

Kennebec Highlands Advisory Committee Meeting

April 14, 2010 6pm to 8:30pm

Mt Vernon Community Center

MINUTES

General comments:

After Pete Smith's overview of Kennebec Highlands management since 2007, a participant noted that overflow parking onto Watson Pond Rd from hiking trail parking lots is a safety concern. This happens especially on nice spring days and fall foliage weekends. Signs may be a partial solution.

Amy Hudnor showed a map outlining roads that legal research showed a public right of way exists. One participant noted that the findings from the BPL lawyer are not conclusive enough to make firm statements that public rights-of-ways exist on all the roads defined on this map. It may have not been the intent of the town of Vienna to allow public rights-of-way on all the roads it discontinued in 1997. The plan should note the degree of uncertainty on this matter.

There is interest in the public having more influence on specifics of timber harvesting in the planning process.

Blueberry management should continue as blueberry picking is popular.

Amy presented the two options the staff brainstormed on ATV routes through the western part of the Unit.

Comments on potential ATV trails:

There is currently a lot of unauthorized ATV use on the property. The designated ATV route should be direct and constructed well. It should be done right so the relationship with Allen's Blueberries is protected. BRCA hopes to one day be able to purchase land from the Allens to add to the Kennebec Highlands.

The 2 potential ATV routes in the presentation both will have problems with steepness and erosion. There are wet areas that need to be avoided. Rugged Hill Rd is especially steep and rutted out. There is a wet area east of Vienna Mtn Rd on private land. One participant does not support ATV use on the town portion of Vienna Mtn Rd. Cross Rd also has erosion issues. One participant noted that the ATV option that uses the short section of Vienna Mtn Rd maintained by the town would better meet the interim plan goal of separating incompatible uses. The second option would put ATVs closer to the hiking trails with possible noise issues. One participant noted that some towns such as Norridgewock do allow ATV use on town roads.

Amy presented staff brainstorming on snowmobile trails.

Comments on potential snowmobile trails:

A sentiment was expressed by some that snowmobilers and non-motorized winter users interact somewhat peacefully. Skiers can benefit from the maintenance and grooming the snowmobile

clubs do. Mountain bikers can use trails in the summer. The snowmobile club has installed bridges and done GPS work on the Kennebec Highlands Trail, and is opposed to closing this off to snowmobiles. There are also fire and rescue needs to be considered. Snowmobilers need access to KH from Long Pond. Currently they go through Dolley property, along Prescott Rd and up the Goat Path. Though the interim plan says non-motorized and motorized uses should be separated, it may not be as important for winter use. However, many members of the public in 2007 public meetings expressed concern about separating incompatible uses in winter as well as summer and providing quiet areas in all seasons. Snowshoers use the Round Top and Sanders Hill Trails, and looping these trails so they don't use the Kennebec Highlands Trail is a potential way to separate this use from snowmobiling. Deer wintering areas are another consideration in trail location, as non-motorized and motorized trails have potential to harm deer. Snowmobile trails can bring in coyotes that kill deer. Follow-up is needed to plan the snowmobile trails.

Non-motorized trails and access:

Use of KH is heavy most times of year. Access is needed from the north and west. From the north, the Roxy Rand Rd needs a parking area, but concerns of private landowners on the road are necessary to consider. From the west, the turn-around at the end of the town portion of the Vienna Mtn Rd may be considered. Another option is further north of the turn-around. New acquisitions on the west around the Kimball Pond Rd could lead to new opportunity for parking. A loop trail of the entire KH using peaks is possible. The goal for a DAP trail is a good one. Use Mick Roger's expertise, international standards, and the RTP program for funding. These trails can also be used for mountain biking. Horseback riding should be allowed, though use is sporadic. Old timber roads are used. It should be clear which uses are allowed on each trail so horseback riders will know where they are allowed and which other users they could encounter. The RailTrail from Jay to Farmington has many users including horseback riders. Storage of boats should be allowed, especially where vehicle access is not. A more accommodating policy (such as the one used by North Maine Woods) should be enacted. Support for keeping the vehicle barrier at McIntyre Pond was expressed.

Attendance:

Chris Currier, Brian Alexander, Stan Caban, Roger Wing, Ann Keilty, Gary Keilty, Hank Washburn, Susan Burns, Roy Bouchard, Bill Swan, Dave MacLay, Mike Ayotte, John Jones, Mike Lee, George Smith, Robert Dalot, Stuart Allen

BPL staff: Rex Turner, Brian Bronson, Will Harris, Pete Smith, Bill Haslam, Amy Hudnor, Tom Dinsmore