

White Mountain National Forest



United States
Department of
Agriculture
Forest
Service

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WARREN TO WOODSTOCK SNOWMOBILE TRAIL PROJECT

Towns of Warren and Woodstock
Grafton County, New Hampshire

Scoping Report

Information and Opportunity to Comment

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Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

What is the Forest Service proposing? 3

Where is the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project? 3

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Why is the Forest Service considering the construction of the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail at this time? 3

What decisions are needed with regard to the management of the Project Area? 4

PROPOSED ACTION

What activities is the Forest Service proposing to meet the needs identified above? 5

What decisions will be made? 7

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

How is the public involved in this decision? 7

How can the public learn more about the Warren to Woodstock Trail? 8

How can you comment? 8

MAP 1: Vicinity Map 10

MAP 2: Project Area Map 11

INTRODUCTION

What is the Forest Service proposing?

The White Mountain National Forest is proposing to construct a snowmobile trail linking the existing Three Ponds Snowmobile Trail near the town of Warren, New Hampshire with the existing Glover Brook Snowmobile Trail near the town of Woodstock, New Hampshire. (See Maps 1 and 2.)

Construction of the trail would be a cooperative effort between local snowmobile clubs, the State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development-Bureau of Trails, and the White Mountain National Forest.

Where is the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project?

The proposed trail would follow or closely parallel the historic Warren to Woodstock Carriage Road that connected these two communities in the 1840's. The proposed trail would generally parallel New Hampshire Route 118 in the Town of Warren to the Town of Woodstock, crossing Route 118 two times.

The Trail would be approximately 9 miles long and composed of the following segments:

- 2.8 miles of existing Forest Service roads, approximately half of which are coincident with the long-abandoned historic Warren to Woodstock Carriage Road,
- 1.5 miles of previously cleared skid trail,
- 2.8 miles of the historic carriage road, and
- 1.7 miles of new construction.

PURPOSE AND NEED FOR ACTION

Why is the Forest Service considering the construction of the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail at this time?

This project was first proposed to the Forest Service by members of the snowmobile community more than 10 years ago. Preliminary field work and public involvement was initiated at that time.

Staffing shortfalls have prevented the Forest Service from completing the project design, public involvement and environmental analysis.

The primary purpose of the trail is to connect the existing Three Ponds and the Glover Brook Snowmobile Trails in response to the public request for this connection. The proposed Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail would be a main snowmobile travel corridor, meeting the needs of snowmobile users by offering an alternative route to the current railbed corridor that parallels Interstate 93.

The New Hampshire Snowmobile Association indicates a continuing demand for this connecting trail. The State of New Hampshire Bureau of Trails has expressed support for this project; the Bureau will consider this trail as a high priority for State construction and maintenance grant funds.

What decisions are needed with regard to the management of the Project Area?

The White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (Plan) designates land under a range of Management Areas, (MAs), and describes appropriate management for each MA. The proposed trail traverses three MAs; 2.1, 3.1 and 6.2.

The Plan specifies the purpose of activities in areas designated as MA 2.1 will “broaden the range of recreation options, mainly those offering roaded natural opportunities.” (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, III-32.) The Desired Future Condition of much of the area traversed by the trail includes “noticeable human activity in these areas resulting from many uses. Evidence will usually be in harmony with the natural-appearing environment and consistent with good resource management. Roads will provide access to meet land management objectives. Selected areas will be accessible for off-road motorized forms of recreation activities.” (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, III-31.)

The Plan specifies the purpose of activities in areas designated as MA 3.1 “broaden the range of recreation options, mainly those offering semiprimitive motorized experience opportunities.” (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, III-36.) The Desired Future Condition for MA 3.1 includes that the area “be accessible for off-road management activities.” (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource

Management Plan, III-31.)

The proposed trail location traverses an approximately 850 foot corridor of MA 6.2 lands. This purpose of this area, as described in the Plan, is to “broaden the range of recreation options, mainly those forms of semiprimitive nonmotorized recreation opportunities.” The Desired Future Condition of MA 6.2 specifies that “Evidence of human activities will generally be unnoticeable except for trails that traverse the area and occasional recreational facilities. Recreation activities will be limited to nonmotorized dispersed use. There will be no roads.” (White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan, III-51.) This section of the trail, if implemented, would be a non-conforming use of this approximate 850-foot corridor.

This section of the proposed trail would be located on the historic Warren to Woodstock Carriage Road. The MA 6.2 lands extend from Hubbard Brook Experimental Forest to the south and private land to the north. In order to provide a snowmobile trail connection between the existing Three Ponds Trail and the Glover Brook Trail, the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail must cross these MA 6.2 lands. The proposed location, coincident with the location of the historic road, crosses the narrowest portion, approximately 850 feet, of this MA and minimizes the amount of clearing and excavation required for road construction.

Of this 850-foot section of MA 6.2, approximately 500 feet traverses a narrow extension of the Jobildunk Roadless Area Review and Evaluation (RARE II) area. This area had been considered in the 1986 Forest Plan for designation as Wilderness. While other areas of the Forest were recommended and ultimately designated as Wilderness, this area was not and the area was subsequently returned to general management under the current Forest Plan. The area currently falls under the 2000 Roadless Rule; the snowmobile trail is a compatible use under this rule.

PROPOSED ACTION

What activities is the Forest Service proposing to meet the needs identified above?

The Forest Service is proposing to construct a 9-mile long snowmobile trail located primarily in the same location as the historic Warren to Woodstock Carriage Road linking the Three Ponds Snowmobile Trail near the town of Warren, New Hampshire with the Glover Brook Snowmobile Trail near the town of Woodstock,

New Hampshire.

An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has reviewed the proposed location and determined that the area is generally suited to construction and maintenance of a snowmobile trail. Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and New Hampshire Best Management Practices would be followed during all phases of construction.

1. In all locations, ground disturbance and effects on wet areas would be minimized. All trail construction would be completed in accordance with snowmobile trail design standards in Forest Service Handbook 2309.18 and the Memorandum of Understanding currently in effect between the Forest Service and the State of New Hampshire Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED).
2. The terrain to be traversed by the proposed action is generally suited to snowmobile use. There are several sections, particularly where the trail deviates from the location of the historic Carriage Road, that would require removal of brush, saplings, and trees as well as excavation for the purpose of providing a level riding surface, to improve drainage, and to provide resource protection, including bridges, at stream crossings.
3. Interpretation of the history of the carriage road would be provided to users and visitors of the travelway. The original carriage route will be mapped and included in the state wide Heritage thematic study on Transportation.
4. The construction period will be limited to the summer months in order to limit soil disturbance and exposure.
5. In several locations, the snowmobile trail will utilize existing Forest Service roads. Snowmobile use along these roads would be regulated to accommodate any subsequent conflicting uses, including timber harvest or other resource management activities.
6. The Forest Service will coordinate with the State of New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game as well as the Department of Transportation and the Bureau of Trails with regard to transportation planning, road crossings, and related effects of trail construction and use on wildlife resources.

What decisions will be made?

An environmental analysis will evaluate the site-specific issues, consider alternatives, and analyze effects of the activities proposed. Based on the needs identified for the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project, the scope of the project is limited to decisions concerning the construction of a snowmobile project within this Project Area. An Environmental Assessment will provide the deciding official, Tom G. Wagner, Forest Supervisor, with the information he needs to make the following decisions with regard to the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project.

1. Whether the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project will proceed as proposed, as modified by an alternative, or not at all;
2. What specific resource protection or mitigation measures should be implemented as part of the project;
3. Would the proposed project have significant impacts that would trigger the need to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement; and
4. Should the Forest approve and implement a site-specific Plan amendment to allow an 850-foot section of the trail to traverse MA 6.2 lands.

PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

How is the public involved in this decision?

At this time the Forest Service is inviting you to make site-specific comments on our plans to construct the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail. We suggest you consider the following questions when looking at the Proposed Action:

1. Does the proposed action make appropriate use of this portion of the White Mountain National Forest while protecting the environment and providing winter snowmobiling opportunities?
2. Is there anything about this trail route that you believe the Forest Service should consider in the design or construction of this project?
3. Are there off-site effects that should be considered in this proposal?

Your comments will be used to identify any significant (unresolved) issues associated with this project, to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and to refine the analysis of effects.

How can the public learn more about the Warren to Woodstock Trail?

A project file is available for review at the Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger Station or you can get more detailed information by calling Susan Mathison at the district office, 603-536-1315 (or by e-mail, smathison@fs.fed.us, e-mail comments are appreciated.)

HOW CAN YOU COMMENT?

MAIL:

Written comments must be submitted to Thomas G. Wagner, Forest Supervisor, White Mountain National Forest, at one of the following addresses:

Pemigewasset Ranger Station
RFD #3, Box 15
Plymouth NH 03264-9103
ATTN: Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project/
Susan Mathison

E-MAIL:

Electronic comments may be submitted to: smathison@fs.fed.us

FAX:

Fax comments to 603-536-5147, Attention: Susan Mathison

ORAL:

Oral comments may be provided at the Responsible Official's office during normal business hours (8:00 am - 4:30 pm) via telephone (603-536-1315) or in person at the above address. Ask for John Serfass or Susan Mathison.

Information to include when submitting comments

1. Name and address (include in email and FAX comments also);
2. Title of the proposed project;
3. Site-specific comments on the Proposed Action along with supporting information that the Responsible Official should consider when reaching a decision;

NOTE: Because of recent changes in the appeal regulations (36CFR 215), comments submitted during Scoping no longer provide appeal eligibility. If you wish to be eligible to appeal this project, you must submit substantive comments during

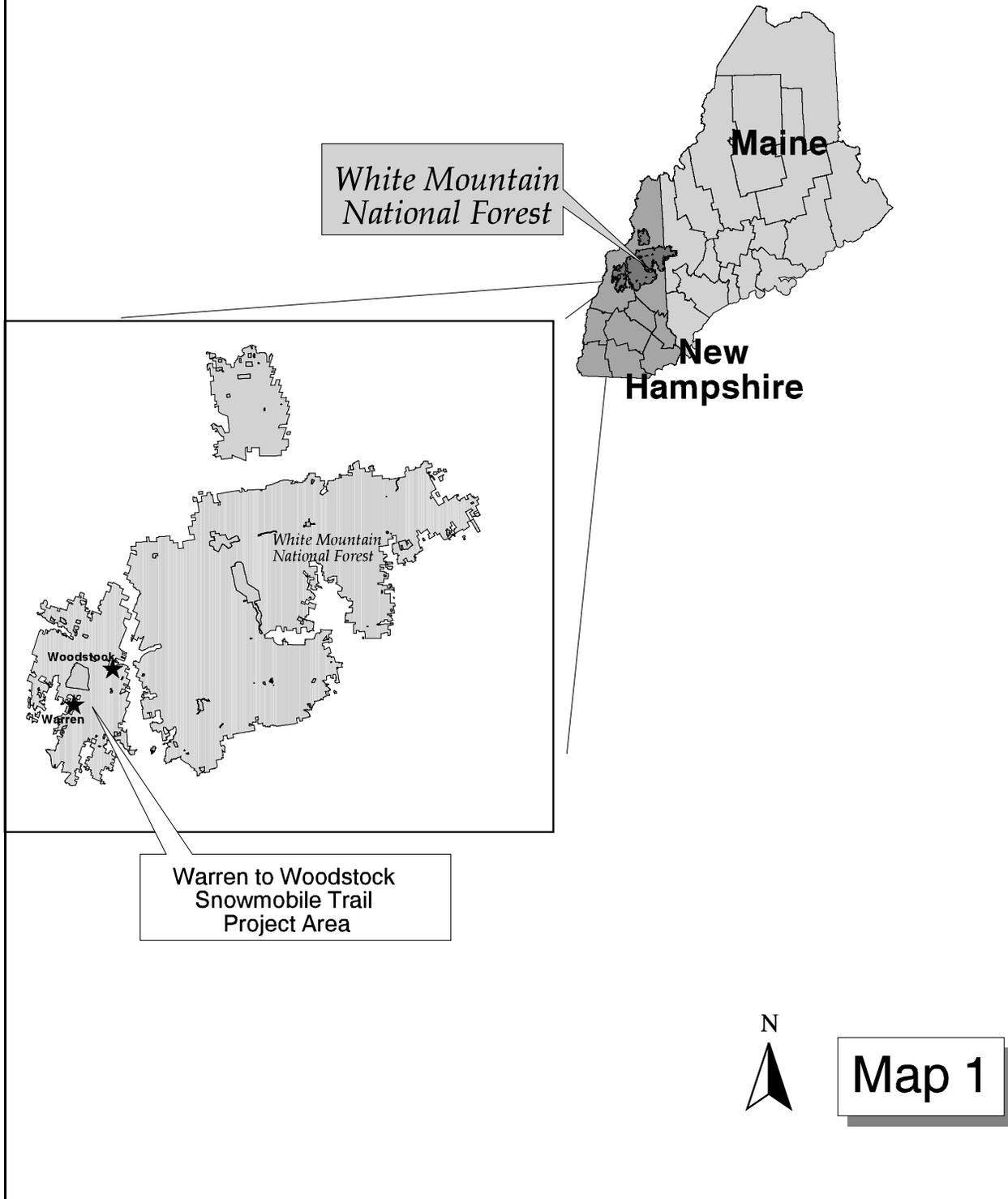
the 30-Day Comment Period. If you do not wish to comment at this time, but wish to comment during the 30-Day Comment Period, please send us a note requesting the 30-Day Comment Report documents for the Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project.

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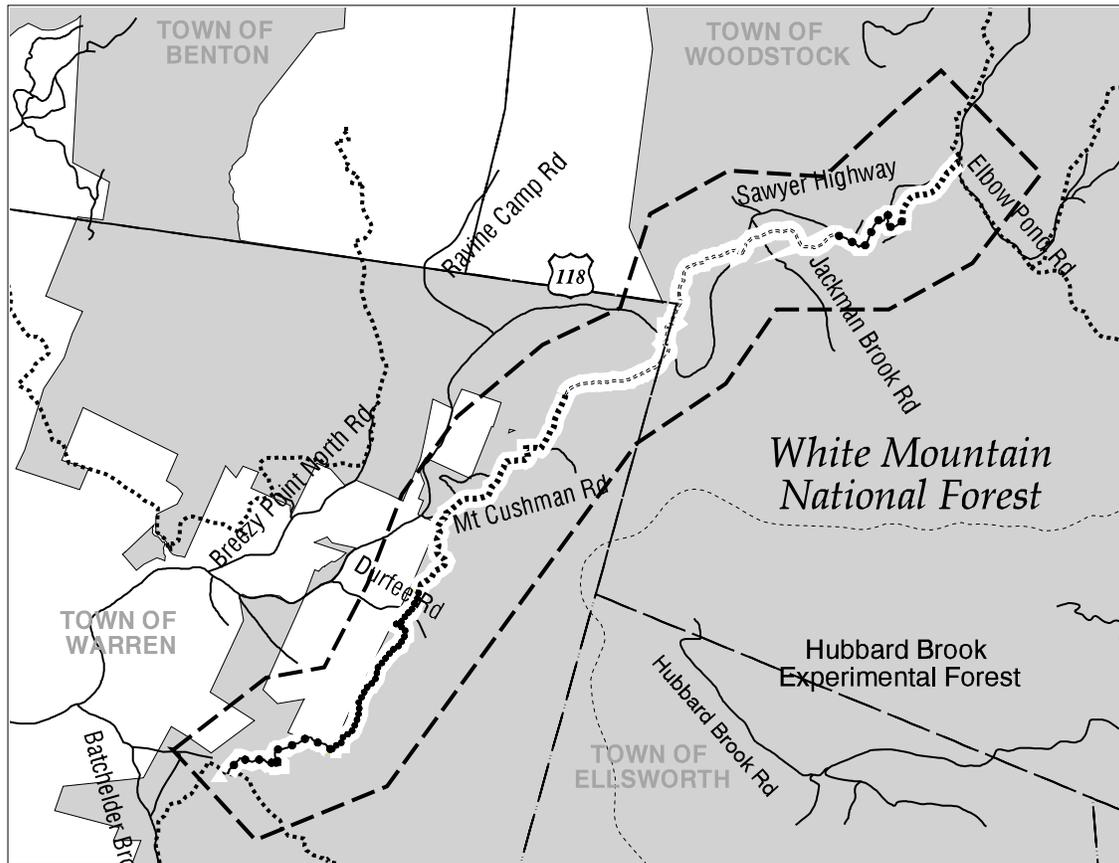
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Proposed Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Vicinity Map



Proposed Warren to Woodstock Snowmobile Trail Project Area



- | | | |
|---|--|--|
|  | Proposed Trail Location Using Existing Road | Land Area |
|  | Proposed Trail Location Using Existing Skid Trail |  Non FS Land |
|  | Proposed Trail Location, New Construction |  White Mountain National Forest |
|  | Proposed Trail Location Using Historic Warren to Woodstock Carriage Road | |
|  | Snowmobile Trail, Existing System | |
|  | Existing Roads | |
|  | Project Area Boundary | |



Map 2



Ammonoosuc/Pemigewasset Ranger District
RDF #3, Box 15, Route 175
Plymouth, NH 03264

**This document is available in large print.
Contact the White Mountain National Forest Supervisor's Office
1-603-528-8721
TTY 1-603-528-8722**