

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
Bureau of Parks and Lands  
**Public Scoping Meeting – Tumbledown-Mount Blue Management Plan**  
UM Farmington Olsen Student Center  
January 28, 2020, 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

MEETING NOTES

1. Welcome and Introductions

Plan Coordinator: Jim Vogel, Senior Planner, Bureau of Parks and Lands

Other BPL Staff Present: Doug Reed, Deputy Director; Bruce Farnham, Mount Blue Park Manager; Liz Petruska, Chief Planner; Rex Turner, Outdoor Recreation Planner

Members of the Public: See attached list

2. Agenda

Jim reviewed the agenda and identified the objectives of the evening which included getting familiar with BPL's planning process; providing background on the lands in the Tumbledown-Mount Blue Management area; and providing an opportunity for public input on issues and interests in this area. Jim explained that this is the first management plan for the Tumbledown-Mount Blue unit, and that the unit is unique both because it includes Maine's largest state park and because the park is nearly as large as the public lands component.

3. Overview of BPL Planning Process and Plan Area

Jim provided background context on the planning process, including:

- a summary of Legislative directives related to management plans, which included highlighting the difference in planning requirements for State Parks and Public Lands;
- an overview of BPL's Integrated Resource Policy which provides key guidance on management planning and resource allocation; and
- an overview of the Management Planning Process which includes this Public Scoping Meeting, several Advisory Committee meetings, and a second Public Meeting to review the draft plan. Overall the process will take between 12-18 months. Around a dozen people have been asked to participate in the Advisory Committee, but all planning meetings are open to the public.
- Originally the planning period for all BPL plans was 10 years, but in 2007, this was changed to 15 years, with two plan reviews added to take place at years 5 and 10. These interim reviews provide an opportunity for BPL to update the community on activities and progress in meeting plan goals, and to discuss unforeseen issues that arise.
- Each management plan contains three sections: Vision Statement, Management Recommendations, and Resource Allocations.

- The Tumbledown – Mount Blue Plan Area includes 10,556 acres in Tumbledown Public Lands and 8,220 acres in Mount Blue State Park. The plan will also cover 167-acre Bald Mountain lot which was part of the Tumbledown lands acquisition.

#### Public Questions and Comments

- Does the IRP need updating to bring it into modern times?  
*Yes, it does need updating. This is on the Bureau's radar screen.*
- Why are you doing the plan now?  
*There has always been an interest and an intention to do a plan for this area, but plans have to be done for the entire state and with limited capacity we're just getting to it now.*
- What about hunting?  
*Hunting is included in Recreation, it's just not a use that is called out specifically.*

#### 4. Overview of Tumbledown Public Lands

Jim provided an overview of the Tumbledown Public Lands, including: key facts; pictures of natural and recreational resources including trails, scenic views, and management issues (such as unauthorized fire pits and resource impacts from camping); info from Maine Natural Areas program on Rare & Exemplary Features, and Important Wildlife Features from IF&W.

#### Public Questions and Comments

The following topics were brought up during the question and comment period:

- **Timber Management**

Questions from the public focused on how close harvesting would be to the pond, when harvesting would begin, and how the Bureau handles pest like the emerald ash borer.

*BPL responded that Timber Management areas are not set at this time. They will be determined through the planning process. Restrictions on high elevations areas will be considered. There is no timeline in place as to when harvesting will begin. Once it's decided where timber management can occur, BPL foresters will do a detailed review of stands and come up with prescriptions for management. These prescriptions may include harvesting and would be designed to respond to any threats, such as pests or disease. Harvesting will also be informed by visual considerations, which are particularly significant for this unit.*

- **Overuse**

Much of the conversation focused on questions and concerns about overuse, since Tumbledown has become a well-known day destination. The public wanted to know what BPL's plans are for being more of a presence and helping to alleviate some of the overuse pressure. Are there similar areas we could look to for ideas of how to address? Could use be limited on busy days, such as holidays? Maybe more trails on the eastern end of the unit would alleviate pressure. BPL should give greater consideration to the impact on the local community, especially as it relates to road maintenance.

*There is currently some presence on Tumbledown thanks to Mount Blue's seasonal staff. BPL has definitely been thinking about how to have more of a presence. There are plans in the works to put privies in. Other options can be discussed as part of the planning process and BPL looks forward to input from the Advisory Committee on this. It really is a unique place, especially where there is such a high and concentrated level of use for a fairly small area. There was a suggestion from the public about looking to places like Morse Mountain – which limits parking to 40 cars and does not allow shoulder parking – for helpful ideas. BPL does think about capacity when designing parking lots. BPL does not own the road and so has little control around those issues. As far as setting limits for busy days, it is something the Advisory Committee can consider, but they'll also have to consider how to set that up and how to enforce it.*

- **Wildlife**

There were specific questions as to whether Peregrine Falcons, Bats, and Bog lemmings were documented on the unit and whether any formal studies had been done.

*BPL will follow-up with Inland Fisheries & Wildlife on this. IF&W staff will participate in the planning process to help address these questions as they arise.*

- **Safety**

The public is concerned by some hikers' lack of common sense. Could messaging place more emphasis on trail difficulty and safety? Could a kiosk have information on current mountain top conditions? Representatives from the local fire department and EMS provided anecdotes about the frequency and cost of rescues, and dangers with people parking on the side of the road when the lot is full. This is a problem at Bald Mountain too where there's not an official parking area. Communications are tricky because it's remote. Could a LifeFlight landing zone and/or demarcated communications pullover be created? The ATV trail on the easement property is dangerous and difficult to get to. Will this be part of the planning process?

*BPL shares concerns about wanting to promote safe use of the land and is open to input on how to address these concerns, with the caveat that you can't regulate or control all inappropriate decisions. As far as issues with the ATV trail – the particular section discussed is on private lands, not the Tumbledown unit, but the ORV division will be an active participant in the planning process and can weigh-in on any issues in this area. BPL does not own the land currently being used for Bald Mountain parking.*

- **Mining and utilities**

Will any non-renewable resources be extracted from the property?

*It is common for BPL to extract gravel from its properties, but for the most part that is to maintain BPL's roads. There are no existing roads on the Tumbledown lands.*

- **Data Needs**

Related to the above topics, the public was interested in knowing whether there was data on (1) the number of users on the Tumbledown trails; (2) the water quality of the pond; (3) the number of rescues, the cost of a typical rescue, and the type or response (hiker, ATV, other); and (4) rare species occurrence

*BPL will try to incorporate this data into the management planning analysis.*

## 5. Overview of Mount Blue State Park

Jim provided an overview of Mount Blue State Park, including: key facts; pictures of natural and recreational resources including trails, scenic views, and wildlife; info from Maine Natural Areas program on Rare and Exemplary Features, and Important Wildlife Features from IF&W.

### Public Questions and Comments

The following topics were brought up during the question and comment period:

- **Communications**

Going forward BPL should consider the communications network for the Mount Blue tower and include the town and county in discussions about radio frequencies.

- **Glade Skiing**

The Granite Backcountry Alliance is interested in developing backcountry glade skiing opportunities in the state park. They have developed similar trails in NH and in Western Maine. They report it to be one of the fastest growing sports and think the park would be a good location. Trails would not be visible from public roads.

## 6. Closing Questions and Comments

- **Climate Change**

How does information on climate change effect BPL's management of forests?

*BPL is wrestling with this topic across the land base. Fortunately, a lot of our existing management strategies are already helping in the face of climate change. The plan will explicitly address this topic.*

- **Conservation Easements**

BPL-held Conservation Easements were depicted on the Management Area map. There were some questions about clarifying BPL's role in management versus monitoring.

*Conservation Easements properties are privately owned and as such are not managed by BPL. So they won't be incorporated into the management planning discussion like the Tumbledown and Mount Blue properties. Although not exactly the same, in general the four easements prevent development, require public access, and provide for sustainable management of the forest resources. The easement properties are monitored by BPL annually.*

- **Commercial Use/Economic Values**

Aside from timber, what other economic values might these lands provide? Will mining be permitted? Power lines? Solar panels? Drinking water extraction?

*As far as economic values, the plan will mostly consider forest products, and primarily for the Tumbledown parcel. Timber harvesting on parks is much more restrictive. There's increasing recognition of the recreation economy, but that's less direct. The only mining*

would be gravel extraction for use on BPL's roads. BPL does have water leases on another unit, but leases for that or utilities is not really part of the planning process. These requests are handled at the Departmental level as they arise. It's not really the role of the plan to address these topics.

- **Plan Process**

Will the list of Advisory Committee members be available to the public? Will comments from the scoping meeting be available? What is the timing of the next public meeting?

*BPL will put information about the Advisory Committee on the plan webpage. Anyone who leaves their email address will be notified of Advisory Committee meetings and can see the materials that come out of that. Advisory Committee meetings are open to the public. Advisory Committee members will receive notes from this Scoping meeting. The next public meeting for comments on the draft plan will probably be later this year.*

7. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:30 pm.

Attachments

Sign-in sheets