

WESTERN HIGHLANDS SECTION

Landscape Level Elements

CONTIGUOUS LANDS

The land to the west of the West River contains the highest elevations in Dummerston and the largest area of unfragmented land. This area is roughly 1,850 acres in size and contains Stoddard Hill. Maple Valley ski area once operated on it's eastern slope. This unfragmented area bends around to include a ridge to the south. This ridge has a road that bissects it. Today this road offers little trouble to wildlife that might cross, but appears likely to become more developed. If this happens, this unfragmented area will become two smaller areas in the future.

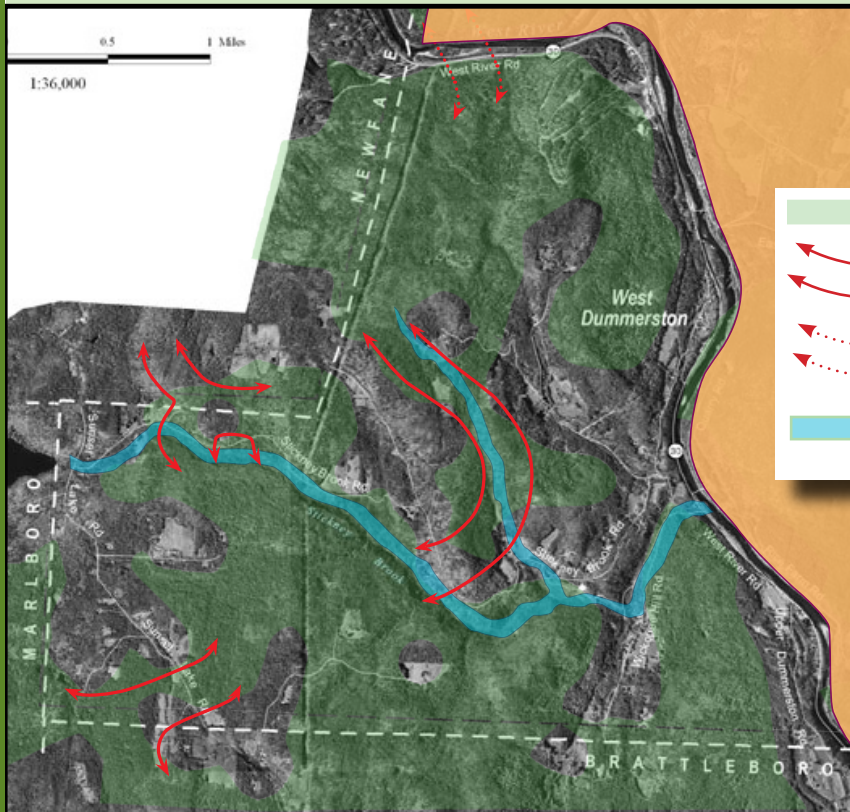
The Stickney Brook contiguous area contains about 1,300 acres in mostly large parcels. The Town of Brattleboro has conserved 238 acres as water supply protection. Another 195 acres are conserved by the Vermont Land Trust.

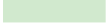



CONNECTING LANDS

This western side of town provides connections to important natural areas, including the Sunset Lake Reservoir in Brattleboro, and large unfragmented areas in Marlboro and Newfane. Bears and other wide-ranging species can move from Dummerston through Newfane to the Green Mountain National Forest.

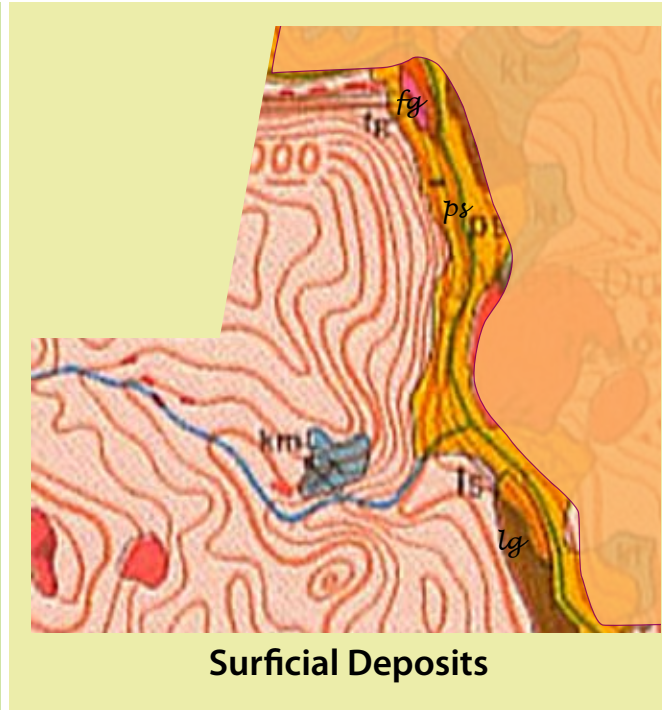
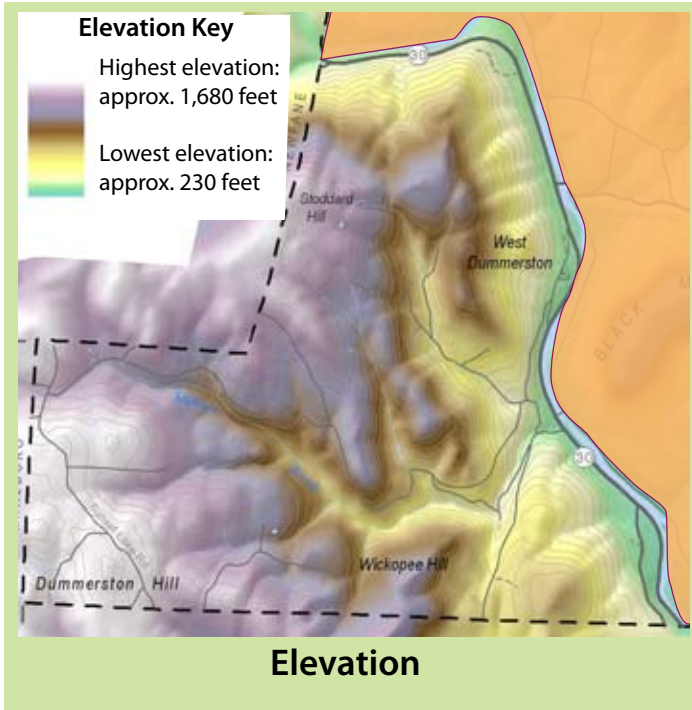
Sunset Lake Road has just one undeveloped segment. While this is a narrow dirt road, it receives a fair amount of traffic. If the undeveloped fragment can remain open this may be important to the connectivity between Dummerston and parts west.

Another important connection is between Stoddard Hill and Putney Mountain. Unfortunately Route 30 poses a major impediment to the movement of wildlife to and from the large tracts of land to the south. Amphibians and reptiles, bears, and small mammals are among the species likely to be deterred from crossing, or unsuccessful if they try. The bridge over the Rock River offers an underpass to wildlife willing to move in the river or along the rocky area next to the bridge abutments. Improving this area as a wildlife corridor should be considered as decisions are made about swimmer access.



-  Areas at least 600 feet from a structure
-  Paired arrows delineate areas 1,200 feet wide that might serve as important connecting habitat
-  Important connecting land, needs improvements
-  Riparian corridors





- Surficial Deposits Key**
- Till
 - Bedrock exposure
 - Well-sorted littoral (lake shore) sand, no pebbles
 - ps* Pebbly sand, lake shore deposit
 - km* Kame moraine, kame complex with morainic topography
 - fg* Post-glacial fluvial gravel
 - lg* Gravel, horizontally bedded lakeshore deposit

Surficial Geologic Map of Vermont, 1970, C.G. Doll, Ed.



ENDURING FEATURES

Dummerston Hill, in the southwest corner, is the high point in town at 508 meters. This part of town is deeply cut by Stickney Brook and has steep slopes.

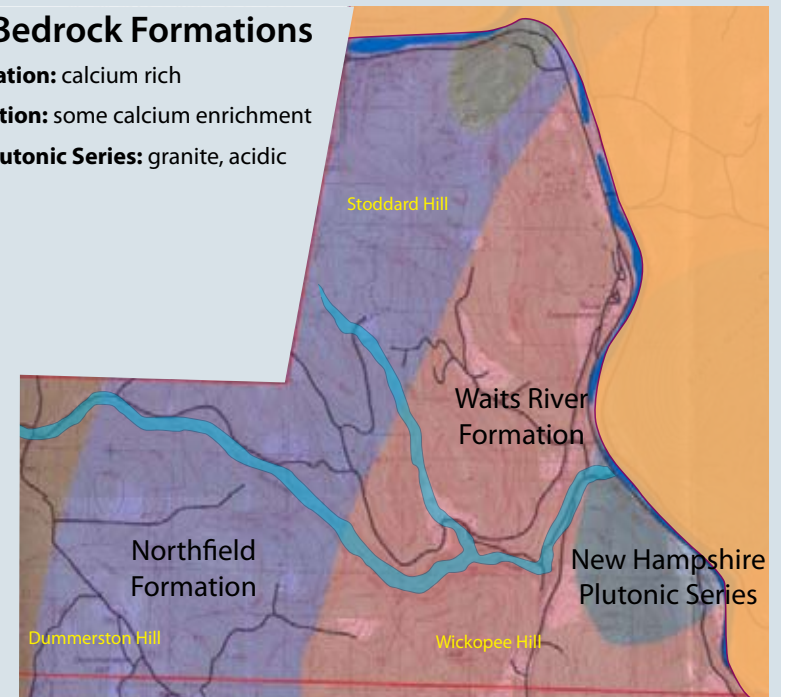
The bedrock in this section includes a swathe of the calcium-rich Waits River Formation. This contributes to rich forest sites and rich ledges on the West face of Stoddard Hill.

There is also a lobe of the New Hampshire Plutonic Series granite on this western side of the river. Much of this is buried beneath deep lakeshore gravels, but some outcroppings, and evidence of small-scale quarrying can be found.

This shores of the glacial Lake Hitchcock are evident along the West River. The village of West Dummerston sits on the pebbly sands deposited on the lakeshore. Farther south, a band of gravels forms a plateau above the river, and this well-drained substrate grows tall pines.

Important Bedrock Formations

- Waits River Formation:** calcium rich
- Northfield Formation:** some calcium enrichment
- New Hampshire Plutonic Series:** granite, acidic



Community Level Elements

NATURAL COMMUNITIES

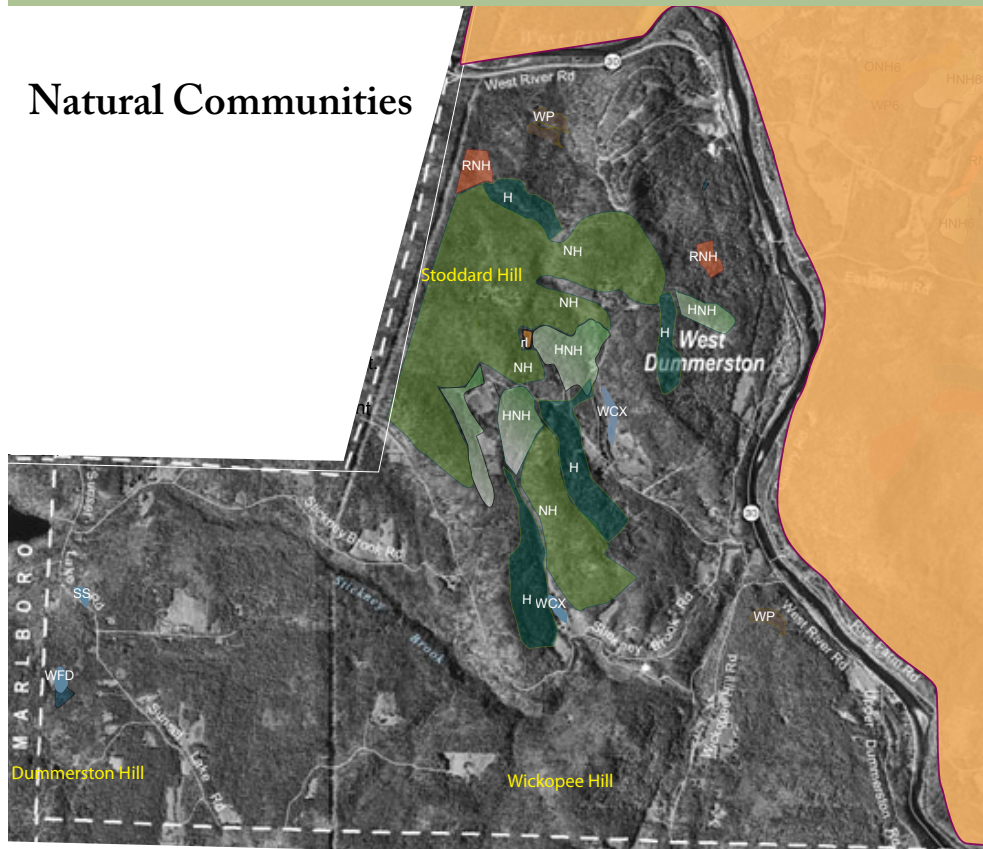
No natural communities were mapped here that were not found in other parts of town. The natural community inventory should be extended to the southern portion of this section. It is possible that unusual community types might be found with a more comprehensive survey.

Patches of rich hardwood forest and rich ledges add variety to northern hardwoods. Oaks are less common in this part of town, in part because of the elevation, in part because of a lack of dry slopes.

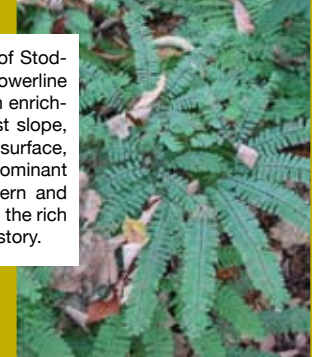
WETLANDS

Beavers have contributed to the development of wetland complexes on two streams, Beaver Brook and one of the tributaries flowing into Stickney Brook. A number of small wetlands are also found along the high, poorly drained plateau along Sunset Lake Road.

Natural Communities



An area on the north side of Stoddard Hill adjacent to the powerline shows evidence of calcium enrichment in the soil. This moist slope, with bedrock close to the surface, has white ash as the dominant canopy tree. Maidenhair fern and white snakeroot are among the rich site indicators in the understory.



Columbine

Natural Communities Key

Upland

- H Hemlock Forest
- NH Northern Hardwood Forest
- RNH Rich Northern Hardwood Forest
- HNH Hemlock-Northern Hardwood Forest

Wetland

- WCX Wetland Complex
- SS Shrub Swamp
- WFD Wetland, Forested, Dead (beaver pond)

Outcrops of Waits River Formation are found on the steep slopes on the west side of Stoddard hill. These ledges serve as refuges for a flora that disappeared from much of the forest when the land was grazed.



Wild ginger and Dutchman's britches



Miterwort



Small shrub swamp adjacent to Sunset Lake Road



Emergent persistent wetland, filling in abandoned beaver pond on border with Marlboro



Gravel terrace above the West River with regenerating white pine seedlings

RIPARIAN AND AQUATIC FEATURES

The riparian area along Stickney Brook is owned by the town of Brattleboro, and has been conserved to protect the water quality of the town's water supply. Brattleboro draws a regulated quantity of water from the brook to feed the Pleasant Valley Reservoir.

VERNAL POOLS

This is the least surveyed section of town, and it is likely a number of pools will be mapped here in the future. Because of the forested nature of this section, nearly all of the pools that have been mapped here are natural woodland depressions. Of these several were mapped outside of the amphibian breeding season, and were identified by presence of fingernail clams in the leaf litter. It is likely that some of these pools host breeding populations of Jefferson's salamanders.

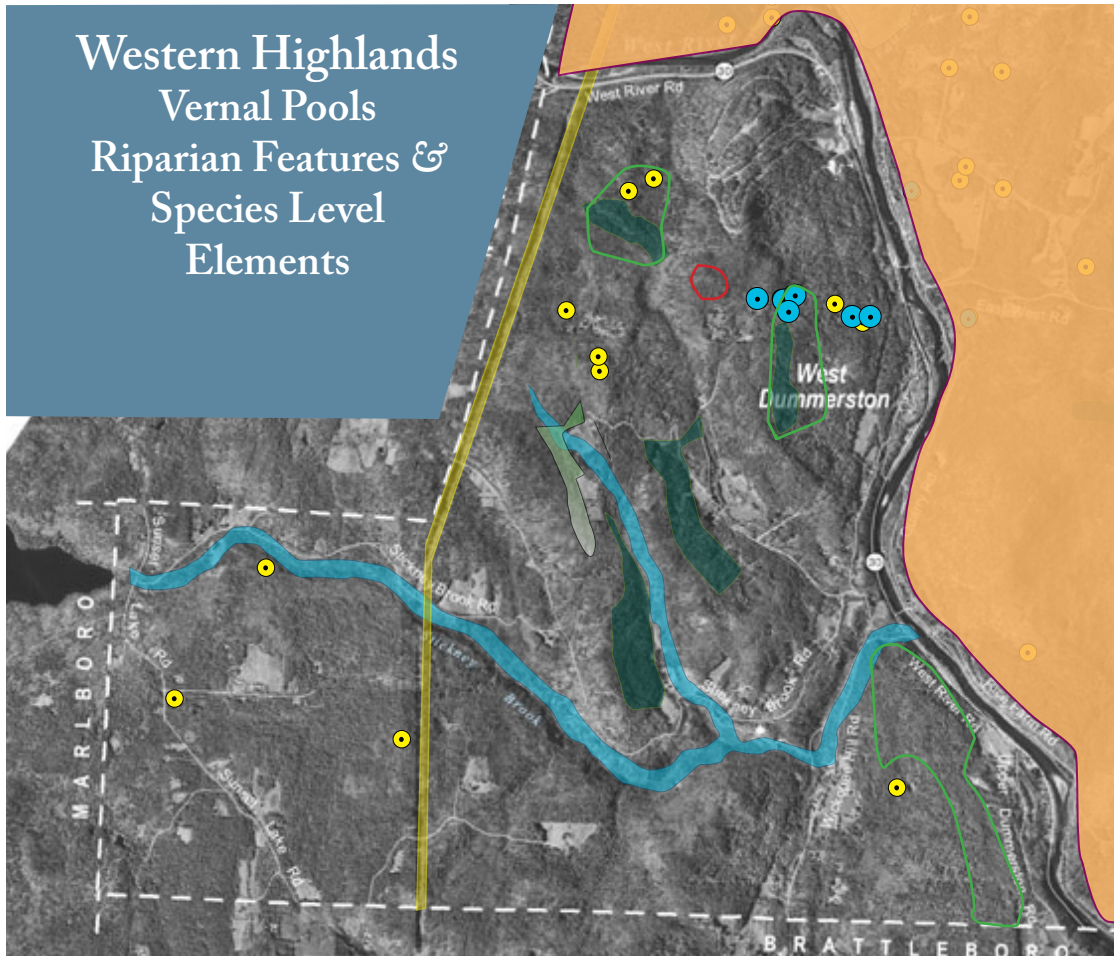


The higher elevation and connection to remote forest land are among the reasons that the only evidence of snowshoe hare in Dummerston was near Sunset Lake Road



Vernal pool with fisher tracks on Stoddard Mountain

Western Highlands Vernal Pools Riparian Features & Species Level Elements

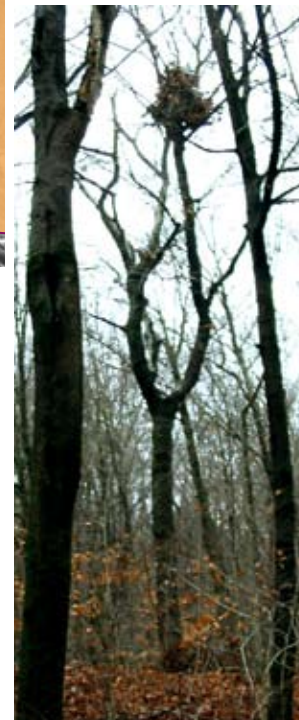


- Vernal pools
- Vernal pools with Jeffersons salamanders
- Mast stand
- ▭ Significant riparian areas
- ▭ Hemlock Forest, possible deer wintering habitat
- Mapped by VT ANR as deer wintering areas
- ▭ Early successional and shrub habitat

Species Level Elements

DEER WINTERING HABITAT

Deer wintering habitat in this section has not been field checked.



MAST STANDS

This is the part of town, with its proximity to important bear habitat in adjacent towns, where beech and oak stands are most likely to provide autumn feeding sites for black bears. This was, in fact, the only part of town where recent evidence of bears climbing beech trees was found. Several trees had fresh and historical claw marks and a "nest" of broken branches was seen in the top of one. This would be an important area to conserve as a mast stand that might be important for bears in the future.



Stoddard Hill power line facing north



Bear claw marks

EARLY SUCCESSIONAL AND SHRUB HABITAT

As with other sections of town, there is little forest in an early successional stage, and the shrub areas are found in the small wetlands and under the powerline right of way. The powerline does provide many acres of this habitat, and we found evidence that this area is used by wildlife. John Anderson has reported a fox den near a power pole. He also saw indigo buntings and rufous-sided towhees on a survey hike and has observed ruffed grouse and woodcock in the vicinity. There are a number of bear-clawed power poles. During raspberry season there were fresh bear tracks and trampled bushes.

In this section, the powerline has a mix of substrates. Wetlands and wet soils are found where there are springs. The summit is dry with bedrock exposures.

GRASSLAND AND BIRD HABITAT

No grasslands suitable for bird nesting were identified; however, more inventory work is needed. The area under the powerline provides excellent cover for grassland-affiliates, such as the eastern racer and other snakes, and small mammals.



Trampled raspberries