



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White Mountain National Forest
Androscoggin Ranger District

300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03581
(603) 466-2713
TTY/FAX: (603) 466-2856

File Code: 1950

Date: February 1, 2005

Dear Interested Citizen:

I am seeking your comments on the Androscoggin Ranger District's proposal to harvest timber and improve wildlife habitat diversity in the Peaked Hill analysis area. This project is in the township of Gilead, Oxford County, Maine. A detailed description of the Proposed Action and how you can comment is included in the enclosed Scoping Report.

The information about this proposal is also available on our website at: [http:// www.fs.fed.us /r9 /white/projects/index.html](http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/white/projects/index.html).

I am interested in hearing your comments and suggestions. Please be specific to the proposals and area described in the enclosed Scoping Report. Comments are due by March 31, 2005.

Your comments will be considered as we proceed with the environmental analysis for the Peaked Hill proposal. We will develop alternatives to the Proposed Action and predict the environmental effects of the Proposed Action and the alternatives. Prior to a final decision, you will be given an opportunity (lasting 30 days) to comment on the analysis. If you provide substantive comments during the 30-Day Comment Period, you will be eligible to file an administrative appeal of the Peaked Hill Project decision. You will not be eligible to appeal the decision if you respond only to this Scoping Notice.

Important information about commenting is on pages 8 and 9 of the enclosed Scoping Report.

I appreciate the time you take to review and comment on our project proposal. Please also take a minute to fill out and return the attached Response Form to help us manage our mailings and to meet your needs to remain informed about this project.

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

Sincerely,

Katherine W. Stuart
District Ranger





United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

March 2005



Peaked Hill Vegetation Management Project

Scoping Report

**Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
Coos County, NH**

For Information Contact: Pat Nasta
Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
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Peaked Hill Vegetation Management Project

What is the Forest Service Proposing?

The Androscoggin Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest is proposing the following activities within the Peaked Hill Project Area:

- Vegetation Management by Commercial Timber Harvest
- Wildlife Habitat Improvement
- Restoration of existing Forest Service Roads
- Prescribed Burning to perpetuate and maintain oak and pine

Where is the Peaked Hill Analysis Area?

The Peaked Hill Analysis Area is situated in the Androscoggin River Watershed in the township of Gilead, Oxford County, Maine (maps 1 and 3). The Analysis Area consists of Compartment 303 and encompasses 628 acres. It is one of five compartments (303, 304, 305, 306 and 307) which comprise Habitat Management Unit (HMU) 302 (approximately 4,244 acres). Thirty one percent of the Analysis Area (194 acres) is assigned to Management Area (MA) 3.1 and sixty one percent (381 acres) is assigned to MA 2.1. Both of these management areas permit vegetative management to achieve the goals and objectives of the White Mountain Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP, 1986). The remaining 53 acres (8%) are within MA 6.2 which does not allow vegetative management.

Compartment 303 is situated with Route 2 to the north, the National Forest and MA 6.2 boundaries to the south, Wheeler Brook to the west, and the National Forest boundary to the east. Within this compartment, there is one snowmobile trail, the Gilead Trail (Corridor 14) and no hiking trails. Also within this compartment, the Maine National Guard maintains a 47.5 acre training facility under a special use permit.

The proposed timber harvest area is predominantly a mixedwood forest type consisting of spruce, hemlock, red and white pine, red oak, red and sugar maple, beech, aspen and paper birch located on moderately flat terrain, ranging in elevations of 700 to 1,000 feet.

Viewpoints into the project area are primarily from Route 2, the North Road in Gilead and the Gilead snowmobile trail.

There are fourteen known cultural resource sites located within the project area; these include a complex of stone walls, a historic road, boulders drilled for quarried stone, and cellar holes. There are also sites along Bog Brook and Route 2 that are considered archaeologically sensitive for pre-historic use. These sites will have test pits dug in the spring to identify any pre-historic archaeological deposits.

Background

Why is the Forest Service considering activities in the Peaked Hill Analysis Area at this time?

The Forest Plan permits harvesting on a sustained yield basis to provide high quality sawtimber. Many of the stands proposed for harvest were partially harvested over fifteen years ago and are ready for silvicultural treatment. The trees removed would not only provide commercial value, but also open up small and large openings within the stand to allow regeneration of trees and vegetation, provide additional growing space for young trees, and permit shade-intolerant species to become established in the understory.

The Forest Plan also seeks to create a balanced mix of wildlife habitats ranging from regeneration-age stands (seedlings) to over-mature stands. Reviews of existing forest habitats are based on HMUs and a review of HMU 302 showed that it is trending toward a mature hardwood/mixedwood forest type with little early-successional habitat. Early-successional habitat is the seedling, grassy, and shrubby habitat that generally exists during the first decade after clearing a forested area. Timber harvesting helps provide a diverse range of habitats and moves certain forest community types (ie. paper birch, aspen, and northern hardwoods) closer toward their desired future levels (USDA 1986a. Forest Plan, VII-B-13).

Reviewing the current road system and evaluating future road management needs within the Analysis Area, we are not proposing any changes (ie. decommission or construction of roads) to the existing transportation system.

Within the Analysis Area, there are no inventoried roadless areas or rivers that are eligible for Wild and Scenic classification.

Purpose and Need

Why does the Forest Service need to implement the Peaked Hill Project at this time?

This Purpose of this project is to accomplish resource objectives to meet the overall management direction of the White Mountain National Forest as established in the Forest Plan (USDA 1986a. Forest Plan III 36-41). Within the Peaked Hill Analysis Area, the Forest Plan establishes the following applicable goals for MA 2.1:

- Provide moderate amounts of high quality sawtimber and other forest products on a sustained yield basis and;
- Provide a balanced mix of habitats for all wildlife species.

The emphasis of Management Area 3.1 is:

- Provide large volumes of high quality sawtimber and other forest products on a sustained yield basis through intensive timber management practices and;
- Provide a balanced mix of habitats for all wildlife species with emphasis on early-successional species.

When comparing the existing condition (EC) of HMU 302 to the desired future conditions (DFC) as outlined in the Forest Plan, there is a Need to increase habitat diversity, especially within the regeneration-age class, and to maintain or enhance the spruce/fir, oak/pine, paper birch and aspen community type. There is also a need to increase the acres of permanent wildlife openings (PWOs).

Based on field visits and data analysis, Table 1 only shows opportunities where the DFC can be achieved through vegetative management. The project record contains the full comparison of EC to DFC.

Tables 1 shows that in order to meet the habitat and stand structure objectives of the Forest Plan for HMU 302, there is a need to; 1) establish regenerating stands of paper birch, aspen, and northern hardwoods; 2) increase the amount of light and growing space for spruce/fir and hemlock in the understory and; 3) increase permanent wildlife openings for species that require early successional habitat. Commercial timber harvest can be used to achieve these objectives.

Table 1 Acres by Community Type in MA 2.1 and 3.1 for HMU 302

Community Type	Existing Condition	Desired Future Condition	Need
Hardwoods/mixedwoods (regeneration)	25	107	82
Paper Birch (regeneration)	0	32	32
Aspen (regeneration)	0	22	22
Spruce/Fir (all age classes)	40	335	295
Permanent Wildlife Openings	33	87	54

Even-aged harvest methods such as clearcuts, shelterwood cuts and seed tree cuts remove most of the existing woody vegetation from a stand, and thus promote a component of regeneration and young growth within a larger landscape of mostly mature, closed canopy forest. This kind of “even-aged harvest” is used with species and community types that regenerate best in larger openings with little shade, such as paper birch and aspen. Clearcutting is also the method used to create PWOs.

Species that regenerate best in shaded conditions require “uneven-aged” harvest methods that remove individual trees or small groups of trees to open pockets of sunlight. Harvest methods include individual tree selection, commercial thinning and commercial improvement cuts. Species and community types that regenerate best with uneven-aged harvest include spruce/fir, hemlock, and some hardwoods (sugar maple and beech).

Oak and pine regeneration can be accomplished using both even-aged treatments such as shelterwood cuts and uneven-aged treatments such as group selection (¼ to ½ acre patches). Both these methods open up the stand to allow sufficient light to reach the forest floor. In conjunction with harvesting, reduction of competing hardwoods and preparation of a suitable seedbed are necessary for pine and oak to become well established in the understory.

Economically, harvesting selected mature and overmature trees at a 15 to 20 year cycle would provide a sustainable yield of high quality sawtimber. At the same time, lower quality or damaged trees can be harvested to provide fiber and improve future quality and productivity of the remaining trees.

Proposed Action

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

The following activities are proposed to achieve the Purpose and Need and move the Peaked Hill Analysis Area toward the Forest Plan’s desired condition (Table 2).

Table 2. Proposed Activities for the Peaked Hill Project

Proposed Activity	Amount
Timber Harvest	Acres*
Clearcut & Patchcut - Regeneration Objective (27 acres) - Permanent Wildlife Opening Objective (3 acres)	30
Group Selection Cut (GS)	15
Individual Tree Selection (ITS) and Group Selection Cut	120
Commercial Improvement Cut	27
Commercial Thinning	20
Shelterwood Prep Cut	17
Stand Improvement	
Prescribed Burning	89
Transportation	Miles
Miles of Road Restoration (FR 741, 724 and 189)	1.5

* Acres are approximate

The Proposed Action is to harvest timber on approximately 229 acres, which represents five percent of HMU 302 and eight percent of Management Areas 2.1 and 3.1 within the HMU 302. The harvest also represents thirty-six percent of Compartment 303 and forty percent of MAs 2.1 and 3.1 within Compartment 303. Table 3 lists the areas, types of harvest, acres, volume, season of operation and objectives. Map 2 shows the locations of the proposed harvests.

One permanent wildlife opening would be expanded and have the stumps removed and would also be maintained through mowing, prescribed burning, or hand brushing every three to five years.

To perpetuate and maintain oak and pine in all or portions of stands 2, 6, 10, 13 and 32, prescribed fire would be used to reduce competing hardwoods and prepare a seedbed. Currently the understory of these stands is striped maple and young beech with little or no oak and pine. Prescribed burning would be done in the spring (mid to late May) or late summer and early fall (end of August till snowfall).

All the proposed stands would be harvested using existing roads (FR 741, 724 and 189) and 5 existing landings. These roads require minimum road restoration (brushing and shaping road surface) to make them usable for log hauling, and upon completion of the sale would be closed. Installation of temporary culverts will be needed to access the timber sale area.

An undersized culvert within FR 741, located at crossing of an unnamed tributary of Bog Brook would be removed to provide for fish passage. The bankfull width of the stream at the crossing site would be restored and the fill slopes would be stabilized to allow for the future use of a temporary bridge crossing to meet multiple-use resource objectives of the area (i.e. wildlife habitat and timber harvest).

Table 3. Proposed Stands and their Harvest Treatment

Comp (Compartment), **Std** (Stand), **Rx** (Stand Prescription), **Acres**, **Vol** (Volume), **SO** (Season of Operation), and **Treatment Objective by Stand**. Stand prescription codings are: **111** (Patch Clearcut), **113** (Regeneration Cut), **121** (Shelterwood Prep Cut), **152** (Group Selection or GS), **153** (Individual Tree Selection and Group Selection) **210** (Improvement Cut), **220** (Commercial Thinning). Since Group Selection harvests only a percentage of the stand, the actual harvest acres are listed in parentheses. Volume is by MBF (Thousand Board Feet, where one board foot is equivalent to a plank 1 inch thick and 1 foot square). The Season of Operation (SO) is: **S(a)**- June 30 through October 15; **S(b)**-August 1 through October 15 and **W**-December 15 through March 20.

HMU 302

Comp	Std	Rx	Acres	Vol	SO	Treatment Objective
303	2	121	17	30	S(b)	Increase red and white pine regeneration.
303	4	113	10	100	S(a)	Wildlife habitat (paper birch and northern hardwoods regeneration)
303	6	210	27	50	S(b)	Improve stand quality and perpetuate oak/pine habitat
303	7	153	4	15	W	Salvage over-mature pine and protect hemlock in understory
303	8	153	11	20	S(b)	Improve stand quality and increase paper birch component
303	8a	111	9	80	S(b)/W	Wildlife habitat (northern hardwoods regeneration)
303	10	152	15(3)	30	S(a)	Improve stand quality and perpetuate oak/pine
303	10a	111	3	20	S(a)	Expand existing permanent wildlife opening
303	11	153	41	100	S(b)/W	Improve stand quality and perpetuate oak/pine and softwood habitat
303	12	153	45	70	S(a)/W	Improve stand quality and perpetuate oak/pine and softwood habitat
303	13	220	20	30	S(b)	Improve stand quality
303	14	111	8	80	W	Wildlife habitat (aspen regeneration)
303	32	153	19	20	S(a)	Improve stand quality and perpetuate oak/pine and softwood habitat
Total			229	645		

Mitigation Measures

In addition to the Forest Plan Standard and Guidelines (Forest Plan Section III and VII-B), the following site specific mitigation measures would be used in implementing the proposed action or alternatives:

- Retain disease resistant beech trees as well as trees with an abundance of bear claw marks;
- Reserve 2-3 early-successional species (paper birch and aspen) per acre in mature mixedwood and hardwood stands;
- Remove slash within 50 feet and lop and scatter slash an additional 50 feet along Forest Service roads, Route 2 and the Gilead snowmobile trail to minimize visual impacts;
- Harvest activities within the Special Use Permit Area of the Bog Brook Training Facility would be coordinated with Maine National Guard to minimize user conflicts;
- Limit skid trail crossings on the Gilead snowmobile trail to minimize disturbance;
- Where dual use of FR 741 between snowmobilers and log trucks can not be avoided, logging operations would not be allowed on holidays or weekends and safety hazard signs would be erected;
- For landings that are designated wildlife openings (303/28, 303/29 and 303/30), limit the area used for landings to minimize soil compaction from heavy machinery;
- Known heritage resources would be protected prior to harvesting. If unknown sites or artifacts are found, harvest activities would be halted until the Forest archeologist and district paraprofessionals can evaluate the findings and make recommendations on how to proceed;
- Harvesting with a feller buncher would be required in selected stands to protect softwood regeneration and;
- For vehicle safety along Route 2, a two tree length buffer would be maintained in proposed stands that will be hand-felled.

What Decision Will Be Made?

An environmental assessment (EA) will evaluate site-specific issues, consider alternatives and analyze effects of the proposed action and alternatives on resources. Based on this analysis, the deciding official would make the following decisions:

1. Which alternative would best move the Peaked Hill Project toward the DFC outlined in the Forest Plan, and best address the purpose and need identified for this project?
2. Which alternative best addresses relevant issues raised by the public and the interdisciplinary team?
3. Would the proposed project have any significant environmental impact to warrant further analysis in an environmental impact statement?
4. Does the project require a Forest Plan amendment?

How Are You Involved In The Decision?

We are soliciting your comments to help define significant issues associated with the project, to develop alternatives to the Proposed Action, and to refine the analysis of effects. The results of our analysis for the Peaked Hill Vegetation Management Project will be documented in an environmental assessment and a decision is expected in the fall of 2005.

Before a decision is made on this project, you will be given another opportunity to comment (30-Day Comment Period). If you provide substantive comments relevant to the project during the 30-Day Comment Period, you will be eligible to file an administrative appeal on the project's Decision Notice. You are not eligible to appeal the decision if you respond only to this scoping letter.

If you wish to receive further information on this analysis, please fill out the enclosed form.

How Can You Comment?

In order for your comments to be considered in the next stage of analysis, they should be received by March 31, 2005 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: Peaked Hill, c/o Katherine W. Stuart

By e-mail – 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:

- Your name, address and telephone number.
- The project you are commenting on: Peaked Hill Vegetation Management Project.
- Site specific comments about the Peaked Hill Vegetation Project, along with supporting information you believe will help me identify issues, develop alternatives, or predict environmental effects of our proposal.

Please direct questions to Pat Nasta, NEPA Coordinator, at the above address or call 603-466-2713 extension 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.

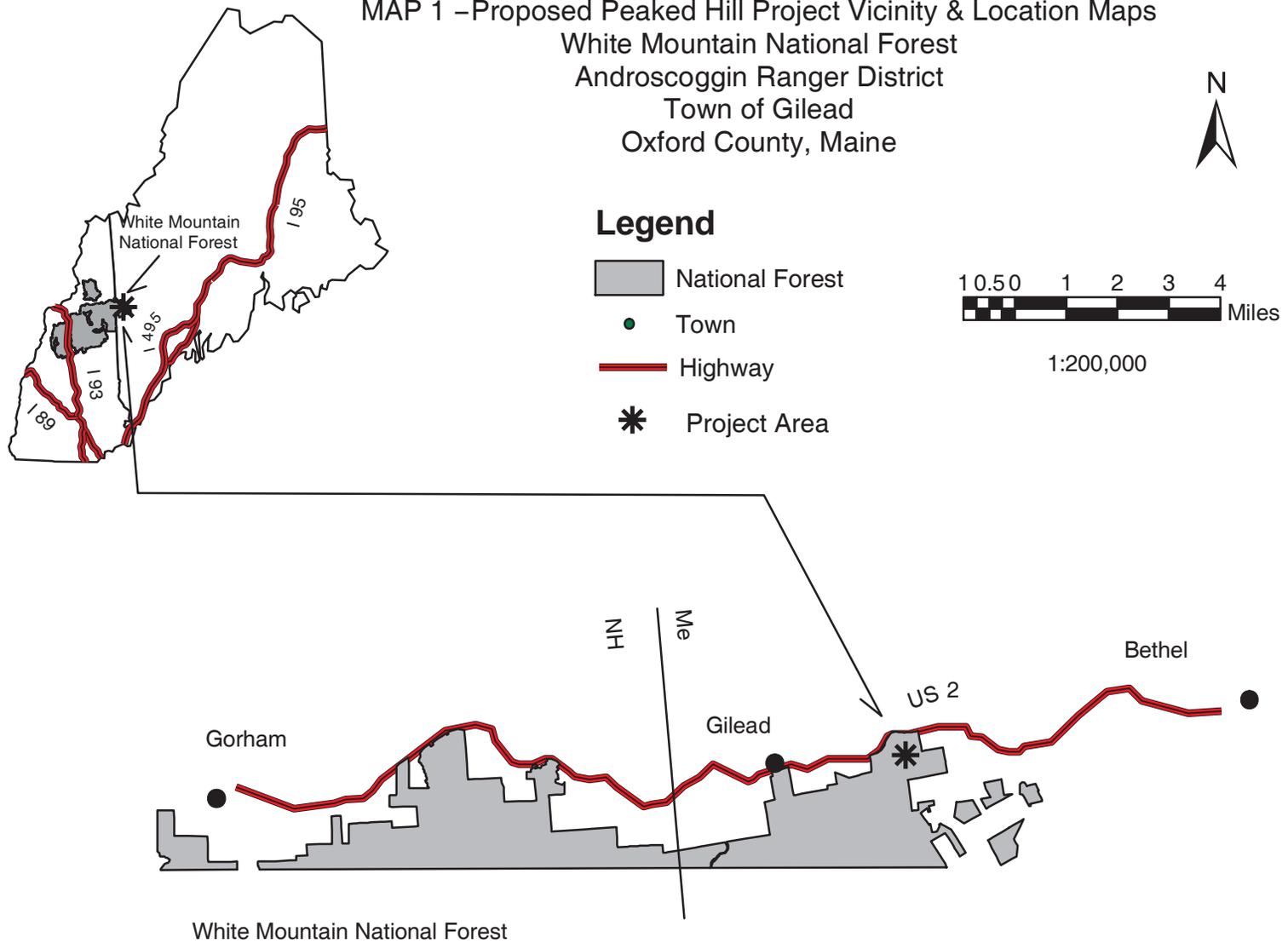
Thank you for your interest in the management of the White Mountain National Forest.

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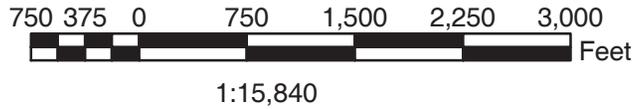
To file a complaint of discrimination, write the USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, Washington, DC, 20250-9410 or call 202/720-5964 (voice or TDD). The USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

This document is also available in large print. For a copy, please contact Gail Wigler at the Androscoggin Ranger District at (603) 466-2713 ext. 230 or TTY/FAX (603)466-2856 for a copy.

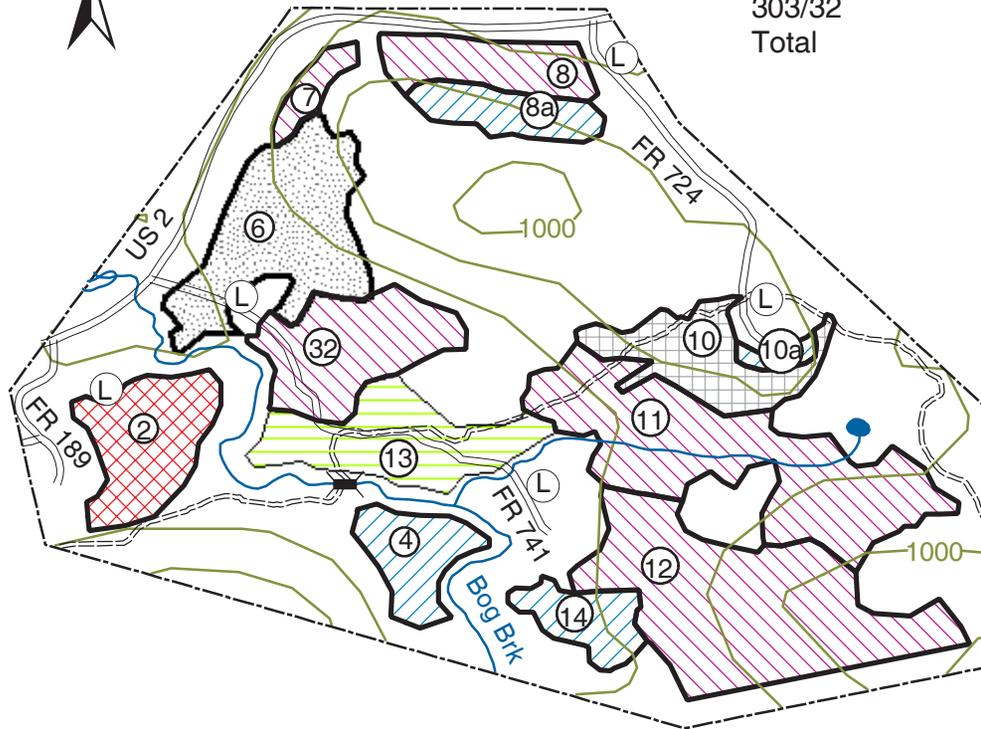
MAP 1 – Proposed Peaked Hill Project Vicinity & Location Maps
 White Mountain National Forest
 Androscoggin Ranger District
 Town of Gilead
 Oxford County, Maine



MAP 2 –Proposed Peaked Hill Project Area Map
 White Mountain National Forest
 Androscoggin Ranger District
 Town of Gilead
 Oxford County, Maine



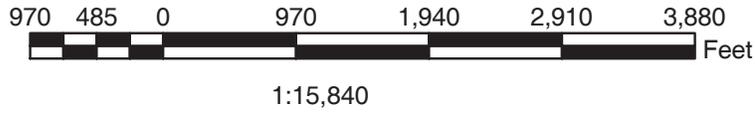
Compartment#/Stand#	Acres	Rx
303/2	17	Shelterwood Prep
303/4	10	Clearcut
303/6	27	Commercial Improvement
303/7	4	Individual Tree & Group Selection
303/8	11	Individual Tree & Group Selection
303/8a	9	Patch Clearcut
303/10	15(3)	Group Selection
303/10a	3	Patch Clearcut
303/11	41	Individual Tree & Group Selection
303/12	45	Individual Tree & Group Selection
303/13	20	Commercial Thin
303/14	8	Patch Clearcut
303/32	19	Individual Tree & Group Selection
Total	229(3)	



Legend

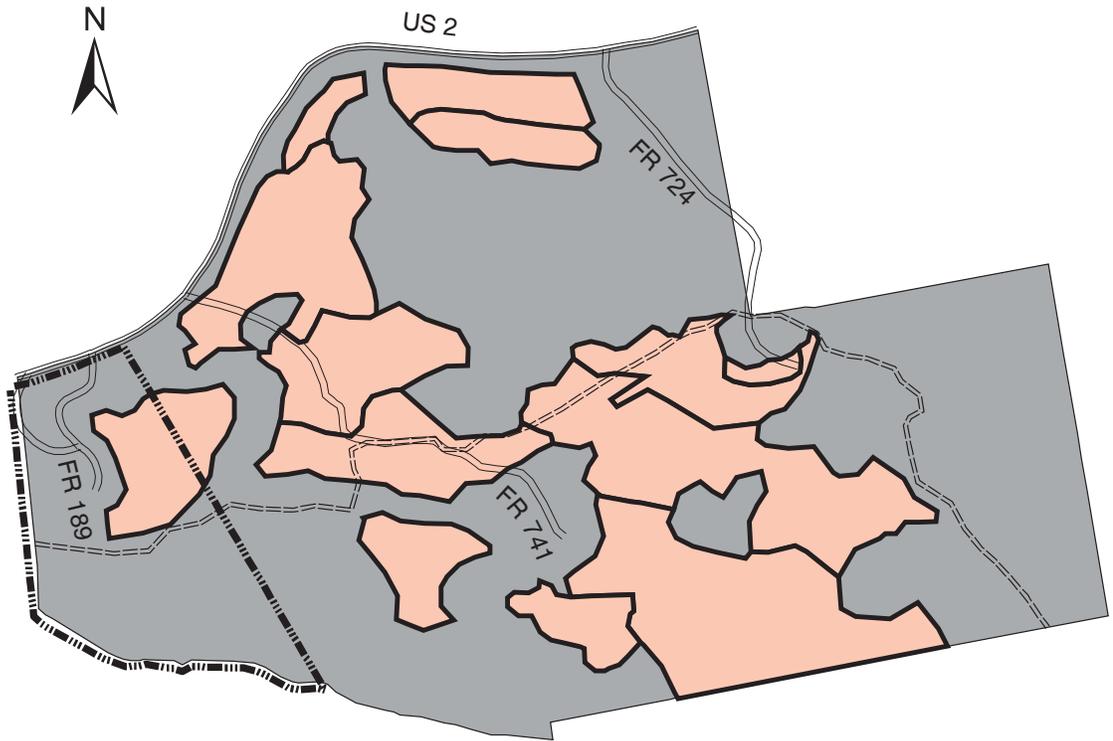
- Project Area Boundary
- ==== Transportation System
- ===== Snowmobile Trail
- (L) Landing
- ⌘ Bridge
- Streamcourse
- Waterbody
- Contour Interval-100'
- ▨ Clearcut or Patch Clearcut
- ▩ Shelterwood Prep
- ▧ Group Selection Cut
- ▨ Individual Tree & Group Selection
- ▩ Commercial Improvement
- ▨ Commercial Thinning

MAP 3 –Proposed Peaked Hill Analysis Area
White Mountain National Forest
Androscoggin Ranger District
Town of Gilead
Oxford County, Maine



Legend

-  Analysis Area
-  Bog Brook Permit Area
-  Transportation System
-  Proposed Stand Harvest
-  Snowmobile Trail



Androscoggin Ranger Station
Gorham, NH 03581
300 Glen Road

Phone: (603) 466-2713
TTY/FAX: (603) 466-2856

**Peaked Hill Vegetation Management Project
Androscoggin Ranger District – White Mountain National Forest**

**Let us know if you want to stay informed about this project.
Please return by March 31, 2005**

1. To stay informed as the Peaked Hill environmental analysis continues, check all that apply:

<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to receive the Peaked Hill environmental analysis for the 30-Day Comment period before a final decision is made.	-OR-	<input type="checkbox"/> Just send me a note when the Peaked Hill environmental analysis is available for the 30-Day Comment period.
<input type="checkbox"/> I wish to receive the Peaked Hill project decision documents when the analysis is complete.	-OR-	<input type="checkbox"/> Just send me a note summarizing your final decision.

I wish to receive Peaked Hill Project information in the following format (choose one):

View on the White Mountain National Forest website: www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

If you wish to receive an e-mail when the documents are posted, please write your email address clearly: _____

By post (print name and address): _____

OR

2. Please remove me from the Peaked Hill mailing list. I do not wish to receive further information about this project.

From: _____

STAMP

Androscoggin Ranger District
White Mountain National Forest
300 Glen Road
Gorham, NH 03581