



Central Penobscot Region Management Plan

Public Scoping Meeting

July 28, 2011

5:30 to 8pm

Milo Town Hall

Minutes

Will Harris began the meeting at 5:30 pm by introducing himself and Maine Department of Conservation, Bureau of Parks and Lands (Bureau) staff. The members of the audience introduced themselves and Will gave an overview of the region and the management planning process.

Comments on Nahmakanta Public Lands

Amy Hudnor introduced the Nahmakanta Public Lands and invited comments. A suggestion was made for more campsites on the water, and particularly more drive-to campsites. Nahmakanta Lake being windy is a factor in this need.

The boat access situation at Nahmakanta Lake was discussed. Some people would like to see drive-to boat access, and there are incidents of people breaking the barriers to drive to the lake. There are complaints at the Jo Mary Checkpoint about the lack of drive to access. Some of the reasons for the current arrangement of a loop road and boat dolly are: to avoid a motorized crossing of the Appalachian Trail (AT) on National Park Service land, and the desire to keep the lake somewhat remote. Some people value the remote character of the lake. On the other side, some people cannot manage the walk to carry their boats and supplies to the lake, and since some of the few water access campsites on the public lands are on this lake it is important to provide access. Additional concerns are: the parking area is too far from the boat off-load area and signage does not adequately direct people there, and some find the signage unwelcoming.

Questions and comments concerning the condition of roads were raised. There is a need for 'quality ratings' on roads so people know where they can drive 2WD vehicles. It is important to be able to give information to tourists on the opportunities on these public lands that are accessible by car. There is currently no deeded right of way to Nahmakanta, but permission has been given for the public to drive there from Nahmakanta Rd (through Appalachian Mountain Club land) and visitors can travel through the Jo Mary Rd by paying a North Maine Woods fee at the Jo Mary Checkpoint. However, the Bureau has been working on negotiating for road rights here and throughout the public lands system. A counter concern expressed is that easy road access could diminish the remote experience.

In general, there is a need for more signage to and within Nahmakanta. Another concern is emergency issues. There are Appalachian Trail hikers who run out of supplies and don't know where to go for help. They are flagging people down on the roads for help. Cell phone coverage is spotty and the Bureau could identify cell phone coverage areas on maps or signs.

Turtle Ridge seems unique botanically and geologically and may qualify as a special protection area.

A question was asked about the Bureau's timber harvesting volumes. Tom Charles explained the state's record year last year for timber harvesting and the sustainable harvest models used for deciding how much to cut. An approximately 20-year rotation cycle is used.

A question was asked about deer yards on Nahmakanta—are there any, and do you need to cut to maintain them? Bureau staff explained where the deer yards are, and plans to expand them. Despite this management, deer are not known to be wintering on the sites.

Comments on Seboeis Public Lands

Seboeis Lake is very popular and the area around the boat ramp needs more parking. People park in some of the sites better for camping, and people camp in the gravel pit, which would be better for parking. A number of campowners park here also. A boat dock is also needed. Campsites on the west side, down the tongue would be beneficial. People are looking for sandy beaches to swim—a better swim beach is desirable, with road access. There is a toilet that is exposed between two campsites.

A question was asked about whether the state would put another boat access site on the lake. Amy said that the LMF applications for the new parcels indicated the potential for a hand carry boat access site. Potential areas include Northwest Pond and the south end of Seboeis Lake. Comments were made that this could alleviate the congestion at the north end. Concern was raised about assuring road right of way to a boat access site and taking responsibility for safety at the site. Northwest Pond is particularly rocky. The Thoroughfare is a potential wildlife area.

The dam at Seboeis that the Bureau maintains should stay in place to keep as a barrier for fish (such as largemouth bass).

Comments on Lands north of Millinocket

Wassataquoik Public Lands—The Bureau should work on getting road access with the abutting landowner (Prentiss and Carlisle P&C). A major obstacle is the cost of rebuilding a bridge across the stream with a 50 foot span. P & C would not want to bear the cost. There used to be campsites on the Wassataquoik that are not maintained because of lack of road access. Could interns be used?

There is significant old growth pine and white cedar on this public land that may warrant special protection.

The International Appalachian Trail is on Elliotsville Plantation land nearby and could be extended onto the parcel.

East Turner Mountain Public Land—there is no drive-to access to this parcel. This will make management difficult. This is not really hunting access, which was the reason the parcel went to the Bureau for management. There is a hiking trail extending from Baxter State Park Avalanche Field that runs through the parcel to Twin Ponds.

Millinocket Forest—There has been some ATV use and there are some very wet portions of the property where this has been a problem. It has been heavily cut recently and a question was asked about the Bureau's plans to replant forests. Tom Charles replied that natural regeneration was so good in Maine that the Bureau does not need to replant, but he explained the Bureau's general practices on managing recently acquired parcels for wildlife and future high quality timber. Another issue pointed out was the lack of deeded public road access to the public lands (though there is right of way for the Bureau for management

purposes). There is fear that the state would trade away this parcel because of lack of road access or because there is land they want instead.

Bradford/Lagrange Public Land—half of this was traded away for Katahdin Lake. It has high quality deer habitat which should be maintained.

General Comments not specific to one parcel

A question was asked about whether there was money from Forest Legacy to buy the Lookout Mountain Easement. Kathy Eickenberg replied that this was still being pursued.

A comment was made that when the Bureau acquires land, guides end up losing commercial bear bait sites.

There does not seem to be much enforcement of the rules on public lands. This needs to be addressed.

A conversation ensued about acquiring deeded public road access to public lands. A statement was made that instead of the state buying conservation easements, which often don't come with road access, the state should focus on buying road access to public lands it owns. Not having road access may lead to the state trading away public lands. However, some landowners are just not willing to sell public rights of way on their roads. Many landowners allow the public to use their roads, so this may not be much of an issue. However, rapid landownership changes leave uncertainty in whether handshake agreements on road access will be enough in the long term.

Conclusion

Amy concluded the meeting at 8:15.