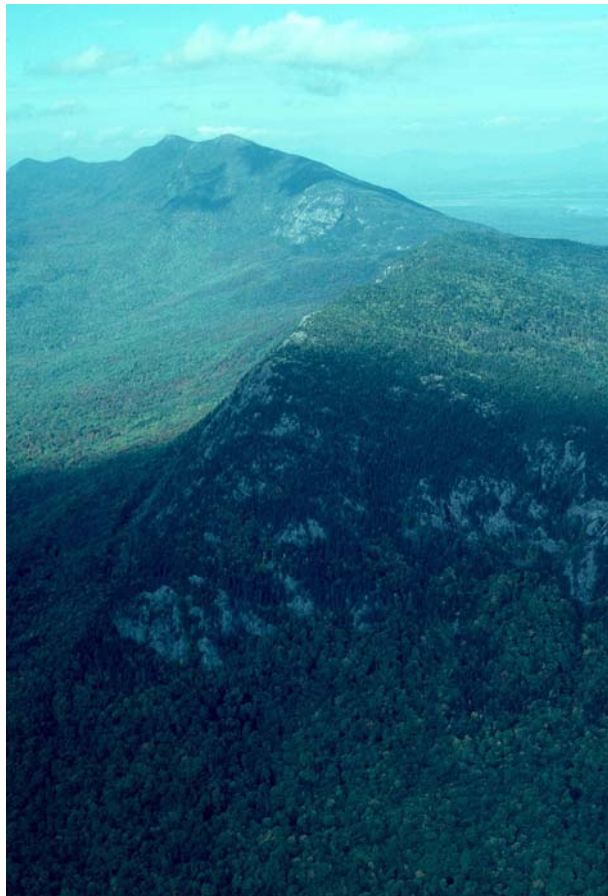


Flagstaff Region Management Plan



**Maine Department of Conservation
Bureau of Parks and Lands**



June 12, 2007

ADOPTION CITATION

In accordance with the provisions of 12 M.R.S.A. § 1847(2) and consistent with the Bureau of Parks and Lands Planning Policy and Integrated Resource Policy for Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands, State Parks, and State Historic Sites (revised December 18, 2000 and amended March 7, 2007), this Management Plan for the **Flagstaff Region** is hereby adopted.

RECOMMENDED: Willard R. Harris DATE: 6/11/07

Willard R. Harris
Director
Bureau of Parks and Lands

APPROVED: Patrick K. McGowan DATE: 6/12/07

Patrick K. McGowan
Commissioner
Department of Conservation

ADOPTED DATE: 6/12/07 REVISION DATE: 6/12/22

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- I. Technical Appendices – Forestry (to be supplied)
- J. Technical Appendices – Natural Resources Inventory (under Separate Cover)

Acknowledgements

The Flagstaff Region Management Plan was prepared through a collaborative effort involving contributions from the following Bureau of Parks and Lands staff:

Kathy Eickenberg – *Management Plan Coordinator-Draft and Final Plan*
John Titus - *Management Plan Coordinator- Preliminary Inventory and Assessment of Issues*
Cindy Bastey – *Chief Planner, Bureau of Parks and Lands*
Peter Smith – *Regional Manager, Public Reserved Lands Western Region*
Steve Swatling – *Bigelow Preserve Manager*
Tom Charles – *Chief of Silviculture, Bureau of Parks and Lands*
Joe Wiley – *IF&W Wildlife Biologist assigned to the Bureau of Parks and Lands*
Scott Ramsay – *Supervisor, Off-Road Vehicle Program of the Bureau of Parks and Lands*
Tom Desjardin – *Historic Sites Specialist*
George Powell – *Boating Facilities Director, Bureau of Parks and Lands*
Gena Denis – *Geographic Information System Coordinator*

In addition, much of the material in the Plan related to natural resources, especially Geology and Soils, Hydrology and Water Quality, Natural Communities, Wetlands, Ecological Processes, and Rare Plant and Animal Species was provided by the Maine Natural Areas Program, whose staff conducted a natural resource inventory for the Bureau and provided a detailed report, written by Brooke Wilkerson, which is included in this Plan (under separate cover) as Appendix J – Natural Resource Inventory of the Bureau of Parks and Lands Flagstaff Region.

Information about archaeological and historic resources information was also provided by Art Spiess at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission.

Partial Plan – Part A - through Overview in Part IV. Resources and Management Issues

Pages 1 - 35

I. Introduction

About This Document

This document constitutes a fifteen-year Management Plan (the Plan) for the Reserved Land properties in the Flagstaff Region managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (the Bureau). The Plan includes background information about the planning process and the regional context of the Plan, but the core of the Plan is a description of the character and resources in the Region, a Vision for the future of the public reserved lands in the Region, and management allocations and recommendations.

One objective of the Plan is to provide a balanced spectrum of opportunities across the Region, and in keeping with the opportunities and resources available in the broader surrounding Western Mountains Region. In developing the management recommendations for each parcel, the Bureau has been mindful of this broader perspective.

The Flagstaff Region Management Plan is a commitment to the public that the public reserved lands in this Region will be managed in accordance with the Bureau's mission and goals, and within prescribed mandates. Revisions to the Plan commitments will occur only after providing opportunities for public comment. The Management Plan will also serve as guidance to the Bureau staff. It will provide clear management objectives, while providing a degree of flexibility in achieving these objectives. It will not, however, be a plan of operations.

An important aspect of the management of public lands is monitoring commitments made in the plans, and evaluating the outcomes of management activities relative to overall objectives. This management plan describes monitoring and evaluation procedures for recreational use, wildlife management, management of Ecological Reserves, and timber management.

The fifteen-year duration for this Plan is a departure from Plans prepared in the past. The Bureau has recently amended its policy related to plan intervals as a result of changes in the planning process - plans are now being developed on a regional basis, with a more robust public process, which requires a more intensive and time consuming effort. In addition, a fifteen year interval aligns more closely to Bureau forest management plan prescriptions, and most other resource management concerns other than recreation. The Bureau recognizes that some resources and management issues, most notably recreation, may undergo more rapid or unanticipated change over time, potentially making it necessary to amend this Plan prior to the fifteen-year scheduled review. *Thus, in addition to the fifteen-year scheduled Plan revision, a review of current issues and progress on implementing the Plan's recommendations will be undertaken every five years, with a status report issued at that time to the Advisory Committee.* If amendments to the Plan are then proposed, there will be an opportunity for public review and comment prior to their adoption. At the fifteen year interval, the Bureau will undertake a comprehensive review of the Plan, including revised inventories and a full public review process, and will develop management objectives and recommendations for the ensuing fifteen year plan period. The Bureau recognizes that several of the stated objectives will require longer than the fifteen year Plan period to achieve.

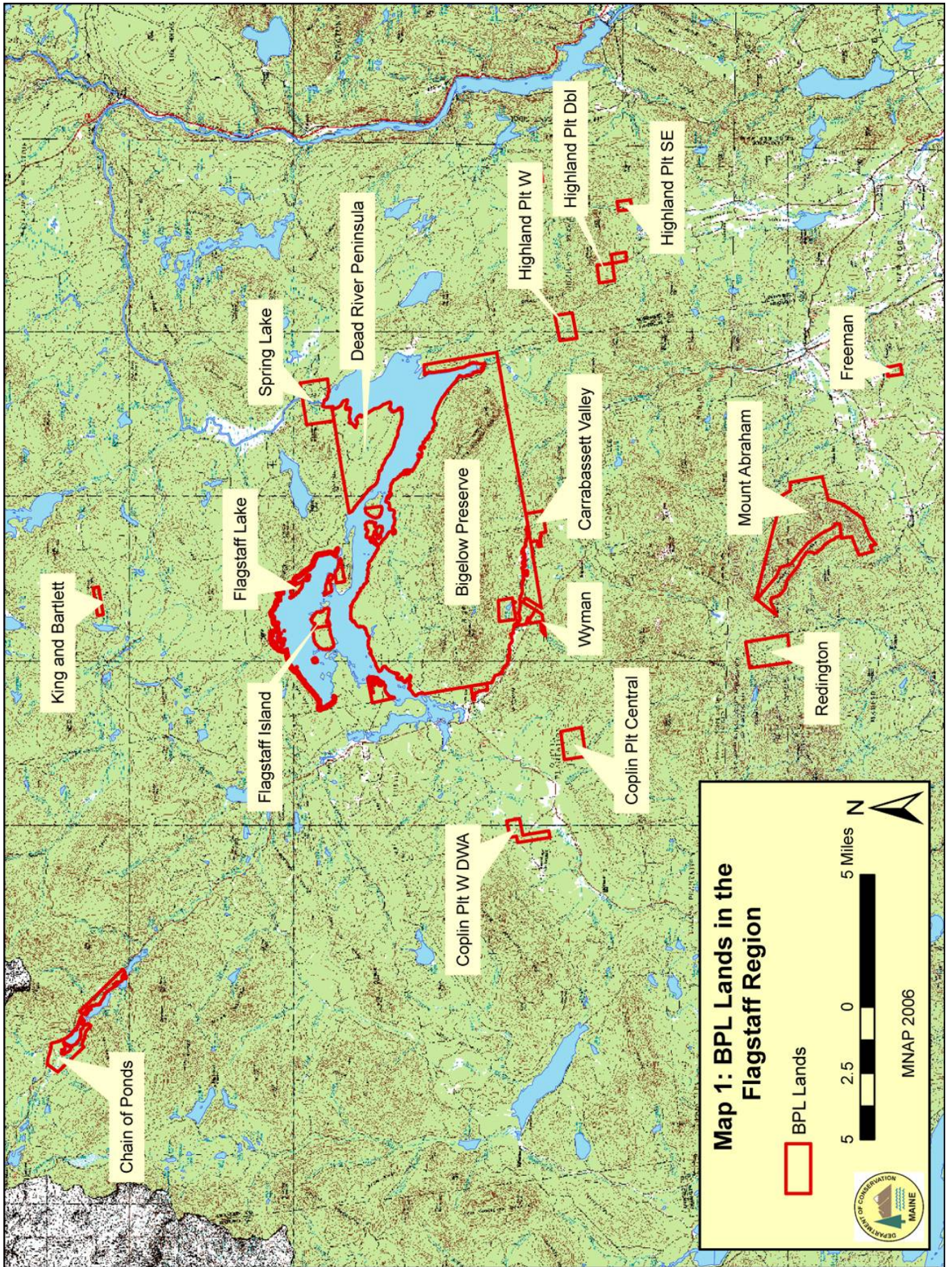
What Lands are Included in the Flagstaff Region?

The Flagstaff Region roughly encompasses the area north of Farmington to the Canadian border, and east of the Rangeley Lakes Region to the Kennebec River valley. It includes the following properties:

Bureau of Parks & Lands Property In the Flagstaff Region

	Acreage
Flagstaff Lake/Bigelow Properties	43,591
Bigelow Preserve	34,934
Carrabassett Valley Lot	413
Coplin Plt. Range Trail Trailhead	111
Dead River Peninsula	3,962
Islands in Dead River Township	306
Flagstaff Twp. (Myers Lodge)	290
Flagstaff Twp. (Original Pond shoreline)	974
Flagstaff Twp. (Flagstaff Island) ¹	530
Spring Lake Lot	993
Wyman Township-E. of Route 27	937
Wyman Township- W. of Route 27	141
Mt. Abraham	6,301
Chain of Ponds	982
Miscellaneous Public Lots	3,136
Coplin Plt. West Lot	398
Coplin Plt. Central Lot	562
Freeman Twp. Lot	122
Highland Plt. Double Lot	362
Highland Plt Southeast Lot	121
Highland Plt. West Lot	408
King and Bartlett Twp. Lot	143
Redington Twp Lot	1,020
Total	54,010
¹ Flagstaff Island includes an original public lot of 189 acres, and 341 acres acquired from Plum Creek as part of the Flagstaff Twp original pond shoreline.	

In addition, the Bureau has responsibility for monitoring compliance with a 9,182-acre conservation easement in Pierce Pond Township; this Plan will outline that responsibility as well as the Bureau's responsibility in preserving and interpreting the historic Arnold Trail where it passes through the Plan area.



II. The Planning Process

Statutory and Policy Guidance

Multiple use management plans are statutorily required for Public Reserved Lands pursuant to Title 12 MRSA § 1847 (2), and must be prepared in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the *Integrated Resource Policy* revised and adopted in December 2000 by the Bureau. These laws and policies direct the Bureau to identify and protect important natural, ecological, and historic attributes; enhance important fisheries and wildlife habitat; provide opportunities for a variety of quality outdoor recreation experiences; and provide a sustained yield of forest products by utilizing forest management techniques and silvicultural practices that enhance the forest environment.

Public Participation and the Planning Process

Overall, the development of Management Plans includes a series of steps, each involving interdisciplinary review, as well as extensive efforts to solicit and consider public comment, in order to achieve a Plan that integrates the various perspectives and needs while protecting and conserving the resources of the public reserved lands in the Flagstaff Region. In total six public meetings were held in the development of this Final Draft Plan, as described below.

Resource Assessments: The first phase of the planning process includes a thorough study of the resources and opportunities available on the Flagstaff Plan lands. Beginning in the summer of 2004, Bureau staff undertook an intensive review the natural and geological, historic and cultural, fisheries and wildlife, recreation, and timber and renewable resources. Much of this information was obtained by conducting formal inventories of specific resource areas (Natural Resource Inventory, Cultural Resource Inventory, etc.). Resource professionals from within the agency provided information on wildlife, recreation, and timber resources. Mapping and GIS-related information was also obtained as part of this phase.

Staff also participated in two reconnaissance field trips to the Plan Area to inventory and characterize the land-based resources and recreational features. The first trip was a summer road trip primarily looking at camping sites, snowmobile trails, boat access facilities, and roads; the second built on the first and utilized snowmobiles to review past harvests and their impacts on various resource allocations, inspect potential water access campsites and included a tour of the snowmobile trail system on the Bigelow Preserve and surrounding lands.

Issue Identification/Public Scoping Session: Another component of the planning process involved conducting a public meeting to determine and discuss management issues needing to be addressed by the Plan. This meeting was held in Farmington on March 29, 2005.

Advisory Committee Formation and Review of Preliminary Inventory and Assessment: In the fall of 2005 the Bureau compiled the resources and management issues identified as described above into a Preliminary Plan or Pre-Plan. At the same time a Public Advisory Committee was formed to review and discuss the Pre-Plan document on a more formal basis, and to provide input on the overall process for developing the Plan. Members of this Committee were selected on the basis of their resource expertise, and for their regional and local knowledge in areas important to the

management of the Flagstaff Region properties. A meeting to review the Preliminary Plan was held November 15, 2005.

Follow-up “Focus Meeting:” As needed, the Bureau holds special focus meeting to address a particular issue. Such a meeting was held February 16, 2006 to hear from the Friends of Bigelow and members of the public about concerns related to the Bigelow Preserve.

Advisory Committee Meetings on the Initial Draft Plan: The Initial Draft Plan, including a draft proposed Vision, proposed resource allocations, and proposed management recommendations, was reviewed by the Advisory Committee at a public meeting held February 27, 2007; a follow-up meeting on issues specific to the Bigelow Preserve was held March 29, 2007. Comments on the Initial Draft from the Advisory Committee and the public are included in the Appendices of this report and are reflected in this Final Draft Plan.

Public Meeting on the Final Draft Plan: The Final Draft Plan was presented and discussed at a public meeting on May 8, 2007.

Commissioner’s Review of the Final Proposed Plan, and Plan Adoption: Comments received on the Final Draft Plan were considered in preparing the Final Management Plan for review by the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands. Upon the Director’s recommendation, the Plan was then reviewed and approved of the Commissioner of the Department of Conservation, with formal adoption on June 12, 2007.

III. The Planning Context

Introduction

This section includes a summary of topics and issues that may have some influence upon decisions to be made in this Plan on how the Bureau will manage its lands during the next 15 years. Information is provided on:

- the character and resources of the surrounding region;
- recreational opportunities in the surrounding region;
- private-public initiatives related to recreation in the surrounding region;
- trends in recreational uses;
- conservation initiatives in the state and surrounding region;
- the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission license for the Flagstaff Project;
- how the Bureau lands were acquired, including any conditions imposed on the management of those lands, by deed or statute; and
- previous plans and the status of the Bureau's implementation of those plans.

For the purposes of this Plan, the "surrounding region" is defined to include, primarily, the area from Farmington to the Canadian border, and from the east side of the Rangeley Lakes area to the Kennebec River corridor, roughly corresponding to Franklin County and the portion of Somerset County westward from the Route 201 corridor.

The Character and Resources of the Surrounding Region

The Public Reserved Lands covered by this Plan lie within Maine's northern forest region, a largely undeveloped area that occupies approximately 8 million acres in the western mountains and northern half of the state, where population density is sparse and a large majority of towns are unincorporated (subject to the jurisdiction of the Maine Land Use Regulation Commission). The area is part of the broader northern forest region stretching from the Adirondacks in New York to the Canadian maritime provinces, which some call the largest undeveloped landscape east of the Mississippi.

The landscape of the region surrounding Flagstaff Region public reserved lands is characterized by broad valleys bounded by some of the highest mountains in the state. The region is highly scenic due to the steep mountainous terrain, with broad river valleys sweeping between the mountains from the Rangeley Lakes through the Dead River Valley and Flagstaff Lake. Alpine areas, including the unusually extensive areas on Mount Abraham and the Bigelow Range, now protected as Ecological Reserves, harbor rare plant and animal species, many of which are at the southern extent of their range. There is an abundance of lakes created both naturally (primarily through glaciation), and through dams constructed initially for log-drives, then for waterpower and hydropower water storage. Today, a number of the lakes, both natural and man-made, are actively manipulated for hydropower storage, subject to licenses from the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC). These include Flagstaff Lake and in the Rangeley Lakes system - Mooselookmeguntic Lake, the Richardson Lakes, Umbagog Lake, and Azischohos Lake.

Flagstaff Region Management Plan Regional Conservation Lands Context

April, 2007

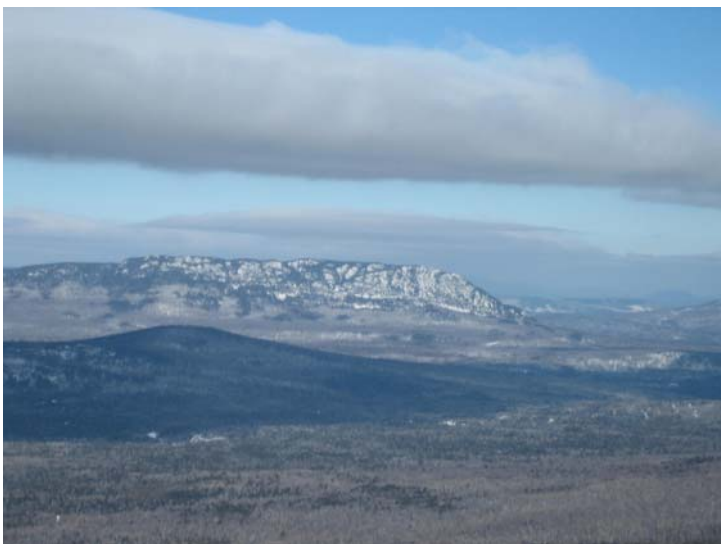


Two of Maine's largest rivers, the Kennebec River (into which all of the lands in this Plan flow), and the Androscoggin River have headwater streams and lakes in this region. Native brook trout are the keystone fish species found in this region, and they thrive where spawning and nursery habitats are abundant. IF&W Fishery Region D (Rangeley Lakes area, including all Flagstaff Plan properties) has 204 lakes that support principal fisheries for brook trout. Of these, 97, (47%) have never been stocked with hatchery trout, and are populated by wild brook trout only. Trout stocking programs support recreational fishing opportunities in many lakes and ponds that lack suitable habitat for natural reproduction, but provide good habitat for adult trout (107 lakes are stocked with brook trout in the Region). Water quality is good to excellent throughout the region.

The forest products industry has historically been an important aspect of the character, economy, and culture of the Flagstaff region. The region is extensively forested and has been actively managed for timber since the 1800's. According to Austin Cary's survey in 1895, of the 335 square miles in the Sandy and Carrabassett River drainages (the area draining the south side of the Bigelow Range and including Mount Abraham and many of the small lots covered by this Plan), only 15% of the total land remained uncut at the turn of the century (Cogbill 1998). While the intensity of harvesting has since varied across the region, there was a significant and widespread impact to the forest resources in the 1980's due to a spruce budworm outbreak and the extensive harvesting that followed.

Deer populations in the region are low as a result of this harvesting, which has limited the availability of mature softwood stands needed for winter cover. Bear and moose populations are thriving in this region, however, due the availability of preferred foods resulting from extensive harvesting.

There are relatively few state or county roads in the Flagstaff Plan area or the surrounding region, as shown on the attached Regional Map. The 82 mile section of the Appalachian Trail that stretches from Route 4 in Rangeley to the Kennebec River is crossed by only one state road – Route 27/16 just south of the Bigelow Preserve and one paved county road – Long Falls Dam Road east of the Bigelow Preserve. In addition, the Trail is crossed by a county maintained gravel road within the Bigelow Preserve (the East Flagstaff Road). However, since the late 1960's when use of the region's waterways for log runs ended, this vast forested area has been laced with a network of private logging roads which, in addition to forest management, are utilized for a variety of recreational pursuits such as hunting, and have also been incorporated into a number of managed backwoods recreational trail systems, notably for snowmobiling and ATV touring.

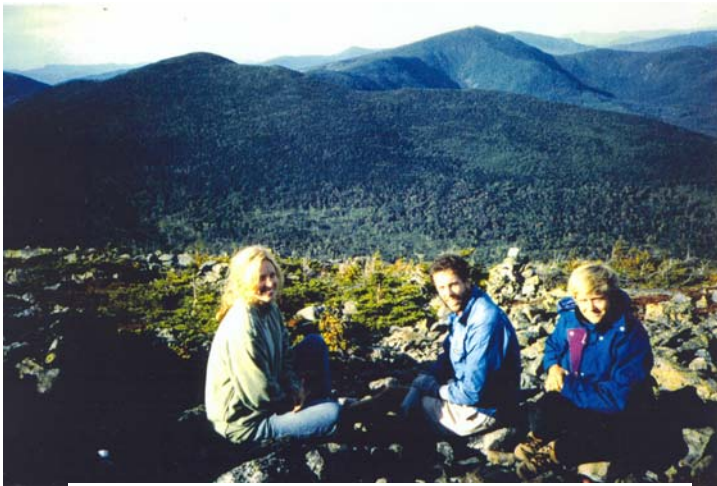


The Bigelow Range

A full spectrum of recreational opportunities exists in the region including hunting, hiking, mountain biking, wildlife watching and sightseeing, snowmobiling, snowshoeing, backcountry skiing, ATV touring, downhill and cross-country skiing, camping, fishing, canoeing, and whitewater boating. Not surprisingly, this region has developed into a major four-season recreational use area.

Some noteworthy recreational opportunities in the region include:

- Backcountry hiking and camping. The Appalachian Mountain Club publication “Maine Mountain Guide” (AMC 2005) characterizes this area as including an “important and outstanding cluster of 4,000-foot peaks.” This includes 10 of the state’s 4,000-foot peaks including Saddleback (two peaks), Abraham, Sugarloaf, Crocker (two peaks), Spaulding, Redington, and Bigelow (two peaks), reached through the towns of Rangeley, Stratton, Kingfield, and Phillips. Sugarloaf Mountain, at 4,250 feet, is Maine’s second highest mountain (aside from the subsidiary peaks at Katahdin).” A publication by the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC 2004), “Guide to the Appalachian Trail in Maine,” describes the 32 mile section of the Appalachian Trail between Routes 27 and 4 as “the most difficult along the AT in Maine, with the trail coming close to six 4,000-foot peaks and crossing three other peaks above 3,000 feet. This is classic mountain hiking featuring high peaks, deep valleys, open vistas, mountain ponds, and rock-strewn streams.” Mention is also



Views from atop Mount Abraham

made (AMC 2005) of “the isolated mountains north toward the Canadian border, reached by a network of logging roads and Route 27.” This refers to Kibby Mountain and Snow Mountain in the vicinity of the Bureau’s Chain of Ponds property. (Note: there is no comprehensive map of all hiking trails in the region, similar to the ATV and snowmobiling maps shown on adjacent pages).

- Whitewater boating. Timed flow releases from the two hydropower storage projects in this region provide exceptional whitewater boating opportunities on the Rapid River below the lower dam on the Richardson Lakes; on the Magalloway River below Aziscohos Lake; and on the Dead River below the Long Falls Dam at Flagstaff Lake. The Dead River trip is the longest continuous Class IV and V stretch of whitewater in the state and is a highly popular commercial whitewater rafting destination.
- Extended canoe touring/camping. One of the most scenic sections of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail runs through the Plan area. This trail is a 740-mile historic water trail through New York, Vermont, Quebec, New Hampshire, and Maine that traces water routes once traveled by Native American Indians and later by Europeans. In Maine the



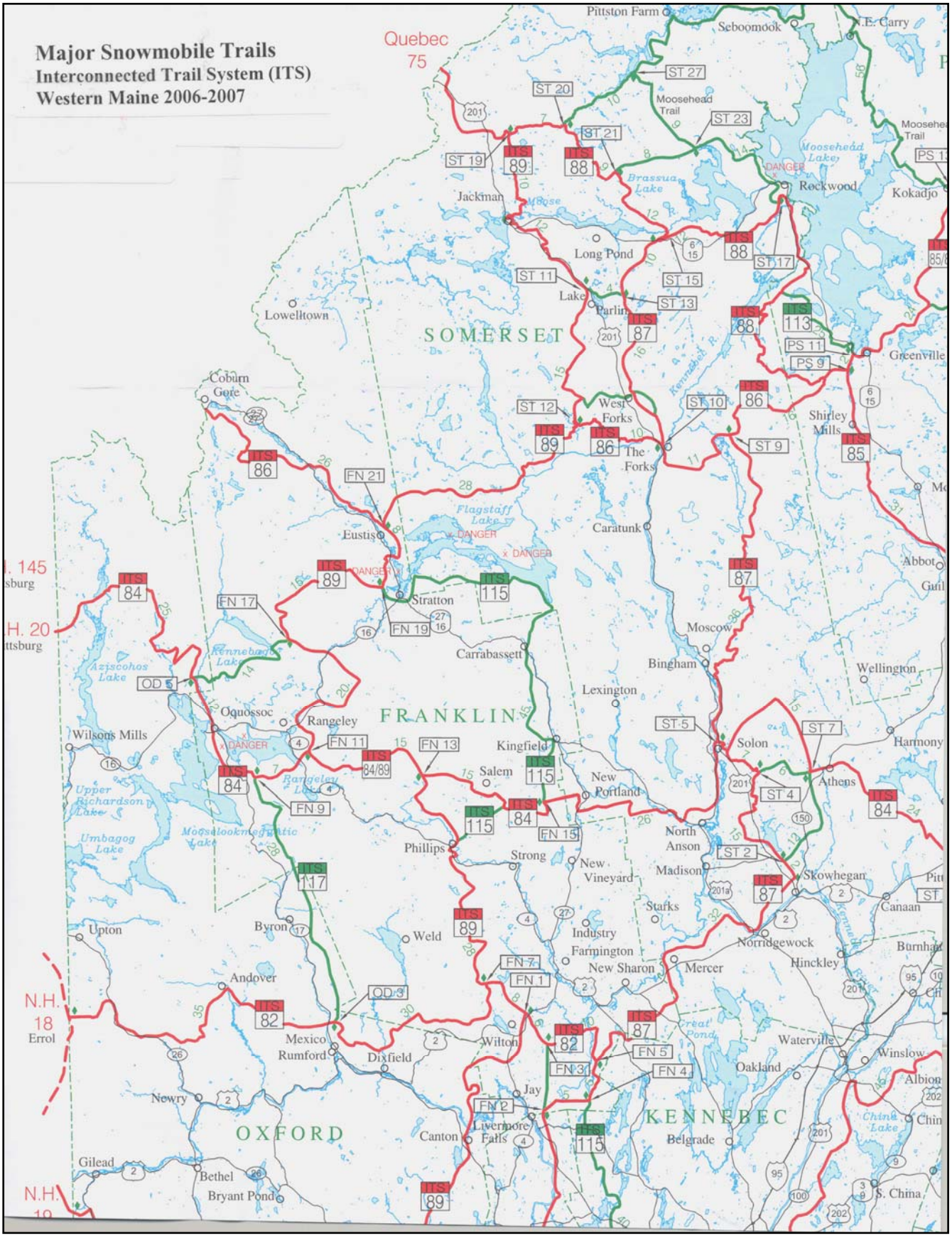
trail crosses a major divide in the Western Mountains region. Guides to this trail make note of this, advising that from the South Branch of the Dead River and north, the rivers flow northeasterly and are best traveled in this direction, while from the Rangeley Lakes, south, the reverse is true. In the Flagstaff Plan area the Northern Forest Canoe Trail follows the South Branch of the Dead River, Flagstaff Lake, and the Dead River north of Long Falls Dam.

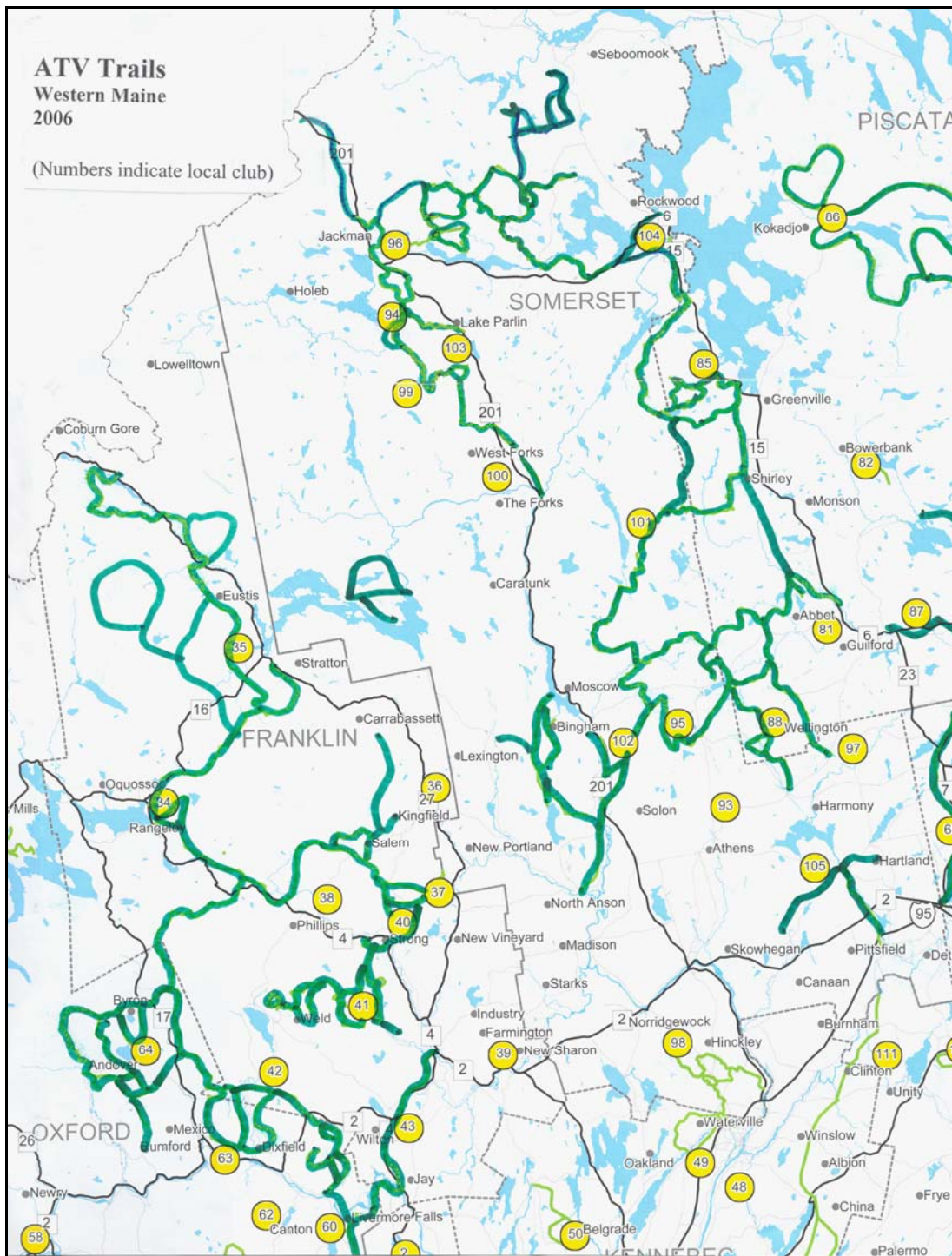
- Downhill and cross-country skiing. In the surrounding region there are two commercial downhill ski resorts – on Saddleback Mountain in Rangeley, and at Sugarloaf Mountain in Carrabassett Valley. Groomed cross-country ski trails are maintained at Sugarloaf and in the town of Rangeley.
- Snowmobiling. Both Rangeley and Stratton are major hubs for a highly popular interstate and international snowmobile trail that connects the northern forest snowmobile system in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine with Canadian trails. This system draws snowmobilers from the entire northeastern U.S., many of whom have camps in the area.



- Hunting, fishing, and wildlife watching: The 54,000 + acres of Public Reserved Lands covered by this Plan are available for hunting and access to adjacent public waters for fishing, except the developed recreation areas (drive-to camping areas, boat launch areas, etc.). Much of the surrounding commercial forested land is also open to hunting. Hunting for deer, moose, bear, and many small game animals and birds has been a traditional use in this large, undeveloped backwoods region. Touring the county roads and public access roads on the Public Reserved Lands is also a popular recreational activity.

**Major Snowmobile Trails
Interconnected Trail System (ITS)
Western Maine 2006-2007**





- ATVing. There is a rapid growth in interest in ATV riding statewide, and in this region. Increasingly, snowmobile trails and back woods roads are being developed for ATV use in the summer. A system of trails is now in place linking the Rangeley Lakes region to Stratton, and northward to the Chain of Ponds public reserved lands. Trails also extend from Rangeley to Farmington and back up to Carrabassett Valley. A link is being sought to connect Stratton and Carrabassett Valley to complete the loop.

Public Lands and Facilities in the Surrounding Region

The following lists the public lands, parks, and boat access facilities in the region including Franklin County and the portion of Somerset County west of the Route 201 corridor.

Other Bureau of Parks and Lands Properties in Franklin and Western Somerset Counties

Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands				Acres		
Cty	P/L	Name	Town	CE	Fee	Total
FR	L	Bald Mtn/Rangeley	Rangeley	0	1873	1873
FR	L	Dallas Plt Lots	Dallas Plt	0	439	439
FR	L	Davis C/U	Davis Twp	0	640	640
FR	L	Four Ponds	Twps D & E, Sandy River & Rangeley Plts	0	6018	6018
FR	L	Kennebec Highlands	New Sharon	0	363	363
FR	L	Rangeley Plt	Rangeley Plt	0	439	439
FR	L	Smalls Falls	Twp E	0	375	375
FR	L	Stetsontown	Stetsontown Twp	0	41	41
FR	L	Tumbledown/Mt Blue	Twp 6, Weld, Perkins Twp, Phillips	12030	10556	22586
SO	L	Caratunk Lots	Caratunk	0	1330	1330
SO	L	Dennistown Plt	Dennistown Plt	0	1000	1000
SO	L	FPL/Wyman Lake	Pleasant Ridge	0	740	740
SO	L	Holeb	Attean & Holeb Twps, T5R7 BKP WKR	0	20255	20255
SO	L	Johnson Mnt	Johnson Mnt	0	960	960
SO	L	Moose River S	Moose River	0	282	282
SO	L	Pleasant Ridge Plt	Pleasant Ridge Plt	0	187	187
SO	L	Sandy Bay	Sandy Bay Twp	0	2712	2712
SO	L	Solon	Solon	0	42	42
SO	L	Upper Enchanted Twp	Upper Enchanted Twp	0	320	320
SO	L	West Forks Plt Lots	West Forks Plt	0	1204	1204
SO	L	Yankee Woodlot	Skowhegan	0	238	238
Total				12,030	50,014	62,044

State Park Properties				Acres		
Cty	P/L	Name	Town	CE	Fee	Total
FR	P	Jay-Farmington Rail Trail	Jay, Wilton, Farmington	0	138	138
FR	P	Mount Blue State Parks	Weld Avon, Temple	0	8220	8220
FR	P	Rangeley Lake State Park	Rangeley, Rangeley Plt.	0	870	870
SO	P	Lake George Reg Park	Skowhegan, Canaan	0	352	352
SO	P	Moxie Falls	West Forks Plt	0	217	217
Total					9,796	9,796

**State Wildlife Management Areas in Franklin and Western Somerset Counties
Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife**

Cty	Name	Town	Acres	Recreation					
				Boat/ Canoe	Fur Trap	Ice Fish	Hunt	Inland Fish	Wildlife watch
FR	Chesterville	Chesterville	1340	C	Y	.	B, S, U, W	W	E, D, W
FR	Stump (Bauds) Pond	New Vineyard	40	C	Y	Y	B, S, U, W	W	E, D, M, W
SO	Black Brook Flowage	Pierce Pnd Twp	750	C	Y	.	B, S, U, W	C	E, D, W
SO	Fahi Pond	Embden	277	C	Y	Y	B, S, U, W	C, W	E, D, W
SO	Martin Stream	Fairfield	195	C	Y	Y	B, S, U, W	W	E, D, W
SO	Mercer Bog	Mercer	317	C	Y	Y	B, S, U, W	W	E, D, M, W

Total

Codes:

Boat/Canoe: C= Canoe

Fur Trap & Ice Fish: Y=Yes

Hunt: B=Big game; S= Small game; U=Upland game; W=Waterfowl

Inland Fish: W=Warm water species; C=Cold water species

Wildlife Watch: E=Eagles & osprey; D=Deer; W=Water birds; M=Moose

State Boat Launch Facilities in Franklin and Western Somerset Counties

Cty	Water Body	Municipality	Type	Owner
FR	LITTLE NORRIDGEWOCK STR	CHESTERVILLE	CI	DIFW
FR	SANDY RIVER	FARMINGTON	CI	DIFW
FR	RANGELEY LAKE	RANGELEY	TR	DOC
FR	QUIMBY POND	RANGELEY	CI	DIFW
FR	WEBB LAKE	WELD	TR	DOC
FR	EGYPT POND	CHESTERVILLE	CI	DOC
SO	CROCKER POND	DENNISTOWN PLT	TR	DIFW
SO	LITTLE BIG WOOD POND	DENNISTOWN PLT	TR	DIFW
SO	EMBDEN POND	EMBDEN	TR	DIFW
SO	FAHI POND	EMBDEN	CI	DIFW
FR	BAUDS (STUMP) POND	NEW VINEYARD	CI	DIFW
SO	WYMAN LAKE	PLEASANT RIDGE PLT	TR	DOC
SO	KENNEBEC RIVER	SKOWHEGAN	TR	DOT
SO	NORTH POND	SMITHFIELD	TR	DOC
SO	IRONBOUND POND	OLON	TR	DIFW
SO	ATTEAN POND	T5 R1 NBKP	TR	DOC
SO	HOLEB POND	T6 R1 NBKP	TR	DOC
SO	GRACE POND	UPPER ENCHANTED TWP	CI	DIFW

Municipal and Private Boat Launch Facilities in Franklin and Western Somerset Counties

Cty	Water Body	Municipality	Type	Owner
FR	CLEARWATER POND	INDUSTRY	TR	INDUSTRY
FR	MOOSELOOKMEGUNTIC LAKE	RANGELEY	TR	RANGELEY
FR	RANGELEY LAKE	RANGELEY	TR	RANGELEY
FR	RANGELEY LAKE	RANGELEY	TR	UNION WP CO
FR	PORTER LAKE	STRONG	TR	STRONG
FR	WILSON POND	WILTON	TR	WILTON
SO	WYMAN LAKE	CARATUNK	TR	CMP
SO	KENNEBEC RIVER	FAIRFIELD	TR	CMP
SO	WOOD POND	JACKMAN	TR	JACKMAN
SO	KENNEBEC RIVER	MADISON	TR	MADISON
SO	WESSERUNSETT LAKE	MADISON	TR	MADISON
SO	WYMAN LAKE	MOSCOW	TR	CMP
SO	KENNEBEC RIVER	NORRIDGEWOCK	TR	NORRIDGEWOCK
SO	LAKE GEORGE	SKOWHEGAN	CI	LAKE GEO CORP
SO	KENNEBEC RIVER	OLON	TR	CMP
SO	MOXIE POND	THE FORKS PLT	TR	THE FORKS PLT

Codes:

TR=Trailer boat launch. CI=Carry-in boat access

Trends in Recreation Use in the State and Region

State Parks: Day use to Maine State Parks increased from 1.75 day use visits in 1993 to 2.32 million visits in 2001, and declined thereafter. In 2006 estimated day use was 1.75 million visits. Camper nights at state park campgrounds followed a similar trend, increasing from 208,000 nights in 1993 to 253,000 in 2002, and then declining. Use in 2006 was 229,000 camper-nights. A decline in economic conditions after 2001 likely contributed to the decline in use that followed an eight-year increasing trend.

Snowmobile Registrations: In contrast, snowmobiling has increased as reflected in snowmobile registrations. The Maine Snowmobile Association reports registrations of 80,833 in 2001-2002 winter season, and over 100,000 in the 2004-2005 season. Registrations were down to 75,096 in the 2005-2006 season due to an abnormally warm winter with little snow.

All-Terrain Vehicle Registrations: Bureau records (kept by fiscal year beginning in July) show that ATV registrations are rising, from 45,337 in FY 2001 to 62,478 in FY 2006.

Appalachian Trail Use: The Appalachian Trail Conservancy keeps records of the number of hikers completing the full 2,000 mile hike from Springer Mountain Georgia to Mount Katahdin, Maine. This group represents a small portion of the people who use the Appalachian Trail each year. Overall, the number of people completing the AT has grown exponentially since the 1960's. Compiled by decade, there were only 37 hikers completing the trail in the decade of the 1960's, increasing to 1,407 in the 1980's and 3,272 in the 1990's. In 2000, more hike

completions were reported than in the first 40 years of records (1930's to 1970's). In recent years between 500 and 600 people complete the hike each year. In 2005 (most recent data for an entire year) there were 535 completions. In that year 217 hikers started the trip at Mount Katahdin, and 352 reached Mount Katahdin from a southern start, so as many as 569 may have passed through the Bigelow and Mount Abraham sections.

Public and Private Recreation and Eco-Tourism Initiatives

In the greater Western Mountains region, there are both public and private initiatives to develop additional recreational resources, and cultivate an eco-tourism economy to supplement the largely recreation and timber-based economy in the region. These efforts are likely to increase recreational opportunities in the region, and to attract more use to the region.

Maine Nature Tourism Initiative: In September 2004 the Maine Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) commissioned a study to assess Maine's opportunities in nature-based tourism. A nationally-known experiential tourism development consulting firm, FERMATA, Inc. worked with state agency representatives, members of various state level organizations, and stakeholders in three rural pilot areas, one of which was the Western Mountains region, an area that includes the Flagstaff Region. FERMATA, Inc. identified sites of interest for tourism itineraries. This information was collected in collaboration with the Maine Mountains Heritage Network. One of the recommendations for carrying this work forward was to "strengthen the appeal of the local region as a recreational destination with a rich cultural and natural history."

Growing Landowner/ATV Club Trail Network: The Bureau of Parks and Lands Off Road Vehicle Program supports the formation of local ATV clubs to work with private landowners to develop and steward ATV trails. This program has gained momentum as ATV use has increased during the past 5 years (see next section). In 2004, the Maine legislature passed a law that made it illegal to operate an ATV on another person's land without the permission of the landowner (12 M.R.S.A Section 13157-A Operation of ATVs). Many landowners quickly saw the benefits of working with clubs rather than individuals in working out agreements that allowed continued use of existing trails and development of new trails on their lands. The result has been a proliferation of clubs and club sponsored trails, aided by funds dedicated to ATV trails primarily from ATV registrations (over 90% of the funds available) and a portion of the gasoline tax revenues (less than 10% of the funds). In 2006 there were 40 ATV clubs within a 50-mile radius of Stratton (136 clubs statewide). Within the Western Mountains region, 32 clubs received trail grants in 2006 to help construct 1,109 miles of trails; and 5 municipalities have received grants for another 400 miles of trails. This illustrates how fast opportunities for this sport are growing, in response to an ever-increasing demand.

Western Mountains Foundation Proposed Hut to Hut Multi-Use Trail - A recreational trail and hut system has been proposed by the Western Mountains Foundation that would provide a continuous 180-mile trail from the Bethel-Newry area to the Moosehead Lake area. The first phase is centered on the northern end of the proposed system. It would be a four-season trail, for hiking, mountain biking, and cross-country skiing, and would include some water-based recreation opportunities. The trail will cross the southeast corner of the Bigelow Preserve, an issue which was heavily contested and in 2005 resolved in the 1st Special Session of the 122nd legislature by passage of Public Law Chapter 205, S.P. 49 – L.D. 143 which limits the crossing of the Preserve by the trail to one mile. North of the Preserve the trail will run in proximity to the east shoreline of Flagstaff Lake, then will travel northward towards the Moosehead region.



Map provided by Western Mountains Foundation; the location of the ski trail on the Preserve is only representative. The legislature has since limited this trail to a section less than one mile in length (see map in Section VII. Management Recommendations).

Conservation Initiatives

Maine Audubon - Wildland Conservation Areas - Western Mountains: The following is taken from the Maine Audubon website: Maine Audubon Society is working to locate the best areas for conservation, commercial forestry, and rural development in Maine's Northern Forest. Amidst the 15 million acres of Northern Forest in Maine, we have identified five Maine Wildland Conservation Areas (MWCAs) totaling 4.3 million acres that host the most valuable concentrations of ecological and recreational assets. Maine Audubon's goal is to secure a future for valuable ecological and recreational wildlands within each MWCA with conservation strategies that enhance local economies and lifestyles. Each MWCA will be designed to ensure the future integrity of large, undeveloped landscapes in Maine, to provide opportunities for extended remote recreation, and to mimic natural processes that we hope will sustain the biological diversity of the Northern Forest. In addition, local communities will be encouraged to broaden their base of economic support by drawing on the multiple resources and values found within each MWCA.

The Western Mountains MWCA includes Flagstaff Lake and the mountainous areas to the south and north, as well as much of the upper Moose River watershed and Attean Pond. . . Mt. Abraham, Bigelow, and Sugarloaf mountains are among the mountains included in this MWCA. The 35,000 acre Bigelow Preserve, encompassing many peaks of the Bigelow Mountain range, features a mosaic of wetlands, a 6-mile-long glacier-deposited esker (a long ridge of sand and gravel), and fragile arctic-alpine plant species. Hikers and climbers of Bigelow Mountain and Mt. Abraham can explore one of the few alpine-tundra plant communities in the eastern United States.

Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust – High Peaks Initiative: The Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT) was formed in June 2002 by a group of Mainers dedicated to the preservation of the natural qualities of the lands surrounding the Appalachian Trail in Maine. Following its campaign to acquire Mount Abraham and a portion of Saddleback Mountain, MATLT is embarking on a new initiative to research and document the ecological qualities of the entire Western Maine High Peaks Region. The MATLT website describes the region as follows: “The Western Maine High Peaks Region is the 203,400 acres roughly bounded by the communities of Rangeley, Phillips, Kingfield and Stratton. In this region, there are about 21,000 acres above 2700 feet. It is one of only three areas in Maine where the mountains rise above 4000 feet. The other two are the Mahoosuc Range and Baxter Park. Eight (8) of the fourteen (14) highest mountains in Maine are in this region (Sugarloaf, Crocker, South Crocker, Saddleback, Abraham, The Horn, Spaulding and Redington Peak.) These are all above 4000 feet. If one adds the Bigelow Range, across Route 27/16 from Sugarloaf, the region hosts ten (10) of the highest mountains (Avery Peak and West Peak added)). This area is comparable in size to Baxter Park but has 40% more area above 2700 feet.”

Northern Forest Alliance Wildlands Initiative: The Northern Forest Alliance proposes creating a system of Wildlands across the Northern Forest to maintain ecological balance, provide remote and wilderness recreation opportunities, and support the forest-based economy. Included is a Western Mountains Wildland that corresponds with the Maine Audubon Western Mountains Wildlands area.

Federal Energy Regulatory Commission License for the Flagstaff Project

The FERC license for the Long Falls Dam was issued originally in 1979 with an expiration date of December 31, 1997. In 1995 then owner Central Maine Power Company submitted its application for a license renewal to FERC. FERC cannot approve the license until the project is certified by the Maine DEP to be in compliance with the State and Federal water quality laws. DEP policy limits the amount of drawdowns on lakes to protect aquatic life. The current owner of the Project, Florida Power and Light, disagrees with DEP's policies, which it maintains are not applicable to artificially created lakes, and is currently challenging that policy in court (now before the Maine Supreme Court with a decision expected by mid-summer). DEP policy requires that in order for a water quality certificate to be issued that would allow a drawdown greater than DEP's aquatic life guidelines would allow, the applicant must submit a "Use Attainability Analysis" (UAA) showing the economic impacts of incremental drawdown levels on aquatic life and the project's economic viability. Both the DEP and the US EPA must agree on the way the analysis is conducted, and the resulting decision as to an allowable drawdown. If the Maine Supreme Court upholds the state, ongoing issues with the UAA could further delay a water quality certificate. FERC cannot force the state to act; it can only issue an annual extension to the 1979 license, which it has done for ten years to date. Given the complications described above, this holding pattern could continue for some time.

The License Application filed in 1995 (as modified by a revised minimum flow proposal submitted to Maine DEP in October, 2003) proposed the following measures that would affect recreation or wildlife resources on Flagstaff Lake or on the Dead River:

- Develop a cooperative recreational management plan with the Maine Department of Conservation for abutting applicant and state-owned lands around Flagstaff Lake that have shared recreational facilities.
- Release a minimum flow of not less than 200 cfs from Long Falls Dam, except during spring refill of the reservoir, when outflow would be limited to 100 cfs, and except when summer drawdown levels reach 4.5 feet below full pond, when outflow would be limited to inflow (natural runoff). Note that current licensed minimum flow is 50 cfs. Note also that Maine DEP, in a water quality certificate issued on November 14, 2003 (and later rescinded by the Board of Environmental Protection after challenges by the conservation community), would require minimum flows of 100 cfs even after the summer drawdown of 4.5 feet was reached.
- Limit the drawdown of Flagstaff Lake to 4.5 feet below full pond between June 1 and August 31; note that in the November 2003 DEP water quality certification (see previous bullet) winter drawdowns were limited to 24 feet, which would reduce the surface area of the lake from approximately 18,000 acres at full pond to approximately 6,000 acres. The current license allows full drawdown (36 feet).
- Implement a loon management program, including the placement of artificial loon nesting platforms and monitoring of loon productivity.
- Improve the Route 27 Maine DOT boat launch (this work was completed in 2001).
- Improve signs and parking area at the Myers Lodge camping area and the Big Eddy camping area.

- Provide access under the ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) to the Long Falls Dam picnic area.
- Conduct periodic assessments of recreational facilities use in accordance with FERC license requirements (see below).

The following is from the FERC Draft License for Long Falls Dam:

Within one year of the date of license issuance, which is on hold, FPL must file for FERC approval, after consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (Maine DIFW), Maine Department of Environmental Protection (Maine DEP), Maine Department of Conservation (Maine DOC), National Park Service (NPS), and the Maine State Historic Preservation Office, a Comprehensive Recreation and Land Management Plan to protect and enhance terrestrial resources, including the federally-listed bald eagle, and to enhance recreation resources.

The plan must include the following land management elements:

- (1) a provision for retaining the existing Flagstaff Project boundary up to an elevation of 1,150 feet U.S. Geological Survey datum to protect riparian habitat;
- (2) a proposal for including in the project boundary any additional lands needed for any recreational facilities required by this license;
- (3) identification of acceptable uses, such as timber harvest management and public access, for the buffer zone;
- (4) site-specific erosion and sediment control measures to be implemented during and after construction to minimize loss of the area's natural vegetation and provide for revegetation, stabilization, and landscaping of new construction areas and slopes affected by erosion; as well as other issues.

The plan shall include the following recreation elements:

- provisions to ensure continuation of public access to project recreation facilities for the duration of the license;
- a construction schedule, and associated costs, for any recreational enhancements required by this license;
- provisions for operation and maintenance of existing and new project recreation facilities and assessment of associated costs, including any maintenance agreements, and fees charged for public use;
- a discussion of how the needs of the disabled were considered in the planning and design of the recreation facilities; and
- detailed site plans for existing recreational facilities and preliminary site plans for recreational enhancements, including delineation of location relative to the project boundary.

FPL is to include with the plan an implementation schedule, documentation of consultation, copies of comments and recommendations on the completed plan after it has been prepared and provided to the consulted agencies, and specific descriptions of

how the consulted agencies' comments are accommodated by the plan. They are to allow a minimum of 30 days for the consulted agencies to comment and to make recommendations prior to filing the plan for Commission approval. If FPL does not adopt a recommendation, the filing must FPL's reasons based on project-specific information.

FERC reserves the right to make changes to the plan. The plan shall not be implemented until FPL is notified by FERC that the plan is approved. Upon FERC approval, FPL must implement the plan, including any changes required by FERC.

FPL must, after consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Maine Department of Conservation, Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, and National Park Service, monitor recreation use at the Flagstaff Project area to determine whether existing recreation facilities meet recreation needs.

During the term of the license, FPL must file a report with FERC on the monitoring results. The report shall include:

- (1) recreational use figures;
- (2) a discussion of the adequacy of the licensee's recreation facilities at the project site to meet recreation demand;
- (3) a description of the methodology used to collect all study data;
- (4) if there is a need for additional facilities, measures proposed by the licensee to accommodate recreation needs in the project area;
- (5) documentation of agency consultation and agency comments on the report after it has been prepared and provided to the agencies; and
- (6) specific descriptions of how the agencies' comments are accommodated by the report.



Acquisition History

The Bigelow Preserve: The Bigelow Preserve was established by public referendum (“An Act to Establish a Public Preserve in the Bigelow Mountain Area”, or “Bigelow Act”) in June of 1976 to “set aside land to be retained in its natural state for the use and enjoyment of the public.” The referendum was in response to a four-seasons resort that was proposed for the Bigelow Mountain area at that time (and included a ski area, marina, and accommodations for thousands, to be serviced by a proposed jetport north of the lake. The Bigelow Act provided for the long-term acquisition and management of approximately 40,000 acres of land, located on the southerly side of Flagstaff Lake and including the entirety of Bigelow and Little Bigelow Mountains. The Act also stated that the Preserve “shall include generally all land in Wyman and North One Half Township north of Stratton Brook Pond, and all land in Dead River Township south and east of Flagstaff Lake. All public lots within or contiguous to this area shall be included within the Bigelow Preserve.”

School, ministry, and settled minister lots were “reserved and located” in the unorganized townships of Bigelow (507 acres), Wyman Township (480 acres) and in Dead River Township (960 acres) during the 1840’s. The Wyman Lot was later conveyed in two separate transactions; Chapter 16 of the Resolves of 1971 authorized the Forest Commissioner to “convey certain lots of land in T4 R3 BKP WKR, Wyman Township,” consequently, 17 of the 480 acres were conveyed at that time, with the remaining 463 acres of the lot conveyed to J. M. Huber Corporation in 1976.

The first significant addition to the state’s ownership on Bigelow Mountain came in March of 1976 with a gift of 5,261 acres in Wyman Township from J. M. Huber Corporation. In 1978, with help from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund, the Bureau of Parks and Recreation acquired 8,465 acres in Dead River Township from the Flagstaff Corporation and Flagstaff Lodge Company, Inc., including most of the area from the lakeshore to the summits within the township. Responsibility for management of both parcels was transferred to the Bureau of Public Lands in 1982.

Subsequent acquisitions to the Preserve include:

- August 11, 1978 - 7 acres from Carl W. Demshar in Dead River Twp.
- February 2, 1982 - 5,275 acres from Hudson Pulp & Paper Company in Dead River Twp.
- October 16, 1989 - 4,274 acres from J. M. Huber Corporation in Wyman Twp.
- May 5, 1998 - 30 acres from Richard E. Fotter in Wyman Twp.

Other acquisitions of lands abutting the Preserve include:

- April 28, 1998 – 115 acres from Angee Brochu in Coplin Plt. (Range Trail trailhead)
- March 29, 1999 - 963 acres from Huber Resources in Wyman Twp. – part of a larger, 2,075-acre acquisition within the township; also included 397 acres in Carrabassett Valley. A portion of this subsequently conveyed to Gardner Land, Inc. in 2006.

Spring Lake Lot (T3 R4 BKP WKR -Spring Lake Township): This was an original Public Lot. Private and Special Law 1927, Chapter 113, made possible the private use of this lot; as a result,

Long Falls Dam was constructed in the late 1940's and early 1950's and portions of the townships were flowed, with Flagstaff Pond expanded to the much larger Flagstaff Lake. Islands in Dead River Township: The Bureau acquired its ownership of the islands in Dead River Township as part of the acquisition of lands from Hudson Pulp and Paper Company in 1982.

Dead River Peninsular: This included an original Public Lot. In 1978 the rest of the parcel was purchased from Diamond International.

Flagstaff Island: This included an original Public Lot on the eastern half; the western half was purchased from Plum Creek in 1999 as part of a larger acquisition.

Flagstaff Township northern shoreline of the original Flagstaff Pond: This was purchased from Plum Creek in 1999 as part of a larger acquisition.

Myers Lodge: This was an original Public Lot.

Mount Abraham Acquisition: In 2001, the Bureau completed the first phase of the Mount Abraham acquisition when it purchased 1,028 acres in Mt. Abram Twp. from Plum Creek Timberlands. A second phase included two parcels first acquired by the Appalachian Trail Conference (ATC), that were then given to the state in 2002. These parcels include 2,988 acres in Mt. Abram Twp., including most of the eastern and southern portions of the summit; and an adjoining 1,045-acre parcel in Salem Twp, along the southern portion of the mountain. These parcels were together deeded as an Ecological Reserve in order to protect the important natural communities that occur on the property. An easement on these parcels was also conveyed to The Nature Conservancy at the time the ATC acquired the property; the purpose of the easement is to ensure the protection of the Ecological Reserve. A fourth parcel (1,153) was acquired by the Bureau directly from the Mead/Westvaco Oxford Company in 2004, and includes the remaining summit area to the west and southwest. This acquisition was subject to a conservation easement held by the Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT) which requires the land to be accepted as an ecological reserve, prohibits motorized uses except in very narrow circumstances, and requires that the Management Plan be consistent with the conservation easement.

Chain of Ponds Acquisition: Most of the lands which comprise the Chain of Ponds public reserved lands were acquired from the Brown Company in 1978, as part of larger statewide land trade. An additional acquisition of 100 acres, along with a subsequent trade of 22 acres, took place in 1985 and 1986, brought the property to its present configuration.

Other Small Lots: Except for the Freeman Twp. Lot, which was tax acquired, these were all original Public Lots.

Previous Management Plans

Except for the Bigelow Preserve, no properties in the lands now incorporated in the Flagstaff Region Plan have ever had a management plan, although detailed Prescription Review and Multiple Use Coordination Reports have been completed on most of the parcels.

Bigelow Preserve Policy Issues/Guidelines: In 1981 a planning document was prepared and signed by the Commissioners of the Department of Conservation and the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife. Considered a policy framework document, it covered broad issues ranging from acquisition of lands and detailing the various agency responsibilities, to operational issues such as management of timber harvest roads and public access roads. It set forth a Wildlife Management Policy developed by IF&W, and included a history of agreements related to responsibilities for maintaining and adding to the Appalachian Trail. This document laid out future plans to be developed, including a Forest Management Plan, and a recreation management plan. The subsequent plans developed are described below.

Bigelow Preserve Forest Management Plan: In 1982 the Bureau adopted its first management plan for the lands acquired during the previous decade as authorized by the Bigelow Act.

1989 Bigelow Preserve Management Plan: In 1989 the Bureau adopted its second management plan, which addressed not only recreation, but the full array of multiple uses on the Preserve. This Plan, signed by the Commissioners of Conservation and Inland Fisheries and Wildlife, replaced the 1981 Policy document, and laid out a new agreement on “Management Structure” between IF&W and the Department of Conservation, whereby the Bureau of Public Lands was designated the lead agency. This new arrangement reflected two developments that had occurred following the 1981 Policy Issues and Guidelines for the Bigelow Preserve: the assignment of an IF&W wildlife biologist to the Bureau of Parks and Lands who would participate as a member of the planning team developing management plans for all Public Reserved Lands, and an overarching policy document for the management of Public Reserved Lands adopted in 1985 – the Integrated Resource Policy developed with multi-agency and public input.

Appendix C details the Bureau’s actions and progress in implementing the recommendations of the 1989 Bigelow Preserve Management Plan.

Summary of Planning Implications

1. The Flagstaff Region Plan public reserved lands lie in Maine's most mountainous area, in an area highly valued for its natural resources. The culture and economy of the area are historically linked to the forest resources and outdoor recreation.
2. The recreation opportunities on the public reserved lands in this region are part of a much larger landscape-level system connecting expansive mountain ranges and historic travel routes – including the nationally significant Appalachian Trail; the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, an interstate system of snowmobile trails, and a growing regional network of ATV trails.
3. New public and private initiatives to further develop the recreation-based economy, and to conserve the special natural areas in the Region are strong, and sometimes competing.
4. The overriding attraction of the area for recreationists is its undeveloped backcountry character and exceptional natural beauty. Careful stewardship is needed to protect these values while making the public lands available to enjoy.
5. There are many opportunities for development of public-private partnerships to further both conservation, and development and stewardship of recreational opportunities on the Bureau managed public reserved lands - including partnerships or cooperative agreements with the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC); Florida Power and Light; local snowmobile and ATV clubs, the Western Mountains Foundation, municipalities, and others. These collaborative relationships are essential to good stewardship of the public lands.

IV. Resources and Management Issues of the Flagstaff Region Plan

Overview

The description of the physical landscape, hydrology, and natural communities and ecology provided in this section is based on information provided by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) which compiled a natural resource inventory of the Flagstaff Region lands for the Bureau. That inventory was based, in part, on field work conducted in 2004 on the Bigelow Preserve, Wyman Township lots south of the Preserve, Dead River Peninsula, Myers Lodge lot, and Flagstaff Island. The MNAP report is provided as a separate appendix to this Plan.

The Physical Landscape: Geology and Soils: The Flagstaff region is underlain by folded and faulted sedimentary and igneous rock that represents the region's chaotic geologic history. The sedimentary rocks originated as layers of sand and mud in an ocean basin along the ancestral margin of North America between 450 and 400 million years ago. The period between 500 and 380 million years ago was tumultuous for the region as an ancient ocean basin closed through a series of collisions between

large and small plates that make up the earth's crust. As plates continued to collide, this ocean basin was uplifted, and in places, magma welled up beneath the earth's surface and cooled slowly there, forming the granite that today underlies the north slope of Bigelow and most of the Chain of Ponds. The heat of these molten intrusions, together with the tremendous pressures of the colliding crustal plates, metamorphosed the overlying ocean sediments into the erosion resistant stone that formed the mountains in this



area. Today, the summit of Mount Abraham is fractured, metamorphosed sandstone, while the top of Bigelow is metamorphosed mudstone. The bedrock and surficial geologic history of the Bigelow area is covered in detail in the previous Natural Resource Inventory (Caljouw 1981).

During the last glaciation (11,000 years ago), much of the landscape was cloaked in till, though pockets of other glacial deposits can be found in the region. Glacial Lake Bigelow was once where Flagstaff Lake is now, filling the basin 33 feet higher than current summer lake levels. This lake formed because a till deposit dammed the outlet near the present site of Long Falls Dam. Lake sediments accumulated during Lake Bigelow's tenure, and much of the land that was once under the lake now has a layer of thick clay sediments, while upland areas have more typical till deposits. Traces of glacial outwash deposits and eskers, including one along Stratton brook registered in 1980 by the Maine Critical Areas program (now Maine Natural Areas

Program), are also found in the region. Soils reflect this glacial heritage and tend to be very stony.

Hydrology: The Plan area is part of the Kennebec River drainage. While most of the region drains into the Dead River, a tributary that joins the Kennebec at the Forks, the southeastern portion of the Bigelow Preserve, and the southern parcels (including the Highland, Mt. Abraham, Redington, and Freeman public lots) drain into the Sandy and Carrabassett Rivers which join the Kennebec just a few miles from each other in Anson.

Flagstaff Lake, impounded in 1949 by Central Maine Power, covers 20,300 acres, being approximately 14 miles long and 6 miles at its widest point, with a maximum depth of 50 feet, and an average depth of 18 feet. The lake drains a total of 516 square miles.

The maximum reservoir drawdown is 35 feet. Normally, the lake is drawn down 20 to 25 feet in the spring and 10 to 15 feet in the fall (in advance of fall rains). Aquatic plants are generally confined to water depths of six feet or less; this puts them in the zone that fluctuates due to hydropower storage manipulations, and during the winter, exposes them to freezing and desiccation. Observations on other large, impounded lakes indicate that vegetation dynamics in dammed lakes are vastly different than in relatively undisturbed lakes (Don Cameron, MNAP).

Natural Communities and Ecology: The Flagstaff Region is within the Western Mountains Biophysical Region (McMahon 1990). The area is characterized by cool summer temperatures, low annual precipitation, and high snowfall, and the mountainous landscape is highly dissected by small, steep-sided streams. Stands of red spruce (*Picea rubens*) and balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) are common on ridgetops, and subalpine forest, which is made up almost exclusively of balsam fir, occurs at elevations greater than 2,500 feet. Sugar maple (*Acer saccharum*), yellow birch (*Betula alleghaniensis*), and beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) are common in the valleys. Woody species richness is low compared with other Biophysical Regions.

Encompassed within the over 54,000 acres of public reserved lands covered in this Plan are many of the important ecological features of the surrounding region, including hardwood and softwood forests along elevational gradients; large, intact wetlands; and alpine summits.

The vast majority of the land area is upland forest. Compared with private lands in the region, BPL lands support a significant component of mature and late successional forests.

Wetlands constitute 6.5% of the total land area. This includes 1,850 of forested wetlands and 1,658 acres of open wetland (non-forested, such as marshes). Most of the open wetlands occur around or near Flagstaff Lake, though significant open wetlands also occur south of the Bigelow range, along Stratton Brook.

Nearly as many acres are above 2,700 feet in elevation as are in



the low lying wetlands. High elevation areas constitute 5.75% of the total land area in this region. Of particular interest are the alpine communities found in the region, two of which, on Bigelow Mountain and Mount Abraham, are now part of Maine's system of ecological reserves. Many plant and animal species reach the southern limits of their range in Maine's alpine and sub-alpine zones. Those that can live in this harsh environment often adopt unique strategies to survive, including the ability to conserve water in the drying winds and to tolerate very cold temperatures. As a result, these areas tend to be hotspots for rare or uncommon species, including animals such as rock voles and Bicknell's thrush and plants such as Lapland diapensia.

Wildlife Resources: The Flagstaff Plan area encompasses a wide range of fisheries and wildlife habitats, with its many high mountains, lowland valleys, rivers, streams and wetlands. The area is home to deer, moose, black bear, bobcats, beaver, grouse, woodcock, and various species of ducks, geese, and birds, including species that require large unfragmented forests. This area has the lowest density of bald eagles in the state (bald eagles are listed as Threatened by Inland Fisheries and Wildlife). Eagles are, however, slowly colonizing this region from the south and east. Three bald eagle nest sites are active along the shoreline of Flagstaff Lake. A number of species of special concern are found in the region, including wood turtles, rock voles, and Bicknell's thrush.

Summary of Wetland and Wildlife Habitat Areas

PL Public Reserved Lands	Total Acreage	Forested Wetland Acreage	Open Wetland Acreage	Wading Bird Habitat (ac)	Deer Wintering Areas (ac)	Acres > 2,700 feet elevation
Bigelow/Flagstaff	43,591	1,645	1,510	1,729	90	3,113
Bigelow	34,934	1,161	1,056	1,232	0	3,113
Dead River Peninsula	3,962	295	166	236	0	0
Spring Lake	993	34	43	0	90	0
Flagstaff-Myers Lodg	290	120	43	79	0	0
Flagstaff Island	530	0	14	0	0	0
Flagstaff Lake Shore	974	23	156	102	0	0
Coplin Trailhead	112					
Wyman	1,078	15	28	80	0	0
Carrabassett Valley	413					
Mt. Abraham	6,301	0	0	0	0	3,124
Chain of Ponds	982	20	112	180	0	0
Miscellaneous Lots						
Coplin West	398	140	29	70	302	0
Coplin Central	562	0	0	0	0	0
Highland Double	362	0	0	0	0	0
Highland Southeast	121	0	0	0	0	0
Highland West	408	7	7	0	0	0
Freeman	122	0	4	0	0	0
King and Bartlett	143	0	0	0	0	0
Redington	1,020	0	0	0	0	49
Total	54,010	1,850	1,658	1,979	392	6,286

Forest Resources: Approximately 85% of the actively managed forests in the properties covered in this Plan are within the Bigelow Preserve and the Dead River/Spring Lake properties. With the exception of the Redington Public Lot, the properties all have similar conditions. Because the Plan area lies mostly in the mountainous area of Franklin and Somerset Counties, with some lots in gentler terrain, soil drainage classes cover the full range from excessive to poor. The area is also rich in well-drained and moderately well drained soils where fertility is generally high enough for growing quality hardwoods on most acres. Wet soils comprise a small portion of the forest; excessively drained soils are found mainly near the north shore of Flagstaff Lake, often holding a significant pine (white and some red) component.

The table below shows the average standing timber volumes on Bureau lands compared to other lands statewide, and for the Bureau lands in the Flagstaff Plan area compared to the average for Somerset and Franklin Counties. This is a reflection of the Bureau’s multiple use management, and the Bureau’s objective of managing for quality large sized trees.

Timberland Volumes per Acre			
	<i>All Regulated Acres</i>	<i>Flagstaff Plan Area</i>	
Bureau Lands only*	20.93 cords/acre	24.32 cords/acre	
	<i>Statewide**</i>	<i>Somerset County</i>	<i>Franklin County</i>
All Lands	14.54 cords/acre	13.83 cords/acre	13.88 cords/acre

* 1999 Bureau inventory, reworked volumes.

** "Statewide" is limited to the seven northerly "regions" used for the inventory developed by the US Forest Service, omitting the Capitol and Casco Bay regions. Data is from the 1995 report.



View of Bigelow Mountain
North Slope

Recreation Resources

Recreational opportunities on the Flagstaff Region Plan properties are wide-ranging, including hiking, camping, canoeing, fishing, hunting, mountain biking, nature walks/birding/photography, and ATV touring in the summer; and snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and dog sledding in the winter. There is also incidental use of the timber management roads for horseback riding. These properties are highly scenic, and draw day users and recreationists with primary destination including the Bigelow Preserve and the surrounding Flagstaff Lake properties; Mount Abraham, and the Chain of Ponds. In addition, a number of recreationists pass through on one of the area’s regional trail systems – hikers on the Appalachian Trail, canoeists on the Northern Forest Canoe Trail, and snowmobilers on the interstate and international snowmobile trails. An active ATV community in the region has worked to provide a system of trails that link many of the public lands, and there is a growing interest in backcountry ATV touring and camping. Overall, the draw of this area for most recreationists is its “wild and scenic” character.

Not all of these opportunities occur on every property in the Flagstaff Region Plan properties. Motorized uses in the Bigelow Preserve are limited to snowmobiling on designated trails, and vehicular the use of public use roads designated at the time the Bigelow Act became law. Uses on Mount Abraham are similarly limited due the fragile ecology, with much of the mountain designated as an ecological reserve. A snowmobile and ATV trail system does pass through the Mount Abraham parcel, including a small stretch on the southern tip of the ecological reserve (which must be relocated if feasible), and following the management road on the non-ecoreserve portion.



Boating opportunities within the Plan area exist on Flagstaff Lake and the Chain of Ponds. Boat access to Flagstaff Lake is limited. The only designated boat access site on the Bigelow Preserve is a hand carry site at Round Barn; this site is also made available for trailered boat access during the fall waterfowl hunting season, a use that pre-existed the Bigelow Act. There are other designated boat access sites on Flagstaff Lake located outside of the Preserve, mostly as a result of the Federal Energy Regulation Commission (FERC) hydro license issued to Florida Power and Light (FPL). One is a concrete-planked trailerable site located on the South Branch of the Dead River in Stratton, on property owned by the State through the Boating Facilities Division of the Bureau. The Division has a 30-year lease with the Town of Stratton for maintenance and management of the site, for which FPL provides assistance. FPL also provides maintenance for two other sites on the east side of the lake, one of which abuts the Preserve at Bog Brook. There are a number of private camps at this location, with parking being very limited. The other site is located near the dam on the Spring Lake lot.

On the Chain of Ponds, hand carry boat access is provided at 2 of the ponds on public reserved lands, and a new, trailerable boat access ramp is being constructed on Natanis Pond.



Flagstaff Lake –boaters’ view of Bigelow Mountain (BPL photo)

Historic and Cultural Resources

Native American Prehistory: The history of the Flagstaff Plan area dates back to its earliest use by Native Americans following the retreat of the glacier about 10,000 years ago.

Arnold Trail Historic District: In 1775 Washington dispatched Benedict Arnold and an army of 1100 soldiers up the Kennebec River to Quebec to launch a surprise attack in an attempt to overthrow British rule in Canada – in the hopes of turning the tide of the Revolutionary War. Arnold lead his colonial militia along an ancient Indian route from the Kennebec River, along the Dead River and into Canada, enduring tremendous hardships along the way, particularly on the northward trek from Bigelow Mountain to the Canadian border. The historic trail followed the watercourse along what is known as the Great Carrying Place, roughly over what is now the Appalachian Trail. The route continued along the Dead River in what is now Flagstaff Lake, then along the North Branch of the Dead River into the Chain of Ponds. The route continued northward along Horseshoe Stream. When the expedition reached Canada, the watercourse became obscured, and Arnold’s army became separated. Many turned back at this point, many others died of starvation and exposure. A small contingent ultimately made it to Quebec, where the expedition came to an end when the attack on the British proved unsuccessful.

The Maine Historic Preservation Commission has filed an application to have the Trail included in the American Battlefield Protection Program, which would provide additional protections along the corridor. The Arnold Expedition Historical Society and the Kennebec-Chaudiere International Corridor have also worked on developing interpretive resources along the trail.

Lumbering in the Flagstaff Region: About thirty years after the Arnold expedition, a lumbering venture established a settlement on the Dead River, named Flagstaff after the flagpole allegedly erected by the Arnold expedition. In 1835 the Dead River Company was granted by the legislature (Private and Special Acts of Maine 1835 pp 858-859) “the right to clear the Dead River of obstructions.... And may for that purpose break jams [sic] blast and split rocks, remove logs, gravel beds . . . and may erect, build and keep in repair guide booms and side dams.” In 1843 the legislature authorized a dam on the Dead River, and on July 15, 1844 its construction was noticed in the Portland Advertiser (Wood, 1971). According to the sixth U.S. Census, in 1840, the area had numerous sawmills, though in the Dead River drainage only one town had sawmills-with two in Eustis; while in the Sandy and Carrabassett drainages there were many more - two in Kingfield, one in Lexington Twp, three in Madrid, two in Philips, one in Salem Twp, one in Freeman Twp, three in New Portland, four in Weld, three in Avon, three in Strong, six in Farmington, three in Industry, and ten others west and south of Farmington in Franklin County (Wood, 1971).

Large scale lumbering in the upper reaches of the Sandy and Carrabassett Rivers began later than in the Dead River drainage.

Early History of Settlements in the Flagstaff Area:

Settlement of the Flagstaff area did not occur until the early 1800's. By 1890, census figures showed the following settlements and populations: This area, as historically, remains very sparsely populated.

	POPULATION	
	1890	2000
Bigelow Plt	62	0 (last census 1930, pop. 39)
Chain of Ponds	7	0 (last census, 1890)
T4R2 (Carrabassett Valley)	9	399
Carrying Place Plt	31	0 (last census 1950, pop. 30)
Coplin Plt	71	135
Dead River Plt	104	0 (last census 1950, pop. 1)
Eustis	321	685
Flagstaff Plt	87	0 (last census 1940, pop. 143)
Freeman	464	0 (last census 1950, pop. 185)
Highland Plt	76	52
Kingfield	601	1,103
Madrid	441	173
Mount Abram	3	0 (last census 1900, pop. 4)
Redington	28	0 (last census 1930, pop. 14)
Salem	218	0 (last census 1950, pop. 67)
T4R3 (Wyman Twp)	25	70

History of Flagstaff Lake: In 1923, a Private and Special Law was enacted by the Maine Legislature (later amended in 1927), giving approval for construction of a dam on the Long Falls portion of the Dead River in Spring Lake Township. Water rights to the 1150' contour were also granted at that time. In 1940, CMP acquired the necessary lease from State in accordance with the 1927 legislation, and in the years that followed the villages of Flagstaff, Dead River, and Bigelow were vacated and flooded. The dam was built and the impoundment known as Flagstaff Lake created in the fall of 1949, although construction was not completed until the following year. As a result of this impoundment, full pond now reaches to the 1146 foot elevation contour.

During low water conditions, remnants of the three villages displaced by dam may be visible. Dead River Plantation was located on what is now the southeastern shore of the lake, while the villages of Bigelow and Flagstaff surrounded what is now the small channel of water that leads to the upper portion of Flagstaff Lake (in what was formerly Flagstaff Pond). Bigelow Plantation was south of the old river course, while Flagstaff Plantation was on the north shore.

Duluth "Dude" Wing grew up in the village of Flagstaff and remembered fondly:

"... the little town of Flagstaff was unique in that everybody knew everyone else ... it was a nice quiet little town. There was only one industry- the Harry Bryant Mill (a birch mill) - it was on a millpond right on the village - the mill supplied power to us..."

At times, the villagers had to ration the supply of electricity for special events:

"Well, at school we had a lot of lights in the gymnasium. And if you had a basketball game scheduled that night, then the people in town shut off all their lights..."

