Orient Unit Management Plan

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

Virtual Public Meeting
September 17, 2020

FINAL DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

Agenda

• BPL Planning summary
• Orient Unit Planning Process
• Review of Final Draft Plan
  ○ Background on acquisition of Unit and resources present
  ○ Vision, Dominant Resource Use Allocations and Management Recommendations
• Questions and Comments
• Next Steps
Legislative Direction and Policy

- Management plans legislatively required for Public Lands (12 MRSA 1833 & 1847)
- Legislative direction includes:
  - “multiple use”
  - “sustained yield of products and services”
  - “sound planning”
  - “exemplary land management practices”
- Management to enhance “timber, wildlife, recreation, economic and other values of lands”
- Plans are prepared in accordance with the guidelines contained in the Integrated Resource Policy (IRP)

BPL Management Plans

- Plans have a lifespan of 15 years with 5 year reviews
- Plans are regional—one plan includes several public lands in a region
  - WBPR Unit is new addition to Central Penobscot Region (CPR)
  - CPR Plan was adopted in 2014
- We look at planning context of the larger region
- Assisted by an Advisory Committee for the region representing a diverse range of organizations and interests
Management Plan Purposes and Content

- **Purposes of the Management Plan:**
  - Identify and Protect important natural, ecological and historical attributes
  - Enhance important fisheries and wildlife habitat
  - Provide opportunities for a variety of quality outdoor recreation experiences
  - Provide a sustained yield of forest products by utilizing forest management techniques and silvicultural practices that enhance the forest environment

- **Core of the Plan:**
  - Vision statement
  - Dominant Resource Allocations (detailed in the IRP)
  - Management recommendations

Resource Allocation System

- **A hierarchical system**
  - Most to least scarce and/or sensitive to management activities

- **7 Categories**
  - Special Protection *(natural areas, historic/cultural areas, ecological reserves)*
  - Backcountry Recreation *(non-mechanized, motorized)*
  - Wildlife Management
  - Remote Recreation
  - Visual Consideration *(Class I and II)*
  - Developed Recreation *(Class I and II)*
  - Timber Management
Planning Process

- **Summer 2019** - Began work on Draft Plan
  - Made use of data compiled during the acquisition of the unit
  - Field visits by Bureau staff before and after acquisition
- **October 2019** - First Draft Plan sent to Advisory Committee for review and comment
- **Fall/Winter 2019-20** – Revised plan based on comments
- **January 2020** – Final Draft Plan sent to Advisory Committee
- **September 2020** – Public Meeting to review and take comments
- **Fall 2020** – Finalize Plan, append to Eastern Interior Region Plan after adoption

Acquisition of the Unit

- **East Grand-Orient Project**
  - Acquired in March 2016 from The Conservation Fund
  - Conservation easement on nearly 1,500 acres of working forest land south of unit owned by The Conservation Fund
- Acquisition was supported by numerous entities and was funded in part through the federal Forest Legacy Program and by the state Land for Maine’s Future (LMF) program
- Forestry Legacy Program prohibits conversion of the property to non-forest uses
- LMF Program requires the property to remain available for recreation, wildlife habitat, and ecological function
Orient Unit Location

Orient Unit and Vicinity
Natural Resources

- 5,992 acres of primarily forested land
  - A mix of forest types, about 50% softwood, 30% mixedwood, 20% hardwood
  - 1,000+ acres dominated by cedar, of low quality
  - 716 non-forest acres
- 2 miles of frontage on The Throughfare and North Lake
- 4 miles of frontage on Monument Brook
- ~1,200 acres of wetlands, including ~1,000 acre Greenwood Brook complex with a variety of fen, swamp, meadow and marsh
- ~70 acre open cedar fen mapped by Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP); potentially additional fen area and enriched northern hardwood forest (pending additional surveys)

Aerial Imagery
Wetlands & MNAP-mapped Feature

- ~1,700 acres of a large deer wintering area (DWA) lies across the central part of the unit
- Part of more recently mapped biological deer wintering area (BDWA) to south extends onto unit
- ~800 acres of mapped inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat
- 4 species of Special Concern (3 birds, 1 amphibian) observed in Greenleaf Brook wetland area
- Vernal pools are unmapped but are numerous

Wildlife Features
Wildlife Features

Access & Recreation

- Access via State Route 1 and Boundary Road
- Two primary management roads (Picnic Area Road, North Lake/Monument Brook Road) are in good condition
  - Emera Maine recently rebuilt and otherwise improved roads for powerline access
- No developed recreation facilities
- Designated ATV route follows North Lake/Monument Brook Road up the east side of the Unit
Orient Unit Access and Recreation Features

North Lake and Monument Brook
General Vision for the Unit

- Protect ecological values associated with Monument Brook and extensive wetlands (incl. exemplary open cedar fen)
- Cooperative management with IF&W of the mapped BDWA/DWAs
- Accommodate dispersed recreation experiences (camping, fishing, and hunting), ATV access, potentially boating
- Manage about half of the unit primarily for timber, emphasizing high value forest products, while providing a variety of wildlife habitats and protecting other significant resources

Dominant Resource Allocations

- Summary of allocations:
  - Special Protection allocation applied to the exemplary cedar fen community; may expand to other areas pending further surveys
  - Wildlife allocation protects wetlands and other riparian areas
  - Developed Recreation allocation is applied to management road corridors
  - Timber Management allocation continues the historical emphasis on timber production on the parcel, with appropriate visual, recreation, and wildlife considerations.
Proposed Dominant Resource Allocations

- Special Protection - Natural Area: 1%
- Wildlife: 43%
- Developed Recreation Class 1: <1%
- Timber Management: 55%

Resource Allocations:
- Green: Special Protection - Natural Area
- Blue: Wildlife
- Light Purple: Developed Recreation Class 1
- Orange: Timber Management
Management Recommendations

- **Wildlife:**
  - Develop agreement with IF&W for management of BDWAs/DWAs; may cooperate with others on management

- **Recreation:**
  - Consider development of carry-in boat access to North Lake or Monument Brook

Timber Management

- Program to improve timber quality on the unit, with the overall objectives of growing high value timber products while maintaining visual integrity and enhancing the diversity of wildlife habitat
- Cooperative Agreement with IF&W will provide additional guidelines for management in the BDWAs/DWAs
- Due to modest stocking, unlikely that major harvests will occur during this 5 year Plan period or the succeeding 5 years
- Potential for harvests designed for DWA enhancement, which may include additional small areas
Comments and Questions?

Skagrock Brook wetland near Rt. 1

Next Steps

- BPL will work to finalize the Plan over the next few months
- In addition to comments provided here, all are welcome to comment during the next two weeks, via a phone call or in writing (email or regular mail)

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Thank You!

Aerial view looking south across Unit from confluence of Monument Brook with Greenleaf Brook (courtesy of Elbridge Cleaves)