

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
Bureau of Parks and Lands  
**St. John Uplands Region Management Plan**  
**Public Meeting – Final Draft Plan**  
January 27, 2021 6:00 – 7:30 PM  
Meeting held virtually via Microsoft Teams

**MEETING MINUTES**

The Public Meeting was attended by 3 people.

The following BPL staff members were present: Bill Patterson, Deputy Director; Liz Petruska, Director of Planning and Acquisitions; Jacob Guimond, Northern Region Lands Manager; David Pierce, Forester; Sarah Spencer, IF&W biologist assigned to BPL; Justin Schlawin, Maine Natural Areas Program; Jim Vogel, Planner/Plan Coordinator.

**Welcome/Introduction**

Jim Vogel welcomed the attendees, and asked Bureau staff to introduce themselves. A meeting agenda was included within the meeting presentation (see Attachment A).

**Presentation**

The meeting was structured around a PowerPoint presentation given by Jim Vogel, which began with background information on the St. John Uplands region and the planning process. The presentation then provided an overview the character, vision, resource allocations and management recommendations for each of the Public Reserved Lands as contained in the Final Draft Plan, beginning with the largest units (Telos, Round Pond, Chamberlain and Gero/Chesuncook) and concluding with the smaller units (Allagash Lots, Falls Pond Lot, and T14 lots). An opportunity was given for the attendees to make comments and ask questions regarding each management unit before moving on to the next part of the presentation, as reflected in the following record.

**Public Comments/Questions and BPL responses, when given (paraphrased from notes)**

Telos Unit

Matt LaRoche, AWW Superintendent

- Expressed concerns that the deer herd isn't doing well. BPL should do whatever it can to bring the herd back, including expanding zoned deer yards, signing an HMA and looking for opportunities for small harvests. Priorities should be having really good deer yards and providing a little boost, maybe through a small harvest to provide food.
- Expressed interest in seeing the boat launch built and would like to see more affirmative language in the plan to this effect. A hand carry launch is a good compromise if it is accessible – if it's situated too far away people either don't use it or they just leave their boat there because it's so much trouble. Would like to see if closer than 500 feet.

BPL Response – used “consider” language in the plan because BPL wants to be clear that there’s interest in the compromise solution before committing to implementation.

- Complemented the BPL foresters working on this unit. They do a good job managing the timber resource and protecting sensitive resources like wetlands.

### Round Pond Unit

Matt LaRoche, AWW Superintendent

- Question - when BPL designates a deer habitat management area, what does that mean on the ground? Does that mean management activities get approved by the regional wildlife biologist?

BPL Response – BPL works with IF&W to come up with an agreement and then any activity done in that habitat management area is done in conjunction with IF&W, including for input on any harvests. The HMA is included as an appendix of the plan.

- BPL did a great job with the tower. It will be a real asset, especially to people on the Allagash. Hopefully some interpretive information will be installed. A ¼ mile walk for people who are driving up there is kind of close. The closer they get, the more chance there is for vandalism. The gate should be further away.

BPL Response – vandalism is certainly something to consider.

### Chamberlain Unit

Melanie Sturm, Natural Resources Council of Maine

- Question - Has the eco-reserve designation been made official or will that happen when the plan is finalized?

BPL Response – there was a meeting of the Scientific Advisory Committee in September they voted unanimously to recommend that the Bureau Director add those lands to the Ecological Reserve System. It does not become official until the Plan, with a recommendation by the Director to the DACF Commissioner, is adopted.

Matt Laroche, AWW Superintendent

- Speaking as AWW Superintendent, the whole tramway would be better managed as part of the Allagash. The AWW has been grappling about how to manage that use and would like to consolidate management for clear messaging and data collection. Especially since it potentially has a significant impact on the other users of the AWW, with the recent substantial increase in use facilitated by the new trail to the trains. AWW has people in that area and could keep a closer eye on it.

Discussion – Some discussion followed about whether BPL’s Chamberlain agreement would be a good example to work from. In that case there’s actually a formal lease on the parking lot. This probably doesn’t have to be too formal, but if use continues to grow as it has been, it’s going to grow as a problem.

## Gero Island/Chesuncook

Matt Laroche, AWW Superintendent

- Regarding the old camp building. It may not seem overly valuable because it is mouse infested, but it has historically been used by PRC Rangers, and a few times by MCC crews that were working on campsites on Gero or nearby sites. It would be nice to have that option in the future  
Discussion – The building door is not even possible to close now. And you can really see the settling in the middle of the building. Think it's the last survivor from Great Northern – so it has some historic value. Agreement that it's hard to find resources for maintenance on old buildings like this.

## Allagash Lots

- No comments

## Falls Pond Lot

Matt Laroche

- Does the language about collaborating with IF&W refer to building a dam on the outlet?  
BPL Response – Yes, it refers to a water control structure to raise the level of the pond. There's much more detail in the plan itself than what's included in the slides this evening.

## T4 R11 and T15 R11

- No comments

## **Next Steps and Concluding Comments**

- Jim Vogel reminded attendees that the public is welcome to comment by phone call or in writing over the next 3 weeks. An email and mailing address to submit comments were provided on the final slide of the presentation
- The Bureau will review and respond to all comments, and these will be included in the plan appendix. We will consider whether any revisions are called for, and make those changes if necessary. We will then hand off the Final plan to the BPL Director and he will carry it forth to the Commissioner for adoption
- The meeting was concluded with a thank you to all who attended.

## **Written Comments submitted during 3-week comment period (ending 2/17/21)**

- Three individuals submitted comments by email between January 28 and February 17. (One AC member submitted written comments before the meeting.) Those comments are attached to these minutes (see Attachment B); the originals will be posted on the plan webpage.

## **Attachments:**

Attachment A: PowerPoint presentation

Attachment B: Written Comments submitted before and after the public meeting

# ATTACHMENT A

## St. John Uplands Region Management Plan

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

Public Meeting  
January 27, 2021



### FINAL DRAFT PLAN



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## Purpose and Agenda

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- **Purpose of this meeting**
  - Review and take comments on the Final Draft Plan
  - Review will focus on **Section IV – Resources and Management Issues**
    - Vision (major units only)
    - Dominant Resource Use Allocations
    - Management Recommendations
- **Agenda**
  - Brief review of plan process and plan area
  - Review 4 major Units
  - Review smaller lots (less detailed)
- **Will have pauses in presentation for comments**
  - Feel free to “raise hand” to ask questions at other points in presentation
  - Comments are also welcome on any of the other sections of the Final Draft Plan

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## Public Planning Process

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- **Step 1: Scoping**
  - Gather and share information on the resources present on the lands
  - Seek input from the public regarding their interests and ideas for uses and management of the property and issues of concern
- **Step 2: Draft Management Plan**
  - BPL drafts a 15 Year plan for the lands that protects the exceptional natural and biological resources and balances the variety of land uses and recreation interests on the parcels
  - BPL presents Draft Plan to the Advisory Committee for review and comment
  - BPL revises Draft Plan as needed
- **Step 3: Final Draft Management Plan**
  - **BPL presents Final Draft Management Plan to public for comment and discussion**
  - BPL responds to comments and prepares Final Plan
- **Step 4: Final Management Plan**
  - Presented to BPL Director for recommendation
  - Presented to DACF Commissioner for approval
  - Plan is adopted with signature of Commissioner

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### Public Reserved Lands of the St. John Uplands Region

- 4 major Units and 3 smaller lots and groups of smaller lots in Northern Piscataquis & Aroostook Counties
- >63,000 acres in total
- Major Units account for >90% of the public lands in the region

Name	Fee acres
<b>Telos Unit</b>	<b>22,761</b>
<b>Round Pond Unit</b>	<b>20,803</b>
<b>Chamberlain Unit</b>	<b>9,462</b>
<b>Gero Is. &amp; Chesuncook Unit</b>	<b>3,916</b>
Allagash SW Lot	1,011
Allagash NW Lot	982
Allagash SE Lot	993
T18 R10 (Falls Pond) Lot	988
Allagash NE Lot	750
T14 R11 Lot	509
T15 R11 Lot	490

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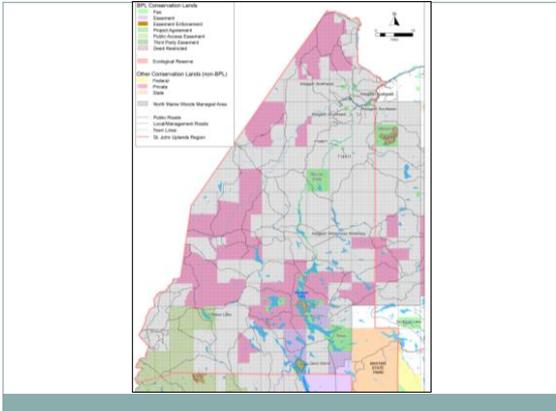
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### Resource Allocations

A system of designating and mapping all of the acres on Public Lands into categories (allocations).

Designation defines allowable management and recreation activities.

See IRP, Chapter VI for details

- Special Protection
- Backcountry Recreation
- Wildlife
- Remote Recreation
- Visual Consideration
- Developed Recreation
- Timber Management

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# Telos Unit



View of Coffeelos Pond from north shore

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## Character of the Unit

- Nearly 23,000 acres of primarily forested land; a major source of timber in the St. John Uplands Region
- ~50+ acre exemplary fen ecosystem

**Access:**

- Telos Road and extensive management road system provide access to most of Unit; access to Baxter State Park (by road and water)

**Fisheries:**

- Coffeelos Pond and Webster Lake both host significant cold water fisheries; Coffeelos is a Heritage Brook Trout pond

**Recreation facilities:**

- Several primitive drive-to campsites near Coffeelos Pond, with short shoreline access trails
- Portage trail along Webster Stream, campsites at stream outlet & north shore of lake
- Chamberlain parking lot - AWW parking, winter RV camping, 2 tent campsites & privy



South Coffeelos Pond campsite

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## General Vision for the Unit

- Accommodate primitive camping, boating, fishing, and hunting experiences
- Continue to provide access to AWW and camping for AWW visitors at Chamberlain parking area
- Consider developing carry-in boat access to Webster Lake
- Protect ecological values associated with ponds and exemplary fen
- More than 80% of the unit managed primarily for timber, emphasizing high value forest products, while providing a variety of wildlife habitats and protecting other significant resources



New road at Telos (July 2017)

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## Resource Allocations

- **Summary of allocations:**
  - **Special Protection** allocation protects exemplary fen community
  - **Wildlife** allocation protects wetland beyond Special Protection area, other riparian areas, and deer wintering areas
  - **Remote Recreation** allocation applied to shoreland areas adjacent to AWW parcels (within 500 feet of shore)
  - **Developed Recreation** allocation is applied to road corridors, campsites, and Chamberlain parking area
  - **Timber Management** allocation continues the historical emphasis on timber production on most of the unit, with appropriate visual, recreation, and wildlife considerations.

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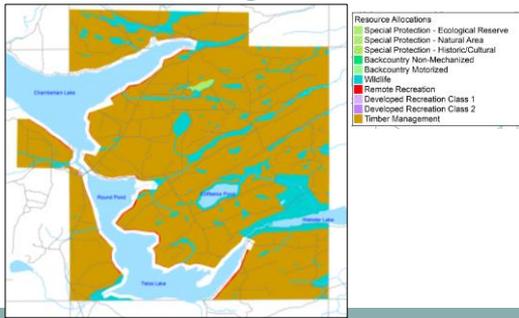
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## Resource Allocations – Telos



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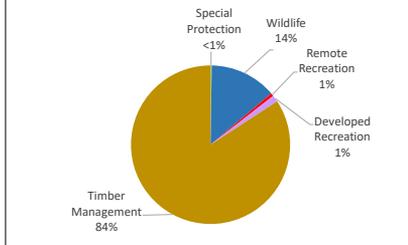
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### Telos Unit - Dominant Resource Allocations



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## Management Recommendations

- **Recreation:**
  - Continued maintenance of Coffeelos campsites by NMW and rehab of Webster Lake campsites, with Baxter SP
  - Close Kellogg Brook site; work with AWW on a plan for developing RV/trailer storage at another site
  - Consider development of carry-in boat access on south side of Webster Lake
- **Wildlife:**
  - Survey and evaluate the DWAs on the Unit
  - If surveys and additional information indicates management for deer wintering habitat is viable and worthwhile, work with IF&W on development of a draft HMA



*RVs and trailers stored at Kellogg Brook (Aug. 2019)*

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## Timber Management

- Continuation of long-term 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
- Harvesting in areas abutting the AWW allocated to Remote Rec. will be light and will seek to mimic harvests in Visual Class I areas
- Areas visible from the AWW waterbodies will be subject to Visual Class II considerations; AWW will be notified when harvests are planned within the one-mile zone
- The Bureau will consult with MNAP when planning harvests in the vicinity of the Chamberlain fen.

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## Administrative Issues

- **Signage and Visitor Information:**
  - Assess signage and visitor information at Chamberlain parking area for possible improvements
- **Coffeelos Pond Boat Storage:**
  - Take steps to bring boat storage at pond into compliance with BPL policy



*Unusable boat stored at Coffeelos Pond*

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## Round Pond Unit



*View toward Round Pond from fire tower platform*

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## Character of the Unit

- 20,000+ acres of forestland on both sides of the Allagash River and crossed by several tributary streams
- HMA:
  - Since 2006, 10,000+ acre DWA managed under HMA developed with IF&W
- Exemplary natural communities:
  - 3 hardwood knolls, and along Schedule Brook; rare plant within small wetland
- Recreation facilities:
  - Former MFS fire tower; rehabilitation recently completed including new cab
  - Day hike trail to fire tower from AWW shore/campsite



*Fire tower with new cab*

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## General Vision for the Unit

- Enhance deer wintering habitat as guided by Deer Wintering Area HMA
- Work toward enhancement of recreational and historical value of fire tower
- Expand public access to the road system in the SE quadrant of the Unit
- Manage timber as primary use on ~48% of unit, respecting wildlife habitat needs and visual concerns in relation to AWW-visible areas



*Gate near SE corner of Unit*

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### Resource Allocations

- **Summary of Allocations**
  - **Special Protection** allocation on 3 hardwood knolls in NW quadrant of unit (to be resurveyed by MNAP)
  - **Wildlife** allocation within the area subject to the Deer Wintering Area HMA, and riparian areas outside HMA
  - **Remote Recreation** allocation applied to buffer surrounding fire tower trail
  - **Developed Recreation** allocation applied along road corridors (roads designated for public use)
  - **Timber Management** allocation on remaining acres

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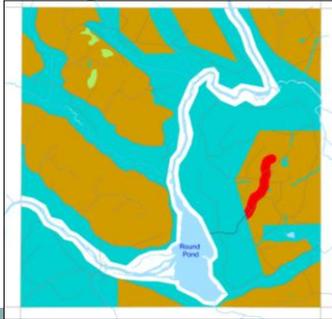
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### Resource Allocations – Round Pond

- Resource Allocations
- Special Protection - Ecological Reserve
  - Special Protection - Natural Area
  - Special Protection - Historic/Cultural
  - Backcountry Non-Mechanized
  - Backcountry Motorized
  - Wildlife
  - Remote Recreation
  - Developed Recreation Class 1
  - Developed Recreation Class 2
  - Timber Management




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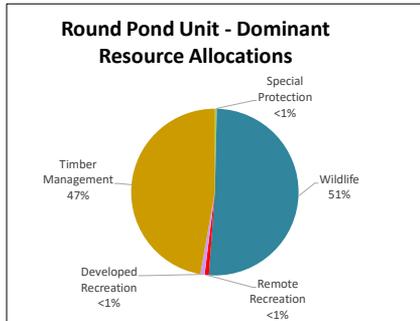
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### Round Pond Unit - Dominant Resource Allocations




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## Management Recommendations

- **Recreation and Public Access:**
  - Develop interpretive information and displays for fire tower
  - Move existing gate to location near where fire tower trail crosses mgmt. road
- **Wildlife:**
  - Continue implementation of Habitat Management Agreement in coordination with IF&W
- **Timber Management:**
  - Management for high quality forest products and improvement of forest quality (in accord with HMA), while protecting visual quality
  - Mapped AWW Visible Areas will be subject to Visual Class I considerations




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## Chamberlain Unit

Abandoned Eagle Lake & West Branch RR line within Chamberlain Ecological Reserve




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## Character of the Unit

- 8 non-contiguous tracts of forestland on Big Eagle, Chamberlain and Allagash Lakes, totaling ~9,500 acres
- All 8 tracts abut the AWW along the lakeshores
- Chamberlain (aka Bear Mountain) Ecological Reserve
  - Largest subunit (2,890 ac) designated as reserve in 2001
  - Eagle Lake Tramway Historic District encompasses west part of reserve
- **Exemplary natural communities:**
  - Several documented within the reserve and on three other tracts
- **Access:**
  - Ecoreserve and several other tracts have no roads, or none open to the public
- **Recreation facilities:**
  - short trail to historic locomotives (within AWW) and tramway portage trail within ecoreserve
  - Allagash Mtn. fire tower and trail to tower from lakeshore
  - Short trail to high point on Pump Handle peninsula



Allagash Mountain fire tower

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### General Vision for the Unit

- About 37% of the unit managed as Ecological Reserve, with the addition of the Pump Handle and Boot peninsulas to the reserve
- Continue to maintain trail to fire tower, tramway portage trail, and Pump Handle trail (with AWW) and new trail to locomotives
- Continue to provide snowmobile routes across parcels, linking the lakes
- Remainder managed primarily for timber, emphasizing high value forest products, while providing a variety of wildlife habitats and protecting other significant resources

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### Resource Allocations

- **Summary of Allocations**
  - Special Protection allocation on Chamberlain Ecological Reserve, including addition of Pump Handle and Boot peninsulas
  - Wildlife allocation within major and minor riparian zones, outside of the ecological reserve
  - Remote Recreation allocation applied to shoreland areas adjacent to AWW (within 500 feet of shore in most areas, with wider buffer where LUPC P-UA zoning applies) and to buffer zone surrounding fire tower trail
  - Timber Management allocation on remaining acres

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### Resource Allocations – The Boot and Pump Handle peninsulas



- Resource Allocations
- Special Protection - Ecological Reserve
- Special Protection - Natural Area
- Special Protection - Historic/Cultural
- Backcountry Non-Mechanized
- Backcountry Motorized
- Wildlife
- Remote Recreation
- Developed Recreation Class 1
- Developed Recreation Class 2
- Timber Management

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### Resource Allocations – Chamberlain ER, Soper Mtn., Indian Pond, Lost Pond Subunits



- Resource Allocations
- Special Protection - Ecological Reserve
- Special Protection - Natural Area
- Special Protection - Historic/Cultural
- Backcountry Non-Mechanized
- Backcountry Motorized
- Wildlife
- Remote Recreation
- Developed Recreation Class 1
- Developed Recreation Class 2
- Timber Management

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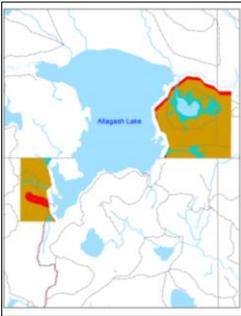
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### Resource Allocations – Otter Pond and Allagash Lake Subunits



- Resource Allocations
- Special Protection - Ecological Reserve
- Special Protection - Natural Area
- Special Protection - Historic/Cultural
- Backcountry Non-Mechanized
- Backcountry Motorized
- Wildlife
- Remote Recreation
- Developed Recreation Class 1
- Developed Recreation Class 2
- Timber Management

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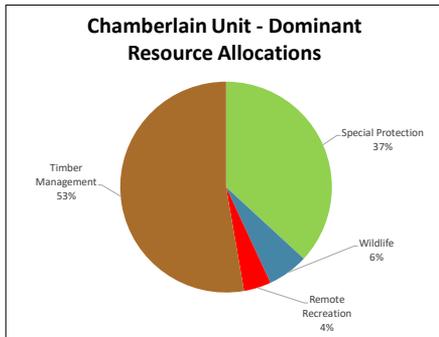
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### Chamberlain Unit - Dominant Resource Allocations



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## Management Recommendations

• **Recreation:**

- Continue coordination with AWW for trail maintenance
- Reroute steep portions of Allagash Mtn. fire tower trail

• **Timber Management:**

- Continue management for high quality forest products and improvement of forest quality
- Visual Class I considerations will apply for areas visible from the AWW



*Remains of tramway along portage trail*

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## Gero Island and Chesuncook



*Gero Island campsite maintained by PRC*

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## Character of Unit

• **Gero Island (3,180 acres):**

- Ecological Reserve, designated in 2001
- 4 shoreline campsites on island, managed by PRC

• **Chesuncook (736 acres):**

- Most of Chesuncook Village is private land, 2 leased lots
- Access road to Village was improved in recent years
- Gravel boat launch with season float at Graveyard Point, managed by PRC




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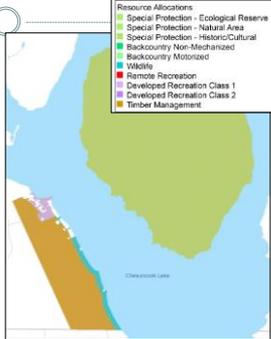
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## Resource Allocations

### • Allocations

- **Special Protection** allocation on Gero Island (ecoreserve)
- **Wildlife** allocation along Chesuncook lakeshore buffer
- **Developed Recreation** in Chesuncook Village area
- **Timber Management** allocation on remaining acres




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## Management Recommendations

### • Roads

- Work with county on maintenance plan for roads and named streets

### • Administrative Issues

- Consider selling leased lot and undeveloped camplots to abutters
- Evaluate whether to repair or remove the bunkhouse
- Develop lease for CLH seasonal dock and use of cove

### • Timber Management

- Little or no harvest anticipated this plan period
- Areas near Village and lakeshore subject to Visual Class 1 considerations



Bureau staff inspection of Graveyard Point bunkhouse (Aug 2019)



Cove near Chesuncook Lake House and dock

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## Allagash Lots



Deer utilizing DWA

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### Character of Lots

- 4 lots near Town of Allagash
- Each 750-1000 acres
- Large deer wintering area extends onto all or part of all four lots
- MNAP has documented rare plants along the rivershore on 2 of the lots
- Network of snowmobile and ATV trails in the area, crossing one of the lots

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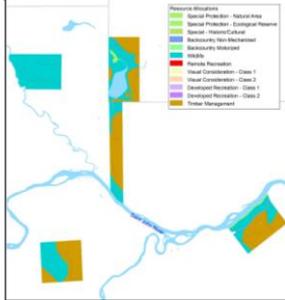
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### Resource Allocations

- **Allocations:**
  - Special Protection on SE lot along St. John River shore due to rare plants as well as small hardwood seepage forest area
  - Most acres allocated to Wildlife due to large DWA and St. John River frontage
  - Remainder to Timber Management




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### Management Recommendations

- **Recommendations:**
  - Timber management targeting hardwood/mixedwood stands
  - Work to retain and expand conforming winter cover for deer
  - Visual Class I consideration applied in areas visible from river and Rt. 161
  - Consult with MNAP when planning any timber management activity in the vicinity of the rivershore exemplary natural communities and rare plants on the SE and NE lots.

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## Falls Pond Lot



Boat launch on Falls Pond

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## Character of Lot

- 988 acres surrounding 224 ac. Falls Pond
- Brook trout fishery at pond
- Deer wintering area extends onto north part of lot
- MNAP has documented "rare and exemplary" northern white cedar swamp north of pond, within large wetland complex
- Gravel boat launch and campsites at south end of pond
- Snowmobile trail crosses lot on road



Falls Pond boat access

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## Resource Allocations

- **Allocations:**
  - Special Protection in area of exemplary Northern White Cedar Swamp
  - Nearly half of the acres allocated to Wildlife due to large DWA and extensive wetlands
  - Developed Recreation in boat launch and campsite area
  - Remainder to Timber Management



- Resource Allocations
- Special Protection - Ecological Reserve
  - Special Protection - Natural Area
  - Special Protection - Historic/Cultural
  - Backcountry Non-Motorized
  - Backcountry Motorized
  - Wildlife
  - Remote Recreation
  - Developed Recreation Class 1
  - Developed Recreation Class 2
  - Timber Management

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### Management Recommendations

- **Recommendations:**
  - BPL will coordinate with IF&W on any harvests planned for the DWA
  - Consult with MNAP when planning any timber management activity in the vicinity of the exemplary Northern White Cedar Swamp.
  - Consider pre-commercial thinning in sapling stands
  - Collaborate with IF&W on potential fisheries project in outlet stream

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### T14 R11 & T15 R11 Lots




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### Character of Lots

- 2 Lots, about 500 acres each
- Located between Round Pond Unit and Allagash, east of river
- Accessible via private roads (rough)
- Do not abut AWW but about half the acreage is within the one-mile zone
- A portion of T15 R11 is within a mapped AWW Visual Zone

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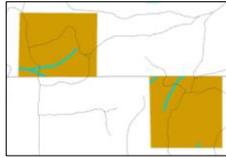
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### Resource Allocations and Mgmt. Recommendations

- **Allocations:**
  - Wildlife in the minor riparian zones associated with small streams
  - Remainder to Timber Management
- **Recommendations:**
  - BPL will coordinate with AWW prior to timber harvests within the AWW visual zones




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### Next Steps and Comments

- In addition to comments provided tonight, all are welcome to comment during the next three weeks, via a phone call or in writing (email or regular mail)
- BPL will prepare the Final Plan over the next month or so, which will include any revisions in response to comments received
- Comments and BPL responses will be included in Plan Appendix A

Jim Vogel  
 18 Elkins Lane, Harlow Building  
 22 State House Station  
 Augusta ME 04333-0022

Jim.Vogel@maine.gov  
 207-287-2163

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*Thank You!*



*Katahdin range from Chesuncook*

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# ATTACHMENT B

**From:** [LaRoche, Matt](#)  
**To:** [Cutko, Andy](#); [Patterson, William A](#); [Vogel, Jim](#)  
**Subject:** no surprises  
**Date:** Thursday, January 21, 2021 11:18:04 AM

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Andy, Bill and Jim,

As you all probably know I have a lot of interest in the St. John Uplands management plan both personally and professionally. I do not want to surprise any of you at the upcoming public meeting on the plan for that unit, so I thought it best to send you my comments prior to the meeting.

My comments on the plan are below:

*General comments:*

Thank you to the Northern Region Lands Division for moving ahead with the installation of new cabs on the fire towers on Allagash and Round Pond Mountains. I actually never thought this would happen. I'm sure there were many reasons that could have been cited to not complete this project. Kudos to all that were involved with this project.

Overall I am very pleased with the forestry work that Public Lands does on the land base. The emphasis seems to always be on improving the timber stand, salvaging trees that are in decline and improving stand diversity.

*Telos Unit:*

- **Wildlife** -I would like to see expanded areas around deer wintering areas designated as wildlife management as the dominate use. The expanded areas to be twice the size of the zoned deer yards. I would really like to see a signed Habitat Management Agreement with IF&W for this unit. It is hard to believe that an HMA was not signed with IF&W many years ago. If an HMA was signed with IF&W the suggestion to expand the zoned deer yards would not be

necessary. I have talked with Doug Kane, Regional Wildlife Biologist in Greenville, he said he has sought a cooperative deer management agreement with BPL on the Telos Unit for years. The deer herd is hurting in the unit, but a few mild winters and some other strategies could bring the deer herd back. Another suggestion is to have small harvest operations around the deer yards that last all winter. This would provide tops for feed and packed down areas for the deer to move freely (*I understand from Doug that they are trying this adjacent to the Pittston Farm deer yard*). When I brought this up in the past, the response from the local forester was that it would be too expensive to plow the roads. My response to that is, this is public land and the cost of plowing roads should not be the determining factor in the implementation of a practice that benefits the deer herd.

- **Recreation** – On page 33, under Webster Lake Boat Access, delete “consider” and just say develop a drive-in access... There are no LUCP or BPL designations for special protection or restricted access at Webster Lake. In fact, there used to be vehicle access at the inlet of the lake. As a compromise, I suggest a road to within 100 feet of the lake with an improved six foot wide trail to the edge of the water. A turn around would need to be built at the end of the road , a parking lot for six vehicles could be built outside the zoned deer yard. The need to carry 100-feet to the water will restrict the size of watercraft and motors on the lake. The six foot wide foot trail could also serve as a snowmobile access to the lake. I have talked with several people that think Webster Lake is being managed for the few people that can afford to be flown into Webster Lake.

#### *Round Pond Unit:*

- **Recreation** - On page 48, I think that allowing vehicle access within one quarter of a mile of the Round Pond tower is a mistake. This will make it easier for potential vandalism of the tower and the interpretive material that will be displayed in the cab. The sense of remoteness for those climbing to the tower from the AWW will be

diminished. I would suggest that the gate be located no closer than one mile from the tower.

*Chamberlain Lake Unit:*

- **Recreation** – Manage the trail to the tramway/trains from the road and the portage trail that runs beside the tramway rails as part of the AWW. The AWW would assume management and maintenance of the trail and trailhead. Any significant expenses related to management of these trails to be paid by the Lands Division. The AWW is much better positioned to assume maintenance of the trail and the primary attraction is within the AWW restricted zone. It is going to be a challenge moving forward to minimize the impact of the foot trail access on the wilderness character of the AWW. The AWW is best suited to monitor and manage that use.

Give me a call if you want to discuss any of these suggestions in more detail.

*Matthew LaRoche*

**Superintendent, AWW**

**207-695-2169**

**[Maine.gov/allagash](http://Maine.gov/allagash)**



February 10, 2021

Re: Final Management Plan for the St. John Uplands Region

Dear Jim,

On behalf of the Natural Resources Council of Maine (NRCM), I appreciate the opportunity to provide additional comments on the St. John Uplands Region Management Plan. Thank you for responding to our comments on the draft plan. I noticed that the final management plan includes a few changes in response to our comments, such as: The new section on how the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL) is addressing climate change, continuing consideration of options for RV/trailer storage at the Kellogg Brook site, and assurances that there will be no timber harvesting in the hemlock stand upslope of Route 161.

Overall, we are supportive of the wide use of wildlife management area allocations in the final plan, particularly because this is one of the most ecologically significant areas in Maine and hosts two significant deer wintering areas. Since special protection zones are proposed in the final plan – the most protective resource allocation, as you mentioned – and the secondary resource allocation in many of the wildlife management areas is remote recreation, we are satisfied with the balance BPL struck between timber management, resource protection, and recreation.

However, we remain concerned with a couple aspects of the plan, including adding trailered boat access at Webster Lake. We urge you to abandon the proposal to create additional access to this water body and instead maintain carry-in access only. Allowing motorboats on the lake, even with limits on engine horsepower, will not adequately preserve the scenic and remote character of the undeveloped shoreline or prevent aquatic invasive species introduction. We strongly urge BPL to work in close coordination with Baxter State Park on management decisions at Webster Lake, with the goal of not adding motorboats.

We also remain concerned with plans to increase ease of access to the Allagash Mountain fire tower and locomotives, specifically because the citizen-approved bond to purchase the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) requires that the state seek to “develop the maximum wilderness character” of the AWW. We believe plans to continue and expand access at the locomotives and the fire tower, respectively, would deplete the wilderness character of the AWW by increasing the number of people that may be present at these sites during several months out of the year. While we certainly support public access to public lands, we also strongly support efforts to protect the maximum wilderness character of the AWW. The AWW is the state’s only wild and scenic river and there are few remaining places like the Allagash in the entire Eastern United States. As such, extra effort must be made to conserve the AWW’s natural resources and habitat and to prevent the slow chipping away of the AWW’s wilderness character by incrementally easing restrictions. While we understand BPL is working to balance public access with resource protection and management, we believe the gate regulating access to the fire tower should remain where it is and that access to the locomotives by land should be discontinued. While we understand that there is no data documenting the level of walk in/day use, we are aware of several firsthand accounts from people traveling the waterway suggesting that there have

been so many people congregated at the trains that it degrades the experience for paddlers. I hope that you'll take into account the impacts that decisions made on all units of the St. John Uplands management area will have on the neighboring, state managed AWW.

We greatly appreciate the careful attention you have given to this management plan. In a region like the Upper St. John, where a sense of remoteness and intact habitats remain, we encourage you to think beyond the scope of these management units and consider the unique role this region plays in a world with so few locations left that have its distinguishing attributes. Thank you for accepting my comments, and please let me know if you have questions.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Melanie Sturm". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the "Respectfully submitted," text.

Melanie Sturm  
Forests and Wildlife Director



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**February 15, 2021**

Mr. Jim Vogel  
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry  
22 State House Station  
Augusta, Maine 04333  
E-Mail: [Jim.Vogel@maine.gov](mailto:Jim.Vogel@maine.gov)

Re: Final Management Plan for the St. John Uplands Region

Dear Jim,  
Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the St. John Uplands Region Management Plan.

My experience in the North Maine Woods began in 1972 when Manager of Aroostook State Park. While at Aroostook, I was also assigned as a radio operator for the AWW. In other words, the Waterway's link to the outside world. That same fall Allagash Superintendent Leigh Hoar was dismissed from his position and he was directed to deliver the AWW's administrative and historical files to Aroostook State Park. I spent that winter reviewing historical and legal records establishing the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. An opportunity which allowed me to become knowledgeable about the legislative intent with establishing the Waterway.

The winter of 1973 and 1974 I was employed to survey to the boundary line of the AWW Restricted Zone. Thus, expanding my knowledge of the area through firsthand experience. Then in 1981 I was hired as Allagash Supervisor where I worked for 18 years until retirement in 1999.

I have received a copy of the final management plan and would like to offer the following comments:

\* I am concerned with plans to increase ease of access to Allagash Mountain fire tower, moving the road gate to Round Pond Fire Tower in T13R12 closer to the tower, and the increased foot traffic at the Tramway.

A. Allagash Tower Trail-During my time as supervisor, legislation was introduced to allow people with disabilities vehicle access to the Ranger's camp on the lake, along with all (possible 11 members) of their party. At the time, the Director of Operations and Maintenance agreed to opening the gate for such activities. However, 'Wilderness Inquiry,' a guide service that offered wilderness trips to the disabled, along with NRCM and others testified against the legislation. It was argued that such exemption would reduce the wilderness character of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway for all. Fortunately, due to lack of public support, the billed was killed in committee.

Today the former access road is only a foot trail. Permanently closed to motorized traffic several years ago by being ditched and blocked with boulders. To move the gate would only encourage more requests for exemptions and other intrusions to the wild character. Perhaps even building pressure to create an aircraft landing zone on Allagash Lake.

B. Round Pond Fire Tower T13R12: If the current gate is relocated closer to the tower, it is likely that public use will increase because the area will become a hiking destination. Thus, reducing the aesthetics of those who have paddled the corridor, arrived at Round Pond, hiked to the tower, only to find day use groups who have driven and walked in.

The likely of such an experience was confirmed last fall when a picture was posted on social media of a person who had climbed the tower and taken a photograph of his pickup parked near the steel base.

I am also concerned that moving the gate further the north would open an old road and encourage vehicle access to the Jalbert Sporting Camps on Round Pond.

C. Foot traffic to the Tramway and the locomotives:

The citizen-approved bond to purchase the Allagash Wilderness Waterway (AWW) required that the state seek to "develop the maximum wilderness character" of the AWW. I believe plans to continue and expand access at the locomotives and the fire towers, respectively, would not only deplete the wilderness character of the AWW, but increase the number of non-canoers to frequent these sites.

According to North Maine Woods, the summer and fall season of 2019 saw a total of 1,609 people registered at NMW's gates to hike into the trains. The summer of 2020 saw a dramatic increase with 3,086 registering to visit the trains from spring opening to Oct. 16<sup>th</sup>. Almost a 60% increase over the 2019-year traffic. However, those figures only represent visitors who registered at a North Maine Woods gate. They do not represented visitation from other sources such as local camp leases, sporting camp clients, or nearby fly in traffic. Canoers who visited the site,

reported meeting groups of 50 to 80 people who had comfortably hiked the 16 minutes from the nearby parking lot.

Today's access to the Tramway along 'Sarah's Road' in T8R13 was a route once blocked for many years at the one mile of the AWW, has only recently opened and extended closer to the Trains.

As someone who has walked the ground and heard from hundreds about significance of the area's wildness, I strongly support efforts to protect the maximum wilderness character of the AWW. The AWW is the state's only wild and scenic river and there are few remaining places like the Allagash in the entire Eastern United States. As such, extra effort must be made to conserve the AWW's natural resources and habitat to prevent the slow chipping away of the AWW's wilderness character by incrementally easing restrictions. I support the Natural Resource Council of Maine when they commented that the gates regulating access to the fire towers should remain as is and that access to the locomotives by land should be discontinued.

While the plan does discuss some recent improvements to the history of the Tramway, there is key information missing. From 1995 to 1999 volunteers worked to jack, replace rail bed and steel rail to stabilize leaning locomotives. Their effort saved the State thousands of dollars. At the time, due to the weight of the project, BPL offered to build a road into the site. But the group, fully committed to living within the 'To Develop Maximum Wilderness Character,' legislation, turned down the offered improvement. Choosing to do the hard labor by hand.

Seems so, the Bureau of Parks and Lands should display that same ethical standard 'to Developing Maximum Wilderness Character' exemplified by those hard-working volunteers so many years ago. To support and encourage that effort, again I feel the current Sarah's Road should be discontinued at the outer edge of the AWW's Mile Zone.

I hope that the Bureau will consider impacts that decisions will make on [all] units of the St. John Uplands management area and the adjacent Allagash Wilderness Waterway. A status so respected that it is protected by state and federal law. A place where opportunities still exist for a sense of wildness and melding within natural habitats.

For years I have heard firsthand the matchless role this region has played for so many lives. Thank you for the opportunity to comment and please feel free to contact me if I may be of any assistance.

Sincerely,

*Tim Caverly*

[www.allagashtails.com](http://www.allagashtails.com)

**From:** [Alexandra Conover Bennett](#)  
**To:** [Vogel, Jim](#)  
**Subject:** St. John Uplands RMP  
**Date:** Wednesday, February 17, 2021 3:19:14 PM

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EXTERNAL: This email originated from outside of the State of Maine Mail System. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Dear Jim,

I am Alexandra Conover Bennett of Willimantic/Elliotsville Twp. My partner Garrett Conover and I have worked in our youth and then became year-round guides in this region since the early 1970's. Our guide service, North Woods Ways, attracted both Mainers and foreigners alike who highly valued wild areas. Time and again they informed us that we had no idea just how rare Maine's North Woods was - even if it is a corporate managed timberland laced with 30,000+ miles of dirt roads.

They loved the St John and Allagash and West Branch Penobscot waterways and enjoyed trips on the main branches and their tributaries both winter and summer. We took them on 6 day snowshoeing camp outs and 5-8 day canoe camping trips.

It is noteworthy however, that part of a guide's challenge is to find them areas that can provide a wilderness feel: wildlife, quietude, scarce human activity and dark night skies. They paid us good money for decades for this privilege.

I now work on these same waterways with College of the Atlantic students outdoor leaders.

With this background in mind, I'm sure you will see why I enthusiastically support all of Tim Caverly's suggestions. And those of NRCM.

What I would like to stress is that access is the key to whether a place can retain a wilderness character.

In my time on the Allagash, the access points have gone from a few to over a dozen places. That directly and negatively changed our clients and my students experience. Sometimes we arrive at Round Pond after a few days on the River, only to find all the sites taken because day users had put in at Henderson Bridge and occupied all the sites.

I think we need to actually designate certain uses for BPL properties or units. (As we did on the Allagash and are still trying to maintain. ) In other words, rather than trying to have each unit serve all user groups, and putting in easy access for everyone, instead, focus upon something special that unit has and have the access reflect that.

For instance, say we have a BPL unit with an exceptional unstocked wild brookies pond or lake. The ideal would be to have dedicated use for non- motorized, walk-in fly fishing only, encouraged and provided for.

For if we don't dedicate the uses of each unit in a focused way then everything goes to default mode - i. e. roads and easy access. Places like the Tramway could quickly go to a noisy, motorized, easy access site if we let it. But that would not be in accordance with the AWW statutes. And it would drastically change the feeling of coming upon those old engines in the middle of a long canoeing trip. So, its a slippery slope. Wild areas and wild experiences disappear fast.

Being very careful with access is critical to how we maintain both thriving BPL units and a happy public. There need to be places that are wild and forever wild in this over populated, over- busy world.

Maine has tremendous potential in being a wilderness destination if we allow for it, value it and carefully provide guidelines in our long term planning documents.

Thank you very much for reaching out to the public for our opinions.

Please add me to your mailing list so I can continue to keep myself informed.

And thank you for all your good work.

Sincerely,

Alexandra