

**AROOSTOOK HILLS MANAGEMENT PLAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING NOTES
Meeting at Bureau of Parks and Lands Regional Offices in Ashland
7/30/08**

Committee Attendees:

Charlie Beck, Sportsman's Alliance of Maine
Dan Bridgham, Maine Snowmobile Association
Kenny Fergusson, Huber Resources Corp.
Bill Greaves, Maine Forest Service
Bob Vigue, Seven Islands Land Co.

BPL Staff:

Vern Labbe, Regional Manager
Don Kidder, Forester
David Pierce, Forester
Randy Lagasse, Forest Technician
David Parent, Seasonal Park Ranger
Kathy Eickenberg, Plan Coordinator
Scott Ramsay, Director, Off-Road Vehicle Division
Jim Caron, ORV Coordinator
Joe Wiley, Wildlife Biologist
Tom Charles, Chief of Silviculture
Mick Rogers, Community Grants Manager
Scott Thompson, Aroostook State Park Manager (Acting)

Scraggly Lake Unit Issues and Proposed Options

1. Additional Hiking Trails:

Issue: There is only one designated hiking trail on the unit and it is accessible only by water. This is the Owls Head trail which affords good views of the unit from a knob on a peninsula. Libby Camps takes clients from the west side of Scraggly Lake to Ireland Pond via old skidder roads and the public access road. They are interested in more non-motorized trails in the Unit, possibly using some old logging roads.

Options Discussed:

- (1) Connect the camping area next to the boat launch to the Owls Head Trail (approximately 2.5 miles one way) with a shoreland trail.
- (2) Connect the Water Access campsite on the peninsula in front of the Back Parlor with Ireland Pond, or create a trail that connects the west end of Scraggly Lake with Ireland Pond. (See also discussion under #5 concerning use of float planes on the back parlor).
- (3) Provide a trail from the public access road near Green Pond to the old growth hemlock stand preserve.

2. Handicapped Accessible Camping Site:

Issue: There are no handicapped accessible camping sites on this unit. Bureau policy is to provide opportunities for handicapped to camp and have shore access to the lakes for fishing.

Options Discussed: Provide a handicapped accessible camp site at the main camping area near the boat launch at Scraggly Lake, including parking, an accessible privy, and an accessible path to the lake.

3. Ireland Pond Road Access/LURC Zoning

Issue: Ireland Pond was zoned as a remote pond by LURC [in 1979]. At that time there was a woods management road already constructed within one-half mile of the Pond. Local outfitters have been raising the issue that the Bureau is not in compliance with the LURC regulations and should close the road within one half mile of the pond.

Options Discussed:

- (1) Block the road ½ mile from the pond. Concerns with this option include:
 - Since there is no suitable area for a parking area at the ½ mile point, the actual walk-in distance would be further than ½ mile;
 - Blocking direct vehicular access to a point 1000 feet from the pond has eliminated the problems of sedimentation of the pond from an eroding trail; and has eliminated use of the site for tailgate camping. The purposes of the Remote Pond designation are being met with the existing 1000 ft barrier.
 - There would be considerable reaction to such a block – a permanent block would limit access for fire control; and a gate likely would be vandalized.
- (2) Petition LURC to rezone this area –given the road was there prior to the zoning.
- (3) Discuss a compromise solution with LURC – retain the existing special protection zone around the pond and the existing 1000 foot barricade.

[FOLLOW-UP NOTE: We have since determined that in 1987 LURC issued an advisory ruling at the request of the Bureau declaring that the road pre-existed the LURC Remote Pond designation; and that “For practical purposes, this means that any gating which you do implement need not strictly meet the P-RR standards. You are free to establish and manage gating to suit your needs.”

4. Boat storage; ice shacks left on the unit.

Issue: There is an accumulation of boats being left on Ireland Pond with no information as to ownership. One canoe was crushed by a tree this winter and no one has taken care of it. There should be some system to at least know who owns these boats. Similarly, there are ice shacks occasionally left on the premises around Scraggly Lake. The IRP (Integrated Resource Policy - the Bureau’s policy guidance document) has a policy on watercraft storage adjacent to ponds (Section VII D.18). For a “backcountry” pond (no two wheel

access within ½ mile) decisions to allow, allow with conditions, or prohibit storage of private watercraft on Bureau-managed land adjacent to backcountry ponds are to be addressed in the management plans; for other ponds, decisions may be made on a case by case basis. If allowed, the IRP requires the storage to be at least 25 feet from the Pond, and must have the owner shown on the watercraft. Canoe racks that are unobtrusive and safe are allowed. Storage of other personal property, such as ice shacks, requires prior Bureau authorization (Section VII.D.19).

Options Discussed:

- (1) Post a notice that any stored boats must show owners or will be removed. Concerns expressed include that there could be a proliferation of these boats if we post a policy explicitly allowing it; how do keep this at a reasonable number? Right now it is not a major issue; however, we should have a policy before it becomes more of an issue. [Additional note: A special use permit may be a solution. This is required when the use involves a private activity that could affect the use by the public, including storage of personal equipment (IRP Section VIII A).]
- (2) A similar approach could work for storage of ice shacks; that is, require the owner to be identified. In this case, the IRP would also require prior authorization from the Bureau (IRP Part VII D, paragraph 19).

5. Potential conflicts between float planes and loon nests

Issue: Guides use float planes to land clients on Scraggly Lake to hike into Ireland Pond. This is also an important loon nursery area; float planes potentially cause stress to the loons on this waterbody, and could adversely affect young chicks. The Bureau has no authority to regulate use of float planes.

Options Discussed:

- (1) Monitor the timing and frequency of this use.
- (2) Work with any outfitter that flies into this area to ensure that loons are protected from disturbance during critical stages of nesting and fledging of the chicks.
- (3) Discourage use of this area by float planes by limiting connector trails between Scraggly Lake and Ireland Pond.

6. Special Protection Areas: Preserves and Exemplary Communities

Issue: Special Protection Areas are those areas that have significant values as exemplary plant communities, or are habitat for rare or endangered plant or animal species. The Maine Natural Areas Program inventoried this unit for these natural areas in 2007 and 2008, and identified three specific areas: the mature/ old growth hemlock stand in the northwest quadrant of the unit (a portion of which, including 80 acres, was set aside by the Bureau as a “forest preserve” (no timber harvest) in the 1988 Plan; an area along Mitchell Brook inlet; and the Sawtelle Brook complex. In addition, the Bureau set aside an area around Ireland Pond as a forest preserve (about 137 acres) in the 1988 Plan.

Options Discussed: The discussion primarily clarified that an area designated as an “exemplary community” by MNAP can be managed for timber if it is done in consultation with MNAP so as to preserve the values that make it exemplary. [Note: The plan will define how these areas are to be treated with respect to timber management]. In addition, designation for special protection will allow non-motorized recreation (none of these areas have existing motorized access).

Squapan Unit Issues and Proposed Options

1. Haystack Mountain/ Hiking Trails

Issue: While there has not been high interest in development of hiking trails on the Squapan unit, there is some potential to develop a non-motorized trail system that would connect the Squapan Unit, Aroostook State Park, and Haystack Mountain. Haystack Mountain is a Parks property that is managed under lease by the Town of Castle Hill, and affords panoramic views of the area. The Squapan Unit, with Squapan Mountain ridge, presently has no viewpoints because top is wooded. Some views might be created with limited clearing, however. Scott Thompson, Acting park Manager for the Aroostook State Park, expressed interest in pursuing an interconnected non-motorized trail system that might also include primitive camping opportunities.

Options Discussed:

- (1) Investigate a hiking trail that would connect Haystack Mountain with a hiking trail on the Squapan Unit – coordinate with the Town of Castle Hill and adjacent landowners in making this connection.
- (2) Work cooperatively with Aroostook State Park staff to investigate the feasibility of a non-motorized trail connecting the Squapan Unit and the State Park (which are about 7 miles apart although a trail would likely be longer due to terrain issues – especially wetlands) with possible primitive camping facilities at Squapan, for use by hikers, cross-country skiers and possibly mountain bikers.

2. ATV Trails – Request for Authorized Trail over Squapan Mountain

Issues: ATV interests have requested the Bureau designate the existing snowmobile trail over Squapan Mountain for ATV use as well. The trail is presently being used by some ATV’ers without authorization (it is shown on some local ATV Club maps) and is in poor condition, with drainage issues on the plateau at the top (fine muck in places with depressions that hold water), and serious erosion on the steep eastern slope (which is eroded down to ledge and loose rock). It would take a considerable investment to armor and stabilize the trail, and address the drainage issues. In addition, the trail is partially within an area identified in 1998 as a potential ecological reserve (see discussion under #3 below).

Options Discussed: The group as a whole had no problem with the concept of allowing the ATV trail to cross the mountain if the trail could be made suitable. The Bureau staff had discussed the impact of a properly maintained trail on ecological reserve values and purposes

with Maine Natural Areas Program staff, and concluded that the trail would not have a significant adverse effect if it were properly constructed and maintained (see discussion under # 3 below). Scott Ramsay (ORV Director) stated that the technology was there to address the issues; it would just be expensive. Techniques include use of several concrete precast units including concrete blocks and tri-loc blocks. [Note: pictures attached]. This can involve a lot of hand labor. Joe Wiley expressed that this trail ought to be engineered professionally. The question raised was who would be paying for this improvement; the clubs or the state? There is some possibility that grants available through the state RTP program and ORV program could be applied (the RTP program is on a competitive basis). Prior to moving ahead with any trail improvements, however, Bureau staff expressed that the ATV community would need to address the illegal use and remove any representation of the trail from the Club maps prior to committing any resources for this trail. The concern is that the trail should not be further damaged as efforts are marshaled to obtain funds and other resources for this project; and the local ATV Clubs need to show a commitment to working cooperatively with the Bureau.

3. Boat Access - need for reliable access at the north end of Squapan Lake.

Issues: The boat access provided at the Walker Siding location on the west side of the lake has been discontinued (it is a private facility). The only other access on this lake is at the dam in the SW end, which is out of the way for the major population served to the east. The south end of the lake is also shallower (it was built to raise the levels of a natural lake and created a long arm of relatively shallow water) and potentially problematic when water levels are drawn down. In addition, the main interest for fishing is in the north end, where there is a popular smelt fishery. The shoreland opposite Walker Siding is accessible with some improvement to existing Bureau roads, and could potentially be developed for boat access.

Options discussed:

- (1) Investigate the feasibility of developing a boat access site at the north end of the Squapan Unit. It was noted that Wisconsin Public Service, the FERC licensee for the dam, is currently conducting a recreational needs assessment (required every 6 years) and that they have a responsibility to provide adequate boat access. It was recommended that they be contacted to describe the need and request assistance for developing a new access site.
- (2) Continue to negotiate with the owners of the private facility at Walker Siding to see if there could be a resolution that would avoid redundant access sites.

4. Drive-to Camping Opportunities

Issue: There is interest in having camping sites that can be accessed by vehicle or ATV. Currently, the only camping sites designated are water access only. While camping is allowed on public reserved lands anywhere, campfires are allowed only at designated sites.

Options discussed:

- (1) If a new boat access is developed, develop some campsites near this (similar to the configuration at Scraggly Lake).

- (2) Consider developing ATV accessible sites that are off the ATV trails, including potentially sites on the water. Ideally the parking areas should be back away from the water, with a short walk to the camping area, and the parking areas would not be accessible by car or truck. Adirondack style shelters would make these more attractive to the ATV users.