

**Summary of Written Comments in Response to the
Five-year Review Table - Kennebec Highlands 2nd Five-Year Review
(distributed to Advisory Committee October 19, 2022)**

– Comment Period: Oct 20, 2022 – November 17, 2022 –

Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.

Comment	Response
From: John Simoneau, Backcountry Hunters & Anglers, New England Chapter	
<p><u>Natural Resources</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We appreciate the water bar work on Cross Road to mitigate erosion and would encourage the department to continue this type of stewardship work. The upgrades to Vienna Mountain Road is welcomed to maintain hunting access; we would encourage a discussion about gating the road seasonally to protect the roadbed from rutting and erosion. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comment noted – ORV trail maintenance will continue as needed and as resources allow, with the oversight of the BPL ORV division and in collaboration with local clubs. The Allen parcels management plan addresses potential new gates on or in the vicinity of the new parcels. The Bureau will need to consult with inholding landowners and others with access rights and will need to consider the existence of public easements on certain roads (see pages 5-7 in the 2011 KH Plan) prior to any gate/barrier installation.
<p><u>Recreational Issues or Opportunities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> We support the protection of remote areas from new trails, as a hunter we seek out the challenge, solitude and adventure that only the backcountry can provide. In the development of the trails plan we support the Vision of the Unit to provide a “semi-remote “back woods’ experience”. We would encourage trail planners to review the study prepared for Vermont Fish & Wildlife, Forest, Parks and Recreation titled Wildlife & Recreation: Understanding and Managing the Effects of Trail Use on Wildlife. The guidance to balance protecting wildlife and providing opportunities for trail recreation seem appropriate for this property and in alignment with the management plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Designate permanent trail-free areas on the landscape Consolidate trails and avoid high value wildlife resources Monitor trailed areas for changes in wildlife, manage existing trails to minimize impact. Trailhead Parking Areas <ul style="list-style-type: none"> During a visit to the parking off Kimball Pond Road there is some ditching and erosion that make access to the parking only available to high clearance vehicles. I would encourage a discussion on small parking area near the town-maintained 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> One of the primary goals of the Trails Plan developed during this plan review was to protect remote/backcountry areas and the unique experiences those areas provide. The Bureau has reviewed and incorporated some of the concepts contained in the cited study (subsequently provided to the Bureau by the commentor), in consultation with IF&W, into the Trails Plan. In particular, that plan designates “no additional development” zones (which are not strictly trail-free) and seeks to consolidate trails to certain parts of the remainder of the Highlands. This informal access is on a 7 Lakes parcel; thus any road work would not be conducted by the Bureau. However, this concern may be addressed in ongoing collaboration with 7 Lakes as the Bureau’s management partner. As described in the Allen parcels management plan, the Bureau will consider

<p>portion of Vienna Mtn. Rd, perhaps before any gates needed to protect the improvements to the access road. A parking area at this location would be appreciated for users without off-road capable vehicles or wanting to access on foot.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fishing and Boating <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The loss of access from Roxy Rand is a priority issue for the BHA Maine Leadership Team. We have contacted the Department offering to be a partner in efforts to help resolve the concerns of the landowner. We would be willing to help with fundraising and grants if there were structural changes to the access point that would reduce impacts on the landowner. ○ If access from Roxy Rand road cannot be restored we would encourage developing a new access that might allow for portage of a canoe into the pond. Speaking with the Fisheries Resource Supervisor for the region the last net study in 2017 showed 4 different age classes of wild trout, so there is fisheries resource worthy of access. • Hunting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Access has emerged as a priority issue for American hunters and anglers, and lack of access is cited as the No. 1 reason why we stop pursuing our passions. I have observed that many remote areas of the parcel that hunters would seek out have access issues and signs of conflict between private landowners and users. As a public land advocate I am often contacted by new hunters or hunters new the area trying to find a place to hunt. We are not advocating for development of large parking areas, roads or trails, but would encourage some locations where one could park near the boundary for non-motorized access. ○ We would advocate for well thought out designated Public Land Bear Bait sites for individuals by permit from the Bureau of Parks and Lands. The parcel is large enough that sites could be located where they would not conflict with other recreational uses. ○ We understand the reasons for firearm & hunting that indicate no discharge of weapons within 300 feet of any picnic area, parking area, marked hiking trail or other developed area. This buffer results in the loss of hunting access to 36 acres of land for every mile of trail. As hunters we are 	<p>winter parking near the end of the town-maintained portion of the road.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau will continue to engage with the abutting landowner on Roxy Rand Road to discuss options for restoring public access; the ongoing probate process will influence the timing of any such future engagement. • The unique remote pond trout fishing experience with carry-in boat access at McIntire Pond is highlighted in the 2011 plan, and the Bureau acknowledges the importance of the loss of drive-to access due to the closure of Roxy Rand Road north of the unit. No new access is under consideration at this point. As mentioned above, BPL will continue to engage with the abutter regarding potential resumed access. • New parking areas on Vienna Mtn Road are under consideration. Informal road access to the west side of the unit and parking is also available (high clearance vehicle may be required) via York Hill Road, Cross Road, and Kimball Pond Road. • The Allen parcels plan includes a recommendation for a unit-wide review, with IF&W, to establish a handful of bear bait sites on the Highlands. • See responses above which reference the Trails Plan and the “no new development” zones it establishes.
--	--

<p>concerned about balance in the planning of trails and developed recreation areas. We encourage the planners to consolidate development and preserve the remote areas of the project.</p>	
<p>From: Julie Davenport, Maine Forest Service</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After reading through both documents, I am impressed by how in depth they were. • It sounds like there isn't much planned in the way of timber harvesting (and that makes sense given both the stand descriptions, my own experiences onsite, and the objectives for the property). It appears that the bureau has everything well organized and under control. • In response to some of the statements about assessing use and parking, I will offer my own anecdotal two cents that I hike Sanders Hill a couple times a month in the summer months and never see the lot empty but always meet smiling faces on the trail. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted • The Bureau had conducted no timber harvests prior to this plan review. The first harvest was conducted in summer 2025 in the vicinity of Watson Pond Road. The harvest has been well received. • Comment noted – this confirms our observations and comments of others that the Sanders Hill trail is well used.
<p>From: Ann Gibbs</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Page 6 – Cross Country skiing – it might be useful to create some trails that are a little wider to accommodate snow shoes and/or Nordic skiers in the winter and could be more leisurely hikes in the other seasons. These might be on less steep terrain and more accessible to all levels of abilities. • Page 7 & 15 – Prioritizing new trail development – with regard to keeping the Allen parcel (blueberry fields) open it is really important that something be done about this sooner than later. The hardwoods (mainly birch) are filling in very rapidly and the views will be lost if something isn't done soon. I have hiked the area recently taking in all the view points and a few of them are already almost filled in and will take a lot of effort to clear. Given the interest in keeping this area as a focal point for all (folks with physical challenges etc.), clearing this area needs to be a priority and it has to be done in an efficient systematic manner. This is also important if the blueberry fields are to be managed for some berry production. • Page 12 – Road closures – it would be good to get some clarification regarding what can be done on Vienna Mtn road. Can it be closed for a period of time in the spring during mud season or must it remain open? Will KHMP be 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Although the Bureau does not typically create trails on the Reserved lands specifically for winter uses, we will consider the factors mentioned in development of any new pedestrian trails. Also, the vehicle tracks on Vienna Mountain, created for commercial blueberry management, may provide an attractive opportunity for snowshoeing and Nordic skiers. • The Bureau is making plans for burning and/or mechanical removal of the encroaching trees in certain areas of the blueberry fields, in consultation with IF&W to ensure habitat goals are taken into consideration. MFS will be in the lead on any burning. Volunteers may be used to conduct tree removal in certain areas where views are most affected. • As described in the management plan for the Allen parcels, the Bureau has completed work on Vienna Mtn Road beyond the end of the town road, and more work will be done as needed and as funding becomes

<p>upgrading the portion of the road adjacent to where the town-maintained portion ends? If it is not upgraded and vehicles are permitted access during mud season the road will not be available for folks accessing the top of Vienna Mtn.</p>	<p>available. The potential for a gate to allow spring mud season closure will be explored, in consultation with owners of inholding properties accessed via the road.</p>
<p>From: Elizabeth Payne</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Overall, I approve of the 2011 management plan and the items in the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan: 2022 2nd 5-Year Review. The overall goal seems to be to maintain the wild, relatively remote character of the land. I want to urge advisory committee members and others to honor this ideal. • As a landowner on the discontinued part of York Hill for about 50 years, I love the remote, wild character of the land there, the solitude I experience there, and above all the quiet...Just because you can add trails and extend recreational opportunities doesn't mean you should. It would be very easy to compromise the goal with overdevelopment, upgraded trails, loud signs, and easy access for more people, more bicycles, and more motorized vehicles. These things cannot help but domesticate and even suburbanize the wildlands. • I understand a trail to McIntire Pond is planned on the newly acquired Allen land. This trail would begin at a location close to my land. My questions are these: Is this trail necessary if McIntire Pond has other access points? How would people access this new trail, on foot or by car? Would York Hill Road get improved? Would a parking lot be created with signs and kiosks and other artifacts? Wouldn't it be better for wildlife to leave the Kidder Pond, Boody Pond, McIntire Pond area unfragmented as it is now? And what are the plans for the barrens? When would I learn about such a plan and what kind of input could I have? I would want the new trail to be as low grade as possible with few, unobtrusive signs, minimal parking and other amenities. • I'm opposed to expanding ATV access in the Kennebec Highlands. As a long-time summertime walker on the Solon to Bingham rail trail along the beautiful Kennebec River, I have watched over the years as that trail has grown insanely crowded with ATVs and dirt bikes. I don't see where ATV club management of the area has improved it. I have also watched many bad actors defy the rules of the road, the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau affirms that the goal expressed in the 2011 plan to maintain the wild, relatively remote character to the Highlands remains as a central component of our management direction. • The Bureau agrees with the sentiments expressed and confirms that all potential or requested trails and other recreation development should not (and will not) be pursued. In the Trails Plan developed during this plan review, we have 1) designated areas of the Highlands where no additional recreational development will occur and 2) identified limited opportunities for new trails, most of which would connect existing old roads and trails and connect Vienna Mtn to the east side of the unit. • Although we are concerned about the loss of walk-in boating and angling access to McIntire Pond with the closure of Roxy Rand Road north of the unit, we have no plans at this time to develop new trail access from the New Sharon parcel. The ponds zone described is within a "no new development" zone designated in the Trails Plan. As opportunities arise, we will continue to discuss with the abutter on Roxy Rand Road the potential for resumed road access to McIntire Pond. • There are no plans to expand ATV access in the Highlands. In the future, the lack of ATV trail connections to adjacent lands and the lack of a local ATV club to partner with for trail maintenance may lead to the closure of some ATV routes on the unit.

<p>speed limits, and common courtesy. It's a noisy, smelly, unpleasant experience now to visit that recreation area on the weekends. The rail trail is essentially wrecked for weekend walkers.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In addition, I live in Orono near the Caribou Bog Recreation Area. Great things are happening there—bait ponds are being returned to wading bird habitat, bike and groomed ski trails zigzag every inch the area, and wet trails are being drained and upgraded. Beaver deceivers have sprung up in every culvert. A new recreation center is being developed. There's an American chestnut grove. From one perspective all these changes are wonderful, and they enhance educational and recreational opportunities. On the other hand, the upgrades draw more visitors: more birders, more walkers, more joggers, more cyclists, more skiers. The upgrades and the increased use domesticate the area and contribute to user conflicts, which are often based on unrealistic expectations about what kind of experience one gets to have there. The intensive use affects wildlife, too. • I have...climbed Sanders, Roundtop, and French Mountains. Those are lovely, but well-used trails. With all the use they get, they lack the feeling of remoteness and undevelopedness that the land around York Hill retains. Maybe it would be best to keep the upgraded trail development near the Watson Pond side of the Highlands and leave the York Hill side of the Highlands wild? • While I understand land conservation is largely for people, the land is also home to plants and animals that need to be allowed to flourish. Carving trails on every inch, nook, and cranny and creating easy access will only wind up fragmenting the ecosystems, domesticate the land, and destroy the wild character. I urge caution at any new development on the west side of the Highlands. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all of our planning, the Bureau takes into account the potential for recreation overuse, potential conflicts among users, and potential adverse effects on wildlife and habitat, of which have become increasingly aware as relevant data accumulates from locations across the country and the natural resource management professions respond. At the Highlands, the management plan for the Allen parcels and the KH Trails Plan both aim to balance recreation use and development with protection of wildlife habitat and remote/undeveloped recreation and other goals. • See responses above describing the “no new development” zones we have designated at the Highlands within the Trails Plan. • See preceding responses.
From: Rome Ruff Riders Snowmobile Club (Hal Garnett, Secretary)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Rome Ruff Riders Snowmobile Club maintains all of the snowmobile trails on the Kennebec Highlands with material and manpower and is supplemented with a grant from the Maine Snowmobile Association. The trails are connected to the State-wide network and are used by local Maine residents as well as numerous out of state summer residents. Often times some of the summer residents come up to snowmobile on our trails and with no place in the Highlands to park their vehicle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • During the winter of 2025-26, the Bureau will make efforts to improve our on-the-ground understanding of the non-motorized and snowmobile uses of the Round Top trailhead parking area. We will engage with the club to discuss this request for parking expansion afterwards.

<p>and trailer, have parked in the parking lot on Watson Pond Road as this is the only place that is close to the trail. This lot is not large enough to provide parking for two or three trucks and trailers as well as a number of vehicles that often use it for winter hiking. This has caused some abusive notes to be placed on their vehicles that note that this lot is not for snowmobile parking. I notice in the plan that it is the objective of the plan to be as inclusive as possible and that the snowmobile trails that are maintained by Rome Ruff Riders are also used by others. It only seems [fair] that the parking lot might also be shared. This would require that the lot be further expanded to include room for possibly three (3) trucks and snowmobile trailers .</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Over the past two years the Snowmobile Club has rebuilt a total of five (5) bridges and made improvements as directed by the State. If the committee would approve the increase in the lot size, the Snowmobile Club would work with the state on this project with manpower and equipment. We request that this parking issue be considered by the Advisory Committee in their five-year review. 	
From: 7 Lakes Alliance	
Natural Resources Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <u>Sensitive Natural Areas</u>: Is there an updated assessment of species populations and sensitive habitats completed later than 2017? Recommend designing a process to identify/map vernal pool habitat across the ownership. <u>Forest Continuity</u>: How is forest continuity modeled in future harvesting plans for the highlands? Considering potential for improvements (i.e. road tie-ins to McGaffey Mountain Road, or areas in the Kimball, Kidder and McIntire Ponds) for future recreational activities, how will collaborative partners be advised of specific planning windows for these activities? <u>Water Quality</u>: We recommend all management activities place a priority on balancing multiple uses (harvesting, hunting, recreational access) with the site specific and regional needs for habitat and water quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There have been no unit-specific updated assessments; however, the Bureau makes use of relevant GIS data provided by MNAP and IF&W, which are periodically updated as new data is obtained, depending on location. This data includes "significant vernal pools" mapped by IF&W. The BPL harvest planning process considers a range of factors related to forest continuity, including a focus on enhancing conditions of diversity and retention of trees of particular ecological significance. As areas of the Kennebec Highlands suitable for near-term timber management activity are identified, the harvest planning process will include outreach to collaborative partners to discuss any impacts on recreational infrastructure/activity. Protection of water quality is an important component of BPL recreation planning (including trail development) as well as development of timber harvesting prescriptions.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Deer Wintering Areas</u>: Are there any updates on potential enhancements to existing DWA's? As with sensitive habitats on page 1, we recommend a management approach that favors intact DWA's with limited entry for extraction of forest products. This is especially critical for water quality and habitat integrity in wetlands adjacent to DWA's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any potential future harvests in the mapped DWAs (updated since the 2011 plan, with several deleted) will prioritize habitat enhancements and incorporate wildlife biologist recommendations.
Historic/Cultural Resource Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>19th Century Homestead Sites</u>: We agree with continued consultation with MHPC on homestead sites across the KH landscapes. We recommend adherence to the 2021-2026 Statewide Historic Preservation Plan. • We also encourage a management approach that ensures adequate research and knowledge on tribal usage of the landscape are incorporated into the management process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau will continue to consult with MHPC as needed before any management activity in the vicinity of the mapped homestead sites. The Allen parcel plan extends Special Protection buffers to the additional sites located on those parcels. • We are not aware of any current tribal usage of the lands, as occurs on some BPL properties (e.g., brown ash harvesting, gathering of other natural materials). However, we will address any such usage or requests in accord with the relevant policies contained in the IRP.
Recreational Issues and Opportunities	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>ATV Riding</u>: Consider the installation of seasonal gates. This will likely help reduce road and trail damage, and thus reduce costs for repair. Vienna Mountain Road and the Welch Rd could be candidate sites. <p>On existing trails, create/enhance standard signage for users. This could include a comprehensive interpretative sign at a central parking location (i.e. winter parking area along the Vienna Mountain Road).</p> <p>In areas such as Kidder Pond, limit access to protect water quality and habitat.</p> <p>Use appropriate sized barriers to minimize incursion and potential damage from larger ORV's.</p> <p>If new trails, work with 7Lakes and ATV constituents (as needed) to design and site trails to minimize recreational conflicts, protect water quality, and limit environmental impacts to the habitat.</p> <p>Consider methodologies for tracking usage.</p> <p>Continue to engage with ATV/snowmobile clubs on project work/enforcement of rules and regulations for usage.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau, with participation of the ORV division, is considering installing seasonal gates on the Cross Road and Berry Hill Road to prevent use by 4WD vehicles during mud season. A gate on Vienna Mtn Road at or near the end of the Town maintained road is also under consideration. The Bureau will need to consult with inholding landowners and others with access rights and will need to consider the existence of public easements on certain roads (see pages 5-7 in the 2011 KH Plan) prior to any gate/barrier installation. • The ORV program has developed standard motorized trail signage. The program's Regional Trails Coordinator recently posted new signage at locations where off-trail riding has been occurring on old woods roads. • Kidder Pond is managed for a remote boating and fishing experience, with walk-in access only (see p. 68-69 of the 2011 Management Plan). • No new ATV trails are planned. The local ATV club ceased operation several years ago; this may have implications for continuation of the designated trails in the Highlands.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Snowmobiling</u>: Similar recommendations as listed above for ATV riding. Continue to consult 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau continues to engage with the local snowmobile club, including on the

with collaborative partners if the need arises for new trails.	recent replacement of several trail bridges. No new snowmobile trails are planned.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Cross-country Skiing</u>: We agree with the continuation of listed actions for cross-country ski activities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hiking</u>: Continue proposed actions in consultation with collaborative partners. <p>Consider a methodology for tracking usage across the trail system. Usage numbers are valuable for future grant-related efforts that can support multiple recreation activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. The Trails Plan and Allen parcels plan both address potential new trails, which would be developed in consultation with partners. • The Bureau does not have the on-site staff presence or resources to devote to system wide trail use tracking. We will consider working with 7 Lakes to gather more usage data (e.g., supply trail counters to install and monitor; request regular vehicle counts at trailheads).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Universally Accessible Trails</u>: Continue proposed actions to include an assessment of some portion of the Allen's lands for a universally accessible trail. <p>Continue working in collaboration with 7 Lakes on the suitability of a UA trail on the Dolley Parcel and the adjacent KH lands.</p> <p>Recommend engaging UA experts such as Enock Glidden. Work with 7 Lakes staff who participated in a conference on UA trails with Maine Coast Heritage Trust and multiple land trusts in October of 2022.</p> <p>Recommend consultation with the Travis Mills Foundation to learn about from their experiences with universal access for veterans.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A contractor is currently assisting the Bureau to meet the goals for a universally accessible (i.e., improved access) trail by developing a conceptual plan for a trail on Vienna Mountain. • We are aware that 7 Lakes has recently completed a short UA trail on their portion of the Dolley parcel, in association with a new parking area and accessible privy. The Bureau is open to discussing future extension of that trail onto the BPL lands. • Enock Glidden and Travis Mills Foundation are included in the contact list for this plan review and update and have been included in BPL outreach. We have also engaged with UA experts as part of planning for a trail on Vienna Mtn. In March 2025 BPL staff attended an accessible trails workshop hosted by Glidden.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Horseback Riding</u>: As with all recreational activities, ensure that habitat and water quality are protected. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted. Equestrian use appears to be low, and generally focused on Vienna Mtn blueberry fields and Vienna Mtn Road.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Mountain Biking</u>: Continue working with 7Lakes on conservation issues including erosion control, water quality, and habitat quality and with Central Maine chapter of the New England Mountain Bike Association when planning new trail locations and design features. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Trails Plan allows for limited potential new bike trails, generally linking existing trails to old roads or other trails. The Bureau will continue to engage with 7 Lakes and the NEMBA chapter on any trail proposals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Trailhead Parking areas</u>: We support the concept of parking areas north of the town snowplow turn around and in the farmhouse area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As described in the Allen parcels plan, both summer and winter parking areas on Vienna Mtn road are under consideration.

<p>We also recommend seasonal gates to reduce roadbed damage during “mud-season”. If usage increases in the Kimball Pond and/or the York Hill Road areas, we agree that parking areas should be considered.</p> <p>We recommend an expansion of the Sanders Hill parking area to accommodate additional vehicles.</p> <p>We also recommend that the following infrastructure be considered at primary trailheads, especially as use grows: Outhouse facilities, interpretative signage, and a use tracking system for vehicles and users.</p> <p>Consider teaming with social media platforms such as All Trails to assist with information dissemination to user groups.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous responses regarding potential seasonal gates. The Bureau remains open to working with 7 Lakes to develop parking on Welch Road (7 Lakes Kimball Pond parcel) to provide access from the west side of the unit. • York Hill Road beyond the town road is unmaintained and appears to receive light use; no parking is currently under consideration. • Any new primary trailheads will have kiosks similar to what has been installed at the Round Top and Sander Hill trailheads. Sanitary facilities are considered on a case-by-case basis. As described in the Allen parcels plan, interpretive signage is proposed for installation on Vienna Mtn, in the vicinity of the house and/or parking. • Most of the existing KH trails are currently included on the All Trails website/app. New trails can be added as they are developed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Fishing and Boating</u>: As mentioned under “Water Quality”, continue protection of key waterbodies/watersheds by limiting vehicular access with seasonal gates to prevent impacts to roadbeds and protect associated hydrological connections to Kidder Pond, Kimball Pond, and McIntire Pond. Design and implement a usage tracking process in these locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At present, access to Kidder and McIntire ponds is walk-in only. See previous responses on potential new gates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Hunting</u>: We support listed actions, including non-hunter recommendations for using hunter-orange colorations for humans and for pets. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Camping</u>: We recommend that the future creation of campsites in the KH lands be designed with known issues (positive/negative) at the two user-created sites on Kidder Pond. <p>Additional sites will require a thorough vetting process. If campsites are planned in the future, consider increasing the on-site stewardship to control negative impacts to these sites and adjacent habitat.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Due to resource and management concerns, we have decided not to develop formal campsites at the user-created sites in Kidder Pond. We will continue to monitor the existing informal sites for usage and for resource concerns. • No new campsites are proposed, other than the sites proposed by 7 Lakes on the Dolley parcel, near the shore of Long Pond, is association with a water trail.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Annual Recreation Forum</u>: We support the creation of an annual recreation forum to include groups and topics listed. We also suggest outreach to all groups such as those requiring universal access trails, and non-traditional groups. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 2011 KH plan recommends that a recreation/trails forum be convened annually, which has not occurred as regularly as intended. We agree that when the forum is reconvened, it should be expanded as suggested.

Transportation and Administrative Considerations	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Roads for general Vehicular Travel:</u> As mentioned above, under Recreational Issues and Opportunities we support seasonal gates to limit resource damage during portions of the year. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See previous responses regarding potential seasonal gates.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Abutting Property Owners:</u> Consider inviting adjacent landowners, local community members and town officials to annual recreation forum as a way to inform and listen to their concerns. This will help build trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau will consider the option of expanding participation in the recreation forum as suggested, or alternatively will consider some form of separate outreach to property owners.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Host Communities:</u> Employ same process as with abutting property owners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • See preceding response.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Potential for Vandalism:</u> We support the “volunteer host” concept with increased communications with 7Lakes stewardship staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau will revisit the volunteer host concept and will consider the identification of a new host if needed. This should occur in light of the Bureau’s MOU with 7 Lakes and the roles of each party as defined there.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Public Information:</u> We suggest incorporating a social media platform to reach users prior to their visits to the KH. This may lessen incidents and will yield a data set that can inform partners of usage/issues. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau does not employ unit-specific social media. However, the BPL webpage for the unit provides basic information about the unit and applicable rules, as well as a downloadable map and guide (last updated in 2022).
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Written Agreements:</u> We support written agreements that are reviewed annually with 7Lakes and other user groups including snowmobile clubs/CeMeNEMBA, and ATV clubs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Structures on the Highlands:</u> We support listed actions regarding derelict structures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comment noted.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Blueberry Field Management:</u> We support continued management of the blueberry lands to include the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Include communities/individuals who have had free access to pick berries. Include towns/groups in outreach and ensure they are involved in future events and activities. Delineate a specific portion of the habitat for this activity. ○ Consider future operations of the upper fields by delineating commercial areas and non-commercial areas. ○ Develop an annual plan to maintain existing habitat (burning) and address portions of the fields (northern) that require brushing. ○ Manage the viewshed to maximize the scenic value of the area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Allen parcels plan addresses management of the blueberry fields. In summary, the plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Identifies the portions of the fields where recreational access and use will be the focus, and where wildlife habitat will be the focus ○ Identifies potential future commercial blueberry production areas, to be under lease. The possibility for organic production will be considered as part of the development of a potential lease. ○ Provides for future burning or cutting to control invasion of trees on the fields and preserve views, in consultation with IF&W in order to ensure habitat goals are met.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ We favor an organic approach to blueberry cultivation for the following reasons: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for value added product ▪ Limited impact on water quality and other flora and fauna that utilize the habitat. ○ Use visitor use data to manage impacts to the habitat and the experience. 	
Monitoring and Evaluation	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Recreation – Public Use and Use Management:</u> We also request that data gleaned from this process is shared with collaborative partners on a regular basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any data gathered by volunteer hosts will be shared within the recreation forum.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Wildlife:</u> Continue consultation with MDIF&W. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation is continuing as needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Special Protective Areas:</u> Continue consultation with MNAP and MHPC. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation is continuing as needed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>Timber Management:</u> Provide periodic updates for 7Lakes regarding proposed harvest areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Bureau will inform 7 Lakes when future harvests are proposed.