

Management Plan for the 2022 Additions to the Kennebec Highlands Public Land

(to be appended to the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan adopted in 2011)

[FINAL DRAFT]



Lower blueberry field along Vienna Mountain Road, with view to the south

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



September 2025

[reverse of cover]

Table of Contents

| | |
|-------------------------------------------|----|
| Introduction | 1 |
| Planning Process and Public Participation | 1 |
| Property Description and Resources | 3 |
| Character of the Land | 3 |
| Access | 5 |
| Hydrology and Wetlands | 6 |
| Wildlife and Fisheries | 6 |
| Timber Resources | 7 |
| Structures | 7 |
| Management Issues | 8 |
| Roads and Access | 8 |
| Blueberry Barren Management | 9 |
| Other Potential Recreation Uses | 10 |
| Timber Management | 12 |
| Disposition of Structures | 13 |
| Resource Allocations | 13 |
| Management Recommendations | 18 |
| Access/Signage | 18 |
| Recreation | 18 |
| Education and Outreach | 19 |
| Blueberry Barren Management | 19 |
| Disposition of Structures | 20 |

Appendices

- A. Advisory Committee Members; Public Consultation Process [Final version pending]
- B. Public Comments and Bureau Responses [Final version pending]
- C. Kennebec Highlands Wild Blueberry Management Plan (Yarborough, 2021)
- D. Site Photos (Blueberry Barrens and Structures)

Introduction

In April 2022, the Bureau completed the acquisition from the George C. Allen Property Trust of three adjoining parcels in the Town of Vienna and one parcel in the Town of New Sharon, totaling 813 acres. These additions bring the total acreage of the Kennebec Highlands Public Land to 6,882 acres. The parcels in Vienna largely fill a gap in public ownership in the center of the unit on Vienna Mountain. The parcel in New Sharon fills a similar gap in the northwest corner of the unit on York Hill. The map on the following page depicts the new parcels.

These lands have been part of the original vision for the Kennebec Highlands since the project to assemble the public land unit began in the late 1990s. All were formerly used by the W.R. Allen company for the commercial production of wild blueberries. As was the case with prior phases of land acquisition, 7 Lakes Alliance (7 Lakes, formed in 2017 when the Belgrade Regional Conservation Alliance combined with the Maine Lakes Resource Center) was a vital partner with the Bureau in acquiring these parcels. 7 Lakes was a co-applicant with the Bureau for grants from the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF) and state Land for Maine's Future Program (LMF) and secured matching funds donated by private foundations, businesses and individuals.

Planning Process and Public Participation

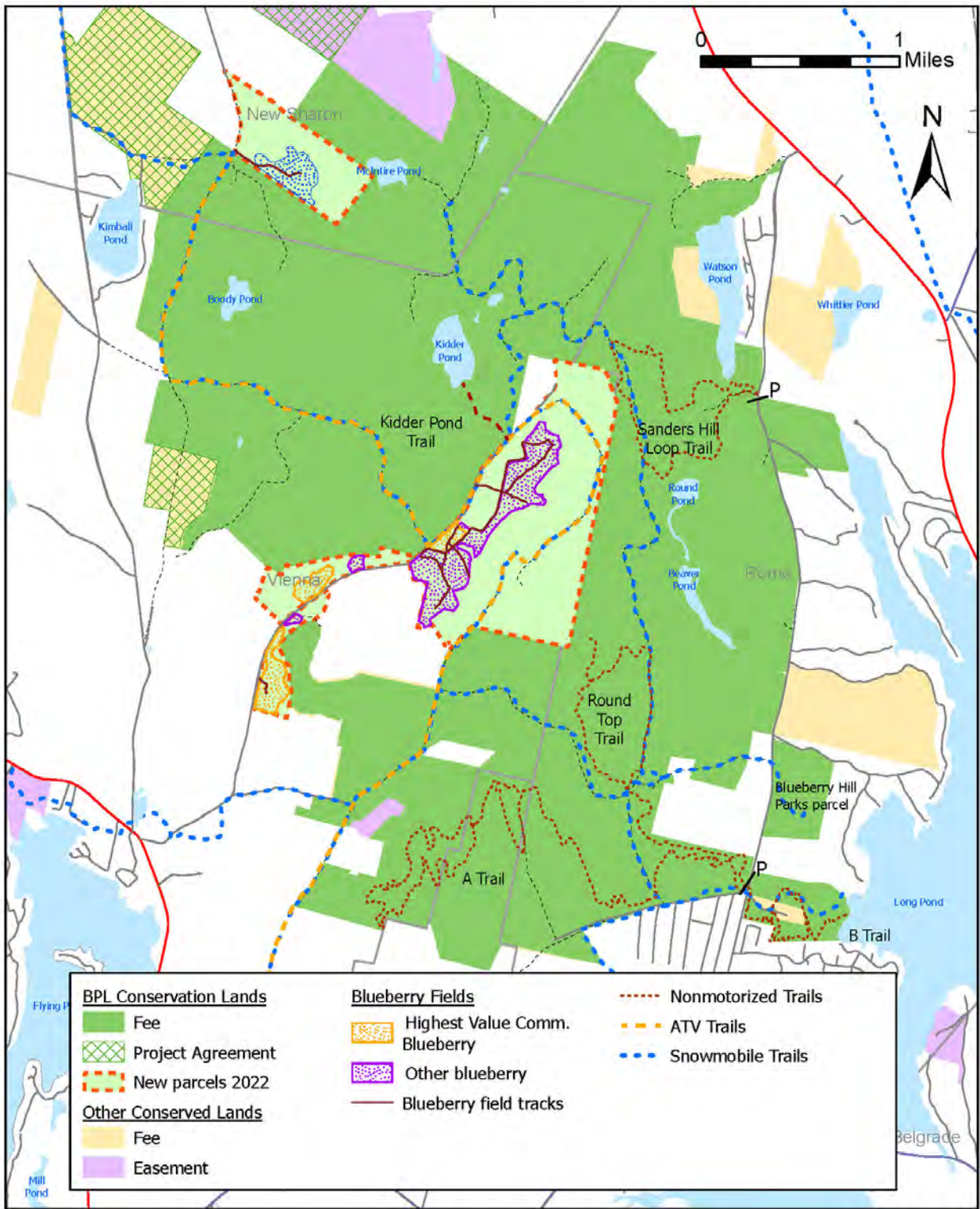
The first phase of the planning process includes a study of the resources and opportunities available on the acquired lands. Bureau staff undertook a review of the natural and geological, historic and cultural, fisheries and wildlife, recreation, and timber and renewable resources. Much of this information was compiled during the acquisition phase. Resource professionals from within the Bureau and the Department of Inland Fisheries & Wildlife (IF&W) provided additional information on wildlife, recreation, and timber resources. Mapping and GIS-related information were also obtained as part of this phase.

Staff also participated in reconnaissance field trips, both before and after the acquisition, to view first-hand and characterize the resources. Staff visited the parcels on several occasions during the past three years. On these visits, the staff members evaluated the access roads, walked the blueberry fields to examine existing tracks and visit key scenic viewpoints, and walked portions of the wooded areas. In November 2022, 7 Lakes staff and board members joined Bureau staff at Vienna Mountain for preliminary discussion of access and other management issues and to examine the house and barn on the Vienna property.

Members of the Kennebec Highlands Management Plan Advisory Committee were reconvened in October 2022, with several new members, for the 2nd 5-Year Review of the plan (postponed for one year to allow the acquisition to be completed). The committee was informed via an emailed memo of the start of the Plan review process and notified that a Draft Plan for the new parcels would be developed with the participation of the committee, with an opportunity for review and comment.

An Advisory Committee meeting was held on March 1, 2023 (with in-person and videoconference participation options). The purpose of the meeting was to discuss key trail issues for the Highlands and several management issues relevant to the new parcels to be addressed in this plan. Ten committee members, four other members of the public, and several BPL staff participated.

Kennebec Highlands Public Land Updated Conservation Lands & Recreation Features



The Draft Plan was sent to the Advisory Committee for review via email on May 15, 2025, with comments requested to be provided during the following month. The document was also posted on the Kennebec Highlands Plan webpage. An Advisory Committee meeting was held on June 26, 2025 to discuss the Draft Plan. Written comments were received from five committee members. The Final Draft Plan was sent to the Advisory Committee via email and posted on the plan webpage on [TBD_], 2025. Comments on the Draft Plan from the Advisory Committee are included in the Appendices of this document and are reflected in the Final Draft Plan.

The Final Draft Plan was presented and discussed via a public meeting on [TBD_], 2025. Comments received on the Final Draft Plan were considered in preparing the Final Management Plan. Upon recommendation from the Director of the Bureau of Parks and Lands, the Plan was then reviewed and approved by the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

Property Description and Resources

Note: Much of the information below on the property's physical characteristics and biological resources is drawn from the LWCF and LMF funding applications (2019 and 2021) and a Phase I Environmental Site Assessment conducted prior to the acquisition (Main-Land, 2020). The full documents are available from the Bureau.

Character of the Land

Vienna Parcels. The three Vienna parcels total 666.5 acres and abut Vienna Mountain Road. The two southernmost parcels (~110 acres in total) are on either side of the road as it ascends the shoulder of John Brown Mountain and then Vienna Mountain. The largest parcel (~556 acres) encompasses the upper part of Vienna Mountain with Vienna Mountain Road along the west boundary.

Portions of all three parcels are occupied by blueberry barrens, which were in active commercial production until a few years ago, with harvests occurring on a two-year rotating cycle.¹ The largest barrens extend for over a mile across the broad top and the gentle upper slopes of Vienna Mountain. The mountaintop parcel provides outstanding views in all directions across the blueberry fields. The highest elevations on the mountain are about 950 feet higher than the Belgrade Lakes below. The southernmost parcel is nearly all blueberry barren, as is about a quarter of the parcel across the road. The remaining ground on all the parcels is primarily forest land. The approximate land cover on the parcels is as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|
| Forest land | 476 acres |
| Blueberry barrens | 178 acres (includes 18 acres growing in shrub land) |
| Wetlands | 12 acres |

The elevation at the highest point on the long crest of Vienna Mountain is 1,177 feet, only 100 feet lower than nearby McGaffey Mountain, the highest point in Kennebec County. It and other high points on the unit are formed from Rome Granite estimated to be about 30 million years old.

¹ Harvests last occurred in 2019 and 2020; 25 acres within the most productive fields were harvested each year, and flail mowing of those fields was done the prior year. The remaining fields, totaling 110 acres, are not suitable for flail mowing and, therefore, require bush hogging or burning to remain productive. Burning was last done in 2016 and the last harvests occurred around 2017-18.

Occasional bedrock outcrops and numerous scattered boulders are visible throughout the blueberry fields. Additional information on geology and soils on Vienna Mountain is provided on pp. 25-26 of the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan. [See Appendix D for photos of views from the southern and northern blueberry fields.]

New Sharon Parcel. The New Sharon parcel covers 147 acres, about one-third of which is in blueberry fields. Two small fields (5 and 7 acres) close to York Hill Road have partly grown in with brush and birch saplings. The larger ~35 acre field in the middle of the parcel (the “summit field”) remains more open, although birch saplings have become established in some areas, along with white pine, particularly in the vicinity of mature pines that line the margins of the field. The fields have not been commercially managed for over 15 years.

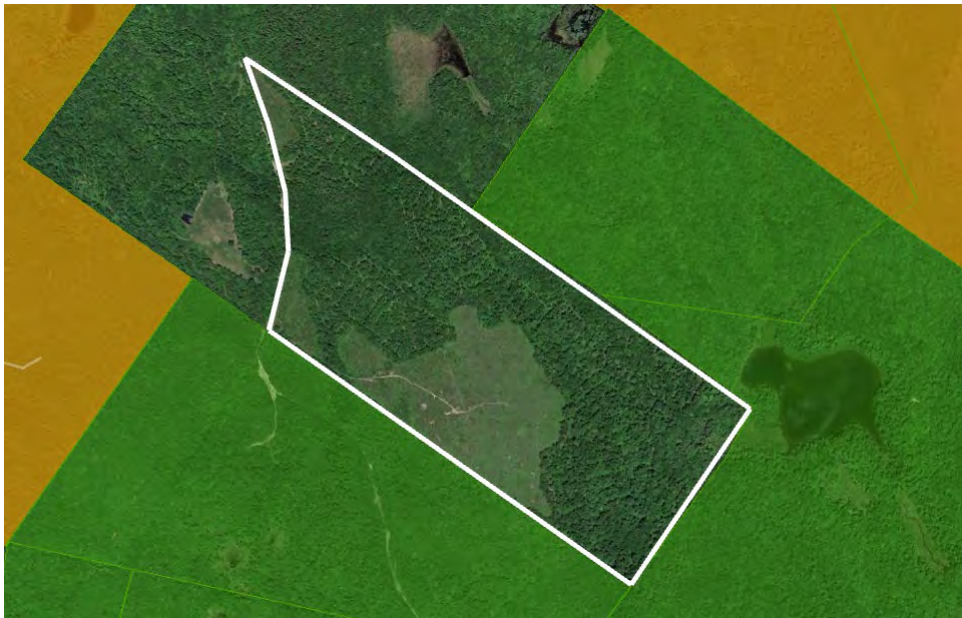
Approximate land cover on the parcel is as follows:

| | |
|-------------------|----------|
| Blueberry barrens | 47 acres |
| Forest land | 97 acres |
| Wetlands | 3 acres |

The highest point on the parcel is near the south margin of the summit blueberry field, which, at about 1,150 feet elevation, provides excellent views. To the northwest Mount Blue and other prominent peaks are visible. Similar to the Vienna parcels, the parcel is underlain with granite bedrock, with occasional boulders and exposed outcroppings in the summit blueberry field. [See Appendix D for photo of views from the summit blueberry field.]



Vienna parcels with aerial imagery.



New Sharon parcel with aerial imagery.

Access

Vienna Parcels. Most of the roughly two miles of Vienna Mountain Road abutting the parcels is an unmaintained gravel road, most suitable for 4WD or other vehicles with adequate clearance. It is a town-maintained road until about a quarter mile up the hill from the southern boundary of the first new BPL parcel (on the east side of the road). There is a snowplow turnaround at the end of the town road, on the BPL parcel.

The remainder of the road, which extends to the Rome town line, was formally abandoned by the Town of Vienna in 1997. Under state law in effect at the time, a public easement was retained. The Bureau owns to the centerline on the east side of the road alongside the mountaintop parcel, as described in the deed (Kennebec Co. Registry of Deeds, Book 14431, p. 342). The final 0.3 miles to the town line is a grown-in woods road that forms the east boundary of two private inholding parcels; it does not appear to have received regular use for many years. A more recently improved management road, suitable for vehicles with adequate clearance, continues for about 1.3 miles around the north and east sides of Vienna Mountain, ending at a log yard.

In the summer of 2022, BPL began maintenance work on Vienna Mountain Road, which included brushing out the roadsides, adding of surface gravel and drainage improvements, with several new culverts installed. Additional work to provide access by standard vehicles outside of winter and mud-season is planned, pending availability of funding (LWCF grant funds are discussed below).

New Sharon Parcel. Access to the New Sharon parcel is via York Hill Road, which connects to Route 27, which is two miles to the north. York Hill Road is a maintained town road to a point about two-thirds of a mile from the corner of the parcel and continues as a rough, unmaintained road alongside the western boundary of the parcel. Abutting private landowners use the road to access their properties and seasonal homes. (The road continues onto the unit -- known as Berry Hill Road on the Vienna side of the town line, which retains a public access easement -- and serves as an ATV and snowmobile trail; see map on page 3. Other vehicles are

prohibited beyond that point.) A rough track extends into the parcel to about the center of the summit blueberry field.

Hydrology and Wetlands

As indicated by the acreage data above, there are no natural ponds on the parcels and few wetlands, as the parcels are mainly well-drained higher-elevation uplands. Small streams run down the east slope on the Vienna Mountain parcel, draining toward Beaver Pond and the fen complex surrounding it. A few small wetlands are associated with the upper reaches of the streams, and about 3.5 acres of open wetland lie along a stream flowing between Vienna Mountain and Round Top, created by an old stone dam spanning about 200 feet. These all drain to Long Pond, within the Kennebec River watershed.

Another small stream, Webber Brook, runs along the east boundary of the southernmost Vienna parcel, draining southward toward Flying Pond; this stream also has some small wetlands associated with it. The two smaller parcels, and about 20% of the mountaintop parcel, are within the Androscoggin River watershed.

On the New Sharon parcel, a few acres of wooded swamp associated with McIntire Pond and inlet streams cross into the northeast corner of the tract, and another ~8-acre forested wetland lies on the west end of the tract. Two small streams flowing across the eastern half of the parcel drain into McIntire Pond.

Wildlife and Fisheries

The blueberry barrens provide habitat for grassland and shrubland birds, a habitat type that is uncommon in the region. A one-day survey by the Biodiversity Research Institute in the summer of 2021 identified 33 bird species, with subsequent surveys by the Bureau's wildlife specialist adding additional species. Large blueberry barrens provide habitat for upland sandpipers, a threatened species in Maine; however, the configuration of these barrens does not provide the large or broad open area that is most attractive to the species, and they were not observed during the survey. Another threatened species (breeding population only) is the short-eared owl, which favors grassland habitats, including blueberry barrens. In the State Wildlife Action Plan, this region of the state ranks high as potential habitat for this species, and the plan identifies many species of greatest conservation need that may be associated with open and/or shrubby habitats like blueberry barrens.

About 10 acres of wetland associated with the stone dam are mapped by IF&W as inland waterfowl and wading bird habitat. Although there are several mapped deer wintering areas (DWAs) on the Kennebec Highlands and adjacent private lands totaling several hundred acres, these mainly lie across the eastern part of the unit and do not include any part of these parcels. The blueberries provide an attractive food source for black bears as well as other wildlife.

There are no high-priority fisheries resources on the parcels.

The 2011 Plan provides additional information on the habitat features of the Kennebec Highlands and the wildlife known or expected to be present, which would broadly apply to these parcels, on pages 27-29.

Timber Resources

The forest land on the Vienna parcels is primarily on the moderately steep northern and eastern slopes of Vienna Mountain and the western slope of Round Top Mountain, on the mountaintop parcel, with another ~50 acres on the smaller parcels. The stands are a mixture of mid-successional and younger hardwood and mixedwood stands. White pine is the dominant softwood in the mixedwood stands.

Areas of dense young hardwood regeneration are mixed with more mature pole and sawtimber-sized trees. Northern hardwood species occur on richer sites, and in other areas, northern red oak makes up a significant component of the stand. Large diameter, older red oak and white pine are widely scattered across some hardwood stands. In some mixedwood areas, mature white pine makes up a significant portion of the overstory.

The forest land on the New Sharon parcel is on the gently sloping area north and northwest of the summit blueberry field and the more steeply sloping area to the east of the field. The forest is primarily hardwoods, dominated by beech and red maple, with occasional yellow birch. Mixedwood stands with numerous small fir and spruce are found on the western half of the tract. Scattered mature white pine and red maple over a hardwood understory are found in the northeast quadrant, with hemlock stands on the slopes above McIntire Pond.

The forest land on all of the parcels has historically been managed for timber production and appears to be capable of producing quality timber on the better sites. Much of the New Sharon parcel saw harvesting in 2010-2011. The Vienna parcels appear to have been harvested in the late 1990's or early 2000's, and then again in 2018 via a whole-tree operation. Harvest intensity varied, with up to 50% removal in some stands and no removal in other areas.

Structures

An old farmhouse -- referred to as "Shakespeare house" on the survey conducted for the acquisition -- and adjacent ~40 ft. x ~30 ft. barn are located on the mountaintop parcel along Vienna Mountain Road, at a corner of the blueberry barrens. Local history indicates the house was used by a women's Shakespearean theater group for a time no documentation could be found to verify this. A metal shed is behind the house. The house was most recently used as a seasonal hunting camp under the previous ownership.

The condition of the structures has not been formally assessed, but the valuation appraisal of the parcel conducted for the acquisition rated the condition of both the house and barn as "fair to poor." A cursory inspection of the house suggests substantial repairs are required to stringers, sills, wood siding, roof, windows, etc. The barn appears to have had repairs on the metal roof, and replacement of some interior supports and joists, which appear to be a mix of original hand-hewn and newer mill-sawn elements. There is a covered dug well behind the house. There are no toilet facilities or other plumbing in the house; a crude privy has been added to the back of the barn.

[See Appendix D for photos of the house and barn.]

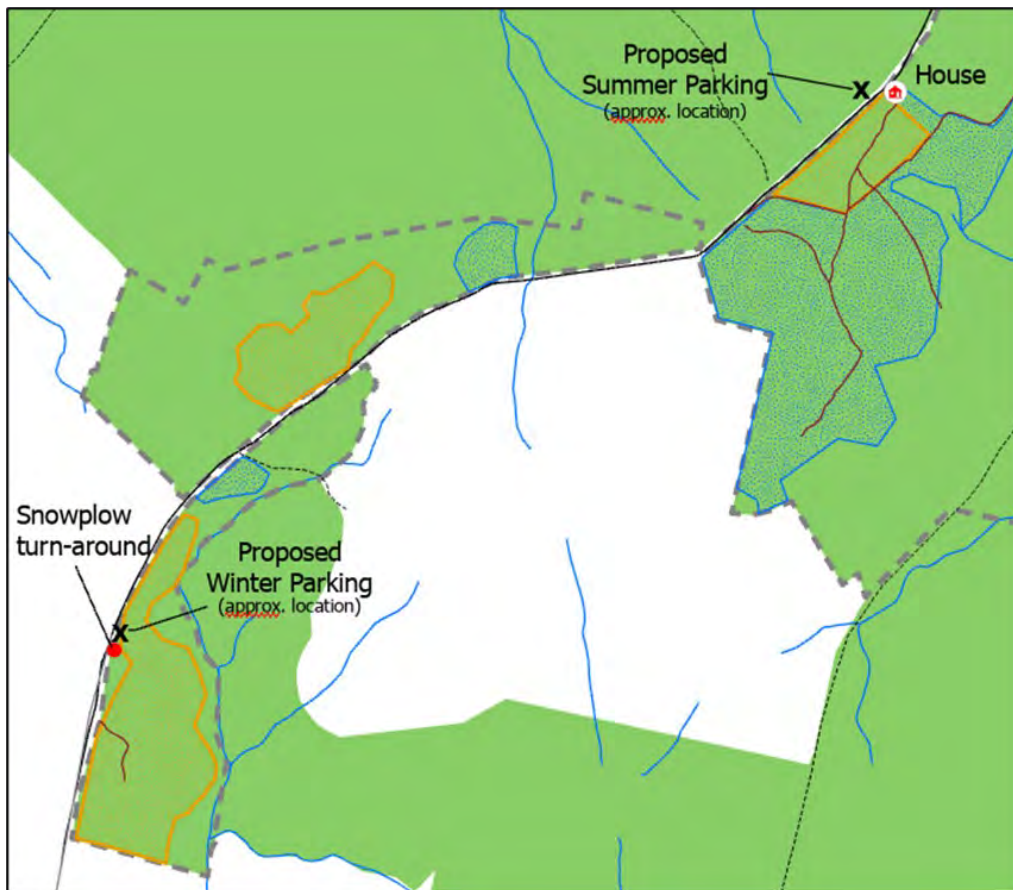
Management Issues

Roads and Access

An exceptional quality of the Vienna Mountain parcels is their accessibility by motor vehicle, which makes the mountain more available than other peaks to users of all abilities. However, as described above, most of Vienna Mountain Road is not suitable for standard vehicles, particularly during wet periods. Road improvements are needed to facilitate public access, at least to the point where summer parking will be developed. There are minimal gravel resources available on the unit to utilize in improving the road surface; therefore, gravel will need to be trucked in, greatly increasing the cost of improvements.

Parking is needed during the snow-free seasons, in a location that will provide convenient access to the blueberry barrens on the mountaintop parcel. Winter parking would also be desirable, preferably at or near the end of the town-maintained portion of the road, when the remainder of the road is not plowed.

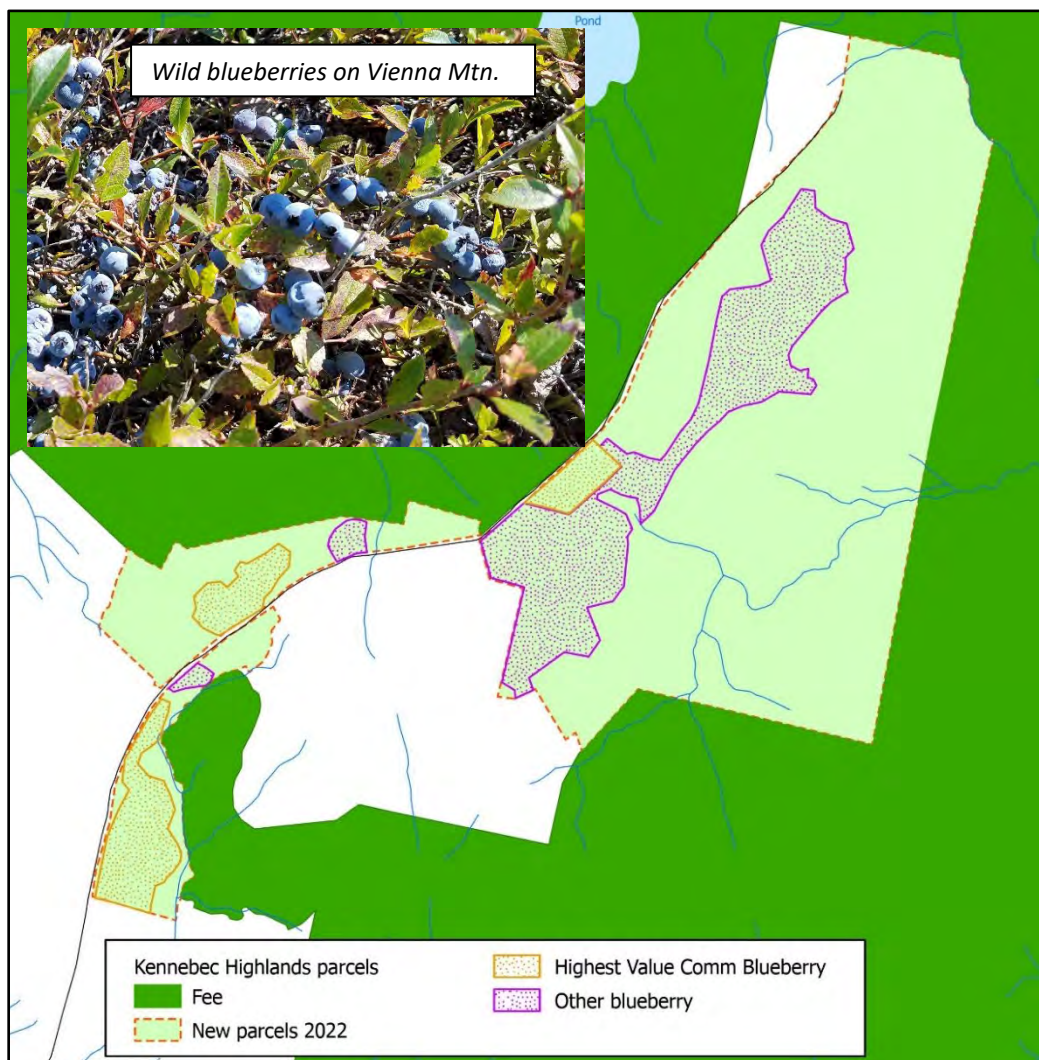
A future LWCF grant would provide partial funding for the design and construction of these road and parking improvements and for informational signage. The LWCF grant proposal would include summer parking, providing space for 12 cars and smaller winter parking area in the vicinity of where the Town stops winter plowing, and the approximately 6,000-foot section of road between the two parking areas to be improved.



Current parking concepts, as shown above, include: 1) summer parking in the vicinity of the southernmost blueberry field on the mountaintop parcel (final location to be determined, but a site on the west side of the road near the house is under consideration) and 2) winter parking at or near the existing snowplow turnaround, which may be enlarged for this use, with care taken to avoid potential conflicts with snowplow use.

Blueberry Barren Management

The Bureau is interested in the potential for resumed commercial wild blueberry production on a portion of the Vienna fields, under a contract with a grower, and opportunities for recreational picking. To assist in evaluating this potential, the Bureau contracted with a wild blueberry specialist for an assessment of the fields. The resulting report (Yarborough, 2021) assesses the potential of individual blueberry fields for blueberry production and suggests planning options related to potential productivity, profitability, and long-term management. The report defined and mapped the portions of the fields that are most productive and suitable for commercial leasing, totaling about 50 acres (labeled Highest Value Commercial Blueberry on the figure below). It also notes that much of the remaining fields on the mountaintop have high potential and desirability for recreational picking, offering good views. The report is attached to this plan as an Appendix.



The Bureau also intends to keep some portion of the non-commercial fields in blueberries to facilitate recreational picking, to maintain views, and to preserve the unique habitat. This will require regular investment in mowing, burning, or other means to keep shrubs and trees from taking over the fields, a process which has already begun. The Yarborough report indicates which Vienna fields were burned and which were mowed under Allen Co. ownership, and the presence of hindrances to mowing, such as steepness and rockiness. Generally, the highest-value commercial blueberry fields are relatively level and rock-free and can be maintained with flail mowing. The remaining fields require bush-hog mowing or burning.

Ideally, a contract for commercial blueberry production would also incorporate vegetation management on the non-commercial fields, given that the contractor would have the necessary equipment on-site. There may also be an opportunity to collaborate with the Maine Forest Service (MFS) and IF&W on burning the fields. MFS could conduct the burning as a training exercise, as they have successfully done on other BPL properties. IF&W staff have received MFS training in conducting prescribed burns; those staff also could potentially implement burns at this site for wildlife habitat management.

To determine what portions of the fields to prioritize for vegetation management, the Bureau will delineate: 1) the areas most desirable and accessible to recreational pickers, taking into account future parking and foot access routes, and 2) the areas important for the maintenance of views (these areas may in part coincide). Regarding habitat, IF&W advises that some areas could be allowed to grow up in young trees and so provide habitat for woodcock and other birds, with the trees cut back periodically to maintain the young forest habitat type.

The Bureau also intends to keep some portion of the summit field on the New Sharon parcel in blueberries to maintain views and preserve the unique habitat. Recreational picking would also be available, although the parcel is less accessible than Vienna Mountain due to the unmaintained road beyond the town road. Periodic cutting of the white pine and birch saplings appears to be the most feasible alternative to accomplish this.

Other Potential Recreation Uses

In addition to recreational wild blueberry picking, these parcels provide opportunities for a range of other dispersed recreation uses and expansion of trail-based recreation, building upon the existing Kennebec Highlands motorized and non-motorized trails.

The parcels provide linkages to the existing trail network on the east side of the unit, as well as vehicle and trailhead access from the center of the unit. The expansion also provides opportunities to create loop trails to buffer motorized and non-motorized uses and potentially develop an improved access trail and trailhead in a spectacular setting with multiple viewpoints.

Construction and maintenance of any motorized or non-motorized trails will apply best management practices (BMPs) to minimize erosion and protect water resources.

Note -- A Kennebec Highlands Trails Plan has been developed concurrently with this plan addendum, in cooperation with the Advisory Committee and other stakeholders. That plan addresses in detail the potential for new non-motorized trails in the context of the overall Vision for the Unit and considering other uses (including timber management) and important resource

constraints. The Trails Plan also provides guidance on the geographic areas (including on the new parcels) that may host any proposed new non-motorized trails.

More specifically, the Kennebec Highlands Trails Plan:

- *delineates areas where additional non-motorized trails (hiking trails and bike trails) will be avoided to preserve largely trailless areas, for dispersed recreation and wildlife benefits*
- *identifies potential for new trails on the Allen parcels and desired linkages to existing trails*
- *determines responsibility for construction and maintenance of new trails and incorporate agreements to formalize this (e.g., with local bike club, in the case of mtn. bike trails)*
- *identifies access points and any needs for parking and signage in addition to locations identified on Vienna Mtn. Road*

The following text provides an abbreviated discussion of potential trails on the new parcels and relationships to existing trails.

Hiking/Walking Trails. The two hiking trails on the Unit, the Round Top Trail and Sanders Hill Loop Trail, both come within a few hundred feet of the east boundary of the mountaintop parcel. This suggests an opportunity to link those trails to new trails on the mountaintop parcel, which could access both the forest and the blueberry barrens. The Sanders Hill Loop Trail appears to provide the best opportunity for such a linkage, with a new trail extending upslope to the blueberry fields. The existing road on the east side of Vienna Mountain could be used for a portion of that connecting trail, which would reduce the distance of new trail construction.

The blueberry barrens on Vienna Mountain also provide opportunities for marked walking trails, providing access to the fields for berry picking as well as to the mountaintop views. These routes could largely make use of the existing double-tracks across the fields.

Bike Trails. Mountain biking is available on the roads and ~13 miles of ORV routes across the Highlands, and the mountain bike community has been active in developing single-track trails on the southernmost part of the unit in the past 5+ years (the A Trail and B Trail). These are multiuse trails, designed and built for bike riding but available for summer and winter pedestrian uses. Bike riders are interested in expanding riding opportunities on the Highlands, in particular (as expressed in the 2011 plan), “single track trails that would provide a cross-country experience.” While BPL does not intend to develop long-distance trails that circumnavigate the unit, it may be advantageous to designate bike routes on the existing blueberry field tracks, possibly co-located with walking trails. Via the roads/ORV routes, these could connect with other parts of the Highlands and existing single-track trails. However, compatibility with hikers and access mobility users will need to be assessed in detailed trail planning and design and will ultimately dictate whether bikes are to be allowed in these areas or not.

Improved Access Trails. The open and relatively gently sloping terrain of the mountaintop blueberry fields in Vienna, combined with exceptional views and direct road access, form a unique opportunity for the construction of improved access trails. Members of the public who are not physically capable of using most other trails would benefit from this scarce recreational amenity. Also, the Travis Mills Foundation retreat facility in Rome, hosting wounded veterans and their families, provides a potential local user population for accessible trails.

ORV Trails. The existing shared snowmobile and ATV route loops around Vienna Mountain, following Vienna Mountain Road and a connecting forest road that runs across the lower eastern slopes of the mountain. This section is part of the east-west snowmobile route and the only ATV route across the unit. A section of trail east of Kidder Pond constructed a few years ago links this snowmobile route to the north-south route that passes a short distance to the east of Vienna Mountain, on the Roxy Rand Road. Although there is no intention to expand the ORV trail system on the Highlands, such small additions can provide flexibility in routing to respond to trail problems and changes in trail permissions on adjoining private lands.

Hunting. The new parcels are open to hunting, as is most of the unit, outside the vicinity of hiking trails. (Under BPL rules, loaded firearms are not permitted on marked hiking trails and may not be discharged within 300 feet of such areas.) No designated bear bait sites have been established on the Highlands; however, the Bureau has been approached by hunters interested in bear baiting on Vienna Mountain, where the former owners had given permission to some individuals. IF&W is also interested in the potential for bear bait sites on the unit. Designation of any bear bait sites on the new parcels will need to account for existing trails and any proposed new trails, and the expected increase in recreational activity, particularly the presence of berry-pickers and other recreators in the blueberry fields.

General Dispersed Uses. These new parcels also provide ample opportunities for the general dispersed uses that occur across the Highlands, including walking on the existing roads and ORV routes and exploring the woods and fields. The blueberry fields, with existing tracks on the larger fields, provide a unique experience for walkers, birdwatchers, etc., strongly contrasted with the typical woods experience.

Wildlife and Fisheries

As discussed above in relation to blueberry barren management, the Bureau intends to keep some portion of the non-commercial fields in blueberries to maintain the unique and uncommon wildlife habitat they provide. As part of planning for vegetation management on the fields, it will be necessary to collaborate with IF&W to identify which areas will be allowed to develop to a young forest habitat type, with only periodic cutting or other techniques to maintain that habitat. In seeking a balance between recreation opportunities and wildlife values on the blueberry fields, the Bureau will allocate some areas to Wildlife and the remainder to Remote Recreation. Trails and other recreation improvements will be focused on the Remote Recreation areas. Seasonal restrictions on recreation uses may be considered to protect breeding birds.

Timber Management

The approximately 500 acres of generally young but well-stocked forest land will provide for future harvests, possibly in conjunction with harvests on adjacent portions of the Highlands, as determined by silvicultural needs and harvesting efficiencies. The existing roads on the Vienna Mountain parcel provide improved access for harvesting throughout the center of the unit, on the new parcels as well as on abutting portions of the unit.

Due to relatively recent, and in some places intensive, harvesting reentry may not be appropriate for another 10+ years on the New Sharon parcel and 15+ years on the Vienna parcels (2033 and 2038 or later). Like the Highlands at large, these parcels represent a transition between oak and pine forest types associated with southern and central Maine and northern hardwood forest.

Opportunity exists for multi-aged management which will enhance tree species and structural diversity and improve wildlife habitat value while producing high-quality timber from oak, white pine, and northern hardwood species.

Disposition of Structures

To make a well-informed decision on the disposition of the structures, the Bureau will need to consider the range of potential uses for the buildings as well as the costs associated with retaining them for certain uses and other concerns. Together, these considerations will determine the possible public benefits and feasibility of retaining the structures.

There may be a number of potential stewardship uses of the buildings, both in relation to the future BPL management of some portion of the blueberry fields and recreational use of the Highlands. The barn may provide sheltered space for the storage of BPL equipment and supplies. The house and/or barn also may have the potential for use as a winter warming space for snowmobilers, skiers, and snowshoers, and as the location for educational events and temporary or permanent interpretive displays, or compatible community events.

The Bureau will need to develop an adequate assessment of the structures' short-term and longer-term maintenance needs and estimates of the costs to meet those requirements. Finally, safety and security issues and the risk of vandalism to the structures, which are located in a fairly remote setting with no regular staff presence yet relatively easily accessible by road, will need to be considered.

If it is determined that it is not economically feasible to retain and maintain the structures, or if other considerations make it imprudent in the Bureau's judgment, plans will be made for their demolition, to eliminate the presence of an attractive nuisance on the public land.

Resource Allocations

The Resource Allocation System designates appropriate management based on resource characteristics and values. The designated allocations determine the primary and allowed uses on the allocated areas. The following is a description of the resource allocations proposed to be applied to the new parcels. (Appendix C of the 2011 plan provides a detailed description of each resource allocation category.)

Special Protection – Historic/Cultural areas: The remains of three historic homesteads identified as potentially significant archeological sites by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission (along with 26 other sites identified in the 2011 plan), with a 200-foot buffer around each site. (The buffer is excepted from the blueberry field located directly across Vienna Mountain Road from two of the sites, one of which is on the new parcels and one of which is across the road, on lands acquired previously.)

Backcountry Recreation – Motorized areas. Consistent with the allocations applied to the abutting forested lands in the 2011 Plan, the forest stands on these parcels are proposed to be allocated to Backcountry Motorized in the vicinity of the motorized trail that loops through the parcels. This allocation permits timber harvesting as a secondary use, with such management designed to enhance vegetative diversity and to provide an environment characterized by a rich variety of plant and animal species.

Wildlife areas. The northernmost blueberry field on Vienna Mountain will be allocated to Wildlife, along with the smaller fields not identified as having the best potential for commercial production, and the summit field on the New Sharon parcel. Management will be focused on maintaining the fields for wildlife benefits. Limited non-motorized trail development, primarily on existing tracks, may be allowed if compatible with wildlife purposes. Also, the small acreage along streams and in wetlands is proposed to be allocated to Wildlife, with the application of riparian buffers as directed by the Integrated Resource Policy (IRP) and as is the standard practice on BPL lands, where not already protected under a higher allocation (e.g., Backcountry Recreation).

Remote Recreation areas. This allocation is proposed for the southernmost Vienna Mountain blueberry field, which was not identified as having the best potential for commercial production but which provides public picking opportunities and good views, and forested areas abutting the Vienna Mountain and New Sharon blueberry fields. It is also proposed for the forested areas in the vicinity of non-motorized trails (e.g., Round Top trail). This allocation allows the development of non-motorized trails on existing tracks and new routes, including improved access trails. This allocation permits timber harvesting as a secondary use, with special attention to maintaining forest aesthetics.

Developed Recreation – Class 1. This allocation includes two small areas: the farmhouse and adjacent barn and surrounding lawn areas and the snowplow turnaround along Vienna Mtn. Road (both less than half an acre). If new facilities such as parking areas or trailheads are developed on the new or abutting existing Highlands parcels, those areas would be reallocated to Developed Recreation.

Other areas. The blueberry barrens identified as having the best potential for future leasing for commercial production are proposed to be allocated to “Other” allocation category, consistent with other commercially managed barrens on BPL property. If in the future additional portions of the barrens are returned to commercial production, those areas would be reallocated from Remote Recreation to Other. If none of these fields are returned to commercial production, all will be reallocated to Remote Recreation.

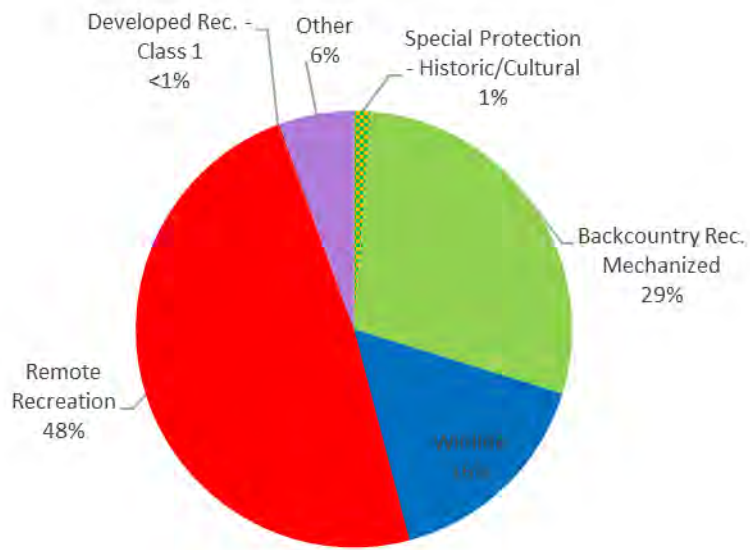
[NOTE: The BPL GIS mapping system does not yet include the “Other” allocation category as it has not yet been officially adopted in the IRP; therefore, the most applicable existing category – Developed Recreation Class 2 – is used on the map in the interim.]

Summary of Resource Allocations (2022 Additions)

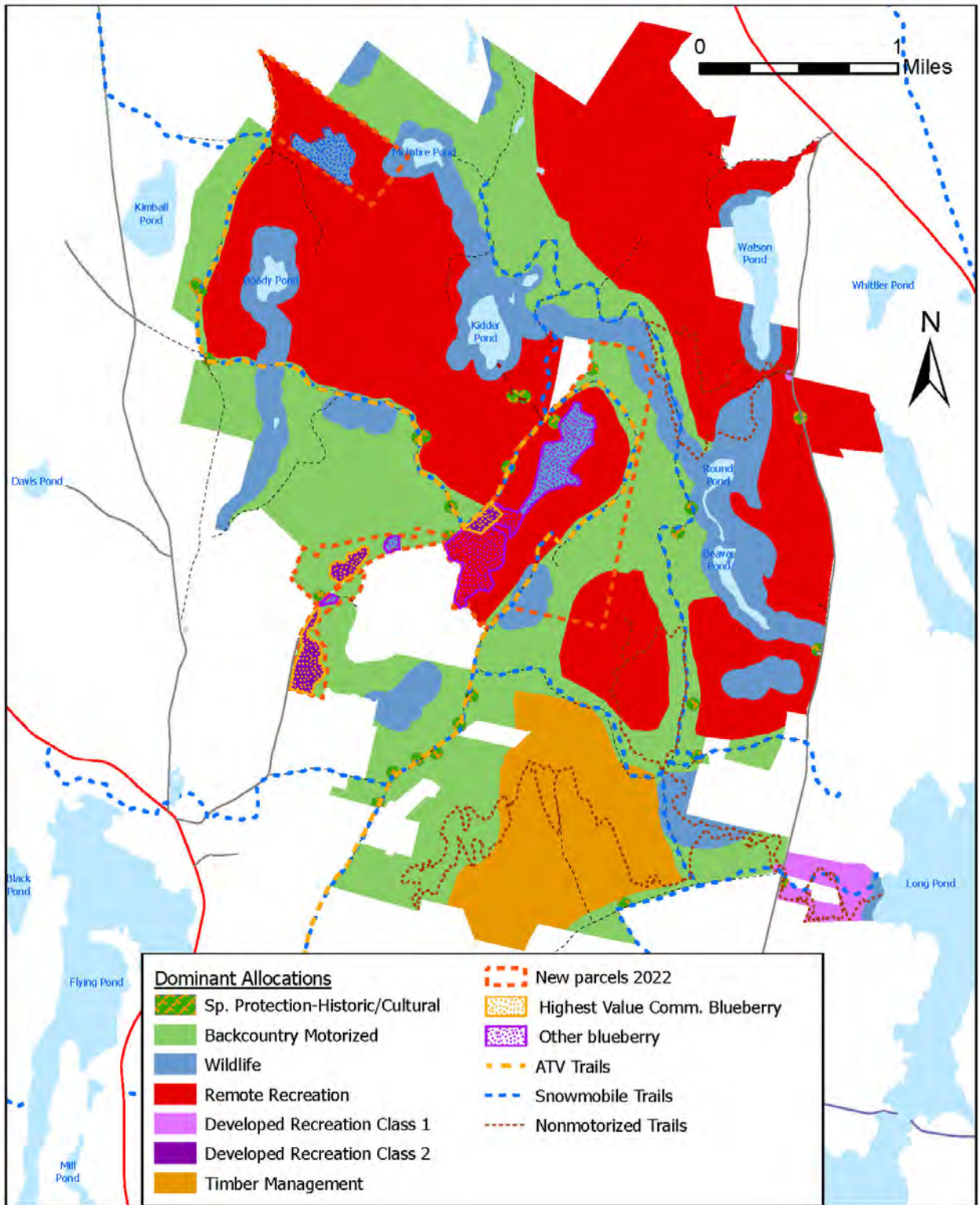
| Allocation | Acres | Percent |
|----------------------------------------|--------------|----------------|
| Special Protection – Historic/Cultural | 10 | 1% |
| Backcountry Recreation – Motorized | 230 | 29% |
| Wildlife Management | 130 | 16% |
| Remote Recreation | 390 | 48% |
| Developed Recreation | <1 | <1% |
| Other | 45 | 6% |

Note: all acreage figures are rounded up to the nearest 5 acres.

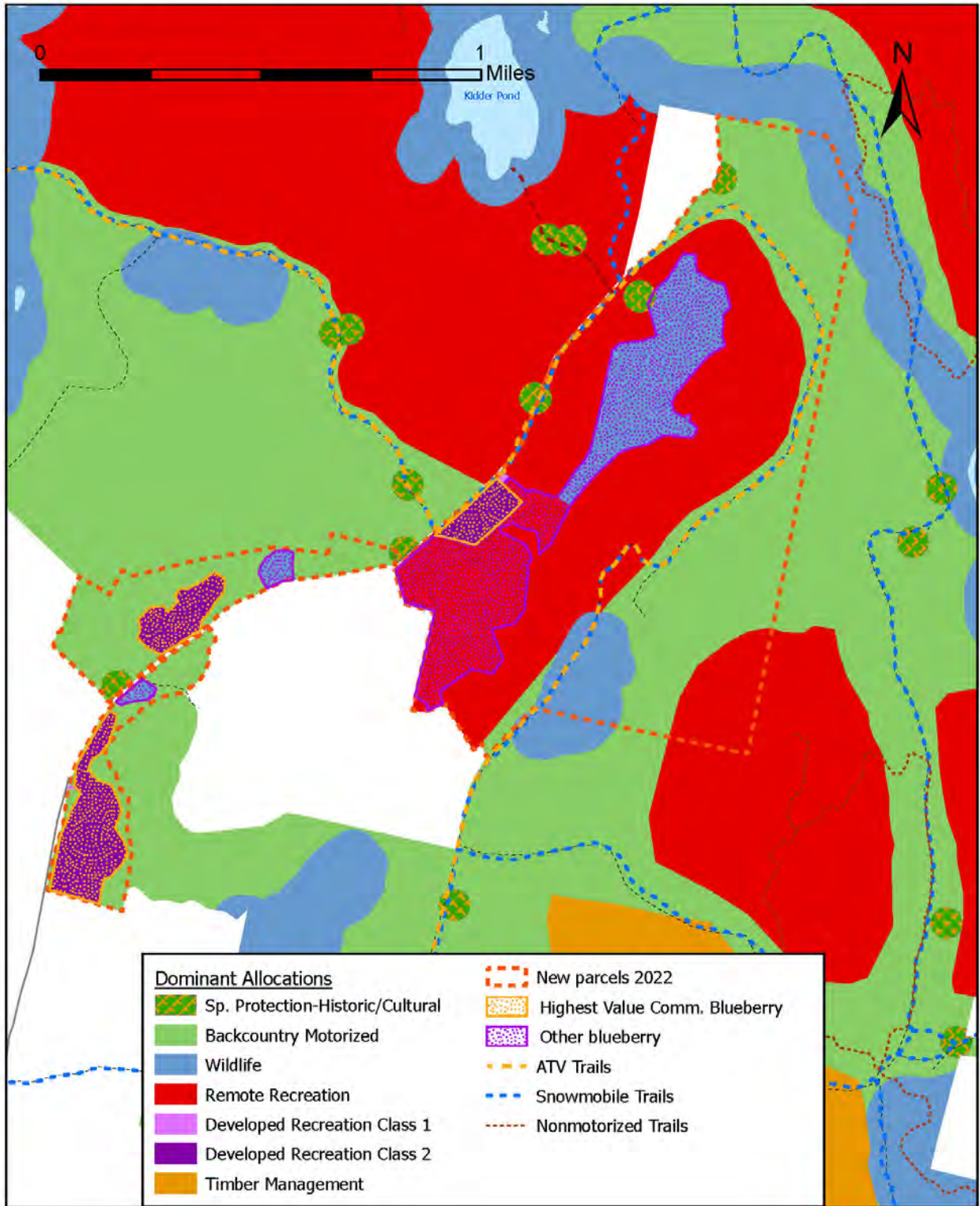
Dominant Resource Allocations



Kennebec Highlands Public Land Proposed Resource Allocations - 2025 Update



Kennebec Highlands Public Land Proposed Resource Allocations - Vienna Parcels



Management Recommendations

Access/Signage

Parking and Road Improvements

- Develop summer and winter parking areas along Vienna Mountain Road, at the general locations proposed in this plan
- Continue to implement road improvements as needed to provide access to standard vehicles on Vienna Mountain Road beyond the end of the town road (between the parking areas)

Signage

- Install yardarm “Kennebec Highlands Public Land” entrance sign on Vienna Mountain Road
- Install informational kiosks and other signage at the new parking areas and elsewhere as needed on the new parcels
- Update kiosk signage at the existing trailheads to reflect the expanded public lands at the Highlands

Potential New Gates or Barriers

- To reduce unauthorized snowmobile, ATV and other vehicle access to the blueberry fields, consider gating or blockage of access lanes; controlled vehicle access may be necessary in some locations, for example, for commercial blueberry operations or “improved access trail” purposes
- Consider installing a gate on Vienna Mountain Road to prevent damage during the mud season; the Bureau will need to consult with inholding landowners and others with access rights prior to any gate installation

Recreation

Hiking Trails

- As guided by the Trails Plan, and taking into account potential renewed commercial blueberry production and other activities, develop and mark:
 - Walking paths on the Vienna Mtn. blueberry fields allocated to Remote Recreation, based primarily on some portion of the existing vehicle tracks developed for commercial management, and giving careful consideration whether certain tracks that may be used for blueberry management activities may also be designated for this use, with appropriate steps to protect public safety
 - Hiking trail connection between the Round Top trail and/or the Sanders Hill Loop trail and the Vienna Mountain blueberry field paths

Improved Access Trail

- As guided by the Trails Plan and informed by potential users and accessible trail experts, work to develop an improved access trail on Vienna Mountain that:
 - If feasible, can be directly accessed by vehicle, including specialized vehicles adapted for wheelchairs or other mobility devices
 - Is of the appropriate length, grade, width and surface material and quality for the primary intended users who cannot readily use typical pedestrian trails on the public lands

- Provides access to high-elevation views on the trail or short viewpoint spurs

Bear Bait Sites

- As part of a unit-wide review aimed at establishing a handful of bear bait sites on the Highlands, work with IF&W to determine whether bear bait sites will be established on the new parcels and identify any implications for trail development and other recreational uses for any sites to be located on the new parcels

Education and Outreach

- Consider installation of interpretive panels on Vienna Mountain, possibly at or near the house; potential topics include but are not limited to: Wabanaki history, European settlement/farmstead history, and more recent logging and agricultural history of the Highlands/Vienna Mountain; blueberry barren management; and the unique wildlife habitats and associated wildlife to be found on the blueberry fields²
- Consider opportunities for special educational and other outreach events, hosted by the Bureau or other local entities or in partnership, that take advantage of the unique setting of the Vienna Mountain blueberry fields

Blueberry Barren Management

Potential Resumed Commercial Production

- Guided by the wild blueberry specialist's assessment (Yarborough report), issue an RFP for a blueberry production lease on the ~50 acres of fields in Vienna identified in the report as most suitable, or possibly larger acreage if potential lessees have interest
- If a lease arrangement is pursued, seek to include provision for management of non-commercial fields with opportunities for public picking in appropriate areas

Management on Non-Commercial Fields

- Identify what portions of the remaining (non-commercial) Vienna blueberry fields will be managed for recreational blueberry picking and viewshed maintenance; determine the method and schedule for mowing or burning to retain the blueberries and retard the growth of invading shrubs and trees on those fields (this will apply to all fields if no commercial lease arrangement is agreed to)
- In collaboration with IF&W, develop a plan for brush control on the Vienna Mtn. blueberry fields to be managed primarily for wildlife; this may be accomplished in conjunction with brush control on the fields to be maintained for recreational blueberry picking and viewshed maintenance; brush/young trees will be allowed to grow in some areas to meet certain wildlife habitat objectives
- Consider near-term actions to control brush and preserve views in priority areas of the blueberry fields described above, potentially using volunteers
- For the New Sharon summit field, develop a plan and take actions to maintain a mosaic of lowbush blueberry and shrubland as important wildlife habitat, periodically setting back succession as needed; consider near-term actions to remove existing small trees to preserve views

² Pages 33-38 of the 2011 Kennebec Highlands Management Plan provides substantial historical information from the prehistory to modern periods, including the results of a 2003 archeological survey of the Highlands by the Maine Historic Preservation Commission. The Bureau will seek additional information regarding the Allen parcels.

Disposition of Structures

- Evaluate the condition of the house and barn, with the assistance of contracted expertise if needed, identify any immediate or near-term repair and maintenance needs, and determine the associated costs of that repair/maintenance
- Identify annual and longer-term maintenance needs and costs for the house and barn
- In concert with the above, determine the range of intended and permissible uses for the house and barn, and any implications of certain uses for operation and maintenance (e.g., management burden and presence required, security, need for potable water, toilet facilities/sanitation, heating of the house)
- Evaluate safety and security concerns associated with retaining the house and barn, and any actions needed to address those concerns if the structures are retained