# **Conant** **Lodge Project Requirements**

## Background

Conant Lodge is the social center and the dining center of 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. *The Winter 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 sneeze guards
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 - Needs

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. It would be desirable during times such as Extension, Group events and other occasions to have the functions both of serving guests cafeteria style and tray return *outside* the kitchen proper.
5. 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.
6. The dining porch on the north side was a building addition and its foundation and roof structure need work. The dining porch floor is not level, and that addition is pulling away from the main building, causing stresses in the roofing area that, coupled with a complicated roof structure in the back causes occasional water leaks.
7. 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.
8. The coffee/tea serving occurs right next to the front door. Another congested area.
9. People speaking to guests during breakfast/dinner cannot be visible to everyone seated with the current layout. I.e., having line of sight with all diners would be desirable. It would also be helpful to be able to hear the speakers more easily.
10. Having a handicap-accessible indoor bathroom in the lodge would be a great asset.
11. Better ventilation and lighting for dining would be helpful. Preferably natural lighting.
12. 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, evoking a feeling of being second class guests. 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?
13. Our current dining space capacity is 72 seats. When Camp is full, the managers (currently a husband and wife with two daughters) family cannot all eat with the guests, or cannot count on it. Nor can the occasional relative staying –off-Camp, or the occasional evening guest speaker.
14. Wheelchair access to and seating at some dining room tables without impeding traffic flow could be improved.
15. There is some feedback from our guests that the dining areas are too crowded in some of the space – hard to get to/from into/out of inside seats given the current spacing.
16. It would be desirable to allow, in the case of inclement weather on otherwise outside barbeque picnic evning, the possibility of setting up the barbeque foods self-serve inside while also having the entire dining area available.
17. Improved ventilation and lighting in the main lodge and bringing it up to electrical code would all be desirable.

It seems fairly apparent that meeting this general list of needs fundamentally requires more space. Re-purposing/re-use of existing space does not offer a feasible solution.

Out of Scope: We are not considering the following items specifically as needs as part of this activity, although they had been suggested by some in the CRC community:

* Solar panels on the lodge roof. This is a very contentious subject that would be highly unlikely to go forward in the foreseeable future for several reasons.
* Relocating the current ramp on the west side of the lodge porch. With the current lodge layout, there is no better place to put it. However, this does not preclude it being relocated as part of an overall design.
* A screened porch, either new or part of the existing. There would be very little support for this as a need.

## 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 –many would even say sacred - ~ hundred year old historical structure, the ‘heart’ of Camp. Any modifications should preserve its character. Ideally, any modification should look like it has always been there.
3. A total seating dining capacity of ~ 78 seats should be provided. (78 is a multiple of 6, which reflects our current table ‘unit’ size of 6 persons/table. This is more than the 72 seats today (12 tables of 6) to allow for camp managers/kids and the occasional dinner guest (e.g., evening speaker or frail relative not staying in Camp) the opportunity to eat with the guests, and the *possibility* of future Camp Committees to increase Camp guest capacity a bit. If other constraints make the 78 infeasible, then we should consider the current capacity of 72 with the potential for occasional temporary placement option of another, 13th, table; or if that is infeasible then just allow for the current capacity of 72.
4. Many guests enjoy tremendously the “intimacy” of the dining experience with the current 6-person tables. Then there is the counterpoint that it limits seating options would provide more opportunity for social interaction at mealtime. E.g., a family/group of four cannot eat with another family of four.
5. As a unit for 6, the current arrangement of three persons on each long side seems to work well, as do the current table dimensions, which are Provide table dimensions.
6. Avoiding high noise levels in the dining area is critical concern, to allow for easy conversation.
7. Good staff work flow, especially for serving meals, must be preserved, including ripple effects into the kitchen area. Besides ease of movement of the servers, space consideration should also be given to the locations for serving tray stands/carts and their movement.
8. It is efficient for the food preparation process if all table units are the same size. That would not preclude, however, a table configuration that joins two table units together. (E.g., abutting two tables of 6 to form a table for 12, staff while still providing good service staff and guest flow.)
9. Reuse of current dining tables and lighting fixtures would be desirable.
10. 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.
11. The vehicle service lane on the north side of the lodge has major infrastructure under/near it – especially septic systems, also a grease pit. To the east of the current shed area there are electrical and water lines underground, but those are fairly easy to move. run into septic/sewer systems. If build east, nothing under the ground.
12. Very desirable to maintain a feeling of separation between the historic living room/sitting are in front of the fire place and the dining area.
13. Preservation of windows/views.
14. Guest ease of movement into/out of dining area chairs and adequate spacing between tables, and away from doorways. And adequate size/location/number of entry/exit doorways. Including provision for handicap accessibility.
15. The lodge cellar is used to store kitchen nonperishable food. On the whole it would be *desirable* to replicate the cellar storage volume on the lodge floor and no longer use the cellar. Reasons to no longer use: greater efficiency, safety and convenience having everything on the same floor rather than cellar with awkward stairs and a head bump risk and greater susceptibility to small critters. Not using it may also allow greater flexibility in floor plan options. Even if it is no longer used, it must still be accessible by a trap door.
16. LEEDS design, where relevant (ventilation, noise levels, lighting, …) may be desirable.

# 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. The seating arrangement at a table has been three chairs on each of its long sides.
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

It is the position of the Camp Committee that the maximum capacity of Camp during the regular season, as a matter of policy, is 68 guests, with the understanding that that number is not absolutely rigid. . 68 is the limit the Camp registrar uses, although it is sometimes exceeded slightly by the registrar or camp managers when trying to accommodate various combinations of guests in a particular week. For example, in the summer of 2017, five of the ten weeks each had 70 guests. While Camp is not always full every week of its full service season,it is the intent to keep Camp as full as possible every week, both for economic sustainability and to allow more people to enjoy the CRC experience.

The current physical capacity of Camp can be characterized in various ways. The two most concrete are   
- number of dining area seats: 72; total for both guests and managers & family   
- number of beds: 79   
  
it should be noted that having a few ‘extra’ beds is useful in two ways. It allows greater flexibility in fitting various arrangements of guests in Camp, and it potentially allows a cabin to be taken out of use for maintenance purposes.

There are also other soft, but nevertheless important, physical capacity considerations, for example  
- how many people can fit in the Rec Hall for the Friday night talent show  
- bathroom capacity – showers stalls, hot water, toilets, sinks during peak usage periods  
- how many people can comfortably sit on the porch; or inside the lodge porch sitting capacity  
- how many cars can be parked on campus  
- and many others

And there are other capacity considerations, such as the number of croo or trip leaders needed to support the guest population.

And there is the question of at what guest volume does Camp become so big that the number of guests does not allow for the ‘community experience’ that we value so much. At 68 or so, with Camp’s traditional week long-stay format, we feel we’re still not too big.

# 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.