

# Owl's Head Project: Expansion of the Dorset Town Forest Fall 2013



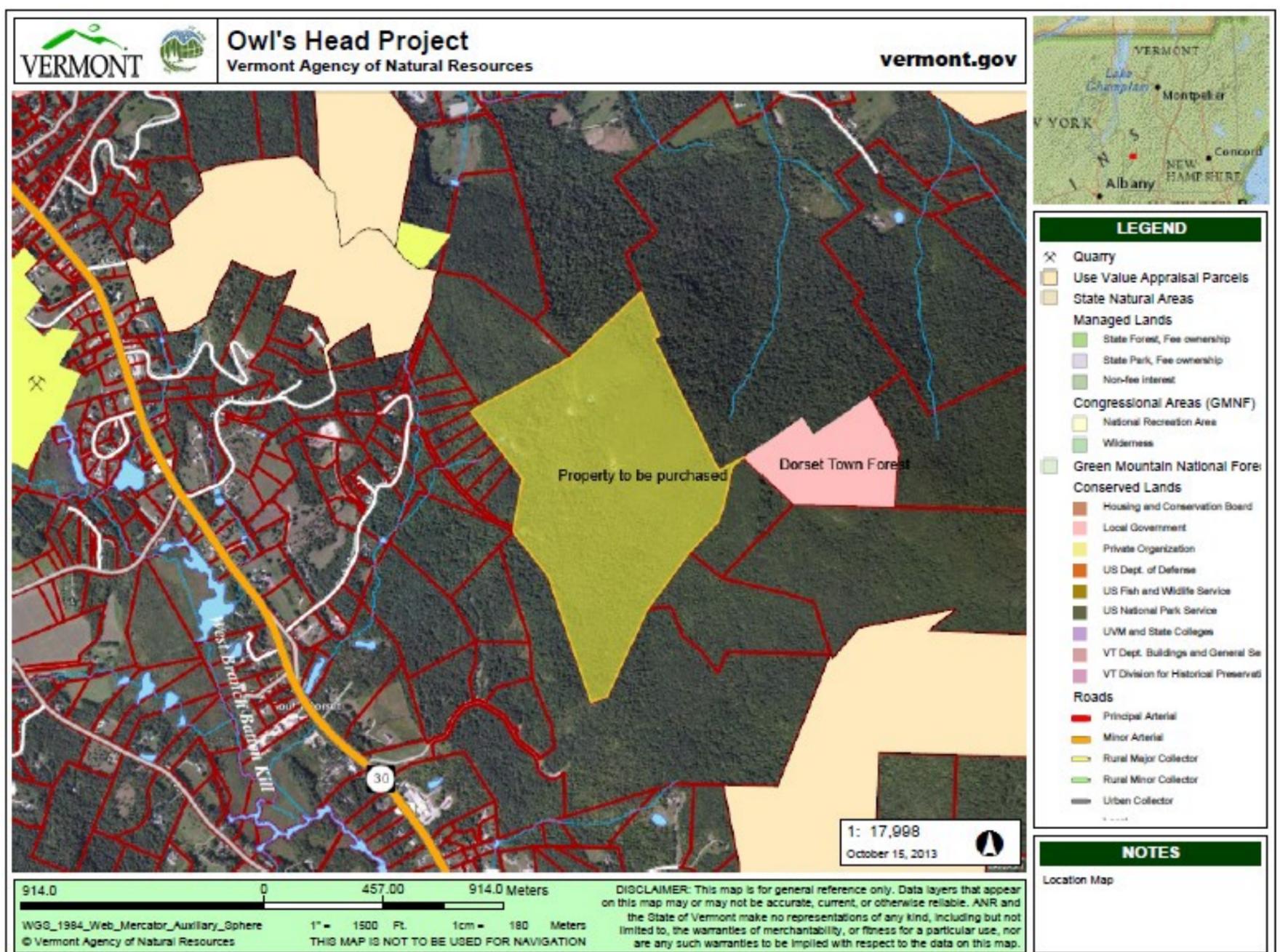
“Vermont Cows” by Peter Salmon

## SUSTAINABLE FOREST & PROPERTY MANAGEMENT:

At current the Dorset Town Forest includes the 30 acre parcel that sits atop Owl's Head peak in Dorset. By acquiring this property the Dorset Town Forest will expand to 230 acres in size. At current there is no deeded public access to the Dorset Town Forest. This project will achieve public access to the Town property. By increasing the size and scope of our Town Forest we will be able to better implement a forest management plan for the property, creating a sustainable Town Forest and protecting many of the valuable assets the property offers to the community. This property holds many historic/cultural, ecological, and recreational assets in addition to its value as a Town Forest. This particular property has been sought after by town planners and conservation groups for many years.

The Town is currently putting together the United States Forest Service Community Forest Grant Application. This grant offers up to \$400,000 with a 50/50 match required. In conjunction the Town will submit an application to the Vermont Housing & Conservation Board for a Land Conservation Grant to use as matching funds for the federal grant. An appraisal will determine fair market value, and be used to negotiate the terms of a purchase and sale agreement with the landowner.

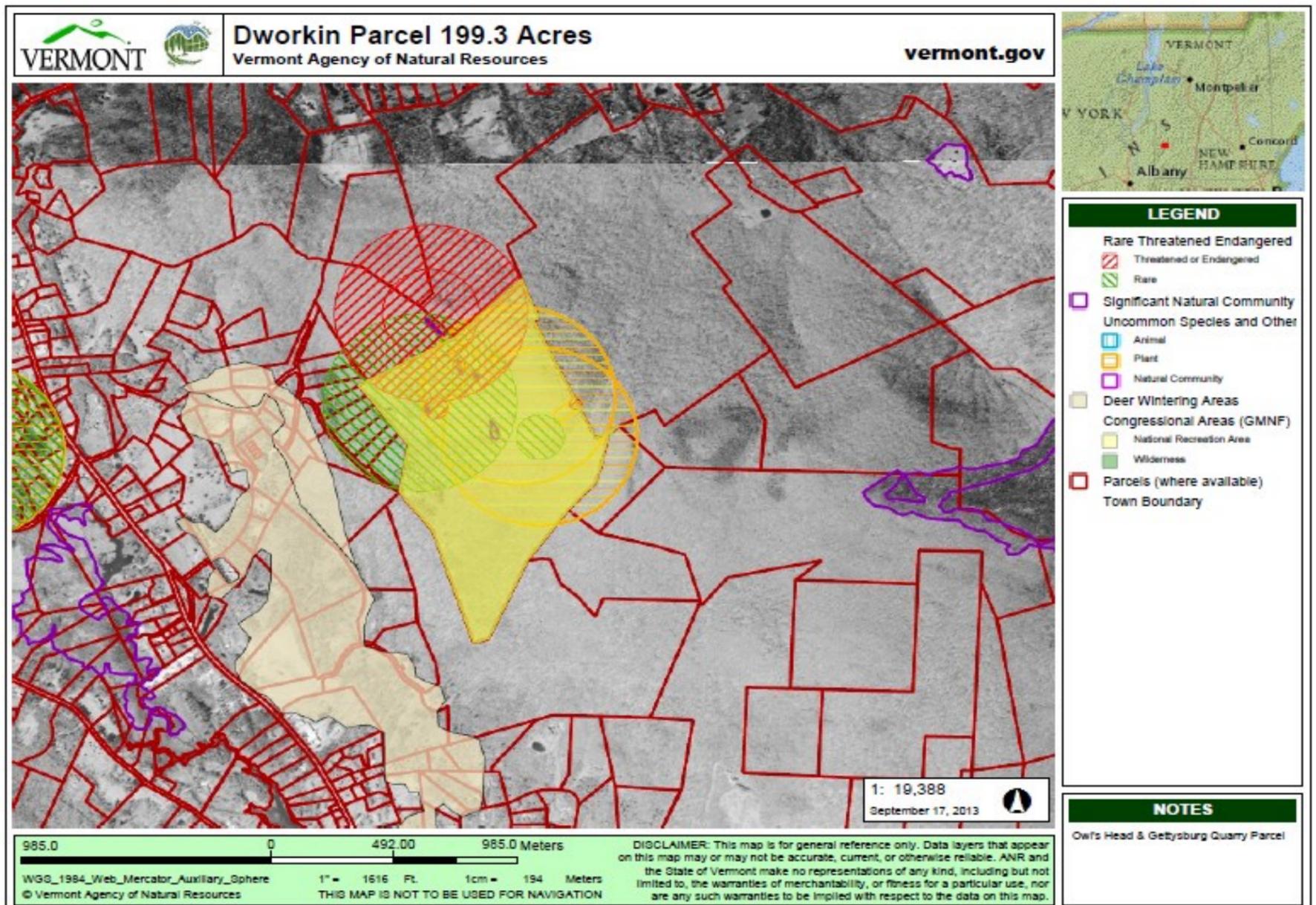
The Town through the Conservation Commission will develop a comprehensive management plan for the property, this plan will address forestry management of the property in addition to managing the recreational aspects of the property as well. In conjunction with the Vermont Housing & Conservation grant, a Conservation Easement would be placed on the property, outlining uses allowed on the property: forestry management, bicycling, bird watching, cross country skiing, fishing, hiking, hunting and trapping, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, walking and wildlife observation. Typically ATV use is restricted to maintenance of the property and allowable for ATV's crossing the property to connect to other "legal" ATV trails located on abutting properties.



## HISTORIC & ECOLOGICAL FEATURES:

The Owl's Head Trail property is home to many historic/cultural and ecological resources. Not far from the main trail head, an old cellar hole from the quarry era can be seen. The property boasts multiple quarries and many visible sights where buildings and operations were located. These are great physical examples of Dorset's strong historic ties to the marble industry.

The property also contains a wealth of unique ecological features. From rare/ endangered plants to unique natural communities. Above the Gettysburg Quarry as the trail heads south toward the notch that lies below Owl's Head, a good example of a dry oak hickory hophornbeam natural community is visible.



## **GETTYSBURG QUARRY (HISTORIC):**

Gettysburg Quarry opening (elevation 1720'). This feature is located (0.75 mi) into the Owl's Head Hike. This marble quarry was opened in 1866. The quarry supplied marble grave stone markers in the civil war era. There is a good view of the Dorset valley from the marble dump, reached by a rough path opposite the quarry opening. From the Quarry take the trail to the right, which climbs steeply along the south side of the quarry opening, for about 150 feet. Turn abruptly right onto gently ascending forest path.



View from marble dump at Gettysburg Quarry



Gettysburg Quarry Opening

## **RECREATIONAL FEATURES:**

The Owl's Head Lookout Hike is linked directly to this property. The majority of the hiking trail to "Gilbert Lookout" is located on the prospective property. This trail was originally blazed by the "Dorset Science Club", as they mapped out the Dorset Trail, a trail connecting Dorset's high country. The trail starts up through the ridges and winds back south after passing by the Gettysburg Quarry. Years ago the trail was marked with small circular metal markers, some of which are still present. About 1.40 miles into the hike a 12 foot high boulder on the right marks the point where the trail to the lookout turns left and heads up steep slopes to the lookout. On a clear day Gilbert Lookout offers good views of the Dorset Hollow, Equinox & Mettawee Valley, and the Adirondacks. The hike to the lookout is about 1.60 miles in length (3.2 miles total).

