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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
BUREAU OF PARKS AND LANDS
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AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

Date: January 9, 2020

To: Eastern Interior Region / Amherst Mountains Community Forest Plan Advisory Committee Members

From: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands

Re: 2nd Five-Year Review and Update of the Eastern Interior Region and Amherst Mountain Community Forest Management Plans; Management Plan for Orient Unit Acquired in 2016

Enclosed are the Advisory Committee comments on the 2019 Five-Year Review of the 2009 Eastern Interior Region Management Plan and the responses to those comments by the Bureau of Parks and Lands. (As outlined below, this review also addressed the 2010 Amherst Mountains Community Forest (AMCF) Management Plan. The AMCF is managed as part of the Eastern Interior Region, and thus the reviews were conducted in the same time frame.) This memo and the enclosure will serve as the Final Report on the Five-Year Reviews.

The Bureau emailed its 2019 Five-Year report for the Eastern Interior Region Plan to the Advisory Committee on September 5, 2019, requesting comments on the report. The Bureau identified one new issue that was not addressed in the Plan: The Bureau's March 2016 acquisition of nearly 6,000 acres of fee property and a conservation easement on nearly 1,500 acres of nearby working forest land in the Town of Orient (the East Grand/Orient Project). The Five-Year report for the AMCF Plan was emailed to Advisory Committee members on October 3, 2019, with a similar request for comments.

A follow-up memo sent to the committee on October 10 requested comments on two proposed recreational facility improvements that were not included in the initial Eastern Interior Region report – a hiking trail at the Duck Lake Unit and ATV bridge at the Bradley Unit.

The Bureau received written comments on the Five-Year report from five Eastern Interior Advisory Committee members and one non-member and takes particular note of the following:

- Keg Lake Lot Road Access and Road Conditions; Carry-in Boat Access: As a result of the Committee member's comments (which were similar to those submitted for the first review in 2015), the Final Report brings up to date the Bureau's discussions with the community of Lakeville regarding boat access at Keg Lake and actions that will be taken to improve hand-carry boat access to Keg Lake. The report also clarifies the current status of road access to the Keg Lake Lot, the Bureau's plans for a swap of rights-of-way with the town, and the potential for road work on the lot, depending on what funding may become available.

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- Access to Lakeville Lots and Town of Lakeville Role in Management of Lots: In response to a Committee member question, the Final Report provides a clarification of the Bureau's sole responsibility for road and access maintenance on the public lots (regardless of shared stumpage proceeds), and an update on an access agreement for the Upper Dobsis Lot.
- Duck Lake Unit Gassabias Portage Trail and "Horseback" Trail Improvements: In response to Committee member comments and suggestions for improvement of the Gassabias Portage Trail, the Final Report notes that the Bureau will consider additional maintenance of the trail, while acknowledging recent interest in an "Eastern Maine Canoe Trail" project that would include the existing portage. The Bureau will participate in discussions of that project as it moves forward. Regarding continued interest in development of the informal "Horseback Trail" along Fifth Machias Stream, the Bureau is open to further discussion but is concerned to balance the need or demand for the trail with the resources required for its development and maintenance.
- Opportunities to Collaborate on Wildlife Habitat Management at the Duck Lake Unit and Vicinity: In response to interest expressed in collaborating with the Bureau on early successional and deer wintering habitat at Duck Lake and on abutting Downeast Lakes Land Trust lands, the Bureau is open to discuss opportunities that may exist for such collaboration.

The Bureau received written comments from one AMCF Advisory Committee member. The comments provided observations on current use of ATVs and snowmobiles on the Unit and in relation to nearby trails off the public lands, and also commented on the issue of potential expansion of the hiking trail system. No changes to the Plan or management of the AMCF are required. However, the Bureau will be holding discussions with the Town of Amherst regarding potential future timber harvests on the portion of the unit leased by the town for timber management.

There were no comments on the proposed hiking trail at Duck Lake and one comment in support of the proposed ATV bridge at the Bradley Unit.

This completes the Five-Year Review process.

Management Plan for the Orient Addition to the Eastern Interior Region

The committee was informed in the initial Eastern Interior Region Five-Year Review memo that the Bureau was working on a draft plan for the Orient fee parcel, for committee review. The Draft Management Plan was emailed to the committee on October 10 (along with the follow-up memo mentioned above), with a request for comments. The Bureau received four comments on the draft.

The enclosed Final Draft Plan reflects those comments and additional resource information received since the first draft was prepared. A summary of the comments and the Bureau's responses is provided in Appendix A of the Final Draft.

A public meeting to present the Final Draft Plan and take comments will be scheduled in the spring, most likely in the Town of Orient or nearby. The Advisory Committee will be informed in advance via email of the date, time and location of the public meeting.

**Summary of Advisory Committee Comments and BPL Responses
Eastern Interior Region Management Plan 5-Year Review for 2019¹
Comment Period Sept. 6, 2019 – Sept. 27, 2019**

*(Does not include typographical, grammatical, or formatting comments;
some comments have been reformatted and/or excerpted for the purposes of this summary)*

Comment	Response
<i>From: Robert Murphy, American Forest Management</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enjoyed reading the updated 5 year plan, I liked your format, concise and very informative. American Forest Management offers no changes or additions to the plan at this time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment noted.
<i>From: D. Gordon Mott, Forester, Lakeville</i>	
<u>Regarding Keg Lake Lot Road Conditions</u>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Road conditions in the Keg Lake Public Lot are in sufficiently serious bad conditions now that vehicular access to the lot is only available by ATV, UTV, or 4x4 truck with high clearance because abundant large rocks have raised for several years by frost to the surface and impede passage. Even then, ATV and truck access requires slow careful passage to avoid damage. It is my judgment that grading will require heavy-duty equipment at this point. Rock rake won't do it. The recreational and hunting value to the community is seriously reduced. Much of the investment in the future value of the road infrastructure is being lost. Some of the roadsides were mowed this year 2019. But ditches are filling with growing young trees to a height of about six feet and were not reached. The road configuration on the south approach to the bridge across Weymouth Brook is spilling silt into the brook in heavy rains - the road surface needs to be configured to prevent this. This brook is a significant source of brook trout reproduction for Keg Lake and beyond. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau recognizes the high local and regional interest in the lot and is willing to work with the town and other interests to improve the roads. The Bureau will endeavor to make gradual progress on improving the roads, with the timing and pace of work depending on what internal funding may be available, in the context of other needs and priorities in the region, and also on what external funding becomes available. Our estimate of the cost to get the roads to the desired condition is \$15-20,000. The Bureau has recently discussed with the town the possibility of a town contribution to the road work; the issue will be brought before the town selectboard for their consideration. Regarding the approaches to Weymouth Brook, in late November the Bureau installed several water bars in the road along with other measures to control erosion and siltation. The site will be revisited in the spring, and additional work may be done if problems persist.

¹ This five-year review also included the 2010 Amherst Mountains Community Forest Management Plan; Advisory Committee comments on that Plan and Bureau responses are provided following this table.

<p><u>Regarding Coordination/Collaboration with the Town of Lakeville on Management of Lots</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not clear to me whether responsibilities are or should be shared between the Town of Lakeville and the Bureau of Parks and Lands for road and access infrastructure maintenance in the Public Lots. Where stumpage proceeds are divided 75%-25% between the Bureau and the municipality, is it expected that maintenance costs will be similarly divided? Or is the Bureau entirely responsible? • As part of the original plan for these lots, it was intended that the Bureau would meet with the municipality periodically to cover matters that might arise. There has been no meeting for several years. Perhaps this question together with the right-of-way concern below indicates that a meeting would be productive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although stumpage proceeds are shared with the Town of Lakeville, road and access maintenance remains the responsibility of the Bureau. As stated in response to the preceding comments on the Keg Lake Lot, the town may discuss contributing to this maintenance work. • The Bureau has been in contact with the Town and met with a member of the selectboard in December to discuss Lakeville Lot issues and concerns.
<p><u>Regarding Right-of-Way to Keg Lake Lot</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The deeded right-of-way to Keg Lake Public Lot from the public Bottle Lake Road goes through Lakeville-owned forest land over Long Point Road and crosses a deteriorated bridge on Weymouth Brook where the abutments and the bridge structure are beyond repair. The western side of the approach road is also frequently impassable because of springs in the road. <p>When the Keg Lake Public Lot was (very well) harvested a few years ago a different access road through the Lakeville-owned forest land, now called Weymouth Brook Road, was used.</p> <p>In meeting discussions with BPL, I recall that the Lakeville Selectboard agreed to a legal exchange of rights-of-way on Weymouth Brook Road for Long Point Road. It was understood that the Bureau would take the initiative to construct and execute the legal documents. It appears that could be revisited and added to the Plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BPL will collaborate with the Town on steps to implement the swap of ROWs.

Regarding Hand Carry Boat Access at Keg Lake

- At the time of the recent harvest in the Keg Lake Lot a short connecting road was built at the easterly end of the Long Point Road within the Public Lot, to go south along the historic portage between Keg Lake and Bottle Lake. This short connector went south to 250 feet from Keg Lake. A hand-carry launch to Keg Lake at this location through the Public Lot was indicated in the original plan.

After the connector was built, a private donation of \$4,000 was made through Forest Society of Maine to gravel and ditch the connector. An effective path was flagged through the 250-foot buffer to the lake edge. This provided public access to Keg Lake and, via a historic hand-carry portage, access to Junior Lake. It also provided the only access by water to two isolated camping areas within the Public Lot on Keg Lake. Upon walking it together, I recall verbal commitment made that the trail would be approved by the Bureau and cleared by a seasonal crew.

Now several years later, the road connector has not been mowed and vegetation is growing up on the surface and seriously in the ditches. The hand-carry trail has not been established. And, most seriously, because of the increasingly impassable condition of road access to the connector, it would not be possible for the community to use this hand-carry access.

- I note the presentation in the matrix of the language: "The residents generally seem opposed to a hand carry site on Keg Lake, as per meetings with them. The offer was made in conjunction with the parking area. Duck Lake has limited site potential for a similar site on Public Lands. There has been some discussion of one or two boat access campsites on

- It is the Bureau's understanding that only minor work is necessary to establish the trail – e.g., light vegetation cutting and perhaps some bog bridging. The Bureau will revisit the carry-in trail in the spring, and will make plans for the trail to be brushed out, etc.

- It is now the Bureau's understanding that opposition to the carry-in access that may have existed at the time of the management plan's development has dissipated, and that no local objection now remains.

<p>Keg Lake at meetings, but it didn't come up in the original plan."</p> <p>Please note that in the email to you in 2015 that is copied below mention is made of the access to Keg Lake and the swap of rights-of-way. One of the original objectors to access to Keg Lake has died. The other, who owns property on Keg Lake, recently said his original objection was to his mistaken conclusion that a trailer boat launch was intended and he has no objection whatever to hand-carry of canoes and kayaks. The Selectboard has no objection.</p>	
<p><u>Regarding Access to Magoon Pond and Upper Dobsis Lots</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I understand the issues concerning access to the Magoon Pond and Upper Dobsis Lots. I manage part of the access to these lots in private practice. The client is willing to provide access over the portion of the access to the Upper Dobsis Lot on the Weir Pond Road for the planned upcoming harvest. We have also positively discussed the possibility of participating in any general agreement that might be reached with Penobscot Nation and others to establish permanent access to the Upper Dobsis Lot. If BPL chooses to go forward it appears there may be an opportunity to seek an access solution. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau now has a year-to-year agreement with Penobscot Indian Nation for access to the Upper Dobsis Lot.
<p><i>From: David Montague, Downeast Lakes Land Trust</i></p>	
<p><u>Regarding MASN forestry research site at Duck Lake</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I would like to express support for the establishment of the MASN site within the Duck Lake Unit. The research conducted at this site will benefit all Maine forest landowners, and I applaud the Bureau's efforts to lead the way toward scientifically-informed forest management in our region. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau appreciates the comment.
<p><u>Regarding Gassabias portage trail</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> I also wish to encourage you to move forward efficiently toward increased signage and maintenance work at the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau's signage and clearing of the portage trail and an associated access trail into the ecoreserve has been

<p>Gassabias portage trail to Fourth Machias Lake. DLLT regularly receives inquiries from the public about the condition of this trail, and we feel that better signage, public education, and consistent maintenance of the trail would provide a wonderful recreational opportunity for paddlers in our region. DLLT would be eager to work with BPL on ways to strengthen the public appeal of this route and the benefits of a well-marketed east-west canoe trail for the local outdoor recreation tourism industry.</p>	<p>minimalistic in part due to the ecoreserve status. The Sunrise County Economic Council and others have recently begun exploration of a “Eastern Maine Canoe Trail” project, of which this portage trail would be an important part. The Bureau will participate in that discussion as it moves forward, particularly regarding the Gassabias portage. In the meantime, the Bureau will evaluate signage and maintenance needs on the trail, and potentially make improvements, as needs and available resource dictate.</p>
<p><u>Regarding wildlife habitat management in the region</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lastly, I want to express DLLT’s strong desire to find opportunities to further collaborate with BPL and other area landowners on regional plans to improve wildlife habitat, especially early successional forest habitat, deer wintering areas, and their associated travel corridors. DLLT’s long-term management plan for early successional patches in the Belden Brook area (adjacent to the Duck Lake Unit) has shown promising signs of enhancing habitat for ruffed grouse, American woodcock, and moose, among other species. We hope that the previously-identified areas of similar cover in the Duck Lake Unit will be actively managed to maintain early successional habitat contiguous with DLLT’s harvest areas. Doing so would multiply the effects of our shared efforts to benefit species associated with young forests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau is open to discussing opportunities that may exist to collaborate with DLLT on wildlife habitat management at the Duck Lake Unit and adjacent lands. It should be noted that the Bureau has continued early successional habitat creation and maintenance at the Duck Lake Unit adjacent to Gassabias Lake as part of the timber management program.
<p><i>From: Kevin Dunham; MDIF&W Wildlife Biologist</i></p>	
<p><u>Regarding brook trout stocking at Duck Lake Unit:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I have just one update to the Management Recommendations table “actions taken” for the Duck Lake Unit; in the “Wildlife Management Recommendations” section regarding brook trout stocking in Upper Unknown Pond: Resurveyed in 2015; no change. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau appreciates the update

From: Dave Tobey, Grand Lake Stream Guides Association

Regarding Gassabias portage trail and "horseback trail":

- I am strongly in favor of cleaning out and maintaining the Gassabias portage trail. As well the "river drivers" or "horseback trail" along Fifth Lake Stream. I also recommend the two trails be connected at their north east ends, this can be easily done with only a distance of about 800'. There has been a hunting trail making this connection for the last fifty years.

This would be a great hiking trail. With the portage trail being through a conifer forest uncut or burnt for over 100 years. Transitioning over to a burnt forest following in part the longest esker in Washington County. A trail head could be at the Sabao Mt end or even starting at the campground at 42-000 road. Complimented with the proposed trail head off the Duck Lake road.

I would be happy to show these trails or help work on their completion. I'm very familiar with all those woods after hunting and trapping this area extensively for the last 53 years. Sites along the way would be Knight Dam, the old Lombard Camp remains, NW of Knight Dam and old logging camp on Gassabias Cary. Hope this may become reality it is so important to show and retrace our history and local culture.

- As stated above, the Bureau will consider additional maintenance of the portage trail. The Bureau appreciates the interest expressed in formalizing the "horseback trail" along Fifth Lake Stream and associated connector trails. The Bureau is open to further discussion; in particular, we would like to have a better sense of the need or demand for these new trails, before committing to such a project.

From: Stephen Keith (non-AC member who requested to submit comments)

Regarding Gassabias portage trail and "horseback trail":

- My comments are specific to the Gassabias Portage Trail and the Horseback Trail both of which have cultural and historic value. In its present condition the Gassabias Portage Trail is difficult to follow from Fourth Lake to Gassabias Lake and could use some non-obtrusive markers to redefine the trail.

- Please see responses to the preceding comments on these trails.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Horseback Trail is part of a 13 mile long esker system that extends from The Pines on Lower Sysladobsis Lake to Lower Sabao Lake. The trail has remnants of a century old logging camp that utilized a Lombard Steam Log Hauler. The Horseback is an excellent wildlife viewing trail along Fifth Lake Stream and could benefit from non-obtrusive signage where it begins at the head of Fourth Machias Lake. • I would also like to commend your department on its exemplary forest management practices that are reflected in the health of the Duck Lake forest. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau appreciates the comment.
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<p align="center">Summary of Advisory Committee Comments and BPL Responses Amherst Mountains Community Forest Management Plan 5-Year Review for 2019 Comment Period Oct. 11, 2019 – Oct. 25, 2019 <i>(Does not include typographical, grammatical, or formatting comments; some comments have been reformatted and/or excerpted for the purposes of this summary)</i></p>	
Comment	Response
<p><i>From: Malcolm Hunter, University of Maine</i></p>	
<p><u>Regarding Expansion of Hiking Trail Network</u> [Plan recommendation: Assess demand for longer day-hikes. Explore the feasibility of providing such opportunities by connecting existing hiking trail networks. BPL reports: No requests for expanded trails to date.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Such requests were made during the initial planning process. It is difficult to know the degree of potential use but certainly there are still very few places in eastern Maine for a multiple day hike and a shortage of places for a full-day hike. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Eastern Region will continue to monitor whether enough demand exists for these hiking opportunities at AMCF to justify expansion of the existing trail network.
<p><u>Regarding Snowmobile Trail to Halfmile Pond</u> [Plan recommendation: Allow the continuance of the “Halfmile Trail” snowmobile trail which has provided direct winter access to Halfmile Pond for ice fishing. Make efforts to prevent unauthorized ATV use and monitor impacts on Halfmile Pond and surrounding Special Protection Areas. BPL reports: (2014) Ongoing; but pond has</p>	

<p>been closed to ice fishing, so this may deserve another look. ATV misuse has been minimal with no degradation noted. (2019) With closing of ice fishing the need for access has been reduced; the Bureau intends to close this trail.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trucks, ATVs, and off-road motorbikes continue to use the trail that accesses the west end of Halfmile Pond generating serious soil erosion issues. Erosion is mostly just off BPL ownership but runoff moves toward the pond. I have seen no snowmobile tracks into the pond since it was closed for ice fishing. Closing this trail would require rocks or at least signage where it leave the Webber road. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau appreciates the comments and will investigate the erosion issue on the abutting land that is reported to be impacting the pond.
<p><u>Potential Expansion of Regional Snowmobile Trail System</u> [Plan recommendation: Investigate the potential and need for linking the 22-00-0 Rd to a planned expansion of the Salt Shed Trail system via the 9-25 Rd and a historical snowmobile trail. <u>BPL Report</u>: Ongoing.]</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been virtually no snowmobile or ATV use of the Salt Shed Road in the last decade and I have heard no discussion of revitalizing the trail system. Such a trail system would have no place to go to the south or west given landownership patterns there. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau's ORV program concurs that there is no local or Bureau interest at this time in these snowmobile trail linkages or expansion.
<p><u>Regarding Annual Trail Run</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In recent years there has been a popular annual trail run sponsored by the local brewery that occurs largely in the AMCF. The first year it was planned to follow steep erodible trails but I believe it has mostly been rerouted to forest roads. It may be worth determining its exact route and assuring that it is not generating an erosion issue where it crosses Indian Camp Brook. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Bureau appreciates the comment and will monitor the annual trail run for potential erosion issues.