

Bureau of Parks and Lands

**Western Mountains Region Management Plan
5-Year Review and Update
with
Plan Amendments**

February 10, 2017

AMENDMENT ADOPTION

In accordance with the procedure outlined in the 2011 Western Mountains Region Management Plan for five-year reviews of the Plan and consideration of proposed Plan amendments, the amendments presented on pages 3-4 of this report are hereby adopted.

RECOMMENDED: Douglas Denico DATE: 2-21-17

Douglas Denico
Director
Maine Forest Service

APPROVED: Walter E. Whitcomb DATE: 3/3/17

Walter E. Whitcomb
Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry

Table of Contents

- 1. Summary of the Western Mountains Region Management Plan 5-Year Review Process and Background on Plan Amendments**
- 2. Plan Amendments**
- 3. Maps – Proposed ATV Trails**

Appendices

- A. List of Advisory Committee Members and Bureau Staff contributing to the 5-Year Review**
- B. Table of 2011 Plan Recommendations, Status of BPL Actions to Implement the Plan, and New Issues or Opportunities Identified**
- C. Summary of Advisory Committee Comments on Status Report and Bureau Responses**
- D. Summary of Advisory Committee Comments on ATV Trail Proposals and Proposed Plan Amendments**
- E. Public Meeting Agenda and Sign-in Sheet**

1. Summary of the Western Mountains Region Review Process and Background to the Proposed Plan Amendments

Summary of Review

The Western Mountains (WM) Region Management Plan adopted in January of 2011 guides the management of public lands at the Mahoosuc, Bald Mountain, Four Ponds and Richardson Units, Grafton Notch and Rangeley Lake State Parks and several other smaller lots in Oxford and Franklin Counties. The Bureau is required to report to the Advisory Committee (AC, Appendix A) at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan. The Five Year Review was initiated with a package mailed to AC members on June 29, 2016 containing a table summarizing actions taken to implement the Plan recommendations (Appendix B), and requesting comments. Although the Bureau did not identify any new issues or circumstances that were not addressed in the Plan that warranted Committee input or action, AC members were invited to identify any such new issues or circumstances they believed may warrant such input or action.

Two AC members responded with comments on specific items in the review table or related issues and concerns. (One of the AC members appended the comments of several other non-AC members to their comments.) The Bureau's responses to these comments (including revisions to the review table) are provided in Appendix C.

Background to Plan Amendments

In July 2016, the newly formed Oquossoc ATV Club approached the Bureau with several proposals for new ATV trails in the Four Ponds and Richardson Units. In an internal review, the Bureau eliminated most of the proposals from further consideration. However, the Bureau deemed worthy of further consideration proposals for trails on the Sandy River and Rangeley Plantation parcels of the Four Ponds Unit (segments of a longer trail that would cross primarily private lands) and a trail segment on the south part of the Richardson Unit, near the Unit's Rangeley Plt. boundary. These new trails would mainly follow existing management roads. In the Bureau's estimation, the proposed trails are consistent with BPL policies stipulating that new ATV trails be part of a regional trail network; be compatible with existing resource allocations and land uses and with protection of natural, cultural and historic resources; and lead to adjacent lands only where landowner approval for ATV routes has been obtained.

The proposed trails would represent a new use in the affected portions of the Four Ponds Unit, and an expansion of a use that is now limited to shared use roads in the Richardson Unit. Therefore, amendments to the Western Mountains Plan are required to permit the new trails to be constructed. The Bureau prepared two proposed Plan amendments that would allow development of the ATV trail sections. On November 7, 2016, the AC was sent information of the proposed ATV trails and the proposed Plan amendments for review and comment. Four AC members provided comments, all in support of the proposed trails and amendments, although Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust expressed concern about potential use of bootleg trails on their property adjacent to part of the proposed trails. Appendix D provides a summary of the comments.

Plan Amendments

Section 2 presents the Plan Amendments allowing the proposed ATV trail development within the Four Ponds and Richardson Units as described above. As a result of ongoing discussions between BPL and the ATV club, the segment of trail initially proposed to cross the Rangeley Plt. parcel of the Four Ponds Unit was dropped from the trail plans. Section 3 provides maps depicting the proposed trail segment on the BPL parcels and the associated segments on adjacent private land.

Public Meeting

A public meeting was held in Farmington on January 26, 2017 to allow the Bureau to hear public comments on the proposed Plan amendments. Advisory Committee members were informed of the time and place of the meeting in advance, via email. Two AC members and 5 members of the public attended. The attendees gave verbal comments in support of the Plan amendments. The meeting agenda and sign-in sheet are provided in Appendix E. The meeting was followed by a two-week period during which written comments could be submitted; no comments were received.

2. Western Mountains Region Management Plan 5 Year Review – Plan Amendments

The following amendments to the 2011 Western Mountain Region Management Plan are adopted in response to the proposals previously outlined.

Amendment A: ATV Trail on the Sandy River Plt. parcel of the Four Ponds Unit

Amendment proposed for addition to Four Ponds Management Recommendations (page 85 of Plan), under “Recreation Management”:

Allow construction of a trail segment proposed by Oquossoc ATV Club within the Sandy River Plt. portion of the Four Ponds unit, as part of a proposed regional ATV trail extending from Route 17 on the west to existing trails east of Route 4 on the east, with the following requirements for final approval:

- 1) BPL approval of final trail route, with the Sandy River Plt. segment traversing approximately 1.8 miles of BPL lands, in part on existing forest management roads,
- 2) BPL approval of design and construction methods of any bridges required to implement the approved route, and obtaining necessary permits,
- 3) Abutting landowner(s) approval for trail segments between Route 17 and the Sandy River Plt. parcel, and east of the Sandy River Plt. parcel and
- 4) Development of a long-term agreement between BPL and Oquossoc ATV Club for maintenance of the trail.

Any BPL management roads designated as part of the proposed trail will be subject to occasional Bureau use for hauling timber or other management purposes.

Amendment B: ATV Trail on the South Section of the Richardson Unit

Amendment proposed for addition to Richardson Unit Management Recommendations (page 103 of Plan), under “Recreation Resources”:

Allow construction of a trail segment proposed by Oquossoc ATV Club within the southern portion of the Richardson Unit in the vicinity of the Richardson Twp./Rangeley Plt. line, to allow for ATV access into the Unit and to South Arm Road in the event that the current access via Shelton Trail Road is lost, with the following requirements for final approval:

- 1) BPL approval of final trail route, with the trail traversing approximately 1 mile of BPL lands, primarily on an existing forest management road,

- 2) BPL approval of design and construction methods of any bridges required to implement the approved route, and obtaining necessary permits,
- 3) Abutting landowner approval for trail segment(s) between Bemis Road and the Richardson Unit,
- 4) Development of a long-term agreement between BPL and Oquossoc ATV Club for maintenance of the trail.

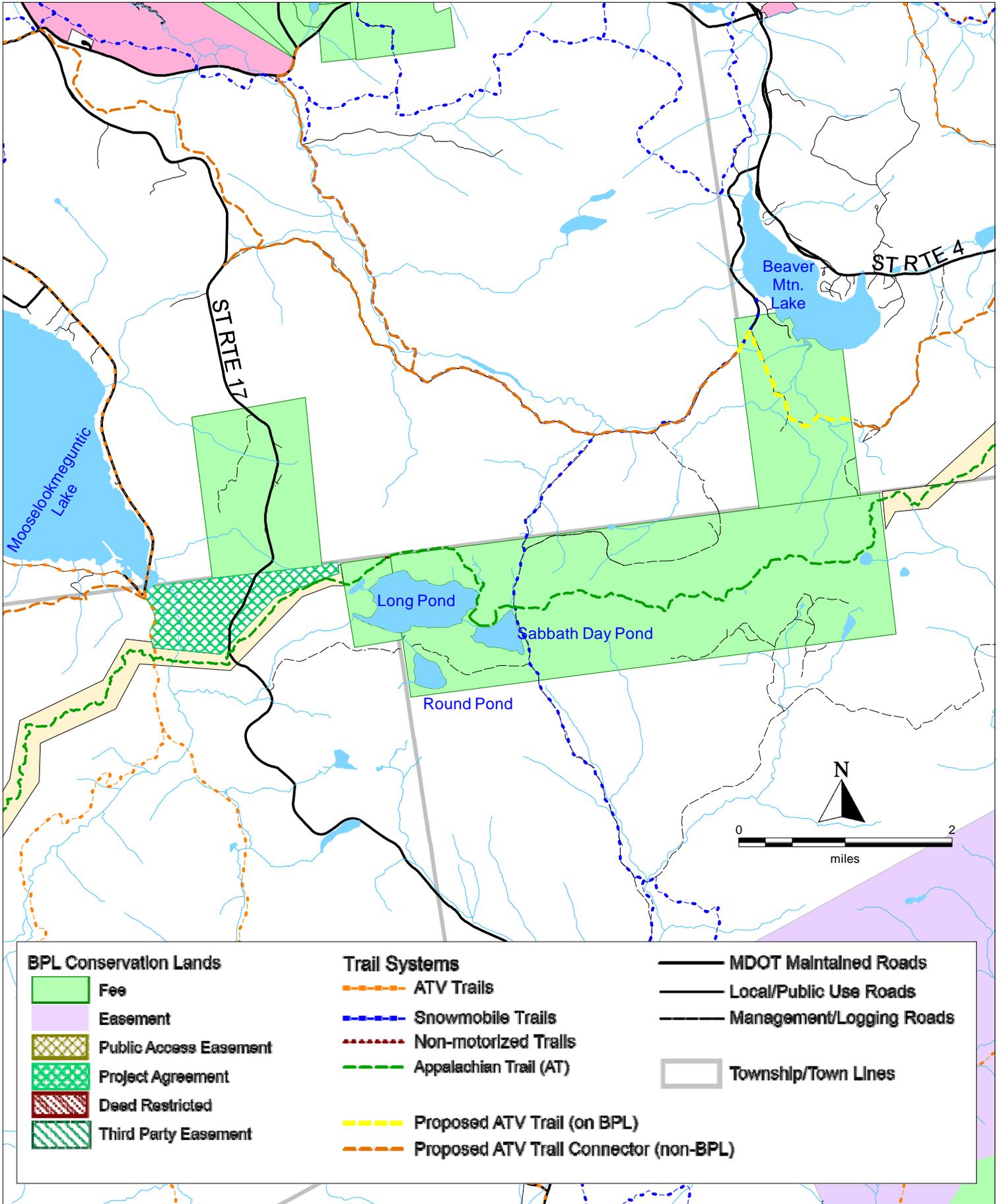
Development of this trail will only be considered if the current permission for ATV use of Shelton Trail Road is lost.

Any BPL management roads designated as part of the proposed trail will be subject to occasional Bureau use for hauling timber or other management purposes.

3. Maps of Proposed ATV Trails: Four Ponds and Richardson Units

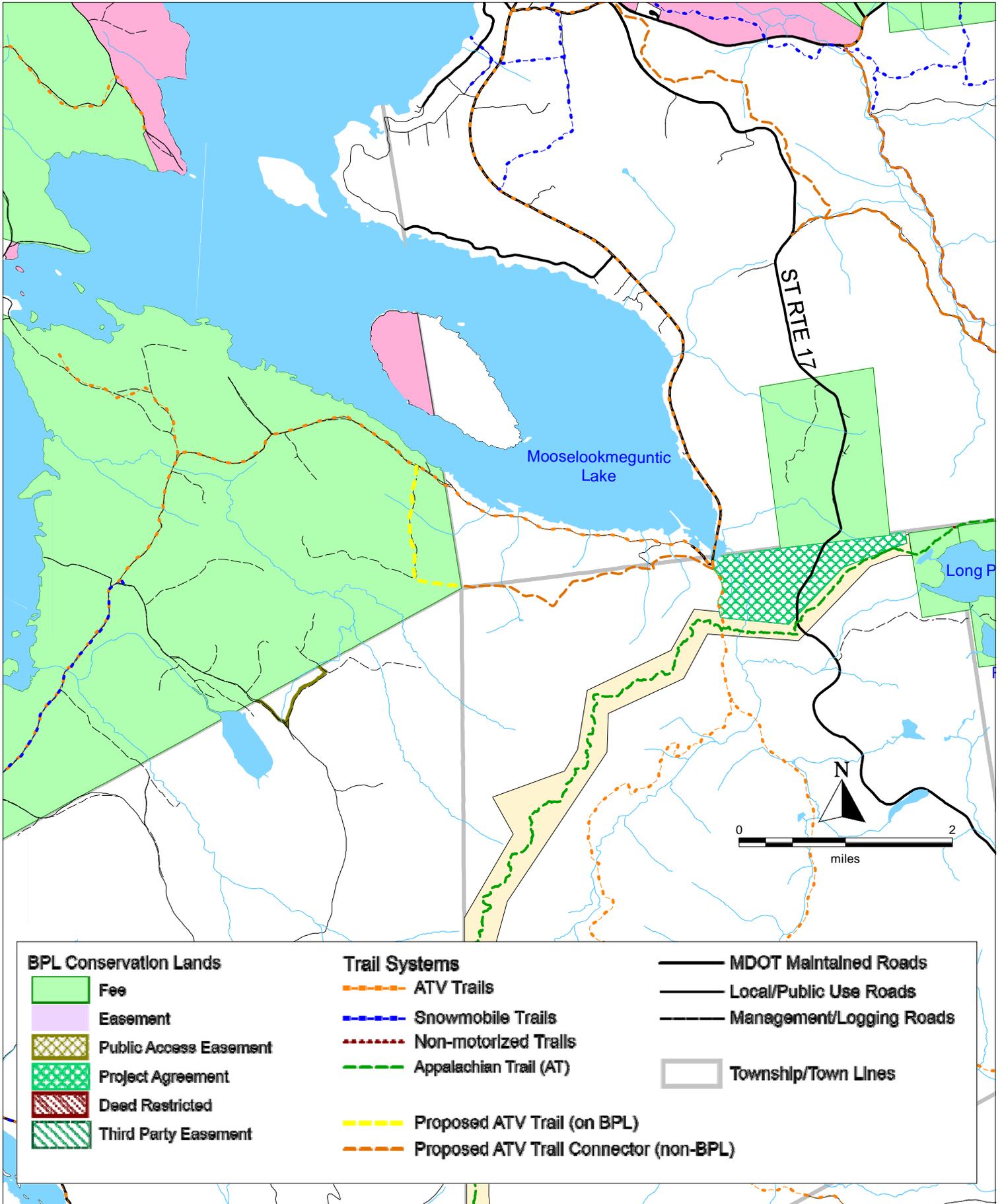
Four Ponds Unit

Current and Proposed ORV Trails on BPL Lands and Vicinity



Richardson Unit

Current and Proposed ORV Trails on BPL Lands and Vicinity



Appendix A

Bureau of Parks and Lands Staff Participating in Review

Name	Organization
Peter Smith	Regional Manager – Western Region
Ben Webb	Forester – Western Region
Jim Vogel	Plan Coordinator
Rex Turner	Recreation Planner
Brian Bronson	ORV Program - ATV Coordinator
Joe Higgins	ORV Program - Snowmobile Coordinator
Tom Charles	Chief of Silviculture

Advisory Committee (2016)

Name	Organization
Paul Casey	Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge
Andy Cutko	Maine Natural Areas Program
Ernie DeLuca	Brookfield Renewables
Mac Dudley	Maine Snowmobile Association
Tom Gorrill	Maine Appalachian Trail Club (Bald Pate District Overseer)
Gordon Gamble	Bayroot/Wagner
Ken Hotopp	Mahoosuc Land Trust
Dina Jackson	Androscoggin Valley Council of Governments
Don Kleiner	Maine Professional Guides Association
Cathy Mattson	none
Andrew Norkin	Appalachian Mountain Club
Kent Nelson	Maine Forest Service
Kip Nichols	Seven Islands
Shelby Rousseau	Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust
Jeremy Sheaffer	The Wilderness Society
Kevin Slater	Mahoosuc Guide Service
Jeff Stern	Androscoggin River Watershed Council
Robert Van Riper	Maine Dept. of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife
Charlie Woodworth	Maine Huts and Trails
Ed Zilinsky	ATV Maine

Appendix B

Management Recommendations

Grafton Notch SP and Mahoosuc Unit	Actions taken/Comments:
<p>Recreation Management</p> <p>Work toward achieving an exemplary standard of balancing recreation and environmental protection in an environment that is both highly valued recreationally and highly sensitive ecologically.</p> <p>Explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrading trails or sections of trails by hardening and/or adding additional trail structures to reduce/prevent erosion. • Relocating or eliminating sections of trail if necessary. • In alpine areas, using specialized alpine trail building techniques, encouraging hikers to stay on trails by better defining trails (while considering the remote, backcountry experience). • Improving and maintaining existing trails should be a higher priority than new trail construction (excluding potential trail segment relocations). However, new trail construction will be considered if high visitor use is causing unacceptable impacts in a particular area and it is determined that a new trail is needed to disperse use. • Increasing hiker awareness of ecologically sensitive areas through increased information and education, delivered through various media, signage and possibly a ridge-runner. • Discouraging use of informal trails that are shown to be causing environmental problems. 	<p>Since the Plan’s adoption, rehabilitation work on the Wright Trail has been completed by a Maine Conservation Corps (MCC) crew. The Bureau has also supported and coordinated with AMC on Appalachian Trail work within the Unit.</p> <p>No new trails have been constructed.</p>
<p>Designate a Bureau staff person to organize and facilitate a Grafton and Mahoosuc trail coalition, to include a representative from Parks, Lands, MATC, ATC, AMC and MLT, to meet at least once annually. Through the coalition: (1) develop periodic trail management plans, and work together to implement these plans. (2) prioritize trail upgrades from year to year, and coordinate in the grant application process. (3) coordinate and improve public information for hikers and share visitor use information.</p>	<p>BPL’s Recreation Planner continues to participate in annual meeting of the trail coalition (the most recent meeting was October 29, 2015), and in ongoing discussion of trails issues as they arise, representing both Parks and Lands.</p>

<p>Increase and improve information and service for hikers and backpackers at Grafton Notch State Park and the Mahoosuc Unit.</p> <p>Explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Designating a summer staff person, ridgerunner or intern to rove the trails and spend time in the Park AT parking lot, giving information to hikers on trail conditions, campsites, etc. • Expanding the written information available at the Park AT parking lot including further enhancements to the kiosk, and including a method for hikers to provide information for each other. • Printing a new “Map and Guide” which includes Grafton Notch State Park, Mahoosuc Unit and the Grafton Loop Trail. • Providing up-to-date information on the Bureau’s website on trail conditions, forestry operations, gate status, rules and guidelines, etc. • As opportunities arise, participate in larger initiatives (with Mahoosuc Initiative, chambers of commerce, or tourism businesses) to coordinate in information provision. Other methods determined by the Grafton and Mahoosuc Trail Coalition and/or the Parks and Lands staff. 	<p>Any actions on information and service?</p> <p>Both full time and seasonal BPL staff spend time each season on the Unit’s trail system, as their schedules allow.</p> <p>A new “Map and Guide” was completed in 2015. The Bureau’s website information for both Mahoosuc Public Lands and Grafton Notch State Park has also been updated.</p>
<p>Work with partner organizations to monitor visitor use, experience and trail conditions. Explore options with partners to expand recreation opportunities if needed in order to avoid levels of use that diminish the quality of the recreation experience or jeopardize the fragile alpine communities.</p>	<p>A monitoring and survey effort was completed in 2012, and a report on preliminary findings on visitor use of the Grafton Loop Trail was prepared by BPL. The monitoring utilized infrared trail counters and self-administered visitor surveys. In general, visitors were satisfied with their trail experience and the level of solitude available.</p>
<p>Gather more information about winter recreation use in the Park. Working with local recreation groups and local officials, develop a communication protocol with the DOT and annually determine appropriate parking areas to be plowed to support winter recreation. Determine if other trail facilities or services are needed to support winter use. Address as resources allow, with partner groups</p>	<p>DOT has plowed the Mother Walker Falls, Moose Cave, and the AT parking lot and the northern scenic turnout each winter at the request of BPL. As long as the parking areas continued to be plowed (particularly the AT lot), current facilities appear to be adequate to support demand for winter use.</p>
<p>Partner with local groups interested in developing the Bull Branch valley for Nordic skiing. Coordinate with groups to designate routes and allow them to groom trails, potentially through a Special Use Permit. After December 1 or the first significant snowfall, whichever</p>	<p>A Nordic skiing trail was laid out in Bull Branch valley by BPL in coordination with local groups. However, interest in development of these trails appears to have waned in recent years.</p>

<p>is later, manage the Bull Branch Road for non-motorized uses (except Bureau management and grooming for Nordic skiing). This is an opportunity to model how Nordic skiing can work with timber management on Bureau lands.</p>	
<p>Currently, there is no specific proposal for locating a groomed Nordic ski trail system other than the general location of the Bull Branch valley. The management road network within timber management areas has been mentioned as suitable in the short-term for this use.</p> <p>The resource allocations identified in this plan in the Bull Branch Valley are a blend of ecological reserve, wildlife, backcountry non-mechanized, and timber management. As stated in the recommendation above, the Bureau will be working with local Nordic ski interests to designate routes and allow for trail grooming. The Bureau and Nordic ski groups will have to consider many factors in locating trail—such as up-coming timber operations and terrain. Under the resource allocation system, grooming for Nordic skiing would be easily allowed in the timber dominant allocation, and in the wildlife allocation on existing management roads. If, in the process of designating specific routes for skiing, it is determined that there is a desirable route that extends into the Ecological Reserve or Backcountry Non-mechanized allocations, the Bureau will need to consider whether this is consistent with current policy and statutory guidance. The Ecological Reserve statute and the Bureau’s IRP are the guiding documents the Bureau will consult to consider new recreational uses in the Ecological Reserve, and IRP description of the Backcountry Non-mechanized allocation will be consulted for decisions on mechanized grooming in the Backcountry non-mechanized area.</p>	<p>See above. Also, the management roads in the Bull Branch valley will be available for groomed ski trails after the current timber harvest in the valley is completed.</p>
<p>Explore options that could achieve a recreation management system for the Grafton and Mahoosuc lands which is seamless, serves the public well, balances recreational use and ecological protection, and more fully realizes the benefits of the many partnerships which bring energy and capacity to this dynamic recreational area. Explore the feasibility of providing a recreation coordinator to work with the various Bureau staff and management partners to implement the recreation recommendations in this plan. Such a coordinator could</p>	<p>Recreation coordination remains a responsibility of current BPL staff in both the Parks and Lands divisions.</p>

<p>also develop and expand the Bureau’s partnerships in the region and improve collaboration and coordination with partners.</p> <p>Specifically investigate creating a new permanent position which could not only serve the Grafton and Mahoosuc area, but the larger Western Maine region. Explore shared funding options for this position, such as a jointly funded position with the Mahoosuc Initiative or local recreation/tourism groups. In the short-term, explore use of a variety of internship programs and grant funding to provide this capacity, recognizing that short-term positions will lack the depth and continuity needed for optimal effect.</p> <p>In the interim, until a new Recreation Coordinator position can be created, designate an existing staff person to fill this role.</p>	<p>Substantial obstacles to the creation of new staff positions within the Bureau exist (in fact, the Western Region has lost staff positions in recent years); the general preference of the Bureau at present is for management objectives to be met with current staff if possible.</p> <p>Seasonal BPL staff have been assigned to perform recreation duties at Mahoosuc Unit each year. BPL also has contracted with Mahoosuc Land Trust (MLT) to assist the Bureau in maintenance of the Frenchman’s Hole area.</p>
<p>Work with the adjacent landowners to resolve any issues with public use. If the Speck Pond and/or Notch Trail are closed to access by the private landowner, the Bureau will, in consultation with partners, assess whether additional hiking opportunities are needed with in the Park or Unit, and may work with partners to address that need.</p>	<p>No specific access issues have arisen since the Plan was adopted. Both the Speck Pond and Notch Trails remain open and have received some additional trail work since the Plan was adopted.</p>
<p>Timber Management</p> <p>Management of the very limited <i>softwood type</i> acres should maintain significant stocking of softwoods, and encourage softwoods where spruce regeneration is common.</p> <p>On <i>mixedwood stands</i>, growing high value hardwoods in mixture with spruce is a desired objective, retaining hemlock for structure and diversity. Some mixedwood stands are located at higher elevations, at the edge of unregulated acres. Here the softwoods might be encouraged more than the hardwoods.</p> <p>In <i>hardwood type stands</i>, sugar maple and yellow birch are the key management species, and healthy beech and good quality red maple can also be encouraged, along with any ash. Oak should be favored where it occurs, and oak regeneration should be nurtured. The softwood component, particularly spruce, should be maintained, or increased where spruce is common in the understory. However, conversion to mixedwood or softwood is generally not a priority,</p>	<p>Ongoing timber management as per Plan.</p> <p>Harvesting through early 2016 occurred at four locations, two on Riley and one each on Grafton and Andover West Surplus. All four operations have been mostly selection and improvement harvests in Northern hardwood stands. Total harvest volume for the period is just under 24,000 cords, with 90% of the volume hardwoods, and 91% of the hardwood pulpwood or biomass, as most of the higher quality trees were retained for high value growth.</p>

<p>except perhaps on the higher/steeper land where hardwoods grow less well.</p>	
<p>The resource allocations for the Mahoosuc Unit will incorporate a 100 foot no-cut buffer on either side of the Appalachian Trail and all official side trails, and the Grafton Loop Trail. A remote recreation allocation with Visual Class I treatment is the dominant allocation for an additional 400 feet along either side beyond the no-cut buffer (where trails are not already within the Ecological Reserve or Backcountry Non-mechanized allocations). This insures that where forest management occurs close to these trails hikers will not be able to readily discern signs of forest harvesting, and harvesting will be timed to have the least impact on trail users. For timber management areas viewed at a distance from hiking trails, public roads, scenic overlooks, and other recreational features, a Visual Class II treatment will be applied.</p>	<p>In most instances, resource allocations were applied as per Plan. However, a timber harvest in winter of 2015 occurred in the no-cut and Visual Class I buffers along the Appalachian Trail in the Mahoosuc Unit on the eastern side of Grafton Notch. Appalachian Trail managers noted the cut in spring 2015 and BPL took steps toward remediation. In the future, BPL managers will ensure that all harvest plans follow the Management Plan by using the most current GIS data which can be updated by contacting the Appalachian Trail Conservancy prior to harvest.</p> <p>Visual Class II standards have been applied in all harvests, where appropriate.</p>
<p>Prior to harvesting, during preparation of timber harvest prescriptions, consult with the Maine Natural Areas Program whenever harvest will take place in identified exemplary communities (allocated wildlife); or in area that was originally proposed by the Forest Biodiversity Project for consideration as an ecological reserve; to ensure that ecological values are maintained.</p>	<p>MNAP has been consulted, when appropriate; for example, MNAP made a field visit issued a brief report in conjunction with the current Bull Branch harvest, at the request of BPL.</p>
<p>The Bureau designates wildlife dominant areas for habitat protection, including riparian zones and deer wintering areas, among others (see Appendix C for a more detailed description). Wildlife values are always dominant over timber values and recreation values. In addition, the Bureau has Wildlife Management Guidelines that indicate wildlife features that should be maintained in Timber dominant areas, and guide management of special habitats allocated Wildlife Dominant. These guidelines are in addition to guidance provided in the Bureau's Integrated Resource Policy document.</p>	<p>Wildlife management continues per the IRP and guidelines.</p>
<p>Transportation and Administrative Concerns</p>	
<p>Retain the portion of the Sunday River Road within the Mahoosuc Unit as a gravel surfaced forest management road with "shared use" status. This will continue its use for Bureau timber management, and</p>	<p>Road is being maintained as described in the Plan.</p>

<p>allow vehicular use (including ATV use) for the public. However, do not promote the road as a motorized trail destination.</p> <p>Work to eliminate the unauthorized vehicular use that leaves this road and travels into the less improved timber management roads and skid trails on the Unit. Methods could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use additional signage as needed to clarify that while motorized travel is authorized on the Sunday River Road, travel off this road into other parts of the Mahoosuc Unit is prohibited. • Retire and/or block the less improved Bureau timber management roads leaving the Sunday River Road when active management is not occurring. • Reach out to clubs, abutting landowners and organizers of ORV events to gain their cooperation in eliminating the unauthorized ORV use in the Mahoosuc Unit. <p>If other methods fail, work with MDIFW wardens to establish an enforcement presence to deter this use.</p>	<p>Management roads branching off the Sunday River Road have been blocked. BPL has also worked with the local Jeep club and conducted other outreach, which have substantially reduced, if not eliminated, this problem.</p>
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Rangeley Lake State Park	Actions taken/Comments:
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<p>Natural Resource Management</p>	
<p>When new facilities (including trails) are planned, use staff and MNAP specialists to perform an inventory of the general site, to locate the facility in an area where natural features will be the least impacted.</p>	<p>No new trails have been developed since 2011; however, work has been done to harden existing trails within the park.</p>
<p>Recreation Management</p>	
<p>Design new visitor amenity development to blend harmoniously with the remote and scenic character of the Park. Currently, developed areas of the Park (campground, boat access area, etc.) are clustered in a core area accessible from State Park Road, yet screened from one another, so the atmosphere of a remote, natural setting is maintained at each site. Follow this well-planned tradition.</p>	<p>No new amenities have been constructed since 2011.</p>
<p>Explore the demand for and feasibility of building a hiking trail system from the Park connecting to the RLHT trails on the South Bog</p>	<p>No action has yet been taken on these potential trails.</p>

<p>property. Consider: (1) the extent and nature of user-demand for such a trail; (2) whether the trail can be sited to avoid environmentally sensitive areas, and (3) if administrative concerns can be addressed, including ability to provide privacy and security to campers, and maintaining the integrity of the fee-collection system. If demand can be demonstrated, and environmental and administrative concerns can be addressed, pursue funding and work cooperatively with RLHT to construct the trail.</p>	
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Bald Mountain Unit	Actions taken/Comments:
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<p><i>Natural Resource Management</i></p> <p>Manage for deer wintering cover in the northern portion of the Unit on suitable sites, including areas zoned as deer wintering areas. Coordinate management of deer wintering area on the south portion of the Unit with RLHT (owners of the South Bog property) wherever possible. Continue to utilize silvicultural techniques that account for high deer populations, such as those described in the timber management section above, where appropriate.</p>	<p>No harvest activity has occurred in DWAs at Bald Mountain since the Plan's adoption.</p>
<p><i>Recreation Management</i></p> <p>Upgrade the Bald Mountain Trail to accommodate a wider range of users (though not to a level that is fully ADA accessible). This more accommodating trail type is not typical on Public Reserved Lands, where hiking trails are typically primitive in nature. It is appropriate here to increase the trail's level of accommodation due to the trail's heavy use, short length, and its easily accessible location in an organized town with a thriving recreational tourism industry.</p> <p>Partner with volunteers from the Trails of the Rangeley Area Coalition (TRAC) to perform basic upkeep of both the trail from the Bald Mountain Road parking area, and the longer trail from the Route 4 parking area.</p> <p>Place signs at the Bald Mountain Road parking area directing people to the Route 4 parking area and trail when the former lot is full.</p>	<p>Work to harden trails and make them more "user friendly" has been completed.</p> <p>TRAC has partnered with BPL in the trail upgrade work.</p> <p>The signs have been installed.</p>

<i>Timber Management</i>	
Continue to perform timber management with the utmost consideration for visual concerns. Apply Visual Class II standards on all Timber Dominant acres and Visual Class I along hiking trails, public roads, trailheads and parking areas.	No timber harvests have been conducted in the Unit since the Plan's adoption.
<p>Manage the Bald Mountain Unit to continue to grow fine quality hardwoods and spruce.</p> <p>Increase the proportion of softwoods where conditions warrant in the northern half of the Unit to provide for deer use.</p> <p>Perform improvement harvesting on the previous landowner's clearcuts as soon as economic conditions allow.</p>	
<i>Transportation and Administration</i>	
Continue to require provisions in any lease amendments to protect the views of Bald Mountain and from the Bald Mountain summit, and make the tower as visually unobtrusive as possible. This includes a height limit, among other considerations.	A new telecommunications lease was issued in August 2011. The new lease contains provisions to protect the views of and from Bald Mountain, including the right of the Department to withhold approval of changes to the structure that may significantly detract from the scenic and natural features of the premises as viewed from the surrounding lakes. The new lease also permitted improvements to the tower access trail.
Use signage to clarify that public motorized use is not authorized on this road. Communicate with leaseholders to delineate their access routes. If necessary, block side trails off the Skiway Road not needed by lessees or Bureau staff, and enlist enforcement help from MDIF&W for unauthorized ATV use.	Signage has been installed. The skeet and trap range in the eastern portion of the unit, on a leased site and accessed via the Skiway Road, has been upgraded by the leaseholder.

Four Ponds Unit	Actions taken/Comments:
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<i>Recreation Management</i>	
Work with the snowmobile club, RLHT, and other willing landowners to relocate this trail so that it will be consistent with NPS Appalachian Trail policy. Authorize a new snowmobile trail on the Rangeley Plantation and Township E portions of the Unit, if deemed suitable by the ORV program and other parties, if necessary to comply with NPS Appalachian Trail policy. Maintain the original club trail as the	Discussions are ongoing regarding this potential snowmobile trail relocation. Efforts have been made to identify a new route, but a suitable route that could be developed at a reasonable cost has not been found.

<p>preferred alternative if the NPS changes their policy to allow the snowmobile/ AT crossing.</p>	
<p>Remove any signage placed on the trailhead (as well as any other indicators that this is a designated trail).</p>	<p>The signage has been removed.</p>
<p>Work with Maine Huts and Trails, and Appalachian Trail partners (MATC and ATC) to explore the feasibility of a winter trail in the Four Ponds Unit. If a trail location is identified, convene the Advisory Committee to review and give comment on the proposal. Consider holding a public meeting for input, particularly if a motorized crossing (for grooming machines) of the AT is proposed.</p>	<p>Maine Huts and Trails has no plans at this time to develop trails in this area, which is near the southern end of their proposed system that is planned to eventually extend to the western shore of Moosehead Lake. (Currently, the focus of trail development is in the Bigelow/Flagstaff Lake area.)</p>
<p>Retain the option to locate a boat access facility on Beaver Mountain Lake in the Four Ponds Unit if legal access can be assured and a suitable site is located. Through the Bureau's Boating Facilities Division, cooperate with IF&W and other relevant parties to determine the timing, location, and design of the boat access facility.</p>	<p>Ongoing; the Boating Facilities Division has evaluated this potential facility, but no further action has been taken.</p>
<p><i>Timber Management</i></p>	
<p>Timber management objectives in the Four Ponds Unit include growing high value timber products, chiefly sawlogs and veneer, while maintaining visual integrity and enhancing the diversity of wildlife habitat and stability of the forest. Management will value species such as spruce, sugar maple, and yellow birch, while taking advantage of the fast growing and abundant but shorter lived fir.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Softwood Stands: Manage the softwood types to stay in this type, moving acres to a higher spruce component while taking advantage of fir's suitability on these sites to produce a more diverse and stable forest. • Mixed Wood Stands: Manage the mixed wood types to encourage reversion to softwoods where past harvesting had changed the type—particularly where softwoods have a strong spruce component. Moving mixed wood acres to a higher spruce component while taking advantage of fir's suitability on these sites can produce a more diverse and stable forest. Management on mixed wood types should favor spruce and the birches, and sugar maple (and red maple, to a lesser degree) on better sites. • Hardwood Stands: Manage hardwood acres for sugar maple and 	<p>Ongoing timber management as per Plan.</p> <p>About half of the 14,500 cords harvested in 2012-16 from the Four Ponds Unit came from the Rangeley Plantation public lot, and the rest was about evenly split between the north and south sides of Twp E. Most of this land lies at 2,000' elevation and higher. Harvests included partial overstory removal, selection, and some thinning, in all types.</p> <p>The currently ongoing harvest on Twp E south included salvage of hardwoods broken by a heavy wet snowfall that fell in December of 2014. Volume was 40% softwoods and 60% hardwoods, and overall 75% was pulpwood or biomass.</p>

yellow birch along with any spruce, managing fir as an intermediate product. Full crowned beech should be retained wherever possible.	
Transportation and Administrative Issues	
Seek opportunities to obtain vehicular rights of way for management purposes, particularly in Township E.	No new rights of way have been obtained.
Clarify with lessees on Sabbath Day, Long, and Round Ponds the access routes and permissions they have on the Four Ponds Unit. This may be done through a meeting between the Bureau, lessees and the adjacent private landowners, or through written correspondence.	Periodic communication with lessees is ongoing.
Work cooperatively with adjacent landowners to identify areas where unauthorized trail use is occurring. Work with local ATV clubs to identify effective means of deterring unauthorized use of snowmobile trails and powerline corridors to gain entrance into the Unit. Consider signage, trail impediments, and enforcement options.	Ongoing.

Richardson Unit	Actions taken/Comments:
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Recreation Resources	
<p>Improve information and reduce confusion about camping reservations on Bureau Lands. As opportunities arise collaborate with other campsite owners on the Richardson Lakes and Mooselookmeguntic Lake in improving clarity of information. Specific recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publish a new “Map and Guide” for the Richardson Lakes and Mooselookmeguntic Lake in collaboration with other conservation and recreation providers on these lakes; identify which sites belong to which landowner, including the phone numbers for making reservations. • Improve the Bureau website to provide clear information on camping at Bureau lands. Include links to other organizations’ websites as appropriate. • Consider additional signage at campsites, in keeping with the 	<p>Work on the Map and Guide is tentatively scheduled for 2017, depending on other priorities.</p> <p>Website improvements have been completed.</p>

<p>remote and scenic character of the lakes. As opportunities arise, participate in larger initiatives in the Rangeley Lakes region to increase the awareness and public information on camping opportunities.</p>	
<p>Work with South Arm campground to phase out the 'right of first refusal' system for reservations at the Richardson Unit. Establish a policy that no new rights will be established and old rights will be phased out.</p>	<p>Discussions are ongoing.</p>
<p>Explore the potential for expanding this parking area to meet demand for hand carry boat launching.</p>	<p>The parking area has been expanded.</p>
<p><i>Timber Management</i></p>	
<p><u>Softwood Stands:</u> On softwood types, management will maintain the high spruce component while encouraging pine and removing fir as an intermediate product. A small proportion of hardwoods will be retained for diversity. Fertility limitations mean widespread conversion to hardwoods is not desirable, though the birches may do fairly well. A second entry will be made into spruce poletimber stands—balancing spacing, potential windthrow, and release of the regeneration created by the 1996-2002 harvest. Areas of current deer wintering area zoning and where deer have yarded will be managed to retain good softwood cover wherever possible, and bring softwood regeneration to cover status through careful overstory removal.</p> <p><u>Mixed Wood Stands:</u> On mixed wood types, growing high value hardwoods in mixture with spruce and pine is a desired objective in the older stands, with yellow birch the most favored species. In younger hardwood stands (which include aspen and pin cherry), reversion to softwood type is desirable, especially near deer wintering areas.</p> <p><u>Hardwood Stands:</u> On hardwood types, yellow birch is the first priority species, followed by sugar maple, spruce, and any existing pine. The small proportion of healthy beech will be retained, and good quality red maple will be encouraged along with any ash. The</p>	<p>Ongoing timber management as per Plan.</p> <p>This unit produced 53% of all Western Mountains harvest volume during the subject period, from two very different types of treatments. A typical BPL selection/improvement harvest totaled about 8,000 cords, of which 53% was hardwood pulp/biomass and low value products of all species 62%. The other harvest was done under the provisions of Outcome Based Forestry (OBF) and was mainly overstory removal retaining a low density pine stand above dense regeneration that had been established/released by low thinnings 15-18 years earlier. These harvests, nearly all done as contract for logging services rather than stumpage sales, totaled over 38,000 cords and were 86% softwood logs, nearly all spruce as the fir had been removed in the earlier thinnings and most pine retained.</p>

<p>softwood component of hardwood stands will be retained, or increased where spruce is common in the understory. Conversion to mixedwood or softwood may be appropriate on less fertile stand edges near softwood stands.</p>	
<p><i>Transportation and Administration</i></p>	
<p>Revise the current gate system for controlling access to Richardson Lake and the Upper Dam tailrace via Upper Dam Road in order to better serve the public. Develop a Plan that will eliminate the current confusion over which gates are open when, will improve access for people with limited physical abilities, and will address current and potential congestion and safety on the Upper Dam Road. Work with NextEra Energy on development of this plan to address legitimate safety and security concerns. This plan shall be adopted within five years of this management plan adoption, but after the completion of dam re-construction.</p> <p>In developing this Plan, investigate the feasibility of the following option:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep Gate 2 open year round • Keep Gate 3 closed year round <p>This is the preferred option in terms of administrative ease, simplicity, and improved public access. Due to its simplicity, it would eliminate confusion for the public. At all times of year (except mud season) the public would be able to drive to Gate 3 and park, walking 1700 feet to the Upper Dam pool. During July and August, this option would improve access for the public (currently the public has to park at Gate 2 and walk 1.3 miles to Upper Dam during these months). At the same time traffic congestion at Gate 4 would be eliminated in September and October, because people would have to park at Gate 3, where a parking area is provided.</p>	<p>Changes to gates are awaiting completion of dam reconstruction, which is projected to be completed at the end of 2016, according to Brookfield Renewable Energy (formerly NextEra Energy).</p>

SMALL LOTS IN THE WESTERN MOUNTAINS REGION

Davis Lot	Actions taken/Comments:
<p>Public Access</p> <p>Work with surrounding private landowners to provide public vehicular access to the Davis Lot. If this is successful, work with the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife to determine appropriate boat access, parking and signage for Kennebago Lake and Flatiron Pond.</p>	<p>BPL has coordinated changed operation of gates to improve access.</p>
<p>Future Timber Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Because of the ownership split, coordinate any timber harvest with KLC, who will also receive one third of revenues. • Management must also respect the visual impact from the lake, though relatively gradual slopes mean that only minor constraints are needed, and the character of the forest is suited to lighter harvests that will not be readily visible from the water. Extensive lake frontage and uplands somewhat visible from the lake must be a factored in planning timber harvests. • The large area of even-aged stands established in the 1970s represent an age class and stand condition less common on Bureau lands. By the end of the Plan period, these should be approaching the time when a commercial thinning will be desirable. 	<p>No timber harvests have occurred since the Plan's adoption.</p>
Dallas Plantation Lots – North and South	Actions taken/Comments:
<p>Public Access</p> <p>Work with the private landowner of Loon Lake Road to allow public access closer to the Davis Lot, which, if successful, would also allow access to the Dallas Plantation North Lot.</p>	<p>See above (under Davis Lot – Public Access)</p>

Small Falls (Township E) Lot **Actions taken/Comments:**

Wildlife	
Work with IF&W to investigate potential fisheries impacts of the recreational gold extraction on Chandler Mill Stream. If unacceptable impacts are identified, eliminate this use.	BPL coordinates with MDIF&W on any potential permits to be issued for this activity (considered “hobby mineral collecting” for the purposes of BPL permits).

Rangeley Plantation Lot **Actions taken/Comments:**

Administrative Issues	
Work with the legislature to remove the game sanctuary status on the Rangeley Plantation Lot, now that it is in public ownership. This will only be pursued on the public lot, not the surrounding private lands in game sanctuary status.	The 126 th Maine Legislature acted to abolish this sanctuary during the first 2013 session; the law was enacted May 24, 2013.
Future Timber Management	
Because the volumes of timber are well below the Bureau’s typical volumes, it will be some time before any significant timber harvesting will be performed. However, there are scattered mature aspen that may be harvested, as well as removing any tall aspen near South Shore Road that become a hazard.	No timber harvests have been conducted since the Plan’s adoption.

Lincoln Plantation Lots (East and West) **Actions taken/Comments:**

Future Timber Management	
<p>West Lot management will continue to focus on hardwood sawlog production, with spruce important on higher elevations and in the northeast corner near the highway.</p> <p>On the East Lot, management for high quality hardwood and spruce will be the timber priority. Maintain visual integrity along the Lincoln Pond Road and along Route 16.</p> <p>Exercise care when harvesting near the frequent streams, especially those containing infeed pipes for camplot water supply.</p>	The 250-acre West lot received a selection harvest in 2014 that produced 2,800 cords, 81% low value hardwoods and 93% hardwoods overall. This lot had been evaluated as a potential sugary, given its good stocking of sugar maple and easy access. However, the fine timber quality of the maple resource has made its being dedicated to syrup production less appealing financially. However, neither the timber nor syrup potential was compromised by this harvest.

Magalloway Plantation Lot **Actions taken/Comments:**

<p>Future Timber Management</p> <p>Softwood types should be managed to retain deer winter cover, while producing spruce and fir timber.</p> <p>Mixedwood stands, where they abut deer cover should usually be managed to increase the softwood proportion for additional winter cover. There and elsewhere, the mixedwood stands can produce high quality spruce, yellow birch, and sugar maple. Much of this type is at or near late successional character, and management should maintain this status where feasible.</p> <p>Hardwood types should be managed to retain the late-successional character, consistent with tree conditions and timber goals, particularly on the east half of the Lot.</p>	<p>No timber harvests have occurred since the Plan's adoption.</p>
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Note on Stetsontown Lot: no management recommendations were formulated for this 41 acre original public lot; the entire lot is allocated to Developed Recreation Class 1 due to the presence of a commercial camp lease and four other camplot leases, which are managed under the Bureau's camplot lease program.

Monitoring and Evaluation (Plan pages 127-128)

Actions taken/Comments:

<p>Implementation of Plan Recommendations</p> <p>The Bureau will develop, within two years of Plan adoption, an action plan for implementing and monitoring the management recommendations in this Plan. This will include an assignment of priorities and timeframes for accomplishment that will be utilized to determine work priorities and budgets on an annual basis. The Bureau will document annually its progress in implementing the recommendations, plans for the coming year, and adjustments to the priorities and timeframes as needed.</p>	<p>The Division implements plan recommendations through the process of calendar year planning, during which it schedules and budgets for projects for the coming year. Priorities are established within each Public Lands administrative region based on urgency of need (e.g., public safety, environmental impact); availability of resources (e.g., funds, staff, equipment, contractors); and opportunities available at the time (e.g., combining projects for efficiency and cost-saving, favorable weather). Yearly accomplishments are reported by administrative region in an annual report to the Legislature, which is posted on the Division's website.</p>
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<p>Ecological Reserves The MNAP conducted a natural resource inventory on Mahoosuc (Carlo-Speck) Ecological Reserve in 2009 as part of the reserved lands management planning process. MNAP is also monitoring these lands as part of its long term monitoring of Ecological Reserves to monitor ecological change within Ecological Reserves and to compare Ecological Reserves to areas under different management regimes. Baseline data was collected using permanent plots at the Mahoosuc Ecological Reserve. These areas will be re-inventoried periodically, according to schedules developed by the Bureau and MNAP.</p>	<p>MNAP’s re-inventory of Mahoosuc ER is tentatively scheduled for 2018.</p>
<p>Recreation In addition to gathering data on use, the Bureau will monitor public use to determine:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (1) whether improvements to existing facilities or additional facilities might be needed and compatible with general objectives; (2) whether additional measures are needed to ensure that recreational users have a high quality experience (which could be affected by the numbers of users, and interactions among users with conflicting interests); (3) whether use is adversely affecting sensitive natural resources or the ecology of the area; (4) whether measures are needed to address unforeseen safety issues; (5) whether changing recreational uses and demands present the need or opportunity for adjustments to existing facilities and management; and (6) whether any changes are needed in the management of recreation in relation to other management objectives, including protection or enhancement of wildlife habitat and forest management. 	<p>As a practical matter, most monitoring of public use occurs as observations made by seasonal recreation staff in the course of their routine duties; or as a result of conditions reported or requests made by visitors and others to field staff or to Bureau regional and central offices. The Bureau is experimenting with a number of monitoring tools to supplement these observations and reports, including trail counters and visitor surveys.</p>

<p>Wildlife The Bureau, through its Wildlife Biologist and Technician, routinely conducts a variety of species monitoring activities statewide. The following are monitoring activities that are ongoing or anticipated for the Western Mountains Region:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> (1) The Bureau will cooperate with IF&W in the monitoring of game species, including deer, moose, grouse, and black bear; (2) The Bureau will identify and map significant wildlife habitat such as vernal pools and den trees in the process of developing its detailed forest management prescriptions. The boundaries of any sensitive natural communities will also be delineated on the ground at this time. Any significant natural areas or wildlife habitat will then be subject to appropriate protections. 	<p>DIFW tracks deer, moose and bear harvests through harvest registrations, which are compiled and reported annually from registration station across the state. DIFW does not survey ruffed grouse populations. BP&L runs drumming survey...</p>
<p>Significant Wildlife Habitat The Division will identify and map significant wildlife habitat such as vernal pools and den trees in the process of developing its detailed forest management prescriptions. The boundaries of any sensitive natural communities will also be delineated on the ground at this time. Any significant natural areas or wildlife habitat will then be subject to appropriate protections.</p>	<p>Ongoing. Process continues as described.</p>
<p>Timber Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prescriptions are prepared by professional foresters according to Division policies, with input from staff specialists, and peer-reviewed prior to approval. • Timber sales are prepared and laid out with field staff looking at most acres prior to harvest and with individual tree marking done on the majority of harvest acres. • Field staff are on-site to check on harvest practice and progress frequently; senior staff visit sites less frequently to obtain overall picture of what is taking place in the forest. • After harvest is completed, roads, trails, and water crossings are put to bed as appropriate, and any changes in stand type are recorded to update the Division’s GIS system can be updated. 	<p>Process continues as described.</p>

<p>The Bureau is currently developing a post-harvest monitoring plan to assist forest managers in assessing harvest outcomes on all managed lands. The monitoring plan will also address water quality and Best Management Practices (BMPs) utilized during harvest activities.</p>	<p>Ongoing.</p>
<p>Third party monitoring is done mainly through the forest certification programs of the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI). Each program conducts rigorous investigations of both planning and on-ground practices. An initial audit by both programs was completed in 2001, with certification awarded in 2002. A full re-audit of both programs was conducted in the fall of 2006 with certification granted in 2007. The Bureau is also subject to compliance audits during the 5-year certification period.</p>	<p>Surveillance FSC/SFI audits were conducted in the West Region in 2012 and 2015. In the earlier audit, visits were made to Riley and Andover West Surplus in the Mahoosucs, and to two harvests on Richardson, one being the initial trial areas for that unit's Outcome Based Forestry (OBF) project – low density pine management. The 2015 audit looked at sites from Gray to Days Academy, including a newly built road and rebuilt bridge on Riley, also a road there scheduled for reopening after having been put to bed about 25 years before. Auditors viewed active harvests at Richardson (OBF harvest) and Bigelow.</p> <p>All previous non-conformances were closed, while one new minor non-conformance was issued by FSC auditors concerning the federally endangered Roaring Brook Mayfly (RBM) at Bigelow. The auditors fully approved of Bureau practices to protect the insect's habitat, but noted that such habitat is supposed to be within a High Conservation Value (HCV) area. All potential RBM streams at Bigelow and the buffers on each side are now within a newly designated HCV area of 400 acres.</p>

Issues for Advisory Committee Attention

New Issues or Circumstances Not Addressed in the Plan: None

Other Items of Special Concern or Interest:

The Bureau is currently pursuing a land swap in which a leased camplot on Aziscohos Lake (Lincoln Plantation East Lot) would be exchanged for a the South Arm boat launch on Richardson Lake, to be managed by BPL's Boating Division.

Appendix C

**Summary of Advisory Committee Comments and Parks and Lands Responses
on the Western Mountains Region Management Plan 5-Year Review for 2016
Comment Period June 30, 2016 – July 18, 2016**

Comment	Response
<i>From: Claire Polfus, Appalachian Trail Conservancy</i>	
<p>Regarding Grafton Notch SP and the Mahoosuc Unit:</p> <p><u>Timber Management Recommendations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review states that resource allocations have been applied per the Plan for a 100 foot no cut buffer and a 400 foot visual class I treatment along the Appalachian Trail in the Grafton Notch SP and Mahoosuc Unit. However, there was a deviation from the resource allocations in 2015. Timber harvest occurred up to the treadway of the Appalachian Trail. We have worked through this error with BPL managers. But it is false to say that resource allocations have been applied per the plan. We would also like to ensure that these errors do not occur in the future. <i>[The comment goes on to provide recommended revised language for the actions taken statement to report the deviation and the remediation steps taken, and suggest that BPL use the most recent GIS data for the AT -- available from the ATC – to avoid future recurrences.]</i> <p>Regarding the Four Ponds Unit:</p> <p><u>Recreation Management Recommendations</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is reference to relocating a snowmobile trail in the Four Ponds Unit. We would like to request clarification to which snowmobile trail this section refers. A map would be helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review table will be revised using the language provided in the comment. A revised table will be provided to the Advisory Committee as part of the Final 5 Year Review package. The issue statement to which this recommendation responds is found (paired with the recommendation) on page 85 of the Plan. It describes "...a club snowmobile trail from Mooselookmeguntic Lake [that] crosses the Appalachian Trail on private land, and travels into the Four Ponds Unit..." and that now crosses the AT following a relocation of that section of the AT.

From: Ken Hotopp, formerly Mahoosuc Land Trust

Regarding the Five-Year Review Process:

- The planning process should be open to the public and for a longer period. The Bethel Area has a large number of outdoor recreationists and conservationists that this 15-year planning process is not yet really engaging.

- It is important to recognize the purpose of the mandated Five-Year Review of the Bureau's management plans and to underscore that the review process is not intended to duplicate the public process used to develop the plans. The purpose of the Five-Year Review, as stated on page 1 of the Plan, is "a review of current issues and progress on implementing the Plan's recommendations." This is in recognition that (as is also stated on page 1 of the Plan) that "some resource and management issues, most notably recreation, may undergo more rapid or unanticipated change over time" such that opportunities for periodic review and discussion of any such changes is needed during the 15 year life of the Plan. As such, it is the Bureau's policy to focus the review process on a reengagement with the Advisory Committee that participated in the development of the Plan. The review will be broadened to include the general public only if changes to the plan (i.e., one or more Plan amendments) are determined by the Bureau to be necessary to respond to "unanticipated changes" or new circumstances. [Please see the note below the table.]

The development of the 15 year Western Mountains Region Plan began with the formation of a diverse and balanced 22 member Advisory Committee, which includes a number of recreation and conservation organizations and interests. The Bureau met with the full AC and with a hiking-trail focused subgroup several times during 2010. The full Advisory Committee, with some changes in members, has been included in this Five Year plan review. It is the Bureau's expectation that the AC members will represent the interests and concerns of the broader community that is not directly engaged in the Five Year Review process.

Comments requesting changes to the Plan regarding Resource Allocations and allowed uses in the Mahoosuc Unit, specifically in the Bull Branch Valley

- From the comments below, it does seem like several changes to “management recommendations” and “plan-level” changes should be considered for the Bull Branch valley to create more and better resource and stream protection zones and more remote recreation and conservation opportunities.

[Following the above comments from Ken Hotopp are seven additional comment letters solicited by Ken from other individuals who are not members of the Advisory Committee. In addition, Ken included a letter and Bull Branch area map which had been sent to the Bureau previously by Glen Langley and signed by a number of individuals representing the Friends of Bull Branch. The letter was a follow-up to discussions BPL has had with the Friends group since Fall of 2015, including a meeting with Regional Manager Pete Smith and other Bureau staff in December 2015.]

Most of these additional comments reiterate proposals from the Friends for new “no cut” stream buffers for much of the Bull Branch stream corridor within the Mahoosuc Unit and other changes to the Resource Allocations designated in the Plan, and requests for protection of “old growth” in Bull Branch valley.]

- The Bureau recognizes the scenic, recreational, and ecological values of the Bull Branch, many of which have been highlighted in discussions with the Friends group over the past year. However, as alluded to in the response to the preceding comment, please note that the Five-Year Review is not intended to reopen discussion of Resource Allocations and the guidance the Plan contains regarding timber harvesting, stream protection, recreation management, and other issues in the Bull Branch Valley (or elsewhere in the Plan area). The summary of written comments on the First Draft Plan and Final Draft Plan and the Bureau’s responses (provided in Appendix A of the Plan) demonstrate that these topics were thoroughly discussed and considered during the Plan’s development. The Bureau is aware of no new circumstances or new information that would suggest that these topics should be considered anew as part of the Five Year Review.

In addition, the Bureau remains confident that appropriate protections to the Bull Branch stream and to ecological, wildlife and recreation values in the valley are provided by the current 330 foot Wildlife dominant resource allocation that has been applied to each side of the entire length of the stream, along with the Visual Class I allocation that has been applied to much of the stream corridor, and the Bureau’s timber harvesting guidelines in accordance with those allocations. Under the Integrated Resource Policy (IRP), timber management is designated as a secondary use of these areas. Thus any harvesting is light and done with the minimum of disturbance. Some areas, particularly those that are steep or otherwise inaccessible, are not harvested at all, and machinery is kept out of the 75 foot riparian zone on either side of the stream.

	<p>In response to concerns expressed about the effects of timber harvesting on “old growth” in the Bull Branch Valley, the Bureau has worked with the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) to identify concentrated areas of “old growth component” and determine a management strategy based on Bureau policy. No areas large enough to be considered old growth stands have been found in the Bull Branch area.</p>
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From: Various members of the public (non-AC member), included by Ken Hotopp following his comments *[The following comments do not involve proposed changes to Resource Allocations or allowed uses, but rather relate to recent changes due to harvesting activity or other immediate concerns or requests. In the judgment of the Bureau, these comments are consistent with the purposes of the Five Year Review.]*

<p><u>Regarding Winter Use and Closure of Management Road in the Mahoosuc Unit (Nancy Babcock, Newry)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Four-wheel drive vehicles chew up the snow on the management roads, making skiing difficult and unpleasant. I strongly feel that the gate at the lower section of the Bull Branch Road should be closed after the first snow...A second gate closing the Sunday River Valley Road would be great too. <p><u>Regarding the Status of Management Roads recently improved for timber harvesting in the Bull Branch Valley (Nancy Babcock, Newry; Emily Ecker, Woodstock; Bob Duplessie, Andover; Laurie Gilbert, Woodstock and Riley)</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>[These commenters submitted similar requests that the roads improved for logging during the recent Bull Branch harvest, with new bridges over several small streams and new culverts, be left as is after the logging work is complete, with the bridges left in place to benefit Nordic</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bull Branch Road up to the Wright trailhead is a public use road open to passenger vehicles and ATVs; the Sunday River Road is a management road with shared use status, meaning it is also open to passenger vehicles and ATVs while it remains in service, although the Bureau is not obliged to maintain it for public use. Closing the Sunday River Valley Road or the lower gate on the Bull Branch Road after the first snow would exclude other users from the area. The upper gate on the Bull Branch Road will remain closed unless harvest operations are active. • The bridges installed for on harvest management roads are designed to be temporary; they are removed and used elsewhere after the harvest is complete. Leaving temporary bridges and culverts in place could lead to flow blockages in the future, threatening the road network and
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<p><i>skiing and mountain biking, and removal of injured hikers from the AT.]</i></p>	<p>causing physical and ecological damage. Additionally, removal of the bridges helps deter motorized use of the management road network. In particular, the Bureau wants to deter those ATVs that go around locked gates and use management roads that are not intended or maintained for their use. Therefore, bridges and culverts installed for the timber harvest will be removed and the roads returned to their pre-harvest condition. However, the roads will remain open to Nordic skiing and biking.</p>
<p><u>Regarding Potential Development of Nordic Ski Trails in the Mahoosuc Unit.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The statement of current interest in development of Nordic skiing trails may not be entirely accurate, because I think strong interest remains amongst a number of players and the timber harvesting may have been as much of a deterrent as lack of local interest (Kirk Siegal, Albany). <i>[A suggested revised statement of current status and interest is provided, mentioning a new trails group, Mahoosuc Pathways, which could have a prominent role.]</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The review table will be revised using the language provided in the comment. A revised table will be provided to the Advisory Committee as part of the Final 5 Year Review package.
<p><u>Regarding Trail Maintenance and Development along Wright Brook in the Mahoosuc Unit.</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Wright Trail could use maintenance and the camping area along that trail could use proper toilet facilities so that the waters of Wright Brook are not contaminated. There used to be a loop trail that went up one side of Goose Eye and down the other. Part of the loop has closed for years because of trail damage. It would be good to work on fixing that trail so that it can become a loop again. (Sarah Southam, Bethel) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The portion of the Wright Trail that formed a loop on the upper part of Goose Eye Mountain (the north fork of the trail) was on steep, wet and otherwise unsuitable ground, causing erosion problems and unsafe conditions. For this reason, that portion of the trail was closed. Lower portions of the trail were also rerouted to provide a more appropriate buffer to Wright Brook. The designated campsite along the brook is maintained by AMC, including a wet-willy style privy.

Note: *If the Bureau determines it will move forward with one or more amendments to the Western Region Plan, following review and comment on the proposed amendments by the Advisory Committee, the amendments will be presented to the public for comment.*

Appendix D

Western Mountains Region Management Plan 5 Year Review:

Summary of AC comments on ATV trail proposals and draft Plan amendments

Commenter and Organization	Date/Form of comment	Summary of Comments
Ed Zilinsky – ATV Maine	11/10/16 (email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the proposals as important connectors for existing trails and routes
Steve Dudley – Rangeley Lake Snowmobile Club	11/16/16 (email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the proposals • Request that the proposed trail between Mooselookmeguntic Lake and ITS 117 and across the BPL Rangeley Plt parcel be allowed as a “joint use” for ATVs and snowmobiles, to bring to reality a connection previously sought by local residents and snowmobile clubs • Acknowledges that joint use trail would require several bridges capable of supporting a groomer, and plans to block trail to prevent 4WD use in non-snow seasons
Shelby Rousseau – Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust	11/26/16 (letter sent via email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supports the proposals and plan amendments, with caveats • Concerned construction of new trail across Noyes Pit and BPL Rangeley Plt parcel will encourage ATV and snowmobile use of bootleg trails crossing the RLHT Height of Land parcel (and NPS AT corridor and private forest land to the south) • Requests that BPL require ATV club to block the existing bootleg trail to RLHT property from Noyes Pit
Kent Nelson – Maine Forest Service	11/30/16 (email)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sees no problems with the proposals from the wildfire perspective • May be some benefit to trail system in the case of wildfire along the AT, due to improved access

Appendix E



2011 Western Mountains Region Management Plan – Five Year Review
Public Meeting: Proposed Plan Amendments

UM Farmington – Olsen Student Center – North Dining Hall B
January 26, 2017
5:30 PM

AGENDA

5:30 PM

Welcome ~ *Introductions, Purpose of Meeting*

5:40 PM

Proposed Amendments ~ *BPL presentation of proposed new ATV trails and justification for revision of Plan*

6:00 PM

Public questions and comments

6:25 PM

Public Comment Period and Steps to Finalize Plan Amendment

Adjourn

The Western Mountains Region Management Plan, Plan maps, and the Proposed Plan Amendments can be found online at:

http://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/western_mountains.html

Written comments on the Proposed Plan Amendments can be sent to:

Jim Vogel

Bureau of Parks and Lands

22 State House Station

Augusta, ME 04333

-or-

Jim.Vogel@maine.gov

Western Mountains Region Management Plan – 5 Year Review
 Public Meeting
 January 26, 2017 ~ 5:30 PM
 UM Farmington Olsen Student Center, North Dining Hall B

PLEASE WRITE LEGIBLY

Name and Organization (if any)	Mailing Address (optional)	Email Address (optional)
Jim Vogel (BPL)	Bureau of Parks and Lands, 22 State House Station, Augusta ME 04333	Jim.Vogel@maine.gov
WESTM DELUCA BROOKFIELD	150 MAIN ST LEWISTON ME 04240	WESTM.DELUCA@BROOKFIELDRENEWABLE.COM
Allison Frockett Brookfield	150 MAIN STREET LEWISTON ME 04240	allison.frockett@brookfieldrenewable.com
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ED Zilinskiy ATV Maine Temple Trail Riders	395 Fair Temple Rd Temple 04984	edzie4wheeler@thotrail.com
Dan Mitchell River Valley Riders ATV.	325 Wold St Dixfield Me 04424	Mitchell179@myFairPoint.net
Brian Milligan OSE Road ATV		brian.milligan@maine.gov
Gary Williams Trailmaster OQuosoc Archival	47 Brown Rd Poland, Me 04294	mrgadget60@yahoo.com

