

**Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks and Lands
Advisory Committee Meeting (#2) – Tumbledown-Mount Blue Management Plan
September 21, 2020, 6:00 to 7:30 pm
Virtual Meeting held via Microsoft Teams**

Post-Meeting Written Comments

Advisory Committee member comments

- Erica DuBois, FSM email 9/23/20
- Michelle Wynn, TCA statement 9/30/20
- Lisa Drapeau email 10/1/20

Additional comments

- Eliza Townsend, AMC letter 9/30/20

Vogel, Jim

From: erica@fsmaine.org
Sent: Wednesday, September 23, 2020 5:24 PM
To: Vogel, Jim
Cc: Petruska, Liz
Subject: Tumbledown post-meeting thoughts

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Hi Jim,

Based on feedback from other members of the committee and guests, it seems like there are three reasonable courses of action for managing human activities/impacts on Tumbledown:

1. Install privies and facilitate camping, possibly using the Mt. Blue State Park reservation system.
2. Install privies to deal with human waste issue, but also prohibit camping.
3. Don't install privies (at least above treeline) and prohibit camping.

I heard arguments in favor of each of the three options above. There's a downside to adding a privy-structure in terms of the experience (loss of "remote" feeling). On the other hand, we also heard people calling for better management of human waste and the impacts associated with it.

Of course, there is a fourth option: No nothing. But no one seems to think that's a reasonable choice. There's definitely a clear call to protect, in some way, both ecological values and the recreational experience of being on Tumbledown.

One thing that would be helpful for me to understand as a committee member, is: is a privy on the mountain really feasible? What would it cost to build and maintain such a thing and, critically, will it be serviceable? (ex. Borestone Mountain has a moldering privy that likely sees similar use #s but there's also a road to it. Baxter has to physically remove human waste from backcountry facilities like Chimney Pond using snowmobiles, which is a huge undertaking of resources and time. Who is going to fish all the weird items out of it when people inevitably drop them in there? etc.)

It seems like we've consistently heard, as a committee, that an increased State presence on the mountain, particularly at night, would be extremely beneficial. I mentioned that I'm not real comfortable with the committee recommending that BPL rely on the MEFS or MEWS to enforce new rules--that is, if we say "no camping"--without at least getting some positive indication from those agencies that they are willing/able to take that on. However, there's the practical/safety issue of dealing with fires, large parties, drunken individuals, etc. So of course we will need to think carefully about how any new rules, if there are any, get enforced.

I will to note that of all the choices, only one has the potential to make revenue and that's facilitating camping reservations through the Mt. Blue State Park system. (It's also probably the biggest up-front investment.)

It occurs to me that BPL could always do a managed camping "trial" and evaluate impacts over that period, such as 5-year and 10-year intervals. If the Bureau isn't happy with the results of an evaluation, than camping could be closed. That might be one way to leave some flexibility in the plan, and also incentivize good user behaviors.

If the committee can be reminded at the next meeting what mapped special communities are present on the mountain and if any impacts to them have been observed/quantified, that would be helpful. Charles H. also mentioned something about changes to zone designations to restrict activities. Is that something that should be considered based on the resources?

Thanks! **And can you also please send me the details for the hike on October 1 (trails, timing, etc.)?** I'm not sure I can make it, but it might be good for me to see the area in question (with regards to human waste impacts) in order to understand the issues at hands.

All the best, Erica

Erica Cassidy Dubois (she/her/hers)
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Forest Society of Maine - Your land trust for Maine's North Woods

To Jim Vogel and the Planning Committee,

I am writing today as a board member of Tumbledown Conservation Alliance. After speaking with other board members and past donors and supporters of the Tumbledown Mountain acquisition and conservation project, I have prepared the following statement.

We would like the entire Tumbledown Mountain summit area, including Tumbledown Pond, Little Jackson, Big Jackson, and Parker Ridge areas to be permanently closed to camping. We feel this step is necessary to maintain existing vegetation, wildlife and critical summit ecosystems, and to restore lost vegetation to recover exposed soils, including underbrush and habitats significant to wildlife.

Over the past two decades, as this region has increased in popularity and usage, we have seen the devastating affects of unmanaged camping, fire rings, deforestation, trampling, etc. In addition, we have seen an increase in threats to the water quality of the fragile Tumbledown Pond including soil erosion, pollution due to human activity, bathing, dishwashing, and runoff inputs from human waste. It is only a matter of time before these affects threaten the aquatic systems of this precious pond.

I would also like to address the quality of the hiking experience for day hikers who encounter camping groups occupying the summit area. The summit/pond area is quite small, this is very apparent to the day hikers who arrive on a summer Saturday afternoon and feel they have entered a campground. Fires burn, trash abounds, swimmers crowd the area around the pond, giving one the feeling of trespassing into someone's campsite. Campers have a far greater lasting impact on the summit than day hikers. Frankly, there is not enough land area to accommodate the massive numbers of people who want to enjoy this beautiful summit area.

We hope that the elimination of camping is a good starting point for addressing some of these issues. Adding an outhouse and tent platforms would only complicate the problem. We would like to see this unique area treated like the precious gem that it is. We are grateful to have these lands preserved by the state

for future generations. We would like to see restoration efforts to restore the vegetation and aquatic systems to a more balanced state where human use is not the most obvious feature.

We want the peregrine falcons and Bricknell's thrushes to continue to inhabit this ecosystem. We recognize that it takes an entire ecosystem to support not only the threatened species, but all components and members of the system. Human visitors need to remain just that: Visitors. People should be encouraged to enjoy a rigorous hike, come to the summit, and show their friends and children what an intact forest can look like. Smell the woods, hear the birds, and experience the complex textures of this forest. In our daily lives we are surrounded by humanity, but do not want to see the garbage and waste from careless past users around every corner.

Our hope is to encourage an attitude shift, to trade the "Free-for-All" party atmosphere for a treasured environment where all are encouraged to "tread lightly" and truly "leave no trace." We are in deep gratitude to all previous efforts of the forest stewards and employees and managers of Mount Blue State Park. We credit them for their continued efforts in education of hikers, trail maintenance and monitoring. This is hard work and they have tackled these tasks with passion and enthusiasm.

It is my hope that most users of Tumbledown Mountain share our opinions of this situation. We climb in search of peace, beauty, a nice view of the lakes and surrounding mountains, the songs and antics of birds and wildlife. We want to quietly contemplate the area geology, the lichens and clinging summit species that make their marginal existence on these mountaintops. It is not our intention to exclude users of this area, but to protect its integrity for future users.

Thank you all for your time and consideration of this issue as you draft your plan for management of the Tumbledown Unit.

Sincerely,
Michelle Wynn



Mr. Jim Vogel, Senior Planner
Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands
22 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333
September 30, 2020

Dear Mr. Vogel,

Thank you for the opportunity to listen to the meeting of the Tumbledown/Mt. Blue Advisory Committee last week. I was glad to hear virtually all of the participants endorse the need to protect a beloved and ecologically significant resource. Since no clear consensus on solutions appears to have emerged, I'd like to offer some comments.

The Appalachian Mountain Club has conducted research in the alpine zone for decades, including long-term monitoring of high elevation freshwater lakes, ponds, and streams in the northeast. Colleagues who conduct the monitoring at Tumbledown Pond have observed not only the conditions BPL has described, but also the use of fireworks and the introduction of baitfish to the pond.

Though the heavy use of Tumbledown and the resulting litter and damage are not new issues, they seem to have increased during the COVID-19 pandemic and warrant action. It's important to acknowledge that efforts to educate the public have not solved the problem to date, and that any solution will require ongoing monitoring, education, and enforcement. All of those require staff, and funding.

AMC has long experience managing backcountry recreation in the popular White Mountains, which have experienced a similar increase in use during the pandemic. That experience leads us to offer the following suggestions:

Privies

We support the plan to install moldering privies and urge that they be placed well away from and downhill of Tumbledown Pond, to prevent negative impacts on water quality, steer camping away from the summit, and to protect the visitor experience. Double or triple bin facilities will require less frequent service.

Camping

Reducing the compaction, erosion and loss of vegetation in the fragile environment will take a variety of strategies. One initial solution could be the development of sites to replace those that were historically available at the base of the mountain. Ideally, such a site would accommodate larger groups.

Banning mountaintop camping outright would be the preferable strategy to protect the fragile mountain environment, but the reality is that some users will continue to defy the ban. Enforcement would continue to be necessary.



Another option would be the installation of no more than 5 tent platforms, placed to draw traffic away from the most fragile areas. Of course, campfires should not be allowed. AMC's experience in the White Mountain National Forest has been that campers prefer the platforms and will use them rather than camping at large, even when other sites offer a view or proximity to water. Using the state park reservation system would make sense. BPL might experiment with carefully managed camping for one season, with clear communication to users that camping will be banned outright if the situation does not improve.

While camping reservations on a Maine Public Land might be new, the overuse in a fragile alpine environment at Tumbledown is a unique challenge that other Maine public lands are not yet facing. Further, individual and group site fees comparable to those charged at nearby Mt. Blue State Park or other popular state parks would be reasonable. Charging competitive fees can help pay for the staffing, communication and public education needed to manage the current overuse.

The fact that some of the largest groups to camp atop Tumbledown have been private summer camps is disturbing. BPL and partners should undertake a concerted outreach effort to this constituency and other user groups to educate them on the impact of overuse and ask for cooperation in protecting the resource.

Finally, we encourage BPL to use dead and downed trees to cover impacted zones, discouraging further traffic and giving soils and plants an opportunity to regenerate.

Thank you for seeking to ensure the well-being of Tumbledown well into the future, so that plants and animals can thrive there and so that future generations can experience it as a wild and beautiful place.

Sincerely,

Eliza Townsend
Maine Conservation Policy Director

Vogel, Jim

From: Lisa Drapeau <ldrapeau@rsu10.org>
Sent: Thursday, October 01, 2020 4:59 AM
To: Vogel, Jim
Subject: Re: Tumbledown/Mount Blue Management Plan - Advisory Committee meeting scheduled

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.

Good Morning Jim,

Today is the day you will observe the beauty of Tumbledown and make decisions about its future use. It is a magnificent, yet fragile environment and needs to be protected. Please consider preserving the majesty of this mountain by rejecting the idea of putting tent platforms anywhere near the summit. Installing tent platforms would not protect the area but only encourage more campers and overuse. There is no way to enforce limited use and sadly people will continue to camp in the woods when platforms are full.

I spent eight hours on Saturday climbing up the Little Jackson Trail, going down the backside over to North Peak, down by the pond, and then around to Parker Ridge and back down to the Morgan Road. The foliage was at peak and the mountain's beauty was awe inspiring. There is no doubt that there were a lot of people near the pond and on the front peaks, but I only saw four people with camping backpacks. I broke up three small fire rings and tossed them into the woods. Despite the many people savoring the mountain experience, I saw very little trash which means most people are respectfully leaving no trace.

I have hiked the mountain numerous times and while I do find it disturbing to occasionally see toilet paper on the trail, it is not like the area is littered with fecal matter. I'm not sure another privy is necessary as one already exists at the base of the trail. If the decision to install another privy is made, I hope it will be a significant distance from the pond and trail.

Please consider protecting Tumbledown's natural beauty as it is to be enjoyed for day use. Do not install tent sites to promote overnight use. I am fortunate to have this natural wonder "in my front yard" and I treasure it. Enjoy your hike.

Respectfully Submitted

Lisa Drapeau

On Fri, Sep 4, 2020 at 8:47 AM Vogel, Jim <Jim.Vogel@maine.gov> wrote:

Greeting Advisory Committee members and other interested parties:

Hope you all have had a good summer and are enjoying the whiff of fall (my favorite season) in the air.

The Bureau would like to convene the committee on **September 21, 6:00—7:30 p.m.** for a discussion focused on two alternatives for addressing the critical management issue of camping at Tumbledown. Discussion within the Bureau has led to the formulation of two preliminary alternatives: 1) closing the Tumbledown Pond area, or the Unit, to camping, and 2) development of a limited number of designated campsites at Tumbledown Pond. The attached document provides additional details on these alternatives and a summary of the Bureau's perspectives on the pros and cons of each.