



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

August 2005



Great Glen Trails Special Use Permit Trail and Warming Hut Construction

Scoping Report

Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
Greens Grant
Coos County, New Hampshire



For Information Contact: Joe Gill
Eastern Region Winter Sports Team Specialist
Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03581
(603)466-2713, ext 221
FAX/TTY (603) 466-2856
www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

or
Susan Howle
Interdisciplinary Team Leader
Eastern Region Winter Sports Team
99 Ranger Road
Rochester, VT 05767
(802)767-4261 ext 543
FAX/TTY (802)767-4777

What is the Forest Service Proposing?

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest has received a special use permit application from Great Glen. They are proposing to construct and maintain 1.3 miles of cross-country ski trails and a warming hut approximately 20 feet by 20 feet. Great Glen feels that there is a need to expand their trail system to service the northern New Hampshire cross-country skiing population to offer more varied and challenging terrain and provide a more efficient trail system. All of the additional trail system and warming hut will occur inside their current trail system area (Figure 2).

Background

Great Glen Trails operates a Nordic ski area on lands conveyed by its parent company, the Mount Washington Summit Road Company (Auto Road), to the United States in 1993 (Figure 1). Upon conveyance, the Auto Road retained easements for a trail system. Several of these easements have proven to be impractical to construct without creating undesirable impacts on the natural resources in the area. Great Glen has submitted a special use permit application in support of this project.

Purpose & Need and Management Direction

The purpose of the project is to provide public recreation opportunities and allow a special use permit that meets Forest Plan guidance. The 1986 White Mountain National Forest Plan directs the Forest Service to “Provide a variety of cross-country skiing experiences ranging from primitive to highly developed.” It further states that “Ski trail facilities should be designed to complement private development and meet basic public health and safety needs.” (1986 WMNF Forest Plan, III-6 (d)). The proposed 2005 Forest Plan Revision states “In general, Special Use Permits for cross-country ski areas should provide more developed opportunities, including highly groomed trails and patrols, than Forest trails.” (2005 Draft Forest Plan, 2-25, G-5). ✦ The need for the project is to address the fact that Great Glen has applied for a special use permit to build some additional trails and a warming hut which will provide a more efficient and suitable trail network for their operations.

While some of the trails are on the private land owned by Great Glen, the majority of existing trails are located in Management Area (MA) 2.1. While the Forest Plan does not address administrative facilities or special uses specifically, the Great Glen facility is consistent with the goals within this management area, which allow for a wide range of uses, including roaded recreation opportunities (USDA 1986a, p. III-30).

Management direction in the Draft Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed revised Forest Plan (due to be finalized in September, 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).”

Great Glen promotes this Desired Future Condition through collaborative efforts to offer recreational and aesthetic pursuits on White Mountain National Forest trails for cross-country skiers.

The proposed revised Forest Plan also places the area under consideration in Management Area 2.1, General Forest Management. The Great Glen 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).

Proposed Action

To meet the Purpose and Need, the White Mountain National Forest would grant Great Glen a Special Use permit to occupy Forest land and to construct and maintain 1.3 miles of cross-country ski trail and a warming hut approximately 20 feet by 20 feet.

Trail construction would result in soil disturbance and removal of the timber on approximately 6,680 feet (2.2 acres) of NFS lands. Construction activities would involve mechanical removal of stumps and large rocks, grading of surface, and installation of drainage ditches, water bars, and culverts. These activities would be accomplished with an excavator. Appropriate application of erosion control fabric and straw mulch would be used, as well as seeding disturbed soil with approved (i.e., weed free) seed mix. The timber value would be charged to Great Glen and deposited with the Department of Treasury.

The proposed trail routes would avoid impacting wetlands, wildlife and cultural resources located on NFS lands. A considerable portion of the proposed trail distance takes advantage of old (c1930s-1950s) woods road.

Implementation would occur during the summer months, when soil conditions are favorable for soil disturbing activities. Ski trail construction mitigations (i.e., only a maximum of 600 slope feet of exposed mineral soil will be exposed at one time, grading, seeding and mulching will occur incrementally with construction, etc.) would apply. Clearing and soil disturbance would be minimized, and introduction of non-native invasive species would be avoided.

Environmental Analysis

Our environmental analysis will consider your comments as well as those provided by a Forest Service interdisciplinary team. The proposed action appears to be in a category that can be excluded from documentation in an EIS or EA as identified in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15-2004-3, Chapter 30, Section 31.2. The analysis and supporting documentation will be the basis for determining whether this action can be categorically excluded in a Decision Memo or whether additional analysis is needed.

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 1909.15-2004-3, Chapter 30, Section 30.3, 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 environmental or administrative issues have been identified to date.

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 issue the Special Use Permit as requested by Great Glen.

How Are You Involved In The Decision?

We are seeking your comments to help identify issues or concerns associated with the proposal to issue a Special Use Permit to Great Glen. The regulations governing this 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.

Your comments will also help us decide if there may be significant effects that warrant further analysis in an EA or EIS. If so, there will be further opportunities to comment and there may be an opportunity to appeal the final decision.

Once the level of documentation is determined and the analysis is completed, copies will be mailed to people who submit comments during this scoping period and to people who request copies.

How Can You Comment?

In order for your comments to be considered, they should be received by **September 23, 2005** and submitted in one of the following ways:

Written comments

- By letter** – send to Joe Gill, Eastern Region Winter Sports Team Specialist
Androscoggin Ranger District, 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581
- By FAX** – (603) 466-2856, ATTN: Great Glen Special Use Permit, c/o Joe Gill
- By email** – jgill@fs.fed.us

Oral Comments

Oral comments can be received in person at the Androscoggin Ranger Station at 300 Glen Road, Gorham, NH 03581 or via telephone (603) 466-2713 x221 (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: Great Glen Special Use Permit

- 3) Site specific comments about the proposal along with supporting information you believe will help identify issues, develop alternatives, or predict environmental effects of our proposal.

Please direct questions to Joe Gill, Eastern Region Winter Sports Specialist, at (603)466-2713 x221. 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)-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.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political affiliation, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication or program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact the USDA's TARGET Center at 202/720-2600 (voice or TDD).

To file a complaint of discrimination, write the USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call 202/720-5964 (voice or TDD). The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.