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AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

Date: January 22, 2026

To: Kennebec Highlands Management 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 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan

Enclosed are the Advisory Committee comments on the 2nd Five-Year Review of the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan, covering the period of 2017-2022, and the responses to those comments by the Bureau of Parks and Lands. This memo and the enclosure will serve as the Final Report on the Five-Year Review. (Note: Unit-wide review for the years 2023-2025 will be addressed in the next plan review/update.)

The Bureau emailed its 2nd Five-Year report for the Kennebec Highlands Plan to the Advisory Committee on October 19, 2022, and requested comments. (The plan review was postponed by one year to allow the acquisition of the Allen parcels to be completed.) Regarding new issues or circumstances that were not addressed in the Plan, the Bureau informed the committee about the April 2022 acquisition of the Allen parcels, totaling 813 acres, and that the plan review would include the integration of the new parcels into the 2011 management plan. The committee was also informed that the plan review would include development of a Trails Plan for the unit to guide planning for non-motorized trails, as recommended in the 2011 plan.

The Bureau received written comments on the Five-Year report from six committee members. Many of the comments related to management concerns that were subsequently addressed in the plan for the Allen parcel and/or the Trails Plan (e.g., management of the Allen parcel blueberry fields, road upgrades and maintenance, retaining the vision of a semi-remote “backwoods” experience, and potential development of a “universally accessible/improved access” trail).

Development of the plan for the Allen parcels (to be appended to the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Plan) and the Trails Plan were initiated in early 2023. An Advisory Committee meeting was held March 1, 2023 to discuss several topics of relevance to those plans, including potential zoning of the unit to identify where expansion of trails should be focused and avoided, road improvement and access needs, and potential commercial and recreational blueberry field uses and management. Bureau staff collaborated over the next 2+ years to develop draft plans and on May 15, 2025 those drafts were sent to the Advisory Committee for review. On June 26, 2025 a second Advisory Committee meeting was convened to discuss the draft plans and take comments. Meeting notes for both Advisory Committee meetings are available on the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan webpage.

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The plans were revised in response to comments and on September 24, 2025 final drafts were sent to the Advisory Committee. Soon after, a public meeting was scheduled for October 29, 2025 to present the final drafts and receive public comments. Twenty-five members of the public and Advisory Committee members attended the public meeting. Meeting notes are available on the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan webpage. No additional comments were received during the 30-day comment period following the meeting.

With minor revisions to the final draft, the final Management Plan for the 2022 Acquisitions (Allen parcels plan) has been adopted with the signature of the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry. With minor revisions in response to comments, the Bureau has also adopted the final Kennebec Highlands Public Land Trails Plan (which does not require the signature of the Commissioner as it implements the 2011 Plan recommendation to develop such a plan for the unit). Both plan documents are available on the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan webpage; printed copies will be sent to any Advisory Committee member who requests them.

This completes the Five-Year Review process.

Enclosure:

Advisory Committee and Other Comments on the 2022 2nd Five-Year Review and Bureau Responses