

Upland Habitat Impacts

The three alternatives impact approximately 89 to 99 acres of upland habitat (Table 2). In general, red oak – northern hardwood – white pine forest accounts for about one-half of upland habitat impacted by each alternative. This is followed by agricultural fields, which account for approximately one-quarter of impacted uplands, then by urban (developed) areas. White pine plantation forests, old fields, and hemlock forests are the only other vegetated upland habitats impacted. Other disturbed habitats affected by the alternatives include a gravel pit crossed by E3E(2) and an industrial area, a capped landfill, crossed by E3E(3).

Rare Natural Community and Significant Wildlife Habitat Impacts

The three alternatives will impact one known rare natural community type, hardwood seepage forest, and a deer wintering area (DWA) mapped by the Maine Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife (MDIFW). All three alternatives impact the DWA, which is located near the southern end of the study area. Alternative E3E(3) impacts this area the least, with approximately 2.07 acres of impact while E3E(2) impacts it the most, with 2.50 acres of impact. E3E(1) will impact approximately 2.11 acres of this area (Table 3).

Hardwood seepage forests occur in two locations in the study corridor—immediately north of Route 2, north of the Kennebec River, and along Wesserunsett Stream. The area along Route 2 was not previously mapped and was identified during field surveys in 2002. The Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP) was subsequently notified about the presence of that community. The area along Wesserunsett Stream was previously mapped by the MNAP. All three alternatives will impact approximately 7.1 to 7.75 acres of seepage forest along Route 2 (Table 3). Alternative E3E(3) will impact an additional six acres of seepage forest along Wesserunsett Stream, for a total impact of 13.93 acres.

Impacts to the DWA and the hardwood seepage forest along Route 2 were reviewed with the MDIFW and MNAP. Both agencies indicated that impacts to these areas should be avoided but, if impacts are unavoidable, they should be minimized to the extent practicable. Both agencies indicated that minimal impacts to those resources would be acceptable. The MNAP should be consulted again with respect to the hardwood seepage forest along Wesserunsett Stream, as impacts to that area were not previously discussed with that agency. Efforts should focus on identifying impact minimization strategies for that area.