

Bureau of Parks and Lands
Flagstaff Region Management Plan
5-Year Review and Update – Public Meeting
June 12, 2014 6:00 – 8:00 PM
University of Maine – Farmington

MEETING MINUTES

The Public Meeting was attended by approximately 20 people.

Additionally, the following BPL staff members were present: Will Harris, Director; Pete Smith, Western Region Lands Manager; Steve Swatling, Bigelow Preserve Manager; Kathy Eickenberg, Chief of Planning; Jim Vogel, Plan Coordinator; Rex Turner, Outdoor Recreation Specialist; Scott Ramsey, Director ORV Division; Tom Charles, Chief of Silviculture

Welcome/Introduction

Will Harris welcomed the attendees, asked staff to introduce themselves, provided a review of the plan review process, and outlined the purpose of the public meeting. Attendees were requested to focus comments on the proposed Plan Amendments being presented.

Presentation

Jim Vogel used a PowerPoint presentation to review key aspects of the Plan review purpose and process, and to review the seven non-motorized trail proposals, the motorized trail proposal, and the boat access proposal under consideration. Each proposal was described and located on a map, followed by a description of the designated resource allocations in the affected areas, BPL justifications for potential approval of the concepts, and finally the proposed Plan amendments (if any) associated with each proposal. Time was given for public comments after the presentation of each proposal.

Public Comments/Questions

Proposed Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail - Chain of Ponds

No comments

Proposed Coburn Gore to Kingfield Trail – Stratton Area

- Ken Spalding, Friends of Bigelow (FOB) – Supports colocation of proposed trail with other existing and proposed trails.
- Ben Godsoe, High Peaks Alliance (HPA) – Likes concept of heritage trail as described in the proposal.

Proposed Maine Huts & Trails (MH&T) Bigelow Preserve connector trail

- Dick Fecteau, Maine Appalachian Trail Club (MATC) – Questioned whether the proposals included 2 routes from the MH&T hut to the Bigelow Preserve; Jim Vogel responded that the only other routes are existing gravel roads and/or motorized trails, and only the MH&T proposal provides a direct route to the preserve for hikers, off gravel road and motorized

trails. Dick also questioned why the proposed trail was intended for just hiking and ungroomed skiing and not biking; Jim Vogel responded that mountain biking has not been part of the proposal largely due to the terrain crossed. Charlie Woodworth of MH&T responded that others can make a case for mountain bike to be part of the proposal if they want, but that would necessitate a much longer trail, with switchbacks.

- Ken Spalding, FOB – Questioned how proposed allocations were arrived at; Jim Vogel explained that proposed Visual Class I “no cut” buffer was based on how hiking trails were addressed by BPL elsewhere in the Plan area and the need to be consistent in applying these buffers.

Proposed Carrabassett Region (CR) NEMBA Dead Moose Trail

- No comments

Proposed CR NEMBA Birthday Hill Trail

- Ben Godsoe, HPA – Proposed trail looks like a good opportunity to connect with other trails on abutting lands

Proposed CR NEMBA Esker Trail Reroute

- Ken Spalding, FOB – Questioned if reroute would involve up to 2.4 miles of single-track trail, but not single-track to either side, and whether the proposed trail would parallel the existing road/trail; Jim Vogel answered in the affirmative, explaining the trail on either side was on old roads, but approximated single track due to regrowth of surrounding forest, and that the proposed trail would roughly parallel the existing road/trail. Ken also asked whether the new trail would provide a more varied experience, would lead to a change in type of user, and would be permanent. Jim Vogel responded that the new trail could provide more varied riding, and would be permanent, but that the intent was to maintain the present “moderate” level of difficulty.
- Steve Swatling, BPL – Would the relocated trail have to be buffered? Jim Vogel responded that since all existing bike trails on the Preserve are on public use or management roads, they are not buffered (or are co-located with a hiking trail in a Special Protection allocation), and this issue has not yet been discussed or addressed in reference to a new single track trail.

Proposed CR NEMBA Jones Trail Reroute

- Ken Spalding, FOB – Supports co-location of bike trail with other trails/uses

Proposed CR NEMBA Backside Trail

- Ken Spalding, FOB – Strongly supports BPL decision to not propose a Plan amendment that would permit development of this new bike trail in the Preserve.

Proposed Redington Lot Appalachian Trail Crossing

- Claire Polfus, Appalachian Trail Conservancy (ATC) – Opposed to the proposed Plan amendment as it is currently written and cannot support it. Major concern is with the

precedent of lessening protection of AT on Public Lands that would result from proposed reallocation at crossing. Proposal requires consultation with NPS and ATC. (Written comment letter was also submitted.)

- Eliza Donoghue, Natural Resource Council of Maine (NRCM) – Agrees with comments of ATC. Need continued dialogue with AT organizations which are given responsibility to monitor potential trail impacts under this proposal.
- John McCatherin, Carrabassett Valley ATV Club – Would like to see comments already submitted on this proposal. There has also been a change related to why this proposal should be considered in the loss of the snowmobile trail and AT crossing on the adjacent road. Find that ATV families use the trails, introduces kids to the outdoors. This proposal would provide shorter loops more amenable to family use.
- Betsy Squibb – Supports the proposal, is confident that the AT and motorized recreation clubs can work together to implement the crossing.
- Dick Fecteau, MATC – Objects to including this proposal in the Plan amendments without more discussion with abutters as to whether they would allow a motorized trail to cross their lands. Believes maps have been produced in association with the Crocker acquisition that depicted other potential motorized trail routes that did not require the proposed AT crossing. Kathy Eickenberg responded that such trail routes, depicted on maps produced by Trust for Public Lands, were conceptual only; John McCatherin seconded that such trail maps were not part of the Crocker Mountain agreement signed by the town of Carrabassett Valley.
- Ben Godsoe, HPA – Supports proposed amendments as written; it represents a balance that offers the most access to the most users in the region, looks forward to further movement on this proposal.
- Charlie Woodworth, Maine Huts & Trails – Supports proposed crossing.
- Claire Polfus, ATC – Is any amendment possible? (notes are not clear on question and do not indicate any response)
- Bob Weingarten – Dissatisfied with Plan review process, can only address new things that have changed; BPL is responding (with Redington Lot proposal) to potential future opportunities (for motorized trail connections), not a change, yet BPL denied Friends of Bigelow requests for ecological studies due to increased logging.
- Niki Haggan – I love to hike, dirt bike and snowmobile in the region; this proposal is the perfect opportunity to get the most out of one crossing of the AT; also can have positive economic impact to small communities.
- Ben Godsoe, HPA – Co-management of the proposed AT crossing is a good thing, and provides a good process to reduce conflicts between motorized and non-motorized uses. It has worked out well with the West Saddleback connector.

Proposed East Flagstaff Lake Boat Launch

- Ken Spalding, FOB – No comments on Dead River peninsula site. Strongly opposed to Bigelow Preserve site. Building a new road (in converting trail to trailered launch ramp) is in conflict with the Bigelow Act. The proposal represents a lot of change to the site for very little justification. Bigelow Act does not speak to motorized boat access but takes a strong

position against motorized vehicle use. The proposed change in allocation (from secondary Remote Recreation to Developed Recreation in the shoreline zone) reduces protection, which takes a higher justification.

- Bruce Marcoux – Lake is full of boats; need launches; existing launch in Stratton is packed (on weekends); boat traffic is growing, heavy use on the west side.
- Niki Haggan – I enjoy kayaking and motorboating; have a camp in Lexington Twp., very important for east side of Flagstaff Lake, would help distribute use on the lake. Proposal represents an “essential service.”
- Bob Weingarten – Not in support of proposal (read from Bigelow Act); motorboat access would be in violation of law. Also opposed because it would be more development and what the Preserve was meant to do was keep it from being developed – value of keeping it “wilderness” where you would not hear a motor.
- Eliza Donoghue, NRCM – Have concerns with the proposal that echo those stated by Ken and Bob. Is FERC license obligation driving this? How much was Bigelow Act taken into account in that obligation? Jim Vogel responded that FERC has made no mention of Bigelow Act and is not imposing a requirement that the launch be built in the Preserve, only that Brookfield work with BPL to identify an alternative site to Bog Brook.
- Steve Swatling, BPL – Bog Brook is a day use beach and this proposal does not address the lack of parking there in relation to day use. Jim Vogel responded by acknowledging the use of the site for day use, and that parking for that use may not be improved by this proposal, while noting that FERC has considered it a boat access site in the official Flagstaff Lake record.
- Dick Fecteau, MATC – Believe that the Gravel Pit sit will have the same problems (for boat launching) as Bog Brook (due to sandy lake bottom). Trailer launch at the Gravel Pit would be a major change.
- Bob Weingarten – BPLs response to comments in the Final Flagstaff Region Plan, appendix F, indicate that BPL has changed position; had dropped plans for boat access at Gravel Pit due to non-state ownership. BPL staff responded that the plans must have been unrelated to the gravel pit, which is in state ownership.
- Ken Spalding, FOB – Proposed ramp would be equivalent to a new road and is not allowed under the Bigelow Act. Kathy responded that the Bureau may need to obtain a legal opinion as to whether the proposal would represent a “new road” in violation of the Act.
- Rob Woodhouse – Supports proposal for gravel pit area; appreciates BPL expanding opportunities and not denying.

Next Steps/Concluding Comments

- Jim Vogel reminded attendees of the opportunity to provide written comments over the next two weeks, and that an email and mailing address to submit comments are provided on the bottom of the meeting agenda. The meeting was concluded with a thank you to all who attended.