

Windham Select Board
Town of Windham
Windham, Vermont 05359

Mr. Jeff Dubie
Vermont Department of Forest and Parks
1 National Life Drive
Montpelier, VT 05620

July 15, 2024

Dear Mr. Dube:

Thank you for preparing the draft Proposed Scenarios for the Master Plan for Hamilton Falls Natural Area. The Town of Windham has a demonstrated history in supporting the conservation of the Cobb Brook, filing as a co-competitor with the Friends of Cobb Brook for its reclassification from a Class B to Class A stream in 1991.

Hamilton Falls, although in the Town of Jamaica, is of significant interest to the Town of Windham. The majority of the West Windham Road, providing the only vehicular access to the falls, is within the Town of Windham. Numerous Windham residents live on this road and some live very near the falls.

The Windham Select Board values, very highly, the natural beauty and awe-inspiring features of Hamilton Falls. The Board believes Hamilton Falls is a fragile Natural Area that should be left to be enjoyed in as undisturbed a state as possible and will only support a proposed management scenario that places the integrity and most natural state of this resource as the top priorities in any proposed management plan.

Therefore, the Windham Select Board supports Vermont Department of Forests and Parks' Low Use Scenario with the provisions that no more facilities: no more parking spaces, no viewing platforms, no new trails, and no porta-potties will be constructed anywhere near the falls. All efforts should be made to encourage access to the falls through the main entrance of Jamaica State Park. The existing 4 parking spaces off the West Windham Road help protect this delicate area because they automatically limit the number of people who can gain easy access to the falls, therefore increasing safety, and causing less disturbance to the Natural Area.

It is our understanding from the families and people living on the West Windham Road and in vicinity of the Falls, that the number of people using the West Windham Road for access to the falls has dropped radically since its peak in 2020, and the existing conditions present at this time are more than adequate to accommodate the level of use. We feel instead of building new structures and facilities at the falls, a better use for taxpayer dollars would be to fix the landslide on the West River Trail in Jamaica State Park which would allow better hiking access to the falls—a safer and more appropriate way to observe this magnificent natural feature.

Sincerely,

The Windham Select Board:

Kord Scott, Chair

George Dutton

Michael Pelton