



# Group seeks to reopen camp on federal land in Woodford

**KEITH WHITCOMB JR.**

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WOODFORD -- The Red Mill Brook Campground was closed last winter by the federal government, but a large group of people met Friday to discuss options for opening it once more.

The meeting was moderated by Chris Shea, a member of the Woodford Planning Commission and owner of Greenwood Lodge and Campsites, a hostel and campground near the Red Mill site on Route 9.

Shea said he and other commissioners worry that if access to the Green Mountain National Forest, which covers the majority of Woodford, is not provided, it may lead to the town becoming less rural in character.

Attending the meeting were representatives from the U.S Forest Service, the Woodford Sno-Busters snowmobile club, the Vermont State Forest and Parks, Bennington County Regional Commission, the Vermont Outdoor Guide Association (VOGA), and Rep. Bill Botzow, D-Woodford/Pownal.

District Ranger Alex Sienkiewicz, of the Forest Service, said the Red Mill site was closed after the service took a look at the level of use at its sites and compared it to the cost. He said it was "gut-wrenching" to have to prioritize and shut down low-performing sites down, but it was because of cost

measures.

He said the site is gated, but people can still walk on it.

Sienkiewicz said that if those present sought to form a coalition, he could work with them easier and they would be able to make a more powerful case for reopening the Red Mill site. He said there are significant

hurdles to overcome when confronted with federal bureaucracies, and it may behoove the group to think bigger than the Red Mill Campground in order to give the project more weight.

Botzow suggested that Sienkiewicz and others think about using the closing cost of the Red Mill site as a n element in an economic argument for reopening it.

Sienkiewicz said no money has been allocated for decommissioning the site, but the line item does exist. He said there would have to be figures on what the decommission would cost versus what it would take to get the site back up to government standards.

Director of State Parks Craig Whipple suggested the group look into Kingdom Trails, a partnership in East Burke that made the town a summer destination for mountain bikers.

Also suggested as a model was the Moosalamoo section of the Green Mountain National Forest, some of the trails of which are maintained by the Blueberry Hill Inn.

Shea said whenever there is an event in the area, Woodford sees more people and it would good if there were more places that offered lodging. He said that if the site itself was found to not be sustainable,



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some effort should still be put into the trails around it, possibly by connected them to others.

Shea said he hopes others will join when a group officially forms and he can be contacted via e-mail at [campgreenwood@aol.com](mailto:campgreenwood@aol.com).

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