Winter is a fickle friend for winter sports enthusiasts. But, it looks like she is finally here and planning to stay and that's good news for the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area in Goshen. December 18th marked the official opening of cross-country skiing at Blueberry Hill and the countdown to New Year's Eve, which marks the official launch of the ski center's 40th Anniversary. The annual ski and snowshoe to Hogback Mountain, the region's featured location for December, will be the kick off event. To join the celebration, just bring along your gear and cheer and welcome the New Year around the bonfire.

What's in store for 2011 in the Moosalamoo National Recreation Area? The board of directors of the Moosalamoo Association has just completed their second strategic planning retreat to help guide stewardship of the region for the future . and there is much to be excited about. We hope that you treasure the region enough to help us meet our goals with a tax-deductible contribution to the Moosalamoo Association. The Association has been a stewardship partner with the US Forest Service for decades and has taken the lead in helping to ensure an outstanding outdoor recreation experience for all.

We have identified several key areas of focus for the next five years. These include:

. Trails, roads, and facilities -with the USFS and the local community we will work on trail monitoring and maintenance, bridges, and culverts. We will also evaluate our current map and when needed, update, reprint, and distribute broadly throughout the state.
. Education - we will evaluate and replace Interpretive panels within the region, as needed; encourage schools to use the region as an outdoor classroom; implement national curricula, such as Project Learning Tree or Leopold Education Program; and host a summer writing camp.
. NRA Planning - in partnership with the USFS, we will participate in the public process for a new recreation plan.
. Alliances - we will focus efforts on building greater collaboration with US Forest Service, gateway communities, other recreation groups, schools, chambers, legislature, and others.
. Tourism promotion - we will work to improve our website (www.moosalamoo.org) to increase its standing with search engines and use available tools to monitor website traffic. We will continue promotion of the region through brochures, local print, and member recruitment.
. And last, but certainly not least, we will focus our efforts on the creation of an Interpretive Center - we believe that establishing a center will give the region an "anchor" that it's currently lacking. This center will be the "home base" for interpretation, education, information, office, and the connection to other institutions and surrounding communities. We are currently working on defining the footprint, function, and funding for such a center, a huge undertaking but one that will enhance the visitor experience.

How will we accomplish all this, you ask?

In 2011, the Moosalamoo Association will have a new trails director! This person (or company) will be hired to help move our organization forward in developing educational programming, events, and alliances with other recreation groups and communities. We will also have more on-the-ground presence for trail monitoring and maintenance, guided hikes, and volunteer training. Support for this position will be funded, in part, through a grant from the Northeast Wood Collaborative sponsored by Senator Leahy, USDA Forest Service and Vermont Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation.

The Moosalamoo Association board of directors, members, and recreation users bring passion to every endeavor.. And this is the cornerstone of our future success. You can help support our mission with a tax deductible contribution to the Moosalamoo Association in any amount you can afford. Visit our website and use the DONATE NOW feature to make your contribution via credit card using PayPal's secure server or send your check via mail to Moosalamoo Association, PO Box 6004, Rutland, VT 05702.

We cannot reach our objectives without your help. Just as we are stewardship partners with the Forest Service, you all are our stewardship partners and we need you! Thank you in advance for your support.

The mission of the Association is to: Collaborate with public entities to plan, manage, and provide stewardship for wildlife habitat conservation and quality public recreation opportunities and facilities, promote responsible recreation participation and environmental awareness through interpretation, education and resource monitoring, demonstrate the unique capabilities of public and private partners working together, and strengthen partnerships at the local level in cooperative projects such as trail construction and maintenance, wildlife habitat improvement, or visual enhancement of roadsides.

Moosalamoo NRA is a 20,000-acre region of public and private land nestled in the Green Mountain National Forest. Moosalamoo's diverse ecosystem is home to a large number of plants and animals. The region is also a marvelous recreation area for wildlife viewing, berry picking, hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, snow shoeing, picnicking, and camping. Find out more by visiting www.moosalamoo.org.

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Kathleen Wanner is the Moosalamoo Association Executive Director and owner of Ghostwriters Communications, Inc.