

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks and Lands

**West Branch Pleasant River Management Plan
Virtual Public Meeting to Review Final Draft Plan**

August 20, 2020 6:00 PM
Meeting held via Microsoft Teams videoconference

MEETING NOTES

The Public Meeting was attended by three people (two by videoconference, one by phone; participants were provided the option of participating by videoconference or call-in, with audio but without video). All of the participants were Advisory Committee members.

Additionally, the following BPL staff members were present on the videoconference: Doug Reed, Eastern Region Lands Manager; Justin Lyons, Eastern Region Lands Forester; Liz Petruska, Director of Acquisition and Planning; Jim Vogel, Plan Coordinator.

Welcome/Introduction

Jim Vogel welcomed the attendees and introduced Doug and Liz. Participants were given instructions on how the Teams functions would be used. The meeting began with the PowerPoint slide presentation visible to participants, with a meeting agenda as the first slide after the title slide.

Presentation

The meeting was structured around the PowerPoint presentation given by Jim Vogel, which began with background information on the public planning process, the purpose and scope of the Bureau's management plans and on the Resource Allocation System. The next part of the presentation summarized the character of the West Branch Pleasant River (WBPR) Unit and the resources present. The presentation then provided an overview of the Vision, Dominant Resource Allocations, and Management Recommendations for the Unit. An opportunity was provided for taking comments and questions near the end of the presentation, as reflected in the following record.

Public Comments/Questions (paraphrased from notes)

Hawk Metheny, Appalachian Trail Conservancy, asked a question the allocation of Remote Recreation within 500 feet of the AT (as shown on slide 20), requesting clarification if that buffer is 500 feet from the NPS boundary. Jim responded that the buffer is based on the centerline of the trail itself, which is based on the best available data in our GIS system. Hawk stated that he thinks the NPS ownership is 500 feet from the trail; we could verify at a later date. He further stated that if there's additional Remote Recreation, that would be welcome since that represents a very small percentage of allocation on the unit. Hawk will send the survey and get the land stewardship manager in touch with BPL to confirm the NPS boundary.

Hawk also commented about the management recommendation to consider parking area expansion at the Gulf Hags trailhead. ATC is generally supportive because they know there are cars parked along KI road, which causes safety and resource degradation concerns, but cautioned the Bureau to consider that by formalizing that level of use it might increase the official capacity on the AT. He requested that as the plan develops, to please keep ATC in the loop and part of the conversation about what the appropriate level of expansion would be to deal with parking and still balance use.

Melanie Sturm, Natural Resources Council of Maine, commented that this was her first BPL meeting, and had wanted to share comment from Steve Tatko of the Appalachian Mountain Club about the parking area. Steve couldn't make the meeting, but his comments were covered by Hawk's comments.

CLOSING COMMENTS

The Plan Coordinator mentioned that comments on the Final Draft Plan would continue to be accepted through September 4 (two weeks). Email and U.S. mail address and a phone number for comments was provided on the final slide of the presentation. The next steps toward completion of the plan were described, including consideration of comments received and any resulting revisions to the Plan, followed by review of the Final Plan by the BPL Director, and the eventual recommendation by the Director to the DACF Commissioner for plan approval and adoption.

ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 6:35 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Jim Vogel*

Attachment: Meeting Presentation

West Branch Pleasant River Management Plan

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks and Lands

Virtual Public Meeting
August 20, 2020



FINAL DRAFT PLAN REVIEW

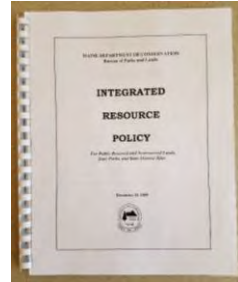


Agenda

- BPL Planning summary
- West Branch Pleasant River (WBPR) Unit Planning Process
- Review of Final Draft Plan
 - Background on acquisition of Unit and resources present
 - Vision, Dominant Resource Use Allocations and Management Recommendations
- Questions and Comments
- Next Steps

Legislative Direction and Policy

- Management plans legislatively required for Public Lands (12 MRSA 1833 & 1847)
- Legislative direction includes:
 - “multiple use”
 - “sustained yield of products and services”
 - “sound planning”
 - “exemplary land management practices”
- Management to enhance “timber, wildlife, recreation, economic and other values of lands”
- Plans are prepared in accordance with the guidelines contained in the ***Integrated Resource Policy*** (IRP)



BPL Management Plans

- Plans have a lifespan of 15 years with 5 year reviews
- Plans are regional—one plan includes several public lands in a region
 - WBPR Unit is new addition to Central Penobscot Region (CPR)
 - CPR Plan was adopted in 2014
- We look at planning context of the larger region
- Assisted by an Advisory Committee for the region representing a diverse range of organizations and interests

Management Plan Purposes and Content



- **Purposes of the Management Plan:**
 - Identify and Protect important natural, ecological and historical attributes
 - Enhance important fisheries and wildlife habitat
 - Provide opportunities for a variety of quality outdoor recreation experiences
 - Provide a sustained yield of forest products by utilizing forest management techniques and silvicultural practices that enhance the forest environment
- **Core of the Plan:**
 - Vision statement
 - Dominant Resource Allocations (detailed in the IRP)
 - Management recommendations

Resource Allocation System



- **A hierarchical system**
 - Most to least scarce and/or sensitive to management activities
- **7 Categories**
 - Special Protection (natural areas, historic/cultural areas, ecological reserves)
 - Backcountry Recreation (non-mechanized, motorized)
 - Wildlife Management
 - Remote Recreation
 - Visual Consideration (Class I and II)
 - Developed Recreation (Class I and II)
 - Timber Management

Planning Process



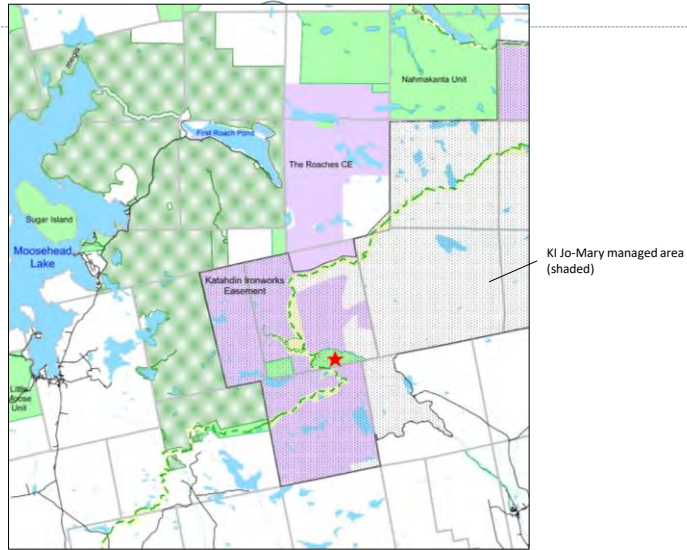
- Spring 2019 - Began work on Draft Plan
 - Made use of data compiled during the acquisition of the unit
 - Field visits by Bureau staff before and after acquisition
- July 2019 - First Draft Plan sent to Advisory Committee for review and comment
- Fall/Winter 2019-20 – Revised plan based on comments
- June 2020 – Final Draft Plan sent to Advisory Committee
- August 2020 – Public Meeting to review and take comments
- Fall 2020 – Finalize Plan, append to CPR Plan after adoption

Acquisition of the Unit

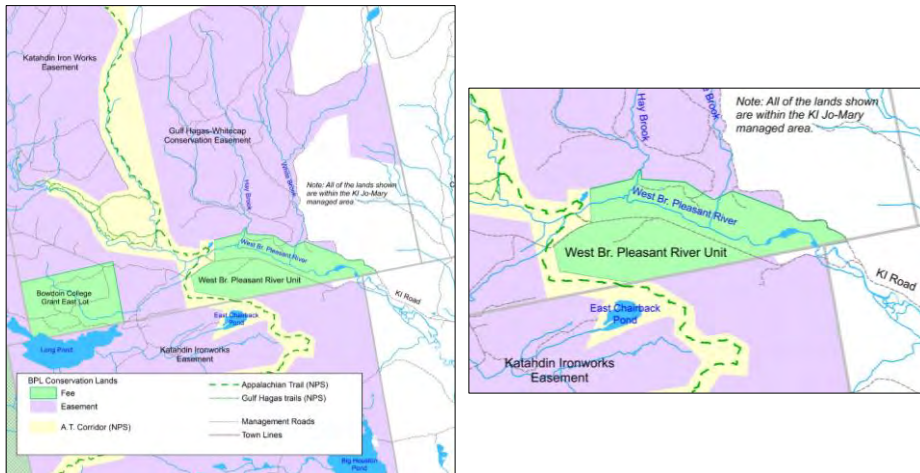


- **Gulf Hagas-Whitecap Project**
 - Acquired in December 2016 from Pine State Timberlands
 - Conservation easement on over 7,000 acres of Pine State Timberlands property north of unit
- Acquisition was supported by numerous entities and was funded in part through the federal Forest Legacy Program and by the state Land for Maine's Future (LMF) program
- Forestry Legacy Program prohibits conversion of the property to non-forest uses
- LMF Program requires the property to remain available for recreation, wildlife habitat, and ecological function

West Branch Pleasant River Unit Location



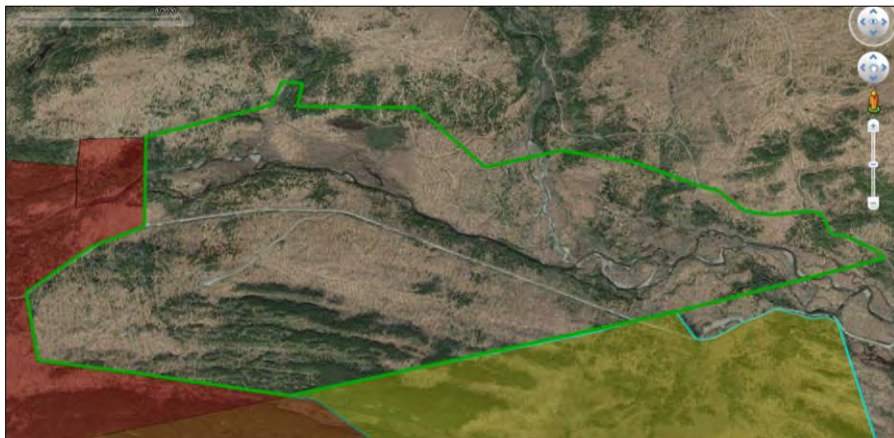
West Branch Pleasant River Unit and Vicinity



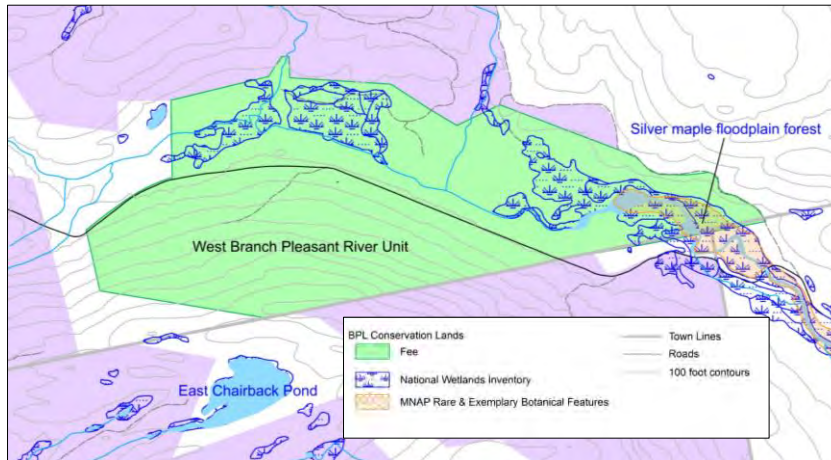
Character of the Unit – Natural Resources

- **1,260 acres of primarily forested land**
 - A mix of forest types, but hardwood stands predominate
 - Most stands are relatively young, primarily poletimber and small sawtimber (2016 cruise data)
- 5 miles of frontage on W. Br. Pleasant River and on lower Hay Brook, which host significant brook trout cold water fisheries
- 200 acres of wetlands, mainly wooded swamp and floodplain hardwood forest
- ~30+ acre upstream-most portion of an exemplary silver maple floodplain forest mapped by Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP)

Aerial Imagery



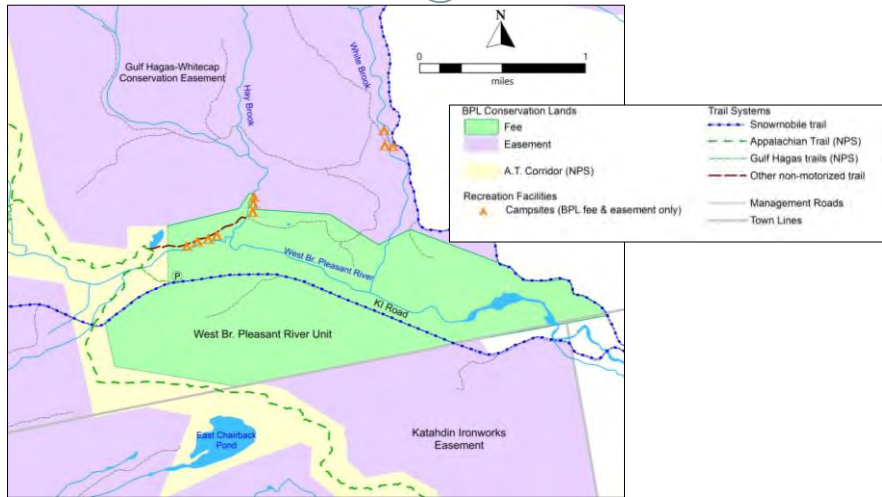
Wetlands & MNAP-mapped Features



Character of the Unit – Access & Recreation

- Access via KI Road, Hermitage Road, Hay Brook Road and other roads on the fee and easement lands
 - Conveyance included ROW on roads that provide access across easement lands
 - Fee required for public to enter at KI Jo-Mary gates
- Several primitive walk-in campsites near river and Hay Brook, with access trail (maintained by KI Jo-Mary)
- Gulf Hagas parking area (MATC) and privies (KI Jo-Mary)

Recreation Features



Hay Brook and Pleasant River Campsites



Gulf Hagas Parking Area



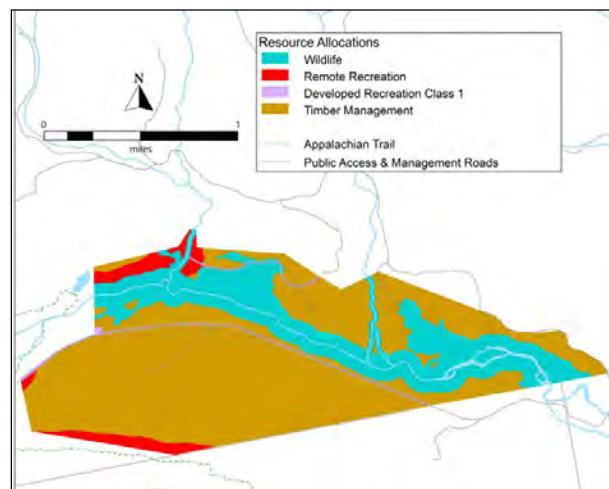
General Vision for the Unit

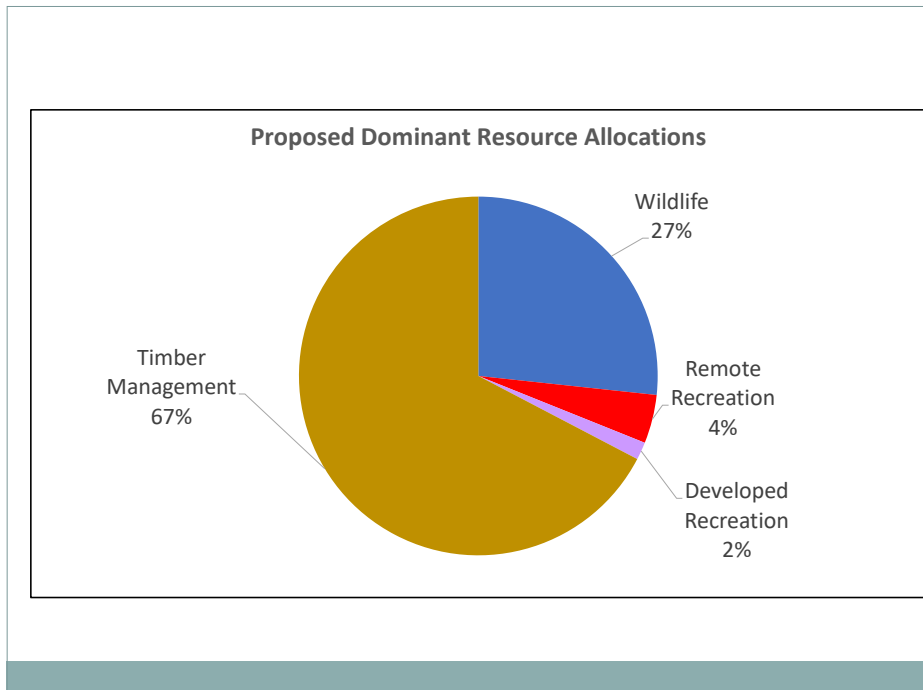
- Accommodate primitive camping, fishing, and hunting experiences
- Continue to provide walk-in camping on the Unit and access to Gulf Hagas recreation area (NPS)
- Protect ecological values associated with river and wetlands (incl. exemplary silver maple forest)
- Management guided by HMA signed by BPL & IF&W (2017)
- About 2/3 of the unit managed primarily for timber, emphasizing high value forest products, while providing a variety of wildlife habitats and protecting other significant resources

Dominant Resource Allocations

- Summary of allocations:
 - Wildlife allocation protects wetlands, including exemplary silver maple floodplain community, other riparian areas
 - Remote Recreation allocation applied to areas within 500 feet of A.T. and campsite access trail
 - Developed Recreation allocation is applied to access road corridors and parking areas
 - Timber Management allocation continues the historical emphasis on timber production on most of the unit, with appropriate visual, recreation, and wildlife considerations.

Dominant Resource Allocations





Management Recommendations

• Recreation:

- Continued maintenance of campsites and privies by KI Jo-Mary
- Maintain road access to north side of unit (Hay Brook Road)
- Consider expansion of Gulf Hags parking area

• Wildlife:

- Implement HMA with IF&W, with focus on protection of native brook trout fisheries
 - ✦ Timber management in riparian areas
 - ✦ Public access management



Campsite along Pleasant River (July 2019)



Hay Brook near campsites (July 2019)

Timber Management



- Program to improve timber quality on the unit, with the overall objectives of growing high value timber products while maintaining visual integrity and enhancing the diversity of wildlife habitat
- HMA provides additional guidelines for management in riparian corridors
- Harvesting in areas abutting the A.T. and campsite access trail allocated to Remote Rec. will be light and will seek to mimic harvests in Visual Class I areas
- NPS will be notified when harvests are planned in areas abutting the Gulf Hags recreation area
- Due to modest stocking, unlikely that harvesting will occur during this 10 year Plan period

Comments and Questions?



Next Steps



- BPL will work to finalize the Plan over the next few months
- In addition to comments provided here, all are welcome to comment during the next two weeks, via a phone call or in writing (email or regular mail)

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Thank You!

