



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

September
2005



Decision Memo

Appalachian Mountain Club Camp Dodge Volunteer Center Special Use Permit Renewal

Greens Grant

Coos County, New Hampshire

Prepared By

The Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest



For More Information Contact:

Marianne Leberman
Special Use Permit Administrator
Androscoggin Ranger District
300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03581
(603) 466-2713 ext. 216
TTY (603) 466-2856
mleberman@fs.fed.us

This document is available in large print.

Contact the Androscoggin Ranger District Office

1-603-466-2713

TTY 1-603-466-2856

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, political beliefs, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication or program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 202/720-2600 (voice and TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write the USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TDD). The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Appalachian Mountain Club

Camp Dodge Special Use Permit Renewal Decision Memo

1.0 -- Decision

After conducting an environmental analysis and seeking public comment on the Appalachian Mountain Club's request to renew their special use permit to operate Camp Dodge Volunteer Center in the White Mountain National Forest, I have decided to renew their special use permit for tenure of 10 years. The special use permit authorizes the Appalachian Mountain Club to occupy National Forest System lands and facilities while providing services in the White Mountain National Forest.

1.1 -- Rationale for the Decision

An analysis of the resource conditions (see Section 4.2) revealed no extraordinary circumstances that would require further environmental analysis.

The AMC has maintained and operated the Camp Dodge Volunteer Center successfully since 1982 to the benefit of the White Mountain National Forest. With no compelling reasons such as financial insolvency or poor performance, and with support expressed by those who participated in the environmental analysis, I believe a decision to renew the permit is in the government's best interest.

2.0 -- Location, Features, and Background

The Camp Dodge Volunteer Center encompasses 5 acres of Tract 18, just east of NH Route 16 in Greens Grant, Coos County, NH (See Maps 1 and 2). The permit area includes the facilities site and the entrance road leading from NH Route 16.

The facility is comprised of three bunkhouses, crew quarters, mess hall/kitchen, twelve tent platforms, bath house, tool shed, and water and septic systems. The capacity ranges up to 100 overnight campers during busy weeks and special events such as early-season training sessions.

The facility was established in 1935 as a Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) camp, operating for eight years as Camp Peabody, a center for trail construction and other recreation projects. In the 1950s, the US Army Cold Weather Lab used the facilities for testing cold weather equipment. The Youth Conservation Corps (YCC) operated the camp starting in 1974.

The AMC was first issued a Special Use permit in May 1982 to operate the facility as an organization camp for AMC volunteers working on projects in the White Mountain National

Forest. The Forest Service has continued to authorize the use; the next renewal will occur as a result of this analysis.

3.0 -- AMC's Camp Dodge Volunteer Center Operations

Camp Dodge serves as the base of AMC's cooperative volunteer trail maintenance efforts in the White Mountain National Forest. The facility provides lodging, food, leadership, and other logistical support to more than 500 volunteers per season. AMC provides two weekly volunteer trail crews, skill sessions, Adopt-A-Trail program support, and coordination of special activities such as New Hampshire Trails Day, National Trails Day, trail work weekends, AMC seasonal employee training, and special trail work projects for groups.

The Forest Service requires AMC to submit an annual operating plan that identifies work projects, staffing plans, and other details associated with operating and maintaining the facilities. The facilities are inspected regularly and compliance with the permit clauses is overseen by a Forest Service permit administrator.

4.0 -- Category of Exclusion and Environmental Analysis

Renewal of AMC's special use permit for the Camp Dodge Volunteer Center is in the category of actions identified in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 Chapter 30, Section 31.2 (15):

"Issuance of a new special use authorization for a new term to replace an existing or expired special use authorization when the only changes are administrative, there are no changes to the authorized facilities or increases in the scope or intensity of authorized activities, and the applicant or holder is in full compliance with the terms and conditions of the special use authorizations."

4.1 -- Rationale for Category

I find that the above category is appropriate for this analysis and decision because the Appalachian Mountain Club is not proposing changes in the facilities, uses, or services currently authorized, and continues to comply with the terms and conditions authorized by the Forest Service. I have determined that there will be no resulting significant effects on the environment, and therefore the proposed action requires no further analysis in an environmental assessment (EA) or an environmental impact statement (EIS).

4.2 -- Resource Conditions and Extraordinary Circumstances

The environmental analysis included on-site surveys for rare plants and heritage resources, and also determined if any extraordinary circumstances exist that could result in significant effects to the environment. In accordance with FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, the following specific resource conditions were examined:

4.2a -- Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.

A Biological Evaluation of the permit area was conducted to analyze and document the potential effects of this decision on listed species and their habitat. An analysis of additional species of concern in the White Mountain National Forest was also conducted. Field reconnaissance closely examined habitat and potential for populations, and determined that the renewal of AMC's special use permit

- is consistent with the terms and conditions set forth by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for the protection of Indiana bats (federally listed endangered species), and that the likelihood of Indiana bats occurring in the permit area is extremely low;
- will not likely cause a trend toward federal listing for eastern small-footed myotis and northern bog lemming; and the likelihood of these two Regional Forester sensitive species occurring in the permit area is low.

No other federally listed or sensitive species or habitat has the potential to be affected by renewing the special use permit. The Biological Evaluation and the species lists are available in the Project File.

4.2b -- Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds

There are no wetlands in the permit area, and Camp Dodge does not sit in the floodplain for either the Peabody River or Cowboy Brook. Camp Dodge is not located within a drinking water protection area. Forest Plan standards and guidelines are designed to protect water quality and aquatic habitat. Therefore, renewal of the special use permit is not expected to result in any impacts to floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.

4.2c -- Congressionally Designated Areas

The closest congressionally designated area to Camp Dodge is the Great Gulf Wilderness, located about 1.10 miles west. Renewal of the special use permit renewal will not result in any impacts to the Wilderness.

4.2d -- Inventoried Roadless Areas

The Camp Dodge permit area is surrounded by the Wild River Inventoried Roadless Area as identified in the proposed Forest Plan (USDA 2004a). Roadless Areas generally have characteristics that would be consistent with Wilderness designation; Camp Dodge is excluded from the Roadless Area as were all areas on the Forest with long-term special use permits. Authorized operations and activities at Camp Dodge are confined to the permit area and do not make use of the surrounding forest. It is consistent with its "roaded natural" classification, and permit renewal will not affect the Roadless Area values.

4.2e -- Research Natural Areas (RNAs)

The Forest currently has three designated Research Natural Areas – The Bowl, Alpine Garden, and Nancy Brook. The proposed Forest Plan identifies several additional

Research Natural Areas. None of the RNAs or Candidate RNAs are nearby or will be affected by renewal of AMC's special use permit.

4.2f -- American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites/Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas

An examination of cultural resources data followed by field surveys and consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office has revealed no known sites located in the permit area, hence there will be no impacts to cultural or archeological sites. The site is a historic site, however because this is an administrative action with no proposed changes, there will be no effects to the historic site. The permit area will be re-evaluated with any future proposals that would involve ground-disturbing activity or other physical disturbance.

5.0 -- Public Involvement

The White Mountain National Forest listed the renewal of AMC's special use permit for Camp Dodge on the Schedule of Proposed Actions beginning in October 2004, and mailed 286 scoping reports to interested and affected parties on May 11, 2005. The majority of the respondents support the renewal of AMC's special use permit because the Camp Dodge Volunteer Center serves the White Mountain National Forest well by providing volunteers the opportunity to maintain trails and shelters, and fosters the stewardship partnership between the Forest and hikers. Several respondents supported the renewal as long as there are no changes to maintenance requirements and scope of authorized activities. One respondent requested that the permit tenure be 5 years, and another suggested that the permit be renewed but the use of Camp Dodge be opened up to other organizations that serve the Forest. See Appendix A for details regarding public comments and Forest Service responses.

6.0 -- Consistency with the Land and Resource Management Plan (Forest Plan) and other Applicable Laws

My decision to renew the Appalachian Mountain Club's special use permit for Camp Dodge operations is consistent with the Forest Plan. Standards and Guidelines in the Forest Plan are designed so that on-the-ground activities comply with applicable regulations, laws, and executive orders.

6.1 -- Forest Plan

Many of the visitors to Camp Dodge volunteer to do trail work as a means of recreation by joining a community of like-minded people. Though they do not volunteer directly for the Forest Service, much of the work they do is on White Mountain National Forest trails. This is consistent with the current Forest Plan (1986), which has a goal to "recognize the need for the Forest user to bear a share of management costs through continued use of volunteer programs, payment for services, cooperative agreements, and voluntary contributions and donations (USDA 1986a p III-2)." The program at Camp Dodge provides an organized opportunity for people to do volunteer work in the national forest.

Camp Dodge is in Management Area (MA) 2.1. While the Forest Plan does not address administrative facilities or special uses specifically, the Camp Dodge facility is consistent with the goals within this management area, which allow for a wide range of uses, including development levels consistent with the area's "roaded natural" classification in the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (USDA 1986a, p. III-30).

Management direction in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed revised Forest Plan (due to be finalized in 2005) describes the Desired Future Condition as follows:

Stewardship of the National Forest continues to be a collaborative effort between local communities, forest users, private sector entities, nonprofit partners, and other government agencies. Many programs, facilities and services that contribute to local and regional economies and the quality of life are developed and implemented through partnerships, volunteer programs, cooperative agreements, and donations (USDA 2004b, Ch. 1, p. 6)."

Camp Dodge promotes this Desired Future Condition through the collaborative efforts of the AMC, volunteers, and the Forest Service to maintain White Mountain National Forest trails.

The proposed revised Forest Plan also places Camp Dodge in Management Area 2.1, General Forest Management. The Camp Dodge facility is consistent with the purpose of MA 2.1, which allows for a full mix of recreation opportunities and development levels (USDA 2004a, Ch. 3, p. 3).

6.2 -- Special Uses – Forest Service Manual 2700

My decision to renew AMC's special use permit complies with Forest Service regulations as stated in Forest Service Manual 2700, which directs the management of special uses in the national forests. The regulations provide the authority and terms and conditions necessary for granting and administering special use permits.

7.0 -- Implementation Date

Renewal of AMC's Camp Dodge Volunteer center special use permit may proceed immediately. A new permit is expected to take effect by January 1, 2006.

8.0 -- Administrative Review or Appeal Opportunities

This decision is not subject to administrative review or appeal, pursuant to 36 CFR 215.8.

9.0 -- Contact Persons

For more information, contact Katherine W. Stuart, District Ranger, or Marianne Leberman, Special Use Permit Administrator, at 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581; (603) 466-2713 ext. 210 (TTY 603-466-2856); email kstuart@fs.fed.us, or mleberman@fs.fed.us.

10.0 -- Signature and Date

I have concluded that renewing AMC's special use permit for the Camp Dodge Volunteer Center may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, because the scope of activities will not individually or cumulatively have a significant effect on the quality of the human environment. My conclusion is based on the information presented in this document and in the Project File.

/s/ Katherine W. Stuart
KATHERINE W. STUART
District Ranger

09-13-2005
DATE

References

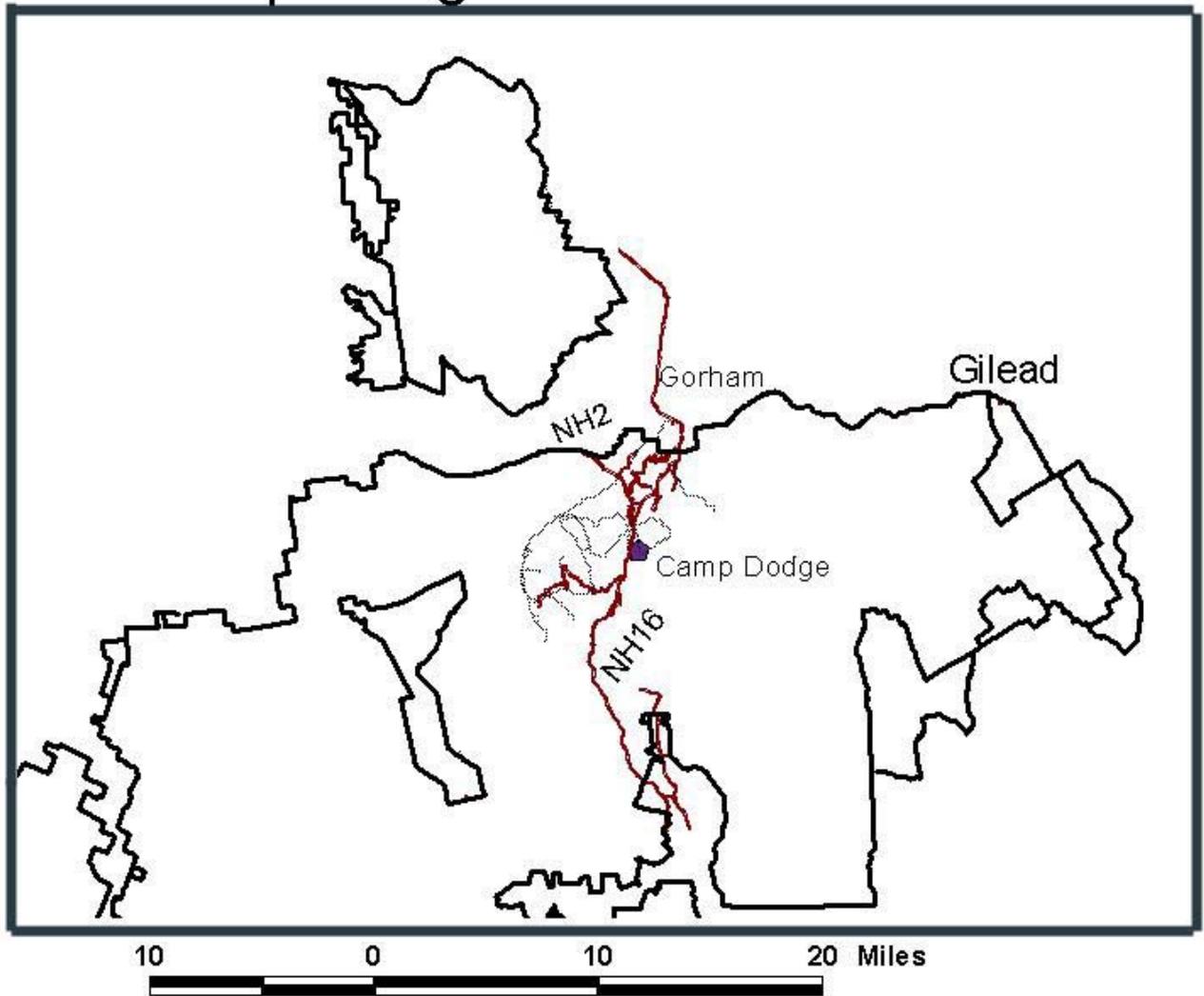
USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1986a. White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan (As Amended). Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 1986b. Final Environmental Impact Statement: White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

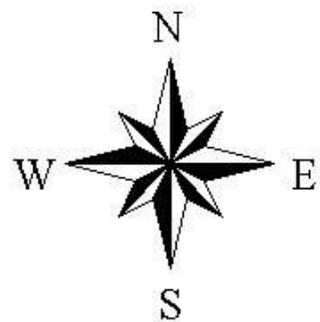
USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 2004a. Proposed Land and Resource Management Plan. Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 2004b Draft Environmental Impact Statement: White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

Map 1: Vicinity Map Camp Dodge Volunteer Center

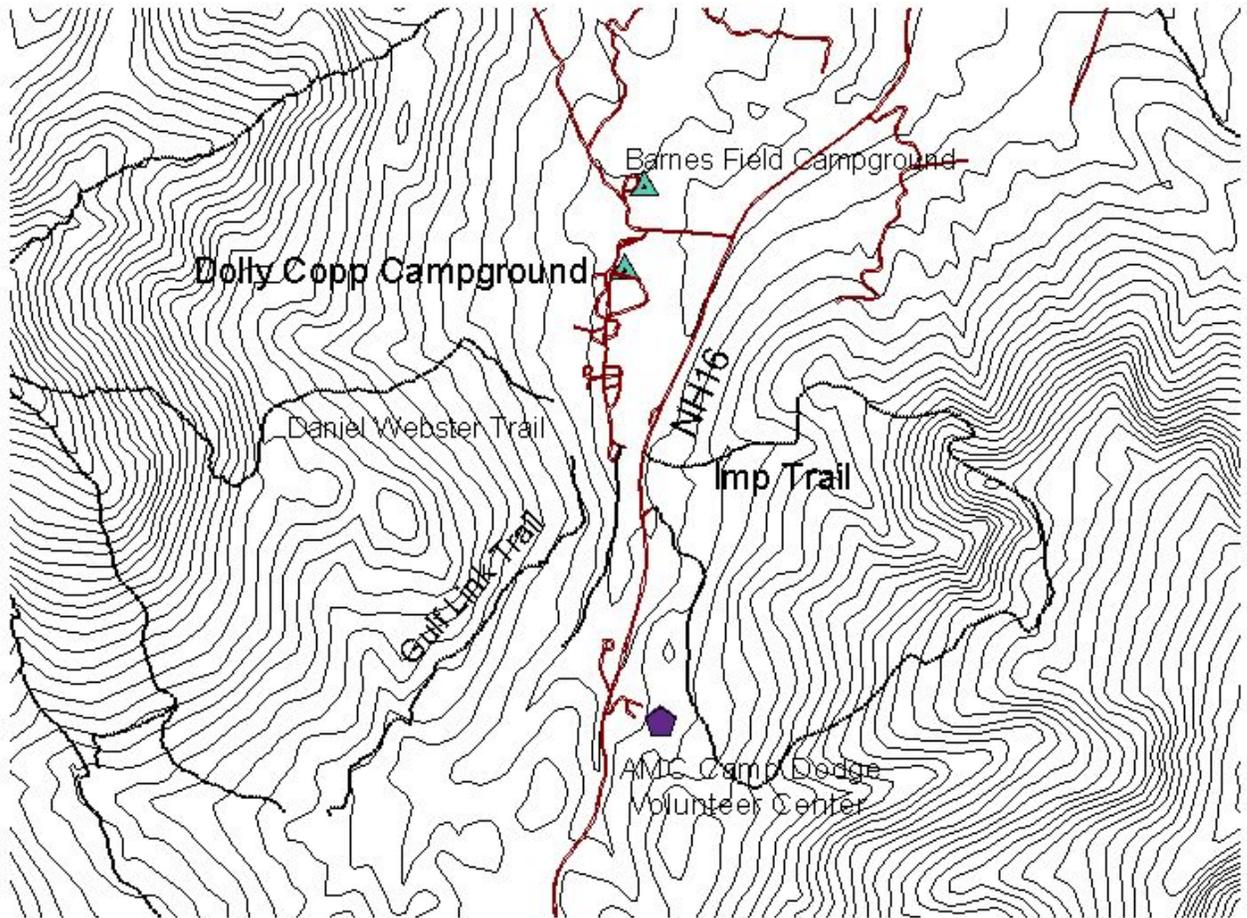


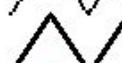
-  Trails
-  Forest Boundary
-  Roads
-  Camp Dodge

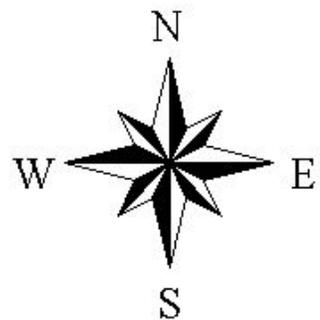


Map 2

AMC Camp Dodge Volunteer Center



-  Trails
-  Forest Boundary
-  Roads
-  Camp Dodge
-  Campgrounds
-  100' Contours



Appendix A
AMC Camp Dodge Special Use Permit
Scoping Comments and Forest Service Responses

Public Involvement

10/01/2004 - present: Listed on the White Mountain National Forest's Schedule of Proposed Actions. Distributed via mail and available on www.fs.fed.us/r9/white and (since 04/01/2005) www.fs.fed.us/sopa/.

05/11/2005: Mailed 286 scoping reports to interested and affected parties and had several media outlets provide the project description and contact information.

- 18 were returned as undeliverable.
- 14 requested to be kept informed of the analysis and decision without providing comments.
- 4 requested to be taken off the project list.
- 22 responded with comments.

Of the respondents who requested to remain informed, 14 requested print form and 8 requested electronic notices. Those who did not state a preference will receive further project information via the method they used for commenting (email or post).

Support of Proposed Action

All comments are noted and available in the project file.

Eighteen respondents support the Camp Dodge special use permit renewal.

The reasons for support are:

- AMC volunteers contribute significantly to the maintenance of trails and shelters in the White Mountain National Forest.
- Training and support provided at Camp Dodge is important to standardizing work methods.
- Camp Dodge is an important link in management and maintenance of the Appalachian Trail.
- Volunteers programs for the AT should be supported.
- AMC and AT mission and goals are consistent with WMNF goals.
- Camp Dodge helps connect people to the Forest, which in turn builds support for the Forest.
- Stewardship through collaboration is promoted in the Draft Forest Plan; Camp Dodge supports volunteers and fosters collaboration.
- Camp Dodge is a low-impact facility.
- Camp Dodge has been a WMNF asset for many years and is important historically as a CCC camp.
- Services provided to trail adopters serve them well, and maximize their time on the trails. Necessary facility for volunteers.

- AMC keeps the facility in good repair.
- 20-year term is okay.
- “The cooperative efforts at Camp Dodge are as American as apple pie...the Club provides a great opportunity for volunteers to serve their country, and using the old CCC Camp is good stewardship of a historic property.”

Support with Conditions/Suggestions

Commenter #1	
Comment #1a	My having a long association with AMC and Mt. Washington Observatory most certainly favors continuity for the Dodge center’s permit renewal. Not being privy to (USDA 1986a, p III-2” as noted on the report’s page 5 (Purpose and Need and Management Direction –para 4) I take issue with the permitting of “roaded recreation opportunities” for Camp Dodge in any way, shape, or manner, and should not be utilized to foster the encroachment of trail bikes, snowmobiles, or recreation motorized equipment or vehicles, in the White Mountains.
Forest Service Response #1a	We mention roaded recreation in the scoping report to illustrate that the current use of the Camp Dodge Volunteer center is a permitted use within the management area it is located in. We have no proposals for increasing motorized recreation or otherwise changing the current uses in the area.
Commenter #2	
Comment #2a	I am in favor of renewing the subject permit especially with the same maintenance conditions intact.
Forest Service Response #2a	The special use permit requires the development of an annual maintenance and operations plan, which the Forest Service must approve and insure is consistent with the terms of the permit. The renewed permits will retain the maintenance and oversight requirements.
Commenter #3	
Comment #3a	I support the renewal of the AMC Camp Dodge special use permit as long as the authorization is for the same scope of activities that have occurred in the past and no expansion into new uses and endeavors is allowed.
Forest Service Response #3a	No changes in the facilities or uses are proposed at this time or would be authorized under this permit. Any future proposals to expand or re-configure the existing facilities would be evaluated with regard to Forest Plan direction, and would undergo environmental analyses that would include public involvement.
Commenter #4	
Comment #4a	I suggest that the renewal of this permit be awarded to include use by other organizations which also serve the Forest. Groups such as SOLO, university environmental groups, Wilderness, society for NH forests, etc. may benefit

	<p>form occasional use of such a facility. The new, off forest, AMC center in Crawford Notch reduces the need to totally use the Camp Dodge facility. It serves the forest and should be available to others beyond the AMC. If AMC is permitted, it should be stipulated that reasonable use be offered to other forest-supporting groups.</p>
<p>Forest Service Response #4a</p>	<p>The Camp Dodge facility is managed as a support center for trail work taking place on the Forest. At times other organizations supporting the Forest have requested to use space at the facility and AMC has accommodated these requests when possible. There is no reason to believe this will not continue under the new permit.</p> <p>The Forest Service has two options for awarding a permit, as outlined in the FSM 2711. Upon receiving an application from the current permittee, the Forest Service can re-issue the permit to the existing permittee, or the Forest Service can choose to open up the permit to other bidders. National and local policy discourages change in operators unless there are compelling reasons, such as financial insolvency or poor performance. Scoping presented no evidence that these conditions exist, nor has the Forest Service found reason to seek another vendor.</p>
<p>Comment #4b</p>	<p>Since no investment is involved under this permit, I would limit the permit to 5 years. This will allow for future changing needs of the forest.</p>
<p>Forest Service Response #4b</p>	<p>The decision on length of permit is guided by special use permitting regulations and agency policy. The use code for the permit has a maximum tenure of 20 years. In general it is agency policy to grant the greatest tenure allowed under a use code as long as all conditions such as financial worth and solvency are met. This is so that a "business" investing in improvements on public land is able to function in a stable environment where some relatively long term commitments can be assured. It is important to remember that special use permits must be consistent with Forest Plans, including change that may occur over time. If the current or future Forest Plan revision finds evidence or information that would call into question the existence of a given special use permit, that permit would have to be re-evaluated. It is possible that as a result the permit would be modified or canceled.</p>