

<p style="text-align: center;">Middlebury College Land Stewardship Initiative</p>

Middlebury College has a tradition of excellence and leadership in environmental issues that begins in the classroom, but permeates the daily life and institutional priorities of the College. This is exemplified in the College's mission statement, which sets the goal of "*integrating environmental stewardship into both our curriculum and our practices on campus*" (Middlebury College Strategic Plan, 2006). The diversity and size of the College's land holdings represent a significant and largely untapped opportunity to further the College's mission of integrating environmental stewardship with our educational mission. With this Initiative, Middlebury College extends its leadership in environmental stewardship and environmental education by formally recognizing the important contributions that the College's landholdings make to the education of students, the research of students and faculty, and local and regional sustainability.

The College undertakes this Initiative within the context of the established legal principles that define responsibility for governance of the College's affairs, including land use decisions. The Board of Trustees, with the advice and support of the Administration, holds the ultimate, non-delegable responsibility and authority for management of the College's land and resources. The Initiative also recognizes the variety of goals and objectives that shape the College's decisions to acquire, hold, and convey land. The Initiative will ensure that land stewardship principles are carefully reviewed and taken into account so that the College can make informed and environmentally responsible decisions.

The components of this Initiative are:

- Adoption of land stewardship guidelines to guide the College's land use decisions.
- Establishment of closer connections between College lands and our educational mission, including student and faculty research and class use.
- Establishing a Land Use Advisory Group to assist the College in making land use decisions for all College lands.

Guidelines for Land Stewardship

Adoption of the following Guiding Principles lie at the heart of the Lands Stewardship Initiative. Despite an impressive record of innovative efforts to support environmentally sound land management, the College currently has no formal guidelines for ensuring that stewardship principles are considered in management of the College's lands. With these Guiding Principles, the College seeks to maximize the positive impacts of College land use decisions and to coordinate current efforts at sustainable land management under a single common vision of the College's goals. These Principles recognize the College's commitment to operate with both fiscal and environmental prudence, and provide guidance to those making land management decisions. Finally, the process of implementing these guidelines will provide a uniquely rich set of multidisciplinary opportunities for students to extend lessons of the classroom to real-world issues in the finest tradition of liberal arts education.

Scope:

These Guiding Principles are specifically intended to apply to College Lands Outside of the Main Campus, as defined by the Wallace Floyd Design Group 2000 Master Plan, including the Ralph Myrhe Golf Course, the Snow Bowl, and the Bread Loaf Campus. Separate criteria are included for lands gifted to Middlebury College or acquired by the College primarily for investment purposes, many of which are only owned for a short time. At present, they do not apply to non-domestic lands, including lands that the College own or leases for the Middlebury Schools Abroad or other Middlebury programs elsewhere in the United States. They also exclude all lands for which management decisions are stipulated by deeds, terms of estates/trusts, leases, easements, or other legally binding agreements, although the Guiding Principles should be applied to such lands to the greatest extent possible where compatible with applicable legal restrictions.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- **The College recognizes the importance of applying principles of environmental sustainability to the stewardship of its lands beyond the Main Campus.**
- **Land stewardship involves fiscally responsible decision-making.**
- **The College recognizes that College lands are parts of broader ecosystems, and promotes practices that improve the biological integrity of those ecosystems.**
- **The College recognizes the value of the traditional Vermont landscape and historically important land uses to Middlebury College and to the larger Vermont community.**
- **The College recognizes that appropriate use of lands can help achieve broader sustainability goals, such as reduction of transportation impacts through development of land close to town centers, or reduction of carbon emissions through development of land for alternative energy sources.**
- **The College recognizes the value of existing teaching and research sites and acknowledges the tremendous opportunities for experiential education across disciplines that exist in its network of landholdings.**
- **The College embraces the ideal of compatible uses, recognizing that conservation and fiscal prudence are not mutually exclusive objectives, and resolves that responsible stewardship will carefully consider *all* of these guiding principles.**

Consultation with Land Stewardship Advisory Group

The Guiding Principles represent broad goals with respect to land stewardship, and unique land management decisions will be necessary for different categories of land. For example, management decisions for land acquired and held by the College primarily for investment, either short term or long term, may be different than decisions about land held primarily to protect forest, farm, or open land. The Guiding Principles acknowledge that some stewardship practices, strictly applied, could conflict with other objectives of the College, as identified by the Administration and the Board of Trustees.

The Guiding Principles also recognize that decisions about College lands must be flexible so that they reflect changing financial and ecological needs, and evolving patterns of land use and development in the surrounding community. The balancing of factors that influence land decisions will constantly change, and the College must maintain the ability to respond to this change. It is impractical to adopt and constantly modify specific management plans for each property that the College owns.

The process of developing land management information, and recommending responsible stewardship practices that comply with the Guiding Principles, should be undertaken by a Land Stewardship Advisory Group composed of students, faculty and staff with relevant expertise (including staff responsible for current land management), the Dean of Environmental Affairs, and the College Treasurer or his/her designee. Use of consulting professionals in the appropriate fields is encouraged. This Land Stewardship Advisory Group will be formed upon the adoption of these Guiding Principles. This group will make significant contributions in the first year of implementation, and then could be reconvened on a periodic basis to provide updated guidance.

The Administration and the Board of Trustees are responsible for making decisions about the College's lands. Where practical given time and other constraints, the Administration will consult with the Land Stewardship Advisory Group on significant land decisions that raise issues that fall within the purview of the Guiding Principles.

The Land Stewardship Advisory Group will review the property involved and make recommendations on how the Guiding Principles might affect the College's decision. The Group's recommendations will be submitted to the Administration for consideration.