United States Department of Agriculture
Forest Service
White Mountain National Forest
Androscoggin Ranger District
300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03581-1399
Comm: (603) 466-2713
TTD: (603) 466-2856

File code: 1950/2720-2
Date: July 24, 2006

Dear Interested Citizen,

I am writing to invite you to comment on the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Special Use permit renewal for the Maine Army National Guard's use of the Bog Brook Training Site, Gilead, Maine.

The enclosed Scoping Report provides details about this project, instructions on how to comment, as well as a map for your reference. This document is also posted on our WMNF website: <www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/projects/projects/>.

You have received this letter because you own property close to the permitted area or have expressed interest in similar projects. I am interested in receiving your comments about our proposal, including any information about the permitted area that could help us improve our plans.

Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

Sincerely,

/S/ KATHERINE W. STUART

KATHERINE W. STUART
District Ranger

Scoping Report
White Mountain National Forest
Special Use Permit Renewal – Bog Brook Training Site
Reissue to United States Army Corps of Engineers
and
Maine Army National Guard

What is the Forest Service Proposing?

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is proposing to issue a Special Use permit previously held by the Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (COE) for use of the Bog Brook Training Site located in the Town of Gilead, Oxford County, Maine (see Map 1, page 3.)

The permit would authorize the Maine Army National Guard (MEARNG) to operate a training facility at the Bog Brook Training Site and would cover 47.5 acres of National Forest System Land (see Map 1 page 3) and 12 Forest Service owned facilities. Renewing the permit would authorize uses identical to the previous permit.

The previous Special Use Permit, which expired in 1996 and has been amended to allow continued operations, was issued directly to MEARNG. If the permit is renewed, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and the MEARNG have requested that the permit be issued to the COE, which serves as the long-term real estate asset holder for State National Guard organizations.

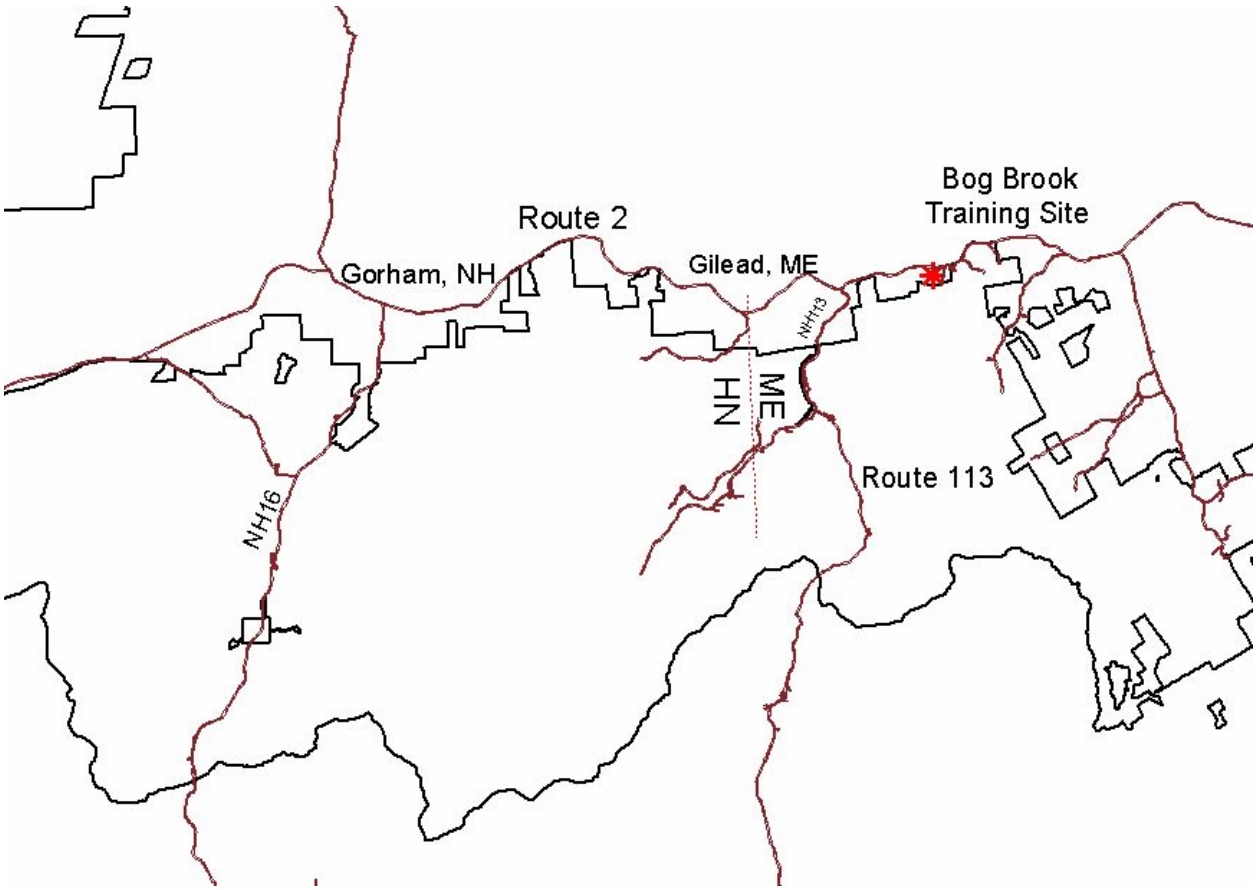
Background

The original Special Use permit was issued to the MEARNG in 1984, renewed in 1991, and expired in 1996.

The Maine Army National Guard has occupied the camp facilities continually since 1984. They have built two additional dorm buildings and a classroom/storage building. The buildings have been winterized as has the water system making this facility available for use twelve months a year. The facility is available for use by other groups and organizations for training or education, and also provides seasonal housing for temporary Forest Service employees.

MEARNG continues to improve the facilities by upgrading the utilities for each dorm and facility, improving road drainage, and performing annual maintenance on the road and facilities. The MEARNG has demonstrated responsible land stewardship by following annual permit operating plan guidelines and responsive communications with the U.S. Forest Service.

Since 1996 the expired permit has been allowed to continue through periodic amendments of the Special Use permit.



Purpose & Need and Management Direction

The purpose of the project is to operate a year-round, intermittent bivouac site and training area to be used in conjunction with State owned land in Riley, Maine. MEARNG's intent is to continue use of the camp facility as a training area for military as well as federal, state and local agencies for the 10 year permit period.

The need of this action is to address COE/MEARNG's request to renew the expired Special Use permit.

Renewing this Special Use permit meets the goals and objectives of the White Mountain National Forest by renewing permits when appropriate and in a timely manner (USDA, 2005, White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan; Ch. 1, page 1-7.)

Environmental Analysis

Our environmental analysis will consider your comments as well as those provided by a Forest Service interdisciplinary team. Renewal of Special Use permits 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."

Neither the Army Corps of Engineers nor the Maine Army National Guard are proposing changes in the facilities, uses, or services provided and authorized under the previous permit. Naming the holder as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers rather than the Maine Army National Guard is considered an administrative change, as the direct users and uses of the facility will be the same. We expect this permit renewal to be routine, with no resulting individual or cumulative significant effects on the environment, and therefore the analysis can be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement (EIS) or an environmental assessment (EA).

The environmental analysis will include on-site surveys for rare plants and heritage resources, and will identify any extraordinary circumstances that exist and could result in significant effects to the environment. In accordance with FSH 1909.15 Chapter 30, the following specific resource conditions will be considered:

1) Federally listed threatened or endangered species or designated critical habitat, species proposed for Federal listing or proposed critical habitat, or Forest Service sensitive species.
2) Floodplains, wetlands, or municipal watersheds.
3) Congressionally designated areas.
4) Inventoried Roadless Areas.
5) Research Natural Areas.
6) American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites.
7) Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas.

Preliminary Issues

No administrative issues have been identified to date. There are no known occurrences of threatened, endangered, or rare species on the WMNF lands at the facility. However, the site provides viable habitat for the wood turtle (Clemmys insculpta), listed on the Regional Forester's sensitive species list (see WMNF Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement: Appendix G page G-5; and Biological Evaluation, page 199).

Wood turtles have not been documented on the site, however the Bog Brook training facility is considered likely habitat for this species. Since this species can venture up to 0.25 miles from their hibernation stream, there is potential for wood turtles to be wandering or creating nests on the training facility.

Possible impacts to wood turtle habitat will be mitigated and made a part of the special use permit through the annual operating plan submitted by MEARNG and approved by the USFS.

What Decision Will Be Made?

After conducting and reviewing the environmental analysis, including public involvement and resource specialists' input, the District Ranger of the Androscoggin Ranger District will decide whether or not to renew the Special Use permit requested by the MEARNG.

How Are You Involved In The Decision?

We are seeking your comments to help identify issues or concerns associated with the proposal to renew the COE's Special Use permit for the MEARNG's use of the Bog Brook Training Site. The regulations governing this kind of analysis do not allow appeals of the final decision, so we encourage you to share your comments and concerns now so we can incorporate them into the environmental analysis.

How Can You Comment?

In order for your comments to be considered in the next stage of analysis, they should be received by August 25, 2006 and submitted in one of the following ways:

Written comments

By letter – Androscoggin Ranger District, White Mountain National Forest, 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581, c/o Katherine W. Stuart, District Ranger

By FAX – (603) 466-2856, ATTN: MEARNG/Bog Brook Training Site Permit Renewal, c/o Katherine W. Stuart

By email – kstuart@fs.fed.us

Oral Comments

Oral comments must be received in person at the Androscoggin Ranger Station or via telephone (603) 466-2713 (TTY 603-466-2856), during normal business hours (8:00am – 4:30pm).

In your comments, please include the following information:

1) Your name, address and telephone number or email address.
2) The project you are commenting on: Maine Army National Guard Bog Brook Training Site Special Use Permit Renewal
3) Site specific comments about the proposal along with supporting information you believe will help me identify issues, develop alternatives, or predict environmental effects of our proposal.

It is the responsibility of the interested parties to respond to this notice within the established time period. Postal delays or web server failures will not extend filing times. If a document is not available or delivered when expected, contact the Androscoggin Ranger District to arrange an alternate method of delivery

Please direct questions to Pat Nasta, NEPA Coordinator, at the above address or call 603-466-2713 ext. 222. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection. If this is a concern, please contact us at your earliest convenience.

References

USDA (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service). 2005. White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Laconia, NH: USDA-FS, Eastern Region, White Mountain National Forest.

WMNF Forest Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement: Appendix G page G-5; and Biological Evaluation, page 199.

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