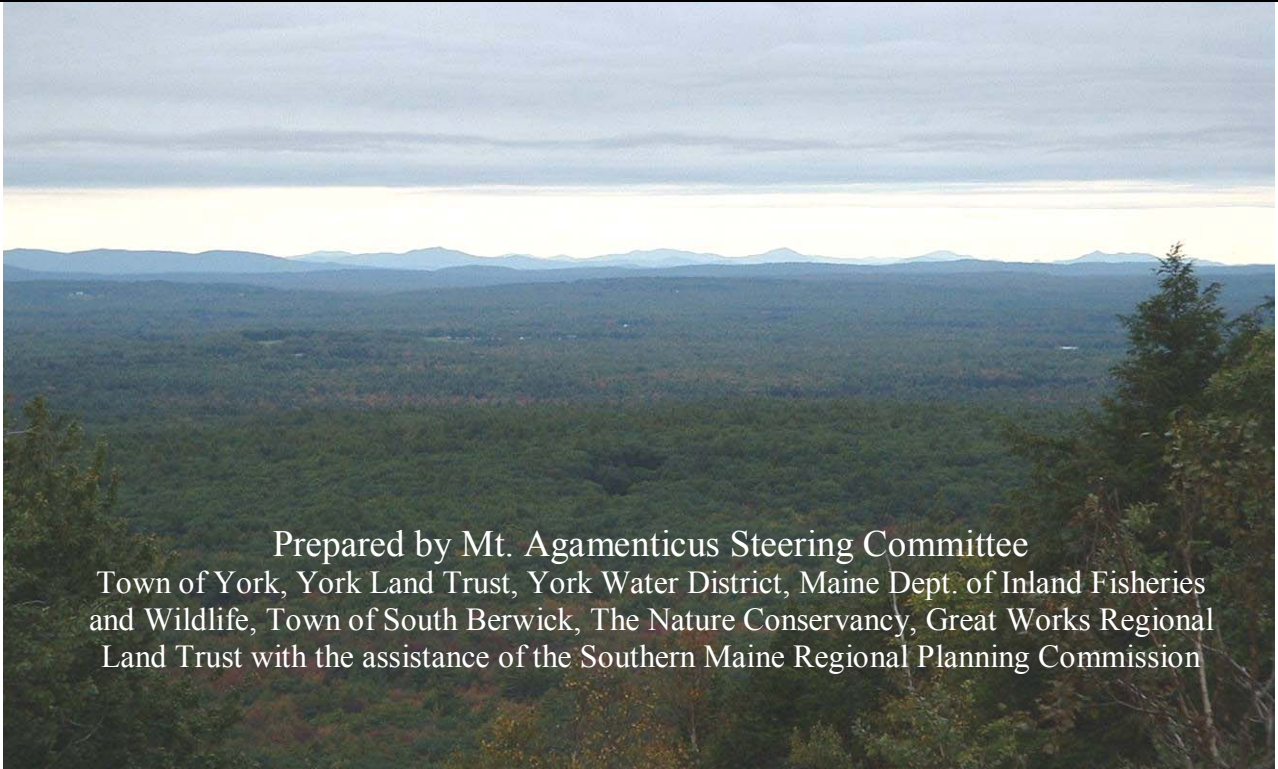


---

# Mt Agamenticus Summit Guidelines for Usage 2009



Prepared by Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee  
Town of York, York Land Trust, York Water District, Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries  
and Wildlife, Town of South Berwick, The Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional  
Land Trust with the assistance of the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	2
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MT. AGAMENTICUS STEERING COMMITTEE.....	3
Introduction.....	5
1. Mission Statement and Vision for Summit. ....	6
2. Visitor Services .....	7
a. Parking .....	7
b. Sanitary Facilities .....	9
c. Informational Kiosks/Signs at Summit and Access Road .....	11
d. Interpretive Kiosks/Signs .....	12
3. Lodge .....	13
a. Short-Term Lodge and Summit Use.....	13
b. Long-Term Vision for Lodge.....	15
4. Summit Area .....	16
a. Vegetation .....	16
b. Views .....	16
c. Existing and new structures within the Summit Management Area.....	17
d. Towers.....	18
5. Process and Administration.....	19
a. Role of Mt A Steering Committee.....	19
b. Privately and publicly funded improvements.....	20
c. Funding and Operations .....	21
d. User Fees.....	23
Appendix A .....	Summit Management Area Map
Appendix B .....	2008 Visitor Use Survey and Traffic Counts
Appendix C .....	Guidelines for Use
Appendix D.....	Invasive Plants & Control Methods
Appendix E .....	2008 User Fee Survey

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF MAJOR RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE MT.  
AGAMENTICUS STEERING COMMITTEE**

1. It is essential to provide for more stable funding mechanisms for the conservation program at Mt A and look at long term operating, capital planning and maintenance items. Establish subcommittee to explore funding operations, plan implementation, conservation program and maintenance within the Summit Management Area.
2. Begin a comprehensive planning process for determining a long term vision and plan for the lodge, Summit Management Area and trails systems including location of parking areas, use of the lodge, a view and landscaping plan, water and wastewater issues, examining traffic flow and vehicular access to the summit as well as other issues. The comprehensive plan will thoroughly examine all existing structures such as ski equipment, the rock pile, decks, and memorials.
3. All proposals for new structures, kiosks, signs, parking facilities, sanitary facilities, memorials, landscaping and other related items within the Summit Management Area shall first go to the Mt Agamenticus Steering Committee for review, comment and recommendation. Following that the proposal should follow the appropriate town and/or landowner process as warranted. The Committee shall review proposals using the Mission Statement for the Summit Management Area (as included in this plan) as an initial “filter” and then forward recommendations to the Board of Selectmen or YWD Trustees for final approval.
4. Develop guidelines and criteria for all new structures or landscape material for the Summit Management Area. For example, new structures or buildings must be attached to existing structures or buildings when possible. Provide a comprehensive list of needed facilities and structures that the Steering Committee would recommend (including kiosks, signs, native plants, etc.) that can be provided for through private donations.
5. Make the summit and its surroundings an environmental/green showpiece by requiring all new proposals for structures and facilities within the Summit Management Area be of low environmental impact (composting toilets, permeable parking areas, moving parking out of the watershed for example) be energy efficient and be comprised of natural materials.
6. Additional bathroom facilities – secure and enclosed – need to be provided at the summit and entrance road. In the short term continue to provide two seasonal portable toilets at the summit and build an enclosure at the entrance road to house one more. In the long term replace these with more permanent composting toilets. Examine opportunities to move these facilities out of the watershed.
7. The summit lodge should be transformed from a private function hall based facility to a public educational facility that highlights the resources and history of the Mt A region.

8. Activities at the lodge – guided by concerns about water availability and sanitary facilities – shall be limited to a maximum of 35 people and shall be based on the guidelines for lodge usage as outlined within the plan.
9. As part of the overall transition of the lodge from an event facility to an environmental education facility, assess the opportunities to create a more visible and accessible office and contact station for the conservation operations, transition the existing conservation office into a small community based function room for school and community groups and better utilize existing space.
10. As a pilot project in the near future, close and lock the gate at the bottom of the access road in the evening and provide access with special permission after hours for approved groups and individuals.
11. Based on usage figures for 2008, develop a pilot project for a non-resident fee system, beginning in 2010.
12. Establish a moratorium for the Summit Management Area on private donations for new structures, signage, and other objects until a list of needed items and a gift acceptance policy has been developed.

## **Introduction**

**The Mt Agamenticus Summit Plan - Guidelines for Usage** is a product of discussions amongst the Mt A Steering Committee, the public, interested stakeholders and was created with funding and the generosity of the Piscataqua Garden Club.

The Mt Agamenticus Steering Committee consists of representatives of:

- The Town of York
- The Town of South Berwick
- The York Land Trust
- The Great Works Regional Land Trust
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
- The York Water District

For approximately ten years these agencies have been working together in a collaborative fashion to address trail planning and maintenance, usage, and public information needs of the Mt A region and the nearly 11,000 acres of privately and publicly held land that surround it. Much of this land is used by a number of different groups and individuals, in a number of different recreational pursuits. A great deal of attention has been paid to trail planning and signage, identifying trails for certain user groups and seeking funds to make improvements to those trails. Importantly, most visitors begin and end their pursuits at the summit of Mt A or at the bottom of the Mt A access road.

The summit area is an approximate 8 acre open crown atop Mt. A, and includes tow parking areas, an old ski lodge, viewing platform, barn, and 5 trailheads. However, these Guidelines apply only to (i) land owned by the Town of York, and (ii) land owned by the York Water District used for the access road, and the entrance parking area that is subject to the May 12, 1980 Agreement between the Town of York and the York Water District (recorded at the York County Registry of Deeds in Book 2651, Page 118), collectively referred to throughout these Guidelines as the “Summit Management Area”. A map generally depicting the Summit Management Area can be found in Appendix A.

It has recently become apparent that the Summit Management Area is in need of additional attention. Figures below and in Appendix A, demonstrate the increased usage of the Mt A Summit. Additional structures have recently been added to the summit and more requests seem to be forthcoming for towers, added structures, signage and memorials. All of these requests are taking place without a plan or process in place for protecting the scenic, ecological and historical integrity of the summit and it’s surroundings. The increased events, structures and use have created a need to examine how the Summit Management Area is managed and to create a vision which might result in short and long term guidelines for use at the Summit and lodge. In sum, the popularity of Mt A for both active and passive recreation and as a stunning venue for other activities, has begun to degrade the focal point of the Mt A region – the summit itself.

**Guidelines for process and usage at the summit can not only be beneficial to the town of York and it's partners, but to those individuals and agencies wishing to propose uses and structures at the summit – either by donation or other means.**

A recent Visitor Use Summary (2008) with accompanying information can be found in Appendix B. A brief portion of that survey states the following:

*A total of 735 visitors were recorded on the mountain throughout the survey, which averages out to 105 people per day (over 7 days in July and August).. There were 251 cars, 10% with bike racks, which equals a daily average of 36 cars. There were also 72 bikes, 1 ATV, and 58 dogs total. The average group size was 2.4 people, the same value as in 200).*

*The crew obtained slightly less than 200 individual surveys. They showed that 36% of people were first time visitors, while 31% visited once to a few times a year. The other 33% constituted frequent users – meaning they visited at least once a month. Over a third of the visitors heard about Mt. A. from a local resident or because they themselves were local residents. 'Word of mouth' and 'friend or family' received 19% and 14% of the answers, respectively. In addition to those totals, 7% heard from the Internet, 6% heard from summer residents, and 4% of people saw it on a map. The 'other' category had 10% of the answers, with guidebooks and simply seeing it being the most common answers*

These numbers only account for activity over short time periods for these days during the summer. Extrapolating these numbers over the spring, summer and fall would result in significant amounts of visitation.

In fact, traffic counts conducted in October (also found in Appendix A) found 462 trips to the summit on Sunday, October 12th (Columbus Day weekend). On Sunday, 8/17 the number of trips was less but still notable at 133.

It is important that these surveys continue not only this year but in all years to follow. More detailed information will also be required regarding parking and trail usage in the upcoming year to more fully inform some of the steps needed to guide visitor activity on the summit and entrance road area. These are noted in the sections to follow.

It is also important to note that more far ranging decisions (beyond the scope of this plan) are needed as far as facility planning, parking and signage are concerned. For instance, there have been discussions that the Mt A Entrance Road intersection might one day be the formal starting point for many activities.. Trailheads may be added and/or removed in other areas. These and other decisions will impact many of the ideas discussed by the Steering Committee. In the end, this plan presents some guidelines, both short and long term, for usage at the summit and the area surrounding it, to provide decision makers and those responsible for it's maintenance the assistance they need to preserve the integrity of the mountain and its surroundings.



## **1. Mission Statement and Vision for Summit.**

The following mission statement was adopted by the Steering Committee and forms the basis for much of the plan that follows:

*The Mt. A Summit Management Area will be used to educate and present to the public the many uses and aspects of the Mt A region and its recognition as one of natures "Last Great Places." As the gateway to the Mt A region, the Summit Management Area shall reflect the history and culture of the area, its importance to water quality and the physical and economic health of the region, its nationally recognized diversity of plants, animals, and habitats, the many recreational opportunities and finally the collaborative nature of the organizations and people who cooperatively manage the area.*

Many of the guidelines for use, visitor services, and longer -term recommendations are based on the vision the Steering Committee has outlined above. In fact, this broad vision will be used as the lens by which appropriate uses of the Summit, lodge and immediate area will be determined and existing or possible future conflicts will be resolved.

It is important to note that the sole drinking water source for the Town of York is Chase's Pond. Kittery Water District has four additional water supplies in the region supplying drinking water to the Towns of Kittery, Eliot, and a small portion of York. Much of the water in Chase's Pond begins its journey as rain or snowmelt on Mt. A. Water quality from the Mt. A region and control of increasing recreational activities in the area are therefore of highest importance and a serious concern to the Districts since they must supply clean, safe, affordable drinking water to thousands of area residents on a daily basis. With this in mind, the Steering Committee acknowledges that water quality concerns must be a primary consideration in contemplating management of the summit and surrounding area. It is also the intent of the Steering Committee that the summit showcases the commitment of the town of York to green technologies, building and environmental sustainability. These ideas are provided throughout these guidelines.

## **2. Visitor Services**

### **a. Parking**

#### **Parking at Summit**

The summit area itself contains about 65 to 70 parking spots (including the area near the old horse stables). On days of normal summer or fall use, parking at the summit is not a big problem. If an event is taking place concurrently with a beautiful summer or fall day, however, parking capacity does become an issue.

Parking at the summit itself should be restricted to the existing parking areas (see Appendix A for aerial photo). These include the large lot to the south of the lodge (lot 1)

and the left above the former horse stables (lot 2). The area below this and directly in front of the stables is considered overflow parking (lot 3). This area has also been considered for a group area or pavilion -which would serve to eliminate this area for parking.

Parking should be discouraged near or in front of the lodge except for handicapped parking; loading and unloading for approved uses; or deliveries to the lodge for instance. Parking outside of the parking lots, on landscaped or planted areas should be restricted. Signs should be considered to highlight appropriate parking locations, including signage and appropriate locations for handicapped parking. Handicapped parking would also be appropriate near the newly installed handicapped sanitary facility.



At the current time, particularly with the guidelines to follow, parking should be adequate for uses at the summit. However, monitoring of parking conditions should take place during peak times for documentation of the times and any possible capacity problems. The Steering Committee should begin a discussion of where additional parking might take place at the summit based on this review.

Any new parking areas within the Summit Management Area shall be located outside of the York Water District watershed and shall be designed with Best Management Practices (BMP's) to minimize storm-water runoff and impacts from storm-water. This might include new products such as more permeable paving and/or pavement products.

In addition, due to the narrow and difficult alignment (hairpin turns, etc) of the access road, diesel fumes, and safety the Steering Committee has discussed restricting school buses, tour buses and/or RV's. This should be assessed in the coming summer and fall to determine issues associated with bus and large vehicle usage.

#### Parking at Mt A Road Entrance

Parking is over capacity at the base of the mountain during high use periods in the spring, summer and fall months. How much parking and where is an issue that should be analyzed and discussed during the upcoming year (2009/2010). This will require some additional observations during the course of the summer as to the extent of the parking problems, at what times and whether they represent public safety issues. The parking issue at the Mt A Road entrance will also be part of the long term discussion of trail



usage and guiding uses to alternative locations. Additionally there may be ways to change parking to take it out of the watershed area.



### **Recommendations on Parking and Access at Summit and Access Road**

1. Conduct a parking capacity assessment during peak summer use periods including number of vehicles and locations. (ongoing)
2. Steering Committee shall make recommendations on possible new parking configurations during the winter of 2010 including changing parking location to bring it out of the watershed.
3. Steering Committee shall make recommendations on types of parking products that can minimize storm water runoff (2010)
4. Assess parking capacity, safety, and water quality considerations at entrance road during summer season and make recommendations during winter 2010.
5. Request appropriate signage (such as pedestrian crossings, etc if deemed necessary)
6. Establish handicapped parking place near new sanitary facility at summit.

### **b. Sanitary Facilities**

#### **Sanitary Facilities at Summit**

The size, location and condition of the current on-site septic disposal system for the lodge is unclear. This represents both a short and long term concern. Portable bathrooms have been available for public (outdoor) use over the years. In the summer of 2007 there was only one portable toilet placed at the summit. An additional enclosed portable toilet has recently been added. Based on the use and visitation at the summit, (not counting lodge

use) this seems clearly inadequate – particularly during events and large outdoor group functions, such as visiting school groups. An additional portable toilet has been provided at the summit during the summer and fall.

One concern with the portable toilets is the potential for vandalism (ie. tipping over the facility) and impacts on water quality. Any portable facilities will be built with vandal proofing in mind and requires Water District approval if located within the watershed.

The indoor facilities are found in the basement of the lodge and have only been available for private use (including special functions). While there have been few reported problems with these during periods of high use at the lodge, water supply becomes an issue (reduced flow) and can impact the capacity of these facilities.

In the short term, and with clear budget limitations on adding facilities to the Summit, it appears that the existing indoor sanitary facilities will have to suffice. As changes in the use of the lodge take place (discussed later), improvements to the sanitary facilities within the lodge will also likely occur. This should be studied in the immediate future and related to the future plans for the lodge.

In the long term and as part of a longer- range vision for the summit, the Steering Committee would like to see permanent composting toilets placed near the lodge for use by visitors and groups using both the lodge and outdoor facilities. Cost estimates for these sanitary facilities are attached to this document. The locations of these will be determinant upon the plan and timing of any possible improvements to the lodge (discussed below).

With both wastewater and water supply issues it is clear that an engineering assessment on the existing septic system, it's limitations and future options as well as a hydrological assessment for the buildings and water needs should be a priority. That should take place in the near future and should line up with future plans for the lodge.

#### Sanitary facilities at Access Road

Historically, there have been no sanitary facilities at the access road entrance to the mountain – an area which is the hub of many activities. It has been extensively noted by trail crew members and others that the woods are basically serving as a rest room at the access road entrance with potential threats to water quality as a result. As noted by the Conservation Coordinator and others, a portable facility at this location would be desired and should be put in place as soon as possible. The York Water District has approved and requires construction of a temporary structure to hold a portable toilet this year. This is considered a short- term option.

For a longer term option, the Steering Committee and the York Water District will require composting toilets be placed at the access road and at the summit. The Water District would also like to see these facilities enclosed to prevent vandalism and mitigate

any water quality concerns. The cost of these toilets is considerable and would likely require a collaborative approach to funding. However, the Steering Committee feels such facilities would send a positive message concerning the vision for the Mt A region.

### **Recommendations on Sanitary Facilities at Summit and Access Road**

1. Continue to examine the viability and cost of composting toilets for the summit (2009/2010)
2. Research with local civil engineers and town staff the issues with the current wastewater disposal facilities at the lodge (2009/2010).
3. Prepare recommendations for both short term (with lodge as currently used) and long term (with lodge as nature center/educational facility) sanitary facilities (summer 2010)
4. Place a portable toilet in enclosed facility at Mt A entrance road area for summer 2009.
5. Analyze possible costs and cost sharing for two composting toilets at the entrance road in conjunction with composting toilets at summit (2010)

### **c. Informational Kiosks/Signs at Summit and Access Road**

Informational kiosks and signs providing information on parking areas, trail head locations, hours, and Guidelines for Use (See Appendix C) among other items, shall be somewhat uniform in appearance, reflect the natural environment to the maximum extent possible and be of a size that does not intrude on the environment. A number of different standards exist for outdoor signage in natural settings. The Steering Committee should make a recommendation on those standards in the coming months. Locations of signage shall be determined by the Steering Committee. Signage should be limited to that which is necessary for providing needed information to the public. The Steering Committee feels that public postings and/or flyers should not be permitted on kiosks, sign or bulletin boards.

All signage should be compliant with ADA requirements to the maximum extent possible. Such requirements shall be kept on file in the Conservation Coordinator's office.

The Steering Committee also feels more informative signage at the Mt A Road entrance defining additional trails at the summit and also detailing rest room locations could help deal with some of the issues described above.



## Recommendations for Informational Kiosks and Signage

1. Review and approve sign standards based on similar conservation reserves/facilities (i.e. National Park, State Parks, Nature Conservancy, etc) (summer 2010)

A nice guide can be found at:

<http://www.americantrails.org/resources/ManageMaintain/MgmtPubLandSignsCO.html>

2. Prepare information for distribution to donors and others regarding these approved standards, restrictions and relationship to mission. (summer 2010)
3. Follow design guidelines established above for any signage at entrance road
4. Provide summit information at entrance road (such as trails, rest rooms etc,) to reduce unnecessary trips to the summit.

### d. Interpretive Kiosks/Signs

As described in the mission statement, the focus of the summit and its immediate surroundings will be to educate the public to the natural resource diversity, history and recreational opportunities of the Mt A region. With that said, there is now and will continue to be a need for education and interpretation of what makes Mt A special.

While it is not the intent of the Mt A Steering Committee to discourage individuals or groups from donating interpretive materials, the Steering Committee does believe that oversight of the content and location of these kiosks/signs is needed. Thus we are recommending that any interpretive signs/kiosks (including content, design and location) be approved by the Steering Committee prior to placement. Those wishing to donate or propose an information sign or kiosk should refer to the mission statement at the beginning of these guidelines or see attachment with a list of giving options.

It should also be pointed out that any approval by the Steering Committee of signage and kiosks does not preclude the need for any permits or approval needed from the town of York.

## Recommendations for Interpretive Kiosks and Signs

1. Develop standards for interpretive signage similar to that discussed above (2010)
2. Develop a summary sheet explaining process for donation of interpretive signs or kiosks (such as town approvals needed if any, relationship to mission, Steering Committee approval, etc)





#### e. Informational and Interpretive signage

All informational and interpretive signage should be of a uniform design. The Mt A Steering Committee should endorse that design (either based on the existing signage or a new design). Once again any additional interpretive signage should inform the mission as described in the beginning of this document. Informational signage should be restricted as to what is absolutely needed to direct visitors and to provide essential information. Advertising or promotional signage is / should be discouraged.

By way of example, existing informational and interpretive signs include; a kiosk; trail boxes; welcome sign; native tree walk; fire tower memorial; picture posts; viewing platform display; hiking/foot traffic only signs; St Aspinquid; conservation office/workshop signs and others. These provide a partial list of the types of signage that would be considered appropriate for the summit and base of the mountain.

#### **Recommendations on Informational and Interpretive Signage**

1. Provide list of acceptable donations of kiosks and signage as described in prior paragraph (2009/2010)
2. Provide forms and summary process for approval of informational and interpretive structures/signs.(2010)

### **3. Lodge**

#### a. Short Term Lodge and Summit Use

Essentially, the uses at the lodge are proposed to remain as currently reflected in the guidelines outlined on the following page. These guidelines have been reviewed by the Mt Agamenticus Steering Committee who feel that such guidelines meet the intent of the mission statement outlined in the beginning of this report.



**Mt. A & Lodge/Surrounding Property Recommended Functions  
2009 Season**

<b>Allowed (Lodge) <i>35 attendees or less</i></b>	<b>Exclusions (Lodge)</b>	<b>Allowable (Outside) Non Lodge Usage</b>
School Groups (York & Other Towns)	Large Groups (40 or more)	Group picnics/cookouts
Meetings/Civic	Weddings (lodge & outdoor)	Small Corporate Groups
Educational Programs	Reunions; Graduations; "Parties"	Ceremonies (no receptions allowed)
Not-for-Profit	*Overnight camping (lodge & outdoor)	
		<b>Parameters</b>
		Designated area
		Low Impact (stress conservation)
		Leave No Trace
		Self-sustaining:
		No running water
		*No amplified sound
		**Must provide portable toilets when carrying capacity exceeds what is on site
		Carry In, Carry Out
		No Alcohol
		Area is always open to public
		Limit number of attendees (100)
		No open fires/ok if provide grills (gas grills ok)
		No vehicles on lawn (except for handicap)

\*Previous approval by Parks & Recreation Director      \*\*Dependant on number of attendees and length of stay & placed in designated location

**Revised 3/31/08-rls Internal use only – not for publication**



## **Recommendations on Short Term Use of the Lodge and Summit**

1. Formally adopt the chart above as a means of controlling uses at the summit. (2009)
2. Publicize these restrictions in appropriate places such as on the website, in kiosks, and other public places(2010)

### **b. Long Term Vision for Lodge**

The following ideas relate to the long term plans for the lodge – which obviously will require greater resources than are now available for the Summit. Furthermore, these ideas and recommendations will need to be fully explored through a more focused planning process than we have undertaken.

The types and amount of use of the lodge facility has been the source of considerable discussion amongst the Steering Committee and people associated with the mountain. At this point, there is support for transitioning the use of the lodge away from an event facility to an educational facility with the ability to hold small and specific functions which are compatible with the mission adopted by the Steering Committee. The use of the lodge is actually influenced by a lack of water - during periods of high use (generally more than 35 people at a time) the well at the lodge can literally run dry (1 gallon per minute).

The long term vision for the lodge (which will obviously require a yet to be determined funding source), is to develop an educational facility that will serve to further the mission and highlight the biological and cultural features of the Mt A region as well as providing a smaller venue for community events or activities. The Committee discussed at length the need to balance attracting more people to the summit and lodge and maintaining the integrity of the summit and it's relationship to the surrounding resources.

The Committee envisions a passive nature center at the lodge, with fairly modest displays and that is primarily self-guided in nature. This would be less costly from a capital planning standpoint and also less expensive to operate in the future. The displays and their tone would incorporate the resources that make Mt A special as well as the spirit of cooperation that is found within the participating agencies and towns.

The Steering Committee also felt that reducing car and bus traffic to the summit should also be discussed as a long term goal.

Ideally, the Committee would envision moving the Coordinators Office to the current tenant space and use the existing office space for meeting space for small groups. These discussions should take place as part of the larger vision for the summit and access. Issues related to vandalism and night time use of the summit also continue to be a concern. The Committee felt that possibly establishing a pilot program on locking the gate at night might help determine whether this restriction is worth the time and effort

involved The Committee also discussed meeting with the Water District on the use of the former Highland Towing property. Possible plans might include housing the summer work crew at such a location - although there are a number of issues associated with that possibility.

In the end, the Committee hopes to see a gradual transition of the Summit and Lodge from an event/party location to something educational in nature.

### **Recommendations on Long Term Use of the Lodge and summit**

1. Transition the lodge and summit from an event based facility to an environmental educational facility.
2. Assess the needs of the conservation program and the space available at the lodge with the idea of creating meeting space and a conservation office.
3. Seek additional funds for developing displays and other environmental/educational options.

### **c. Vegetation**

Only native plants are proposed to be used for landscaping. These decisions will be made for the most part by the Conservation Coordinator. For larger landscaping projects, it is suggested that the landscaping plan come to the Steering Committee for review. This might be an informal decision (to bring to the Committee) by the Conservation Coordinator.

There is an established protocol for the removal of existing invasive vegetation developed with assistance from the Invasive Plant Atlas of New England (IPANE), and the York Conservation Commission. (See Appendix D) The removal of invasive plants that is currently underway shall continue with oversight by the Conservation Coordinator.

### **Recommendation on vegetation**

1. The Conservation Coordinator should review the current and/or proposed landscaping protocol with the Steering Committee. (2009)
2. The Conservation Coordinator shall provide the list of plants developed with assistance from the University of Maine Cooperative Extension and the Maine Natural Areas Program that could be used (through purchase, donations, etc) at the summit. (2009).
3. Establish a protocol for invasive plant management (2009).

### **d. Views**

One of the most noted features of Mt A are the views available to the mountains in the north and the ocean to the east. A number of visitors have responded that they would like to see more vistas either created or at a minimum be retained. It is suggested that the Steering Committee examine opportunities for a limited number of new viewsheds and

how best to maintain those that are currently found at the summit. Currently, native plantings are grasses, perennials, or shrubs that grow no taller than 6-10 feet. This might be adopted as a standard. Additional information on significant viewsheds can be found in the 2004 Mt Agamenticus Conservation Plan. These views should be used as a reference.



### **Recommendations on views**

1. The Steering Committee should solicit input on what notable viewsheds to develop and/or maintain. (2009/2010)
2. The Steering Committee should initially seek assistance of certified foresters on the best management techniques for developing and/or maintaining these viewsheds and have the plan reviewed by Woodlot Alternatives (or other contractor) along with the Conservation Commission & Code Enforcement . Preferably volunteers can maintain the work. (2010)

#### **e. Existing and new structures within the Summit Management Area**

A number of structures can currently be found in the Summit Management Area. These include older structures such as the fire tower, the stables, ski lifts, ski equipment, the lodge, the rock pile, etc. Other newer structures have recently been placed in the Summit Management Area such as the viewing platform, fire tower memorial, donation tubes an observation deck and new cell tower arrangements. The aerial photo in Appendix A highlights the current location of some of these structures.

Existing structures (and those items which might be considered something like a structure, such as the rock pile) within the Summit Management Area should be

evaluated for their relationship to the mission, whether they may present a safety concern and whether they serve some public purpose.

As with other interpretive and signage related improvements, structures should inform the mission outlined in the beginning of this document. While the Steering Committee encourages private donations (of both structures and dollars for structures) the Committee plans to develop a comprehensive list of structures and other items needed within the Summit Management Area which will contribute to the mission. Not only will the Steering Committee review the content or intent of any new structure but their placement will be examined as well. There is a concern regarding the visual impact of ill planned structures and their placement in the Summit Management Area. The Steering Committee will be taking this into account as they review new structures.

One of the most important criteria (in addition to the need for the structure) will be whether the structure can be attached or consolidated with other existing structures within the Summit Management Area such as the stables, other towers, the lodge, etc.

Any considerations by the Steering Committee do not take place in-lieu of the formal permitting process of the town of York – whatever they may entail for the structures proposed.

The Mt A Steering Committee would like to emphasize their support and encouragement regarding private donations of signs and structures. However, due to what can become an unmanaged process the Committee is hoping to devise a more systematic process for receiving and locating these donations.

### **Recommendations on structures**

1. All new structures within the Summit Management Area shall first be reviewed by the Steering Committee for a recommendation - prior to an application through the appropriate land owner. (ongoing)
2. All new or expanded structures within the Summit Management Area shall first be reviewed as to whether they can be attached or consolidated with existing structures.
3. Establish protocol for managing and evaluating existing structures within the Summit Management Area.

### **f. Towers**

The towers within the Summit Management Area also were the subject of lengthy discussions. While the thought of unobstructed views within the Summit Management Area are appealing, the Committee acknowledges that the towers are a source of critical funding that supports conservation efforts on and around the summit. It was also noted that no additional revenue stream was apparent for replacing those funds if the towers were to be removed. In the end, the Committee

recommended that a task force or committee be established to examine the options as far as consolidating the towers within the Summit Management Area, providing for revenue and including an examination of impacts on wildlife from any future tower expansions and/or consolidations.



#### Recommendation on towers

1. Establish a committee to look at options for consolidating towers, leases, needs, revenues and impacts of the towers within the Summit Management Area.

#### **4. Process and Administration**

##### **a. Role of Mt A Steering Committee**

Decisions on what is needed for trails and uses at the summit, parking, sanitary facilities, structures, signage is not as clear cut. Over the past few years additional structures, markers, and other items have been added to the summit without any guidelines in place. As the summit is limited in area, the Steering Committee felt that the landscape of the summit itself could be eroded without any controls put in place. To that end the Steering Committee recommends that a review system be designed for the placement of structures, and any landscape or infrastructure changes at the summit.

The Mt A Steering Committee has been filling this role in an understated fashion since 2000. The Mt Agamenticus Steering Committee is comprised and represented by the following organizations:

1. A representative from the town of York
2. The town of South Berwick
3. The York Land Trust
4. The Great Works Regional Land Trust
5. The Nature Conservancy
6. The Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
7. The York Water District

The Steering Committee meets once a month (the third Thursday) to discuss issues regarding the lands around Mt A., finances, future plans and how to accommodate the usage of the area. Individual land owners and/or agencies have the final word on any uses/restrictions/structures that may be proposed for their properties.

The Steering Committee believes their role needs to be legitimized. The Steering Committee's role to review and make recommendations on structures, uses, infrastructure, landscaping and other issues noted throughout this document to the appropriate agencies or decision making bodies should be formalized through adoption of this plan and agreement by town Boards and decision makers.

#### b. Privately and publicly funded improvements

As noted above, privately funded improvements should be reviewed by the Mt A Steering Committee and also receive any necessary approvals from the town of York. The Steering Committee has listed the following as needs – either new or replacement items:

- Kiosk
- Trail boxes
- Wayside exhibit
- Bridge/boardwalk
- Benches
- Picnic tables
- Native garden with signs
- Pavilion

Improvements funded by either the town of York or the partners of the Mt A Steering Committee should also be reviewed by the Steering Committee. Funding town improvements will obviously follow the normal town processes as far as review and approval. Partner funded projects will be dealt with by each specific organization and then proposed to the Steering Committee as a whole as far as content and location.



Any structures, signs or other improvements will need to follow the town of York Zoning Ordinance and other applicable land use and other town codes. The Steering Committee's role is outlined in the administration section below.

**Recommendations on Mt A Steering Committee and privately and publicly funded improvements**

1. For privately funded improvements, the Committee shall specify the number and (if appropriate) type, as well as the possible location of each item listed above which might be accepted as a donation. (2010)
2. All improvements shall first be reviewed by the Steering Committee prior to review by the appropriate town agencies.

c. Funding and Operations

The summit and lodge at Mt A is owned and managed by the town of York. The entrance road, the lower parking area, and the upper parking area are on lands owned by the York Water District. The two organizations work together to jointly provide for use of the area based on an existing agreement between the Town of York and the York Water District dated May 12, 1980.

Funding for needed infrastructure (such as sanitary facilities, parking, signs, etc) at the summit and access road comes from a combination of town of York funds, grants and Steering Committee partner funds as well as private donations.

Funding for improvements at the summit itself are provided through the town of York, private donations and grants.

Funding for the Conservation Coordinator and trail crew is a cooperative effort as follows:

**Mount Agamenticus Conservation Program  
Operating Budget**

**Expense Amounts:**

Conservation Coordinator Salaries	44,905
FICA	3,693
Retirement	3,368
Health Insurance	6,350
Conservation Crew salaries	35,000/year w/4-6 members
Stewardship/Project Supplies & Materials	<u>8,000</u> /year for four years
Total	101,316

**Income:**

**Partner Revenue Sources:**

Town of York	25,000/year
Town of South Berwick	4,000/year
Great Works Regional Land Trust	4,000/year
York Land Trust	4,000/year
The Nature Conservancy	7,000/year
York Water District	6,500/year

**Additional Revenue Sources Planned:**

Recreational Trails Program	29,000 (secured)
Maine Outdoor Heritage Fund	9,900 (secured)
Private Donation	10,500 (pledged for 2008)
Donations (other)	1,000 (estimated)

**Inkind Support:**

Volunteers contributed more than 740 hours of volunteer labor in FY08-  
representing an approximate \$6,000 value.  
We expect to sustain or increase these numbers in FY09.

Total    100,900

Most of these dollars went towards sustaining the trail crew and Conservation Coordinator position and working to maintain trails, develop information and assist users at or near the summit.

Funds provided for capital improvements, supporting infrastructure (such as signage, bathrooms, etc) come from the Enterprise Fund generated from tower revenues.

It has become increasingly clear to the Steering Committee that a long range plan for operating, maintenance and capital items needs to be established for the summit of Mt A. Currently a great deal of the funding is grant dependent as well as requiring large amounts of the Coordinator's time in applying for funds for both grants and other outside agencies.

### **Recommendations on Management and Funding**

1. Working with appropriate local officials from York, the state and other towns and non-profit groups, develop mechanisms to provide for long term funding for operations, maintenance and capital items at the summit.

#### **d. User Fees**

The Steering Committee also felt that user fees needed to be examined in the near future although they declined to make a recommendation that these fees begin this year- even on a trial basis. The Steering Committee felt that more outreach and education would be needed before instituting a fee program. Issues concerning who would be exempt (York and South Berwick residents or the towns in the Mt. A region for instance), how they would be collected and how much to charge are a few of the issues to be resolved. It is clear however, that revenues will likely be needed in the near future to maintain the area and continue the work of the Conservation Coordinator and crew. An idea of the general reaction to user fees can be found in Appendix E (based on surveys during the summer of 2008).

Currently donations are solicited in a passive manner through donation tubes. Money raised through this mechanism has been minimal.

It should also be noted that data on traffic counts and other information collected during the summer will be valuable to establishing a possible user fee system. This information is currently being developed.

#### **Recommendations on user fees**

1. Develop a pilot program on user fees to be implemented on a trial basis in 2010 or 2011.