

**MAINE DIVISION PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS (DPPL)**

Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
22 State House Station - Augusta, Maine 04333-0022

**MEETING NOTES**

**FLAGSTAFF REGION MANAGEMENT PLAN – FIVE YEAR REVIEW  
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC) MEETING**

Farmington, Maine  
August 15, 2013  
6:00 – 9:00 PM

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THE INTERESTED PUBLIC PRESENT**

AC Members

Dick Fecteau, MATC  
Ben Godsoe, High Peaks Alliance  
Jennifer Gray, Maine Audubon Society  
Cathy Johnson, NRCM  
Claire Polfus, ATC  
Tom Saviello, Senator – District 18  
Ken Spalding, Friends of Bigelow  
Joshua Tauses, CR NEMBA  
Charlie Woodworth, Maine Huts & Trails

Interested Public

Lance Tapley (Friends of Bigelow)  
Bob Weingarten  
Barry Turcotte  
Christine Parrish (Free Press Online)  
Ed Gervais  
Jennifer Clark  
Ian Fitzmorris  
Michael McDonald  
Joe Stevenson (Sappi Fine Paper Co.)  
Lester Kenway (MATC)  
Larry Warren (Western Mountains Corporation)

**DPPL STAFF PRESENT**

Will Harris, Director of DPPL  
Kathy Eickenberg, Chief of Planning  
Jim Vogel, Management Plan Coordinator  
Peter Smith, Lands Manager Western Region

Steve Swatling, Bigelow Preserve Manager  
Rex Turner, Recreation Planner  
Scott Ramsey, ORV Program Supervisor  
Tom Charles, Chief of Silviculture

**INTRODUCTIONS**

After a welcome by Director Harris, introductions were made by members of the Committee and DPPL staff, followed by a brief statement by the Plan Coordinator of the meeting's objectives and goals: to review the accomplishments since 2007 in implementation of the Flagstaff Plan recommendations and to hear presentations about and discuss three trail proposals/requests that may require plan amendments. Reference was made to the 2007 Amendment to the Integrated Resource Policy requiring DPPL to "review with the Advisory Committee accomplishments in implementing the Plan's recommendations and changing conditions that that may warrant amendments to the plan" every five years, as described in a handout provided with the meeting agenda (both attached). Attendees were asked to focus comments and discussion on the 3 "new issues" (trail proposals) that were the main agenda items.

## **MEETING OBJECTIVES AND GOALS**

AC members raised several questions and concerns regarding the meeting objectives and the broader issue of the role of the committee in the five-year review. Committee members requested a more thorough explanation for the status of management recommendations, particularly those for which “no activity this period” was reported, and that they be given the opportunity to provide feedback on implementation of the Plan recommendations before moving on to new issues. AC members also asked for an opportunity to bring other “new proposals” to the table besides those on the agenda, and related this request to several other issues and concerns tied to management of the Bigelow Preserve. In response to these questions and comments, it was explained by staff that the intended purpose of the meeting and role of the AC was to advise DPPL on new issues that may require a Plan amendment. However, staff also stated that DPPL welcomed feedback on the implementation of the Plan, and information on any new circumstances not considered when the Plan was adopted that may suggest a need for Plan amendments.

## **ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

Pete Smith provided a brief review of the Plan recommendations that have been accomplished since the Plan was adopted, as summarized in the Plan Review table (AC members were provided the table in advance of the meeting). Dick Fecteau expressed a concern about the recommendation for a lease to be issued for the “Wing Camp”, which has not been acted upon and which he believes is unwarranted, stating that the camp structure is now in disrepair.

Cathy Johnson noted that timber management in the Bigelow Preserve is not addressed in the Plan Review table (it is addressed by the Plan but with no specific recommendations listed). In response, Steve Swatling provided a description of ongoing forest management at the Bigelow Preserve, and mentioned new forest stocking standards that DPPL has been directed to implement across its forest lands over the next 20 years. Under the directive, average forest stocking levels would be reduced 7 percent (from 23 cords/acre to 21.5 cords/acre), representing the lower stocking conditions that existed in about 2004. Several minutes were spent discussing DPPL forest conditions and the resource management motivations of the directive. Tom Charles and Will Harris emphasized that the directive is not aimed at Bigelow Preserve or late successional forests and may not substantially affect timber management in the Preserve, and that it would be premature to predict any changes in timber management on specific lands at this point.

## **NEW RECREATION DEVELOPMENTS TO BE CONSIDERED**

Three organizations have come forward over the past 6-12 months with proposals for recreation trail development that was not considered in the development of the Plan and that may require plan amendments. These proposals are also indications that the recreation context has changed significantly since the Plan was developed, including new regional trail initiatives by Maine Huts & Trails and Western Mountains Corporation, and a new emphasis (and trail development initiatives) around mountain biking in the Carrabassett Region. The Carrabassett Region Chapter of the New England Mountain Biking Association (CR NEMBA), Maine Huts and Trails, and Western Mountain Corporation were invited to present their trail proposals to the AC Committee at this meeting.

**CR NEMBA Presentation:** Josh Tauses used a Powerpoint presentation to provide an overview of CR NEMBA’s history, mountain bike trail work and trail development interests in the Carrabassett Region. Several requests related to mountain bike use of existing corridors (motorized rec. trails or old roads) in the Bigelow Preserve were made: 1) open to mountain bikes a segment of old road south of Stratton Brook Pond used as a snowmobile trail (referred to as the “Dead Moose trail”); 2) provide a mountain bike trail route around the portions of the 60’s road that will be improved for use as a timber haul road in the next few

years; 3) allow repair of a 75 yard segment of the Stratton Brook (“esker”) trail that has been flooded by beaver activity; 4) allow mountain bike use of the snowmobile trail linking East and West Flagstaff Roads and crossing the north Bigelow Preserve and north arm of The Horns ecological reserve; and 5) mountain bike use of the “Birthday Hill” segment of snowmobile trail, east of Huston Brook Road. Josh also discussed the organization’s strong interest in development of new “destination trails” on the Crocker Mountain lands, and recommended development of a master trail development plan for the new properties.

Staff requested maps of each of the segments of trail addressed by the above requests. It was asked if a request for a new mountain bike crossing of the ecological reserve would be reviewed by the Ecological Reserves Scientific Advisory Committee; and staff responded it probably would, and that staff had already requested Andy Cutko at MNAP to look at this possibility. It was also asked if CR NEMBA would want to use mechanical means to conduct trail work across the northern Bigelow Preserve and the ecoreserve; it was pointed out that use of an excavator may not be allowed in the ecoreserve. Lester Kenway of MATC complemented CR NEMBA in their trail construction methods and expressed the interest of MATC to work with them on their trail needs/wishes. General concern was expressed about the effect of new mountain bike trails and increased levels of use on the undeveloped character of the lands the Preserve was established to protect.

**Maine Huts & Trails Presentation:** Charlie Woodworth described MH&T’s interest in developing two hiking trail connections to the Stratton Brook Hut. The first is a trail approaching the hut across the Carrabassett Valley (CV) lot from the east, which requires rerouting a segment of trail on the south edge of the lot that was built in a location needed for logging access. (Steve Swatling has recently worked in the field with MH&T to identify an alternative route.) The second would be a new hiking trail (also open to ungroomed skiing and snowshoeing, but not designed for bike use) extending north from the hut across the CV Lot to Stratton Brook, and across the brook to link with the 60s Road/Stratton Brook trail, providing connectivity to the Fire Wardens Trail. An 8.5 x 11 map of the proposed trail connections and surrounding area was distributed and discussed. Ken Spalding suggested an alternative route for a trail linking the hut to old roads/snowmobile trail and thence to Stratton Brook Pond Road, and suggested the potential for more shared use of existing trail corridors rather than new trail development.

AC members questioned why the trail segment on the CV lot to be rerouted did not require a Plan amendment. This trail segment was given a permit with the understanding that it would follow an existing old road rather than establishing a new footprint, which the Regional Lands Manager determined would not require an amendment prior to issuance of a permit. It was later determined that no old road actually existed along the intended route, which staff viewed as invalidating the permit. However MH&T believed it had a permit and proceeded with trail work without notifying DPPL.

Several attendees had questions about why the CV lot was not part of the Bigelow Preserve. DPPL staff explained it was the Department’s interpretation that the lot did not meet the criteria in the Bigelow Act for additions to the Preserve. [Note: DPPL has misstated the specific rationale – that the lot was interrupted by another ownership (along the power line) - when in fact the reason the lot was not added is that is not a “contiguous public lot” as we interpret the term “public lot” (see Plan Appendix F, page 17)]. In the discussion there was some uncertainty regarding ownership of the power line corridor, and Dick Fecteau requested deed research be conducted on the corridor to provide confirmation of ownership.

Charlie briefly described a proposal by MH&T for the Hemlock Trail on the east side of Flagstaff Lake to be opened to mountain bike use, to allow bikes to ride between the Poplar Stream Falls and Flagstaff Lake huts. He proposed rerouting the trail in the two locations where it intersects and coincides with the A.T. and

crossing the A.T. only at one point. Staff pointed out that the Hemlock Trail was considered an undesignated side trail of the A.T., on which bike use would not be permitted by National Park Service policy, and that the crossing of the A.T. by bikes was also against NPS policy, which by agreement the Department has agreed to uphold. Staff expressed concern that some mountain bike riders using the Hemlock Trail would be tempted to cross on to the A.T. and follow it along the lakeshore. For these reasons, staff indicated DPPL would instead recommend a trail linkage that would direct mountain bikes onto Long Falls Dam Road near the southeast corner of the Preserve.

**Western Mountains Corporation Presentation:** Larry Warren used a Powerpoint presentation to provide a description of the proposed 56-mile Coburn Gore to Kingfield multi-use trail. Larry described the trail project in detail, including project partners; the approximate trail route; easements, permissions and land acquisition that have been pursued with private landowners and Penobscot Indian Nation; the overall concept of a “heritage trail” with a special interpretive focus on the Arnold Expedition; and possible linkages to other regional/international trails. GPS recording of the proposed route and identification of bridges needed is ongoing. The trail would be 5 feet wide, with primitive winter grooming only. Maps were shown depicting the planned trail route in two areas where DPPL public lands would be crossed: the Chain of Ponds area and Stratton/southwest Bigelow Preserve area. Larry described an opportunity to acquire new public parcels north of the Chain of Ponds. A new footbridge crossing of the southern Chain of Ponds would be required for the trail. In the Preserve, Larry described a trail route that could make use of old logging roads and existing hiking or mountain bike trail corridors (however, the trail map depicts a route along Stratton Brook where no old road is known to exist). Staff noted the existence of riparian habitat along Stratton Brook. Larry fielded several questions on the potential uses and users of the trail, and who would be responsible for trail maintenance.

Cathy Johnson asked why the Chain of Ponds unit was designated largely as “Wildlife Dominant” and if that would be an issue for the trail. Staff responded that it was so designated because of the extent of wetlands and riparian zones.

### **NEXT STEPS AND OTHER COMMENTS**

Several AC members expressed interest in scheduling another AC meeting to have further discussion about Plan implementation, to discuss the trail proposals that were presented, and any other “new issues” that members may identify. DPPL acknowledged the interest in having another meeting.

Staff requested that the proponents of the three trails initiatives develop specific outlines of the proposals describing all new trail uses and/or new trail development requested for State lands, and to provide maps of the relevant trail segments. It was explained that these will then be reviewed by staff for compatibility with the lands to be crossed, the resource allocations established in the Plan for those lands, and potential conflicts with and impacts on other resource uses and values.

DPPL staff will then develop Plan amendment recommendations, which will be provided to the AC members for review and comment. These Plan Amendments may include new proposed trail facilities and any Resource Allocation changes that will need to be adopted in conjunction with the new recreation facilities or uses of existing facilities. [Note, the same process would be used to address any other new issues requiring an amendment to the Plan brought forward by the AC.]

The final draft proposed amendments would then be presented at a public meeting to gather further public input.

It was also explained that the process to develop a management plan for the Crocker Mountain acquisition will begin in concert with this five-year review, with the public meeting on proposed amendment to the existing management plan envisioned as also serving as a scoping meeting for the Crocker Mountain plan.

**ADJOURN**

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 9:00 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by  
Jim Vogel*