

Bureau of Parks and Lands

Flagstaff Region Management Plan
5-Year Review and Update
with
Plan Amendments

June 26, 2014

AMENDMENT ADOPTION

In accordance with the procedures outlined in the 2007 Flagstaff Region Management Plan for five-year reviews of the Plan and consideration of proposed Plan amendments, amendments A through F, as presented in Section 3 of this report, are hereby adopted.

RECOMMENDED: Willard Harris DATE: June 26, 2014
Willard R. Harris
Director
Bureau of Parks and Lands

APPROVED: Walter E. Whitcomb DATE: June 26, 2014
Walter E. Whitcomb
Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

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1. Summary of the Five-Year Plan Review Process for the Flagstaff Region Management Plan

The Flagstaff Region Management Plan guides the management of public lands at Chain of Ponds, Bigelow Preserve and surrounding properties on Flagstaff Lake, Mount Abraham and several small lots. The Bureau is required to report to the Advisory Committee (Appendix A) at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan (see Appendix B).

The Bureau identified several new issues or circumstances that were not addressed in the plan that warranted Bureau consideration and Committee discussion. The new issues and circumstances included several proposals for new trails at the Chain of Ponds Unit and in the Bigelow Preserve, and a new trailered boat launch on the east side of Flagstaff Lake, which were presented by their proponents at the Advisory Committee meeting held August 15, 2013. At the December 11, 2013 Advisory Committee meeting the Bureau presented its initial response to the proposals, as well as a new proposal for a motorized/multi-use trail crossing of the Appalachian Trail on the Redington Lot. The Bureau invited comments on these proposals at the meeting as well as written comments to be submitted during the subsequent two-week period. Four Advisory Committee members provided written comments.

Taking into consideration the input of the Advisory Committee and the comments received, the Bureau prepared a set of proposed Plan amendments that would allow some of the recreation developments to be implemented, while not allowing others which were judged to be inconsistent with the vision for the affected public lands as expressed in the Flagstaff Region Plan. On March 19, 2014, the Advisory Committee was sent the proposed Plan amendments for review, and at a June 12, 2014 public meeting the Bureau presented the proposed Plan amendments for comment. Once again, written comments were invited during the subsequent two-week period.

The comments of individual Advisory Committee members and members of the public (some excerpted) to both the initial recreation development proposals and the proposed Plan amendments and the Bureau's response to each are presented in Appendix C-1. (The complete written comments are provided in Appendix C-2). In addition to verbal comments given at the public meeting (as recorded in the meeting minutes; see Appendix C-3), the Bureau received written comments from 11 Advisory Committee members and members of the public on the proposed Plan amendments.

2. Summary of Proposed New Recreation Initiatives and Bureau Recommendations

The following proposals were considered due to changes in conditions since the 2007 Plan was adopted:

Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail – Chain of Ponds area (Figure 1)

- Western Mountain Corporation proposal (part of proposed 47 mile trail)
- 1 mile and 0.6 mile segments of new multiuse non-motorized trail at north and south ends of the unit, 2 new bridges and “engineered boardwalk”
- *BPL Recommendation: Allow construction of trail segments and bridges, under certain conditions and requirements*

Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail – Bigelow Preserve (Figure 2)

- Western Mountain Corporation proposal (part of proposed 47 mile trail)
- ~4.5 miles of new trail along Stratton Brook, ~3 miles on existing public access and management roads/trails
- *BPL Recommendation: Allow routing of trail and potential limited improvements on existing management and public use roads and trails*

Mountain Bike Trail Requests - Bigelow Preserve (Figures 3-7)

- 5 proposals from Carrabassett Region NEMBA
- 2 short management roads to be opened to mountain bikes
- Reroutes of 2 trails on management roads
- Opening of northern Bigelow Preserve snowmobile trail to mtn. bikes
- *BPL Recommendations:*
 - *Allow use of mountain bikes on 2 management roads*
 - *Allow minor reroutes of trail in problem areas on one management road*
 - *Allow up to 2.4 miles of new single-track trail parallel to existing trail as reroute around road scheduled to be upgraded and used for timber hauling*
 - *Proposal for new mountain bike route across northern Bigelow Preserve not allowed*

New Hiking/Ungroomed skiing trail – Carrabassett Valley Lot and Bigelow Preserve (Figure 8)

- Maine Huts & Trails proposal to connect hut to Bigelow Preserve trails
- 1.5 mile trail across Carrabassett Valley lot and following an old road into the Bigelow Preserve; footbridge would be required for safe crossing of Stratton Brook
- *BPL Recommendation: Allow construction of trail and bridge, under certain conditions and requirements*

New Motorized and Non-motorized Trail Crossing of the Appalachian Trail – Redington Lot (Figure 9)

- Allow a shared perpendicular crossing of the AT corridor on the Redington Lot to provide motorized trail link (along with segments on abutter’s lands) between Carrabassett Valley and Madrid Township

- *BPL Recommendation: Given currently divided opinions on the advisability of the motorized trail connection in this remote area, and uncertainty regarding obtaining agreements with abutters for trails on their parcels in the near term, the proposal was deemed premature*

New Trailered Boat Launch on East Flagstaff Lake (Figures 10-11)

- Address the lack of functional trailered boat access on east Flagstaff Lake, work with Brookfield as required by their FERC license obligations
- Investigate potential locations for improving trailered boat access on BPL lands including: (1) conversion of carry-in trail at Little Bigelow Gravel Pit trailhead; (2) a new launch ramp on Dead River peninsula, in vicinity of North Flagstaff Road (specific site to be determined)
- *BPL Recommendations:*
 - *Given uncertainties regarding the consistency of the proposed improvements at the gravel pit site with the Bigelow Preserve Act (specifically regarding new roads), this site was dropped from consideration*
 - *Continue to investigate boat access options on the Dead River Peninsula and other possible sites on the Flagstaff Dam lot.*

Figures depicting Recreation Proposals

Figure 1.

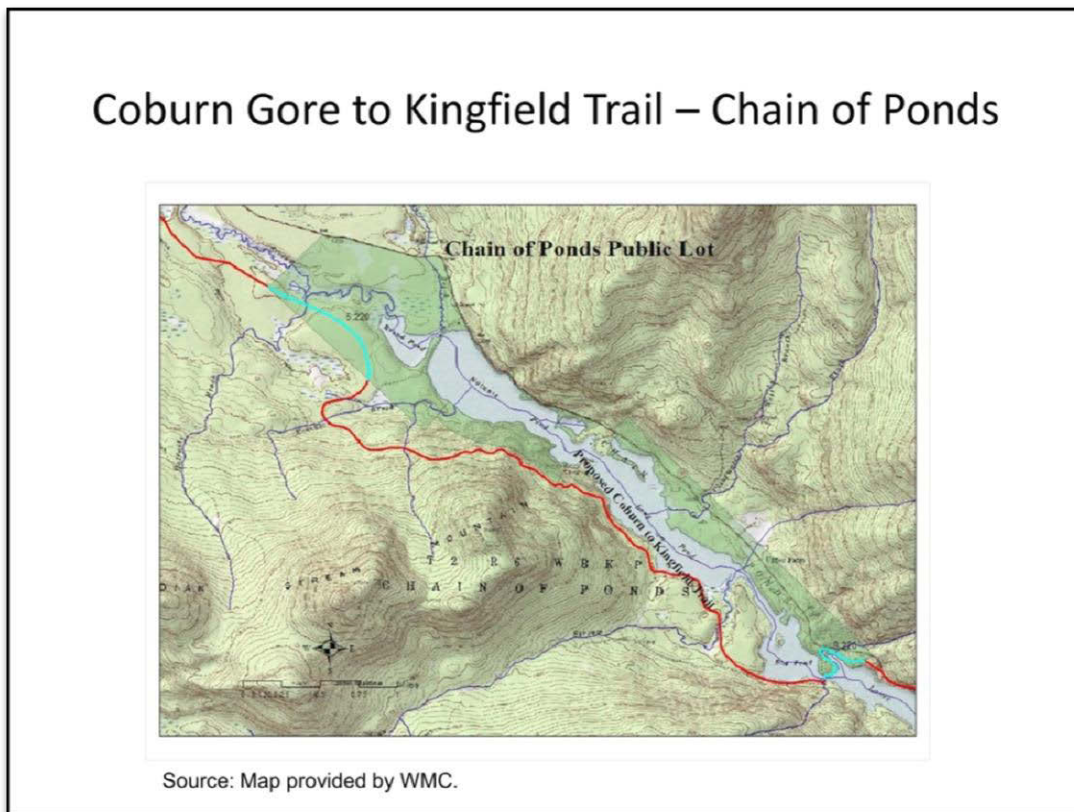


Figure 2.

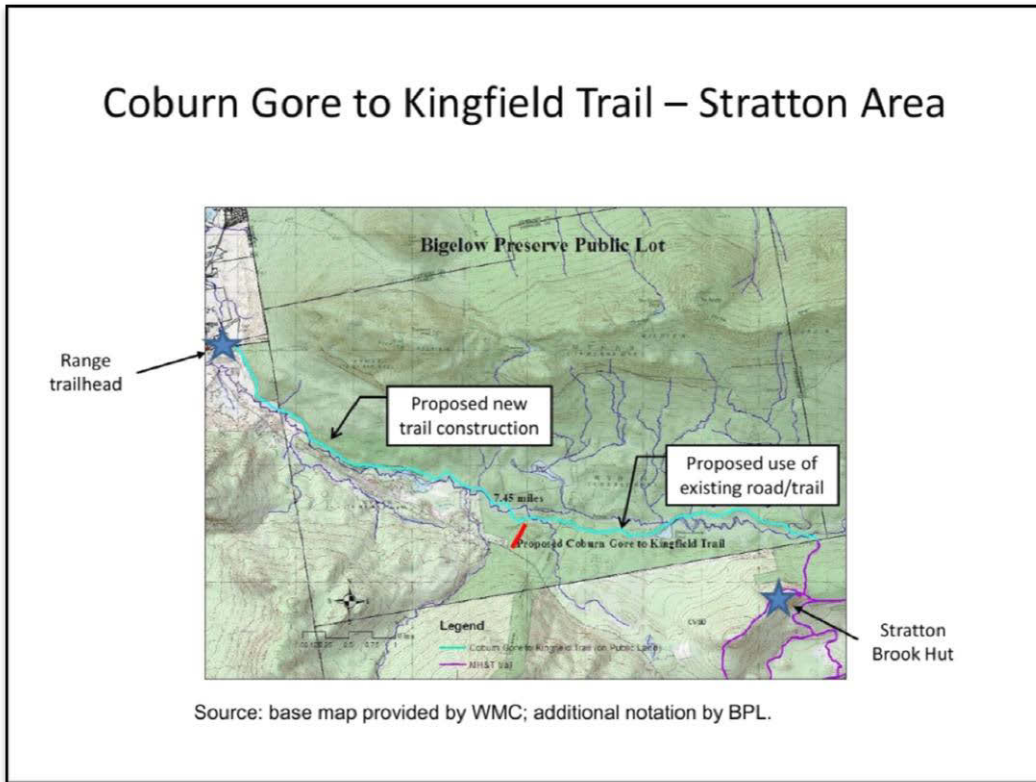


Figure 3.

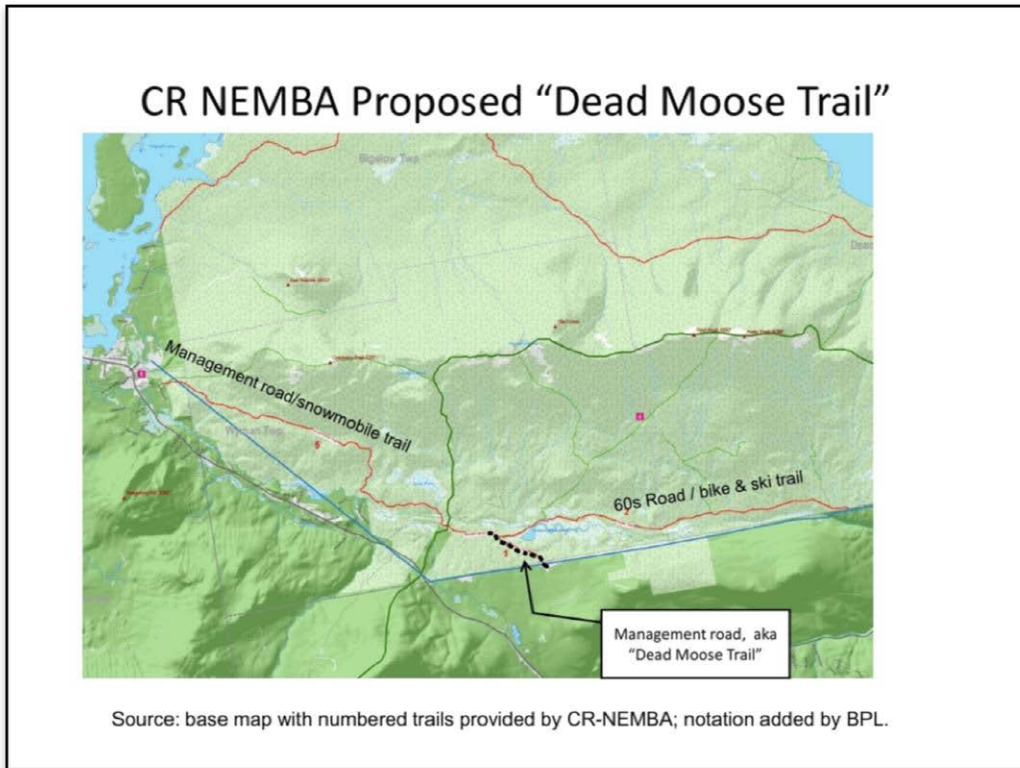


Figure 4.



Figure 5.

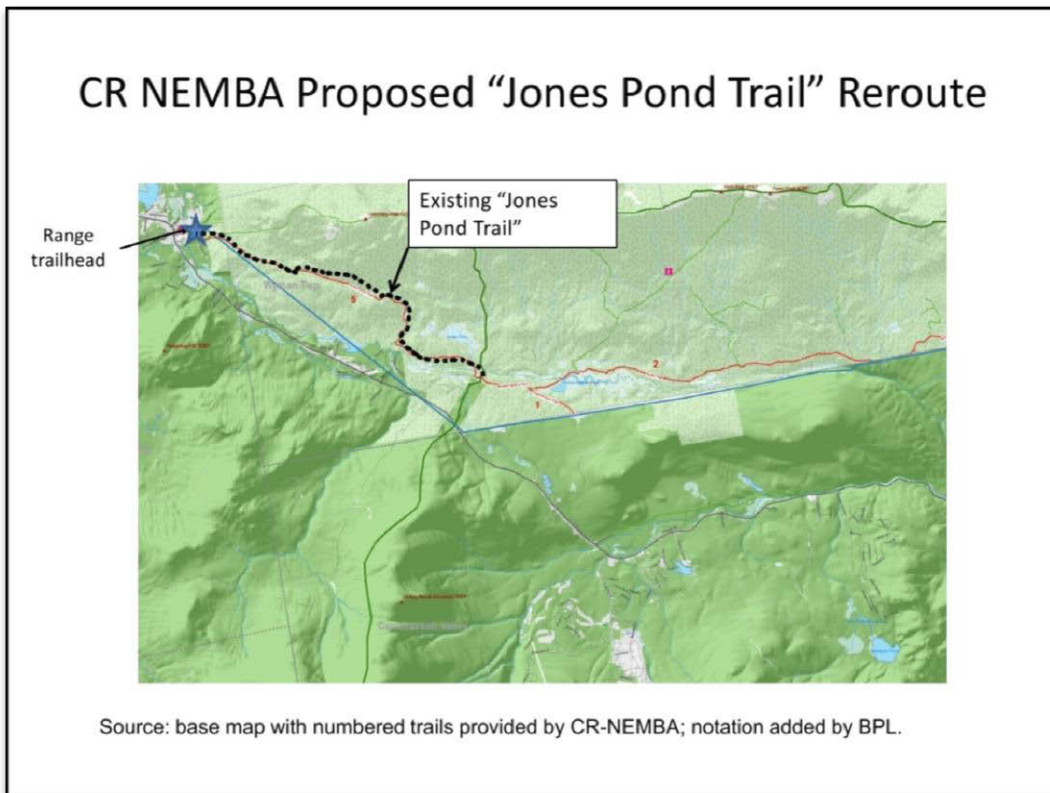


Figure 6.

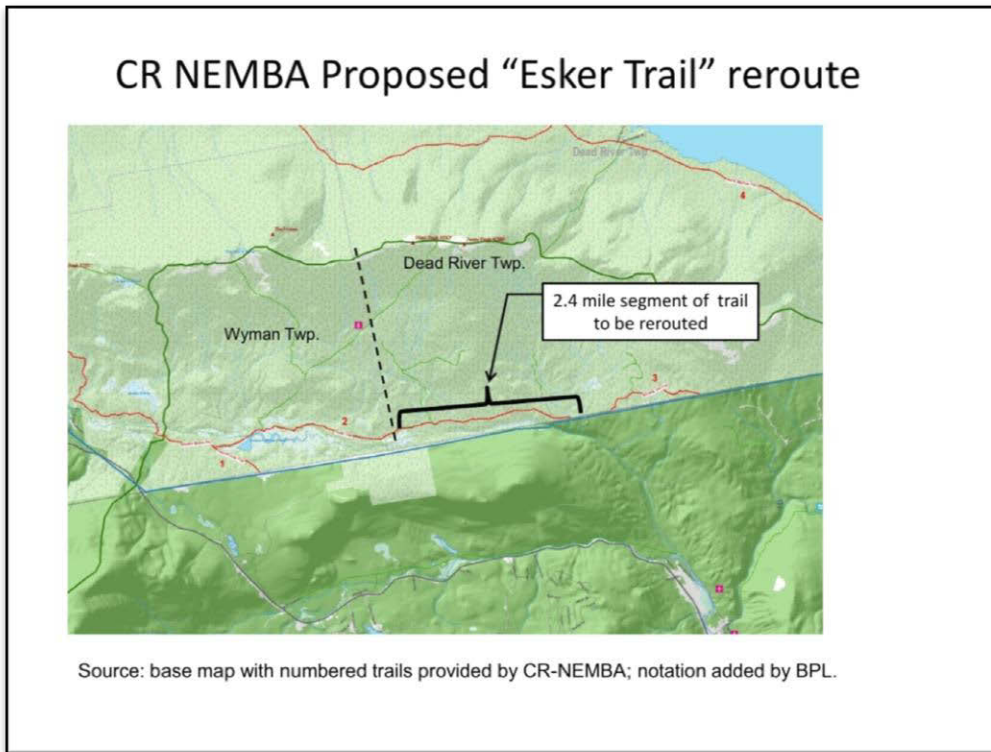


Figure 7.

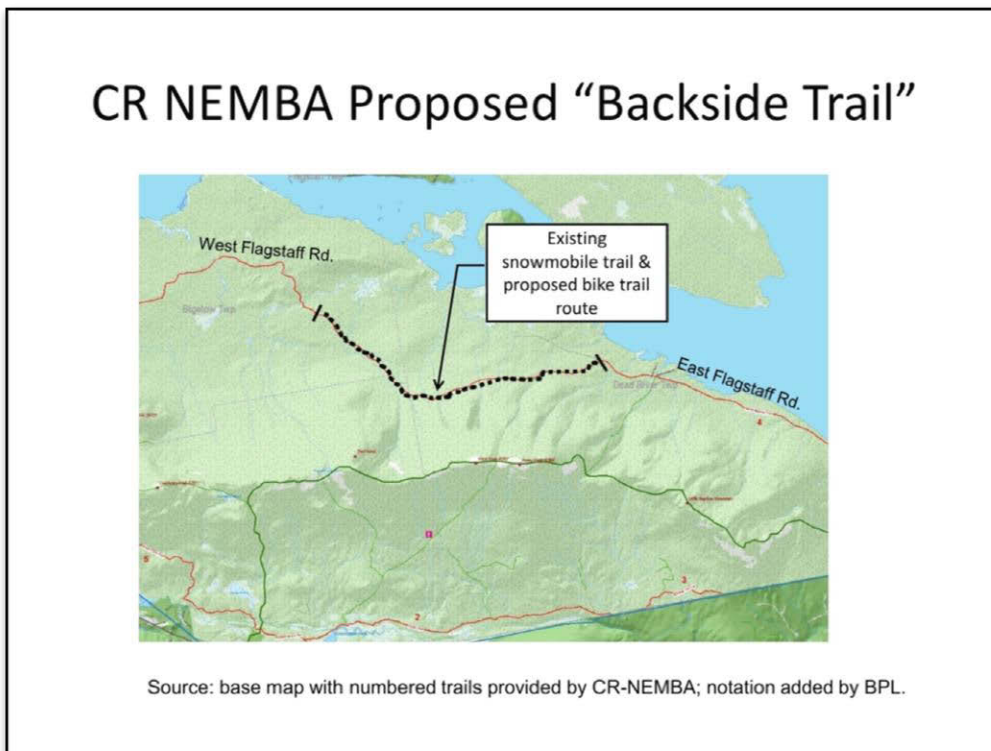


Figure 8.

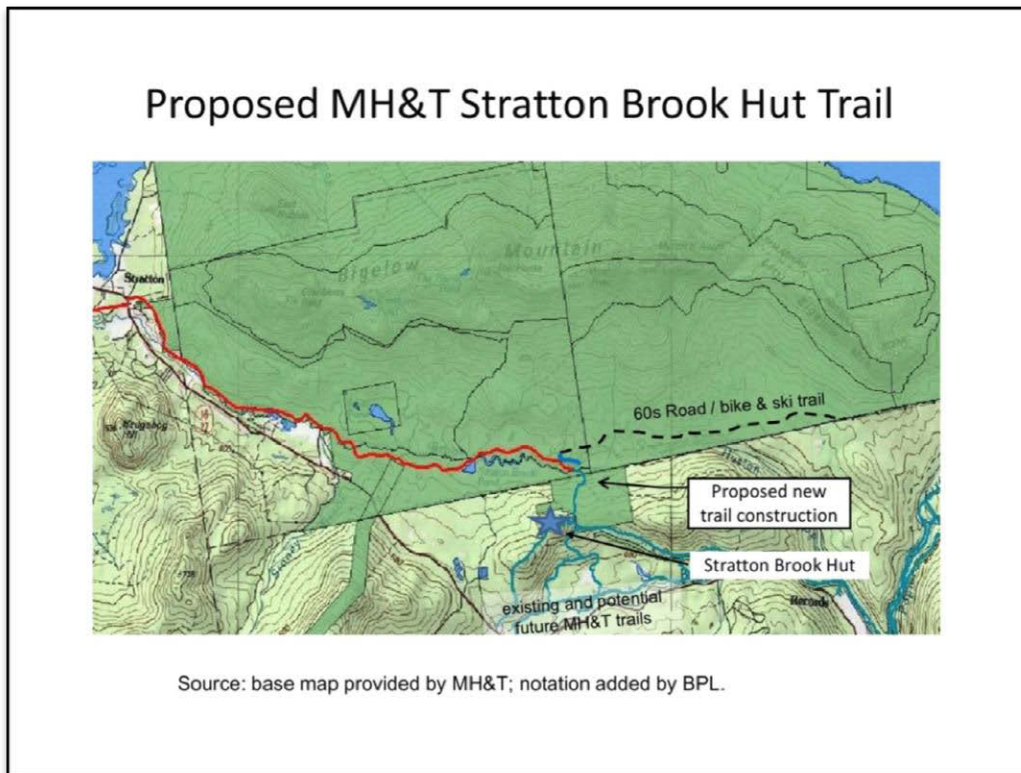


Figure 9.

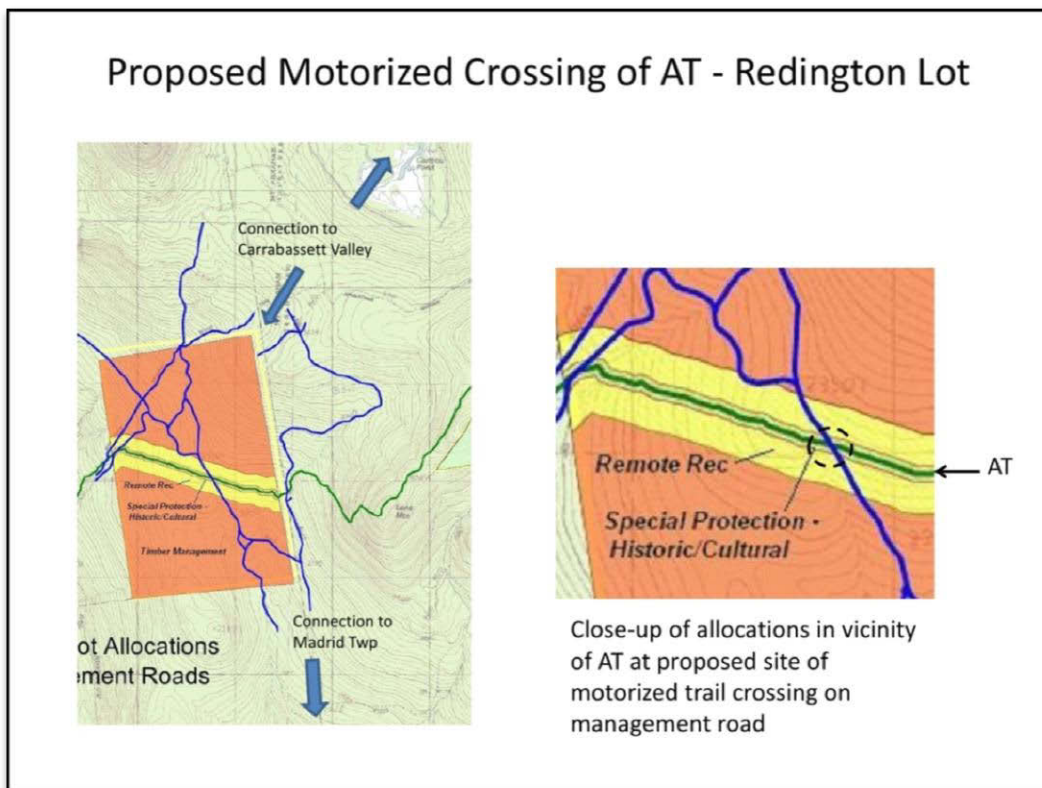
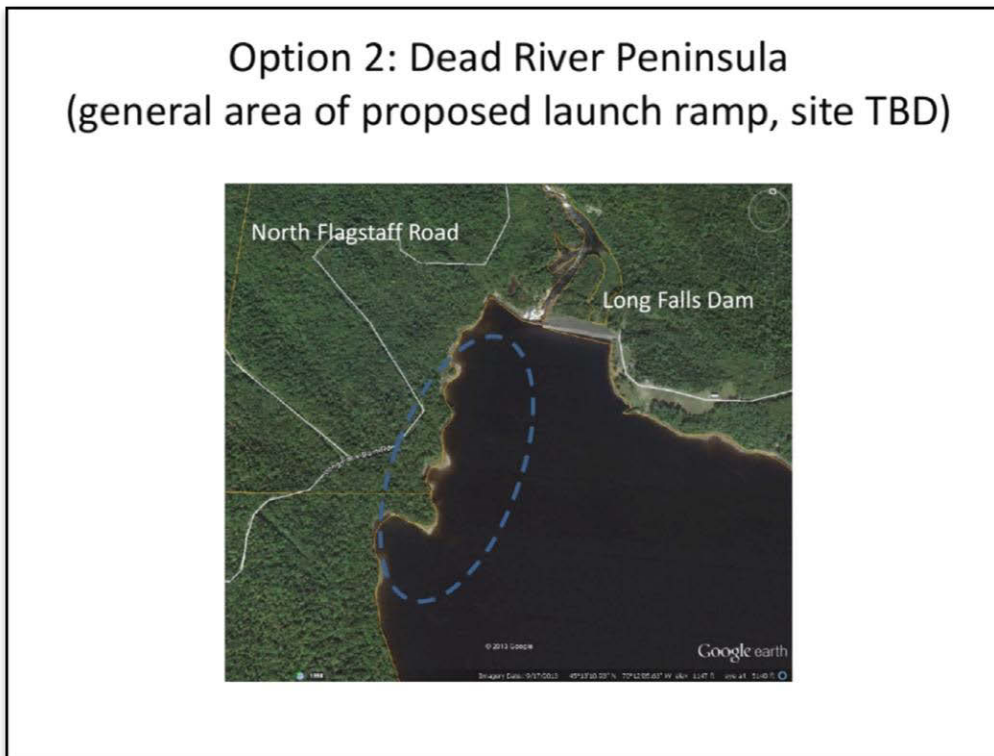


Figure 10.



Figure 11.



3. Flagstaff Region Management Plan 5 Year Review –Plan Amendments

The following amendments to the 2007 Flagstaff Region Management Plan are adopted in response to the proposals previously outlined.

ADDITIONAL TRAILS

Amendment A: Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail – Chain of Ponds Unit

Amend the Chain of Ponds Management Recommendations (page 169 of Plan), under “Recreation Resources” to include the following:

Allow construction of trail segments and bridges proposed by Western Mountains Corporation (WMC) within the northwest and southeast portions of the Chain of Ponds unit, as part of the proposed 47-mile Coburn Gore to Kingfield multi-use non-motorized recreation trail, with the following requirements for final approval:

- 1) BPL approval of final trail route, with the northern segment traversing approximately 1 mile and the southern segment approximately 0.6 mile of BPL lands,
- 2) BPL approval of design and construction methods of any bridges and engineered boardwalks required to implement the approved route; and evidence of necessary regulatory permit approvals,
- 3) Evidence of approvals from abutting landowner(s) for a trail segment west of the unit linking the trail segments on BPL property.
- 4) Satisfactory resolution of any potential conflicts with state-sanctioned regional ATV trails near the north end of the unit and near Coburn Gore, where the proposed trail intersects the ATV trails, and
- 5) Development of a long-term agreement between BPL and WMC for maintenance of trail.

Any BPL management roads designated as part of the proposed trail will be subject to occasional Bureau use for hauling timber or other management purposes. Crossing between Bag Pond and Lower Pond will also be subject to potential installation and use of a temporary truck bridge as needed for timber operations by the Bureau or as allowed by the Bureau through agreements or rights-of-way executed with the abutting landowner.

Amendment B: Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail - Bigelow Preserve

Amend the Bigelow Preserve Management Recommendations (pages 162-163 of Plan), under “Hiking, Biking and Camping Opportunities” to include the following:

Allow the segment of the Coburn Gore to Kingfield non-motorized multi-use trail proposed to cross the Bigelow Preserve to be co-located with the existing management road and designated snowmobile trail between the Range trailhead and Stratton Brook Road, connecting to and following Stratton Brook Road and the existing bike and ski trail on the “60s management road.” The trail must be maintained with non-motorized equipment. BPL will consider trail improvements on the segment between the Range trailhead and Stratton Brook Road to facilitate bike and pedestrian use; any improvements must be compatible with snowmobile use. The trail concept is to be coordinated with other trail proposals (e.g., Maine Huts and Trails’ Stratton Brook Hut connector trail, CR-NEMBA’s proposed mountain bike usage of Bigelow Preserve management roads) to avoid incompatibilities.

Amendment C: Mountain Bike Routes - Additions and Improvements

Amend the Bigelow Preserve Management Recommendations (pages 162-163 of Plan), under “Hiking, Biking and Camping Opportunities” to include the following:

(1) Add two short management roads to the public use and management roads designated for mountain bike use (page 126 of Plan), to provide connections to the bike touring network on abutting lands.

Road 1 – 0.7 miles in length, within Wyman Twp., extending southeast from the Stratton Brook parking area to the CMP powerline corridor at the south boundary of the preserve.

Road 2 – 1.5 miles in length, within Dead River Twp., roughly parallel to the south boundary of the Bigelow Preserve/Carrabassett Valley line east of Huston Brook Road, connecting at each end to the CMP powerline corridor.

Both road segments are part of the existing snowmobile trail system on the Bigelow Preserve, and link directly to snowmobile/ATV routes on adjacent lands that are used by mountain bike riders, and indirectly to mountain bike trails. Consistent with current policy on mountain bike use within the Bigelow Preserve, these road segments will not be formally designated as bike trails. BPL is likely to use these roads as haul routes during future timber harvests, and log yards could be constructed along the roads. The roads will be examined for any potential culvert/drainage repairs to facilitate bike use, with any needed repairs scheduled as resources allow.

(2) Work with CR NEMBA to plan improvements on the existing management road/snowmobile trail between the Range trailhead and Stratton Brook Road to facilitate bike use and improve the riding experience, with the potential for limited reroutes in problem areas.

Improvements, to be constructed by CR NEMBA, must be compatible with snowmobile use of the trail corridor.

Amendment D: New Mountain Bike Single-Track Trail

Amend the Bigelow Preserve Management Recommendations (pages 162-163 of Plan), under “Hiking, Biking and Camping Opportunities” to include the following:

Collaborate with CR NEMBA on a specific route and design for ~2.4 miles of rerouted trail focused on the Dead River Twp. portion of the Stratton Brook bike and ski trail (aka “60’s Road/Esker Trail”). The Bureau intends to reopen the 60’s Haul Road for timber harvesting in the near future. This rerouted trail will create a permanent “single track” trail along the popular section now utilizing the “60’s Road.” This is an important section of trail as it connects to a major network of mountain biking trails on lands adjacent to the Preserve. If the beaver flowage a half mile east of township/county line is not avoided by the reroute, consider improving the crossing to facilitate trail use during occasional flooding.

Amendment E: Hiking/Snowshoeing Connector on Carrabassett Valley Lot and Bigelow Preserve to Link Maine Huts and Trails Stratton Brook Hut to 60’s Haul Road

Amend the Flagstaff Lake/Surrounding Properties Management Recommendations (pages 166-167 of Plan), under “Land Based Recreation” to include the following:

(Note: This amendment also affects lands within the Bigelow Preserve, and therefore is also proposed to be appended to the Management Recommendations for Bigelow Preserve (pages 162-163 of Plan), under “Hiking, Biking and Camping Opportunities.”)

Allow construction of a new hiking/snowshoeing/ungroomed ski trail by Maine Huts & Trails (MH&T) between an existing multi-use non-motorized trail near the Stratton Brook Hut and the 60’s Road bike/ski trail. The trail will cross the Carrabassett Valley lot and enter the Bigelow Preserve on an old road at a crossing of Stratton Brook. The total trail length will be approximately 1.5 miles; approximately 1,200 feet of the trail will be within the Bigelow Preserve, north from Stratton Brook to the intersection of the old road with the 60’s Road. The final route of the trail on the Carrabassett Valley Lot is to be determined by BPL in collaboration with MH&T. Construction details for the trail, addressing drainage and potential erosion issues, must be approved in advance of construction by BPL. The design and construction methods for a pedestrian bridge over Stratton Brook are to be developed by MH&T and approved by BPL. (Mechanical equipment would not be permitted for trail or bridge construction north of Stratton Brook). The trail is to be posted with appropriate signage as closed to bicycles, and indicated as such on BPL and MH&T maps. Trail planning will seek to minimize potential conflicts with the

snowmobile and ATV trail that crosses the Carrabassett Valley lot. A Visual Class I secondary allocation (buffer) would be designated along the new trail, as stipulated by the IRP and the Plan (p. 149) for all hiking trails, with the goal to “retain the appearance of an essentially undisturbed forest” (p. 132 of the Plan).

BOATING ACCESS TO FLAGSTAFF LAKE

Amendment F: Trailered Boat Access Facility on East Side of Flagstaff Lake

Amend the Flagstaff Lake/Surrounding Properties Management Recommendations, under “Coordinated Recreation Planning for Flagstaff Lake” (page 166 of Plan) to include the following:

Given that neither of two traditional boat access sites on the east side of Flagstaff Lake that were formerly part of the FERC hydropower license are being continued (the Bog Brook area and the Long Falls Dam day use area), leaving no trailered boat options on this side of the lake, work with Brookfield White Pine Hydro, operator of the federally licensed Flagstaff Project, to investigate options on the Long Falls Dam BPL property (under lease to Brookfield) and on the BPL Dead River peninsula, to be included in Brookfield’s required Recreation Plan for the Flagstaff Project. If an appropriate site is identified, work cooperatively with Brookfield to design the facility to minimize the footprint of disturbance, and facilitate launching of small to medium sized boats appropriate to the constraints of relatively shallow waters in Flagstaff Lake; and to jointly develop and maintain the site. If an appropriate site is identified, adjust the allocation to Developed Recreation.