

THE RANGELEY REGION

Regional Setting

The ecological context of the Rangeley Region is much larger than the ten-township study area. The study area encompasses only the lower portion of the Upper Androscoggin River Watershed, a subregion of the Western Mountains physiographic region (see Map 1). Primarily in timberland, this area functions generally as an outdoor recreation destination, with the Town of Rangeley as the economic center for “local” goods and services. Residents generally go to communities beyond the region, i.e. Farmington, Rumford, or Errol, N.H., for their groceries and major shopping and service needs.

High Value Resources

The region’s extraordinary natural resources have dictated its historical development. This beautiful and bountiful complex of forests, lakes, and mountains first attracted loggers, then it drew turn-of-the-19th-century sports. Today, a core of year-round residents live on the edge of the working forest that attracts outdoor recreationists and second homeowners throughout the seasons. Map 2 depicts a few of these significant resource values. While there are many outstanding regions of the state and New England, none has quite the same character as Rangeley.

The area’s unique quality is threatened by increasing development pressures. Shorefront property is becoming scarcer, thus putting pressure on marginal lands, places away from the water with a view, and backlands. The Commission’s *Comprehensive Land Use Plan* contains a detailed description of these and other threats.

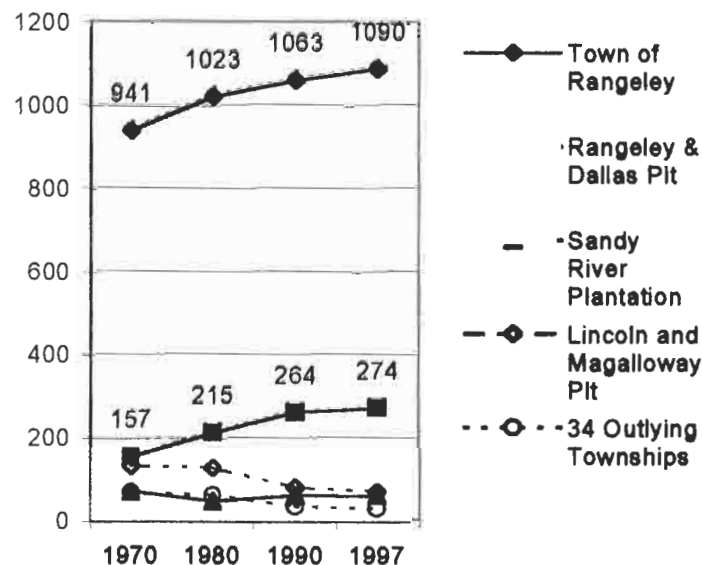
Year-round Population

Year-round residency in the Town of Rangeley and Plantations of Rangeley and Dallas rose about 24% between 1970 and 1997, on par with the State

and Franklin County averages of 25% and 29% respectively. Sandy River Plantation had a relatively stable population over this time period. The population of Lincoln, Magalloway, and other outlying townships is in decline, however, creating a net loss in the study area.

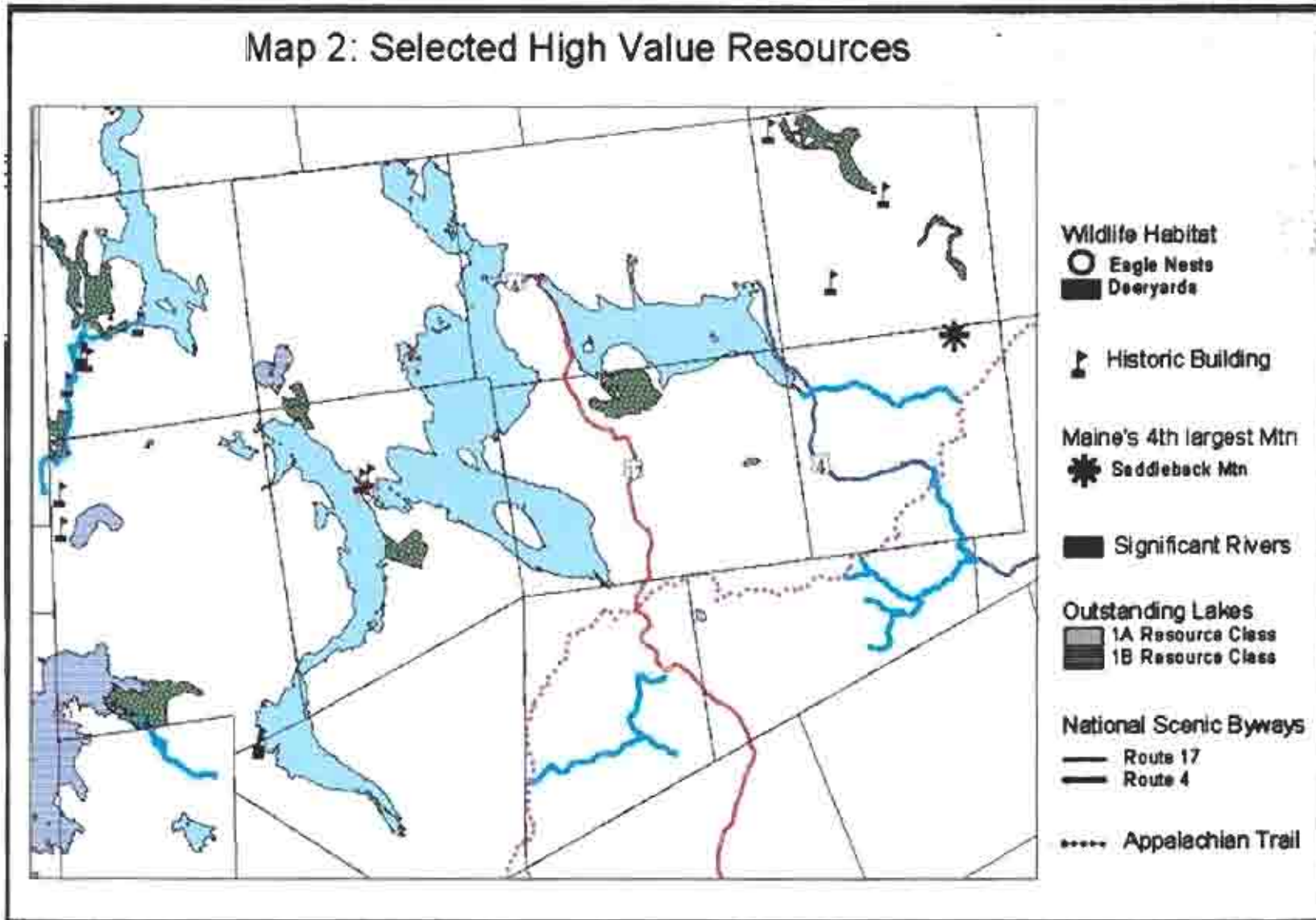
Between 1990 and 1997, total year-round population in the study area and the Town of Rangeley declined from about 1548 to 1532.

Figure 1: Year-round Population



Source US Census Bureau and Maine Dept. Human Services estimates

Map 2: Selected High Value Resources

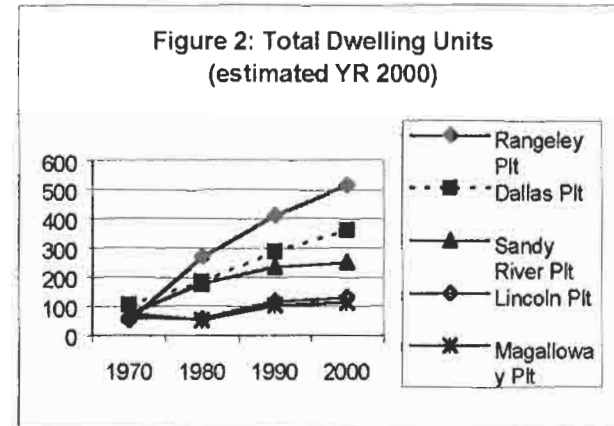


The Census Bureau aggregates data for sparsely populated outlying townships. The population data for the 34 outlying townships grouped in Figure 1 are in the Northern Oxford County, West Central Franklin, and North Franklin County Census tracts.³ Consequently, no data is available individually for Adamstown, Richardsontown, and Townships C, D, and E.

Seasonal Population

Keeping with tradition, more people have homes and camps in the study area than year-round population data reflect. Again, Rangeley, Dallas, and Sandy River have seen the greatest increases in dwellings since 1970 when all five plantations had roughly the same number (see Figure 2). The pace slackened somewhat in the 1990s, according to building permit data.

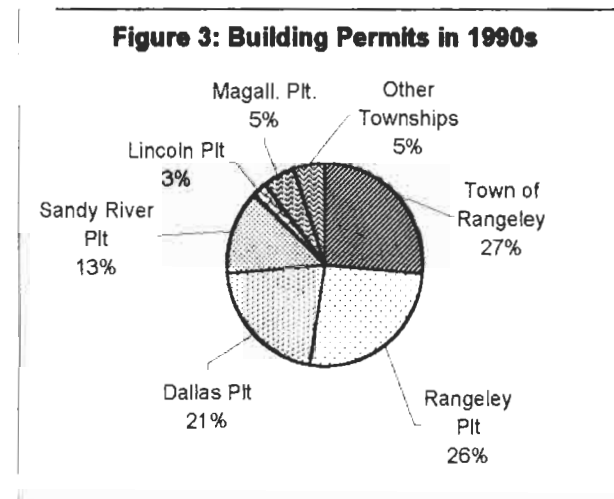
Still, during the 1990s, the ten-township study area averaged 28 building permits a year for new camps, mobile homes, or year-round homes or camps. Together, Rangeley (10/year), Dallas (8/year), and Sandy River (4.6/year) Plantations had the lion's share with 23/year. In comparison, the Town of Rangeley averaged 10 per year and the most populated township in the Commission's jurisdiction, Albany, averaged 8. Lincoln and Magalloway together averaged 3 per year and the other five study townships averaged 2.



Source: US Census Bureau and Land Use Regulation Commission

For every year-round resident gained over the last decade in Rangeley, Dallas, and Sandy River Plantations, 23 new homes or camps have been permitted.

³ The West Central Franklin County Census Tract includes: Townships D, E, and T6 North of Weld. North Franklin includes: Gorham Gore, Lowelltown, Skinner, Kibby, Jim Pond, Redington, Beattie, Chain of Ponds, Alder Stream, Tim Pond, Lang, Coburn Gore, Massachusetts Gore, Seven Ponds, Stetsontown, and Davis Townships. North Oxford includes: Bowmantown, Parmachenee, Oxbow, Lynchtown, Upper Cupsuptic, Parkertown, Adamstown, Richardsontown, C, C Surplus, Andover North Surplus, Andover West Surplus, Grafton, and Riley Townships.



Trend Toward Permanent Construction

Dallas and Rangeley Plantations have the bulk of dwellings constructed for year-round use, if not actually occupied on a year-round basis (Figure 4). While Dallas had slightly more dwellings in 1970, extensive subdivision east of Mooselookmeguntic Lake in Rangeley Plantation has moved that community to the front in the number of dwellings (Figure 2). Sandy River follows Dallas in third place.

According to US Census data between 1970 and 1980, the proportion of seasonal dwellings stayed constant in the study area, about 82% of the total. But Figure 5 shows that the recent trend is toward more permanent

construction with foundations as more people build or convert camps to seasonal homes in the area. Presumably this trend will continue as the bulging baby-boomer generation enters its pre-retirement and retirement years.

Over three-quarters of building permits issued for new homes or camps in the past decade have been constructed in a manner that can accommodate year-round use.

Figure 4: Residential Structures (1995 LURC Inventory)

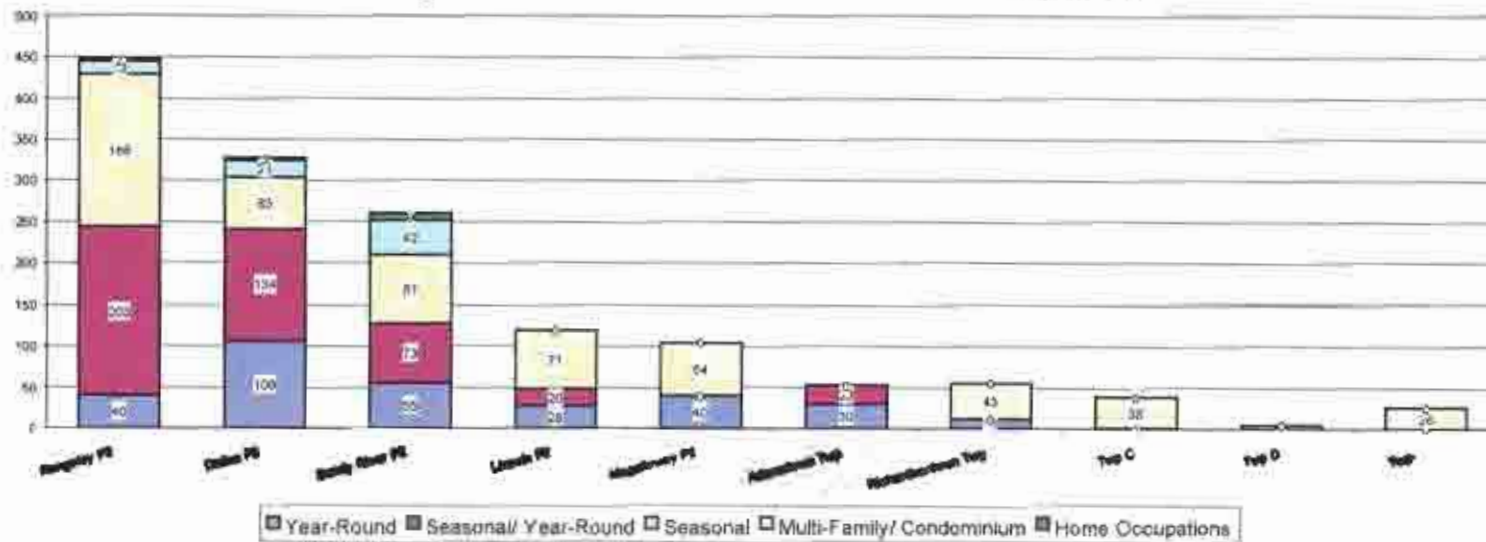
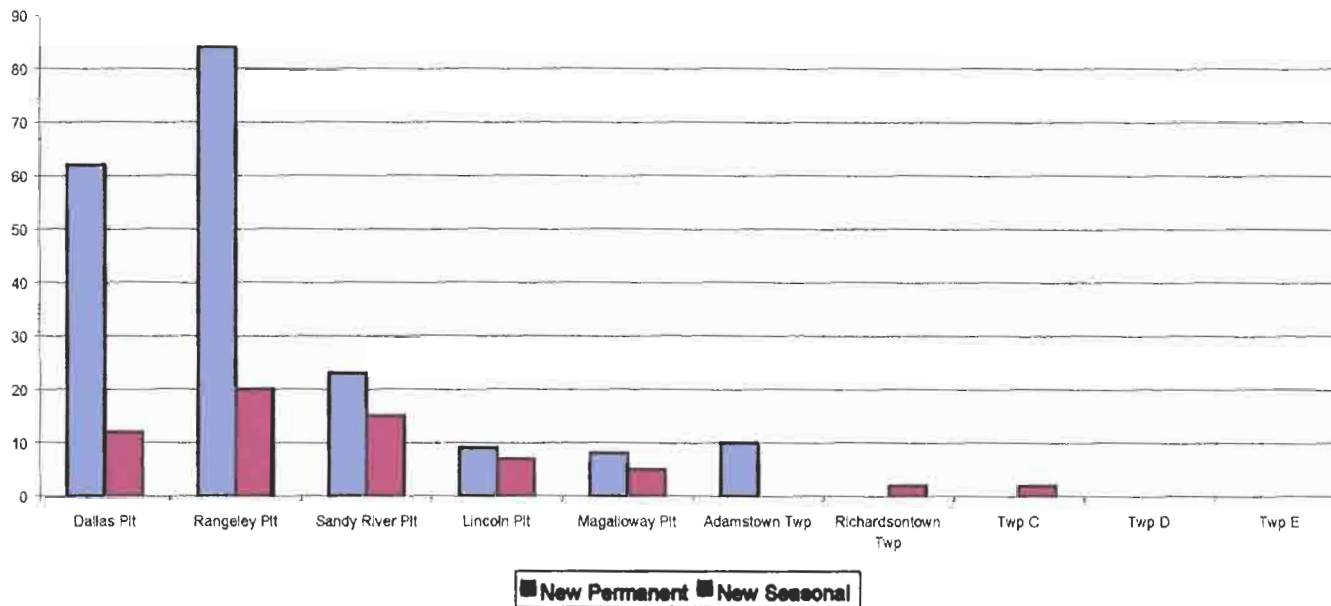


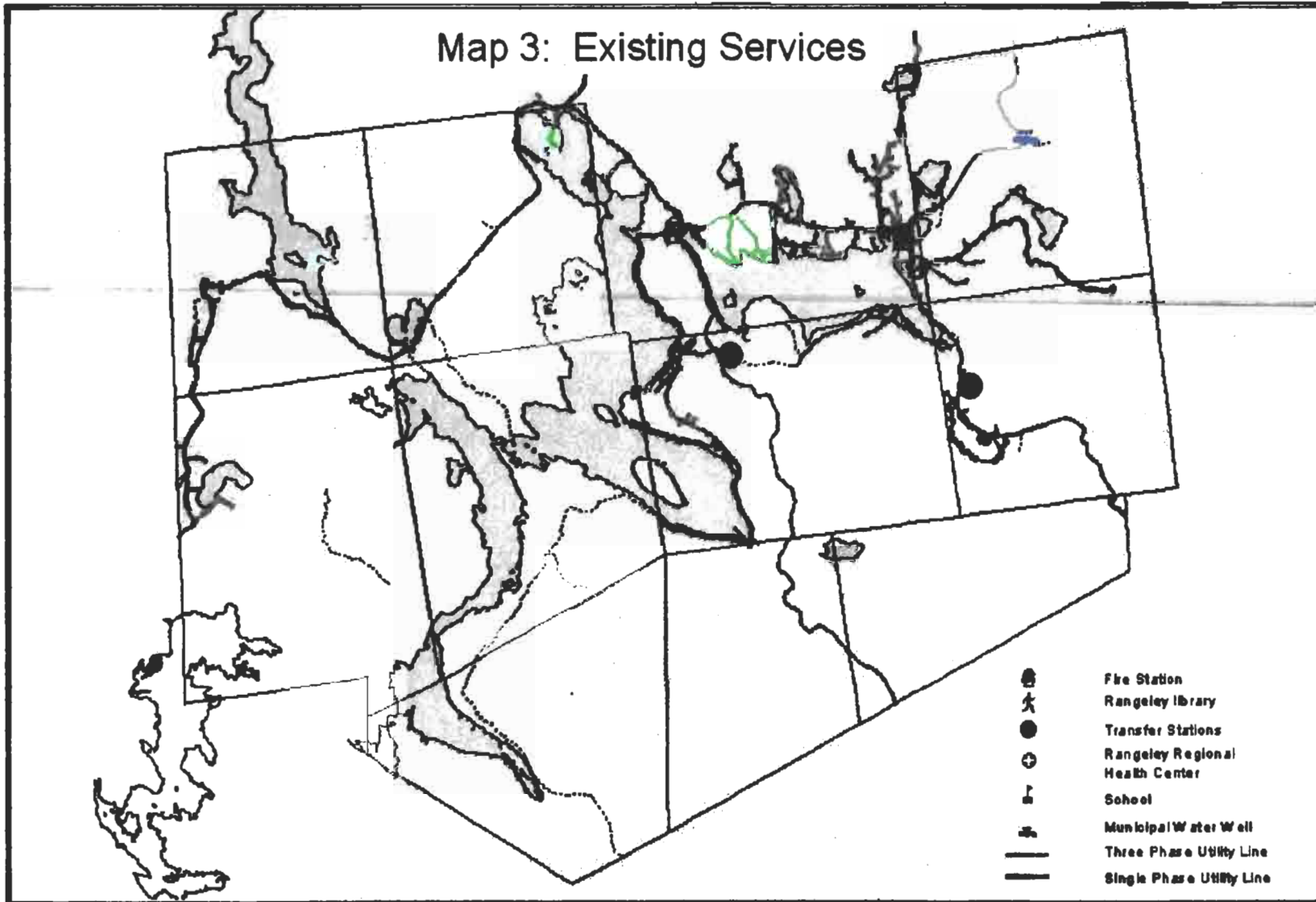
Figure 5: Building Permits For New Dwellings (LURC data)
 (1/1990 to 8/1999)



Development Patterns

Map 3 shows development patterns generalized by property parcels in the ten townships, along with public utilities and services. Most development is concentrated near the Town of Rangeley and state highways, or along lakeshores. Public services are minimal, primarily road maintenance, snowplowing, and transportation to the Rangeley Region School. The townships contract with the Town of Rangeley for fire protection. Rangeley and Sandy River Plantations have their own transfer stations. Some households in Dallas are connected to the Rangeley Water District system. The Rangeley Sanitary District serves only the Town of Rangeley.

Commercial enterprises are not extensive, even in the plantations closest to the Town of Rangeley. The following are some examples. Sandy River Plantation has Saddleback Ski Area, as well as most of the home occupations that were inventoried in 1995. Dallas has a restaurant and a golf course, the latter constructed without a permit (an After The Fact Permit application is under consideration). A sporting camp exists on Lower Richardson Lake (Lakewood, on the National Register of Historic Places) and another is being developed on Rangeley Lake. Three other sporting camp/housekeeping cabin facilities in Rangeley and Dallas Plantations were sold as individual camps.



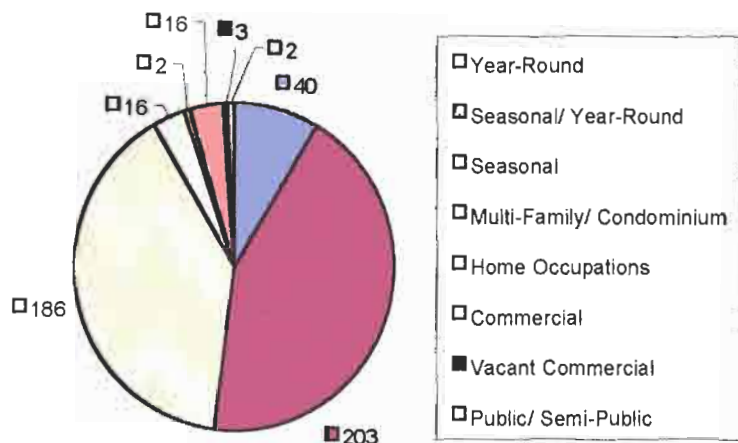
Land Consumption

Change used to be relatively slow in the Rangeley Region, but the building boom of the last 20 years has sped up the cycle. The Commission until recently did not record complete data on parcel size for building permits so one can only estimate the rate of land consumption.

For the data that is available, the size of developed parcels varies. For example, according to 32 permits out of 37 issued in Dallas between 1995 and 1999, three-quarters were 5-acre or smaller lots, and about half of these were 2-acre or smaller lots.

Assuming one acre for every primary structure – of which there were 2963 in the ten-township area in 1995, roughly 3000 acres are now developed. This is about 1.4% of the land area in the ten-township region.

Figure 6: Type of Structures (1995 LURC Inventory)



Land Ownership

Large timber management and power generation companies have traditionally held most of the land in the region in large blocks. This holds true today with the Pingree Family, Mead Corporation, International Paper Company, Dallas Company, Franklin Timber Company, and others still managing large tracts for timber and accommodating public use for outdoor recreation (see Map 4). No parcel maps are available for Lincoln and Magalloway Plantations, but only the settlement areas are in small parcels.

Most small parcels have been created in townships closest to the Town of Rangeley. Lease lots, of which there are many, are not reflected in this data.

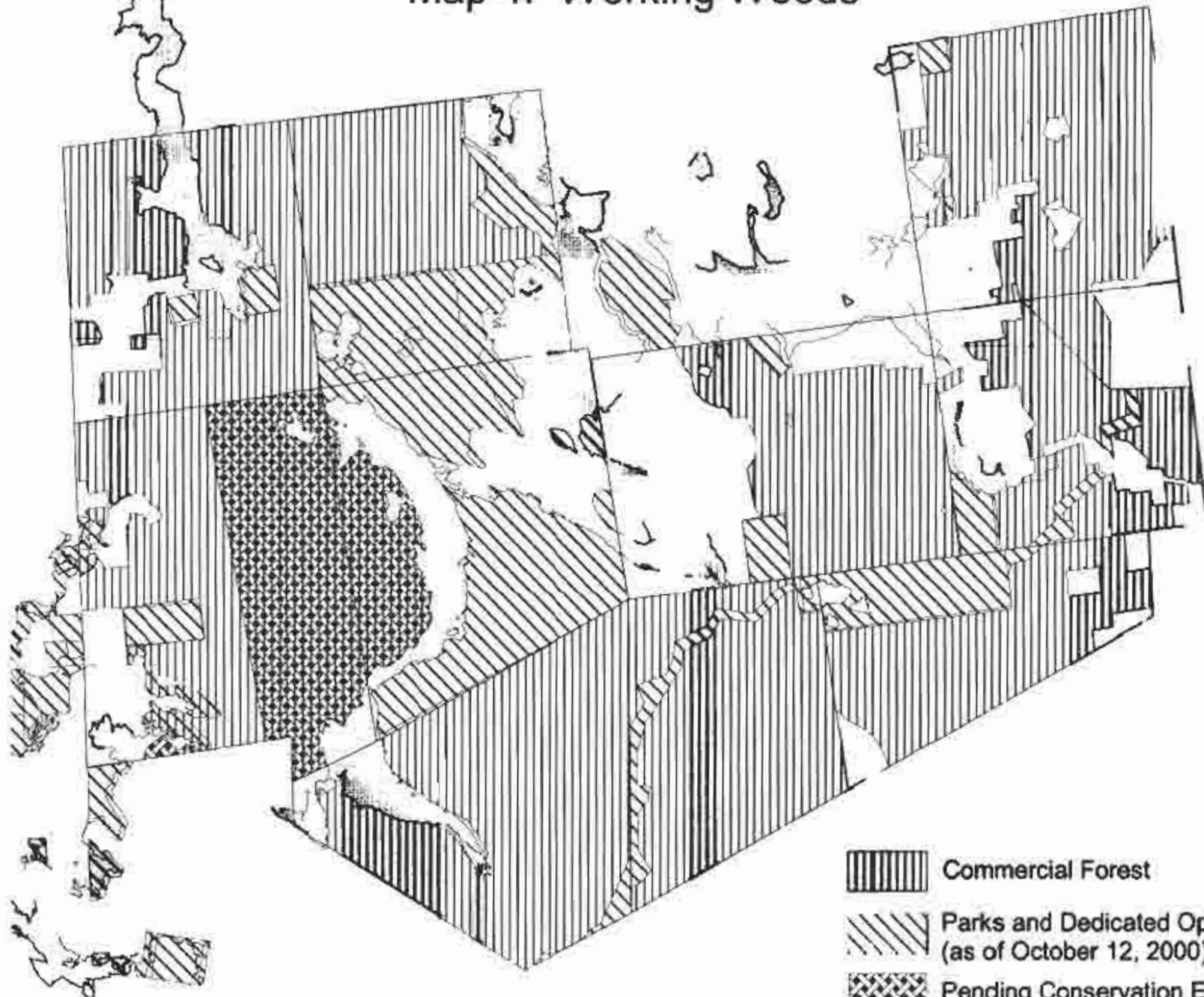
Figure 7: Property Parcel Count By Parcel Size




	0 to 2 Acres	2.1 to 5 Acres	5.1 to 100 Acres	100.1 to 1000 Acres	>1000 Acres	Total Acres
Rangeley Plt	645	193	206	13	2	27,715
Dallas Plt	430	108	115	7	2	25,602
Sandy River Plt	343	68	116	12	6	20,897
Adamstown Twp	43	11	14	2	6	44,092
Richardsontown	0	1	2	1	1	5,875
Twp C	8	1	5	4	2	54,107
Twp D	5	0	0	1	3	22,763
Twp E	26	0	2	4	2	19,039
Total Count	1500	382	460	44	24	220,091

Land Conservation

The extraordinary landscape of the Rangeley Lakes area and a strong sense of stewardship have motivated several individuals, landowners, Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust, and state and federal governments to conserve large important tracts of land (see Map 4).

Map 4: Working Woods



-  Commercial Forest
-  Parks and Dedicated Open Space (as of October 12, 2000)
-  Pending Conservation Easement

The Rangeley Lakes Heritage Trust and the state own about half the shorelands of Mooselookmeguntic Lake and Upper Richardson Lake, along with an extensive land area in between. Union Water Power Company worked to conserve shorelands of the Rapid River and Pond in the River before selling their remaining property to Florida Power and Light Company. The New England Forestry Foundation is currently raising funds to sell development rights for conservation for 100,000 acres owned by the Pingree Heirs within the Rangeley area. Jean Noyes swapped land with state agencies on Rangeley Lake to expand the Rangeley Lakes State Park. Many landowners worked with the National Parks Service to conserve the Appalachian Trail Corridor. And the US Fish and Wildlife Service is also working to conserve land around Umbagog Lake and the Magalloway River.

Other Initiatives

Town of Rangeley Comprehensive Plan & Land Use Regulations

The Town of Rangeley recently revised its comprehensive plan following the State's Growth Management Program. The State Planning Office is currently working with the community to bring the draft plan into consistency with the state program.

The future vision for the town described in the plan is largely consistent with this prospective plan. It focuses on the region's four-season recreational character and seeks to concentrate and strengthen the two economic centers (Rangeley and Oquossoc Villages). It seeks to retain the high quality of traditional, outdoor recreational opportunities and the natural resource setting, to be implemented by a range of lot sizes.

The Rangeley town plan is different from this plan in two ways. It explicitly favors clean, low-impact, non-location sensitive businesses over manufacturing/light industrial uses. It calls for a range of densities for the community's various zoning districts.

In regard to key policies, the plan appears to be consistent with this prospective plan, but lacks specificity for determining how effective these will be in practice. Two primary goals very closely parallel the intent of this Land Use Regulation Commission plan. These include:

- Concentrating growth in designated areas located close to the economic centers of the town; and
- Expanding the range of low-impact businesses allowed as home occupations as long as there are safeguards to protect neighboring properties.

A major difference between the two plans in policy direction is that Rangeley explicitly seeks to maintain rural areas primarily for natural resource and traditional rural uses while allowing some other compatible uses. The Land Use Regulation Commission prospective plan is silent on this issue, focusing only on locations where development is appropriate and providing incentives for locating there, e.g. it allows a greater amount of floor area and some retail traffic for major home occupations located in most development zones. It does not prescribe any additional disincentives for development in the management or protection zones.

The Rangeley town plan does not yet provide specific strategies for realizing its policy for limiting development in the woodland zone. This is one of the State Planning Office's major findings for which it is seeking change before determining the plan to be consistent. The next step for Rangeley will be to revise its zoning regulations to be in conformance with its new plan.

National Scenic Byway

The Maine Department of Transportation established Route 4 and Route 17 as state scenic highways in 1982. Recently, these routes achieved federal designation as the *Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway*. The scenic highway will be managed according to a corridor management plan that was developed by a committee of local citizens and representatives.

The corridor management plan contains general language about the management of future development, stating that *the villages within the*

Prospective Zoning Plan for the Rangeley Lakes Region

Byway will be the location for the majority of any future development that may occur. This policy is consistent with the Rangeley Lakes Prospective Zoning Plan that concentrates development in limited and discrete areas.

MDOT Access Management

The location of driveways and other entrances along state highways in the Rangeley region is an important issue. The spreading out of new development has slowed regional traffic in recent years, especially trucks hauling timber from the woods. For land managers this presents an efficiency issue, causing longer travel times to the mills. For all drivers, it makes the roads less safe. This is particularly a problem on stretches of Routes 17 and 4 where terrain and sight distances are dangerous to begin with.

Access standards were to be part of this plan, but they have been omitted because of recent legislation authorizing the Department of Transportation to strengthen its permitting process. The Department now requires landowners to obtain a driveway permit that only considers safe sight distances and drainage requirements.

After developing new regulations, Maine Department of Transportation will establish criteria and standards that also will ensure long-term maintenance of existing posted speeds along state or state-aid highways. This will primarily be accomplished by limiting the number of driveways that can be established in areas outside of village and urban areas. It will affect Routes 4, 17, and 16 in the Rangeley Lakes area.



View from the *Height of Land* on the Rangeley Lakes National Scenic Byway, Route 17