

APPENDIX A

Advisory Committee Members and Public Consultation Process

Kennebec Highlands Advisory Committee:

NAME	AFFILIATION
Brian Alexander	Central Maine Chapter - NEMBA
Roy Bouchard	7 Lakes Alliance Board Member
Sue Burns	former Vienna Comprehensive Plan Committee
Chris Currier	Mtn View ATV Club
Julie Davenport	Maine Forest Service
Laura Rose Day	7 Lakes Alliance
Rep. Sharon Frost	Maine House District 58
Ann Gibbs	none
John K. Jones	none
Gary Keilty	BPL Trails Advisory Committee
Keel Kemper	Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (IF&W)
Dave Macleay	none
Lincoln Nye	Rome Ruff Riders Snowmobile Club
Elizabeth Payne	none
John Simoneau	New England Chapter - Backcountry Hunters & Anglers (BHA)
Bill Swan	none
Hank Washburn	none

Public Consultation Summary:

Plan Phase/Date	Action/Meeting Focus	Attendance/Responses
Preliminary Planning/Scoping		
Summer 2022 through Fall 2023	Field visits to plan area to view and discuss access and road systems, recreation facilities, forest conditions, etc. (combined with planning for Allen parcels)	Various Western Region and Augusta BPL staff
March 1, 2023	Advisory Committee meeting held in Belgrade Lakes, with videoconference option; discuss development of trails plan and plan for parcels acquired in 2022 (Allen parcels).	10 committee members attended, plus two 7 Lakes staff members, two snowmobile club officers/members and several BPL staff

Plan Phase/Date	Action/Meeting Focus	Attendance/Responses
Fall-Spring 2023-24	Data gathering and work on initial internal drafts of Plan, including staff review. Continued field visits.	Various Western Region and Augusta BPL staff
January-May 2025	Finalization of Draft Plan	
Draft Plan		
May 15, 2025	Draft Plan made available on Plan webpage and sent via email to AC members with request for comments.	
June 13, 2025	End of comment period.	Comments received by email from five AC members (four with attached letters)
June 26, 2025	Advisory Committee meeting held in Belgrade Lakes, with videoconference option; reviewed Draft Plan and discussed comments received.	Nine committee members attended, plus four 7 Lakes staff members and associates and several BPL staff
Final Draft Plan		
Sept. 24, 2025	Final Draft Plan posted to plan webpage and emailed to AC members, with responses to comments (Appendix B).	
Xxxx x, 2025	Public meeting scheduled for _____ with option to participate via Microsoft Teams videoconference with comment period ending xxxx x, 2025.	
Xxxx x, 2025	Notice of Public Meeting posted in papers. Also advertised via BPL webpage and social media.	
Xxxx x, 2025	Public Meeting held, 6-7 pm: presented Final Draft Plan and received comments	____ AC members and ____ member of public attended, plus BPL staff.
Xxxx x, 2025	End of Comment Period.	__ comment email received (see below).

APPENDIX B

PUBLIC COMMENTS AND BUREAU RESPONSES

Summary of Written Comments from Advisory Committee members on the Draft Kennebec Highlands Trails Plan (May 15, 2025) (Comment Period: May 16, 2025 – June 13, 2025 and following June 26, 2025 AC meeting) Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.	
Comment	Response
Topic: General / Overall Vision for Kennebec Highlands	
From: Elizabeth Payne, York Hill Property Owner, AC member	
- For 50 years, I have cherished the remoteness of this place and its wild character...I worry that the edgy, undomesticated character of the Highlands near York Hill will fade in the Bureau's effort to satisfy various interests. I worry about the wildlife and its habitat. I hope that you will keep the Kennebec Highlands wild. - I enjoy the recreational opportunities afforded by the Highlands...More than recreation, I value the quiet and the abundance of wildlife: the herons, beavers, moose, deer, coyotes, turkeys, porcupines, foxes, ravens, hawks, and songbirds that thrive in the Highlands. - I hope that experience [of a tamed and mediated experience] doesn't someday come to characterize the entire Kennebec Highlands. - I hope that you will limit the development of recreational trails of all kinds. The current maps show sufficient trails, access points, and signs for everyone.	The Bureau appreciates the expression of support for the importance of remoteness, wild character, and minimized impacts on wildlife, and the support for undeveloped zones. All of these are primary factors the Bureau applied in formulating the vision expressed in the Trails Plan.
Topic: Section III. Overall Trails Vision and No New Development Zones (pages 3-4)	
From: Elizabeth Payne, York Hill Property Owner, AC member	
...I am absolutely in favor of managing undeveloped zones to conserve wildlife. Studies have shown that even low-impact hiking trails affect the movement and fitness of wildlife. - Given biodiversity loss in the U.S., significant swaths of the Highlands should be managed to protect wildlife habitat. Any proposed trail development in the Highlands should consider whether the inevitable human disturbance will threaten fragile ecosystems. One compromise might be to close certain areas to recreation during breeding season.	- The Bureau appreciates the support for the concept of maintaining relatively undeveloped zones. - The Bureau will consider closing portions of the blueberry fields to recreation during breeding season, with the guidance of IF&W, to protect nesting birds. This recommendation is included in the management plan for the 2022 acquisitions (Allen parcels).
From: Roy Bouchard	
The concept of relatively undeveloped zones in the unit has merit to encourage certain low impact uses and conserve wildlife habitat. As noted below I think the Remote Recreation areas should in the future allow for low impact, non-motorized trails to be constructed where they make sense, in particular to allow trail	The Bureau appreciates the support for the concept of maintaining relatively undeveloped zones. We also recognize that there is interest among various user groups for additional non-motorized trails, to create loop trails and for other purposes. However, as expressed in the Overall Trails Vision (p.

connectivity and provide for loop opportunities. I do not see the existence of trails as significantly impeding hunters access to the areas where trails exist. With a few exceptions, most trails are relatively lightly used, especially during deer hunting season, the main hunting activity in the Highlands.	3) the Bureau has determined the best direction for the unit, on balance, is to limit additional trail development while emphasizing preservation of wildlife habitat and opportunities for recreation in a more remote and undeveloped setting. Minimizing conflicts with hunting is potential benefit of this direction for the Unit, in part due to the Bureau rule that prohibits discharge of firearms within 300 feet of marked hiking trails.
From: 7 Lakes Alliance	
We ask BPL to consider larger, landscape level conservation and recreational trail planning and initiatives when designating the non-additional trail zones. A recent 7 Lakes acquisition offers an opportunity to establish a trailhead providing access to the Highlands through a recent 7 Lakes acquisition along Route 27. 7 Lakes is also working on a regional conservation corridor project to connect the Highlands to additional conserved lands. Recently, the Land for Maine's Future program approved a proposal that advances the long-term objective to connect the Kennebec Highlands to other 7 Lakes holdings and other conserved lands through a strategic series of acquisitions (See Figure 1). We ask BPL to consider this initiative and planned trailhead in their designation of no additional development zones. We suggest making Zone 1 smaller and excluding the area around Watson Pond to accommodate these opportunities. ["Kennebec Highlands to North Pond Conservation Corridor" map included]	Due to our improved understanding of these potential regional trails and connections to the northern end of the Kennebec Highlands, a concept which the Bureau supports, we have revised the Northwestern "No New Development Zone" (Zone 1). We have moved the boundary west in the Watson Pond area and reduced the size of the zone by about 100 acres. This adjustment allows for the desired trail connections with some new sections of trail on the unit, while retaining the overall purpose of the zone.
From: Roy Bouchard	
- I do have a significant concern about the "No Additional Development" Zones. It's reasonable to prioritize careful assessment of trail location with respect to other competing uses, but to prohibit any new trails in large areas of the Highlands, especially in light of recognized opportunities, should be reconsidered. - For example, disallowing any new trails in the northeast segment of Zone 1 removes a real opportunity for regional trails access and connectivity with minimal effect on the objectives set for this area. It has been a long term goal of 7 Lakes Alliance to link its extensive trail system between The Mountain to Mt Phillip and beyond to the Kennebec Highlands. A significant opportunity now exists for 7 Lakes to accomplish this with newly acquired lands and trail easements on either side of Rte. 27 offering opportunity to link to the north end of Watson Pond. Since this is near	- See response to Roy's similar comment on page 1. - See response to preceding 7 Lakes Alliance comment

the fringe of Zone 1 it might offer possible foot access to the Sanders Trail system without significantly affecting the goal of minimal development in the rest of the zone.	
From: Dave MacLeay	
While I generally support the goal of retaining large undeveloped parcels, I think it is important to provide a viable route for the long-envisioned connection to other 7 Lakes trail systems. (Whether via existing trails and roads or via low-impact new trail segments.)	See response above to the 7 Lakes comment on potential connection to regional trails.
From: John Simoneau, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers	
- I appreciate the “identified zones to be left relatively undeveloped to increase the viability of wildlife habitat, sustain remote recreation that depends on trailless areas, and retain areas where forest harvesting is less complicated by complex interactions with trails.” [Overall Trails Vision, p. 3] - I want to express that that neither BHA nor I are anti-trail, we also use trails for recreation. My comments related to trails are intended to make sure that wild public land, water and wildlife has a voice in this process. It is important to maintain some areas that are not fractured, which is becoming increasingly rare as communities and desire for recreation opportunities grow.	The Bureau notes the support expressed for the overall concept of retaining relatively undeveloped zones and the purposes and benefits of that vision for the unit.
Topic: Section IV. Resource Protection and Integration with Other Uses (pages 4-5)	
From: 7 Lakes Alliance	
<u>Timber Management Zone</u> - As the A Trail (a mountain bike trail) cuts through this zone, we would appreciate if the plan included strategies for minimizing timber management activities impacts on this existing trail. We also suggest BPL consider opportunities for connecting existing trails in this area to Roundtop Mountain.	This operational concern will be addressed in the management prescription prepared by the forester when any harvest is planned in this area and is beyond the scope of this plan. Note that while the Bureau strives to minimize crossings of trails when conducting harvests, to the extent possible given other factors, Timber Management remains the dominant allocation for much of the area crossed by the trail and this use will have priority. This is the understanding whenever permission is granted to a non-BPL entity to develop a trail in a Timber dominant area.
From: John Simoneau, Backcountry Hunters and Anglers	
As a hunter and angler, I very much appreciate the consideration of compatibility of multiple recreation uses [page 5]. I agree with the statement in the plan that says “To provide opportunities for all users while reducing conflict, it is necessary for different recreation uses to share resources, and it is important to maintain the more remote regions of the unit as primarily undeveloped to allow for the dispersed	The Bureau appreciates the support expressed for maintaining more remote regions of the unit as primarily undeveloped.

recreation that relies on and benefits from that remote setting.”	
Topic: Section V. Potential New Trails and Expansion of Existing Trails (page 6)	
From: 7 Lakes Alliance	
• 7 Lakes believe that public opportunities for low-impact, remote recreation and experiences in nature in close proximity to population centers, are the highest public benefit of the Kennebec Highlands. We appreciate BPL’s attention to protecting these values through the Draft Plans. These values for people and wildlife could be amplified and leveraged by creating a goal of enhance connections between the Highlands and other conserved tracts of land in the surrounding area, especially as much of the highlands remains in private ownership. • 7 Lakes is also developing a water trail connecting the lakes of the water trail (Figure 2). In establishing this trail, our goals are to facilitate human powered recreation, promote safe and responsible use, and engender stronger connections, understanding, and appreciation of important connections between land and waters of the watershed. In particular, as part of this trail, there is an opportunity to establish a primitive campsite for paddlers on Lower Long Pond. We ask BPL to incorporate this trail into this plan. • We agree Vienna Mountain is an attractive location for expanding trail access. We caution that the distance required to access views from existing parking areas may pose challenges for creating an accessible trail without extensive earth work. We caution that without any canopy cover, a trail surfaced with gravel will be fully exposed to the elements and subject to erosion, creating ruts and deeps that will be challenging for users with disabilities. We recommend planning and budgeting for annual maintenance as part of this trail expansion effort.	• In concert with modification of the Northwestern “No New Development” Zone described above, we will also revise the discussion of potential new trails to allow for relatively short sections of new trail that would connect existing trails to conserved lands in the surrounding area. • The Bureau supports the water trail concept, although the Trail Plan does not address it as -- unlike all other types of trails addressed -- it has no direct effect on the public land. The Bureau has reviewed the proposed primitive campsite near the shore of Long Pond and will work with 7 Lake in their development of the site. This will be addressed elsewhere in the management plan review and will be incorporated into the Kennebec Highlands plan. • We recognize that Vienna Mountain presents certain challenges to developing the proposed accessible trail (e.g., limited suitable roads for access, topography) and maintenance of any trail developed. We have contracted with an accessible trails expert and will consider all these challenges with the assistance of the contractor.
From: Roy Bouchard	
• <u>Specific areas for possible trail improvements</u> Obviously, new trails will require ensuring adequate resources exist for ongoing maintenance as well as construction. However, there are some valuable opportunities such as linkage of biking/hiking trails, especially extensions to existing trails which could happen over time.	

1) Extension of A Trail to South Vienna Mtn Rd and on to Round Top Spur. A portion of this has already been laid out and brushed and an evaluated route exists which would minimize overall trail building (probably about 1-1.5 miles). This would provide multiple new possibilities for different loops and medium-longer distance hiking or biking not currently feasible without bushwhacking. 2) Linkage of 7 Lakes lands on Route 27 to Watson Pond as part of connecting Mt Philip and The Mountain to the Highlands should be allowed. 3) A trail along the high points of the blueberry fields can be easily established and maintained. This would be approximately 0.6 miles and could follow the route of an existing informal path, much of it on exposed bedrock. 4) Trail up west side of Watson Pond from Sanders trailhead connecting to Roberts Hill area or Rte. 27 (perhaps located partially on 7 Lakes land). While it is not envisioned in the current Zoning it should not be precluded for the future if demand exists. 5) Ski access from Sanders Hill and Round Top parking. The former might be done via a portion of the logging road currently bypassed by the foot trail. The latter is now accomplished by skiing on the snowmobile trail from the parking area, but there are problems with the steepness of the hill and a wet area at the bottom that poses a hazard. A more gradual ascent trail (possibly including a portion of the Wildflower Estates Road beyond current residences) may be an option. 6) Connect McGaffey Mtn Rd to east face of Vienna Mtn on old logging trails for foot access (also for skiing and especially biking). As is envisioned in this draft, this is a good route for hiking that would reduce the distance to connect Sanders Hill to Vienna Mtn.	• It is not clear what is referred to by South Vienna Mtn Rd and Round Top Spur and how these relate to the A Trail. However, the Bureau believes the existing mileage of mountain bike trails on the unit is sufficient. Also, Round Top is a hiking trail, not intended for bike use. As noted in some of the responses below, we are open to other options for limited trail expansion that align with the overall management goals for the unit. • The Bureau will support these potential connections to 7 Lakes lands (see previous response to 7 Lakes comment on page 2). • This idea is in line with the concept proposed in the Trails Plan for trails on the blueberry fields, with views, and based primarily on existing tracks and paths. • The Bureau will support this potential trail, which likely would be part of new connections to nearby 7 Lakes lands. • The Bureau believes the existing informal access for cross-country skiing is adequate and does not desire to develop special access for this use. Cross-country skiing opportunities are also available on Vienna Mountain via the existing roads and the blueberry field tracks, and access will be enhanced by planned winter parking. • As described in the Trails Plan, the Bureau proposes to connect Sanders Hill trail to Vienna Mtn. We do not believe a second connection to Vienna Mtn from the east side of the unit – e.g., from McGaffey Mtn Road -- is needed.
Topic: Section VI. Other Existing Trails Not Proposed for Expansion (pages 6-7)	
From: 7 Lakes Alliance	
• <u>Winter Trails</u> - The Highlands network of former roads provide excellent cross-country skiing. However, access is now a challenge. Routes leading from existing trailheads (Round Top and Saunders Hill) are inappropriate for skiers and the addition of a gate on Roxy Rand Road has impacted traditional access. We suggest the	• The Bureau believes the existing informal access for cross-country skiing is adequate and does not desire to develop special access for this use. It is possible to park at the Round Top trailhead and walk a short distance to the snowmobile trails and Roxy Rand Road. Cross-country skiing opportunities are also available on Vienna

plan highlight this access challenge and the need to find a long-term solution. Furthermore, despite minimal publicity, the existing York Hill Farm fat biking network has become a popular network. It is now known as the best fat biking network in the state. We suggest the trail plan highlights the value of this trail network to the community. We share BPL's concerns that access is via private lands. We believe that there is merit in a public trailhead in this vicinity for winter use that would accommodate both fat biking and cross-country skiing.	Mountain via the existing roads and the blueberry field tracks, and access will be enhanced by planned winter parking. The Bureau appreciates the value of the fat-biking trails established in part on the public land. However, the network remains a project of the local mountain biking community. We will continue to support the project by allowing the current routes (which have recently been expanded to link the summit blueberry field to McIntire Pond). If the current access on private land is lost, we will consider providing informal parking and access to the network on the former Allen parcel, if winter use of York Hill Road beyond the end of the town-maintained road is feasible. This new access could potentially utilize the existing old road that extends into the summit blueberry field.
From: Roy Bouchard	
- The success of the current system of winter bike trails in the York Hill/Roberts Hill area warrants the consideration of securing permanent access/parking off the York Hill Road. This would conserve this recreational use if current parking arrangements are terminated. The current arrangements for access off the York Hill Rd relies on the generosity of private landowners so in time another convenient and secure access to the area (from the west or north) is of high importance to future dispersed use. In the northwestern segment of Zone 1 BPL might foresee allowing a short access to the existing fat tire path system if the current access or parking on private land is lost. Since this trail system has been clearly a significant resource for biking in the greater region provision for continuing access should be specifically allowed. - As noted below, while existing snowmobile tracks are open for skiers, access to them, especially for beginner-intermediate skill levels is very difficult and will only be partially addressed by opening winter parking on the Vienna Mountain Road. There is a real need for skiing access in the unit even if purpose-built trails are not envisioned. While the Plan should consider the degree of separation eventually desired between motorized and foot powered trails, the use of the Kennebec Highlands Trail and others now accessed by snowmobiles provides one of the few skiing options in the area at this time. Improved access from the Round Top and/or Sanders trailheads would be	- See preceding response - See response to 7 Lakes "Winter Trails: comment on previous page

beneficial allowing expanded skiing options. This could provide linkage to the South Vienna Mtn Trail, McGaffey Mtn Road and an ascent to Vienna Mtn from the east. I appreciate the provision of winter parking on Vienna Mtn. Road which would add significantly to access without the topographic challenges of the eastern trailheads. Continued efforts to reopen access via the Roxy Rand Rd for skiing would be one of the most beneficial additions to winter access, especially for less skilled “backcountry” skiers.	
From: Dave MacLeay	
• Roxy Rand Road is/was *the* key access point for cross-country skiing in the Highlands. Whenever it snows, my household laments the loss of our long-time favorite backcountry cross-country ski destination. Working with the landowner and town to restore winter access via Roxy Rand should be a top priority.	• The Bureau will continue to engage with the landowner to discuss potential restoration of access via Roxy Rand Road. The timing of this engagement is likely to depend on the ongoing probate process.
Topic: Motorized Trails [not directly addressed in Plan]	
From: Elizabeth Payne, York Hill Property Owner	
• I...oppose expanding access for motorized vehicles, including ATVs, snowmobiles, dirt bikes, and e-bikes. On the other hand, I’m not opposed to the bike club modifying its grooming schedule to accommodate hunters.	• The Trails Plan does not propose any additions to the existing ATV or snowmobile trails, nor are any additions proposed more broadly as part of the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan Review and Update. Nor is expansion of existing mountain bike trails proposed; note, however, that BPL policy permits e-bikes on any trail open to other bikes.
From: Roy Bouchard	
• I support keeping the current trail system for motorized access and recognize the value of this use, especially to area residents. However, I see no need for adding any new snowmobile/ATV trails in the foreseeable future. For example, there is snowmobile access into much of the McIntyre Pond region from the newly established winter trail on Welch Rd and the North Vienna Mtn trail to the Vienna Mtn Rd. There is also access from the south via Round Top trailhead and the Kennebec Highlands Trail, including using the South Vienna Mtn Rd. Even before 2011 when the previous plan was discussed, snowmobiling over the Kennebec Highlands Trail was envisioned to be primarily for north-south connectivity but it was acknowledged there could be other additions, especially recognizing the existing informal use. Now there are trails all around the Highlands as well as east-west. To enhance the Highlands as a snowmobile destination would produce conflicts with other user groups and greatly reduce the experience of quiet woods for	• As stated above, no increase in motorized trails is proposed in the Trails Plan. (Note: motorized trails were intentionally not addressed in the Trails Plan because no such increase is intended and because we were mindful of reigniting concerns about motorized uses expressed during development of the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan.)

others, something which is now increasingly hard to come by in the region.	
Topic: Other topics	
From: John Simoneau	
- Map 3 for the “No Additional Development” zone and wildlife features does not include the approved fat biking trails. While not “constructed” trails with signage, they are an approved trail use in this area. - As a hunter who prefers late season muzzleloader hunts (Dec 1-13th in 2024) with fewer hunters in the woods and snow on the ground, the overlap of the grooming and fat bike use is a consideration. In the fall 2024 season I noted grooming by snowmobile as early as November 30th following work sessions trimming trails during November. - I support considerations to relocate the sections of the Sanders Hill Loop to minimize disturbance within deer wintering area in Zone 2.	- The fat bike trails were not included on the map as we are not treating them as “developed trails”, here or on other plan maps or on maps developed for the public. Also, unlike the trails that are shown, the “no discharge of weapons within 300 feet of marked hiking trails” rule does not apply to the (unmarked) fat bike trails. - This topic was discussed at the June 2025 Advisory Committee meeting. It appears there is the potential for adjustment in the timing of the fat bike trail grooming. The hunting community may want to coordinate with the mountain bike club on this topic. - Comment noted.

Summary of Public and Advisory Committee Comments on the Final Draft Kennebec Highlands Trails Plan (xxxx xx, 2025) (Comment Period: Jxxx x, 2025 – xxx xx, 2025) Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.	
Comment	Response
Topic:	
From:	
Topic:	
From:	
Topic:	
From:	
From:	