



Donella Meadows Quest

Super Quest 2021: Climate Connections



This Quest is one of 12 Quests featured in this year's Super Quest challenge to reflect on ways in which climate change is affecting the Upper Valley and how our communities are addressing these changes. **Donella Meadows Quest** will introduce you to one of the pioneering system thinkers, author and climate activist while visiting the cohousing community of Cobb Hill that she founded 20 years ago.

This year's **Climate Connections Super Quest** examines the ways climate change is affecting the Upper Valley—from plants, insects, and other animals moving here from the south due to warming temperatures; to more frequent and more powerful storms; to people moving here from other places experiencing even greater climate-induced changes. The Super Quest also looks at ways we're preventing or adapting to climate change, including flood control through land preservation; green energy technologies; and regenerative agricultural practices.

Hartland, Vermont

Physical Difficulty: Moderate

Special Features: Natural, Vista, Farm

Walking Conditions: Trail

Duration 1:30

Bring: Binoculars, compass, money for Farmstand

Season: All year, but in winter snowshoes may be needed and various elements will not be visible or will have moved, ie. the chickens will be near the barns.

To get there: From I-91, take Exit 9 towards Hartland. Turn North on Routes 5 and 12 Continue 2 miles, keeping left onto route 12 West when you come to the center of Hartland. Go about 3 miles to 4 Corners turning right on Mace Hill Rd and then your first left onto Linden Rd. at the Cobb Hill Cohousing sign. Park at the kiosk board in front of the Farm Stand.

Overview

(QR codes will take you to the Donella Meadows Archives & specific writings related to points in this Quest)

Donella, or Dana as her friends called her, was one of the most influential environmental thinkers of the twentieth century. After receiving a PhD in biophysics from Harvard, she joined a team at MIT applying the relatively new tools of system dynamics to global problems. She became principal author of *The Limits to Growth* (1972), which sold more than 9 million copies in 26 languages. She went on to author or co-author eight other books.

For 16 years Donella wrote a weekly syndicated column called "The Global Citizen," commenting on world events from a systems point of view. It appeared in more than twenty newspapers, won second place in the 1985 Champion-Tuck national competition for outstanding journalism in the fields of business and economics, received the Walter C. Paine Science Education Award in 1990, and was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize in 1999.

Her affection and brilliance were contagious. Her guiding message was quite simple:

We humans are smart enough to have created complex systems and amazing productivity; surely we are also smart enough to make sure that everyone shares our bounty, and surely we are smart enough to sustainably steward the natural world upon which we all depend.

In 1995, she put out a vision of "an intentional community of people who want to explore the challenge of Right Livelihood-living and making a living in ways that are materially sufficient, socially and ecologically responsible, humanly rewarding, satisfying to the soul....[pursuing] the central values of sustainability, sufficiency, community, equity, service, [and] efficiency." Based on this vision, [Cobb Hill Cohousing](#) was born.



This Quest will take you on a hike to see some of the features of this community and how they are working towards living in harmony with nature and stewarding the earth.

Clues:

Face the kiosk, helpful info you'll see.
 Behind it, the Welcome Garden's a beauty.
 Take in the Hunt House on the drive's other side,
 Where the [Sustainable Food Lab](#) now resides.



Who lives in the tiny house north of the garden?
 Scratching and pecking, 40 egg-laying hens!
 The land feeds their eggs as their poop feeds the pasture.
 Say hello. Their sign tells the breeds that are here.

Touch the fence 'round the chickens and you'll get a shock!
 It wards off the foxes, protecting the flock.
 Hey, the coop has some wheels! Do the hens leave the farm?
 No, but in winter they stay warm near the barn.

From the kiosk move north, the barn's on your left.
 At the door to the greenhouse, St. Francis greets guests!
 Inside veggies thrive and the season extends.
 Look north to the right at plots the community tends.

On the left are fields where Farmer Stephen toils.
 His no-till techniques make healthy moist soils
 that hold carbon in place and fight climate change.
 It's regenerative farming - thinking long range.

Now back to the kiosk, round the gambrel barn corner
 Look to the barn roof, our new solar power
 gives 90% of the kilowatt hours used here,
 again cutting carbon in Earth's atmosphere.

In the barn cows give milk that is used to make cheese.
 Farmer Kerry tends the herd of prize-winning Jerseys.
 4-H'ers help feed them and learn of their care.
 Each year some are shown at nearby summer fairs.

Pass the big common house on the left up the driveway
 On past the homes, now you're making some headway
 Stop at the sharp turn. The trail sign on the side

and a bright yellow arrow provides your next guide.

Take the trail. Yellow arrows keep pointing the way.
Check the trees – are there some you can ID today?
In the late 1800s this land was all clear!
Merino breed sheep were pastured right here.

There's a 10-year forestry management plan
addressing our goals for the use of the land –
Shelter the wildlife; keep air cool and clean;
Timber and firewood; help make the Earth green;
Recreation year round, like skiing and Quest;
Remove the invasives - find the balance that's best.



In about 1.5 mile(s) there's a big Basswood Tree -
aka Linden, Dana loved this species.
Its sign shows Dana's Bench path to the right
A short walk will bring you to a beautiful sight.

The long view's a line of hills in New Hampshire.
The meadow before you is in "rotational pasture"
As the cows graze the grass, they plop their manure,
the soil builds and holds carbon, so the air stays pure.

When you've soaked in the view, step through the fence.
By the huge oak tree there's Dana's stone bench.
Take a seat – on a side ponder Rainer Rilke's quote,
a poet Dana favored for the wisdom he wrote.

Maples on the left sport 1,000 taps
You can see plastic lines that carry the sap
to the sugarhouse, next March to boil down.
Back at the barn maple syrup can be found.

The maples are good for more than the sweet stuff
(even though you might think that would be enough).
As part of a project of the Audubon Society
It's a "bird-friendly sugarbush" - there's always variety

in winged species that sing there, some migrating through
and others that live here – would you like to, too?

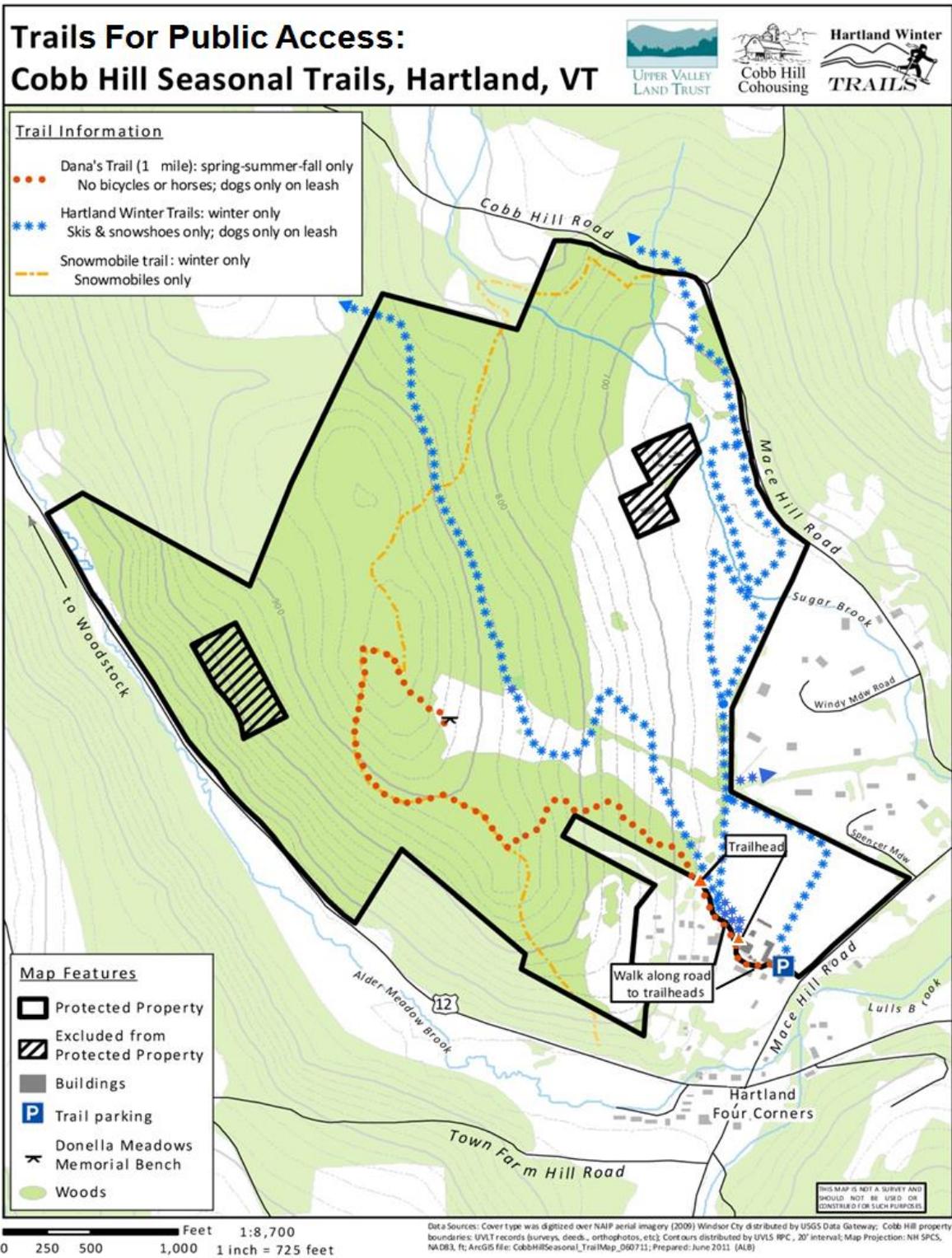
Go back the same way through our forest and farm.
Stop at the farmstand in the front of the barn.
Check out our wares, will the local stock be
veggies, syrup, beef, cheese, or shiitakes?
It's all fresh, no chemicals or long distance travel
All helping our world not to unravel!

Under the shelves where veggies display
There's the Quest Box, logbook, and the stamp for today.

We hope you've enjoyed our Quest! Come back and see us again!



And please be good stewards of the land:
leave it better than you found it,
pack out any trash you found and work
to restore and protect what we have.



This Quest was written in 2021 by residents of Cobb Hill Cohousing in celebration of 20 years in community.

Other things to do nearby: Many great dirt roads for bike riding; Skunk Hollow Tavern across the intersection of Mace Hill Road and Route 12 for great meals, access to Hartland Winter Trails for XC skiing in winter.



Valley Quest is a collection of 160+ treasure hunts that share and teach the natural gems and cultural heritage of the Upper Valley with children, families, adults, and visitors. It is a program of Vital Communities, a regional nonprofit working to engage citizens, organizations, and communities in creating solutions to our region's challenges. Learn more at vitalcommunities.org.