Bureau of Parks and Lands

Moosehead Region Management Plan
Plan Amendment

April 22, 2021
AMENDMENT ADOPTION

In accordance with the procedure outlined in the 2017 Moosehead Region Management Plan for consideration of proposed Plan amendments, the amendment presented on pages 2-3 of this report are hereby adopted.

RECOMMENDED: [Signature] DATE: May 6, 2021

Andrew Cutko
Director
Bureau of Parks and Lands

APPROVED: Amanda E. Beal DATE: 5/6/21

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
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1. Background to the Plan Amendment and Summary of the Review Process

Background to Plan Amendment
In late 2017, the non-profit Moosehead Outdoor Alliance (MOA) (formerly the Moosehead Outdoor Sports Committee) approached the Bureau to discuss the potential for development of mountain bike trails on the Little Moose Unit. In August 2018, MOSC provided working maps for trails on the Unit, depicting about 22 miles of new “multiuse” and single track bike trails on the Little Moose ridge and north and south of the ridge. An accompanying “Moosehead Outdoor Center” proposal mentioned up to 50 miles of bike trails on the Unit. The Bureau determined that development of bike trails was in general consistent with the vision for the unit as expressed in the Moosehead Region Management Plan (adopted in February 2017). Subsequent discussions over the next two years narrowed the area of consideration for bike trails to three zones of the Unit. In accord with Bureau policy, trails would not be allowed on most of the Little Moose ridge, specifically within areas allocated in the plan to “Special Protection – Natural Area” and “Backcountry Non-Mechanized Recreation.” In November 2020, the Bureau discussed with MOSC the public process required to amend the management plan to allow development of bike trails, given that the potential for such trails is not addressed in the plan and would represent a new use of the Unit.

Summary of Review Process
The Bureau and MOA jointly prepared a Little Moose Unit mountain bike trails proposal, with three mapped trail development zones on the east side of the Unit. On January 21, 2021, the Moosehead Region Advisory Committee (AC) was sent the proposal via email and invited to attend a videoconference meeting on February 4 to provide input. Comments on the proposal were also accepted for two weeks after the meeting. Several AC members and other interested organizations and individuals provided comments, during and after the meeting. All were in support of the proposed trails and amendments. Inland Fisheries and Wildlife expressed cautions about trail routing to protect wildlife habitat, particularly in Zone 1, and opposed a request to expand the zone to include two eskers abutting Wiggins Brook bog. Appendix A provides the meeting notes. Appendix B provides the post-meeting comment emails and letters.

The Bureau next prepared a draft Plan amendment that would allow development of the bike trails in the three mapped zones, with certain limits and requirements. The AC and others on the contact list for the Moosehead Region were sent the draft amendment via email on March 18, and informed of a public videoconference meeting scheduled for April 7. The purpose of the public meeting was to allow the Bureau to hear public comments on the draft Plan amendment. The meeting was advertised in local papers and on the Bureau webpage two weeks in advance. Appendix C provides the meeting agenda. Two AC members and one member of the public attended. The attendees gave verbal comments in support of the Plan amendment. The meeting was followed by a two-week period during which written comments could be submitted; no comments were received.

Section 2 presents the Plan Amendment allowing the proposed bike trail development within the Little Moose Unit. The Amendment includes maps of the three trail development zones, similar to those presented in the proposal discussed with the Advisory Committee, with minor enlargement of Zone 2.
2. Plan Amendment

The following amendment to the 2017 Moosehead Region Management Plan is adopted in response to the proposal that was the subject of public review and comment, as outlined in Section 1.

Amendment: New Mountain Bike Paths and Single-Track Trails

Amendment proposed for addition to Little Moose Unit Management Recommendations (pages 48-49 of Plan), under “Recreation”:

Allow construction of up to 25 miles of new mountain bike trails, primarily single track with wider multi-use paths limited to a potential connector trail with the Town of Greenville and existing roads. Trails are to be constructed within three zones of the Little Moose Unit, as depicted on the zone maps (pages 4-6). The three zones are on the east side of the Unit, and range in size from about 300 acres to about 600 acres. In total, they comprise about 17% of the Little Moose land base.

The purpose is to allow development of sufficient quantity and quality of mountain bike trails, serving a range of skill levels from novice to experienced, to attract visitors to the Greenville area, which it is anticipated will provide a substantial benefit to local community members in addition to the tourism-based economy. Secondary uses of the trails may occur including but not limited to walking, hiking, jogging and cross country skiing.

The trails will be professionally constructed, following best management practices and utilizing industry-standard construction methods for trail tread preparation, drainage, erosion control, and stream crossings. IF&W will be consulted regarding trail construction in riparian zones and adjacent to the exemplary natural communities at Wiggins Brook bog.

Timber management is the primary use on the majority of acres within the three zones, and an allowed secondary use on the remaining acres; therefore, timber harvesting will continue in these areas as silvicultural needs dictate. Careful consideration will need to be given to the layout and density of trails, with a BPL forester involved in the planning, to ensure that future timber harvests can coexist with the trail system. The Bureau will attempt to minimize crossings and other disruptions of the trails when planning and conducting harvests; however, some such impacts would be unavoidable.

Improvements will be considered for parking areas at Gravel Pit Pond (Zone 1), the Little Moose Mountain trailhead off Rt. 15 (Zone 2), and the North Road entrance to the unit (Zone 3), as needed to accommodate new and increased use generated by mountain bike trail development. Improvement to short management roads off Rt. 15 in Zone 3 may also be considered to provide trail access. Trail development in Zone 3 is subject to further staff review and approval, and
should be considered in relation to connections to potential future trails on lands outside the Little Moose Unit.

Consideration will also be given to development of a “pump track” -- a specialized type of riding experience based on a circuit of berms and jumps that loops back on itself in a relatively confined area -- and related amenities in the former gravel borrow area near Gravel Pit Pond (Zone 1).

Short connector trail segments will be considered across the east end of the Little Moose ridgeline, to link trails in Zones 2 and 3, potentially collocated on the existing multi-use (snowmobile and ATV) trail.

The trails will be funded and constructed by Moosehead Outdoor Alliance with the following requirements for final approval:

1) BPL approval of the final trail routes on the public land,

2) Abutting landowner approval for any trail segments linking to roads or trails off the Little Moose Unit,

3) Posting of signage warning of crossing bike/motorized traffic on the new bike trails and the ATV/Snowmobile trails at any locations where they may cross, and

4) Development of a long-term agreement between BPL and MOA and/or the local chapter of New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) for maintenance of the trails.
MEETING NOTES

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND OTHERS PRESENT [*: non-Advisory Committee members]
- Paul Stearns, State Representative, District 119
- Jenny Ward *
- Chuck Wagenheim, Moosehead Outdoor Alliance
- Rodney Folsom *
- Robert Frederick *
- Jon Blackstone *
- Henry Gilbert *
- Suzannah (last name unrecorded) *
- Doug Watt *
- call-in participant (name not recorded) *
- Whitney Folsom *

BPL STAFF PRESENT
- William Patterson, Deputy Director
- Jeff Bartley, Forester
- Tim Post, Western Region Lands Manager
- Rex Turner, Recreation Planner
- Sarah Spencer, IF&W Wildlife Biologist assigned to BPL
- Jim Vogel, Sr. Planner/Management Plan Coordinator

Welcome/Introductions
Jim Vogel welcomed the attendees, and asked BPL Staff to introduce themselves. Introductions were followed by a statement of the meeting’s purpose: to review the mountain bike trail development proposal for the Little Moose Unit -- which staff feels is generally appropriate for the Little Moose Unit and which was sent to the committee two weeks in advance -- and to receive committee input. The meeting agenda and trail development zone maps from the proposal were shared on the screen during the meeting.

Jim then asked Chuck Wagenheim, the president of the organization proposing the project and a new Advisory Committee member, to provide some background on the organization and its mission.

Moosehead Outdoor Alliance (MOA) Organization and Mission
Highlights of information provided by Chuck include:
- MOA is a new 501c3 non-profit organization
- Along with BPL, we are also working with Natural Resources Education Center (NREC) and Forest Society of Maine at the Moosehead Welcome Center.
• Little Moose is the “biggest and most important part” of the regional trail development plan. Trail designers that MOA has consulted have identified Little Moose as ideal for trail development due to location and terrain.

• Provided background rationale for economic development and mission to increase tourism in the community; cited development of “Kingdom Trails” in East Burke, VT, which has brought 100K visitors and $13 million in economic activity and sparked the development of other tourism amenities.

• A new Piscataquis County Chapter of New England Mountain Bike Association (NEMBA) has recently been founded, which brings a $2 million insurance policy.

• MTB trails project has the unanimous support of the Greenville Board of Selectmen and the Piscataquis County Economic Development Board.

• The presence of substantial area of public lands near to town is a huge asset; development of a similar trail network mostly or solely on private lands would be tough to accomplish.

The remainder of the meeting was devoted to discussing each of the 3 mountain bike trail development zones described in the proposal, with Chuck Wagenheim providing highlights on each zone.

**Zone 1**

**Highlights**

- Unique for being close to town
- Some infrastructure already present at Gravel Pit Pond (parking, privy)
- Perfect place for beginners and riding from town with potential for direct trail connection
- Most expensive due to need for gravel to be imported for trail tread
- Less suited for intermediate and advanced riders/trails

**Discussion**

- Jim asked about request proponents have made to add the two eskers on the west side of the Wiggins Brook bog complex to the zone. Proponents feel trails on the eskers would add a different sort of terrain, and could be reached from Gravel Pit Pond parking by existing roads.
- Jim pointed out that the Bureau does not own the Railroad Bed corridor which provides access to the eskers, and other staff noted that agreements are in place for the portions of the snowmobile/ATV trails on the road (within the Little Moose Unit most of the snowmobile trail is on the public land alongside the road).
- Jim highlighted that trails should be carefully laid out with a BPL Forester (applies to all zones) and that Zone 1 was recently harvested, and so there would be no harvesting in the near future.
- Sarah Spencer asked for clarification of the zone boundary and if it included the eskers. Jim replied that it does not currently include the eskers, zone would need to be revised to include them.
Zone 2

Highlights
- More slope on upper part of zone means no material would need to be imported to construct trails.
- Still close to town and Gravel Pit Pond area, but has better variety of slopes, soils, and area for greater distance rides, which provides more potential for intermediate and advanced trails. A different riding experience than Zone 1.

Discussion
- Jim asked whether the zone could be a ride-from-town destination. Chuck felt this was the case, with potential to access zone from existing roads on south boundary and from existing parking areas there and on east side (variable options for access).
- In relation to town connection, Chuck noted that bike visitors tend to spend money and will be more likely to do so with trail connections to town.
- Chuck further noted that NEMBA offers free bike use and training to local youth.
- Jim noted possibility of parking on east side (Shadow Pond parking and possibly existing log yard downslope on same access road).
- It was also noted that there is the potential to link Zone 2 to Zone 3 with a trail over the east end of the ridge, possibly collated with the existing multiuse (ATV/snowmobile) trail.
- Henry noted the advantages of the multiple access points and connectivity.
- Jeff noted that the steeper the terrain the more challenging it is to intersect timber management access (skid trails) and bike trails.
- BPL staff noted that there is some experience with intersecting bike trails and logging at the Bureau’s Carrabassett Valley Lot (part of the Flagstaff Unit, in the Flagstaff Plan area).
- Sarah Spencer noted that there are established bear bait sites (leased by BPL) in both Zones 1 and 2 and possibly Zone 3.
- Henry asked about bear bait sites – how do they work? Tim explained that they must be 50 yards off roads; Chuck suggests that trail development can buffer those areas.
- Jim pointed out that other types of hunting also occur in the zones; Chuck responded that they expect most trail use will be over by Oct. 1, before most hunting starts.

Zone 3

Highlights
- This zone presents the most opportunities for advanced trails – longer trails, steeper trails. Vision is for advanced but still smooth trails.
- Trail building will be less expensive in this zone.

Discussion
- Chuck stated that 25 miles (total for all three zones) “seems to be the magic number for people to travel to the region overnight.”
- Henry stated that he has done a lot of skiing and snowmobiling in the zone; notes that well-built can get you up steep mountains due to switchbacks.
- Also planning ski trails, especially closer to town trails.
- Jim noted that proposal describes a phased approach with Zone 3 development last.
- Jeff noted that the extensive old skid trails and slopes in this zone should be compatible for extensive trails. Roads in the area could play a role.
- Chuck noted that they have been talking with the potential buyers of Big Squaw/Big Moose Mtn Resort, who would like to see a connector trail through Zone 3 into town.
- Jim noted that the resort does not directly abut the Little Moose Unit along the North Road; another landowner is between North Road and the resort.

**Next Steps and Concluding Comments**

Attendees were reminded that written comments could be submitted during the three weeks following the meeting, and advised that the next steps would be for BPL to prepare a draft Plan Amendment, and to hold a virtual public meeting to take comment on the proposed Amendment. It was acknowledged that the proponents desire to break ground on trails in 2021.

The meeting was concluded with a thank you to all who attended and was adjourned at approximately 7:15 pm.

Respectfully Submitted by
Jim Vogel

**Summary of written comments submitted by AC members and others during the 2 week post-meeting comment period (all submitted by email, some with attached letter)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Commenter</th>
<th>Summary</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2/9/21</td>
<td>Cathy Sweetser</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/21</td>
<td>Mike Roy, Town Manager, Greenville (letter attached) (AC member)</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/21</td>
<td>Maynard Russell</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/21</td>
<td>Perry Williams, Big Lake Development Company, LLC</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/9/21</td>
<td>Sarah Spencer, IF&amp;W</td>
<td>Concerns about high value habitat on eskers, recommends no trails; several other recommendations related to trail routing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2/10/21</td>
<td>Doug Kane, IF&amp;W (AC member)</td>
<td>Concurred with Sarah’s comments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/11/21</td>
<td>Moosehead Region Econ. Dev. Council (letter attached)</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/12/21</td>
<td>Doug Watt, local resident (MOA Board of Directors)</td>
<td>Support proposal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16/21</td>
<td>Adam Moskowitz, local resident and rider</td>
<td>Supports proposal</td>
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Appendix B
Dear Mr Vogel,

This Mountain bike trail project by a group in Greenville, Maine is very important to the people of our community. It will bring another wonderful reason for people to get outdoors and exercise! It also will be an enjoyable activity for people who come to our beautiful area. Please support our efforts in making new Mountain bike trails in greater Greenville area. Sincerely, Cathy Sweetser, Beaver Cove, Maine
02.09.21

Bureau of Parks and Lands
James Vogel
18 Elkins Lane, Harlow Building
22 State House Station
Augusta, Me. 04330

Dear James,

On behalf of the Town of Greenville, I'm writing to share my enthusiasm and support for the Moosehead Outdoor Alliance pursuit of developing Mountain Bike Trails in the Greenville and Moosehead Lake region. I believe this group will provide a well thought out trail system, while keeping conservation in mind.

Our endorsement joins existing widespread support within the community, including the Town of Greenville and the Moosehead Lake Economic Development Corporation as well as businesses.

These trails will bring numerous positive benefits to our community and increase the visibility of ongoing efforts within the region. These trails will be utilized by families, local school children, and visitors, the trails will also add to the outdoor recreation activities we already have in the Moosehead Lake Region. I feel these trails will also be utilized by casual walkers, hikers, and nature enthusiast. These trails will promote a healthy lifestyle, while enjoying what the Moosehead Lake has to offer. I believe the Mountain Bike culture will blend into the proposed area, as most mountain bikers are responsible and respectful stewards of the land they are on. Providing a bike trail system will allow every level of ability to enjoy.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Roy
Town Manager
Town of Greenville
Jim,
Thank you for shepherding this vital part of forming a regional Biking Program in the Moosehead area. I am an older (72) mountain biker with extensive knowledge of the area willing to explore on my bike wherever I can. My wife generally accompanies me if she can stay on the gravel roads and less challenging places. We both were born in Greenville and have managed nonprofits in town (Moosehead Marine Museum and the Moosehead Historical Society).

My career as a ski resort engineer has exposed me to several mountain biking operations from a business standpoint as well as a customer. I recently gifted season passes to my daughter and granddaughters at Mount Abram bike park a short distance from their Bethel home. The grand kids are so excited about this after they sampled the Mount Abram trails last autumn. I can't wait to bike with them this summer and participate in their advancement and bonding in this family sport.

Bike programs have put several communities on an economic up slope. Mount Abram, Sugarloaf, North Conway, NH, West Burke, VT to name a few.

With the, hopefully, nearing purchase and redevelopment of our local ski resort a biking program would fit very nicely with that mix. Several ski resorts have tried mountain biking only to abandon the projects due, in my opinion, to oft time giving these project developments to the top tier riders who make the bike parks too tough for most family type guests.

The focus in Greenville is to start small and focus on families first. I fully support this proposal and can't wait to see it move forward. Well balanced complimentary seasonal programs will foster solid economic growth. The Moosehead Region has so many natural attributes that are worth protecting and sharing. This proposed bike program is a very good fit.

Sincerely,
Maynard Russell

I inadvertently sent you an incomplete version of this. oops!
Hi Jim,

My name is Perry Williams and I’m the managing partner of Big Lake Development Company, the group involved in the purchase and re-development of Big Squaw ski area.

I’m writing today to express our full support for the proposed mountain bike trail system on the Maine Public Reserve Lands behind Big Moose mountain, near Little Moose mountain. The development of a trail system of this nature will be a benefit to everyone involved and perhaps can connect to the base area of the ski resort. Our future plans involve mountain biking as a natural extension of the multitude of outdoor activities available in this region. We’re exciting to see this trail system move forward and stand willing to help in any way possible.

Best regards,

Perry Williams
Managing Partner
Big Lake Development Company, LLC
(207) 632-9616
perry@skimoosehead.com
Hi All,
This is very interesting proposal and an exciting one for the region as well as the Bureau. I’ve discussed wildlife resources of interest with Doug Kane (cc’d here) to be sure we highlight concerns upfront to allow for straightforward planning of trail location.

I have two follow-up questions:

1. What was used as a buffer on the large wetland complex to form the wildlife allocation in this area. My assumption was that it’s 330’ but it seems to vary between nearly none (eskers) to 300’. If someone could provide clarification on that, it would be helpful.

2. Are all trails expected to be the same width or are Zone 1 trails expected to be wider? (I ask because I heard someone mention similarities to carriage trails in the meeting)

Wildlife-related concerns:

• General:
  o Bear baits in proximity of these three zones are an important resource for individuals and commercial guides and an important management tool - their location in proximity of a populated area is particularly valuable. Use of bait is the most effective form of hunting bears in Maine. The season to hunt bear with bait (late August through late September) coincides with mountain biking season. We should explore ways to maximize distance of trails from established bear bait sites. Ideally, trails would be ½ mile from bear bait sites -we recognize that would significantly limit potential trail areas in Zone 1. In some cases, moving the bear bait site would be an appropriate solution. Of note, there are other Bureau properties near populated areas where we’ve received requests to increase bear hunting opportunities due to increases in nuisance bear complaints – we should try to retain these opportunities where possible to do so.

• Zone 1
  o The majority of riparian areas in the proposal are in this zone. Avoid locating trails within these riparian areas. Stream crossings can be placed within riparian areas to move the trail from one side of the stream to the other, minimizing the trail distance within the riparian area.
  o Wood turtle- there’s a wood turtle occurrence search area which overlaps with the southwest corner of Zone 1 (see attached map). We don’t share locations of wood turtles on general natural resource maps in management plans due to concerns of illicit trade but I expected it would have been included as a wildlife allocation. MDIFW maintains a document focused on Forest Management Recommendations for the Wood Turtle which apply within 2 miles upstream and downstream of the occurrence. While bike trail construction is slightly different, many of the considerations are applicable.
  o Eskers- based on the map provided, these areas weren’t included in the proposal, but discussion at the meeting indicated otherwise. These eskers are very special features - small islands of upland surrounded nearly entirely by wetlands. As such, use of these riparian areas by wildlife is often disproportionately higher than similar nearby uplands. Because of their relatively small size, disturbance would be disproportionately greater. If possible, avoid developing trails in these special areas.
Dear Jim:

The Moosehead Lake Region Economic Development Corp. (MLREDC) wholeheartedly supports the Moosehead Outdoor Trail Alliance efforts to create a world class mountain bike destination in the Moosehead Lake region. For the past three years the Alliance has been working diligently on this effort.

With the support of the Town of Greenville, the Moosehead Outdoor Alliance committee was formed as a 501(c)(3) with the mission to design and build a premier mountain bike trail system. They have been developing a trail program with the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands for the past three years and, most significantly, the Bureau has given them newly permitted access for trails within a 15,000 acre public parcel - Little Moose Preserve - in Greenville Maine.

The MLREDC is very supportive of the development of this world class extensive trail system. This will include all trail development, a parking trailhead, maps, signage and pump track. We look forward to trail-building commencing in the spring.

Sincerely,

Steven H. Levesque
President
Hi Jim,

My name is Doug Watt and I am on the board of directors for the Moosehead Outdoor Alliance. I wanted to drop you a note and express my deep appreciation for the consideration and professionalism that your team has displayed while we negotiate the land use for the mountain bike trails. Everyone on your team has been very easy to work with and the thoughtful approach you are taking has been great. I know it’s late on a Friday but I just wanted to say thanks. If there is ever anything I can do please do not hesitate to reach out. My cell is always the best way to get to me. I have a lot of family in the area and they are all very excited to see this project take off. Have a great weekend,

Doug Watt
President
Connectivity Point Design & Installation
207.782.0200 Ext. 212 Office
207.753.0200 fax
207.232.5391 cell

connectivitypoint.com  

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Hey Jim,

I wanted to write you a short email about the Moosehead Outdoor Trail Alliance Project. I am a resident over in Squaw bay, next to Chuck Wagenheim. I know he has been working tirelessly on getting a trail system over on little moose for some time now. I even connected him with a professional mountain bike rider and rep for Giant. I believe we need this recreational attraction for the Moosehead Lake region. I believe it is also a good economic booster that could bring added jobs. I understand there are a few residents in opposition, but would benefit more than not.

Thank you for your time,

Adam Moskovitz
C.E.O. ANM Properties, LLC
Sent from my iPhone
2017 Moosehead Region Management Plan
Public Meeting: Proposed Plan Amendment

*Virtual meeting held via Microsoft Teams videoconference*
*April 7, 2021*
*5:30 PM*

**AGENDA**

5:30 PM
**Welcome ~ Introductions, Purpose of Meeting**

5:40 PM
**Proposed Amendment ~ BPL presentation of proposed mountain bike trail development and justification for revision of Plan**

6:00 PM
Public questions and comments

6:25 PM
**Public Comment Period and Steps to Finalize Plan Amendment**

Adjourn

The Moosehead Region Management Plan and the Proposed Plan Amendment can be found online at:  

Written comments on the Proposed Plan Amendment can be sent to:  
Jim Vogel  
Bureau of Parks and Lands  
22 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333  
-or-  
Jim.Vogel@maine.gov