

## Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands --- Upper Kennebec Region Plan

### Summary of Scoping Comments

#### Public Scoping Meeting - 10/19/16

- How will Resource Allocations in Plan address scenic impact concerns related to wind power projects in the vicinity of Cold Stream Forest?
  - Jim reply: BPL comments on proposed wind projects (and has commented on wind test towers in the region) only as part of the DEP permitting process. There is no direct connection between the management plan, which addresses only public lands, and wind power project on private lands in the region, other than as regional context.
- Jeff Reardon (Trout Unlimited):
  - FERC relicensing process for Harris Dam (Indian Pond) included fisheries research showing the value of Cold Stream as a native fishery watershed. Fishery value needs to be recognized.
  - Keep remote areas remote; important to do so to keep invasive organisms and fish out of those ponds.
  - Need to keep 100 foot no-cut buffer on streams.
  - Would like to conduct chop-and-drop projects to add large woody debris and let stream side trees fall into stream for same purpose
  - BPL should reach out to campground maintainers
  - Canoe storage on ponds is a litter issue, not a crowding issue; have seen no more than 3 canoes on any pond even during peak use weekends.
    - Doug Denico, question for Jeff: what is BPL put 5 canoes on the Pond? Jeff: Suggest two models to implement at Cold Stream: 1-Baxter State Park model, where park provides boats for rent on remote ponds, 2-TNC model, Big Reed Pond preserve [need more info on this]
- More in-and-out traffic on paths to ponds (if boats had to be carried in) could expand path width
- Maple sap operation is a mess; hoses, fittings, etc. [determined that commenter was thinking of a non-BPL site, not Sandy Bay Unit]; replied that BPL regularly inspects operations on our lands
- Question if Sandy Bay abuts Penonscots; No -- several owners away
- Johnson Mountain Lot has two “heritage fishery” ponds [Wilson Hill Pond and Little Wilson Hill Pond, both on tributaries to Cold Stream; later research indicates that neither is designated by IF&W as a wild or native brook trout fishery, and only Little Wilson Hill Pond is identified as a brook trout fishery]

- Question: does Coburn lot include Mountain Pond 1 and 2? Response: No [both are brook trout ponds, but are ½ mile to the NE of Coburn lot]
- Jeff Reardon: Arctic Char and significant trout fishery are at Bald Mountain Pond [later research indicates that IF&W identifies a brook trout fishery there, but the only arctic char fishery in the Plan area is at Penobscot Lake, at the far north end]
- Question: Can the scoping presentation be emailed to people. Response: the presentation will be posted on the Plan webpage.
- Question: Is the Habitat Management Agreement available on the website? Response: Yes, it will be once it has been adopted.
- Question: What is the schedule for the HMA? Response: will be finalized relatively soon, fall or early winter
- Question: What is the status of transfer of the Kennebec Gorge lands from CMP? Would be great to come to state given adjacency to Cold Stream Forest. Response: Have no information as to that potential acquisition, is not currently in progress.
- Cold Stream needs to stay cold, a forest buffer is needed to maintain cold water temperatures.
- Comment voicing concern about Misery Ridge wind power project [a proposed project east of the Plan area, between US 201 and Moosehead Lake; only meteorological test towers have been installed; no permit application has been submitted to DEP]; how does that affect backcountry status of BPL lands? Response: Issue has not come up in any plans to date, so cannot say with certainty how potential backcountry allocation might be affected. May be no affect, but could depend on specifics of individual wind project (i.e., how visible from key viewpoint on the BPL lands?).
- What is timeline for the Plan process? Response: It generally takes 9 months to 1 year to complete the Plan process. Expect to have a Draft Plan ready by spring.

Written Comments received during 3 week period ending 11/11/16 (paraphrased key statements)

- Eliza Donoghue, Natural Resources Council of Maine, 10/19/16: 1 page letter attached to email, focused on Cold Stream Forest
  - It is our understanding that BPL has not entered into a Habitat Management Agreement (HMA) for high value deer wintering area and cold water fisheries habitat as required by the Land for Maine's Future program.
  - We urge the Bureau to negotiate the HMA with deference to MDIFW's established BMPs, such as limiting the harvest of trees and alteration of other vegetation within 100 feet of streams, prior to developing the Plan.

- Kaitlyn Bernard, Appalachian Mountain Club, 10/19/16: 2 page letter attached to email, focused on Cold Stream Forest
  - Impetus for acquisition project was protecting brook trout and deer habitat; those values should be prioritized in the management plan, particularly brook trout habitat as a “single exceptional resource” identified in the federal FLP and state LMF funding applications
  - Plan should maintain hike in access to remote ponds, while also allowing future habitat restoration activities
- Todd Towle, 10/19 and 10/21/16: emails focused on Cold Stream Forest
  - Every effort should be made to protect the wild brook trout within the Cold Stream watershed. Watershed provides some of the best habitat for brook trout in Maine...denying this fish the greatest protection possible would be short sighted.
  - Maintain foot access, it is low impact and maintenance; also protects the watershed from invasive species introductions.
  - Plan needs to be completed as soon as possible and not shelved
  - Habitat should be at the front of every decision; new roads will have a detrimental effect on deer yard protection
- Jon Lund, 11/5/16: email focused on Cold Stream Forest
  - Observed silting of backcountry ponds where streams enter, suggests usual regulations regarding cutting near streams are not sufficient to protect water quality
  - Urge that the 100 foot no-cut zone surrounding streams in the Cold Stream parcel be regarded as an absolute minimum and be expanded, where appropriate.
- David Hedrick, 11/7/16: email focused on Cold Stream
  - Cold Stream provides the primary spawning habitat for brook trout in the upper Kennebec River
    - plan should include a no-cut riparian buffer along all of the watercourses of at least 100 feet.
    - Bridges and culverts must be constructed to provide year-round fish passage up and down stream at all levels of water flow.
    - Consult with DIFW on fishing regulations
  - Road access to ponds and stream now difficult to access by motorized vehicle
    - Urge caution, easier access leads to non-native introductions, more trash and waster, over fishing; encourage BPL to leave remote ponds as foot access, prohibit stashing of watercraft
  - Potential wind power projects on Misery Ridge overlooking Cold Stream Forest
    - BPL should participate actively in review of permits through DEP to ensure protection of ecology and viewsheds at Cold Stream

- Steve Brooke, 11/8/16: email focused on Cold Stream (followed by hard copy)
  - Plan should begin with careful review of USDA Forest Legacy Program (FLP) and state Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) applications...commitments made to secure funding must be reflected in the plan, specifically protection of native brook trout habitat and deer wintering areas, also importance to Canada lynx.
  - The LMF application noted wild, native brook trout as the “single exceptional value” for LMF scoring and noted a need for improved management of riparian areas or improved timber harvest practices to protect brook trout habitat.
  - FLP application also identifies brook trout as an important non-forest value; initial concern about larger than traditional buffers was withdrawn...much of the buffer area had not historically been harvested due to difficult access, steep slopes and wetlands. Recommended 100 foot buffers were determined to be scientifically justified, important to the primary resources of brook trout and DWAs, and consistent with IF&W recommendations for other properties.
  - Important to maintain the remote ponds as remote to protect the exemplary fishery.
  - All bridges and culverts need to be surveyed and reviewed in light of new “normal” of weather events [e.g., more intense rain events].
  - Consider the importance of maintaining the riparian lands to promote the recruitment of large woody debris along ponds and streams; consider using chop-and-drop strategies in the short term.
- Jeff Reardon, Trout Unlimited, 11/11/16: letter (7 pp.) addressing Cold Stream Forest delivered by email, with 5 attachments
  - Brook Trout Habitat Values: Cold Stream represents one of the most intact and highest value watersheds for native brook trout in Maine.
  - Cold Stream Forest Project History: Protection of wild native brook trout habitat was the primary goal of the project partners.
  - From the earliest planning on this project, the project partners have intended to establish a 100 foot no-cut buffer to protect brook trout habitat.
  - DIFW and DACF have not completed the Habitat Management Agreement
  - Trout Unlimited’s primary concern for the development of the initial Management Plan for the Cold Stream Forest property is that the Plan include measures to protect brook trout habitat. Brook trout habitat protection should be the first priority over management for other values.
  - Other management issues:

- Management should be similar to the recent past, other than more focus in timber management on protecting and enhancing fish and wildlife habitat
- Maintain existing vehicle access to key areas on the property, but do not extend new roads into areas currently only accessible on foot.
- Maintain existing snowmobile and ATV trails, but avoid any impacts to fish or other important habitat. Discourage ATV access to remote ponds.
- Engage current maintainers of existing camping facilities in planning and possibly future maintenance. Address long-term use of favored sites and sites that may be too close to aquatic resources.
- Consider policies to allow but better manage the traditional storage of boats at ponds.
- Address potential for extension of Maine Huts and Trails trail, and possible hut, on/across lower end of unit, with focus on protecting fish and wildlife resources.