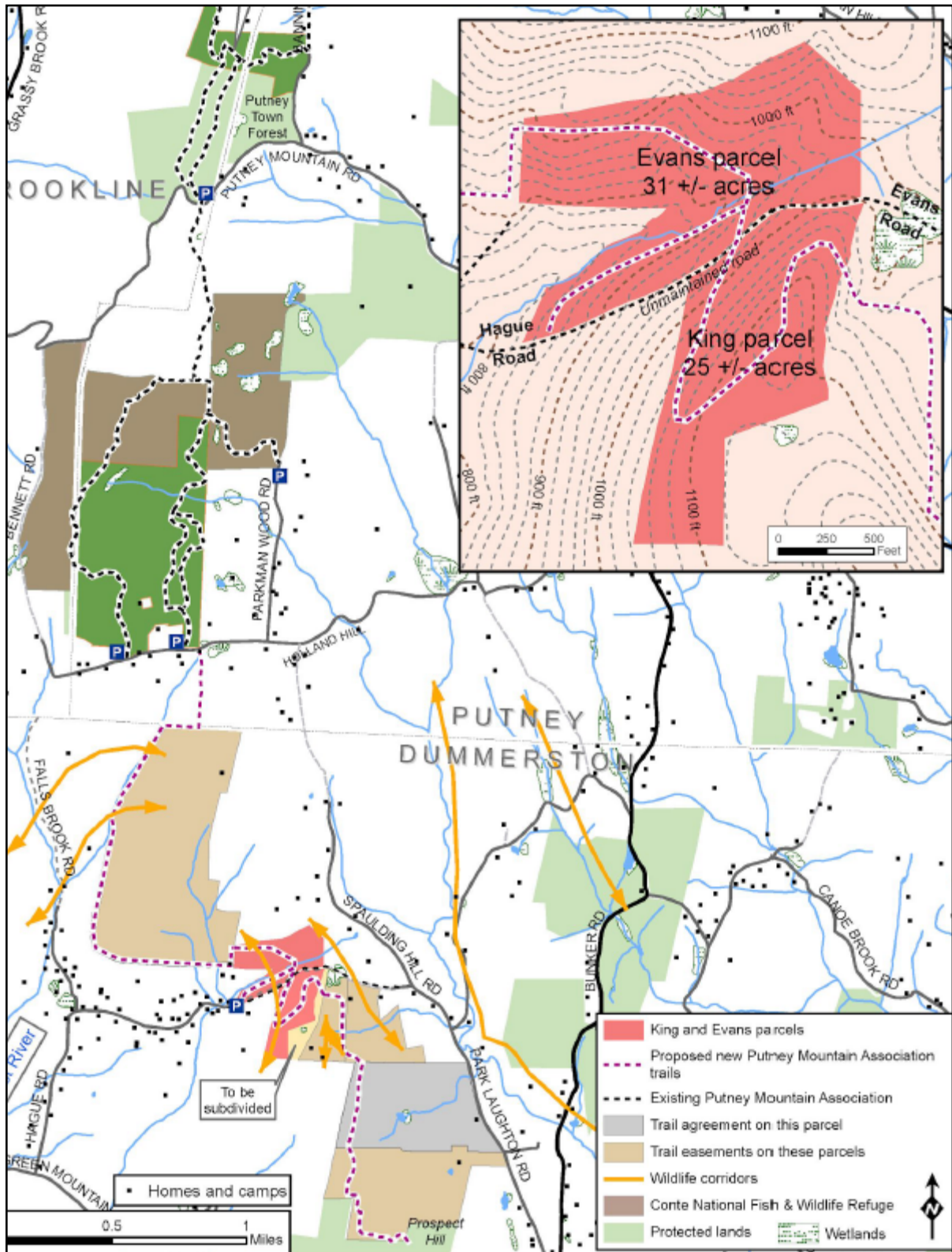
- A: Ortho Map – Putney Mountain Association II (King and Evans)
- B: Location: PMA III (King and Evans) in context of preserved habitat and ridgeline trail system
- C: Wildlife Corridors near PMA III (King and Evans) and Future Proposed Trail Linkages
- D: Evans Invasive Map
- E: Missing Link Trail Location on PMA III
- F: Recreational Trail Map, Grafton to Brattleboro



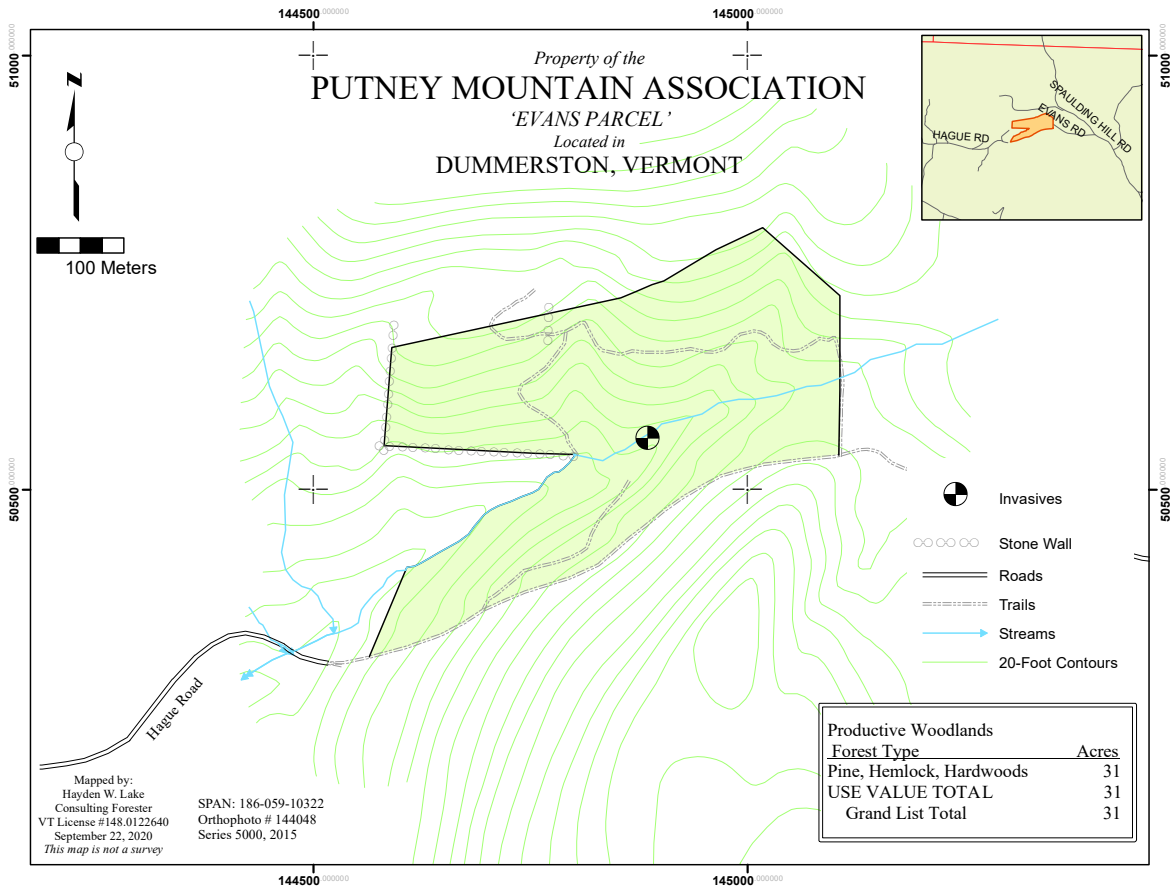
A: Ortho Map – Putney Mountain Association II (King and Evans)



B: Location of PMA III (King and Evans) in the context of preserved habitat and ridgeline trail system



C: Wildlife Corridors near PMA III (King and Evans) and Future Proposed Trail Linkages



D: Evans Invasive Map





E: Missing Link Trail Location on PMA III

