INTRODUCTION

The Beeslick woods, land owned and maintained by Hotchkiss School, is home to three cabins, an old broken ski lift, mountain bike trails, and several miles of hiking trails. These trails are used by the school and public alike.

The Beaver Pond Trail in the Beeslick Woods was made by James Morrill, a former teacher at Hotchkiss. The trail used to be maintained for educational purposes, and included an interpretive segment with pamphlets that corresponded with posts along the path (Fig. 1). Due to change in management, the Beaver Pond Trail is no longer maintained, has several over growth issues and a broken bridge. To make the Beaver Pond Trail more accessible and enjoyable, this project provides a management plan for the trail’s future.

MANAGEMENT PLAN

Debris Management
The trail is littered with plant debris, dead logs, and thick brush that needs to be cleared. Options for management:
- EcoDay project for Hotchkiss students
- Use a chainsaw to cut downed logs
- Use salvaged wood as new trail markers

Invasive Plant Removal
Different invasive plants have taken over, like honeysuckle, phragmites, and multiflora rose. To restore the trail, extensive removal of the invasives should be undertaken.

Educational Component
An updated trail brochure will be created for information about the Beaver Pond Trail, forestry, and the history of the woods. A meeting area for outdoor lessons and future geocaches could increase educational objectives.

Geocaches
To make hiking the trail more interactive and popular, four geocaches will be placed. These geocaches will highlight points of interest, similar to those that Mr. Morrill originally included in trail brochures. Locations will include (Fig. 2):
- Trailhead
- Slink Pond
- Marsh Bridge
- Granite Outcrop

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Bridge Repair
The bridges along Beaver Pond trail all pose a safety hazard for hikers. While reconstruction of these bridges is a greater project that could be handled individually, cleaning up the bridges and their approaches could be a way to expedite repairs. Ideally, Hotchkiss could hire a professional to sink new bases and build a more stable long lasting bridge system.

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Flooding
Being near a marsh, the trail seasonally floods, which causes an impassable trail.

CONCLUSIONS

One of the first things we talked about at the NRCA Field Experience was how to get people to care about the environment. We were taught that getting people outside to experience and learn on-site builds connections and encourages them to care. Even if in a small way, by restoring this trail and making it more accessible and educational, could help build a land ethic for those that walk this path.

The management plan highlighted in this project will commence on April 25, 2019 for Hotchkiss’ EcoDay. A group of students will begin the process by using their volunteer time to help revive the trail. In addition, the Hotchkiss school Committee on Conservation in the Environment has agreed to update the structure and foundation of the existing bridges.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Throughout this process, my mother and instructor in environmental science at the Hotchkiss School, Jennifer Rinehart, helped coordinate and made this project possible. I’d also like to acknowledge the Hotchkiss School for their willingness to meet the needs of this project.