

Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL)
Western Mountains Region Management Plan
Public Scoping Meetings

Rumford Town Hall (January 28, 2010) and Rangeley Lakes Regional School (February 4, 2010)

Minutes
Public Comments

General Comments

Scoping meetings should have been more publicized as many found out about them through word of mouth. Send information to organizations and have them spread the word and put a notice in the Rangeley Highlander.

Each unit could have its own advisory committee as the issues are so varied and the knowledge of BPL lands held by members of the community is vast.

Umbagog NWR has recently focused on acquisitions in upland areas particularly in NH. Coordination with Maine and outreach to the Umbagog Manager is desirable. It may be possible to connect the NWR with Mahoosuc and/or Richardson through acquisitions.

Fire control is a concern in the Rangeley region. The BPL practice of pulling culverts and reseeded old roads, in combination with certain Land Use Regulation Commission rules, increase the risk of fire that gets out of control and cannot be managed effectively.

Mahoosuc Unit and Grafton Notch State Park

Comments on Grafton Notch State Park

Grafton Notch State Park is an important resource and though its' one parking lot is not often full now, in the 15 years of this plan, use will most likely increase. Plan for increasing use of the Park, including additional parking.

Grafton Notch State Park is popular and used by school groups as well as tourists and locals. It is a well-managed great resource.

Recreation comments

Last year there was confusion and hikers getting lost on Mahoosuc on the Grafton Loop Trail due to blue markings on trees used by foresters. The blue closely matched that used by trail crews to mark trails and a couple of hikers needed to be rescued as a result of getting lost. Foresters should be conscious of this when conducting harvests near trails.

Motorized access should not be allowed on the Grafton Loop trail and crossings should be avoided whenever possible.

A loop trail linking the Cataracts Trail and Baldpate is recommended.

Access to Mahoosuc hiking from NH depends on private landowners' goodwill. Hikers must travel on Success Pond Rd which could be closed off to public use. Look to provide more day hiking opportunities from the east to compensate for lost access from the west. A hiking trail to Goose Eye Mountain would be desirable.

BPL should work to acquire portions of land with Speck Pond Trail and Notch Trail.

Ecological concerns

A unique alpine bog community exists around the AT in Riley Township. The Appalachian Mountain Club would like this area recognized as important ecologically and should be afforded protection above ecological reserve status. Impacts from hikers could be lessened if more resources were available to AMC which could result from an awareness of the natural community's importance.

Several points were made in advocating for expanding the Mahoosuc Ecological Reserve. There is conservation land in New Hampshire that is adjacent to and near the Mahoosuc Ecological Reserve. There is a wedge shaped parcel of land in Riley Township that if acquired could provide connection with conservation land in NH (and protect hiking trails). The ER wraps around a piece of land that has since been added to the Unit in fee and the ER could be expanded into this piece. Low elevation hardwood forest which has never been harvested is a good candidate for ER status. There is also some interest in expanding the Backcountry Non-mechanized area in the unit.

Forestry comments

Forest harvesting in Andover West Surplus is too close to Cataract Trail and stream. Scenic standards need to be maintained near trails.

There is concern about past harvests from the 1990's in the Bull Branch Valley which is a unique and special area. The bidding process may have been to blame. BPL staff explained how the bidding process has changed since then.

BPL needs to educate the public about forestry practices to dispel myths that state lands aren't managed as well as private.

Richardson Unit

Maine Huts and Trails may be planning on using Richardson Unit in the future. BPL should reach out to them now to see what their plans are and be proactive in determining if this is an appropriate use of Richardson Unit. Safety needs to be considered if they use public use or management roads, and be conscious of the fact that they used motorized vehicles on their trails for maintenance.

Hand carry boat access is desired in the Richardson Unit with enough parking space nearby to accommodate a van with canoe trailer. The shoreline near Pine Island/Metallak Stream may be an appropriate site.

Campsites are not maintained frequently enough. Forest fires are a concern if people leave their sites without distinguishing fires. Daily visits to campsites would be ideal.

Some campsites should only be reserved for non-motorized boats.

Campsite reservations are difficult to obtain and confusing. Since different entities control different sites, it would be good to coordinate so the public knows who to contact. Putting this on the BPL website would help.

Campers using sites on Richardson Unit need more information on rules and rights. Some campers have been possessive of the day use sites (which are available to the public regardless of campsite reservations).

BPL should seek to acquire land around Metallak Pond from Seven Islands.

Four Ponds Unit

Height of Land is a great resource in the Rangeley region. Anything BPL could do to protect and expand opportunities here is appreciated. Protection of the view and expanded parking and short hiking opportunities are some ideas of how to increase value of this resource.

There is a snowmobile trail that used to cross the Appalachian Trail on the Bemis Rd. Now that the AT has been relocated, the snowmobile trail crosses the AT in a more wooded location and the NPS is prohibiting this crossing. A new trail needs to be designated between Mooselook and ITS 117 north of Sabbath Day Pond north of the AT. Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust has been blamed for the snowmobile trail closing. They are willing to have a new trail cross their land near Height of Land and would like all interests to work together to solve this issue this year (some progress has already been made). BPL land could be used also if topography allows it.

ITS 117 should be retained in Unit.

AT shelter should be held to same standards as campowners—no metal roofs.

The boat ramp at Beaver Pond needs maintenance and parking. Though it is a private ramp, if there was any way BPL could enhance this site and open to the public officially that would improve the situation. RLHT occasionally monitors this Pond for invasive species and educates boaters. It's better to have designated, maintained public sites than various informal private sites used by public.

Bald Mountain

Rangeley Skeet and Trap has a lease to use a portion of Bald Mountain and 300-400 people a year use this site. They enjoy being able to use the land in this way and hope everything stays the same into the future.

The hiking trail up Bald Mountain is in rough shape with mud and exposed tree roots causing dangerous conditions at times. This is a tremendously popular hike for locals and tourists and many tourists are unprepared for the conditions they encounter. Cars parked along the road can

stretch for quite a distance during the summer. The trail needs more water bars and other improvements to handle the traffic. Additional trails to the summit may be considered to disperse use possibly using the DOC parking area on Carry Rd as a starting point. However, with limited resources it may be more feasible to put more resources into the current trail. Adding more trails also has implications for hunters who cannot hunt within 300 feet of a trail.

Deer wintering habitat should be encouraged by foresters.

BPL should continue to be sensitive to visual impact when discussing any changes to the communications tower with the leaseholder.

The snowmobile club appreciates the current trail on the unit and would like it to continue.

There is a wetland at the top of Bald Mountain being damaged from unauthorized ATV use. This is an enforcement issue.

Rangeley Lakes State Park

RLHT has acquired new land adjacent to Rangeley Lakes State Park and could partner with the SP in creating new opportunities for users of the park and also possible connections with Bald Mountain. New hiking trails and canoeing opportunities are possible.

Smalls Falls Lot

Expand hiking opportunities at Smalls Falls.