

## Proposed Silver Lake Hut - Frequently Asked Questions

### Q: Where is the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area?

The Moosalamoo National Recreation Area (MNRA) is a region within the Green Mountain National Forest that comprises 16,000 acres and 70 miles of multi-purpose trails. The approximate boundaries are Route 125 to the north, Route 73 to the south, the Long Trail to the east, and Route 53/Lake Dunmore to the west. MNRA is one of 40 NRAs nationwide and one of two in Vermont.



### Q: What is a National Recreation Area?

National Recreation Area (NRA) status is a unique Federal designation that recognizes the quality of this area for recreating. The Moosalamoo Association worked with the U.S. Forest Service to achieve the NRA designation for the region. The goal was achieved in January 2007 with the signing of the New England Wilderness Act.

### Q: Who is the Moosalamoo Association?

The Moosalamoo Association (MA) is a citizens' advisory group that advocates on behalf of MNRA to plan for and manage quality recreational opportunities, education, and wildlife habitat conservation. MA is recognized as a 501(c)(3). The all-volunteer board includes eleven Addison and Rutland County residents who love the MNRA for its solitude, hiking and biking, fishing and birding, skiing, and other activities. MA also employs a part-time executive director for 15 to 20 hours a month to manage the organization's business, membership, and marketing activities. [Meet MA's board members and executive director here.](#)

You might also know MA by the reconstruction effort recently completed on the Robert Frost Interpretive Trail off Route 125. That two-year \$700,000 project helped renovate a universally accessible boardwalk and extend the universally accessible trail for another two-thirds of a mile through the blueberry field and along the stream that looks out at the Presidential peaks above Bread Loaf Campus.

For those who don't know MA, it maintains the trails in the MNRA, along with the USFS, and the group often creates workdays to improve the trails within the MNRA with volunteer labor. In short, MA is the group that picks up the MNRA trails to make the hiking as enjoyable as possible, cut away tree falls, etc., when they learn of them; and they plow the parking lots on winter weekends.

### **Q: Who is Vermont Huts Association?**

Founded in 2016, the Vermont Huts Association (VHA) is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization with huts distributed across the state. VHA's mission is to provide an enriching and immersive outdoor experience for *everyone*. By collaborating with their partners in recreation, they are creating a year-round hut network across the Green Mountain State to strengthen local communities and foster a deeper appreciation of our natural environment.

VHA works with local trail groups as well as private, state, and federal land managers such as the US Forest Service to identify locations that may be suitable for hosting a new hut on or in close proximity to recreational trail networks. They own and operate the Chittenden Brook Hut under a special use permit with Green Mountain National Forest, and they handle reservations for multiple other huts in Vermont hosting hikers, skiers, bikers, snowshoers, birders, hunters, families, and anyone else seeking solitude in the outdoors.

VHA employs a full-time executive director, a full-time development and communications manager, and a part-time marketing director. Meet the [Vermont Huts team here](#).

### **Q: Why do MA and VHA want to build a hut in MNRA?**

The short answer is this: VHA, MA, and USFS share a common goal of making public lands more accessible.

A more complete answer: Huts allow for year-round recreational opportunities for various user groups of all abilities, creating new points of access for outdoor enthusiasts of all ages and walks of life. The hut system in Vermont has proved to be very popular with locals and visitors alike.

Over the years, countless miles of trails have been created by and for skiers, mountain bikers, and hikers. By creating a network of overnight huts, these individual trail systems can be unified, creating a cohesive network of backcountry accommodations.

The proposed Silver Lake Hut site can be reached within one-hour or fewer hikes from two well-used parking areas, thus making it accessible to families, elders, and mobility-impaired. Multi-day hikers can reach the hut within a few miles of the Long Trail and the North Country Trail.

### **Q: Why do we need more huts in Vermont?**

There is currently a shortage of year-round trailside lodging accommodations in the state of Vermont. While tent camping is suitable for many individuals, others do not own the necessary gear or have the funds to attain the gear to allow them to stay where they recreate. A hut fills

that need by providing a safe, reliable, and accommodating structure so guests of all walks of life can have a home base for their recreational pursuits. With hiking, mountain biking, and skiing in the MNRA, a hut will provide a new point of access to those opportunities on a year-round basis. Nearby states such as Maine and New Hampshire each have their own hut networks, and Vermont is currently at a disadvantage in that arena. Fortunately, Vermont's trail networks offer a great opportunity for year-round connectivity, meaning many of our huts can serve multiple user groups.

**Q: Where is the proposed hut located?**

The proposed site is walk-in/walk-out and can be reached from the Falls of Lana and Silver Lake East parking lots within one-hour or fewer hikes in either direction. The site is equidistant between the southernmost privy and the Leicester Hollow Trail/Goshen Trail intersection that accesses the Silver Lake East parking lot. The site is slightly uphill from an old, abandoned campsite. Proposed coordinates are: 43.8919842,-73.0497878

**Q: Why was this site chosen?**

The Silver Lake location has the closest access to MNRA's four-season recreational opportunities. To respect and maintain the pristine viewshed from the lake, conceptual hut sites were not deemed viable if it appeared the hut would be seen from the lake during the summer months. The proposed site is on the east (not lakeside) side of the Leicester Hollow Trail, approximately 315' from the Silver Lake shoreline. It may be possible to see some of the hut from the lake during the winter, but not when trees are leafed-out. This location eliminates the need to add an additional privy, is within walking distance to a water source for campers' use, is close to two trailhead access points, is past the last shoreline campsite, and is adjacent to a double-track trail that can accommodate trucks during the construction phase and caretaking once in operation.

**Q: Were other sites considered?**

VHA and MA considered the Moosalamoo Campground as a potential hut location. An old log landing on the north side FR24 B (road to Voter Brook) was also considered as a potential hut site. While the alternative locations could likely host a hut, the Moosalamoo Campground and the log landing on FR24 B would primarily only cater to hikers and mountain bikers, whereas the Silver Lake location would allow more user groups during summer months (swimmers, paddlers, anglers) to take advantage of the hut, as well as skiers and snowshoers in the winter.

**Q: What will the hut look like?**

The hut is similar in design to one being built at Grout Pond in Stratton (see the design here) and part of VHA's statewide hut network. It is 1 ½ stories, 16' x 24' living space plus an attached 16' x 8' screened porch, for a total footprint of 16' x 32'. The hut can accommodate up to 10 guests (though the average group size is generally around six guests) and is outfitted with camp-style mattresses, low-wattage DC lights, a heat source, and a small propane cooktop for meal preparation. There are no electrical outlets for appliances or charging of any portable devices. The huts are utilitarian, not luxurious by any means. All huts built on public lands are ADA accessible.

The hut will utilize an existing nearby privy (outhouse) used by tent campers.

**Q: How much does it cost to rent the hut?**

On average, one night's rental ranges from \$65-\$165/night or \$6.50-\$16.50/per person at full occupancy, making it affordable for almost anyone, especially lower-income households, disadvantaged, and underserved communities. Because the hut is equipped with necessities, campers can experience the backcountry without making a large investment in tents, cooking utensils, camp stoves, etc. The affordability factor increases access for everyone.

**Q: Who uses the hut and how often?**

Vermont's network of huts sees higher use in the winter (a time of year when Silver Lake is less frequented). Year-round occupancy rate in the Vermont Huts network is 74% and used by people from all walks of life. Users include experienced hut-to-hut hikers or skiers. Or, it could be a family with small children who want to introduce their kids to the forest, but appreciate the security of four walls. On the opposite end of life, older folks might want to spend a quiet fall or summer night in that area but shy away because they don't want to carry all the gear needed to go tent-camping. The hut is a good alternative for both groups.

Again, the hut is ADA accessible and can be used by those with mobility impairments.

Roughly 80% of users are fellow Vermonters.

**Q: Who will manage the hut?**

Vermont Huts will manage the hut in partnership with Moosalamoo Association. Reservations for the proposed Silver Lake hut will be made through VHA's existing reservation system. VHA will hire a caretaker to clean the hut and restock supplies. The caretaker may also serve as a trail

steward, assisting with routine maintenance of the trail(s) used to access the hut. MA will assist VHA with maintaining and repairing the hut as needed.

**Q: Does the hut generate a profit?**

Profitability is entirely dependent on occupancy rates, maintenance costs, and annual expenses which include propane, property insurance, chimney sweeping, human waste disposal, toilet paper, dish soap and sponges, miscellaneous cleaning supplies, caretaker's salary, USFS permitting fees, and credit card processing fees. Revenue generated from hut rentals goes directly back into the hut for stewardship, future maintenance, employing a local caretaker, and overhead to keep booking fees affordable.

The forecast model for the proposed Silver Lake Hut would generate less than \$15,000 per year in profit, which would be shared between VHA and MA to further their respective organizational missions.

**Q: Would the hut be available to disadvantaged/underserved communities?**

Yes. Any additional revenue supports additional programming, including VHA's FOREST Program, providing underserved communities with free, two-day retreats in the backcountry. For more information on the Forest Program's sustainability, teamwork, and recreation impact, visit <https://vermonthuts.org/forest-program>.

MA also has an educational component as part of its mission in which area school students are invited into the Moosalamoo for various activities. This has largely been done through OVUHS. With a hut at Silver Lake school programs could be expanded (during the school year, which is not the busy summer months) to include occasional overnight trips that could be a first for many students whose parents either don't camp or can't afford the tents, pads, sleeping bags, cook stove and all the rest of the gear that's needed. Area disadvantaged students, or those from the Rutland and Burlington areas, might also be beneficiaries of subsidized stays, courtesy of the MA and VHA — again as part of our mission to offer wilderness experiences to those who might not have access. These stays would typically be during the shoulder or winter seasons.

**Q: How much does it cost to build a hut and where will the money come from?**

In current market conditions, the hut and ADA-accessible ramp will cost approximately \$250,000 to build. This includes helical pilings (footings), wood, roofing, heating, and all sundry equipment needed. The hut does not sit on a foundation.

The funds will come from a mix of grants, philanthropy, and fundraising events.

**Q: How long will it take to build?**

When shovel-ready, it will take approximately 16-20 weeks.

**Q: Who will build the hut?**

Vermont Huts is partnering with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps (VYCC) to construct the large majority of their new huts, including the Silver Lake Hut. The partnership with VYCC has the added benefit of training and putting Vermonters to work in meaningful ways, creating a workforce development program while building new public recreation infrastructure.

**Q: Will the hut's construction alter the landscape?**

There will be minimal disruption to the site. The hut does not have a foundation. The hut itself, an ADA-compliant ramp, and screened-in porch will be supported by approximately 25 helical pilings. Boulders that interfere with the pilings or the hut's subfloor will be moved out of the way. The only trees that will be cleared are those that are unhealthy or pose a hazard during storms/high winds. Construction vehicles will use the existing Forest Service access road from the Silver Lake East parking lot. There will be no additional development to the area, including access roads.

**Q: Are you worried the hut will be used for parties?**

Not really, for a few reasons. Because the hut is monitored, as are the guests, they are personally responsible for any damage or complaints made. It's important to note that the majority of hut users are outdoor folks and athletes. They spend the day skiing, biking, or hiking, then simply want a warm place to eat a meal and get some sleep so they can get back out on the trails the next day. Often, hut guests are families who want a safe place to spend the night while playing outdoors.

Huts are often shared by more than one party and, naturally, when sharing the hut everyone wants to make a good impression. Additionally, the hut-to-hut system is only as good as its reputation as a clean, quiet, environmentally responsible host in a wilderness setting. The system attracts folks who care about recreation and their environment, and they overwhelmingly act accordingly while staying in the backcountry.

**Q: Has the Silver Lake area been developed before?**

The area around Silver Lake has passed through many hands over the years – from the Abenaki Indians to a private development by a local farmer to government lands. In the late 1800s, the shoreline of Silver Lake was home to a three-story hotel and seminary. The Leicester Hollow

Road was built to provide horse-and-buggy access. Today, the hotel and seminary have disappeared, while U.S. Forest Service roads (authorized vehicles only) can still access the campsites for administrative and maintenance purposes. For most, however, the lake is accessed by foot and bicycle. Silver Lake Campground now hosts 15 campsites that are often full throughout the summer, and a guest ranger is stationed on one end of the lake. During the busy summer months, two concrete privies serve the campsites and one older privy on the northern beach serves the public. For more information on Silver Lake's history, read a [2018 article from the Rutland Herald](#).

**Q: What is the review process?**

The hut is on federal land under the supervision of the U.S. Forest Service and the project is currently (as of mid-May 2022) under review. The process includes a review by a GMNF natural resources specialist, a USFS archeologist will do a specific review of the site and submit the project to the Vermont State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) for concurrence.

**Q: Will there be a public comment period?**

Yes. A proposal of this nature also includes a formal, 45-day public comment period. We anticipate the public comment period will begin sometime in June, with notification broadcasted through various mediums, allowing ample opportunity for the documentation of public opinion.

**Q. What if I have more questions?**

You may direct your questions to:

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