

Carl Siemon Family Charitable Trust Strategic Plan – Tactical Update

May 8, 2020 Annual Meeting Table of Contents for the Tactical Update for the 2019 Annual Report

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The purposes of the Carl Siemon Family Charitable Trust from Article II of Trust's Organizational Document are:

- i. To provide educational programs to the public concerning the preservation of fields, forests and wildlife;
- ii. To preserve, protect, and maintain the fields and forests located on the Real Property;
- iii. To preserve, protect and enhance the variety of native wildlife located on the Real Property;
- iv. To preserve, protect and enhance the quality of other natural resources and features of the Real Property including but not limited to air and water;
- v. To provide multiple public use of the Real Property provided that such use is not detrimental to the purposes set forth above.

PREFACE

I, Cynthia Siemon Wyatt, acting as Managing Trustee of The Carl Siemon Family Charitable Trust (CSFCT) since 1995, wrote this strategic plan for the organization in 2013. The Strategic Plan is an evolving document and covers a 10-year time period. The focus of the strategic plan is to continually fulfill the purposes of the Trust's charter as stated above.

2019 was a year of transition for the Trust and for me personally. Succession planning is an important part of this strategic plan. After 24 years as Managing Trustee, I worked with the CSFCT Board of Directors last year to approve the engagement of our first Executive Director Jared Kane in November of 2019. Since Jared's hiring, I have enjoyed working with Jared and enthusiastically support his initiatives to establish Heritage/Preservation Apple and Cider Specific Orchards at Branch Hill Farm. In November of 2020, I will officially retire and donate my time to the CSFCT as Chair of the Board.

Jared has embraced our family's dynamic legacy centered on sustainable agriculture, conservation and education. This legacy was created by Carl Siemon when he founded the family trust in 1995. The following mission statement written by Carl will continually provide the framework for the CSFCT Strategic Plan.

"Our mission is to purchase land, to produce quality products on the land, to share the land, and to protect the land. To teach through these acts sound forestry and conservation and agricultural practices. To educate others of the need for these practices by sharing the joys which the managed land's multiple uses provide."

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I have worked over the last 25 years to build on the legacy established by my father. Dad and I worked closely together for 10 of my 25 years managing Branch Hill Farm. During this time, we doubled the size of Branch Hill Farm's conservation lands to 3000 acres. We developed a common commitment to the everlasting vision to connect Branch Hill Farm's forever conserved and managed land holdings to other permanent conservation lands to form Greenways.

Our common Greenway vision was my inspiration to found Moose Mountains Regional Greenways (MMRG) 20 years ago. During this time, MMRG has assisted in conserving nearly 8,000 acres. Many MMRG land projects are close to and upstream from source water areas in the Salmon Falls watershed, ensuring water and air quality on CSFCT properties today and into the future. Additionally, the CSFCT and MMRG have collaborated over the last 20 years to produce several successful community outreach programs on Branch Hill Farm properties. This mutually advantageous relationship with MMRG has profoundly advanced my management strategies for the CSFCT.

My 20-year role as Chair of the Milton Conservation Commission has also supported local conservation planning and projects in our town. I am also one of the founding members of the 5-year old Explore Moose Mountains grass roots initiative. I will continue to work with this group to promote the vital nature-based economies of farms, forests, and recreation.

I recently retired from MMRG's board after a 20-year tenure as its founding member. Fortunately, Jared agreed to join the MMRG Board of Directors to ensure the continuity of our organizations' collaborative relationship. Jared has also joined the Explore Moose Mountains group.

It is important to call out the importance of our invaluable open spaces during these isolating and insecure times brought on by the Covid-19 global pandemic. Many are finding solace, refuge, and peace by escaping to the great outdoors. Simply said, escaping into nature is healthy mentally and physically. Our work at Branch Hill Farm will, in Carl's words, "forever create an oasis of forests, fields, wildlife, recreation, clean water and air."

Thanks, Dad for your clean and clear legacy and vision.

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I have refreshed some of the strategic goals and noted implementation work **in bold performed in 2019**.

1. Progress the Greenway Vision

- a) **Collaboration:** Foster collaboration and support with conservation organizations to ensure the success of neighboring or nearby conservation projects as an effective strategy to forever preserve, protect, and maintain the valuable natural resource features of Branch Hill Farm. This is vital to fulfill the goal of connecting BHF's 3000-acres to the existing and emerging greenways in our region.
- **“Westward-Ho Recreational Greenway”:** In 2019, we met with stakeholders Jack Savage, President of the Forest Society and George Szirbik, owner of the parcel that will enable the rail crossing to launch a collaborative effort to create a greenway trail system that connects the CSFCT trails (Plummers Ridge) to the CSFCT Jones Brook West property and continue the expansion to the Moose Mountains Reservation owned by the Forest Society.
 - **In 2019, Moose Mountains Regional Greenways (MMRG) and Southeast Land Trust (SELT) collaborated successfully to purchase and conserve the 2,000-acre Birch Ridge Community Forest overlooking Merrymeeting Lake in New Durham. SELT purchased the land and MMRG holds the easement. This is a top priority focus area in MMRG's Conservation Action Plan. SELT was able to meet the fundraising goal of \$2,950,000 to acquire, conserve, and steward the Birch Ridge Community Forest. This landscape scale conservation project has significant potential to advance greenways in the MMRG region with the vision to connect to Branch Hill Farm's conservation lands. In 2019, MMRG completed conservation easements on 320 acre Snow property in Brookfield, and 63 acre Leary property in Farmington.**
- b) **Nature Based Planning:** Participate and collaborate in local, regional, and state professional conservation planning initiatives to preserve the region's rural character and natural resources with the benefit of supporting local and regional recreation/tourism. NH Regional Planning Commissions and UNH Cooperative Extension are actively promoting Nature-based municipal planning. We envision the greenway sprinkled with local eateries, farm stands, lodging, artesian shops to add value to the nature-based experiences.

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With Jared at the helm, we are formulating a plan to re-make Branch Hill Farm into a community center and tourist destination with agricultural offerings of organically grown apples, pears, vegetables, cider pairings with locally grown food, along with robust nature based educational programs centered on family- oriented programs.

- **In 2019 as in previous years, we welcome the public to enjoy the Plummer’s Ridge Hiking Farm to Farm Hiking Trails along the Branch River along with our 30 miles of open scenic trails. We support advertisements in the Scenic Byway brochure featuring seasonal activities such as the festival in Milton and Milton Mills and historic farming events at the NH Farm Museum.**
- **2014-2019 Branch Hill Farm is a member of a regional effort called Explore Moose Mountains (EMM). EMM is a 5-year old grass roots organization with the mission to showcase the Moose Mountains Region’s many valuable cultural, historic, and natural assets such the farms, farm stands and hiking trails throughout the region. Strafford Regional Planning Commission partially funds and supports the EMM organization and Wentworth Economic Development (WEDCO) is our parent company. We have developed a very popular Facebook page called The Moose; developed an EMM website; and created brochures for travel centers and regional businesses.**
- **As of September 1, 2019 the Branch Hill Farm owned historic Cape at 1490 White Mountain Hwy, a scenic byway, is rented for \$1900/month to Yvonne and Eric Rand. Yvonne is a photographer and has opened a studio in the old “icehouse” building. Yvonne’s cottage industry along Rt 125 Scenic Byway complements the tourism initiatives that EMM and community members are promoting on Plummer’s Ridge and Applebee Rd.**
- **Prioritize and pursue abutting strategically important parcels.**
List of priority properties:
 - Gelanis property abutting Martha Plummer to the south, Map lot #18/4, 25 acres.
 - Remaining 6 (5-acre) lots on Piggott Hill and remaining 9 (5-acre) lots on Brookfield Drive.
In October of 2019, we purchased 5-acre 17/5 on Brookfield Drive from the Town of Milton
 - Alice Ziegler property on Branch Hill Rd., 8/18; 132 acres

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- **George Szirbik property (gravel pit) on White Mt. Hwy, 526 acres. We met with George and he is interested in pursuing a conservation option.**
 - Sanborn property, Applebee Rd., 9/116-1, 73 acres
 - Smith/Ekwurtzel on the Salmon Falls River, 6/5. 69.2 acres
 - Thomas Towle landlocked parcel on JBW, 1.55 acres. Sent a letter in 2017 asking to purchase with no reply.
 - Rick Thayer landlocked parcel on JBW, 20/1, 6.47. Reached out in 2017 without success.
 - Nute property, abuts JBW property
 - Shortridge Academy property on Governor's Rd. (\$825,000 in 2001, \$2350/acre) 350 acres. Shortridge agent reached out to us in 2017 asking \$900,000 (\$3,000/acre), but FMV is substantially less than asking price, so did not pursue.
 - Property across from the barn. Reached out to seller in 2017 too late, already under agreement.
- On March 5th, 2018, I attended the Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative Annual Meeting on behalf of MMRG and the CSFCT. The Collaborative (DES, EPA, regional land trusts; local municipalities) are working on an action plan to protect and maintain clean drinking water; low impact development; stormwater management; contaminant mitigation; prioritized land conservation; community outreach.
 - In 2017, MMRG released its Conservation Action Plan. I served on the stakeholder focus and visioning sessions led by 2 professionals in the conservation field. The plan is based on scientific GIS mapping layers and priorities are based on community input of all MMRG's member towns. The Forest Society's Moose Mountains Reservation is the Centerpiece of our regional greenway efforts, and Branch Hill Farm's 3000-acres is a vital anchor property of the regional greenway plan.
 - In 2017, and for several years, I have been involved in other professional planning initiatives: as Chair of Milton's Conservation Commission, I worked on a subcommittee to update the Natural Resource Chapter of Milton's Master Plan; The Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative; and in Strafford County's Regional Conservation Plan.
 - Ensure that the mapping tools are continually updated and in place for strategic planning. In 2016, we discovered that many of the CSFCT

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conservation lands were not catalogued in State Granit database. As Chair of the MCC, we contracted with Strafford Regional Planning Commission to convert to shape files, a standard needed to submit the properties to GRANIT. This guarantees that all of Milton's conservation properties including the CSFCT are up to date in the statewide GRANIT database.

- c) Foster Community Engagement** through collaboration to make conservation lands more accessible and to increase awareness that conservation lands are integral to the economic fabric of our communities that support the farm, forest, and recreational industries.
- **In 2019, we hosted our first 10K competitive Trail Run at Branch Hill Farm. The participants were a new and enthusiastic audience for promoting the greenway trails.**
 - **In 2019, as Chair of the Milton Conservation Commission, the Commission advanced the conservation of the 79-acre Town owned Casey Rd. property with the following actions:**
 - **The CC formally contracted with MMRG to hold the conservation easement on the 79-acre town owned Casey Rd. Property with tremendous community support. In 2018, the town voted overwhelmingly in favor (521 yes, 168 no) to place a conservation easement on this town owned property indicates a high level of public support for conservation.**
 - **We worked collaboratively with MMRG to successfully fund- raise to meet the \$48,000 MMRG budget to cover the costs of placing a conservation easement on the property.**
 - **We worked with Milton Eagle Scout to build a welcome kiosk at the trail head, blaze and name the trails.**
 - **The CC collaborated with the BOS and Dept of Public Works to organize cleanups to remove shacks and litter along the trails and to build a parking area for school buses.**
 - **We worked with Milton School Board to plan educational activities on the property.**
 - **CSFCT multiple outreach program. In 2019, BHF and MMRG continue to co-host our yearly and very popular Branch River Paddle, the WWW Festival, and the well-attended forestry workshops. We added an apple tree pruning and grafting**

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workshop and, because of its popularity, have made it one of our annual events which is hosted by ED Jared Kane.

- d) Advocate for conservation** to municipal leaders, planning boards, state & federal legislators to stress the importance of a healthy eco system for the health and welfare for our communities and preserving our rural character. Promote the economic benefits of conservation which supports the important NH tourism/recreation industry, as well as the vital forest and farming industries.
- **In 2019, as in previous years, the CSFCT is one of the sponsors for New Hampshire's Annual Land Conservation Conference, Saving Special Places organized by UNHCE. This event is attended by 300 people. MMRG led a workshop at the conference.**
 - As long time Chair of Milton's Conservation Commission, I work with Milton's municipal leaders to promote the public benefits of conservation. I have also advocated to legislators to continue to fund the Land & Community Heritage Investment Program.
 - **In 2017-2019, the Conservation Commission supported the Three Ponds Protective Association's collaborative efforts with the NHDES and Maines DEP to eradicate European Naiad, an invasive weed concentrated in Northeast Pond, very close to the CSFCT peninsula property. The total cost for the 2018 eradication was \$38,000. It is in Branch Hill Farm's best interest that this sensitive watershed is protected.**
 - **In 2019, the Conservation Commission along with Three Ponds Protective Association took an active role against the application by a large Michigan corporation for a massive expansion of a campground on Northeast Pond in the low-density residential zone. The CSFCT property has substantial water frontage along NE Pond, a fragile ecosystem due to the pervasive existence of European Naiad. The ZBA denied their application, the corporation took the town to court. Recently, the court ruled in the favor of the town's ZBA decision and the Corporation has appealed to the Supreme Court.**

2. Advance Sustainable Land Management

- a) Sustainable Farm & Field Management:** Work to become an agricultural demonstration model for sustainable farming practices such as heirloom orchards, permaculture gardening, pollinator gardens, producing organic compost, using organic fertilizers, following zero waste practices.

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We plan to slowly transition from hay production to more cost-effective field management strategies.

- **Jared's report in 2019, Jared initiated his detailed plan to establish a Heritage Apple Orchard and Cider Specific Apple Orchard. (Jared report)**
- **Jared also made plans with Sheehan Lygren to expand his organic plantings to the Racetrack and Parker fields (Jared)**
- **From 2018-2019, the WWW Festival showcased a large, organic permaculture garden, planned and planted with heirloom vegetables and herbs by Sheehan Lygren of Sheehan Gardens & Homestead. Permaculture systems are intrinsically sustainable and much easier to care for. They are ecosystems that have built in mechanisms to constantly revitalize the earth, keeping plants healthier and more resistant to disease and pests, and require less watering. This is a no-till system to ensure that the soil's healthy and vast system of microorganisms are not disturbed.**
- **In 2019, to avoid the use of commercial fertilizers and to add organic matter to enrich our fields' soils, Bob spread a total of 595 tons of cow manure on 80 acres (10 tons/acre) including all of the Dahl fields, Stowell field, and the Racetrack Field for a cost of \$6,154.**
- **In June, 2018 we made the unfortunate discovery of smooth bedstraw in the Stowell fields. This is an invasive perennial weed that is difficult to eradicate. In 2019, to eradicate the bedstraw, we chose not to use herbicides. Instead we began to plow up the field soon and use "bare fallow" technique which requires us to harrow every 2 weeks to kill perennial plants and to deplete the weed seed reservoir in the soil. We have amended the soils with organic wood ash to bring up the pH and potassium. In mid-August, we will bring in cow manure and additional nitrogen and plant the field with hay or some other crop that can be grown organically. With increased soil health, the crop should outcompete the bedstraw. We are looking into planting flax.**
- **2019, we ended the free lease with the McKenzie's farm because they are not able to grow crops without synthetic chemicals.**
- **The cover of the report features last year's spring blooms of our first pollinator garden along the edge of the Racetrack hayfield. We have a second pollinator garden in the works and are planning to install several**

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400 square ft gardens along the edge of the field as part of our field management plan. Pollinators are critical in assisting 80% of the world's flowering plants to reproduce and include ants, bats, bees, beetles, birds, butterflies, flies, moths, and wasps.

- In 2018 and 2017, we have demonstration composting bins and large piles of compost in varying degrees of decomposition. The “black gold” compost makes for nutrient rich and well- balanced soil that is utilized in the permaculture gardens. The message is that everyone can turn kitchen scraps and yard waste into valuable black gold instead of adding biodegradable to a landfill.
- All future farming lease agreements will ask lessee to follow organic standards and practices.
- b) **Sustainable Forest Management:** Implement sustainable forest management practices, many of which are funded through NRCS grants in order to:
 - Promote a healthy, productive, and complex forest.
 - **In the fall of 2019, Forester Charlie Moreno discovered red pine scale which led to the decision to perform a salvage harvest on all BHF's red pine plantations.**
 - Promote a mixed aged forest and diverse species regeneration with guidance and funding through NRCS.
 - **During 2019, NRCS funded programs totaling \$79,365.**
Received Annual Conservation Stewardship payment of \$3039.96
Received payment for TSI, tree marking, nesting bird boxes, delayed mowing of Salmon Falls Property for \$39,537.23
Received payment for TSI of Booma Property for \$25,309.20

Received payment for TSI (beech control) on Jones Brook East for \$11,477.90
 - Remove exotic, invasive species so that all parts of the forest ecosystem are healthy and functioning;
 - **In 2019, we contracted with Taylor Invasive Plant Control to spray invasive plants on our properties.**
 - Continue to host forestry workshops on the CSFCT forest lands.

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- **In October, 2019 Charlie hosted a Walk through History of the Land between the Rivers.**
 - **In December, 2019, Charlie and Kyle Lombard NH Forest Health Specialist led an evening workshop on forest pathogens, including red pine scale.**
 - Continue to pursue American Chestnut Foundation initiatives to bring chestnuts back to our NE forests:
 - **2015-present Forester Dan Stepanauskas continues working with Bob to plant the 12 genetically improved American Chestnuts seeds that we receive every year for our membership donation to TACF.**
 - **In the spring of 2019, Charlie planted 50 chestnut seedlings that have built in genetic resistance in openings in the Branch River West forest**
 - **In the spring of 2019, Kendra Collins, NE Regional Science Coordinator with the American Chestnut Foundation visited BHF to see plantings in the beaver pond field and in the Branch River E. forest.**
 - Work with foresters to investigate the feasibility of hiring summer interns with majors in forestry, wildlife, environment, recreation.
 - Follow up on Charlie's idea to make the old gravel pit (red pine plantation) with nonproductive soils into a solar garden.
 - Apply wildlife habitat enhancements and management;
 - Protective buffers to water resource areas;
 - Blaze and paint boundaries of all CSFCT tracts:
 - Completed: Jones Brook East, Branch River West, Donahue Lot, Branch River W.
 - In 2018 Jones Brook West Survey was recorded and blazing is complete on the eastern side.
- c) Wildlife Enhancement**
- **2019, we continued the practice of delayed mowing on certain fields to continue the protection of field nesting birds which Charlie Moreno has substantiated with an inventory study. 2016-2018 we were enrolled in the NRCS EQIP for 3 fields, Racetrack and Dahl 1 and 2 to prevent mowing of the nests of field nesting birds. Charlie Moreno has taken bird inventory for all three years with special attention to the field**

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nesting bobolink in the Racetrack, and Dahl 1 & 2 fields. Charlie Moreno organized the early morning bird watching/listening/counting sessions and filed reports for all 3 years.

- **In July 2019, professionals with NRCS/NHFG programs visited the property to enhance wildlife habitat for trout and turtles. Wildlife biologist Kelly Boland and John Magee, NHFG Biologist for Fish Habitat Program and Josh Megyesy, Biologist for NHFG Turtle & Amphibian program visited several sites on our properties to take inventory of fish and turtles. They will help create a wildlife enhancement plan for those areas.**
- **In April 2019, Chris Martin with NH Audubon sent pictures of a pair of Bald Eagles on NE Pond. He is tracking the pair and keeps us posted with stunning pictures. At last year's Branch River Paddle in May, the eagles had moved their nest from our property to the Maine side of NE Pond.**
- We now have strategically placed wildlife clearings in the forest. Shrubland and young forest provide habitat for migratory birds. Wildlife openings have been created on the Jones Brook East and Branch River West tracts.
- Continue to Install bird and bat houses around the properties. Dan built and installed several bat and bluebird nesting houses on the properties.
- Continue to Install pollinator gardens to ensure the health of the stressed and diminishing pollinator species. In the fall of 2017 we planted a 20 by 20 pollinator garden along the perimeter of the Racetrack field.
- We plan to work with the Northeast Culvert Project Coordinator Colin Lawson with Trout Unlimited to restore/replace undersized culverts for fish passage in several MMRG towns.
- Reach out to Forest Service Wildlife Biologist Mariko Yamasaki as a resource to enhance the wildlife chapters of the Forestry Plans.

d) Management of Trails

- In 2018, we posted the land on the homestead property for the safety reasons. I had some unfortunate encounters with hunters and decided this was the safest way to keep me and my dogs safe.
- In 2017, we completed the Plummers Ridge Hiking Trails with 6.5 miles of trails along the Branch River and connecting to the 2 neighboring farms. This is the first step to implement a plan to expand the greenway recreational trail system.

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- In 2017, Explore Moose Mountains website went live to market and promote community greenway trail systems inclusive of other nearby cultural, artisan, farm, and recreational assets in the Moose Mountains Region.
- Continue to prioritize plans to mark trails and create corresponding maps.
- Develop a plan to manage the public use of Branch Hill Farm’s trail systems to safeguard sensitive ecological areas and to promote responsible and safe recreational use.
- In 2016, we placed Welcome/Allowed use signs at 25 trail access points
- All entrances are secured with locked iron gates.
- In 2018, we continued the upgrading of woods roads on the Salmon Falls Woodlands.

3. Expand Education & Communication: Promote Branch Hill Farm as a model for conservation and sustainable land stewardship.

- a) Collaborate with UNH, UNH Cooperative Extension, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Strafford Regional Planning Commission, MMRG, and other organizations to engage in educational outreach programs.
 - **In 2019, and for the past several years, Charlie hosts UNH Thompson School of Forestry Professor Matt Chagnon’s and Wildlife Biologist Matt Tarr’s class visits BHF and takes tours led by Charlie Moreno. Matt Chagnon’s class met with me to learn about conservation easements.**
 - **In the fall of 2019, Charlie met with Professor of Silviculture Jen Asbjornsen and her class to showcase BHF’s innovative forest management practices.**
 - **In August 2019, Charlie and I were asked to speak to a consortium of around 30 professionals, all stakeholders representing the Salmon Falls Watershed Collaborative, including USEPA, USDA, NHDES, municipal leaders, NRCS, UNH-PREP, Conservation Law Foundation.**
 - **In 2018 and 2019, the CSFCT made a commitment to make a grant for \$10,000 to UNHCE internship program.**
 - **In 2019 we continued to collaborate with MMRG and other conservation/education organizations with the assistance of the Education Outreach Coordinator, Kari Lygren. (Kari will give a presentation of BHF events and BHF/MMRG collaborated events.)**
 - **In 2019, MMRG and BHF collaboratively hosted 2 forestry workshops and a very well attended Coyote Presentation led by**

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Wildlife Biologist Chris Schadler. Kari is the lead organizer for outreach events and BHF contracts with Virginia Long to do the publicity.

- **In 2019, and for the past 18 years, BHF and MMRG jointly host the Woods Water & Wildlife Festival with many forest and farm educational, family-oriented events. The Festival typically attracts over 600 people. Kari is the lead organizer and Virginia Long does all the publicity**
- b) Focus educational programming on Salmon Falls Watershed, targeting strategic landowners within the watershed and municipal leaders including Selectmen, Planning Boards, and Conservation Commissions.
- c) Plan programs for local and regional schools
 - Sponsor NH Envirothon: Volunteers teachers/advisors coach teams of students with the assistance of the local conservation districts, forestry associations, and participating natural resource agencies. Students are tested on their knowledge of aquatics, forestry, soils, land use, and wildlife. Student teams may be sponsored by school, agricultural association, scout, or community service groups. Winning teams from each state advance to the North America Envirothon.
- d) Continually work to improve CSFCT website and update it regularly. Explore options for on-line education program.
- e) **Investigate the feasibility of an Education Center that focuses on a “sustainability” management model. Cyn Wyatt and Jared Kane will work together to develop a vision plan for the Sustainability Center.**
 - Create a plan to visit similar orgs for ideas.
 - Work with Carolyn Settzo on the financial feasibility of construction and supporting the operations of the Center. Create a 10 year plan to fund on-going operations, strategic land acquisitions, new education programs, educational center, and long range land management activities.
 - Talk to UNH Sustainability Center and UNHCE Sustainability Institute to see if they would use the resource,
 - Explore options to share the structure with other conservation/wildlife/educational organizations.
 - Locate to maximize visibility and to add value to neighboring historic and entrepreneurial properties. This building would be a “sustainably

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engineered structure” to provide classrooms for seminars, demonstrations, training, webinars etc.

- Brainstorm where to locate the Sustainability Center

5. Succession Planning: See Preface

Respectfully Submitted,

Cynthia Siemon Wyatt