# An Overview

## [Thanks to Don Devine for providing the first draft.]

## Background

Conant Lodge is the social center and the dining center at AMC Cold River Camp.

The building was already in existence when the property was purchased in 1919 and details about its earlier history and usage are murky.

## Seasonal variations in the use of Camp

All of the variations need to considered, although Full Service is the most important by far. It generates almost all of the revenue and is the principal reason Camp exists. Lodge features for other uses should be considered as long as they do not have a negative impact on the Full Service season.

1. *Full Service* typically runs for 9 weeks from near the end of June through the end of August. Most guests stay for a full week, which greatly enhances the community feeling of Camp. A large proportion of guests are returning guests.
2. *Extension* is typically a 2 week period following Full Service and including the Labor Day weekend. It employs a volunteer crew and offers fewer services. There is no waiter service; a chow-line is used. Camp guest capacity is limited to about 40 and on most days it is substantially lower.
3. *Opening & Closing* These are long weekends around the beginning of May and the beginning of October when volunteers open and close the Camp. A chow-line is used.
4. *Chatham Trails Association trail maintenance weekends* These are usually the Memorial Day weekend, the first weekend in June and a weekend around the end of September or the beginning of October. A chow-line is used and capacity is generally 40 or fewer.
5. *AMC Trail work periods* The AMC volunteer or paid trail crews use Camp on a completely self-service basis for a full week from time to time. There are typically up to 10 crew members.
6. *Camp rentals* At other times between Opening and Closing Camp is available for rental by weddings, AMC Chapter outings, meetings, etc. With the exception of caretakers, they provide their own staffs.
7. *Off Season Cabin* is available for rental when Camp is otherwise closed, but since its guests do not have access to the Conant Lodge, it need not be considered in possible renovations.

## Functions of the Building

1. Social gathering place during all hours of operation.
2. Receives and stores food and related supplies.
3. Institutional kitchen and baking area for the preparation of meals.
4. Contains institutional kitchen equipment.
5. Dining area for camp guests.
6. Supports food service by waiters for breakfast and dinner Activity flow in the dining and kitchen areas, serving tray stand placement (currently use serving trays).
7. Supports food service by buffet line (during extension, cook-outs, “happy hour,” etc.).
8. Supports do-it-yourself lunch preparation before & after breakfast from ingredients laid out on tables with sneezeguards
9. Self-service beverage accommodation in the mornings, afternoons and evenings.
10. Public announcements, trip reports, manager requests, upcoming activities etc. especially during breakfast and dinner.
11. Facilitates for clearing tables, washing dishes and cleaning food preparation equipment.
12. Properly handles processing left-overs.
13. Stores dishes, etc.
14. Facilitates smooth and efficient work flow and guest flow for all functions.

## Why we are considering renovations now

1. The kitchen is no longer in compliance with health regulations. Its current “grandfathered” status is unlikely to protect it from potential short-notice requirements to fix specific issues. Multiple *ad hoc* fixes are likely to be expensive and disruptive without providing effective overall solutions.
2. It would be desirable to incorporate the grill capability (grill currently in the separate little shed) into the kitchen area.
3. Kitchen equipment and overall layout could be improved. For example, rearrangement for improved efficiency in how dishes are washed and stored; putting all the kitchen activity on one level.
4. Health regulations are likely only to become more rigorous. In one specific area, buffet tables may need to provide refrigeration to classes of foods if left-overs are to be allowed.
5. The dining porch on the north side was a building addition and its foundation and roof structure need work.
6. Lunch preparation occurs in the main sitting area of the lodge in the mornings. Tables are temporarily set up each day. This causes the sitting area to be congested – access to the map tables area, cabin ‘mailboxes’, the reference books area, childrens’ books & games, etc.
7. The coffee/tea serving occurs right next to the front door. Another congested area.
8. People speaking to guests during breakfast/dinner cannot be visible to everyone seated with the current layout. It would also be helpful to be able to hear the speakers more easily.
9. Having a handicap-accessible indoor bathroom in the lodge would be a great asset.
10. Better ventilation and lighting for dining would be helpful.
11. We purpose to be a family friendly, community camp. Yet we have feedback from guests, typically newer guests but not always, that they do not feel welcome, and that the large family groups or veteran friends groups tend to come across as cliquish. (This is **not** meant to be judgmental. It is natural for family and friends to focus attention on each other, especially when they are together for only a week.) One way in which this manifests itself is a sense of exclusion at meals. There is also a bit a sense of privileged hierarchy/order to the current dining layout that suggests families with infants should sit on one area, families with kids should sit another area, and adults without younger kids in another area. Moreover, wouldn’t it be nice if, say, two families of four were able to eat a meal together? Are there dining room/table arrangements that facilitate the ‘intimacy’ of meal sharing with relative strangers while preserving the opportunity for intimacy of dining in small groups?
12. Our current dining space maxes out at 72 seats, which is also the upper limit of the number of guests in Camp. When Camp is full, the managers (currently a husband and wife with two daughters) family cannot eat with the guests, or cannot count on it.
13. Wheelchair access to and seating at some dining room tables without impeding traffic flow could be improved.

## Constraints/Considerations

1. First and foremost, Cold River Camp provides a “community experience” for its guests. The preservation of this experience is critical for the continued success of Camp.
2. Conant Lodge is a cherished, ~ hundred year old historical structure, the ‘heart’ of Camp. Any modifications should preserve its character.
3. Many guests enjoy tremendously the “intimacy” of the dining experience with the current 6-person tables.
4. Avoiding high noise levels in the dining is another critical concern, in allow for easy conversation.
5. Good staff work flow, especially for serving meals, must be preserved, including ripple effects into the kitchen area. It is efficient for the food preparation process if all table units are the same size.
6. Relationship to space around the lodge. E.g., the immediate lawn area on the north side is used for buffet serving for picnics. There is a gravel ‘service lane’ on the north side. The lawn on the north side of the service lane is a picnic area, and currently sits far enough away from the lodge that it does not feel like the lodge is imposing.
7. Very desirable to have a feeling of separation between the sitting areas and the dining area.
8. Preservation of windows/views.
9. Guest ease of movement into/out of dining area chairs and adequate spacing between tables, and away from doorways.

# Details

## Social Activities that take place in the lodge

1. General *ad hoc* gatherings of guests on the porch and in the living room area next to the fireplace.
2. A children’s play area currently in the south west corner of the living room area. Childrens books and games.
3. Reviewing maps, guidebooks, earlier trip reports, etc. and planning outdoor activities. (Map table, reference library.)
4. Evening spontaneous groups engaging in games, planning and activities in alcoves of the dining room area and tables peripheral to the fireplace sitting area.

## Features that support activities in the lodge

1. Racks for coats
2. Open cubby-holes for each cabin where guests can store personal items.
3. Storage of children’s books and games.
4. Rug area that is used for game playing and book reading, mostly by children.
5. Storage of maps and guidebooks and reference information for outdoor activities.
6. Table space and peripheral seating – game playing jigsaw puzzles, reading, writing, activity research.
7. Sitting furniture next to with fireplace. Conversation reading, fire enjoyment.

## Rules governing activities in the lodge

In keeping with our desire that guests interact with each other in a community experience …

1. Conversation is encouraged and reading is welcomed in the lodge or on the porch.
2. No electronic devices usage in the lodge other than for reading. E.g., no phone calls, electronic gaming, texting, …
3. Loud and disruptive behavior is discouraged.

## Dining features

The Community Experience is a consideration.

1. Camp has historically offered up to 12 tables, each seating 6 people. This seems to encourage everyone at a table to participate in table conversations.
2. There is no assigned seating and, although families typically sit together, guests are encouraged not to save places, but rather to sit with different guests from time to time.
3. The current layout of the dining areas, divided into several spaces, seems to provide some sense of intimacy to each table and reduces sound levels in the overall dining area, which facilitates conversations.

## Total capacity of Camp

There is concern that, if the number of guests at Camp at any one time increases, the critically important community experience may be jeopardized. It is the opinion of the Camp Committee that the maximum capacity of Camp during the regular season should be in the range of 68-72 guests, not including the managers and the managers’ family members. Camp is not always full every week of its full service season. However, it is the intent to keep Camp as full as possible every week, both for ecocomic sustainability and to allow more people to enjoy the CRC experience.

# The Process

1. Involvement The Cold River Camp community must support the renovation project. To get this support, the community should have the option to be informed and potentially involved in each step of the process. They should be kept informed, given time to digest the information, and their input should be welcomed. Everyone will not necessarily want to be involved. Everyone involved will not necessarily agree. But having the opportunity to voice their ideas and concerns will reduce negative reactions and make final decisions more acceptable.
2. Clearly define the requirements first That is the purpose of this document. I suggest it be reviewed, revised, and approved before renovations are designed. A small subcommittee should be appointed by Committee to oversee this process, with community involvement.
3. Design The entire project – dining areas, kitchen, storage, etc. – should be included in the design. Innovative design ideas may result in revisions to the requirements. If so, the statement of requirements should be kept up to date.
4. Implement in stages For a number of reasons – economic and so as not to unduly disrupt operations – the renovations should be implemented in stages over multiple years.
5. Fund raising There should be a single fund raising campaign, over several years, to raise funds to cover the multi-year renovations.