

# 2023 Update

## Mt. Agamenticus Public Access and Trail Plan

*For the*  
Mount Agamenticus Steering  
Committee

*2012 Plan Prepared by the*  
Southern Maine Regional Planning  
Commission

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## **Introduction**

The Mt. Agamenticus Conservation Region comprises over 15,000 acres of public and quasi-public lands in York County, the most heavily populated county in Maine. The area supports the largest assemblage of species at or near the northern limit of their range within the state and contributes significantly to Maine's biological diversity. Mt. Agamenticus is also a popular recreational destination for the sub-region as well as for recreational enthusiasts from Massachusetts and New Hampshire. The area is dramatically growing in popularity, and more and more people are expanding their recreational pursuits beyond Mt. A's "First Hill" (the focus of the 1999 plan).

### Purpose and Scope of Plan

A cooperative planning process has been established to develop a trail management plan that will allow continued compatible public use of the expanded area while protecting the significant natural features of the site. This process is supported by a diverse group of partners who wish to see the area used in an appropriate and sustainable fashion.

The purpose of the project is to develop a visitor use and trail management plan with a particular focus on recreational use and access for the public, quasi-public and non-profit conservation landholdings within the defined area. These lands are owned by the Town of York, the York Water District (YWD), the state of Maine managed by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW), The Nature Conservancy (TNC), the Great Works Regional Land Trust (GWRLT), the York Land Trust (YLT) and the Town of South Berwick.

### Cooperative Management

The project is overseen by the Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee (MASC) comprised of representatives from each of the non-profit organizations and public agencies with fee holdings noted above. While the mission of these groups varies, the goal of resource preservation (whether it be water, wildlife or natural features) and maintaining safe and sustainable public access for recreation is a common theme. A Conservation Coordinator position aids the Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee in guiding the sensible and sustainable use of the Mt. Agamenticus area. The Coordinator manages a Conservation Program, two part-time year-round staff along with seasonal stewardship staff and volunteers that carry out trail improvement, habitat restoration, and environmental education projects while carefully balancing water quality, wildlife and recreation.

This update to the Public Access and Trail Plan will allow the Steering Committee to implement trail and public access development projects without compromising the integrity of the area's ecologically significant habitats.

## **I. General Overview**

Mt. Agamenticus has been the subject of a great deal of attention since the early 1970s. At that time, a proposal for a 3000 unit condominium/planned development was presented to the Towns of South

Berwick and York. Both towns soundly rejected the plan. In so doing, a focus on the Mt. Agamenticus region began which ultimately led to land purchases, studies, additional land purchases and finally the establishment of the Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee and this planning effort. In reality, the Mt. Agamenticus planning effort has been in process for over 50 years.

### Ownership

In 1979, approximately 84% of the land was privately owned, either by individuals or corporations; with 64% (13,300 acres) owned by 550 individuals and 20% (4,000 acres) by 14 private corporations. The remaining 16% (3,000 acres) was in semi-public ownership. Of the 3,000 acres in semi-public ownership, the York Water District owned about 1,500 acres, and the Kittery Water District owned about 1,500 acres.

As of 2022, approximately 15,200 acres, 63% of the land located within the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region, are either in public, quasi-public, or non-profit ownership (See Appendix F Map 1 – Greater Mt Agamenticus Conservation Lands).

### Acquisition History

Since the late 1800s, the York and Kittery Water Districts have been acquiring lands to ensure the protection of drinking water supplies for the residents of York, Kittery, and Eliot. The residents of southern York County also have a long and impressive history of conservation. Since the 1970s, engaged and concerned citizens have helped to protect land from Wells to Kittery. York residents, for example, voted to spend \$200,000 in 1980 to protect the summit of Mt. Agamenticus, which was slated for the development of 3,000 residential housing units on 3,500 acres.

Between 1999-2001, The Nature Conservancy, Great Works Regional Land Trust and the York Land Trust completed The Mt. A. Challenge, a conservation effort that raised over \$3.2 million and protected 1,652 acres of land around Mt. Agamenticus. This combined with previously protected land resulted in a total of 5,529 acres.

The successes of the Mt. Agamenticus Challenge, combined with the increasing threat of development, inspired the formation of the current land protection effort: the Mt. Agamenticus to the Sea Conservation Initiative (MtA2C). This coalition of ten national, regional and local partners representing federal and governmental agencies, statewide land protection organizations and three local land trusts have collectively protected an additional 5,200 acres of land since October 2002. The group continues the mission of protecting a network of connected conservation lands and natural resources within a 48,000-acre focus area in Southern Maine for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Collectively, the region has more than 10,700 acres of permanently protected lands. These lands, combined with the York and Kittery Water Districts' 4,500 acres, make up nearly 15,230 conserved acres of open space within the MtA2C focus area.

## Trail Management Area

The area encompassing the scope of this project is situated in southern York County, Maine, approximately 65 miles south of Portland, and straddles the line between the Town of York and the Town of South Berwick. One-third of the area is located in South Berwick and two-thirds in York.

The Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region is a roughly rectangular shaped parcel of land 6 miles long by 5 miles wide containing about 20,530 acres generally bounded on the east by Josiah Norton Road, Clay Hill Road, Greenleaf Parsons Road, Chases Pond Road and Scituate Road; on the southwest by State Route 91; on the west by Witchtrot Road and Emerys Bridge Road; and on the north by Bennet Lot Road and Ogunquit Road. The planning area for this effort has a narrower focus to include just the areas north of and approximately 2,000 feet west of Mountain Road and excluding the Kenyon Hill preserve, encompassing nearly 4,400 acres of conservation land that contains approximately 15 miles of managed trail. (See Appendix F Map 2 – Mt. Agamenticus Trail Management Area by Conservation Land and Trail Use Type)

There is good access to all sections of the trail management area via perimeter roads and other smaller roads that bisect the area. The majority of the terrain in the area is gently rolling to steep with about 92% of the land forested and dotted with numerous ponds and streams. Near the center of the area, rising 692 feet above sea level, stands Mount Agamenticus, the highest point on the coastal plain of southern Maine; Second (rising 555') and Third Hills (rising 526') lie just to the northeast.

## Previous Studies

The development pressures on and surrounding Mt. Agamenticus along with an increased awareness of its regional significance prompted a series of planning efforts focusing on the natural resources, water quality, and recreational benefits of the region. These studies included the following:

- **1979 Mount Agamenticus U.S.D.A. Cooperative Study**, prepared by the Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission and United States Department of Agriculture.

The 18-month study collected, organized, and analyzed information to assist the communities in making decisions about the future concerning ownership and control of the area; management of the water, land, forest, fish and wildlife, and recreational resources of the area; and location and distribution of new residential development. The major recommendations of the study called for key parcel acquisition on an available basis, more public and private resource management, stronger land use controls, and increased regulation of new housing.

- **Toward a Mount Agamenticus Reservation** by Tri-Town Agamenticus Coalition, 1988, A Proposal to Land for Maine's Future Board.

The three towns involved in the proposal for a Mount Agamenticus Reservation were York, South Berwick, and Eliot. The original proposal to the Land for Maine's Future Board included an area from Ogunquit Road in South Berwick, southwestward over Third Hill and Mt. Agamenticus, encompassing areas such as Round Pond and Warren Pond in South Berwick, extending further southwestward through the Kittery Water District lands and the York Pond area in Eliot. Due to the size (and potential costs) of

the project, the scope of the project was reduced. In late 1989, the state gave this application the highest rating of the initial group of applications, and purchase and sales negotiations began soon after that.

- **Mount Agamenticus Chronology 1997** by Roger P. Cole for the Town of York, May 1997.

This 25-year chronology compiles in a single volume, the information, decisions and actions concerning the Mount Agamenticus property. It also provides valuable information from the Town of York's perspective on the thoughts and deliberations that went into the town's purchase of the top of Mt. Agamenticus.

- **Mount Agamenticus Public Use and Trail Management Plan, 1999**, prepared by Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission for the Mt A Steering Committee

By 1999 and after years of acquisitions, it became obvious that Mt A was becoming more well-known and popular for a wide variety of recreational pursuits. The increased usage raised fears that many of the features – such as rare and endangered plant and animal life, water quality and the miles of wilderness near the populated coastline – would be lost without some guidelines for use in place. The existing public and non-profit land holders took this charge and with funding from a number of sources began the development of the Mt Agamenticus Trail and Usage Plan.

Trails were GPSed and mapped. The trails could then be viewed in their relationship to existing resources. The different existing trail uses were determined. Problem areas related to erosion and water quality were identified. Access points were mapped and areas where trails crossed private lands were noted. Finally guidelines for trail use were developed including some restrictions on ATV, bike and equestrian uses. Major trail improvements were identified including approximate costs.

The resulting Plan was adopted by the Steering Committee and served as the vehicle for grant applications and the resulting funding as well as the establishment of the Trail Coordinator position and the collaborative funding of that position by the various municipal and non-profit stakeholders. By all accounts the management of the uses within the Mt A region has led to fewer conflicts among users, less damage to the natural environment and the resources for which the area is known while also providing for a rich variety of recreational pursuits.

It is clear however, that the time is right for an update of what is now a twelve year old plan. Mt A is still a popular destination and visitors to the mountain have increased since that time (according to traffic counts conducted near the entrance to the summit road). The Steering Committee has also noted that it is critical to protect not only the natural resources of the area while providing for recreation, but also to protect the investments that have been made to the trails (such as bridges, erosion control measures, signage, etc). This plan is a logical step from that effort in 1999.

- **A Conservation Plan for the Mount Agamenticus Region, 2004**

This plan lays forth the community's vision of timely and effective strategies to achieve lasting conservation results within the 33,000-acre Mt. Agamenticus region. It was developed with extensive public input from a broad range of citizens and stakeholders- including landowners, conservation

commission members, recreational users, a forester and other resource professionals, town Selectmen, and others.

This plan was developed using a planning process in which a group of core conservation values are identified; conservation goals are set for these targets; the major threats to these targets are evaluated; and strategies to reduce the threats and achieve conservation goals are developed. The strategies and accompanying recommendations that are put forth are the result of a year-long planning process.

- **Mount Agamenticus Summit Guidelines for Usage**, 2009, by Mt A Steering Committee with assistance from Southern Maine Regional Planning Commission.

Increased use at the top of the mountain in addition to a number of new structures being located at the summit became a concern for the Steering Committee during the time frame of 2005. With a small grant for the Piscataqua River Garden Club, the Steering Committee developed a plan for the Summit that outlined a process for new structures, addressed use at the lodge, access and parking and additional signage. The Plan outlined a process for the Steering Committee to address many of the activities – both existing and potential uses – as essentially the “gatekeeper” for maintaining the character of the Summit itself. The Committee developed the following mission statement to guide decision making on the Summit:

*The summit of Mt A 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 nature’s “Last Great Places.” As the gateway to the Mt A region, the summit 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.*

See Appendix A for the Executive Summary of the adopted Summit Guidelines for Usage

While not specifically a use and trail plan, these recommendations should be seen as part of the general overall approach in addressing use and visitation at Mt A.

- **Mount Agamenticus Public Use and Trail Management Plan**, 2012, prepared by Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission for the Mt A Steering Committee

Mt A is still a popular destination and visitors to the mountain continue to increase. The Steering Committee remains committed to working collectively to protect the natural resources of the area while providing for recreation, and to protect the investments that have been made to the trails (such as bridges, erosion control measures, signage, etc). Moreover, with plans underway to expand and improve parking at the base and summit of Mount A and install composting toilets and possibly a user fee, now is the time to address and re-prioritize some of the deferred maintenance and work to define access points outside of the, until now, more traditional or popular locations to access the area. This plan is an update from the 2012 effort.



- **Mt. Agamenticus Strategic Plan**, 2015, with assistance from Carol Wishcamper, Organizational Development Consulting and Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission for the Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee.

MASC developed a plan to help balance the competing goals of conservation and public access/education, with the summit of Mount Agamenticus (First Hill) as the focus for people wanting to access trails, visit the Learning Lodge and attend programs. With these major infrastructure improvements coming to the summit and its immediate environs (the creation of the universal access trail, parking, and restroom projects), the Steering Committee has re-identified the summit area as a Town of York Park. This frees Second and Third Hills to remain focused on conservation and more clearly defines which parts of the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region are for visitor orientation and outreach and which are intended primarily for a more wilderness-like experience and as habitat for wildlife.

- **Mt. A Parking and Traffic Flow Needs Study**, 2016, Prepared by Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission for The Town of York Parks and Recreation Department

Southern Maine Planning and Development Commission (SMPDC) was contracted by the Town of York Parks and Recreation Department in the summer and fall of 2016 to collect data for a parking and traffic flow needs study at the Mount Agamenticus Park. SMPDC placed out traffic data counters on the access road, and also placed cameras at both the summit and base to view parking patterns during two separate weekends.

## **II. Regional Significance, Natural, Cultural and Scenic Resources**

### General

The Mt. Agamenticus area is one of the few remaining large tracts of relatively undeveloped woodland in coastal New England. Interspersed among the forested area are numerous wetlands that include the highest concentration of vernal pools – up to 40 vernal pools per square mile - and pocket wetlands in Maine which provide important feeding and breeding habitat for several state-rare species. There are 12 animal species and 21 plant species found in this area that area considered rare in Maine. In addition, the Mt. Agamenticus region has been identified as a focus area of statewide ecological significance with 9 rare and exemplary natural communities and 3 significant wildlife habitats identified by the Maine Natural Areas’ Beginning with Habitat Program. Five watershed systems have tributaries which originate in the area, and the towns of York and Kittery depend on the Mt. Agamenticus region for their drinking water supply. The rugged topography and granite outcrops have contributed to the low rate of development and lack of forest fragmentation in the area.

A 1979 Mount Agamenticus U.S.D.A. Cooperative Study and two Site Conservation Plans developed by the Maine Natural Areas Program and MDIFW, and by The Nature Conservancy collected and compiled considerable information about the regional importance of the area and the natural, cultural and scenic resources that are present here. See Appendix B for the Inventory of Natural Resource Features within the Mt. Agamenticus Conservation Region.

### **III. Public Use, Access and Recreational Resources**

#### Past and Current Uses

The region has a long track record, shaped, and reshaped by the many people that have come through this area. A walk down old logging roads reveals evidence of past land use practices such as stonewalls, old gravesites, foundations, and rock piles.

Native Americans settled the Mt. A region along coastal waterways, using the Mt. A region for hunting, food gathering, agriculture and ceremonial purposes. By 1630, with beginning of European settlement in the York area, Mt. A supported colonial industry, such as timbering and farming. Streams were dammed for sawmills and gristmills. Substantial timber harvesting continued to occur around Mt. A and throughout the state after the colonial era. Well into the 1800's, Mt. A continued to be used as a common grazing ground for cattle and sheep.

Mt. A itself has undergone many additional changes in modern history. From the early 1900's, the U.S. government recognized the strategic value of Mt. A. In 1918 the U.S. Forest Service constructed a fire watchtower at the summit, replacing it in 1981. The 1981 tower remains in operation today, run by the York Beach Fire Department. In the 1940's during the World War II years, the U.S. Army established the country's first radar tower on Mt. A. The 551st Signal Battalion manned the station, with 25 men housed in barracks on the summit. During the winter of 1944, a fire on the summit destroyed the army complex. Footings of the radar tower are evident today. In the early 1960's, construction began for "The Big A Ski Hill." In December 1964, The Big A opened with a rope tow, T-bar, and a chair lift, with capacity for 25,000 skiers per day. Due to warm Atlantic winds and low snow-packs for consecutive winters, the ski operation shut down in 1974. Remnants of ski lifts can be seen at the northern base of the mountain, the base of Sweet Fern Trail, and the summit.

Prior to the last trail management plan, both the summit and the former ski slopes were experiencing tremendous amounts of stress due to impacts from ATV's and horse-back riding, and to a lesser degree mountain biking. As a result of the management plan, restrictions were put in place to exclude ATV's and horses from the trails on and leading to the summit of Mt. A and later all three summits. In addition, three trails on Mt. A, or "First Hill" were limited to pedestrian use only. Parking areas and trailheads were defined. An informational brochure with map was developed to guide visitors around to designated trails. Kiosks and trail boxes were constructed and installed at access points around Mt. A to display the trail map and other important information. Trails on First Hill were marked, remediated, or closed to improve drainage, protect sensitive habitats, and reduce fragmentation.

Today, the area is a popular destination for sightseers and outdoor enthusiasts with an estimated 50,000 annual visitors. Typical authorized uses in the Mt. Agamenticus Trail Management Area and on the summit access road include: Pedestrian (Walking/Hiking/Jogging/Dog Walking), Bicycling (Mountain Biking –long distance/down hilling- shuttling/road cycling), Equestrian (base backside parking and multi-use trails), ATVs to include dirt bikes (on Mt. A's multi-use trails only), Hunting (mostly outside of First Hill), Bird watching (trails, road, summit), Rock Climbing, and winter activities such as Skiing (backcountry, telemark, Nordic or cross country), Snowboarding, Snow shoeing, and Sledding. Other

common uses occurring primarily at the summit include sightseeing, picnicking, kite flying, various ball games, frisbee, bird watching, hawk migration bird counts, school & summer camp activities, and ceremonies.

Pedestrian trails are located throughout the Conservation Region. Mountain biking is permitted on almost all trails within the region with exceptions being the few specifically designated Hiking-only trails leading to the summit of Mt. A. ATV's and horses are currently permitted to use large portions of the public lands within the area (shown as multi-purpose trails). There are restrictions on usage around the summits of Mt A, Second Hill, and Third Hill.

It should be noted that the York & Kittery Water Districts do allow the use of ATV's (by permit only) but do not allow dirt bikes. Trails on York and Kittery Water District property south of Mountain Road are not shown on the published Trail Map.

### User Surveys

Each year the conservation crew surveys visitors and trail users at several sites around Mt A. The survey is used as a tool for gathering and analyzing data pertaining to the visitors of the Mount Agamenticus conservation region. The survey captures historical data that is tracked annually relating to individuals and their purpose for visiting. Data is also used to evaluate the public's opinion of the condition of trails and facilities and overall operations in the Mt. A. region. Additionally, every participant is asked for general feedback regarding recommendations or suggestions to enhance the visit to Mt. A.

In 2021, we spoke with 1,567 visitors in 613 total surveys. We received an additional 115 online surveys, bringing the total survey count to **728** and individual visitor count to 1,908. This is an increase of 209 surveys over last year, which was the first year we offered an online option.

In 2020, possibly due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, we did see a decrease in first-time visitors to Mount A, 36.42% of those surveyed. In 2021, however, there was an increase. 42.72% of surveyed visitors were here at Mount Agamenticus for the first time. Of those first-time visitors, 13.18% were local, living less than fifty miles away. The majority of our visitors this year (57.28%) live 50 miles or further away from Mount Agamenticus. Local visitors (those living within 50 miles of Mount A) make up 41.76% of those surveyed.

Frequent visitors were asked to think critically about the trails they use, and if they think there are areas where trails could use improvement. Of the 146 frequent visitors who answered this question, 28.77% said that directional signage clarity could use improvement; 24.66% noted rocks and roots on the trail, 28.77% said that blazing and designated use indicators could be improved, and 21.23% thought that standing water and drainages were an issue. Another 82 people (56.16% of all those who answered) said that there was nothing they thought could use improvement. Another 14.38% of those who answered noted other issues not included on the survey, including downed trees, excessive "fluffing" in the closing and blocking of social trails, issues at parking areas, and other concerns that were not necessarily related to trails, specifically.

The study showed that most visitors this year (70.19%) come to hike the trails, but this is a decrease of 5.15% from last year. Sightseeing was up by 1.03% from last year, however, in 2020 we saw a 7.71%

decrease from 2019, so this is still low compared to previous years. Walkers and dog walkers make up 31.73% and 17.58% of those surveyed, respectively. Mountain bikers make up 9.89% of trail users surveyed, cyclists 2.88% (a decrease of 1.17% from 2020), and ATV users 2.61%. Other uses this year include birding (7.55% an increase of 1% over last year); participating in public programs or visiting the Learning Lodge (3.98%, a slight increase) running (7.83%, a decrease of just over 1% from last year), and winter activities including cross-country skiing, 1.79% and snowshoeing, 4.95% of those surveyed. See Appendix C for a complete summary.

## Trends

Anecdotal observations were gathered from staff and volunteers who have been involved over the last 15+ years implementing the previous trail management plans. Here are some of the highlights:

- Overall, less vandalism/dumping/trash/new or reopening of unauthorized trails/unauthorized use of designated trails

There seemed to be a surge in the unauthorized reopening and use of previously closed trails in 2020. This was likely due to the extra time people had during the lockdown phase of the pandemic and brought more people to the outdoors who don't have an understanding of the land ownership, management, or policies. Since the first Public Access and Trail Plan in 1999, except for 2020, vandalism, dumping and the creation of new unauthorized trails/unauthorized use of designated trail is down. This is likely due to the increased presence of staff, law enforcement, signage, and immediate action to repair, clean up, and/or closing of impacted areas. The reduction may also be due to increased awareness, acceptance of management goals and strategies and some theorized that because the area now looks cared for and well maintained it may send a different message about how to treat it. However, this activity is still an ongoing threat, will continue to be a problem with increases of development pressure, and requires continued attention.

- Less need for Search & Rescue

Although visitation had a dip in 2020 the trend shows that use is on the rise. Despite this, Mt. A staff, York Water District Patrol Officer & local Police/Fire Departments are receiving fewer calls requesting assistance or reporting that people are lost. The exception is a spike during the height of the Covid 19 pandemic when many of the visitors to the area were new the area and to outdoor recreation. The decline in calls is likely due to improved and expanded trail maps, trail markers/blazes and directional signage on Mt. A and a coordinated effort with Mt. A Steering Committee, York Water District, and Kittery Water District to design and install a standard trail marking system complete with new trail signage, color-coded blazes, gates, etc. in the expanded area beyond "First Hill".

- Less complaints/ user conflicts; Increase requests for use-specific trails

The public seems to be more accepting of trail use designations (compared to when the first management plan was implemented in 1999). Now we infrequently find evidence of ATVs riders using trails designated as non-motorized. There is still evidence of mountain bikers using the handful of hike-only trails and evidence of mountain bikers using the old ski glade (now closed). Overall, people are using trails appropriately or for designated purposes. Though we are not receiving reports of user conflicts or complaints about shared trails, we have had an increase of requests for bike only trails and complaints about dogs off leash and/or pet waste left behind.

- Sustained trail conditions

This is especially true on “First Hill” trails where we have made a priority focus area for trail improvements due to intense visitation. Since the first trail plan crews and volunteers have installed and constructed numerous dirt dips, knicks, outloping/deberming, boardwalks, rock pavers, etc. Visitors have noticed and often praise the improvements. We have received feedback in the form of unsolicited comments directed toward the crew, in emails, and during visitor use surveys. But the trails are old, were not built for long-term sustainability and continue to be impacted by weather and increased use. They will continue to require annual routine maintenance and occasionally will require remediation to recover lost sediments or alternate rerouting to allow sections to heal.

- Increased visitor awareness

Public awareness & support have been demonstrated through unsolicited praise given to crew when seen working on trails, comments during visitor use surveys, active participation on volunteer workdays, monetary contributions, and thru town referendum/vote to support programs and invest in infrastructure improvements. This may be attributed to seeing results of work completed on the ground, reading signage & outreach materials in trail boxes, brochures, kiosks, on the website, during presentations, and/or in press releases. Outreach greatly improved by the conversion of the summit lodge into an educational facility now referred to as the “Learning Lodge” in 2010. The Lodge is open during the warmer months to the public on weekends and to school groups, summer camps and other organized events scheduled throughout the week.

- Increased use by visitors, schools, summer camps, organized groups

We are seeing more and more individuals and groups take advantage of the summit, trails, and Learning Lodge. Though we are better able to track this use through a voluntary group registration and permitting system, it is still unclear how many people visit each year. Trail traffic counters are being investigated at key access points. It would be beneficial to be able to track use at all access points more accurately moving forward and as a use fee is implemented on Town of York owned and leased land. Increased use is likely due in part to increased visitor awareness (from above) and our outreach efforts, but also due to increased information sharing on the internet, social media sites and apps such as All Trails, Maine Trail Finder, Strava and more.

It is clear that in the last 20 years conditions in the Mt A Conservation Region have improved considerably. Natural resources are better protected, severe impacts continue to be mitigated (particularly erosion on the former ski slopes and the unfettered creation of new trails), and user conflicts are diminished. This can be directly attributed to the adoption and continuing implementation of the initial Mt A Public Access and Trail Management Plan (1999) by the Mt A Steering Committee partners. It is also evident that these efforts have created users that are more conscientious of the area’s unique resources and potential allies in supporting its stewardship.

### Trail Assessments

The conservation crew assesses the conditions of the recreational trails in Mount Agamenticus Trail Management Area on a regular basis. These assessments are used to create annual work plans.

Since 2012, more trails have been named and incorporated into the management area. In addition, the availability and capability of mapping technology has dramatically improved, making it more efficient to document trail conditions than ever before. To utilize these new resources, a detailed assessment of all recognized trails in the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region was conducted throughout the summer and autumn of 2022. This assessment expanded the previous assessment of 17 trails to 31 trails and can be found in Appendix D.

### Boundary Survey & Mapping

Boundary survey work is underway and ongoing. As parcel data is updated, mapping efforts follow. This work will help determine what areas will be shown on future public brochure and maps. It will also help determine where trailhead information can be provided.

## **IV. Goals and Management Guidelines**

The following statement of goals and management guidelines express the Committee's long-term intent in managing the area. They form the basis for the policies, actions and proposals included in this plan.

### 1. General

- Collect new GPS data for parcels, trails, and resources and maintain current GIS files.
- As land is acquired review all trail connections and designate trails for future use.
- Incorporate future management plans into recreational planning process.
- New trails shall be discouraged; however, if a new trail is proposed, it shall be reviewed by the Steering Committee.
- All publicly and privately sponsored recreational trail programs and event proposals shall first go through a Special Use Permit process. Sponsors will report to the Steering Committee the location and extent of their programs prior to undertaking such uses. The Steering Committee shall provide guidance on where and when such activities might take place.
- Develop and implement interpretive programs designed to increase public awareness and interest in the conservation program and resource preservation.

### 2. PROTECT AND ENHANCE Natural Resource and Cultural Features

#### Rare Plant and Animal Protection

- No new trails shall be developed within 250 feet of a point identified by the Maine Natural Areas Program as the location of a rare, endangered, or threatened species.
- If any new trail is proposed, its proximity to rare and endangered natural features or species will be examined and comments sought by natural resource professionals, to include MDIFW partners, on such a location.
- Existing trails which are located within 250 feet of such locations shall be reexamined on a yearly basis to determine any adverse effects upon the rare, threatened, or endangered species.

- Updated data on listed animal species and Best Management Practices shall be incorporated into the trail planning process.

#### Rare Plant Communities

- No trails shall be established within rare communities associated with wetlands (such as the Atlantic White Cedar Swamp, the Perched Hemlock/Hardwood swamp and wetlands associated with Welches Pond) or other exemplary plant communities.
- Any new trails proposed within other rare communities shall be reviewed by the Steering Committee.
- Continue to develop and implement removal plans for invasive non-native plant species.
- Updated data on listed plant species and Best Management Practices shall be incorporated into the trail planning process.

#### Hydrology

##### Watersheds

- GIS system updates shall be incorporated into the trail planning process.
- Horse trails shall be kept out of the direct watershed for the York Water District.
- Current Water District regulations shall be incorporated into the trail planning process to include ATV use, prohibitions on camping, fires, and fishing, etc.
- The Water District shall continue to report patrol logs and finds to the Steering Committee on a monthly basis.

##### Streams and Tributaries

- Stream crossings shall be limited to the maximum extent possible, and one shall be eliminated if two crossings occur in close proximity.
- Any proposed new trail shall limit and avoid stream crossings, if possible.

##### Wetlands and Vernal Pools

- Trails crossing wetlands shall be bridged, rerouted and/or eliminated.
- No new trails shall be established over identified wetlands.
- If “spidering” of a trail has occurred to avoid a wetland, the trail over the wetland will be closed and the new trail established as the permanent trail.
- Existing trails located within 25 feet of a vernal pool shall be relocated around the vernal pool except for the Rocky Road boardwalk and display.
- No new trails shall be established within 100 feet of a vernal pool.
- Vernal Pools shall be reexamined as new guidelines and classifications become established.

#### Soils & Terrain

- New trails or rerouted trail sections shall avoid slopes of 25% or greater and have a tread out-slope of ~2-3%.
- Any new trail or rerouted trail section should be less than ½ the grade of the hillside, with a maximum average of 10% slope for the entire trail. Tread grade for individual sections should be kept to 15-20% or less when possible or 25-30% or less on bedrock or hardened surfaces.

- Use of ATVs and electric bikes classes 2 and 3 shall continue to be excluded from the trails that lead to the summits of all three hills to minimized exposure on steep slopes.
- Existing trails that show severe signs of erosion shall be evaluated for possible rerouting.

### Cultural

- Identify significant cultural resources within or adjacent to trail corridors.
- Register known historic and archaeological sites.
- Protect historic and archaeological sites from disturbance by trail development and visitor use.

### 3. MANAGE area for long-term trail sustainability

- Preserve and maintain existing infrastructure of trails and related facilities.
- Manage for level 1-4 trail priority (see Trail Functional Classifications)
- Seek to increase funding resources.
- Continue to actively recruit a dedicated volunteer base to supplement staff and to assist in trail maintenance and outreach goals.

### 4. ENSURE Positive Visitor Experiences

- Maintain high maintenance standards and conduct routine inspections of trails and related facilities for safety.
- Provide varied and enjoyable recreational opportunities such as trail circuits, loops, links when able (local, regional, statewide)
- Provide varied, up to date, and quality educational opportunities, programs, and tours.
- Identify and address any crowding or user conflicts should they arise and encourage compatible use of the area.
- Promote a healthy use of the area utilizing the principles of Leave No Trace and promoting a Carry In/ Carry Out trash philosophy.
- Develop outreach tactics to “seek compliance thru education”.
- Continue annual Visitor-Use surveys and assess patterns, preferences and obtain feedback on trail use, projects, and development.

### 5. Promote and FACILITATE Coordination and Cooperation between public agencies, organizations (Steering Committee), private abutting landowners and recreational users.

- Continue to annually review and update the Mt. Agamenticus Steering Committee’s Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to ensure it remains practical and meaningful for each agency or stakeholder.
- Continue bi-monthly meetings with representation from each agency or stakeholder.
- Allow public input and participation in meetings and in work on the ground.
- Continue to develop partnership with law enforcement and emergency response personnel to assist in patrol and enforcement operations.
- Continue to develop partnerships with other agencies and organizations to promote common goals and share resources as appropriate.



6. RESOURCE long term FUNDING for management, monitoring, maintenance and programs INTO THE FUTURE.

- Develop funding estimates for projects and staff resources needed to implement the management plan based on these goals, objectives, and priority management activities.
- Develop funding strategies and solutions to sustain current management level and for future growth and development.
- Promote growth and activities of the Friends of Mt. A group to enhance fund-raising efforts, grants administration, volunteerism and public support.
- Pursue adequate funding to meet program operation needs such as corrective maintenance, visitor protection, resource management, and visitor services.
- Seek permanent funding to support existing Trails, Grounds and Facilities Supervisor and Outreach and Education Coordinator positions.
- Add individual(s) if/when appropriate to help with daily maintenance, enforcement, and growth.

## V. Management Policies

There are several ongoing management challenges facing the recreational trails in the Mount Agamenticus trail management area. The challenges include controlling access to recreation trails from vehicles, detailing how trail maintenance is prioritized, where and how much parking is permitted, the appropriate placement of signs and trail information and the establishment and maintenance of views/scenic overlooks. After considering a number of policy changes to address these issues, the Mount Agamenticus Steering Committee (MASC) is adopting the following management policies.

### 1. Access Points

There are many places to access the recreational trails in the Mt A Conservation Region (See Appendix F MAP 3– Access Points and Trail Functional Classification). Though vehicle access has been restricted for most trails that intersect Mountain Rd, there are still numerous access points throughout the area that are open to all variety of motorized and non-motorized activities. As more improvements are made to protect resources, repair trails and build water crossings, there is a need to protect these growing investments from damage caused by unauthorized vehicle access.

Policy: Gates with a space for ATVs to pass through are the preferred method of access control on trails designated for multiple use. Boulders are an acceptable short-term solution. For access points that are shared with private landowners, informal written agreements (or memorandum of understanding) should be acquired, when possible, prior to installation of access controls. The Conservation Coordinator may enter into these agreements on behalf of the Steering Committee.

Priorities:

- Near Term -- Access point #11 (Norman Mill Trail access off Bennett Lot Rd) Install gate in coordination with MDIFW & SB (possibly in conjunction with an IF&W forest management project).  
Access Point #13 & #14 (South side of Mountain Rd) add boulders now.
- Mid Term -- Access point #7 (Notch Trail access off Old Mountain Rd) and #9 (Great Marsh Trail northern access at the end of Old County Rd), research deeds, any ROWs, and if needed talk with adjacent landowners to get permission to place boulders. Former Access Point #10 (Old second access off Bennett Lott Rd now closed), research deeds, any ROWs, and if needed talk with adjacent landowners to get permission to place boulders to prevent reopening and going around closure. Access point #12 (Norman Mill Trail access off Pave Street), talk with landowner of in-holding parcel about adding a lock to existing gate or replacing with new gate, and providing landowner a key.
- Long Term – Access points #6 (Unnamed trail south of Porcupine Trail off of Old Mountain Rd) and #8 (Great Marsh Trail southern access off Old Mountain Rd). Because of the many private abutters and protracted legal issues it will take longer to reach agreements with all landowners.

## **2. Trail Functional Classifications**

The following functional classifications identify the parameters used to maintain trails in the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region. All trails have been designated to meet a certain functional “level” thus requiring we maintain the trail conditions (criteria) established for the respective level.

**LEVEL ONE (L1):** Best maintained. Frequently assessed. Immediate maintenance.

L1 Trails: All of “First Hill” and those that connect.

Includes:	Beaver	Big A Trail	Blueberry Bluff	Cedar
	Chestnut Oak	Fisher	Goosefoot	Hairpin
	Northface	Porcupine	Ring	Rocky Road
	Summit Staircase	Sweet Fern	Vultures View	Wintergreen
	Witch Hazel			

Assessment Frequency: Weekly

Condition Requirements:

- Clearly marked with blazes, icons, and signage.
- Clear of any dead fall or other obstructions.
- Vegetation will remain brushed back.
- No long-term standing water/mud holes.
- Intersections with monitored trails only – no spider trails.

Maintenance Requirements:

- Resources will be immediately purchased and designated to maintain these trails.
- Work will be prioritized though may be scheduled appropriate with efficiency of effort.
- Water bars, knicks, dirt dips, check dams - immediate repair.
- Steps, boardwalks, bridges – repair as soon as practical (as long as safely passable.)
- Spider trails (aka social, side connections or any widening) will be blocked, narrowed and made as transparent as possible.

**LEVEL TWO (L2):** Good conditions. Periodically assessed. Scheduled maintenance.

L2 Trails: All “search and rescue” (SAR) trails, except Cedar.

Note: Cedar SAR trail is maintained at L1.

Includes:	Great Marsh	Norman Mill	Notch	Wheel
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Assessment Frequency: Monthly

Condition Requirements:

- Signed and blazed.
- Clear of dead fall or other obstructions.

Brushed periodically.  
Standing water or mud holes minimized but allowable for wet periods.  
All access points managed to minimize impact.

**Maintenance Requirements:**

Repairs should generally be accomplished within the season.  
Resources should be scheduled to accommodate workflow.  
Spider trails (aka social, side connections or any widening) will be blocked, narrowed, and made as transparent as possible.  
All work to prevent further damage to trail will be prioritized.  
Improvement work will be scheduled until accomplished.

**LEVEL THREE (L3):** Always passable conditions. Seasonally assessed. Maintenance as resources allow.

L3 Trails: All remaining maintained trails. Some of these trails remain unnamed. Primarily on Third Hill.

Includes:	Trails around 2 <sup>nd</sup> Hill:	Hidden Second Hill Trail	Incline	Ridge Stone Fence.
	Trails around 3 <sup>rd</sup> Hill:	Bobcat	Ledge	Third Hill Trail
	Darter			

Also: Some trails north of Mountain Road.  
Some trails east of Third Hill  
Some miscellaneous trails primarily intersecting named trails.

Assessment Frequency: Summer, Autumn, Winter, Spring

**Condition Requirements:**

Passable, as a minimum, to foot traffic.  
Clear of large dead fall.  
Free of water where practical.

**Maintenance Requirements:**

Remove or repair any safety hazards.  
When damage can be mitigated, schedule seasonal repair.  
Other repairs and improvements as resources permit.  
Spider trails (aka social, side connections or any widening) will be blocked, narrowed, and made as transparent as possible.  
Must be able to keep trail open with limited workload.

**LEVEL FOUR (L4):** Conditions vary greatly. No scheduled assessment. No maintenance requirements.

L4 Trails: All remaining trails that we are aware of but do not maintain to include west of Mountain Road within Trail Management Area.

Examples: Neighborhood trails linking with a maintained trail, abandoned trails not specifically closed, trails with unclear ownership, hunting trails, etc.

Assessment Frequency: Annually

Maintenance Requirements:

Although we have no maintenance requirements these trails may be closed or be upgraded to a higher level as deemed appropriate or with new landowner information from updated boundary survey work. Any changes in use or activity will be reported.

### **3. Trail Use Standards and Impact Assessments**

Trail managers require objective information about trails to monitor trends, evaluate impacts to natural resources and visitor experiences, and direct maintenance efforts. Identifying desired resources and experiences, possible threats or impacts to those resources or experiences, trail use standards or limits of acceptable change, and management options when levels exceed what is acceptable provides trail managers with an analytical process for trail management decisions.

#### **Potential Impacts to Resources**

Trails: trail deterioration, trail erosion, excessive mud holes, excessive trail width, excessive trail depth/development of tread ruts, development of social trails

Water: water pollution, contamination (fecal, chemical, food or animal remains), sedimentation

Wildlife: destruction or loss of habitat, change in species composition, introduction of exotics, harassment or disturbance of wildlife, competition for food sources, attraction of wildlife, illegal hunting or fishing

Soil: soil compaction, erosion of organic matter and soil, excessive mud holes

Vegetation: trampling, loss of herbaceous vegetation or seedlings, change in species composition, introduction of exotics, improper collection, deterioration of grazing or wintering areas, trampling of tree roots, nails in trees, peeling of bark, carving initials/words into bark, felling live trees.

Cultural Resource: deterioration, defacement, theft

#### **Potential Impacts to Visitor Experiences**

Crowding: unacceptable levels at attraction sites, encounters on the trail, in visitor center, at trailheads, congestion, unacceptable traffic on road, lack of available parking spaces

Visitor Conflicts: incompatible uses, large groups/parties, rowdiness, excessive consumption of alcohol, visitor displacement

Noncompliant Behavior: vandalism, resource destructive behavior

Inadequate/Inappropriate Levels of Access: facilities, restrooms, defined trailheads, natural areas, cultural resources, accommodations for broadest possible spectrum of people including persons with disabilities

Visitor Safety: behavior that jeopardizes the safety of the individual OR of other visitors, failure to maintain safe environment thru facility design, maintenance, or other means

Litter/Garbage: improper disposal, unacceptable evidence (trail markers/cairns), hazardous waste

Resource Impacts:

<b>Indicator Examples</b>	<b>Standards or Limits of Acceptable Change - Examples</b>	<b>Management Options</b>
Signs that a resource is being impacted	Can use point data collected and trail assessment information for reference and to establish priority areas for remediation.	If standards are not being met, must initiate strategies and tactics to manage. *delineates which options require further MASC review.
soil erosion/compaction	5% of soil surface samples exhibit a porosity of 50% or less of undisturbed sites	-Adjust Standards -Organize & conduct trail work projects to remediate (repair, redesign, reroute, harden, etc.) -Prohibit early season use until trail is suitable* -Temporarily close trail to one or more uses until corrective measures can be completed* -Permanently close trail to one or more uses to avoid issue.* -Explore other options*
density of social trails	10% or more additional linear ft per square mile than present in 2006	
trail widening	5 or more sections of trail widening per mile per year	
cover/frequency of vascular plants (trampling, exotics, etc.)	5% or more of sample points are exotic or have a reduction in cover	

Visitor Experience Impacts:

<b>Indicator Examples</b>	<b>Standards or Limits of Acceptable Change Examples</b>	<b>Management Options</b>
Signs that visitor experiences are being impacted	Can use visitor use surveys, group registration data collected to track trends.	If standards are not being met, must initiate strategies and tactics to manage. *delineates which options require further MASC review.
# of people at one time on trail segments	20 or more people at one time observed for 10% or more of peak hours of peak months	-Adjust Standards -Install or enhance trail signs/maps/brochures to inform visitors of allowed trail uses, etiquette, and safety considerations -Review established designated use areas -Redesign trail to reduce speed with control points or increase sight lines -Develop carrying capacity policy and limit access (by parking, permit, or fee)* -Explore other options*
# of parties/groups	4 or more groups per day during 10% or more of peak hours of peak months	
traffic congestion on road and parking areas	congested at a rate of steady flow, 5 or more parked cars on road at peak times	
# of conflicts reported	No greater than 5 conflict incidents reported each year.	

#### **4. Parking**

Upcoming infrastructure projects to include expanded and improved parking areas at the summit and base of Mt.A and the possible implantation of a use fee at these locations could result in an increase in interest and attempts to park at other access locations around the Mt. A region. Cedar trailhead and parking area should be upgraded with gravel and squared off to improve parking efficiency. Road signs have already been installed on the York side of Mountain Road to discourage parking vehicles in the road. MDIFW has approved a small gravel parking area near the Norman Mill Trail trailhead off Bennett Lot Road. The South Berwick side of Mountain Road, Pave Street, Old County Road and Bennett Lot Road should be closely monitored, and any issues or observations shared with the Town of South Berwick. Work could be coordinated with South Berwick for any needed road postings. Other access points are either owned privately or are under legal review. The Mt A Steering Committee agreed not to expand or improve upon other parking areas at this time.

#### **5. Signage**

The Steering Committee agreed that usage guidelines should be posted at each access point with designated trails. Signs will be approximately 16” x 22” and be made of metal. See Appendix E for proposed sign content and layout.

They also agreed to leave in place the sign policy for the summit access road and “park” area as detailed in the Mt A Summit Guidelines.

#### **6. Views and Scenic Overlooks**

The Steering Committee agreed that the development of views and overlooks on 2nd and 3rd Hills are appropriate maintenance projects, as long as it 1) is on partner property, 2) isn't too costly and 3) doesn't negatively impact critical resources. The focus should be on 2nd Hill, as it has more land in partner ownership. These projects will be much smaller in scale than the 1st Hill viewing project (implemented in Winter of 2011/2012).

#### **7. Major Trail Projects List**

After reviewing the trail assessments and annual work plans, the Conservation Coordinator and the Trails, Grounds, and Facilities Supervisor created a list of trail project priorities. Some will require more funding than is currently available in the annual trail maintenance budget. The list is split between “shovel-ready” projects that would be done immediately if funding became available and longer-term trail planning items that need further study to determine feasibility. The lists are ranked in order of priority.

##### **Larger Trail Projects:**

- Reroute Fisher between Ring and the Big A, to avoid muddy areas. (MDIFW, York)
- Update signage at trailheads and intersections – weatherproof maps noting “you are here”. (All)
- Norman Mill, Great Marsh, and Cedar: Continue major fill project. (MDIFW, YLT, GWRLT)



- Replace interpretive site on Beaver Trail. (MDIFW)

-Conduct assessment of existing trail east of Third Hill to determine if it will be incorporated as Hike/Bike trail within the management area (signs and inclusion in future public brochure and map TBD). (YLT, MDIFW, GWRLT)

**Long-Term Trail Proposals requiring further review:**

- Replace culvert on Cedar Trail near old snowmaking pond - enlarge to DEP standards, install a beaver deceiver. Requires permitting and assessment of bullet below. (MDIFW, York)

-Create Universal Access Trail (approx. 0.32mi Out & Back) utilizing Cedar and Beaver trail; possibly 2 lanes and widening to reduce any conflicts with mixed use and improve emergency access to base (needs further discussion and assessment). (MDIFW, York)

- Eliminate stream crossings on Wheel and Great Marsh – install culverts. Requires permitting (MDIFW, YLT, GWRLT)

-Establish multiple use trail connection thru former CFW site to YWD Yellow trail to reconnect section lost. Requires review of possible connection to new parking area, habitat assessment, coordination with YWD and any other landowners, and review of any impact to safety on road. (YWD, Private)

-Short Third hill connection to GWRLT&YLT to the north; could be improved and made official pending results of assessment (in Large Trail Project list). Requires further habitat assessment, survey work, and coordination with landowners. (YLT, GWRLT)

- Vultures and Sweet Fern: closure and single reroute OR install major erosion controls (needs further discussion on SKI GLADE management). (York, MDIFW)

**VI Implementation Matrix**

This is a timeline for implementing the various policy proposals in this plan. Items are categorized as either Short-term (immediately through 2024), Medium-term (2-4 years out), or Long-term (5 years +).

Short Term (immediately - 2024)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Access Points	#11	Install gate when able
	#13	Add Boulders now
	#14	Add Boulders now
Signage	various	Post updated usage guidelines at each access point
Views	2nd Hill	Small view-scaping projects on 2nd Hill

Medium Term (2-4 years out)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Access Points	#7	Talk with Landowners about placing boulders, obtain MOU
	#9	Talk with Landowners about placing boulders, obtain MOU
	#10	Talk with Landowners about placing boulders, obtain MOU
	#12	Talk with in-holding about locking gate, replace gate if needed, providing key
Views	3rd Hill	Small view-scaping projects on 3rd Hill
Trails	1 <sup>st</sup> Hill	Reroute Fisher between Ring and the Big A, to avoid muddy areas
	Trail Management Area	Update signage at trailheads and intersections – weatherproof maps noting “you are here”.
	Norman Mill	Continue Major Fill Project - North End
	Great Marsh	Major Fill Project
	Off Cedar Trail	Replace interpretive site on Beaver Trail
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Hill	Conduct assessment of existing trail east of Third Hill to determine if it will be incorporated as Hike/Bike trail within the management area

Long Term (5+ years)

<b>Category</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Description</b>
Access Points	#6	Await resolution of legal issues, approach landowners about controlling access
	#8	Await resolution of legal issues, approach landowners about controlling access
Trails	Cedar off Mountain Road	Replace culvert on Cedar Trail near old snowmaking pond - enlarge to DEP standards, install a beaver deceiver
	Cedar off Mountain Road	Create Universal Access Trail (approx. 0.32mi Out & Back) utilizing Cedar and Beaver trail
	Wheel and Great Marsh Trails	Eliminate stream crossings on Wheel and Great Marsh – install culverts
	1 <sup>st</sup> Hill	Establish multiple use trail connection thru former CFW site to YWD Yellow trail to reconnect section lost.
	3 <sup>rd</sup> Hill	Short Third hill connection to GWRLT&YLT to the north
	Vulture's View/ Sweet Fern	Close both and create a single re-route OR install major erosion controls

## **Appendix A**

### ***Executive Summary of 2009 Summit Guidelines for Usage***

The Mount Agamenticus Steering Committee adopted the following as a guide for immediate and future activities at the Summit:

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.

## Appendix B

### *Inventory of Natural Resource Features, Cultural and Scenic Resources*

Extracted from 1999 Mt. Agamenticus Public Access and Trail Plan

*Addendum with updated data will be provided when available.*

#### A. Natural Resource Features

##### Vegetation

Mt. Agamenticus is a large tract of relatively undeveloped woodland. The vegetation of the area is primarily transitional hardwood forest characterized by hemlock (*Tsuga canadensis*), white pine (*Pinus strobus*), black birch (*Betula lenta*), yellow birch (*B. alleghaniensis*), beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), white oak (*Quercus alba*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), red maple (*Acer rubrum*), and white ash (*Fraxinus americana*). Oak-pine-hickory forest dominated by white pine, shagbark hickory (*Carya ovata*), chestnut oak (*Quercus montana*), and white oak represents the only such example of this forest type left in Maine (MNAP/MDIFW 1997). The York Water District has an active timber management program aimed at converting hardwood stands to softwood dominated stands in order to lower turbidity in the water (York Water District 1997). Other private landowners selectively log their properties near Mt. Agamenticus, with the major target species being white pine, hemlock and red oak.

Mt. Agamenticus has one of the highest concentrations of state rare and endangered plant species in Maine. This represents an area where many species at the southern limit of their range overlap with species at the northern limit of their range. State-rare plant species include wild leek (*Allium tricoccum*), white wood aster (*Aster divaricatus*), spotted wintergreen (*Chimaphila maculata*), Atlantic white cedar (*Chamaecyparis thyoides*), sweet pepperbush (*Clethra alnifolia*), flowering dogwood (*Cornus florida*), featherfoil (*Huttonia inflata*), smooth winterberry holly (*Ilex laevigata*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), spicebush (*Lindera benzoin*), alga-like pondweed (*Potamogeton confervoides*), chestnut oak (*Quercus prinus*), large beak-rush (*Rhynchospora macrostachya*), sassafras (*Sassafras albidum*), swamp saxifrage (*Saxifraga pennsylvanica*), and Columbia water meal (*Wolffia columbiana*).

In addition, there are a number of exemplary natural communities found in the planning area. These have been documented by the Maine Natural Areas Program as:

1. Atlantic White Cedar Swamp (*Chamaecyparis thyoides/Ilex verticillata* Forest) which are limited to the coastal plain of southern Maine and are found in poorly drained depressions underlain by mineral soil. A shallow sphagnum mat supports red maple (*Acer rubrum*), highbush blueberry (*Vaccinium corymbosum*), common winterberry (*Ilex verticillata*), smooth winterberry, and sweet pepperbush.
2. Oak-Pine Woodland (*Pinus strobus/Quercus (rubra, velutina)* Woodland) are found on knolls and hilltops with excessively well drained soils and bedrock outcrops. Dominant species include red oak and white pine with an herbaceous layer of woodland sedge (*Carex lucorum*). Shrub species include *Vaccinium* spp.
3. Oak -Hickory Forest (*Quercus (prinus, velutina)/Gaylussacia baccata* Forest) is a semi-open to closed canopy forest of well drained soils primarily on south to west facing slopes. Dominant overstory species include white oak, chestnut oak, and shagbark hickory. The community often includes

understory species which are common south of Maine but rare in Maine, such as sassafras and flowering dogwood.

4. Perched Hemlock - Hardwood Forest (*Tsuga canadensis*/*Sphagnum* spp Forest) forms on areas of impermeable bedrock which traps a pocket of water. Dominant overstory species include black gum, red maple, and hemlock. Spicebush is a good understory indicator of this community type.

5. Lacustrine Shallow Bottom Community (*Vallisneria americana*/*Potamogeton perfoliatum* Permanently Flooded Herbaceous Vegetation) is found on sandy or somewhat muddy shallows of lakes and ponds where sufficient sunlight allows for growth of aquatic bed vegetation.

6. Enriched Northern Hardwood Forest (*Acer saccharinum*/*Tilia americana*/*Fraxinus americana* Forest) occurs on moist nutrient rich soils where basswood and white ash make up a large component of the northern hardwood canopy.

The management of these plants and communities is perhaps the major consideration in developing a trail system in the area. Trails will be located in areas that will not negatively impact rare plant or exemplary natural communities with a suitable buffer area to prevent a trail from “creeping” towards important natural features.

A general locational map for these rare and endangered plant/animal species and communities can be found on Map 3.

### Wildlife

- Game Species

Mt. Agamenticus provides significant habitat for forest and wetland wildlife species, including several that are considered state-rare. According to the 1978 USDA study, Mt. Agamenticus provides good habitat for white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginiana*), ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*), snowshoe hare (*Lepus arcticus*), red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*), mink (*Mustela vison*), coyote (*Canis latrans*), fisher (*Martes pennanti*), and raccoon (*Procyon lotor*).

A deer wintering area identified by MDIFW is also located within the area. MDIFW prefers to examine land use issues within a deer wintering area on a case by case basis. In 1989, guidelines for timber harvesting within a deer wintering area proposed by MDIFW stated that “timber harvesting is an essential component of deer wintering area management and should be a permitted activity. The general goal in managing deer yards is to maintain approximately 50% of the area in mature softwoods. The individual conifers in mature softwood stands are generally older than 45 years of age, taller than 35’ in height and are 7-8” or larger in diameter at breast height. To maintain this cover, each landowner can harvest as much as 20% of the total timber volume on his ownership in any 15 year period. Single openings in the forest canopy created during timber harvesting should not exceed 14,000 square feet. Openings larger than 10,000 square feet should be no closer than 150 feet apart.”

- Non-game Species

Non-game wildlife includes songbirds, birds of prey, small mammals, reptiles and amphibians, insects and other animals not legally hunted. Mt. Agamenticus is renowned for the annual hawk migration

which attracts a large number of hawk watchers during peak migration. In 1978, 226 accipters were seen during 32 hours of observation on the mountain (USDA 1978).

Mt. Agamenticus provides important habitat for a number of state-rare animal species including Blanding's turtle (*Embydoidea blandingii*), spotted turtle (*Clemmys guttata*), banded bog skimmer (*Williamsonia lintneri*), black racer (*Coluber constrictor*), ribbon snake (*Thamnophis sauritus*), and swamp darter (*Etheostoma fusiforme*) (MNAP/MDIFW 1997). Blanding's turtles and spotted turtles are dependent on vernal pools and pocket wetlands for feeding and resting habitat, but need sunny upland sites in which to deposit their eggs. Banded bog skimmers breed in wetland pools dominated by suspended *Sphagnum* moss. The swamp darter is found both on lands owned by the York Water District and also on lands within the Chick's Brook Watershed on IFW property (personal communication from Mark McCullough).

### Hydrology

Five watershed systems have tributaries which originate in the Mt. Agamenticus region. Of the 40 miles of perennial streams in the area, five have been dammed, four of which form reservoirs for the water districts (MNAP/MDIFW 1997). Middle, Folly, and Boulter Ponds are located on the Kittery Water District. Chases Pond is the main source of water supply for the York Water District. The Mt. Agamenticus region, because of the geologic features, has the highest density of vernal pools and pocket wetlands in Maine.

In the 1979 Mount Agamenticus U.S.D.A. Cooperative Study, there were no identified point sources of pollution and that probably holds true today. Potential nonpoint sources include erosion resulting from logging and construction, contamination from subsurface sewage disposal, recreational usage including ATVs, mountain bikes, and horseback riding, and additional human impact from the rapid increase of use of the area. Both water districts recommend that there be no trespassing within 250 feet of the listed reservoirs in order to protect the drinking water supply.

The following water resources play a critical role in the ecological diversity of Mt. Agamenticus:

- Wetlands

Wetlands provide scenic beauty, water storage, and diversified wildlife habitat. The National Wetlands Inventory in the area surrounding Mt. Agamenticus (Map 4) and is included as a data layer in the GIS analysis for this project. However, because of the number of small vernal pools, this coverage probably under-represents the wetlands in the area.

Only one wetland within the study area is rated as high or moderate value, as defined by MDIFW for wildlife habitat. MDIFW (1989) recommends that 1) no draining, filling, etc. be allowed within such a wetland; 2) existing riparian habitat within 250' of these wetlands be protected from development and modifications other than MDIFW practices; and 3) to protect water quality, the first 100' of riparian habitat should not be altered in any way. Within the remaining 150', timber harvests should not remove more than 20% of the volume of each acre of trees 6" or larger dbh over a ten year period. Single openings in the canopy should not exceed 14,000 square feet. Canopy openings greater than 10,000 square feet should be no closer than 100 feet apart.

- Vernal Pools

Vernal pools represent an important wetland type in the Mt. Agamenticus region. They are noted here as a separate resource because of their ecological importance as habitat for a number of state rare species. Both the Maine Audubon Society and the Maine Natural Areas Program have been examining vernal pools in the Mt. Agamenticus area for the past two years. A vernal pool is defined as a "temporary or seasonal body of water that is essential breeding habitat for certain amphibians and invertebrates that does not support fish or, if it is a permanent pool, it is fishless" (Maine Audubon Society 1996). The fishless environment provides valuable breeding habitat for frogs and salamanders without the threat of egg and larval predation. These pools serve as important travel ways for certain wildlife species, particularly as wetland habitat becomes more fragmented. It is important to note that most vernal pools receive no regulatory protection due to their small size.

Maine Audubon Society and the Maine Natural Areas Program have attempted to identify the vernal pools most critical to wildlife and species preservation. The data sets for these more significant pools (as well as the codification of other pools) is still being developed and should serve as valuable resource information for the region upon completion.

A Watershed Management Plan for the York Water District addresses the protection of vernal pools. The report also directly addresses wildlife habitat management and recreational usage of the watershed. Among recommendations made for the protection of vernal pools are the following:

1. Avoid entering the pools with machinery
2. Avoid rutting on the area of the pools
3. Slash shall not be allowed to accumulate in the pools
4. A 50 foot buffer of trees shall be left around pools.

- Watersheds

Watersheds for the surface water bodies containing the drinking water for the York and Kittery Water Districts are among the most significant features within the area. In fact watershed planning was a major focus of the 1978 Study.

The watershed for Chases Pond is 2,694 acres in size of which the York Water District owns 1,369 acres. With the exception of 54 acres owned by other governmental agencies, the remaining acreage is in private ownership. Watershed boundaries are shown on Map 4. The York Water District (1997) has recently completed a management plan for their holdings in the area. Among the relevant concerns/recommendations of the plan were to schedule and conduct water quality monitoring for all tributaries of Chases Pond; to implement a policy to regulate and limit recreational use on the watershed; to manage the forest growth to maintain a tree stand composition of eighty percent softwood species to enhance water quality; and to continue cooperative planning with the Kittery Water District, town of York and other landowners in the area.

Many of the recommendations for preservation of water quality concern clarifying recreational usage of the watershed. Highly erodable soils, steep slopes, human and animal waste, and increased use of the



area were raised as concerns. In the end, the conclusion was drawn that the area "could be used for low impact, non-motorized recreational activities and limited classes of motorized vehicles with permits issued by the District."

- Soils

Glacial till, glacio-marine silts and clays, and water lain sands and gravels were deposited as debris from the last ice sheet. Based on soil and slope consideration of the soil maps used in the 1979 Mount Agamenticus U.S.D.A. Cooperative Study, the area appears suited for forest land, dispersed recreational activities, and woodland wildlife management.

From a recreational perspective, soils with steep slopes (greater than 15%) and hydric soils are rated as poor for trail use or development (Map 5). This information helped form the basis for the trail remediation plan developed for the Mt. Agamenticus region.

## B. Cultural Resources

- Historic/Archeological

The Mount Agamenticus Area was part of the territory ruled by the Abenaki Indians. European settlers colonized the area around 1620. In 1631 and 1634 saw and grist mills were established in surrounding communities. The principal sources of income were timber, fur, and fish during colonial times. Agriculture increasingly became the most productive activity. But by the early 1800s because of reduced soil fertility and as a result of western expansion, agricultural activity, population, income, and employment declined. Growth recurred during the Industrial Revolution when local streams were harnessed to provide power for many small mills in the area. The mills and the growing recreation industry benefited from the post-Civil War railroad construction.

Over the years the Mt. Agamenticus area was used for a number of traditional activities including wood production, housing, water supply, investment (in both timber and raw land), and perhaps most importantly, for recreation.

The mills and manufacturing economy are now things of the past, and York is now a major tourist destination. South Berwick is primarily a residential community. Mt. Agamenticus is now viewed as a place to recreate and enjoy nature in the midst of growing suburban communities.

Although there are no historical structures in the Mt Agamenticus planning area, the Maine Historical Preservation Commission (MHPC) has mapped areas around Scituate, Boulter, Chases, and Welches Ponds as either potential prehistoric archaeological sites or potential historical archeological sites (a prehistoric site implies pre-European Native American while an historic site is concerned with mostly European-American, after written records). The MHPC has developed a predictive model of prehistoric archeological sites which has found that 95% of the time a "habitation or workshop site" is found abutting a water body or former waterbody on a landform with a slope of less than 10% with little

exposed bedrock. For the purposes of the Mt Agamenticus area this includes much of the aforementioned water bodies.

- Scenic

Two major components contribute to the scenic aspects of the Mount Agamenticus area: the natural landscape and the cultural or man-made landscape. A dense deciduous forest restricts visibility except in areas where fields have been cleared and in wetlands. When clearings do occur in the woody vegetation, the views can be dramatic.

The mountain itself is a visual focal point and provides one of the more dramatic views in southern Maine. Views towards the north and the western mountains of Maine and the White Mountains of New Hampshire and to the east towards the Atlantic are virtually wide open due to the former ski facilities. A fire tower and several cellular towers on top of the mountain impact some of the esthetic qualities of the mountain top itself.

Other scenic views are somewhat more subjective but are also noteworthy. Aside from the mountain itself, a small ridge off Mountain Road provides an open view of the Hoopers Brook gorge. Along the western side of Mt. Agamenticus, a cleared ledge also provides a noteworthy view. Other views which are notable can be found in areas surrounding the ponds, particularly on a ridge which travels alongside Chases Pond.

## Appendix C

### 2021 Visitor Use Survey Summary

#### Introduction

The Mount Agamenticus Visitor Use Survey is a tool that allows us to collect and analyze data on who is visiting Mount A, the popular activities on the mountain, and offers us a chance to receive direct visitor feedback. This data is gathered annually to allow for the analysis of changing trends. This year, we made some minor changes, but continued to track where visitors are from, how often people visit, and what activities they do on the mountain. Like last year, we conducted surveys in person and chose to provide an online option, available to subscribers of our e-mail list and as a QR code that visitors could scan from designated access points. We want to thank everyone who spoke with us directly or who filled out the survey online. We greatly appreciate your feedback, suggestions, and support!

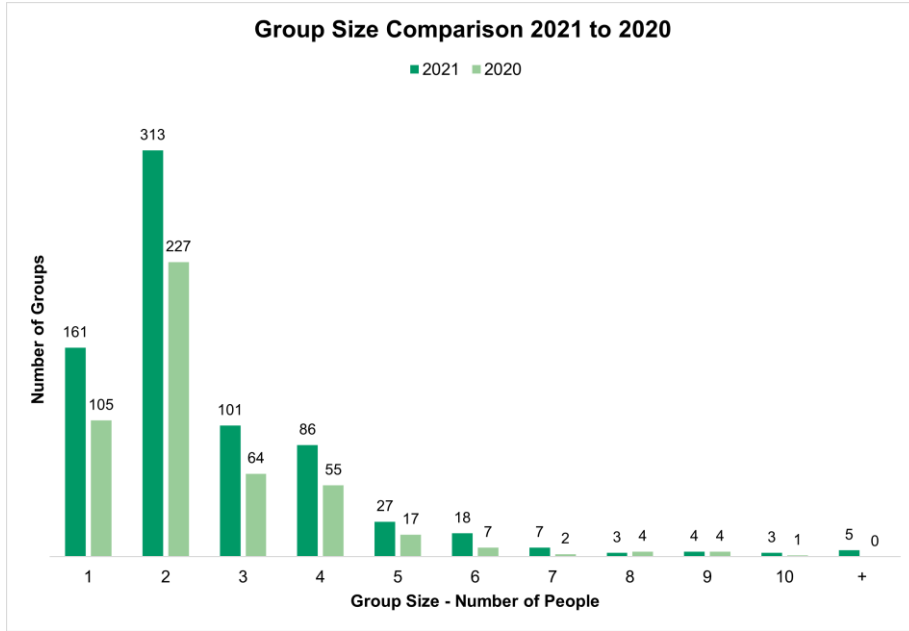


In-person surveys were conducted during the last two weeks of July into the first week of August, and our online survey was available from August through October. From three in-person survey sessions per day for seven days at two locations (Base and Summit of First Hill), we spoke with 1,567 visitors in 613 total surveys. We received an additional 115 online surveys, bringing the total survey count to **728** and individual visitor count to 1,908. This is an increase of 209 surveys over last year, which was the first year we offered an online option. Unless otherwise noted, results for this report are calculated based on *total*

*surveys*, rather than individual visitors. It should be noted that all survey questions are optional and that no personal identifying information is collected from online or in-person surveys.

#### Group Size

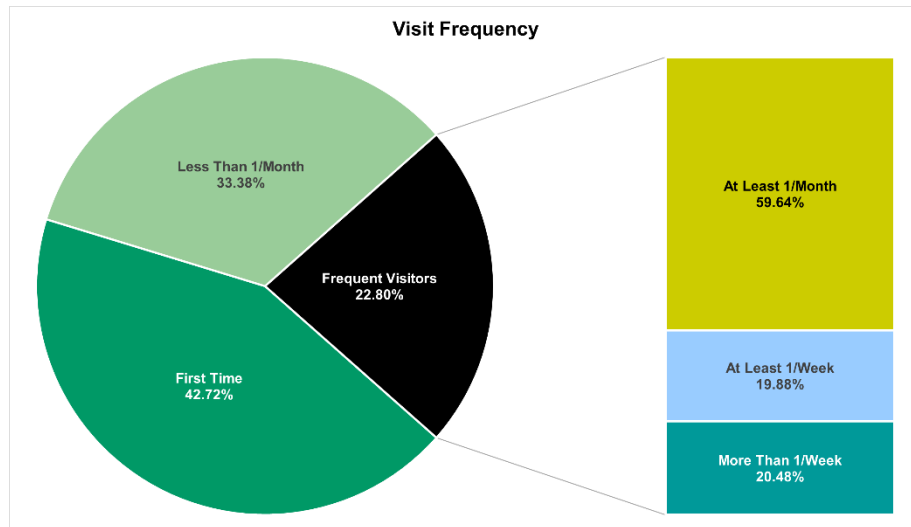
Nearly 43% of groups surveyed this year were visiting in pairs, as were the majority of last year's surveyed groups (46%). Single visitors made up 22.12% of those surveyed this year, and groups of three people made up 13.87% percent. Just over eleven percent of visitors surveyed were in groups of four; 3.71% in groups of five; and 2.47% in groups of six people. There were 22 groups of the 728 surveyed that included more than six people, and only five groups with ten or more people. Last year, we surveyed no groups of ten or more people, and only 11 groups with six or more.



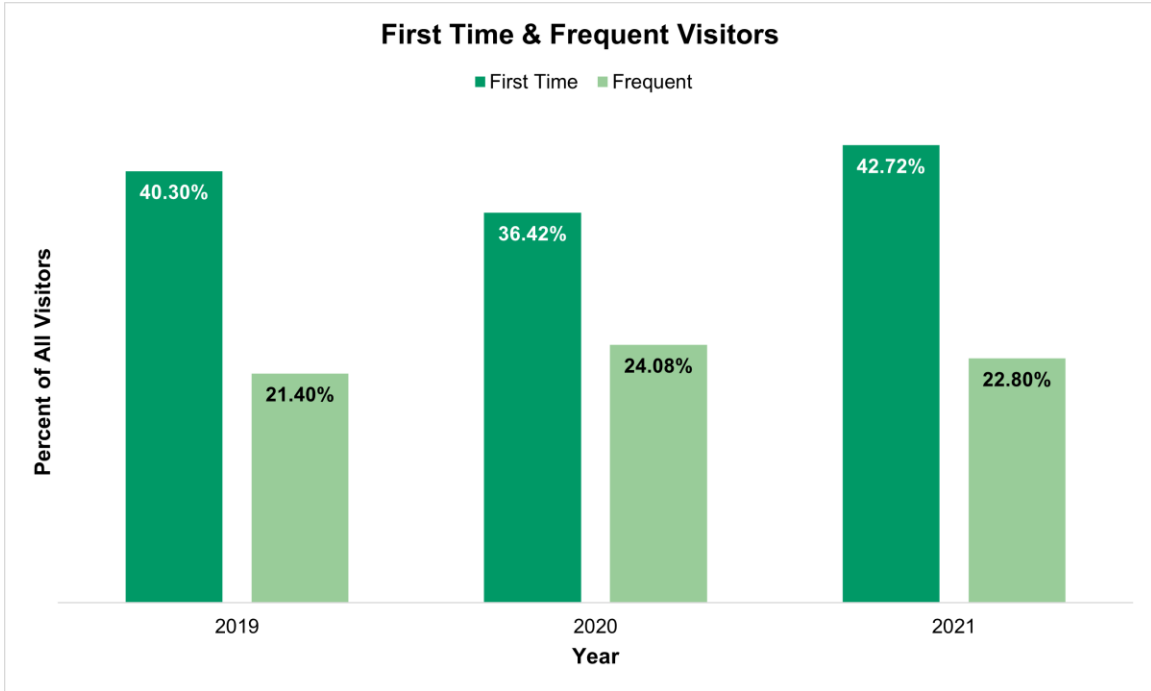
Group Size Comparison 2021 to 2020 - Click to Enlarge

**Visit Frequency**

Last year, possibly due to pandemic-related travel restrictions, we did see a decrease in first-time visitors to Mount A, 36.42% of those surveyed. This year, however, there was an increase. 42.72% of surveyed visitors were here at Mount Agamenticus for the first time. Of those first-time visitors, 13.18% were local, living less than fifty miles away. Another 33.38% of our visitors come to Mount A less than once a month. Frequent visitors, those coming at least once per month, made up 22.80% of all visitors, down from 24% last year. Most of our frequent visitors (59.64%) come to the mountain at least once a month, 19.88% visit at least weekly, and 20.48% visit more than once a week.



Visit Frequency - Click to Enlarge



*First Time & Frequent Visitor Comparison 2019-2021 - Click to Enlarge*

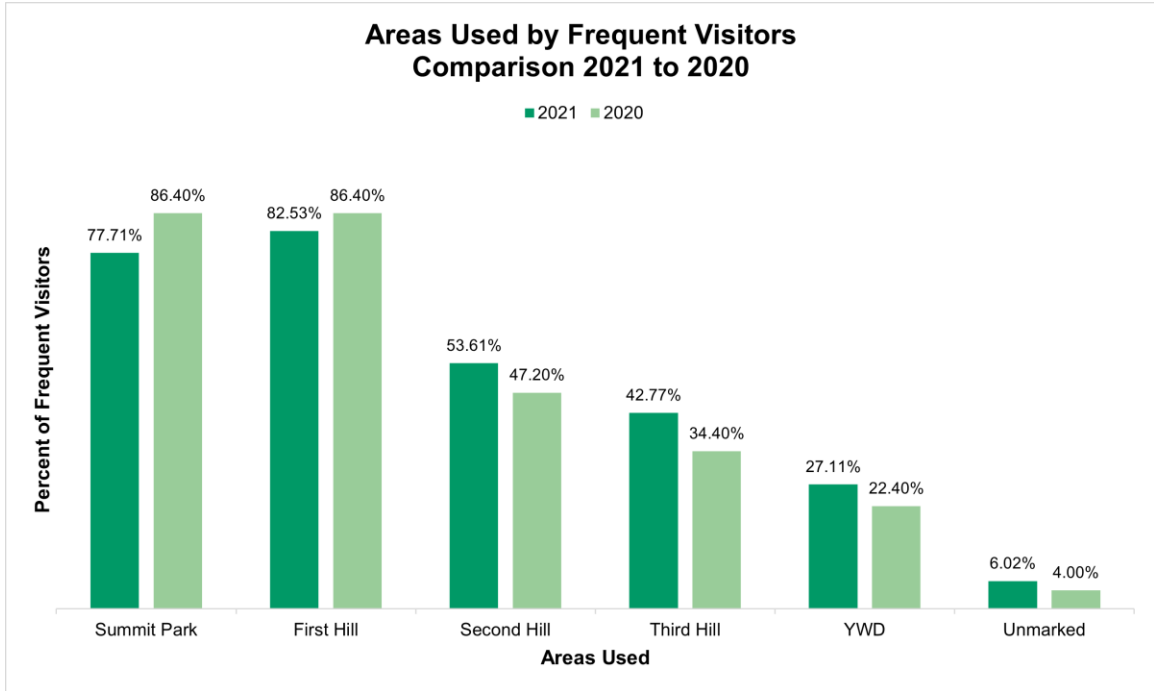
**How First-Time Visitors Heard About Us**

This year, 39.23% of our first-time visitors heard of Mount A through friends or family. Another 29.58% heard about Mount A through the internet or an app, with most of those visitors utilizing Google or AllTrails. Another 8.36% of first-time visitors heard of Mount A through a local business, and 8.04% via word of mouth. Less than 3% of first-time visitors discovered Mount A through street signs, welcome and information centers, or print media.

**About Our Frequent Visitors**

**Seasons** Of the 166 total frequent visitors to Mount A, 86.14% also visit in the fall, 57.23% visit during winter, and 79.52% visit in the spring. Over half (53.01%) of the frequent visitors who answered this question visit the mountain all year round!

**Areas** Frequent visitors were asked which areas of the Mount Agamenticus region they typically use. This year we saw a decrease in the use of more heavily trafficked areas by our frequent visitors, though these places (the Summit Park and First Hill trails) still see more use compared to other areas. 129 people (77.71% of all frequent visitors) utilize the summit park, a decrease of 8.69% from last year. Another 137 visitors (82.53%) use First Hill trails; 89 (53.61%) go to Second Hill, and 71 (42.77%) of our frequent users venture out to Third Hill. Four percent of this year’s frequent visitors surveyed use unmarked trails in the area, and 22.4% access the neighboring York Water District trail system. There is an increase in use of Second and Third Hill trails among frequent visitors compared to last year (up from 47.20% and 34.40% respectively). Reported use of unmarked trails is up by 2% from last year and reported use of York Water District trails has increased by 4.71% from last year.



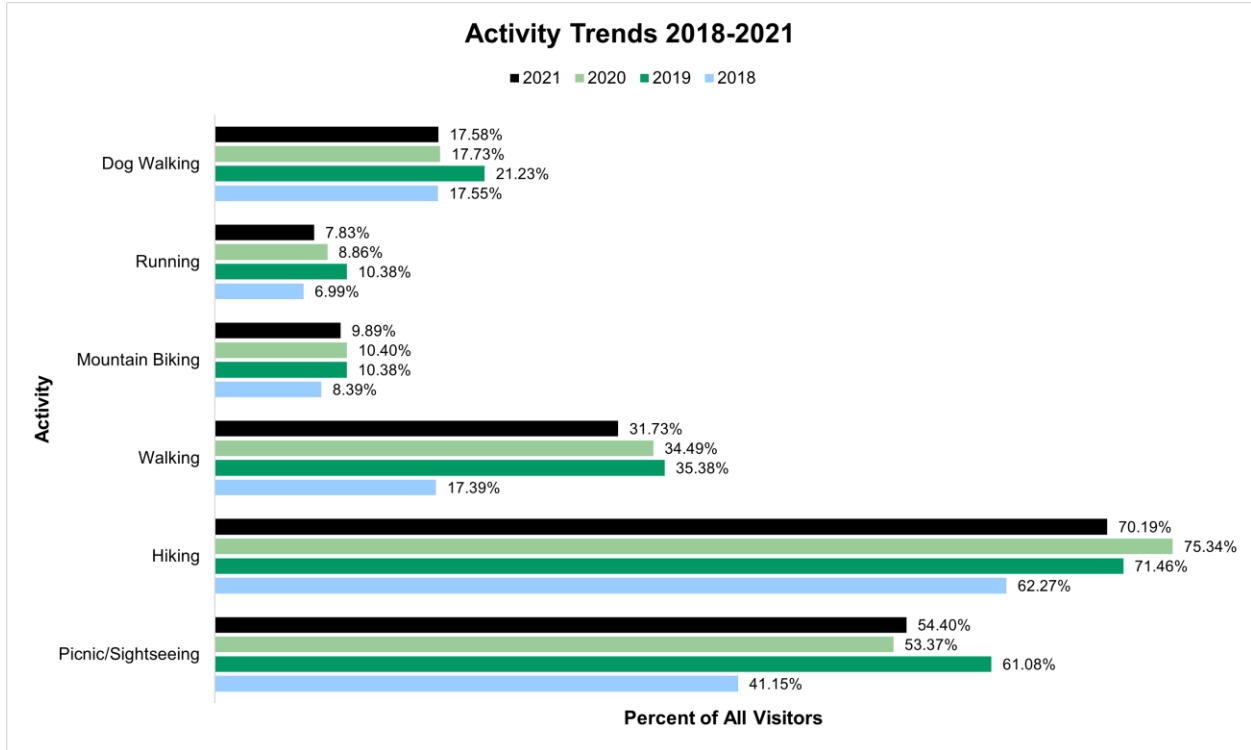
*Areas Used by Frequent Visitors Comparison 2021 to 2020 - Click to Enlarge*

***Favorite Trails*** Answers to this question varied this year from a single trail to areas of the Conservation Region, to multiple trails, to even specific routes or loops. Ring Trail was a favorite among frequent visitors once again, with 33.87% naming it on its own, or as part of a favorite route. Another 15.32% named Blueberry Bluff, and 11.29% named the Big A Trail.

***Trail Feedback*** We asked our frequent visitors to think critically about the trails they use, and if they think there are areas where trails could use improvement. Of the 146 frequent visitors who answered this question, 28.77% said that directional signage clarity could use improvement; 24.66% noted rocks and roots on the trail, 28.77% said that blazing and designated use indicators could be improved, and 21.23% thought that standing water and drainages were an issue. Another 82 people (56.16% of all those who answered) said that there was nothing they thought could use improvement. Another 14.38% of those who answered noted other issues not included on the survey, including downed trees, excessive “fluffing” in the closing and blocking of social trails, issues at parking areas, and other concerns that were not necessarily related to trails, specifically.

**Activities at Mount A**

Of those surveyed, 65.93% of our visitors engage in multiple activities at Mount Agamenticus, a decrease from last year (70.91%). Most visitors this year (70.19%) come to hike the trails, but this is a decrease of 5.15% from last year. The chart below shows four years of usage trends for the more common recreational activities at Mount Agamenticus (those which have consistently seen an 8% or greater visitor participation rate over the years), from 2018-2021. We saw an increase over last year in visitors coming to the mountain for sightseeing or picnicking at the summit. Sightseeing was up by 1.03% from last year, however, in 2020 we saw a 7.71% decrease from 2019, so this is still low compared to previous years.

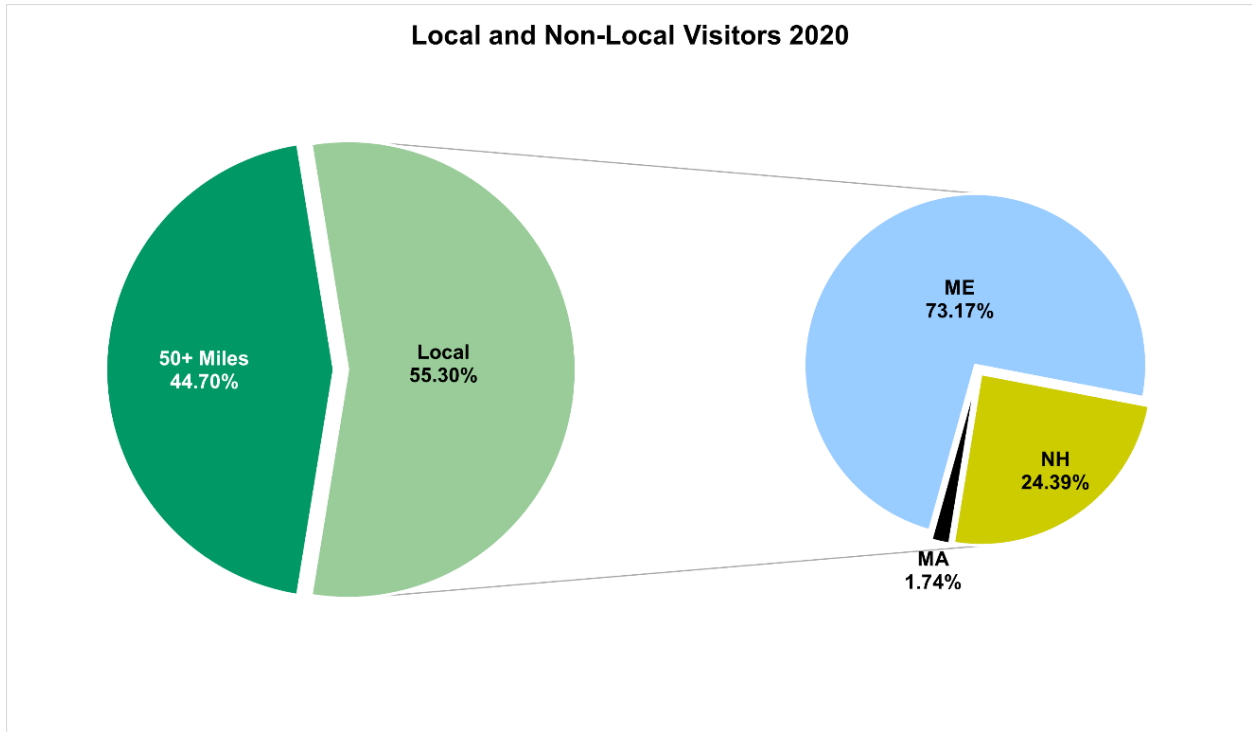


*Activity Trends 2018-2021 - Click to Enlarge*

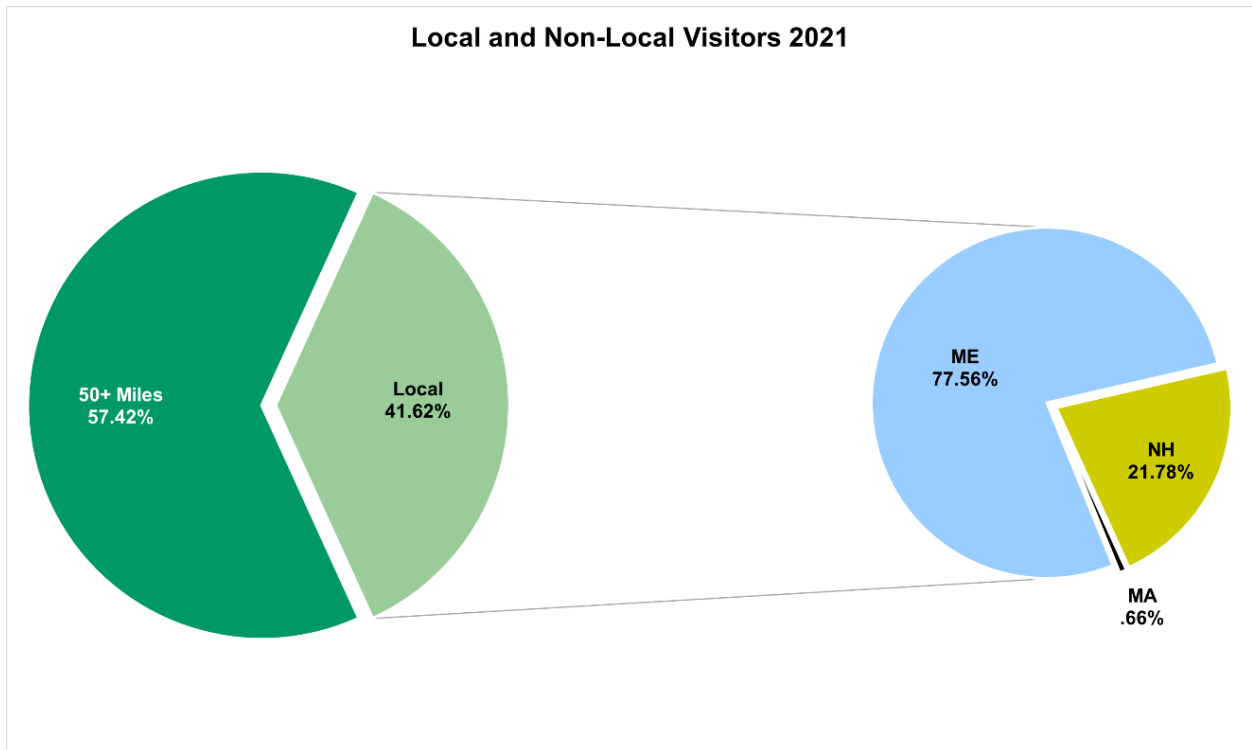
Walkers and dog walkers make up 31.73% and 17.58% of those surveyed, respectively. Mountain bikers make up 9.89% of trail users surveyed, cyclists 2.88% (a decrease of 1.17% from 2020), and ATV users 2.61%. Other uses this year include birding (7.55% an increase of 1% over last year); participating in public programs or visiting the Learning Lodge (3.98%, a slight increase) running (7.83%, a decrease of just over 1% from last year), and winter activities including cross-country skiing, 1.79% and snowshoeing, 4.95% of those surveyed.

**Where Visitors Are From**

The majority of our visitors this year (57.28%) live 50 miles or further away from Mount Agamenticus. Local visitors (those living within 50 miles of Mount A) make up 41.76% of those surveyed. In 2020, we saw an increase from previous years in local visitors, and a decrease in those who live further away. Our results from this year’s survey follow the trends from years prior; it is possible that travel restrictions during the earlier stages of the pandemic made an impact on visitation last year. It’s also worth noting that the parameters of “local” and “non-local” were changed in 2020; in previous years, “local” visitors were those who lived within 30 miles, rather than 50.



*Local and Non-Local Visitors Last Year (2020) - Click to Enlarge*

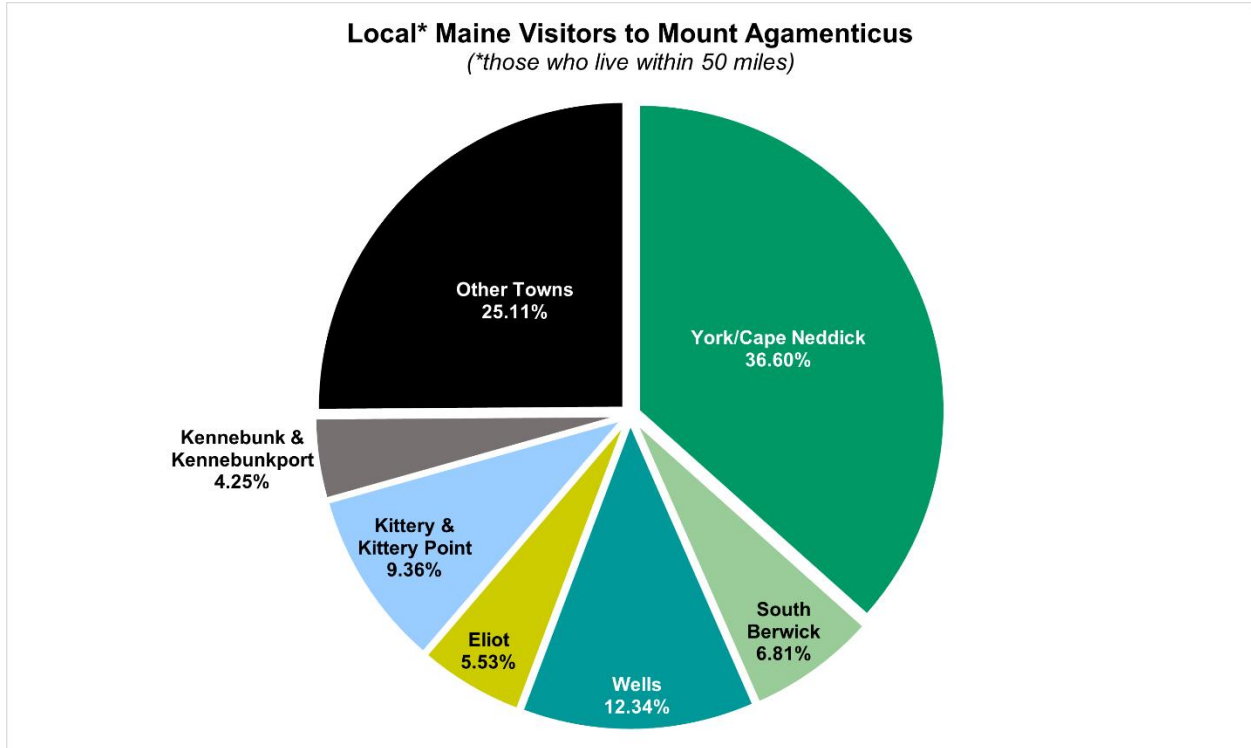


*Local and Non-Local Visitors This Year (2021) - Click to Enlarge*

Most of our local Maine visitors live in York or Cape Neddick (28.38% of all local visitors, 36.60% of local visitors from Maine). Neighboring South Berwick residents make up 5.28% (an



increase of half a percent over last year) of all local visitors surveyed, 6.81% of local Maine visitors.<sup>1</sup> Residents of Wells make up 9.57% of all local visitors (an increase 3.30% over last year); Eliot, 4.29%; residents from Kittery and Kittery Point make up 7.26%, and those from Kennebunk and Kennebunkport make up 3.30%. Towns with 3% or fewer visitors are not listed individually in this report, but this year we saw local Maine visitors come from another thirteen towns. The graph below shows the breakdown of local visitors who live in the state.



*Local Maine Visitors to Mount Agamenticus - Click to Enlarge*

Most of the local visitors we surveyed who come from New Hampshire live in Portsmouth (6.27% of all local visitors) and Dover (5.61%). There was a slight decrease in surveyed visitors from the local New Hampshire area, 70 total surveys in 2020 and 66 total surveys this year.

Of our 530 visitors from “away,” the majority (31.70%) are from Massachusetts, 12.26% are from New Hampshire (a decrease of 2.85% from last year), 20.38% from New York, and 6.79% from Maine. We surveyed visitors from thirty-two states and three countries outside the United States (Canada, Hungary, and Vietnam).

### Day Trips and Overnight Visitors

<sup>1</sup> In 2018, we were able to take additional in-person surveys from Cedar, and South Berwick residents represented 16.17% (a much larger percentage) of local Maine visitors; we have not surveyed from the Cedar access point since that time. While we did include QR codes to an online survey at multiple alternative access points this year (including Cedar), the bulk of our data came from in-person surveys at the Summit and Base; surveys accessed through the QR code made up just over 11% of all surveys.

We asked all visitors whether they were visiting for a day or if they were in the area overnight or on an extended stay. Of the 724 groups who answered this question, the majority were visiting the area on a day trip (56.91% of respondents); the other 42.96 % were in the area for an overnight stay or longer. Those visitors here for more than a day were also asked where they were staying. Most overnight visitors (142 people, 45.66%) were staying in York or Cape Neddick; another 18.33% stayed in Ogunquit, and 13.50% stayed in Wells. Compared to last year, there was a 1.58% decrease in visitors staying in York or Cape Neddick, as well as a decrease in visitors staying in both Ogunquit (by 3.14%) and Wells (by 1.84%). Overnight visitors stayed in a total of 28 different towns in Maine and NH; some overnight visitors did not indicate which town they were staying in. The following graph shows the breakdown of overnight visitors (towns hosting fewer than 2% of all overnight visitors are not shown individually).



*Where Overnight Visitors are Staying - Click to Enlarge*

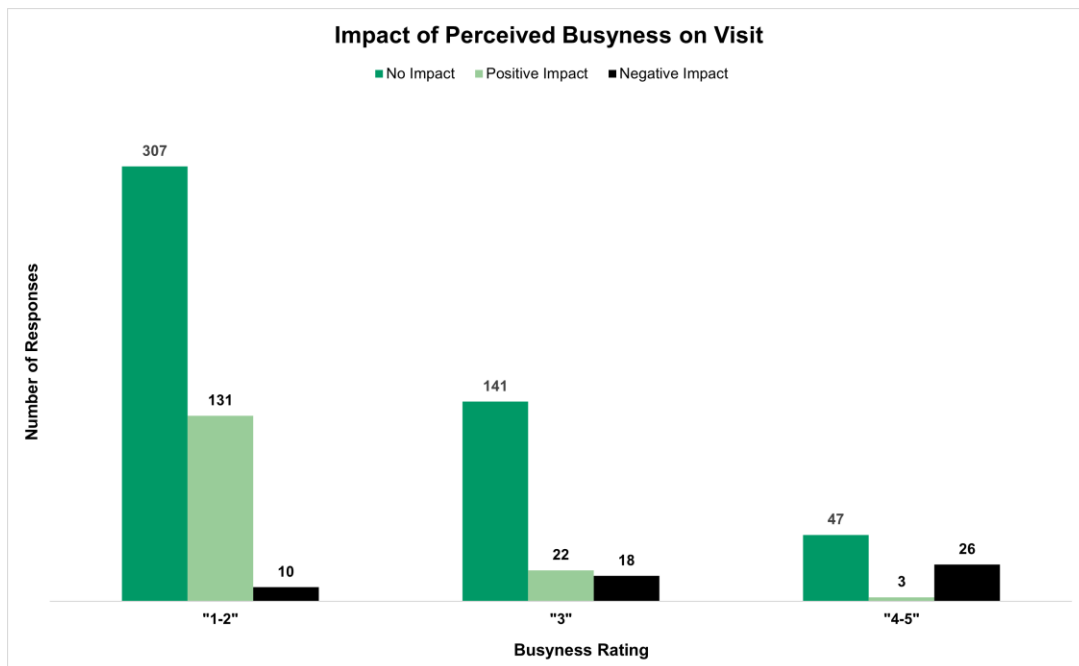
### Visitor Perception of Busyness

Visitors were asked to rate how busy they thought it was at Mount Agamenticus during their visit. “Busyness” at Mount A was based on a scale of 1-5, with a rating of “1” being least busy and “5” being most busy. Of all 728 surveys received, 701 people provided an answer to this question. Those visitors were then asked whether their perception of how busy it was had any impact on their visit and, if so, how. Answers to the first portion of this question are displayed in the table below. Most of our visitors (35.34%) thought that it was not very busy at the time of their visit; the fewest number of visitors (2.43%) thought that it was very busy.

“How Busy” Scale of 1-5	Number of Respondents	Percentage of Those Who Answered
1 - Least Busy	247	35.24%
2	198	28.35%
3	179	25.53%
4	60	8.56%
5 - Most Busy	17	2.43%

Of the 77 visitors who answered with a “4” or “5,” 58.44% of those were visiting Mount Agamenticus on a Saturday or Sunday, when we do typically see a higher rate of visitation. Of those who thought it was busy at the time of their visit (rated a “4” or “5”), 21 people were first time visitors to Mount A. Of the remaining 56 people, 46.42% were frequent visitors to Mount A, visiting at least once monthly or more often.

Twenty-nine percent of the people who answered the second part of this question said that how busy they thought it was made an impact on their visit. We asked about both positive and negative impacts and received a wide variety of answers as to how the number of other people present affected visitor experience. Of the 217 visitors who answered all three parts of this question, 25.35% felt the number of other visitors impacted their visit negatively, while 71.89% felt a positive impact on their visit. Of all visitors who rated Mount A’s busyness a “1,” or a “2,” 43.86% indicated that this had no impact, 60.37% indicated a positive impact, and 4.61% indicated a negative impact. Of those that rated a “3,” 20.14% indicated that this had no impact, 10.14% indicated a positive impact, and 8.29% indicated a negative impact. Of those who rated a “4” or a “5,” 6.72% indicated no impact, 11.98% indicated negative impact, and 1.38% indicated a positive impact.



*Impact of Perceived Busyness on Visit - Click to Enlarge*

It seems that most visitors to Mount Agamenticus prefer to come during times they perceive as less busy, and many returning visitors make decisions about when to visit based on how busy it seems. For example, many of the return visitors we spoke with choose to visit on weekdays or in the early morning, rather than at peak times. While the pattern seems to trend that most visitors are negatively affected if the mountain is at its “most busy,” we still received a variety of comments, both positive and negative, for each of the ratings on the scale. The table below shows a few sample responses.

“How Busy” Scale of 1-5	Positive or Negative Impact	Comment
1 - Least Busy	Positive	“It’s more peaceful, you know?”
2	Positive	nice to have fewer people when mountain biking
3	Negative	purposely travel away from 1 <sup>st</sup> Hill to get away from crowds
4	Positive	meet people, get help with trails, etc.
5 - Most Busy	Negative	too busy

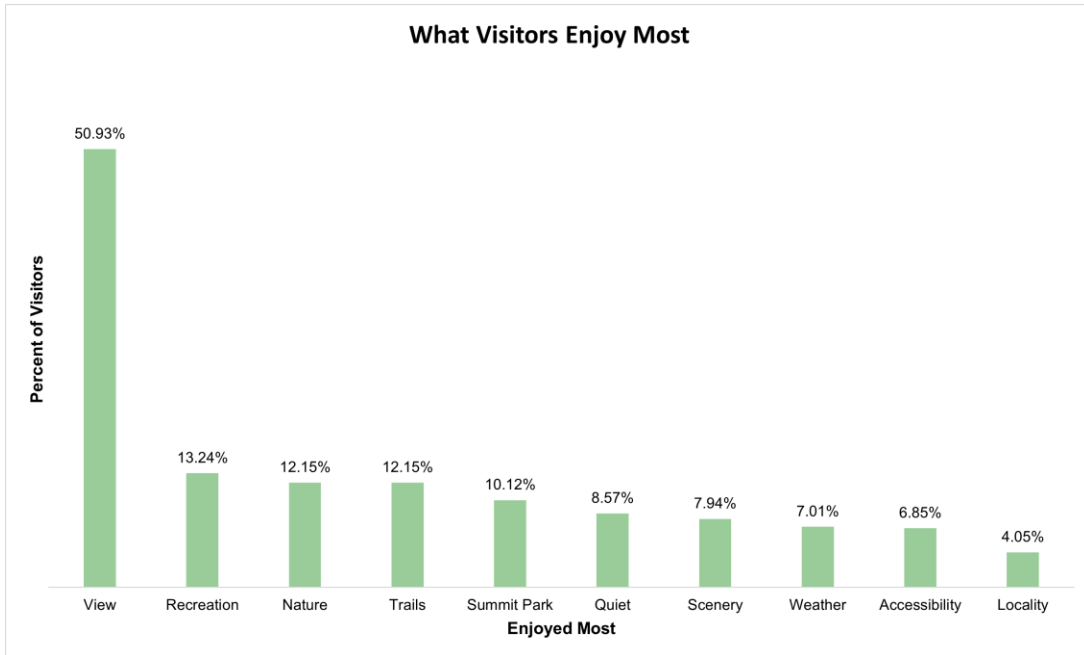
### What Visitors Enjoy Most

There’s a lot to love about Mount Agamenticus! As is the case most years, many people who answered this question provided us with multiple answers. Responses to this question were tagged with broad categories and then counted.

The breakdown is displayed in the graph on the following page. Categories that received less than 2% of responses (fewer than 15 total) are not shown, but included: “StoryWalk,” “staff interaction,” “nostalgia,” “the ocean,” “time with family or friends” and additional, outlying responses that did not fit into a set category.



As in previous years, most people who visit Mount Agamenticus most enjoy the view. Of the 642 visitors who answered this question, 327 (50.93%) gave this answer. Another 13.24% of those surveyed said that they most enjoyed some form of recreation or exercise (their hike, mountain bike route, general exercise, etc.). Just over 12% of visitors most enjoyed the trails or being outside in nature, and another 10.12% of those surveyed said they most enjoyed some aspect of, or facilities within, the summit park, specifically.



*What Visitors Enjoy Most - Click to Enlarge*

**Visitor Comments and Suggestions**

At the end of our time surveying each group, we ask them for any additional comments, questions, or suggestions. Each year, we receive a wide variety of answers. While some visitors and trail users do offer criticism or have concerns, the majority of the comments we receive are positive. Utilizing an online survey in addition to our in-person survey sessions has allowed an additional opportunity for people to provide comment while remaining anonymous.

This year, we received a handful of comments expressing interest in specific-use trails, as well as several concerns about fees, overcrowding, and dog waste on the trails. A few frequent users expressed concerns about trail erosion and drainage problems, and some visitors who were new to Mount A noted that blazing, signage, and our trail map could use improvement. Many visitors simply asked us to “keep up the great work,” while others appreciated more specifically our efforts in accessibility and preservation of public history. Visitors were divided about our “Carry In/Carry Out” trash policy as well as the upcoming parking project.

**Conclusion**

This year continued to challenge us in many ways, but these challenges have showed us that places like Mount Agamenticus continue to be important. Our yearly survey is only a snapshot of our estimated 50,000 plus yearly visitors. Mount Agamenticus is frequented not only by many vacationers, but by local visitors that love coming as often as they can. As always, we are surprised by the number of people who are finding their way to the mountain for the first time, and we hope that they will return for many years to come. We will continue our efforts to provide all-important recreational access to the outdoors while maintaining a delicate balance with habitat and water quality.



## Appendix E

### *Access Point Trail Signs*



## Mount Agamenticus Cooperative Management

This trail is part of the Mount Agamenticus Conservation Region. The landowners manage this area for water quality, wildlife and compatible recreation.

To help protect the forests, wildlife and wetlands, there are a few simple rules:

- 🍂 Carry out what you carry in. Trash receptacles are not provided. Do not litter.
- 🍂 Use trails for their designated uses only. Respect others and share the trail.
- 🍂 Stay on open, marked trails. Do not shortcut or clear new trails.
- 🍂 No unauthorized trail maintenance. Do not leaf blow trails.
- 🍂 Do not cut, dig or collect any plants, animals or cultural artifacts.
- 🍂 Wetlands and vernal pools are fragile. Do not disturb them.
- 🍂 Pets must be on a leash. Pet owners are responsible for carrying out and properly disposing their pet's waste.
- 🍂 No overnight parking, camping or campfires.
- 🍂 Area is open year-round from dawn to dusk.

**These trails cross private property. Please be respectful of all landowners.**

Detailed Guidelines for Use and trail maps are located at the Mt. Agamenticus summit kiosk and online.

For more information:

Conservation Office: 207-361-1102 or visit [www.agamenticus.org](http://www.agamenticus.org)

Thank you for your cooperation! Enjoy your visit!

