

Agenda Summary
October 8, 2025

Agenda Item No. A-4

Cady Hill Forest Proposed Trail – Baby Bears

Summary: Over the past several years, Stowe Trails Partnership (STP) has worked closely with municipal staff and the Conservation Commission to design a beginner-friendly, bi-directional trail in Cady Hill Forest. STP has been coordinating on the preliminary trail location and design with the Commission and staff since 2022. Most recently, on May 12, 2025, the Conservation Commission conducted a site visit with STP to review the final trail design.

The proposed trail, located between the existing Macutchan Trail and Bears Trail in Cady Hill Forest Management Area #4, is approximately ±0.27 miles long with an average grade of 1.8%. It is intended to provide a true beginner-friendly route, helping to reduce pressure on the adjacent Macutchan Trail.

At their August 11th meeting, the Commission determined that the proposed trail is consistent with the Cady Hill conservation easement and the adopted Cady Hill Forest Land Management Plan. The Commission unanimously voted to recommend approval of the trail. Enclosed for your consideration is the Commission's letter of recommendation.

The Conservation Commission is responsible for the stewardship of all the town-owned conserved properties, including Cady Hill Forest, and for making land management recommendations to the Selectboard. The Town has an existing Cooperative Agreement with STP which designates STP as the trail corridor manager for all trails in Cady Hill Forest that are suitable for mountain biking.

Town Plan Impact: Conforms with the following Economic Development policy: *The Town will continue to support opportunities for trail-based recreation, including the development of mountain biking and cross-country skiing, to enhance Stowe's position as a four-season recreation destination.*

Conforms with the following Recreation policy: *The Town will seek to expand current levels of service and types of facilities, including the following: a. Additional trails and trail-related facilities.*

Implements the following task: *Support the efforts of local public and private organizations working to enhance the recreational assets within the community, including: ... b. Supporting the Stowe Trails Partnership in their efforts regarding maintaining and building recreational trails*

Fiscal Impact: The Conservation Commission serves as the primary stewards for town-owned conserved lands, including Cady Hill Forest. Planning & Zoning Director Sarah McShane provides professional and administrative support to the Conservation Commission and coordinates projects on town-owned conserved land with easement holders to ensure compliance with easement terms. An estimated 25 staff person hours were involved in coordinating with interested parties, conducting site visits, and supporting the Conservation Commission throughout the review process.

Recommendation: Move to approve the construction of the proposed trail, Baby Bears, in Cady Hill Forest.



Town of Stowe
Conservation Commission

Members: Catherine Gott, Phillip Branton, Evan Freund, Kay Barrett, Walter Frame

September 8, 2025

Dear Selectboard:

The Conservation Commission is writing to offer its full support and endorsement for the proposed 'Baby Bears' Trail in Management Area #4 of Cady Hill Forest. Trail-based recreation is the primary objective of this management area. Cady Hill Forest was conserved in-perpetuity by the Town in 2012 and is subject to the terms and conditions of a conservation easement held by both the Stowe Land Trust ("SLT") and Vermont Housing and Conservation Board ("VHCB"). One of the primary purposes for conserving the lands was to provide for perpetual low-impact, non-commercial and non-motorized public outdoor recreation. The Stowe Conservation Commission is responsible for the stewardship of all the town-owned conserved properties, including Cady Hill Forest, and for making land management recommendations to the Selectboard.

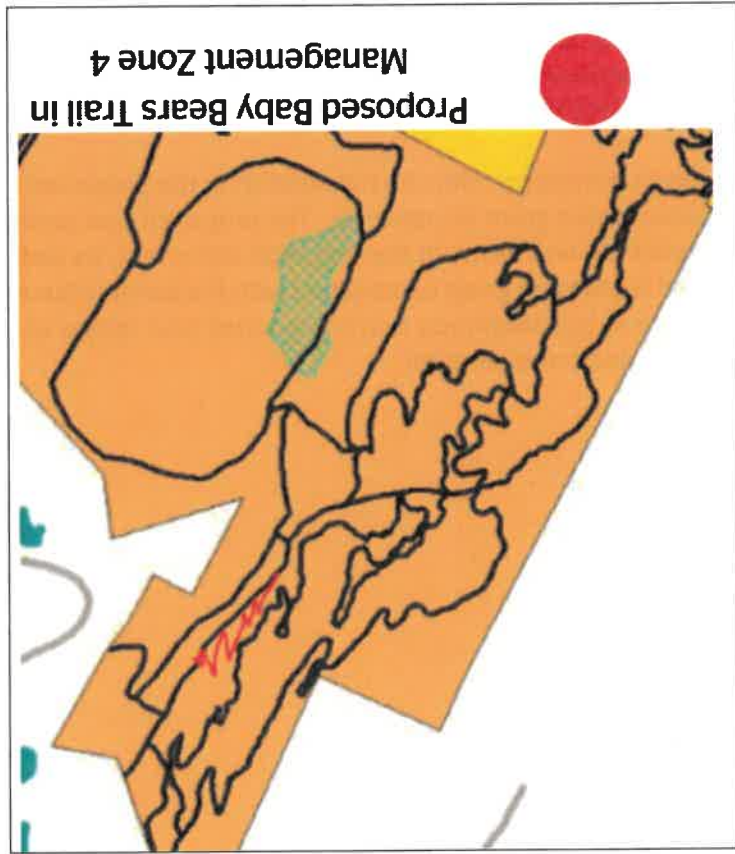
The Commission conducted two site visits with Stowe Trails Partnership ("STP") to understand the trail location, anticipated conditions, and how the proposal relates to the approved Cady Hill Management Plan and terms of conservation easement. The Town has a Memorandum of Understanding with STP which designates the club as the trail corridor manager for all trails in Cady Hill Forest that are suitable for mountain biking. 'Baby Bears' is designed to be a beginner, bi-directional trail that lies between the existing Macutchan Trail and Bears Trail. The proposed trail is approximately 0.27 miles in length with an average grade of approximately 1.8%. The proposed trail is intended to be a true beginner friendly alternative into Cady Hill, to take the pressure off of the adjacent Macutchan trail.

Following review, the Commission offers its full support of the proposed trail and recommends the Selectboard grant its approval. The proposed trail conforms with the Cady Hill Management Plan and terms of conservation easement, as well as carries out the community's adopted recreation goals established with the current Stowe Town Plan. I will be available to answer any questions you may have during your review of the trail proposal. Thank you for your time and consideration.

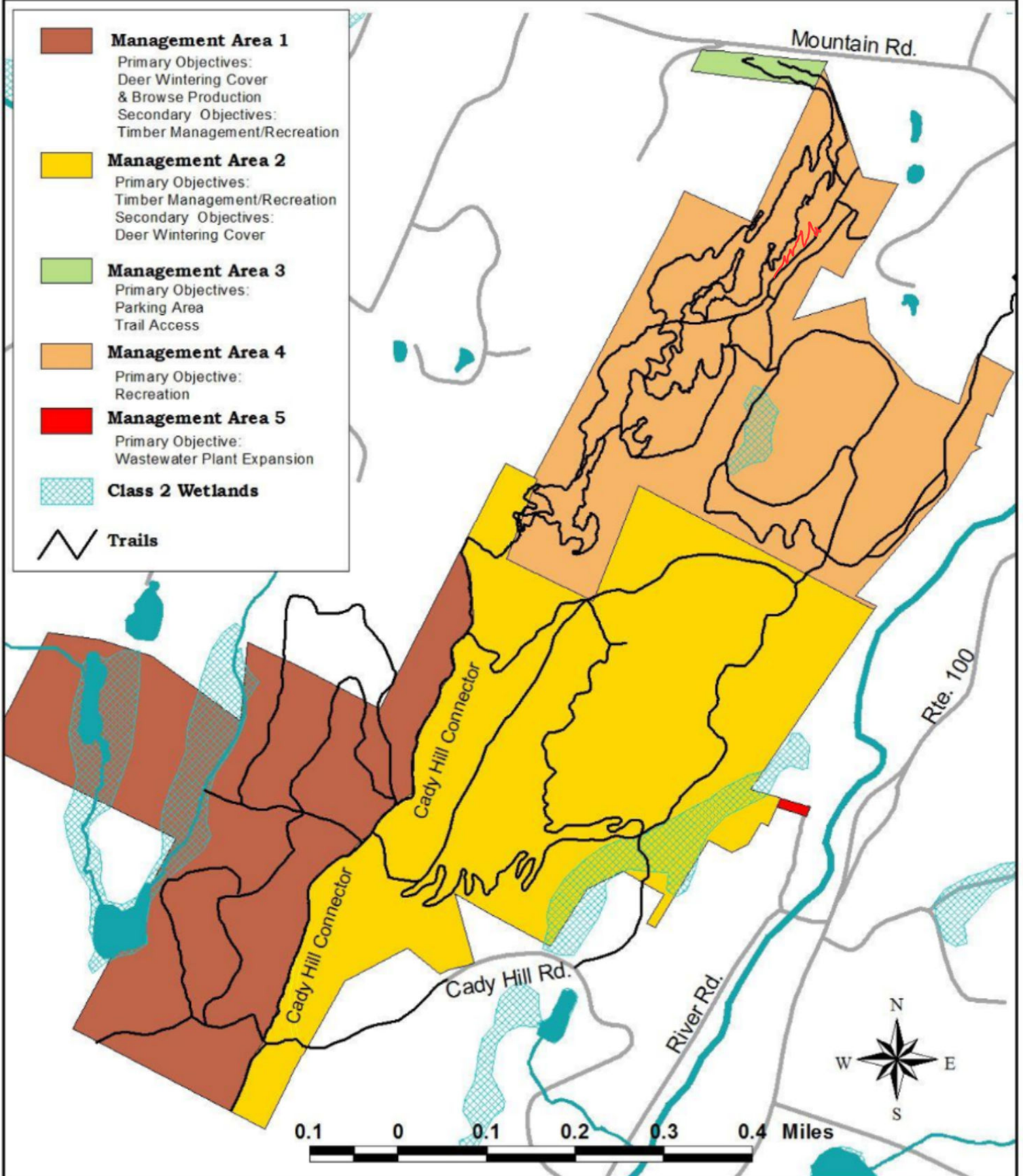
Sincerely,

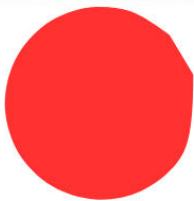
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Catherine Gott".

Catherine Gott, Chair
Conservation Commission



Cady Hill Forest Management Areas





Proposed Baby Bears Trail in
Management Zone 4

Distance: 0.27 miles
Elevation: 74 feet
Grade: 1.89%

 Proposed Trail



Baby Bears Proposal



Stowe Trails Partnership Stewardship: Stowe Trail Partnership follows the following “Pillars of Sustainability” when performing maintenance on existing trails or developing new trails. These three Pillars are Environmental Sustainability, Social Sustainability, and Economic Sustainability:

- **Environmental Sustainability** means that all trails are designed and managed to minimize impacts on the environment. This includes managing the flow of water, not allowing trails to be widened or eroded, keeping them out of important habitats, etc.
- **Social Sustainability** refers to giving trail users what they want and expect. For example, creating a trail to a viewpoint allows users to access this viewpoint without creating their own trail, or a “social” trail. This also refers to ensuring appropriate styles of trail are located through the network, such as “flow” trails, climbing trails, smoother tread, rougher tread, etc.
- **Economic Sustainability** refers to not just the cost of building and maintaining a trail, but the economic impact these trails can have on the local economy. It is important not to overspend on the maintenance of a trail, so ensuring proper design is important. Trails can also be a big draw for tourists to visit Stowe and support local lodging, food, and other businesses in and around town.

Location: Cady Hill Forest - Management Area #4

Description: Baby Bears lies between Macutchan, a double-track trail currently used as access for vehicles when necessary (emergency or maintenance) and an alternative entrance/exit to Cady Hill from the main parking lot on Route 108 and Cady Hill Lodge, and Bears, a directional downhill intermediate mountain bike trail. Baby Bears, a proposed bi-directional beginner trail, is approximately .27 miles long with an average grade of 1.8%. Stowe Trails Partnership is proposing this trail as a true beginner friendly alternative into Cady Hill, while taking pressure off of Macutchan that follows the fall line in a straight line. There are several water bars on Macutchan to help with erosion, which require constant maintenance and often fail due to the steepness of the grade, the width of the trail, and the amount of water that it collects.

Purpose of Proposed Trail: Macutchan in its current form is a difficult trail to climb on foot or bicycle. It is not frequently used by any trail users due to its straight and fast design as well as the erosion and water running down the trail. The plan would be to create a dollar-sign-style (\$) trail northwest of Macutchan to address these issues. Macutchan would remain to keep vehicle access for trail maintenance and emergency services, but a new tread would crisscross, meeting the old trail, but not venturing onto Bears. This would also allow those traveling by bike or foot to have a reduced grade to ascend or descend at a safer pace. Adding switchbacks and traversing the hillside instead of going up the fall line will allow water to shed more sustainably. Even with the old trail remaining, the new switchbacks will help water shed off the trail instead of running straight down it.

This new proposed trail will also provide an easier entrance and exit to Cady Hill Forest from Route 108, something that STP has been working toward for years, and is a common point of feedback from our members. Bear's and the current iteration of Macutchan are not suitable for beginners to exit to the Route 108 parking lot. Cady Hill Climb and Macutchan are steep, even for more advanced riders in terms of an entrance to Cady Hill Forest. Hikers tend to prefer a straighter shot, so leaving the old version will benefit those looking for that style of trail, and enhance true multi-use recreational dispersion in this zone of the Cady Hill Forest. The "S" shape of the trail will provide a safer and more speed-controlled ascent/descent for those looking for an easier route. This trail will not only provide an easier entrance/exit, but will allow for groups of trail users looking for varied difficulties to travel the same direction and skill/fitness level appropriate trails.

An additional benefit is that there will be greater access to reduce the number of invasive species of plants that have cropped up in the wake of the 2017 storm.

Below is an example of what the final trail might look like. This is not a GPS-accurate route of exactly what will be built, but is one of the suggested options that this work could result in. A more detailed route will be flagged in the spring of 2024. As the track shows, the grade would be reduced from a 7% grade to less than a 2% grade. The final product would be very similar to this in layout and location.





Cady Hill Forest Trails



Cady Hill Forest Parking Lot



Other Access Points



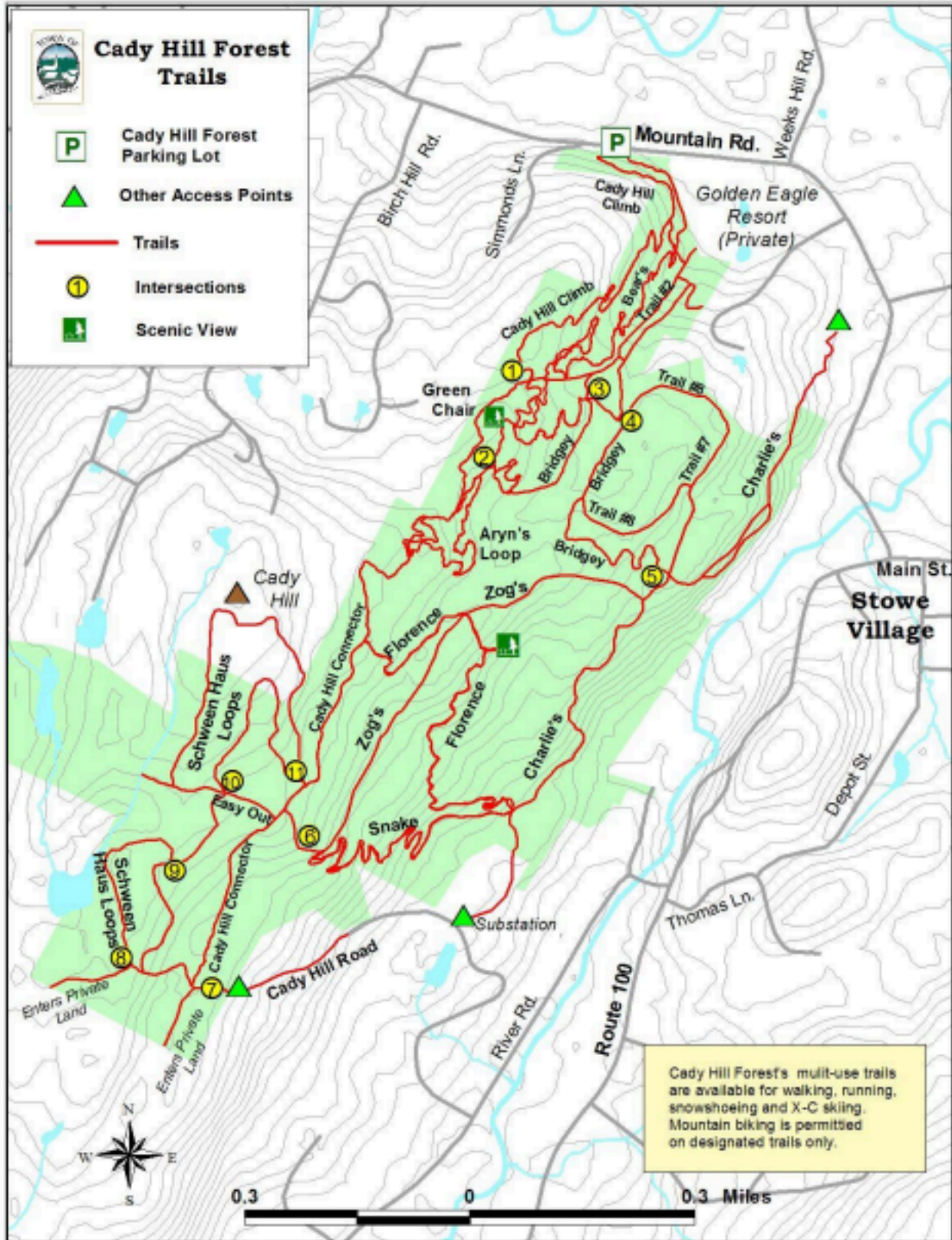
Trails



Intersections



Scenic View



Cady Hill Forest's multi-use trails are available for walking, running, snowshoeing and X-C skiing. Mountain biking is permitted on designated trails only.

