

Management Plan
Gulf Hagas-Whitecap Project Additions to the
Central Penobscot Plan Region

West Branch Pleasant River Unit
Gulf Hagas-Whitecap Conservation Easement
(to be appended to the Central Penobscot Region Management Plan adopted in 2014)



West Branch Pleasant River as viewed from campsite on the Unit.

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



September 2020

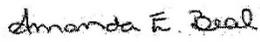
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ADOPTION CITATION

In accordance with the provisions of 12 M.R.S.A. § 1847(2) and consistent with the Bureau of Parks and Lands Planning Policy and Integrated Resource Policy for Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands, State Parks, and State Historic Sites (revised December 18, 2000 and amended March 7, 2007), this Management Plan for the **West Branch Pleasant River Unit** is hereby adopted. Upon adoption, this plan will become an amendment to the Central Penobscot Region Management Plan (adopted May 27, 2014).

RECOMMENDED:  DATE: August 6, 2021

Andrew Cutko
Director
Bureau of Parks and Lands

APPROVED:  DATE: August 6, 2021

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

ADOPTED DATE: 8/6/21 REVISION DATE: 8/6/36

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Introduction

The document constitutes a Management Plan for the recently acquired West Branch Pleasant River (WBPR) fee parcel managed by the Bureau of Parks and Lands. It describes the resources present on the property, applies the resource allocations outlined in the Bureau's Integrated Resource Policy (IRP), and puts forth management recommendations to be implemented over the next ten-year period. The adjacent easement parcel is also described. Upon adoption, this document will be appended to the Central Penobscot Region (CPR) Management Plan adopted in 2014.¹

Under current policy, the Bureau's management plans cover a period of 15 years after the date of adoption; however, the horizon for this plan is nine years to align it with the CPR Management Plan, which will be subject to a comprehensive review in 2029. A review of current issues and progress on implementing this Plan's recommendations will be undertaken in 2024, as part of the second mandated 5-year review and update of the regional plan.

The reader is directed to the regional plan for information on statutory and policy guidance for Public Reserved Lands management plans, for a summary of the Resource Allocation System, and for additional details on mandated plan reviews.

Acquisition History

In December 2016, the Bureau acquired from Pine State Timberlands over 1,200 acres of fee property along the West Branch Pleasant River and a conservation easement on over 7,000 acres of adjoining working forest land. The acquisition, referred to as the Gulf Hugas-Whitecap Project, was facilitated by the Forest Society of Maine. Purchase of the fee and easement parcels was funded in part through the federal Forest Legacy Program, which requires that the property remain in a natural state in perpetuity, and by the State of Maine Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program.

Planning Process and Public Participation

The first phase of the planning process includes a study of the resources and opportunities available on the WBPR unit lands. Bureau staff undertook a review the natural and geological, historic and cultural, fisheries and wildlife, recreation, and timber and renewable resources. Much of this information was obtained from the LMF Project Proposal. Timber information was obtained from a timber resource valuation of the project parcels conducted in 2016. Resource professionals from within the agency provided information on wildlife, recreation, and timber resources. Mapping and GIS-related information was also obtained as part of this phase.

Staff also participated in reconnaissance field trips to the WBPR Unit, both before and after the acquisition, to view first-hand and characterize the land-based resources and recreational features. In July 2019, a group of staff visited the fee and easement parcels and evaluated the access roads into the parcels, visited all of the campsites and parking areas, and walked the associated trails on the BPL and adjoining Gulf Hugas land.

¹ Formerly, these lands were located within the Moosehead Region Plan area, managed by the BPL Western Region; the Plan and management region boundaries have been modified to place these lands in the Central Penobscot Plan area, managed by the BPL Eastern Region.

Members of the CPR Advisory Committee were reconvened in 2019, with several new members, for the 5-Year Review of the regional plan. The committee was informed via a memo emailed June 24, 2019 of the start of the Plan process and notified that a Draft Plan would be sent to committee members for review and comment.

The Draft Plan was sent to the Advisory Committee for review via email on July 25, 2019, with comments requested to be provided by August 16, 2019. The document was also posted on the CPR plan webpage. After several months of delay through late winter and spring 2020 due in part to the COVID-19 pandemic, work on the plan resumed and the Final Draft Plan was sent to the Advisory Committee via email and posted on the plan webpage on June 1, 2020. Comments on the Draft Plan and Final Draft Plan from the Advisory Committee are included in Appendix A of this document and were reflected in a revised version of the Final Plan.

The revised Final Draft Plan was presented and discussed via a virtual public meeting (held via Microsoft Teams video conference rather than in-person due to constraints on public gatherings during the COVID-19 pandemic) on August 20, 2020. Comments received on the Final Draft Plan (also included in Appendix A) were considered in preparing the Final Management Plan. Upon recommendation from the Bureau of Parks and Lands, the Plan was then reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

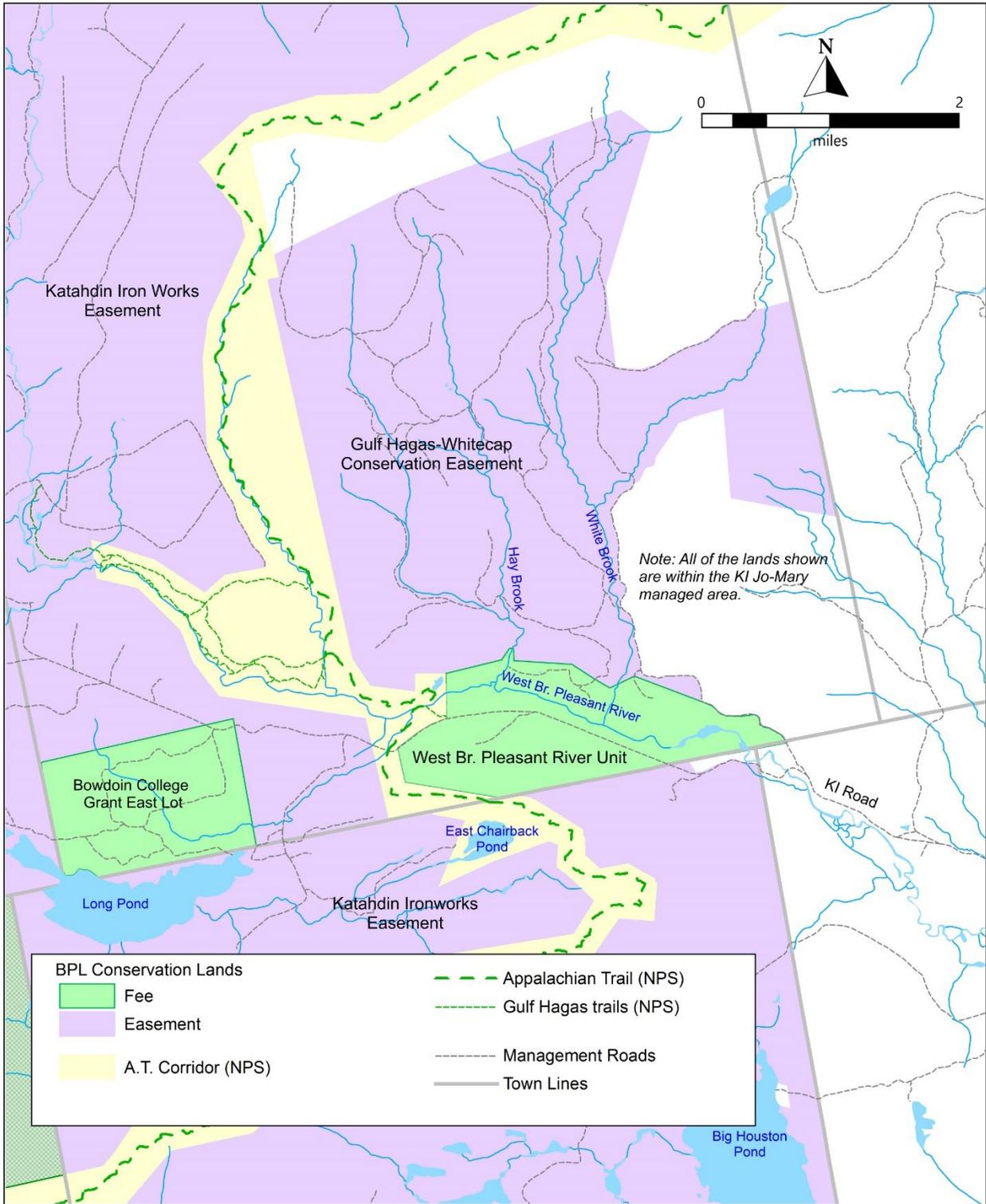
Conservation Lands Context

The acquired fee and easement lands are within Bowdoin College Grant East Twp., in an area of exceptional conservation and recreation values. They are centrally located in what is popularly known as the 100-Mile Wilderness. Both properties are adjacent to the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) corridor, owned by the National Park Service (NPS) and managed by the Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) (see Map 1 on page 4). The 100-Mile Wilderness is generally considered the wildest section of the A.T. The fee and easement lands lie within an area of approximately 175,000 acres of privately-owned commercial forest known as the KI Jo-Mary Multiple Use Forest and managed by a consortium of landowners (KI Jo-Mary, Inc.). KI Jo-Mary manages public access and recreation on these lands, including the maintenance of more than 60 authorized campsites.

Over 75,000 acres of conservation land owned by the Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) and known as the Roach Pond and Katahdin Iron Works (KIW) tracts lie to the north, west and south of the fee and easement parcels. These lands are managed for sustainable forestry, resource protection, and traditional backcountry recreation. AMC maintains a system of non-motorized trails, campsites and hiking shelters open to the public as well as three sporting camps linked by the trail system. BPL holds a conservation easement on these lands.

The Gulf Hagas gorge, a National Natural Landmark managed as part of the A.T. corridor, is immediately upstream (west) of the fee parcel. Several miles of hiking trails overlooking the gorge may be accessed from the Gulf Hagas trailhead, at the edge of the BPL fee parcel.

West Branch Pleasant River Unit and Vicinity



MAP 1.

A short section of trail links the trailhead to the A.T. After fording the Pleasant River (typically shallow in the summer), hikers follow the A.T. for 1.3 miles to reach the Gulf Hagas Loop Trail. Alternatively, hikers may access the A.T. and gorge from a small parking area north of the river at Hay Brook, at the end of the Hermitage Road, also on the BPL parcel. The historic name for this road is the “Pleasant River Road”, used as a tourist approach via wagons in the 1800’s. The Pleasant River Road forms the northern section of the Gulf Hagas Loop Trail.

Abutting the BPL parcel north of the river is The Hermitage, a 35-acre stand of old-growth white pine (part of the A.T. corridor, formerly owned by The Nature Conservancy and now federal property). Visitors access the site via the Gulf Hagas trailhead, just across the river.

In addition to the fee and easement tracts, the “High Elevation Tract” is a third component of the Gulf Hagas Project. The 1,574-acre tract, owned and managed by Maine Appalachian Trail Land Trust (MATLT), lies north of the easement parcel, between the easement and the A.T. corridor. The parcel largely consists of steep slopes below the West Peak to White Cap Mountain stretch of the A.T. and is managed for natural resource and backcountry recreation values. A hiking trail starting on the BPL easement parcel crosses the MATLT tract and extends two miles to the top of White Cap Mountain, at 3,655 feet elevation, the highest peak on the A.T. between the Bigelow Range and Katahdin.

BPL’s 935-acre Bowdoin College Grant East lot lies south of the Gulf Hagas gorge, one mile west of the fee parcel, and is surrounded by the AMC KIW Tract. This original public lot is primarily managed for timber but also hosts hiking/ski trails maintained by AMC as part of their trail network.

Fee Property Description and Resources

The WBPR Unit totals 1,264 acres and is bisected by the Katahdin Ironworks (KI) Road, which parallels the Pleasant River across the parcel (see Map 2 on page 7). The parcel is nearly entirely forested and has been managed for timber for many years. There are no ponds and only a few small open wetlands. However, the National Wetlands Inventory (NWI) includes over 200 acres of wetlands, mainly wooded swamp and floodplain hardwood forest, in the river bottomlands. Notable is 30 acres of hardwood floodplain forest along the river, the upstream-most portion of an exemplary silver maple floodplain forest mapped by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) (see Map 3 on page 8).

The topography is generally flat north of the KI Road. South of the road the land rises about 900 feet on the lower and mid-slopes of Chairback Mountain, toward the A.T. corridor on the ridgeline.

Access. The KI Road is the primary means of vehicle access to the Unit, connecting to State Route 11 in Brownville, about a dozen miles to the south. It can also be accessed from Greenville, about 18 miles to the west, primarily via the KI Road. The public is charged day use and camping fees at KI Jo-Mary entrance stations on the KI Road. The KI Road on the parcel was included in the conveyance, and a rights of way were conveyed to the State from the end of the county road at the KIW entrance station (about 6.5 miles from Rt. 11) to the Unit boundary. Previously, rights of way were conveyed to the State on the KI Road across AMC’s KIW Tract

and Weyerhaeuser Company lands to the west of the AMC property (part of the Moosehead Region Conservation Easement lands). The property was conveyed subject to rights of way on the KI Road and other roads on and abutting the property, variously granted to Pine State Timberlands, AMC, and others.

The portion of the Unit north of the river is accessed through the easement lands, on logging roads winding south from the High Bridge over White Brook, including Hay Brook Road and Hermitage Road. Rights of way were conveyed on the roads that provide access to the Unit north of the river. The last three-quarters of a mile of Hermitage Road is on the Unit. The road is in good condition, though in need of brush clearing for much of its length.

Fisheries and Wildlife. The West Branch Pleasant River is a high-value resource supporting a robust population of resident wild brook trout. In addition, the Pleasant River watershed is within the critical habitat for the federally-endangered Atlantic salmon, and the watershed has been identified as a focus area for habitat restoration for the species.

Currently there are no known occurrences of animal species that are listed by state or federal agencies as endangered, threatened or of “special concern” on the property; however, the entire property is within the designated ‘Critical Habitat’ for the federally Threatened Canada lynx.

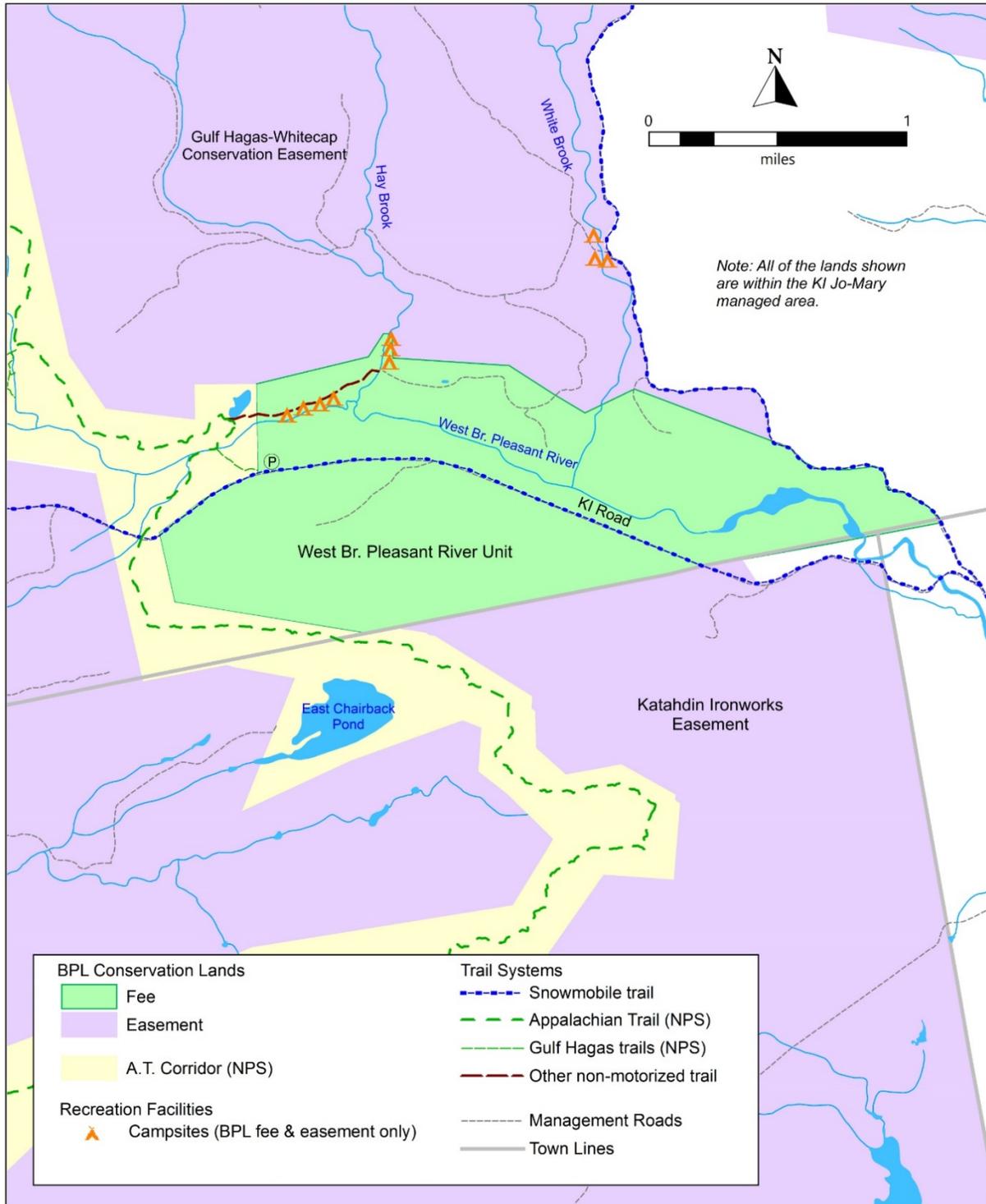
Common wildlife species of northern Maine such as deer, moose and bear are present. The riparian corridor along the river and the associated floodplain forests provide specialized habitat for a number of bird species as well as bats, turtles and amphibians.

Recreation. The lands are visited by anglers, hunters, campers and hikers and are a primary gateway to the popular Gulf Hags gorge (MATC reports ~5,000 summer visitors to the gorge). There are three drive-to campsites on the north side of the parcel along the Hay Brook tributary, at the end of Hermitage Road. A short distance upstream is Hay Brook Falls, a scenic highlight of the property. Four additional walk-in campsites are along the Pleasant River upstream of Hay Brook. Those sites (numbered 7 through 10 by KI Jo-Mary) are along a 0.5-mile trail on an old woods road that links the parking area at the end of Hermitage Road to the A.T. and the NPS Hermitage/Gulf Hags trails. The campsites are provided with picnic tables, fire pits and privies and are maintained by KI Jo-Mary. Visitors may reserve campsites in advance through KI Jo-Mary.

MATC maintains the Gulf Hags trailhead, which features a kiosk with information on the gorge and the region. MATC reports that the trailhead parking is commonly used to capacity during peak use weekends, and additional vehicles park along the KI Road, creating safety concerns. Two privies at the trailhead are maintained by KI Jo-Mary. See Appendix B for photos of the campsites and parking areas/trailheads.

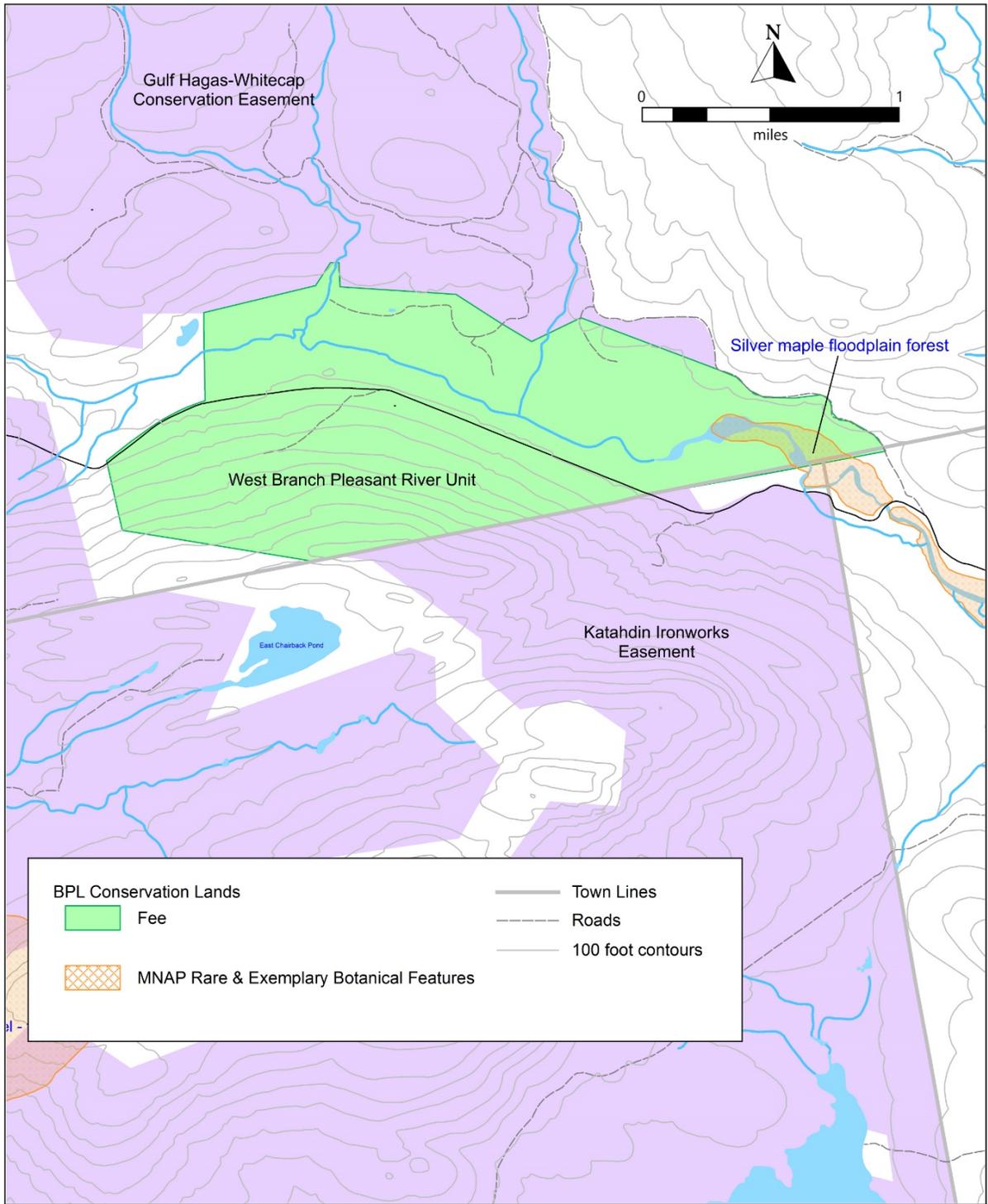
A major Interconnected Trail System (ITS) snowmobile route, ITS 110, follows the KI Road across the parcel, connecting the Greenville and Brownville areas. There are no other motorized trails on the parcel.

West Branch Pleasant River Unit and Vicinity Access and Recreation Facilities



MAP 2.

West Branch Pleasant River Unit MNAP "Rare and Exemplary" Features



MAP 3.

Timber Resources. Timber resources on the Unit include a mix of forest types but hardwood stands predominate. Due to recent harvests on much of the acres, most of the stands are relatively young, dominated by poletimber and small sawtimber, based on a timber inventory conducted prior to the acquisition.

That inventory, conducted in September 2016, indicated an average volume per acre of 15.4 cords across 1,170 commercial forested acres. (By comparison, the Bureau's nearby lot in the township holds an estimated 28 cords per acre on its regulated acres.) That volume is comprised of approximately 70% pulpwood and 30% saw logs. Pulpwood volume is nearly 90% hardwood. Saw log volume is about evenly divided between hardwoods (primarily sugar maple) and softwoods (primarily spruce, fir, and hemlock).

Conservation Easement Property Description, Resources and Management

The Gulf Hagas-Whitecap Working Forest Conservation Easement covers 7,138 acres of timberland abutting the West Branch Pleasant River Unit on the north. The easement allows management of the property as a commercial working forest while protecting in perpetuity the property's significant recreational, wildlife and ecological values for the public benefit. The State holds enforcement rights on the easement, and BPL conducts annual monitoring visits (monitoring reports are available from the Bureau).

The easement includes public access and management rights-of-way on the KI Road and several connecting roads that provide access to the easement lands, as well as to fee parcel north of the river. The easement parcel is crossed by a snowmobile trail to Greenwood Pond linked to the ITS trail, maintained by a local club, and hosts three scenic and popular drive-to campsites along White Brook at High Bridge, managed by KI Jo-Mary.

The deed requires that the fish and wildlife habitat on the easement lands be managed using protocol provided by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). In January 2017, Pine State Timberlands and MDIFW signed a Habitat Management Agreement (HMA) that guides management of the easement parcel. The focus of the HMA is management of riparian zones to protect wild brook trout habitat in White Brook and Hay Brook and associated feeder streams, which flow into the West Branch Pleasant River on the fee parcel.

Fee Property Management Direction and Resource Allocations

The remainder of this document outlines the management direction for the fee parcel, in accordance with the conditions associated with LMF and Forest Legacy funding, and applies the resource allocations outlined in the Bureau's Integrated Resource Policy (IRP). The West Branch Pleasant River Unit will be managed for timber production, wildlife and fisheries, and recreation. Details on management of these resources and the resource allocations that are applied to specific areas follow. Map 4 on page 12 depicts the Dominant Resource Allocations.

Wildlife and Fisheries

In June 2017, BPL and MDIFW signed a Habitat Management Agreement addressing the fee parcel (see Appendix C). The focus of the HMA is management of riparian zones to protect wild brook trout habitat in the West Branch Pleasant River and the two tributary streams. Harvest strategies and public access management will be directed by the HMA.

The riparian corridor along the West Branch Pleasant River and the two tributary streams will be protected by 330-foot and 75-foot riparian buffers, respectively, with a Wildlife allocation. A majority of the forested wetlands lying north of the river, and the small portion of the exemplary silver maple floodplain forest that lies outside the 330-foot buffer are also allocated to Wildlife. Timber management is allowed within these areas with the primary objective of enhancing fish and wildlife habitat.

Public Access and Recreation

KI Jo-Mary, Inc. will continue to manage and maintain the campsites (including reservations/permits and collection of camping fees) on the parcel, under an agreement with BPL. The HMA stipulates that management of public access should emphasize maintaining the remote wilderness character of the riparian corridors and that new trails will only be developed at the behest of MDIFW.

MATC will continue to maintain the Gulf Hagas trailhead on the KI Road, in cooperation with BPL. The Bureau will consider expansion of parking at the Gulf Hagas trailhead, in cooperation with MATC, Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC), and NPS. If it is deemed necessary, BPL will consult with these organizations on the size and design of the new or expanded parking.

The public access roads and trailhead/parking areas will be allocated to Developed Recreation Class 1. Timber management that is sensitive to visual resource, wildlife and visitor safety considerations is allowed as a compatible secondary use. The riverside campsites and most of the campsite access trail lie within the riparian buffer zone allocated to Wildlife. However, a 500-foot Remote Recreation buffer is applied to the trail, extending beyond the 330-foot riparian buffer, and also encompassing the east end of the trail and the Hay Brook campsites and nearby parking area.

Consistent with BPL policy regarding timber harvesting in the vicinity of the A.T., a 500-foot Remote Recreation buffer is also applied to the A.T., portions of which extend into the west side of the parcel where it abuts the A.T. corridor. Any timber harvesting in these areas will strive to maintain an undisturbed appearance.

It is anticipated that the KI Road will be plowed some winters when commercial timber harvesting is occurring in the area, and snowmobile traffic would not be permitted on the road. In order to maintain the well-travelled snowmobile connection between Greenville and Brownville, the Bureau will work to temporarily reroute ITS 110 off the road across the parcel. Such a reroute would need to be conducted in conjunction with other landowners along the KI Road.

Timber Management

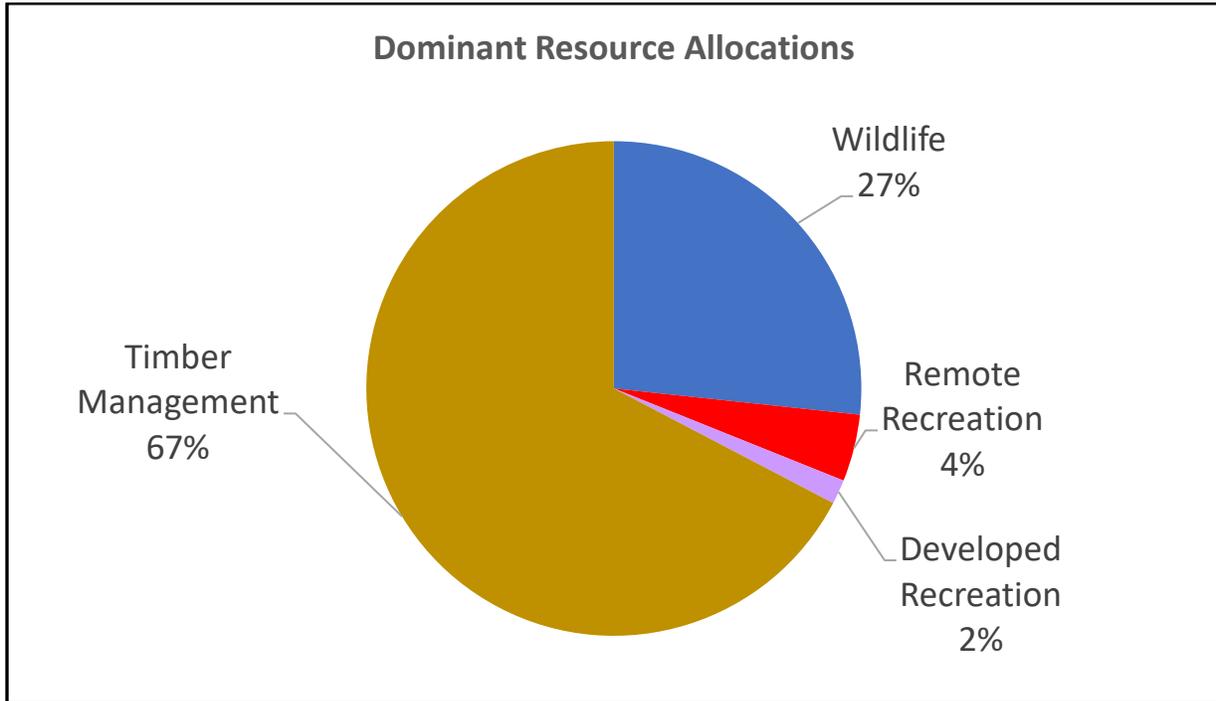
A forest prescription will be prepared by Bureau foresters, based on a compartment examination that will be conducted in advance. Based on the modest stocking reported above and recent harvests, it is unlikely that harvesting will occur during this 10-year Plan period. The initial entry would likely be an improvement harvest in hardwoods and partial removal in mixedwood and softwood, with the objective of releasing desirable regeneration, where present.

Visual Resource considerations will apply in areas visible from the A.T., particularly as regards the Chairback Mountain section of the A.T., as well as along the KI Road and Hermitage Road. The NPS boundary will be verified and NPS will be notified before any harvests in areas abutting the A.T. corridor.

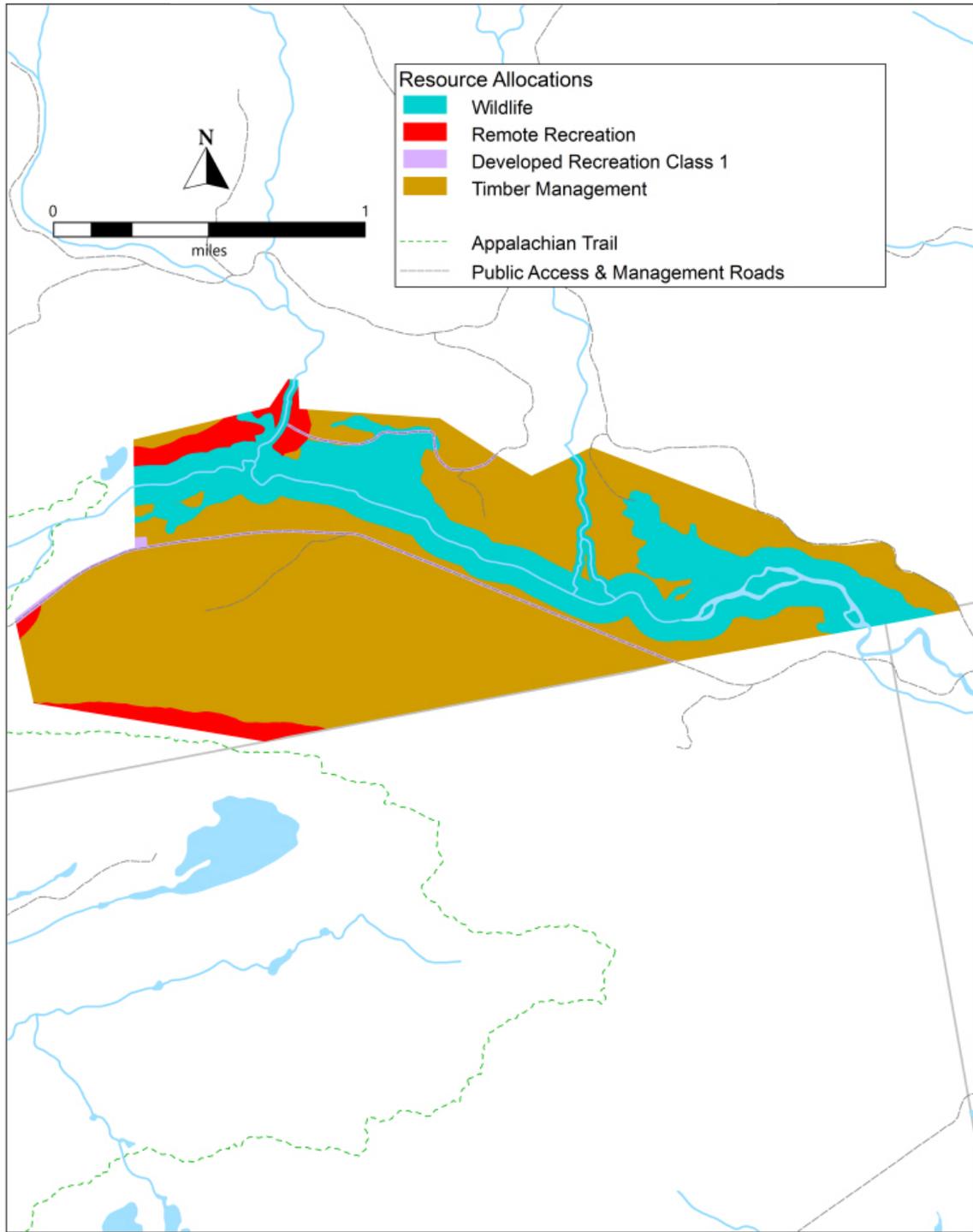
Resource Allocations Summary

Allocation	Acres*	Percent
Wildlife	240	19.0
Remote Recreation	60	4.7
Developed Recreation	20	1.6
Timber Management	935	74.5

* nearest 5 acres.



West Branch Pleasant River Unit Dominant Resource Allocations



MAP 4.

APPENDIX A

Advisory Committee Members; Public Consultation Process; Public Comments and Bureau Responses

Central Penobscot Region Advisory Committee:

Name	Organization
NAHMAKANTA ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
Fred Candeloro	Kokadjo Roach Riders
Al Cowperthwaite	North Maine Woods
Darryl Day	KI Jo-Mary Checkpoint and Guide (retired)
Bill Geller	Private Citizen
Brett Gerrish	Prentiss and Carlisle
Paige Gregory	Appalachian Trail Conservancy - ME Regional Manager
Don and Angel Hibbs	Nahmakanta Lake Wilderness Camps
Jack Hofbaeur	Black Pond Campowners
Christy Hofbaeur-Meyers	Black Pond Campowners
Wendy Janssen	National Park Service--Appalachian Trail Superintendent
Cathy Johnson/Melanie Sturm	Natural Resources Council of Maine
Lester Kenway	Maine Appalachian Trail Club - President
Tim Obrey	MDIFW - Fisheries Biologist, Region E
Bill Patterson	The Nature Conservancy
Janet Sawyer	Piscataquis Co. Economic Development Council
Greg Shute	Chewonki Foundation
Rich Smith	Pleasant River Lumber
Ken Snowdon	Moosehead ATV Riders
Steve Tatko	Appalachian Mountain Club - Land Manager
SEBOEIS ADVISORY COMMITTEE	
John Davis	Town of Millinocket - Town Manager
Wayne Dillon	Maine Guide
David Dow	Prentiss and Carlisle
Kevin Dunham	MDIFW - Fisheries Biologist, Region F
Don Hudson	International Appalachian Trail and Maine Woods Forever
Mark Leathers	Elliotsville Plantation C/O Sewell - Project Mgr.
Fred Michaud	Maine DOT
David Moore	Northern Timber Cruisers snowmobile club
Paul Sannicandro	Northern Timber Cruisers snowmobile club
Gene Shields	Cole's Moosehorn Cabins
Eben Sypitkowski	Baxter State Park
Michael Washburn	KI Riders
David Wilson	Katahdin Forest Management

Public Consultation Summary:

Plan Phase/Date	Action/Meeting Focus	Attendance/Responses
Preliminary Planning/Scoping		
June-July 2019	Data gathering and work on initial internal drafts of Plan	
July 15, 2019	Field visits to plan area to view and discuss access and road systems, recreation facilities, forest conditions, etc.	Various Eastern Region and Augusta BPL staff
Draft Plan		
July 25, 2019	Draft Plan made available on CPR Plan webpage and sent via email to AC members with request for comments.	
August 16, 2019	End of comment period.	Comments received by email from four AC members
Final Draft Plan		
June 1, 2020	Final Draft Plan made available online and emailed to AC members.	Comments received by email from two AC members.
July 29, 2020	Public meeting scheduled for Aug. 20 via Microsoft Teams videoconference with comment period ending Sept. 4, 2020.	
August 3-7, 2020	Notice of Public Meeting posted in papers. Revised Final Draft sent to AC members and posted on Plan webpage.	
August 3-7, 2020	Press Release on West Branch Pleasant River parcel and planning process and upcoming public video conf. meeting.	
August 20, 2020	Public Meeting held, via Microsoft Teams video conference, 6-7 pm: presented Final Draft Plan and received comments	Three AC members and one member of public attended, plus BPL staff.
September 4, 2020	End of Comment Period.	1 comment email received (see below).

Comments received from AC members on the 7/25/2019 Draft Plan

Comment source	Date	Form received
Al Cowperthwaite, North Maine Woods, Inc.	July 25, 2019	email
Darryl Day, retired North Maine Woods, Inc.	Aug. 3, 2019	email
Cathy Johnson, Natural Resources Council of Maine	Aug. 16, 2019	email with attached letter

Comments received from AC members on the 6/1/2020 Final Draft Plan

Comment source	Date	Form received
Al Cowperthwaite, North Maine Woods, Inc.	June 2, 2020	email
Lester Kenway, MATC	June 3, 2020	email

Comments received from the public on the 7/30/2020 Final Draft Plan

Comment source	Date	Form received
Hawk Metheny, Appalachian Trail Conservancy	Sept. 3, 2020	Email with attached letter

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks of Lands
SUMMARY OF PUBLIC COMMENT
WITH BUREAU RESPONSE

Comments on the Draft West Branch Pleasant River Unit Management Plan (July 25, 2019)	
(Comment Period: July 26, 2019 – August 16, 2019) Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.	
Comment	Response
Topic: Proposed Dominant Resource Allocations	
From: Cathy Johnson, Natural Resources Council of Maine	
<p>[Following a review of the resources being protected on the parcel, the timber resource, and restatement of the fact that BPL does not expect to harvest timber on the Unit in the next 10 years] ...NRCM strongly urges the Bureau to designate as the Dominant Resource Allocation virtually the entire unit as Backcountry Non-motorized Recreation. This dominant resource allocation is the allocation best suited to provide the full range of protections for both the recreation and ecological resources described above.</p> <p>The need to keep the KI Road and the three-quarters of a mile of the Hermitage Road open for vehicular use could be achieved, as proposed in the plan, by allocating those corridors to Developed Recreation Class 1.</p> <p>And, to ensure the highest level of protection for the riparian corridors and the fisheries and wildlife they protect, a Wildlife allocation as a secondary allocation could be overlaid on those riparian corridors on all allocations on the parcel.</p>	<p>It is the Bureau’s view that most of the West Branch Pleasant River Unit does not meet the Backcountry Recreation criteria outlined in the IRP related to remoteness, wild and pristine character, solitude and scenic value (refer to IRP page 13).</p> <p>Rather, we believe a majority of the acres are most suited to Timber Management as a dominant use, as reflected in the Draft Plan. Outside of the river corridor and associated wetlands, most of the unit has been managed for timber for many years and has been harvested in recent years. In contrast, the Backcountry Non-Mechanized allocation that the commenter urges would preclude timber management on most of the Unit.</p> <p>Major (330’) and minor (75’) riparian buffers along the river and streams, as well as a portion of the exemplary floodplain forest that lies outside the buffer zone, are protected by a Wildlife allocation. In the Final Draft Plan, an additional unmapped branch of White Brook has been protected with a riparian buffer, and about 90 additional acres of wooded wetlands</p>

	<p>connected to the river have been reallocated from Timber Management to Wildlife.</p> <p>The comment suggests that the current low stocking of the forest stands on the unit is a rationale for applying a Backcountry Recreation allocation. However, it is not the practice of the Bureau to apply a “temporary” Backcountry Recreation or other non-Timber Management resource allocation due to the presence of young or poorly stocked forest stands, and then change that allocation to Timber Management when the stands have matured to merchantable age. While it is true that the Bureau is unlikely to conduct timber harvests on the lands in the near future, the resource allocations applied in the Plan are intended to designate the primary uses of the lands that will have relevance beyond the next 10 years addressed by the current Central Penobscot Region Management Plan.</p>
<p>Topic: Clarification of “third component” of the Gulf Hagas-Whitecap acquisition project</p>	
<p>From: Cathy Johnson, Natural Resources Council of Maine</p>	
<p>On p. 3 of the plan, there is reference to the “third” component of the project. It is unclear what the first two components are. We urge you to clarify that in future drafts.</p>	<p>The Plan text has been revised to clarify that the first two components of the Gulf Hagas-Whitecap conservation lands acquisition project are 1) the BPL fee property (West Branch Pleasant River Unit) and 2) the BPL conservation easement, the properties that are the subject of the Draft Plan.</p>
<p>Topic: General comments</p>	
<p>From: Al Cowperthwaite, North Maine Woods, Inc.</p>	
<p>Thanks for providing your plan for the Gulf Hagas Unit. It outlines the campsites and the maintenance of them, as originally outlined by Karen Tilberg [Forest Society of Maine] several years ago. I am fine with what is included in the plan so far.</p>	<p>Comments are noted.</p>
<p>From: Darryl Day, retired North Maine Woods gatekeeper and Maine Guide</p>	
<p>The Gulf Hagas is a huge acquisition for public lands to manage. It is without doubt the most</p>	<p>Comments are noted.</p>

<p>popular destination for scenic beauty in the KI JO Mary Nahmakanta forest.</p> <p>As you know the main entrance into the gulf means wading the river and should be done with a pair of old shoes and take your hiking boots in to change into. My 1st trip was uncomfortable so the second I went in the north entrance [on the BPL fee parcel] which is a little more walking but more comfortable.</p> <p>Trail down river through The Hermitage [on BPL fee parcel before reaching NPS property] with large trees is enjoyable. The 4 sites going to Hay Brook are on the river. We cut trees and brush to enhance scenic views but have grown up since I took care of them. We kept a two-wheel garden [cart] at the trail across Hay Brook to make it easier for the campers to bring in their dunnage; used to keep the trail mowed to help them out as well. I replaced the picnic tables and rehabbed the one outhouse but probably needs a new one by now. It is truly a wilderness experience area to camping. I will quit for now but want to thank you for including me in the process.</p>	
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<p align="center">Comments on the Final Draft West Branch Pleasant River Unit Management Plan (June 1, 2020) (Comment Period: June 2, 2020 – June 16, 2020) Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.</p>	
<p align="center">Comment</p>	<p align="center">Response</p>
<p>From: Al Cowperthwaite, North Maine Woods, Inc.</p>	
<p>Throughout the document you refer to KI-Jo Mary. It should be KI Jo-Mary, hyphen between Jo-Mary, not KI-Jo Mary.</p> <p>Page 1, third paragraph, last sentence: KI Jo-Mary KI Jo-Mary Inc. manages both timber production public access and recreation on these lands, including the maintenance of more than 60 authorized campsites. (KI Jo-Mary Inc has no responsibility for timber</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Plan has been corrected as suggested. • This paragraph has been corrected as suggested.

<p>production. That is the sole responsibility of the individual landowners.)</p>	
<p>From: Lester Kenway, Maine Appalachian Trail Club</p>	
<p>Page 2, paragraph 2: A short section of trail links the trailhead to the A.T. After fording the Pleasant River (typically shallow in the summer), hikers follow the A.T. for half a mile to reach the canyon trails. Alternatively, hikers may access the A.T. and canyon from a small parking area north of the river, at the end of the Hermitage Road, also on the BPL parcel.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hikers follow the A.T. for 1.3 miles to reach the Gulf Hagas Loop Trail. • Gulf Hagas is often called a “gorge” or just “The Gulf” • Insert “at Hay Brook” before “...at the end of Hermitage Road” • The historic name for this road is the “Pleasant River Road” used as a tourist approach via wagons in the 1800’s. The Pleasant River Road forms the northern section of the Gulf Hagas Loop Trail <p>Page 6, paragraph 7: MATC maintains the Gulf Hagas trailhead, which features a kiosk with information on the canyon and the region and which is provided with two privies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NMW maintains the privies <p>General comment: Calling this unit “Gulf Hagas” is likely to cause confusion with the Gulf itself.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The suggested correction has been made. • The term “canyon” has been replaced by “gorge” throughout the document. • The suggested revision has been made. • This information has been added to the document. • This information has been added to the document. • The Gulf Hagas name was carried forward to the Draft Plan from the acquisition of the property and from the HMA prepared for the fee parcel (Appendix C) but has been changed in the revised Final Draft to West Branch Pleasant River Unit to avoid confusion with the gulf.

**Comments on the Revised Final Draft
West Branch Pleasant River Unit Management Plan
(July 29, 2020)**

(Comment Period following virtual public meeting: August 21, 2020 – Sept. 4, 2020)
Some comments have been excerpted, and introductory or background statements deleted.

Comment	Response
From: Hawk Metheny, Appalachian Trail Conservancy	
<p>The Plan identifies the possibility of expanding the Gulf Hagas parking Area. ATC requests that the Bureau collaborates with the National Park Service, the Appalachian Trail Conservancy, and the Maine Appalachian Trail Club in assessing the need for this expansion. If it is deemed necessary, we also request that the Bureau works with the above-mentioned partners in the size and design of the parking area. While we recognize that visitors currently park vehicles along the Katahdin Ironworks Road when the existing parking area is full, we also recognize that expanding the parking area may lead to even more visitors recreating in the already highly popular Gulf Hagas area.</p>	<p>The Plan has been revised to include collaboration with ATC and NPS (in addition to MATC) in considering the need, and if the need is confirmed, the potential development of expanded parking at the Gulf Hagas trailhead.</p>
<p>ATC's second request is for the Bureau to consider increasing the Appalachian Trail Resource Allocation to a consistent 500' from the existing National Park Service boundary, rather than 500' from the A.T. centerline as described and mapped in the management plan. This change would increase the A.T. Resource Allocation from 2.4% to 8.4 % and would provide additional protection to the ANST from incompatible uses, and it would also adequately protect the NPS boundary from future logging activities. The attached addendum depicts this request in both pie chart and map form.</p>	<p>The Bureau recognizes the importance of protecting the scenic qualities of the lands surrounding the A.T. and the quiet recreation experience desired by hikers. Accordingly, it has been the Bureau's long-standing policy to provide a 500-foot buffer on each side of the A.T. (if a more protective allocation is not already designated) where the trail crosses public land or crosses within 500 feet of public land, as is the case here, allocated to Remote Recreation. This allocation allows timber management as a secondary use, conducted with consideration of the recreation and scenic values of the A.T. corridor. As stated on p. 10 of the plan, any timber harvesting in these areas will strive to maintain an undisturbed appearance, which is consistent with the Visual Consideration Class I standards outline in the IRP. (See note below this table.)</p> <p>It is the Bureau's preference to manage the relevant portions of the WBPR Unit</p>

	consistent with this policy and with management of other public lands abutting the A.T. corridor, rather than applying the 500-foot buffer to the NPS boundary, as requested. The Bureau will verify and mark the boundary with NPS lands before any timber harvesting activity occurs.
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Note: Areas within 100 feet of the A.T. (not applicable to the WBPR Unit) are allocated to Special Protection – Historic/Cultural, which does not permit timber harvesting.

APPENDIX B

Recreation Facility Photos



Hay Brook campsite #1



Hermitage Road parking area



Pleasant River campsite # 7



Pleasant River campsite #10



Pleasant River viewed from campsite #8



Gulf Hagas trailhead kiosk

APPENDIX C

**Gulf Hugas-Whitecap Fee Parcel
[West Branch Pleasant River Unit]
Habitat Management Agreement**

[HMA DOCUMENT TO BE INSERTED HERE]