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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
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Walter Whitcomb
COMMISSIONER

Date: April 17, 2015

To: Aroostook Hills Region Plan Advisory Committee Members
From: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry,
Bureau of Parks and Lands
Re: Five-Year Review of the Aroostook Hills Region Management Plan

Enclosed are the Advisory Committee comments on the 2014 five-year review of the 2009 Aroostook Hills Region Management Plan and the responses to those comments by the Bureau of Parks and Lands. Also enclosed is a proposed Plan Amendment.

The Aroostook Hills Plan guides the management activities of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands on public lands at Scopan (formerly Squapan); Scraggly Lake; and 11 small lots in the Towns of Hammond and Sheridan, in Moro, Nashville, and Oxbow Plantations, and in Townships T9 R5, T12 R8, and T13 R5.

The Bureau is required to report to the Advisory Committee at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan. The Bureau identified one new issues or circumstances that was not addressed in the Plan and that warranted Committee discussion or action at this time; a proposed maple sugaring operation on approximately 300 acres of the Scopan Unit allocated to Wildlife Management and identified as potential future ecological reserve designation.

The Bureau mailed its 2014 five-year report for the Aroostook Hills Region Plan to the Advisory Committee members on December 23, 2014, requesting their comments on the report.

The Bureau received written comments from five Advisory Committee members and takes particular note of the following:

- Proposed Maple Sugaring Operation at Scopan: Three Committee members expressed support for the proposal. One member felt that a sugarbush operation could be compatible with the potential ecological reserve designation, contrary to BPLs proposal. Because maple sugaring requires active manipulation of the forest, the Bureau holds the position that such an operation would not be compatible with the intended protection of unmanaged natural systems within an ecological reserve. The proposed Plan Amendment specifies that the proposed maple sugaring lease area would not be reallocated to Timber Management, as described in the five-year report. Maple sugaring is an allowed use within the current Wildlife Management dominant resource allocation. However, the proposed Amendment would remove

the Plan's restriction on timber management within the portion of the proposed lease in the Scopan Ridge area to allow cutting of trees as needed for the maple sugaring operation. Further, the lease area would be designated to minimize impacts on the larger natural community, and the lease would be designed to ensure the operation is consistent with the Wildlife Management designation and would be sensitive to natural community values. BPL believes the late successional character that would be maintained within the lease area is compatible with the adjacent potential ecological reserve area that would remain.

- Timber Harvesting in the Region: One Committee member requested additional details on timber harvesting completed over the review period. The Final Report directs the commenter to the Northern Region office for the desired information, which exceeded that normally provided as part of the 5-Year Review.
- Recreation Management at the Scopan Unit: One Committee member commented in support of the efforts being made to connect the Unit with other regional parks and conservation lands via non-motorized trails and to improve boating access to Scopan Lake.

A public meeting will be scheduled in the near future to allow the Bureau to hear public comments on the proposed Plan amendment. Advisory Committee members will be informed of the time and place of the meeting in advance, via email.