

MAINE BUREAU PARKS AND PUBLIC LANDS (BPL)
Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
22 State House Station - Augusta, Maine 04333-0022

FINAL MEETING NOTES

**CROCKER MOUNTAIN UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN
ADVISORY COMMITTEE (AC) MEETING**

Carrabassett Valley, Maine
February 25, 2015
6:00 – 7:30 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS AND THE INTERESTED PUBLIC PRESENT

AC Members

Bob Luce, Town of Carrabassett Valley
Doug Marble, High Peaks Alliance
John McCatherin, Carrabassett Valley Outdoor Association
Claire Polfus, Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Joshua Tauses, CR NEMBA
Charlie Woodworth, Maine Huts & Trails

Interested Public

Dave Cota, Carrabassett V. Town Manager
Arthur Pierce
Deborah Pierce
Larry Warren
Dwight Gies

BPL STAFF PRESENT

Kathy Eickenberg, Chief of Planning
Jim Vogel, Management Plan Coordinator
Peter Smith, Lands Manager Western Region
Steve Swatling, Bigelow Preserve Manager / Forester
Rex Turner, Recreation Planner
Joe Wiley, IF&W Wildlife Biologist assigned to BPL

INTRODUCTIONS

After a welcome by Jim Vogel, other BPL staff and members of the Committee introduced themselves, and a brief statement was made of the meeting's objectives and goals: to review the Draft Crocker Unit Management Plan, sent to the Advisory Committee by email on February 10. The remainder of the meeting was structured around a PowerPoint presentation of the Draft Plan, which summarized the Vision, Dominant Resource Allocations, and Management Recommendations for the unit. The slide presentation was supplemented by a large format print out of the Dominant Resource Allocation map posted on the wall, and an 8.5 x 11 in. copy distributed to the meeting attendees (attached).

VISION SUMMARY

No comments were given on the Vision statement.

PROPOSED DOMINANT RESOURCE ALLOCATIONS

Special Protection Areas: Bob Luce expressed concern that the current designation of the entire parcel east of the Appalachian Trail Corridor as Special Protection - Ecological Reserve would not provide enough flexibility for potential future recreational uses, particularly motorized trails. The town does not want the Plan to block a potential north-south motorized (snowmobile, groomed cross-country skiing) trail connection from Route 27. There is the possibility that the current snowmobile access down Caribou Valley Road

(which Plum Creek allows on an annual basis by special permission) could be lost when the Plum Creek lands surrounding the road are developed, as permitted by current zoning. A suggestion was made that a 100 foot corridor along the east boundary of the Ecological Reserve be removed from the Special Protection - Ecological Reserve allocation to provide an option to Caribou Valley Road for routing a motorized trail in the event that the road becomes closed to ORVs. BPL commented that there was leeway available in the acreage allocated to Special Protection/Ecological Reserve in the Draft Plan that would allow for the suggested corridor, and a specific response to the request would be incorporated into the Final Draft Plan.

Mountain Bike Trails: The presentation highlighted two areas, encircled on the Dominant Allocation map with a red line, where future mountain bike trail development would be focused. Both areas have an underlying Timber Management dominant use allocation. In response to a question as to whether that allocation would allow for future trails to be protected from the impacts of timber harvesting, BPL explained that any trails would be allocated to Developed Recreation when built.

PROPOSED MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

There were no comments on the recommendations related to potential recreational development, the Ecological Reserve, wildlife management, or timber management.

Road Access and Maintenance: In relation to the Plan's recommendation regarding future maintenance of Caribou Valley Road from Rt. 27 to the Unit boundary and potential repairs and upgrading of the road on the Unit, Larry Warren (a MH&T board member) described ongoing discussions of MH&T with Sugarloaf Corp. (abutter to the south). MH&T has requested a 200-acre easement on the abutting Sugarloaf parcel for non-motorized recreation and a 5-acre site for a new hut west of Caribou Pond. MH&T would need to use Caribou Valley Road to transport concrete during hut construction, as would Sugarloaf for construction of a proposed dam on Caribou Pond to provide water storage for snowmaking. Larry requested that the Plan make a provision that Maine Huts and Trails and Sugarloaf could improve the road at their own cost.

Bear Bait Site Assessment: In response to the recommendation that the location of leased bear bait sites be assessed, a concern was voiced about the proximity of some sites (which pre-exist BPL ownership of the unit) to the A.T. BPL responded that this will be taken into account during the assessment.

Miscellaneous Issues: Larry Warren expressed concern about spruce/fir growth in the Carrabassett River valley portion of the Unit that will favor creation of a long-lasting snowpack and therefore promote blackfly propagation, which has been a concern of the Sugarloaf golf course in the past. He described a university experiment whereby a biological agent (BTI) was used in the stream to control blackflies and was shown to be safe for fish and other organisms, and asked if this control method could be mentioned as an option in the Plan. Joe Wiley responded that the Bureau would consider any such proposal on its merits on a case by case basis.

NEXT STEPS AND FINAL COMMENTS

The Presentation concluded with a reminder that written comments would be accepted on the Draft Plan for the next two weeks (until March 13), after which the Plan would be revised as needed and a Final Draft prepared for presentation at a public meeting later in March. Dave Cota asked if comments on the Plan are made public; BPL responded that comments would be posted on the Plan webpage.

Written comments were submitted by email by Claire Polfus on February 25 and by Dave Cota on February 27 (attached).

ADJOURN

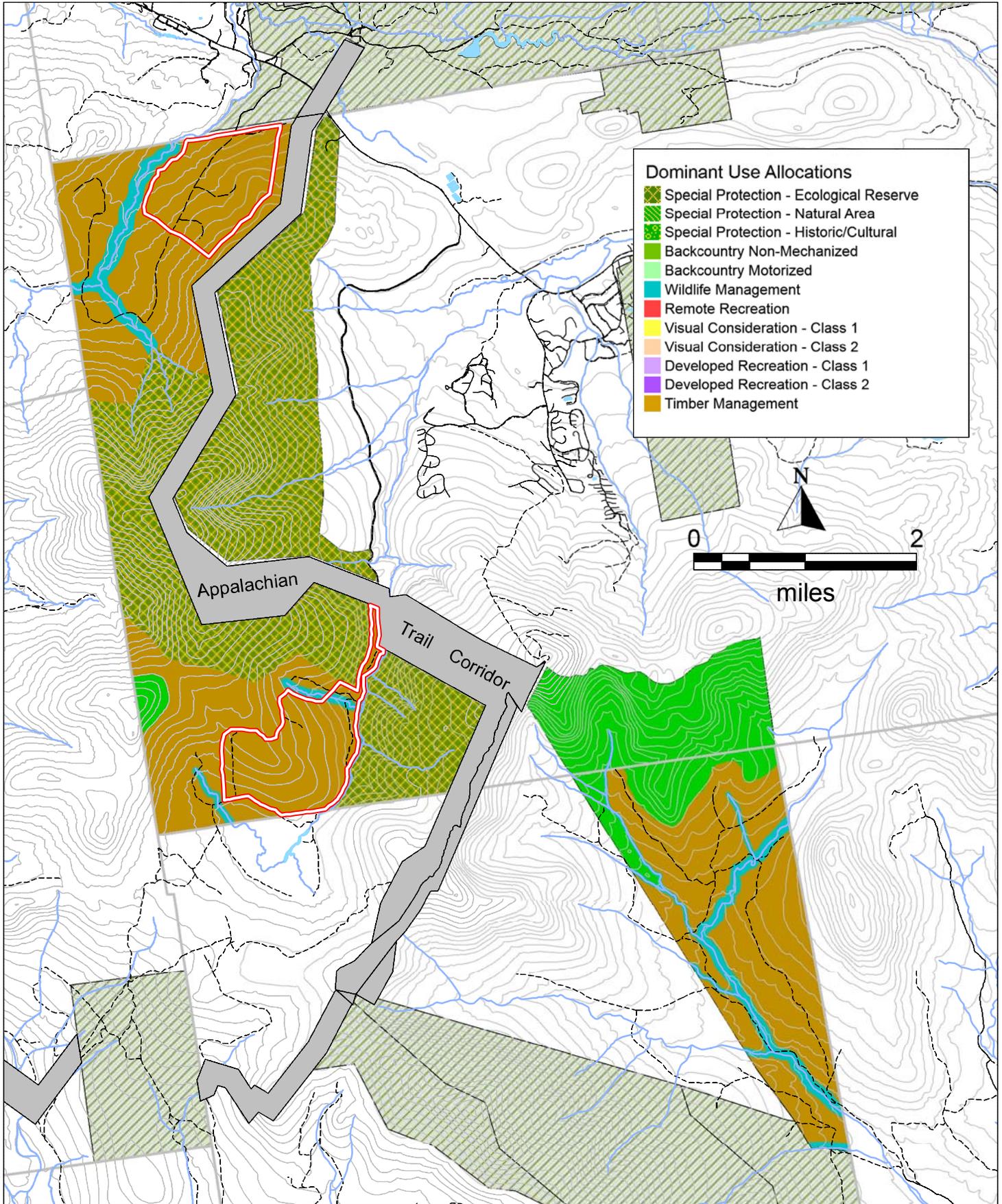
The meeting was adjourned at approximately 7:20 pm.

*Respectfully Submitted by
Jim Vogel*

Attachments

- Draft Crocker Mountain Unit Dominant Allocations Map
- Written comments on Draft Plan – Claire Polfus, ATC
- Written comments on Draft Plan – Dave Cota

Crocker Mountain Unit - Dominant Use Allocations



Vogel, Jim

From: Claire Polfus <cpolfus@appalachiantrail.org>
Sent: Wednesday, February 25, 2015 12:40 PM
To: Vogel, Jim
Subject: Re: Crocker Mountain meeting reminder

Jim,

Thank you for providing a draft management plan for the Crocker Management Unit for the Advisory Committee. I appreciate the opportunity to be part of the planning process. We also appreciate the effort put into acknowledging the users and managers of the Appalachian National Scenic Trail (A.T.) that was put into the draft plan. I want to especially thank the Bureau for the Vision section. Following are some short comments and edits.

Comments:

Again, we appreciate the added visual protection to the A.T. We acknowledge the need for timber management on the lands near Stoney Brook (p 27) and trust that management in that area will take into account visual impacts to the A.T. If management is to occur within sight of the Trail, we would appreciate being informed so that we could help with any necessary hiker or on-trail management.

Loop hiking trails and campsites (p 25-26) could be an asset to recreation and tourism in the area. We appreciate that the plan mentions the process for adding side trails to the A.T. As trail managers, we also want to stress that added funding, staff time and/or volunteer resources would be necessary to create and maintain extra campsites and trails on State Land.

I believe the A.T. Trailhead on Route 27 was developed on the State DOT Right-of-way. It could be plowed for winter access if the State would wish.

Edit:

pg 19 – Considering the histories of the different forms of recreation, it would be more accurate to state, “The Crocker Mountain Unit lands have historically been open to multiple forms of recreation including hunting, fishing, snowmobiling and ATV riding.”

Thank you again to the Bureau for providing the opportunity to comment on the draft plan. I will see you in Carrabassett Valley tonight.

Claire

Vogel, Jim

From: Dave Cota <towncvtm@roadrunner.com>
Sent: Friday, February 27, 2015 10:26 AM
To: Eickenberg, Katherine; Vogel, Jim
Cc: Bob Luce; John McCatherin; JT Horn
Subject: Fw: Crocker Ecoreserve Letter
Attachments: TPL Crocker ECO Reserve letter 5-22-130001.pdf

Hi Kathy and Jim:

In regards to the discussion at the Advisory Committee meeting on Wednesday (Feb. 25th) regarding the Management Plan for the Crocker Mountain Parcel we (the Town of Carrabassett Valley) would like to make a request to include a proposed motorized trail corridor in the Management Plan and on the related maps. I contacted J.T. Horn (see his response below) who, as you know, was heavily involved in this land acquisition project for the Trust for Public Lands. I am forwarding his email which includes a copy of a May 22nd, 2013 letter he wrote to Willard Harris State Director of Parks and Lands regarding the proposed Ecological Reserve and motorized trails in the Crocker Mt. land parcel. Page two of the letter states: "Outreach to the local community via a series of public meetings indicated acceptance of the general configuration of the Ecological Reserve provided that a motorized recreation corridor is maintained along the Caribou Valley Road and the South Branch of the Carrabassett River".

The concern as you know, is that in the event that Plum Creek no longer allows snowmobiling on the Caribou Valley Road there would be no motorized trail access on this parcel to get to this State Parcel Land on the other side of the Appalachian Trail Crossing. It is our understanding that the proposed Ecological Reserve contains approximately 4,400 acres. Throughout the public process leading up to the actual acquisition, 4,000 acres was generally accepted as the approximate amount of land that would be included in this Reserve. This leads to our request for consideration in the Management Plan as follows:

Include a "motorized trail corridor" approximately up to 1,000' wide along the eastern property line of the parcel that is on the western side of the Caribou Valley Road from Rt. 27 to the Appalachian Trail crossing on this road. We believe this corridor to be approximately four miles long which, at 1,000' wide, would include approximately 485 acres. If and when the trail ever got built the actual trail would probably only encompass approximately 5 acres at 20' wide (at four miles in length). However, due to the logistics of actually locating the trail on this parcel (topography, ledge, etc.) the trail would need to "move around" within this corridor to actually be feasible to build.

There may be other ways to identify this corridor in the Management Plan and related maps so as to not detract from the acreage involved with the Ecological Reserve. It might make sense to actually conduct some "on the ground" site visits this summer by representatives from BPL and the local snowmobile and ATV Clubs to determine if a motorized trail is viable within this proposed trail corridor and what the corridor would need to look like. However, with the potential loss of use of motorized trail access that may occur as a result of Plum Creek's future development plans it is our desire to ensure that an alternative motorized trail access plan is in place.

We welcome your thoughts and suggestions (please "respond to all") and we look forward to working with you on a proposed solution. Thank you.