

Bureau of Parks and Lands
**Crocker Mountain Unit Management Plan
Public Scoping Meeting**

July 22, 2014 6:00 – 8:00 PM
Carrabassett Valley Public Library

MEETING MINUTES

The Public Meeting was attended by approximately 13 people.

Additionally, the following BPL staff members were present: Peter Smith, Western Region Lands Manager; Steve Swatling, Bigelow Preserve Manager; Kathy Eickenberg, Chief of Planning; Jim Vogel, Plan Coordinator; Rex Turner, Outdoor Recreation Specialist; Scott Ramsey, Director ORV Division; Tom Charles, Chief of Silviculture; Joe Wiley, MDIFW wildlife biologist assigned to BPL

Welcome/Introduction

Jim Vogel welcomed the attendees, and asked staff to introduce themselves. The attendees also introduced themselves. A meeting agenda and map of the Crocker Unit were distributed.

Presentation

Jim Vogel used a PowerPoint presentation to review the Crocker Mountain acquisition and the agreement for management developed during the acquisition period, and to give an overview of the property and the resources present, the proposed Ecological Reserve, the planning process, and plan's purpose. It was pointed out that the Crocker Unit plan will be a 10 year plan to start (rather than 15 years) to align with the Flagstaff Region Plan cycle. Before taking comments and questions, attendees were directed to a list of key Plan topics on the agenda (attached) that were the focus of the remainder of the meeting.

Public Comments/Questions (paraphrased from notes)

- Pete Smith, CR NEMBA – Requested clarification on whether the Plan would be limited to broad goals for recreational development and other uses or would contain more specific recommended projects (e.g., proposed bike trails, with routes detailed), and whether the Bureau wanted specific plans from user groups and organizations.
 - BPL staff explained that the Bureau's management plans sometimes included specific projects, when a near-term need was documented and adequate resource and other information to support a particular project proposal was available. In other instances, only resource allocations were provided, which indicate where a particular trail or other project could and could not be implemented.
- Bob Luce, Carrabassett Valley selectman – Wants Plan to be open to potential future uses of the lands with an outdoor recreation focus; would like to see Plan embrace both shared-use and individual use trails. Plan needs to recognize the importance of timber harvesting on the lands. Also want to be sure the proposed Ecological Reserve takes place; no interest in getting mountain bikes into the cirques that will be within the ER. However, the Plan should

not be limited to what is here today, but point toward future opportunities for new facilities and enhancements.

- Dave Cota, Carrabassett Valley Town Manager - Referred attendees to the public process during the acquisition phase, which included efforts to identify community interests and desires for the Crocker Mountain lands and which resulted in a vision statement that is contained in the agreement signed by TBL, the town, and BPL. Urged that BPL adopt that vision statement as the basis of the Vision to be stated in the Plan. Regarding development of trails, Dave underscored that because it isn't yet known what specific types and length of trails are desired and where the desired trails might best be located, the Plan needs to be flexible. However, there is also a desire to see some trail development in the near term – don't want to wait 5 years before there are any new trails.
 - Rex Turner, BPL Recreation Planner, suggested that groups work to describe the types of trail experiences that are desired and what types of trails to support the development of a Plan that will meet those needs.
- Larry Warren – Is the existing snowmobile trail on Caribou Pond Road a “dead-end”? [The answer was yes, at the present time, and until conditions change such that motorized trail connection beyond Caribou Pond was a possibility]. If someone negotiates an easement for a motorized trail from Crocker to Redington Lot, will that be a way to include this issue in the new Plan? [It was pointed out that Caribou Pond is off the Crocker Unit; however, new opportunities for motorized trails extending south from Caribou Pond would be an important influence on potential motorized trail development along the Caribou Valley Road corridor within and north of the Unit.]
- Dick Fecteau, Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) – Questioned whether a map produced by TPL during the acquisition phase allocated uses. [BPL staff responded that some TPL maps depicted the preliminary borders of the ER, which will be refined during the Plan process, and that those borders do indicate an approximate area that will be designated with a Special Protection allocation.] Also commented that old logging roads on the unit have severely eroded. Commented that the deed to the recently sold parcel of land between Caribou Pond and Redington lot prohibits the adjacent landowner to the south (Wagner) from providing recreation access to that parcel across their property (after some discussion, it was agreed that a review of that deed was needed to determine the actual restrictions that may be in force).
- Bill Munzer, CV Snowmobile Club – Commented on the loss of a traditional snowmobile crossing of the A.T. adjacent to the Redington Lot. [The history of this crossing was an topic of interest and discussion during the recently completed Flagstaff Plan 5-Year Review, and was acknowledged as never having been a recognized legal crossing, although it was apparently used for many years.]
- Dave Cota, Carrabassett Valley Town Manager – Commented that ATV and snowmobile uses are important to the community and asked if the possible deed issues blocking motorized trail development south of the Crocker Unit were addressed, can the Plan address future motorized trail uses. BPL staff responded that if the status of potential motorized trail development south of Crocker were to change such that new trail connection to the Barnjum/Madrid area might be possible in the near term, this topic would then be addressed in the Plan. Staff also pointed out that if a substantial change in this

status were to occur after the Plan's adoption, the issue of new motorized trail development could be brought to the Bureau without waiting for the scheduled 5-year review.

- Larry Warren – Asked about the status of maintenance of Caribou Valley Road. Comments underscored that the road provides access to a high-use trailhead for the AT [parking area is currently at the south end of the road, just outside the Crocker Unit boundary], and the importance of keeping it passable.
 - Pete Smith, BPL regional manager, stated that he anticipates that the road will be designated a public access road in the Plan, which means it would be maintained such that basic vehicles (normal clearance and 2 WD) would be able to use it.
- Bob Weingarten – Expressed interest in the ecological values of the unit, and asked if there will be a “major survey” of the proposed ecological reserve. Asked if the Bureau was aware of the presence of Bicknell's thrush on the high elevation lands.
 - Joe Wiley, MDIFW biologist, described the survey work already completed by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) in support of the Ecological Reserve nomination, and the use of sample survey plots in areas deemed most likely to harbor rare plants or ecosystems. Described how survey plots would be established within the ER when the Plan is adopted to track changes on ecological conditions.
- Pete Smith, CR NEMBA – Described the interests of the bike club in development of trails on the unit. The club is working with the notion of “pods” which comprise a system of trails in a certain vicinity to attract a variety of users (e.g., novice as well as moderate and expert riders, family groups of riders with children, etc.). One such pod, for example, could be developed near Caribou Pond, possibly on abutter's land and the adjacent portion of the Crocker Unit. Expressed a desire to eventually have ~12 miles of trails on the unit, some of which could be multi-use trails (e.g., ski trails, which could be coordinated with Maine Huts & Trails). The club will look at the terrain on the unit, and expects to offer some basic trail concepts to the Bureau for consideration during the scoping phase
- Josh Tauses, CR NEMBA – Would like to see larger area for riding than have elsewhere in the vicinity protected from timber harvest; concerned about alteration of hydrology from harvest and the effect that has on trails, as well as crossings of trails by skid trails and haul roads. Less concern about effect on viewsheds as seen from bike trails. The biker club envisions “stacked loop” trail development, providing a riding destination in one locale, with bigger loops that would entail several hours of riding to complete. 5-6% grade is optimal, with the use of switchbacks were needed to maintain this grade. Want to provide a “wilderness experience” type ride.
- Pete Smith, CR NEMBA – Asked whether mountain bike trails would be allowed in the ecoreserve. [BPL staff thought this might require a change to legislation and/or the Integrated Resource Policy (IRP). Subsequently, review of the IRP indicates that mountain biking trails are allowed as a secondary use in ecological reserves, where they do not conflict with the dominant resource values.]
- John McCatherin, Carrabassett Valley ATV Club – Described the interests of ATV clubs in the region, particularly in creating smaller loops connected to the 139-mile Moose Loop trail that encircles the region, encompassing more than 300 square miles. Loops that provide

25-45 mile day trips are key to ATV riding groups. One such loop of interest would use the Caribou Valley Road corridor [as used by snowmobiles now] as part of a trail that would connect the Crocker Unit and Caribou Pond to Redington Lot and Madrid Township to the south. The potential ATV trail shown on some maps that connects Caribou Valley Road with Mount Redington on the west margin of the Crocker Mountain unit was acknowledged to not be viable as a reasonable route over those lands could not be found.

Next Steps/Concluding Comments

- Jim Vogel reminded attendees of the opportunity to provide written comments over the next two weeks, and that an email and mailing address to submit comments are provided on the bottom of the meeting agenda. The meeting was concluded with a thank you to all who attended.