



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White Mountain National Forest
Pemigewasset Ranger District

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File Code: 2600

Date: March 6, 2007

Dear Interested Party,

As District Ranger of the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest, I am issuing a Decision Memo on the Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project located in the towns of Piermont, Warren, Thornton, and Lincoln, in Grafton County, New Hampshire. I am sending you this copy because you have expressed interest in this project in the past.

The project includes mowing and prescribed burning on 6 sites totaling 91 acres that are being added to the Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening, Scenic Vista and Hazardous fuels management program. We will also remove non-native Scotch pine in the vicinity of Lake Tarleton by cutting or burning, and replace it with native vegetation. The mowing and burning will occur on a rotation schedule over the next 3 years to maintain these 6 sites in an open condition by regularly removing the brush and saplings that would eventually out compete the desired grasses, forbs, and apple trees.

The Decision Memo which describes my reasons and conclusions for implementing this project can be viewed on the National Forest website at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/projects/projects/. I would be glad to talk with you if you have any concerns or questions regarding my decision. You may phone me at (603) 536-1315 or email me at jserfass@fs.fed.us. If you have any other questions about the details of this project you may contact John Neely (jneely@fs.fed.us) at (603) 869-2626.

Thank you for your participation in this project, and your interest in the White Mountain National Forest. Your comments contributed to my understanding of public issues and concerns regarding this project, and enabled me to make a more informed decision.

Sincerely,

/s/ John J. Serfass

JOHN J. SERFASS
District Ranger





United States
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March 2007



Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project

**Pemigewasset Ranger District, White Mountain National Forest
Towns of Warren, Piermont, Thornton and Lincoln
Grafton County, New Hampshire**

Decision Memo



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**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**

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DECISION MEMO
PEMIGEWASSET WILDLIFE OPENINGS PROJECT

USDA Forest Service, White Mountain National Forest
Pemigewasset Ranger District
Towns of Warren, Piermont, Thornton, and Lincoln, Grafton County, New Hampshire

Introduction

In August Of 2006, the Pemigewasset Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest initiated an environmental analysis for a proposed project to add 6 sites totaling 91 acres to the ongoing Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening, Scenic Vista and Hazardous fuels programs. This project would include removal of a problem non-native plant species and replace it with native vegetation; and over the next 3 years, maintain these 6 sites in an open condition by regularly removing the brush and saplings that will eventually out compete the desired grasses, forbs, and apple trees.

We received 25 responses containing 48 separate comments during the 30-day public comment period. Of these, 21 comments were in favor of the project as described in the scoping and public comment report, 18 comments contained suggestions or general questions about the project and 9 comments were in opposition to the project (see Appendix A).

The majority of comments opposing the project (7 of 9) centered around two concerns: 1) that maintaining the open habitat near Lake Tarleton would increase the population of nuisance Canada geese in the area and, 2) burning the fields at Lake Tarleton and Breezy Point would reduce the blueberry picking opportunities in those areas. After reviewing these comments we agreed that further analysis of the potential effects of our activities was needed.

To address the Canada goose issue, our personnel researched current literature on Canada goose habitat and contacted state, federal, and private sector biologists to get their opinions on the effects of the proposed activities (particularly prescribed burning) on the Canada goose population. Two field trips to the Lake Tarleton site were conducted. On October 16, 2006 we met with a landowner to hear her concerns and establish the extent and location of the problem. On November 1, 2006 WMNF personnel met with USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) biologists and a New Hampshire State Park representative and received their input on the situation.

Using the information and advice gathered from all involved we determined that:

1. Prescribed burning or mowing the proposed project areas will initially produce a flush of new vegetation growth that could provide forage and nesting habitat for Canada geese.
2. This new growth will only be attractive to geese for a short while then it will grow up to a point where geese will no longer use it. The area where we plan to burn or mow is not along the shoreline of Lake Tarleton, so our activities may draw the geese away from Lake Tarleton and the State Park. Personnel from APHIS, New Hampshire Fish and Game, and University of New Hampshire believe we will not increase the population of Canada geese in this area (see project record for their comments).
3. If we do not maintain open conditions through mowing or burning, a gradual conversion to hardwoods and pine would occur, creating a forested habitat that geese would not use. However the loss of open habitat would also eliminate the existing populations of

grassland birds and be detrimental to blueberries. The Lake Tarleton State Park, directly adjacent to Lake Tarleton and the public beach, contains approximately 20 acres of grassland which they intend to maintain as open habitat. Private landowners will also continue to mow vegetation around their houses on the lake shore. Allowing National Forest land to convert to hardwoods and pine while this other land remained open would concentrate the goose population onto the remaining open land, further affecting the beach and Lake Tarleton area.

Our project includes monitoring requirements that are designed to determine the effects of the opening maintenance on the goose population. The 6 units included in this opening maintenance project will be part of an environmental analysis again in 2009 and based on our monitoring results, a decision will be made whether to continue maintenance or remove them from the wildlife opening system. Our monitoring will also be used to determine whether the project increases blueberry production and improves habitat for grassland birds as predicted.

To address the concern about eliminating blueberry picking opportunities, WMNF personnel surveyed and mapped the locations of blueberry habitat at Lake Tarleton and Breezy Point. We found blueberries occurring in several patches at each location. By carrying out a careful rotation of areas to be maintained, we can ensure that not all blueberries at a site are burned or mowed in a given year and that some quality blueberry areas will be available each year.

Background

The Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project Area encompasses 91 acres on six sites in the towns of Warren, Piermont, Thornton, and Lincoln, in Grafton County, New Hampshire. The sites lie in the Baker River or Pemigewasset River watersheds. All proposed activities are on land designated by the 2005 White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan as Management Area 2.1. All 2.1 land is available for various recreation, vegetation management and wildlife habitat activities. The project area consists of grassland, orchard and shrub habitat. Two sites contain undesirable non-native Scotch pine. The intent of the project is to incorporate these 6 sites into the Pemigewasset Ranger District's ongoing wildlife opening maintenance program, to maintain the sites as open habitat, to remove the Scotch pine in two of the sites, and at one site to use an interpretive sign to explain the use of prescribed fire to maintain wildlife habitat.

Wildlife openings are maintained as early successional habitat to provide food and cover for a wide variety of species. Old fields, log landings, and orchards are examples of wildlife openings. The White Mountain National Forest conducts regular maintenance on these sites to keep them in a grassy or shrubby condition to benefit the large variety of species that use such habitats. Mowing, prescribed burning, and hand brushing are examples of methods we use to maintain openings as early successional habitat. Openings are a relatively small component of the overall forest composition; following the goals and direction in the WMNF 2005 Forest Plan, we continually look for opportunities to add new areas to the wildlife opening inventory and demonstrate the important values of open habitat on the National Forest to the public.

Non-native invasive plant species have the ability to rapidly colonize and out compete native vegetation, and have been identified as one of the major threats to the health of the nation's forests and grasslands. The WMNF emphasizes prevention and eradication of invasive species in unique, limited, or particularly threatened ecological communities such as wetlands and

upland openings. Scotch pine is not considered an invasive species at this time, although it is non-native, rapidly seeds into open areas, and is considered undesirable on the Forest. Removal of the Scotch pine from this site is a proactive step to prevent further colonization by this species. After the removal of the undesirable species native vegetation will be planted where necessary to improve the function of the grassland ecosystem.

All planned actions are in accordance with the 2005 White Mountain National Forest Land and Resource Management Plan. Additional information about the background and purpose of this project can be found in the Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Project scoping letter, which was signed on August 16, 2006, made available on the Forest website, and mailed to interested parties.

Decision

I have decided to add these 6 sites (see Table 1), totaling 91 acres, to the Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Maintenance, Scenic Vista Maintenance, and Hazardous Fuel Reduction Program, and to maintain the 6 sites in an open condition by regularly removing brush and saplings, removing the non-native plant species at two sites, and to use an interpretive display to explain the benefits of prescribed burning for wildlife habitat. My decision includes the requirement to monitor our actions to see if we are achieving our goals and confirm whether our assessment of the effects of the project is accurate.

TABLE 1. LOCATIONS AND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES OF PROPOSED SITES

PROPOSED SITES	TOWN	HMU	ACRES	PROPOSED TREATMENT	OBJECTIVE
Breezy Point North	Warren	Upper Baker	16*	Prescribed Burn/Mow	Wildlife/Scenic Vista/Fuels reduction
Breezy Point West	Warren	Upper Baker	8*	Prescribed Burn/Mow	Wildlife/Fuels Reduction
Lake Tarleton North	Piermont	Tarleton	15*	Prescribed Burn/Mow NNIS removal/ Replant native species	Wildlife/Scenic Vista/Fuels Reduction/Ecosystem restoration
Lake Tarleton South	Piermont	Tarleton	50*	Prescribed Burn/Mow NNIS removal/ Replant native species	Wildlife/Scenic Vista/Fuels Reduction/Ecosystem restoration
Discovery Trail	Lincoln	Lincoln Woods	0.25	Prescribed Burn/Interpretative sign	Wildlife/Fuels Reduction/Visitor Education
Martin's Flats Orchard	Thornton	Upper Baker	1.75	Mechanical/Mow/ Prescribed Burn	Wildlife/Fuels Reduction

*** Only a portion of each large area will be mowed or burned each year, using a 2-4 year rotation.**

This Decision is categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment as it is within one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 section 31.2-6. There are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect.

A. Category of Exclusion

The appropriate category of exclusion for the proposed action is described in section 31.2-6 of the FSH 1909.15, which states, "Timber stand and/or wildlife habitat improvement activities which do not include the use of herbicides or do not require more than one mile of low standard road construction (Service level D, FSH 7709.56)." Examples include but are not limited to:

- a. Girdling trees to create snags.
- b. Thinning or brush control to improve growth or to reduce fire hazard including the opening of an existing road to a dense timber stand.
- c. Prescribed burning to control understory hardwoods in stands of southern pine.
- d. Prescribed burning to reduce natural fuel build-up and improve plant vigor.

B. Rationale for using Category 31.2 -6

The reasons for choosing this category are:

- This opening maintenance project is designed to improve wildlife habitat;
- The proposed action will not use herbicides and no road construction is proposed;
- Prescribed burning will control woody vegetation and reduce natural fuel build-up

No other categories of exclusion established by the Secretary of Agriculture or Chief of the Forest Service are as good a fit for this proposed action.

C. Extraordinary Circumstances

Use of categorical exclusions is limited to situations where there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action. The following are examples of potential extraordinary circumstances and their relationship to this project.

Threatened, Endangered, Proposed or Sensitive Species or Designated Critical Habitat

The Endangered Species Act (ESA) requires that federal activities do not jeopardize the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification of such species' designated critical habitat. In accordance with Section 7(c) of the ESA, a Biological Evaluation (BE) of potential effects to ESA and Regional Forester-Listed Sensitive Species (RFSS) was completed for the Wildlife Opening Project. The BE determined the proposed action would have "no effect" on federally listed species. The proposed action "may impact individuals, but would not likely contribute to a trend towards Federal listing or cause a loss of viability to the population or species of" Eastern small-footed myotis (*Myotis leibii*), Northern adder's tongue (*Ophioglossum pusillum*) and Bailey's sedge (*Carex baileyi*). The BE determined that the proposed action would cause "no impact" to any

other RFSS, including the common loon (*Gavia immer*) and Peregrine falcon (*Falco peregrinus*). For further information reference the 2006 Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Project BE in the Project File.

The activities planned for this project will not affect the continued existence of any species federally listed or proposed as threatened or endangered, or result in adverse modification to such species' designated critical habitat.

Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds: Executive Order 11988 requires Federal agencies to avoid adverse impacts associated with the occupancy and modification of floodplains. Floodplains are defined by this order as, "the lowland and relatively flat areas adjoining inland and coastal waters including flood prone areas of offshore islands, including at a minimum, that area subject to a one percent or greater chance of flooding in any given year." The project is not located in or near floodplains. This decision will not affect floodplains.

Executive order 11990 requires Federal agencies to avoid impacts associated with destruction or modifications of wetlands. Wetlands are defined by this order as, "...areas inundated by surface or ground water with a frequency sufficient to support and under normal circumstances does or would support a prevalence of vegetative or aquatic life that requires saturated or seasonally saturated soil conditions for growth and reproduction." The only activity from this project that could alter a wetland is placement of Scotch pine trees (that are cut and removed from the Lake Tarleton opening) into Lake Katherine. This activity is proposed to improve aquatic habitat in the lake. All necessary permits will be obtained prior to project implementation. Forest Service personnel will follow Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines (WMNF LRMP page 2-24) and any other mitigation measures required by the permitting agencies during project implementation to minimize impacts. Therefore this decision will not negatively affect wetlands or any municipal water supply.

Congressionally Designated Areas (Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas): The project area is not located in or near any congressionally designated areas, such as Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, National Recreation Areas, or any other congressionally designated areas. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect any Congressionally Designated Areas.

Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs): The project area is not within the boundaries of any inventoried roadless areas. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect any IRAs.

Research Natural Areas: There are no Research Natural Areas in the project area. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, will not affect any Research Natural Areas.

American Indians and Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites: The project area was surveyed (Summer/Fall 2006) for cultural and historic resources related to Native American use. No sites have been recorded by the NH Division of Historical Resources or the WMNF in the immediate project area. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity, should not affect any American Indian or Alaska Native Religious or Cultural Sites. If, in the course of any project activity, previously unknown sites or artifacts were to be located, activities would stop immediately in that location. The Forest archaeologist would be

called in to evaluate the finds and make recommendations on how to proceed. For further information reference the 2006 Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Project Cultural Resource report in the Project File.

Archaeological Sites or Historic Properties: The project area was surveyed (Summer/Fall 2006) for cultural and historic resources. One new site was identified in the Lake Tarleton project area. This decision, with impacts limited to the immediate area of activity and causing minimal ground disturbance, should not affect any Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties. If, in the course of any project activity, previously unknown sites or artifacts were to be located, activities would stop immediately in that location. The District heritage paraprofessional or Forest archaeologist would be called in to evaluate the finds and make recommendations on how to proceed. For further information reference the 2006 Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Project Cultural Resource report in the Project File.

Public Involvement

The Wildlife Opening project has been listed in the Quarterly Schedule of Proposed Actions for the White Mountain National Forest since August 16, 2006. This publication is available on the Web site for the White Mountain National Forest (www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain).

Scoping and 30-day Public Comment Period

On August 21, 2006, a preliminary public comment package titled "Proposed Decision Memo-Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project" was mailed to over 150 organizations, interested parties and abutters for a 30-day comment period which ended on September 20, 2006. An announcement of the Public Comment Period was published in the legal notices section of the *Manchester Union Leader* on August 21, 2006. The public comment document was also posted on our White Mountain National Forest web page.

The District Ranger (Responsible Official) held an informational public meeting in Piermont on September 8, 2006. Nine people were present. The Forest Service answered questions and gathered public input.

A total of 25 people responded to the Public Comment Package and provided 48 separate comments. A summary of these comments and the Forest Service's response to them is in Appendix A to this Decision Memo. As a result of public comments, members of the interdisciplinary team reevaluated the project and met with local landowners, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service, New Hampshire Department of Fish and Game, NH State Parks, and others to determine if the proposed action needed to change to address public concerns regarding blueberry crops and goose populations. The public comments and questions led us to do a more thorough job of analysis and documentation. Our basic proposal to maintain these 91 acres in an open condition did not change, however, public involvement resulted in some additional considerations for how the actions are carried out (mowing and burning portions of the larger site in order to reserve blueberry picking areas each year, and closely monitor Canada goose populations along the lake shores).

Public Notification of this Decision Memo

The Decision Memo for this project is available for review, and is being mailed to those individuals who requested it. All individuals and organizations who commented during the comment period will receive a paper copy of this Decision Memo, including the Forest Service Response To Public Comments (Appendix A). The Decision Memo will also be posted on the

White Mountain National Forest web page at www.fs.fed.us/r9/forests/white_mountain/, and a legal notice will be printed in the Manchester Union Leader .

Findings Required By And/Or Related To Other Laws and Regulations

My decision complies with all applicable laws and regulations, including:

National Forest Management Act: The National Forest Management Act (NFMA) requires specific determinations in all Decisions, including consistency with the Land and Resource Management Plan for the WMNF which was revised in 2005. The plan provides guidance for all natural resource management activities on the Forest and the Act requires that all projects and activities be consistent with the Forest Plan. My decision is consistent with Forest-wide standards and guidelines (Forest Plan pages 2-1 to 2-36) and with the standards and guidelines for Management Area 2.1 (Forest Plan pages 3-3 – 3-8). Accordingly, this decision complies with the Forest Plan and NFMA.

National Environmental Policy Act: This analysis has been conducted and the Decision Memo has been prepared in accordance with the procedural requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act.

Executive Order 12898 – Environmental Justice:

This order requires consideration of whether projects would cause a disproportionate impact on minority or low income populations. The project area does not qualify as an Environmental Justice community and accordingly this decision and project will not affect minority or low-income populations.

Clean Water Act: This Act was established to restore and maintain the quality of waters. This project was designed in accordance with the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and Best Management Practices for protection of soil and water resources. My decision complies with this Act.

Implementation Date

If no appeal is received, implementation of this decision may occur on, but not before, five business days from the close of the appeal filing period. If an appeal is received, implementation may not occur for 15 days following the date of appeal disposition. (36 CFR 215.9)

Administrative Review/Appeal Opportunity

This decision is subject to appeal in accordance with 36 CFR 215.11. Only those individuals who provided comments during the 30-day comment period in August – September, 2006, are eligible to appeal the decision. A Notice of Appeal must be in writing and clearly state it is a Notice of Appeal being filed pursuant to 36 CFR 215. Appeals must be filed within 45 days of the publication of the legal notice of this decision in the Manchester Union Leader, Manchester, New Hampshire. The day after the publication of the legal notice in the Manchester Union Leader is the first day of the appeal-filing period. Send the Notice of Appeal to:

Appeal Deciding Officer
USDA Forest Service, Eastern Region
Attn: Appeals & Litigation
626 East Wisconsin Avenue
Milwaukee, WI 53202

The office hours for those submitting hand-delivered appeals are 7:30am to 4:00pm, central time, Monday through Friday, excluding holidays. The Notice of Appeal may be faxed to the Appeals Deciding Officer, Attn: Appeals & Litigation, USDA Forest Service at 414-944-3963. It may also be electronically mailed to appeals-eastern-regional-office@fs.fed.us. Electronic appeals must be submitted in plain text (.txt), rich text (.rtf), or Word (.doc) format, and should contain "Notice of Appeal: Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project" on the subject line.

It is the responsibility of appellants to ensure their appeal is received in a timely manner. The 45-day appeal filing period is determined using calendar days, including Saturdays, Sundays, and federal holidays. When the time period expires on a Saturday, Sunday, or federal holiday, the time is extended to the end of the next federal working day. The publication date of the legal notice of the decision in the newspaper of record is the exclusive means for calculating the time to file an appeal. **The day after the publication of the legal notice of the decision is the first day of the appeal-filing period.** Appellants should not rely on dates or timeframe information provided by any other source. If you do not have access to the Union Leader, please call the Pemigewasset Ranger Station at 603-536-1315 (TTY 603-536-3281) for the published date. There will be no time extensions for appeals.

Appeals must meet the content requirements of 36 CFR 215.14. At a minimum, an appeal must include the following:

1. Appellant's name and address, with a telephone number, if available;
2. Signature or other verification of authorship upon request;
3. When multiple names are listed on an appeal, identification of the lead appellant and verification of the identity of the lead appellant upon request;
4. The name of the project or activity for which the decision was made, the name and title of the Responsible Official, and the date of the decision;
5. How the appellant believes the decision specifically violates law, regulation, or policy;
6. Any specific change(s) in the decision that the appellant seeks and rationale for those changes.

Signature and Date

I have concluded that this decision may be categorically excluded from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, as it is one of the categories identified by the Chief of the Forest Service in Forest Service Handbook (FSH) 1909.15 section 31.2-6 and there are no extraordinary circumstances related to the decision that may result in a significant individual or cumulative environmental effect. My conclusion is based on information presented in this document and the entirety of the Planning Record.

/s/John J. Serfass

DATE: March 2, 2007

JOHN J. SERFASS
District Ranger

APPENDIX A

Summary of Comments To Proposed Pemigewasset Wildlife Openings Project

Comment #	Date	Name	Comment	Response
1-1	unknown	Dr. Julian Grossman	In agreement with project	Comment is noted and appreciated
2-1	8/18/06	Bruce Birchard	Makes sense to me	Comment is noted and appreciated
3-1	8/21/06	Glenn English	Project seems reasonable	Comment is noted and appreciated
4-1	8/22/06	Peter Oliver	I fully agree with this project	Comment is noted and appreciated
5-1	8/24/06	Herbert Helthuan	I think this proposal is fine in all respects. I find nothing to disagree with or that gives me pause. I hope it will be implemented	Comment is noted and appreciated
6-1	8/26/06	B. Sachau	<p>i do not think one cent of tax dollars should be spent to put up an educational display on the burning down our national forests - prescribed burning. the air pollution of this burning in fact brings on lung cancer, heart attacks, strokes, asthma, allergies and pneumonia. why are you attempting to kill the american public with this assault on their health by "prescribed burning". you are polluting the air, which is already bad in this area. just by itself, its enough to kill us all, and you want to add to that?</p> <p>no way, i protest. The fine particulate matter emitted in this burning is what settles into lungs and our bodies. researcher after researcher has proven the harm that this release into air of harmful particulates can do to our bodies</p>	<p>It is generally recognized that fire, either through natural or human caused means has played a role in the development of all land based ecosystems in the United States. The past 100 years of aggressive fire suppression has unbalanced the natural cycle of fire, resulting in large accumulations of burnable material that, when finally ignited, can create intense volatile wildfires that do more damage to land, air quality and property than would a lower intensity prescribed fire. Additionally, species of fire adapted plant and animal that depend on periodic fire are declining due to the exclusion of fire in their habitats. The WMNF hopes to use an educational display to explain the role of fire in maintaining ecosystems and reducing hazardous fuels.</p> <p>The proposed project will release minimal amounts of harmful particulate matter (PM 2.5) into the atmosphere. Emission calculations for PM 2.5 in our proposed burns average 26-37 Lbs/Acre, well within the EPA's pollutant standard index category of Good PM 2.5 concentration (0-40 ug/m3). The prescribed burns will be timed to take advantage of well cured fuels and favorable weather to minimize and disperse smoke. The public will be notified in advance of our burning these areas.</p>
6-2	8/26/06	B. Sachau	we should not be making "wildlife openings". these	The proposed project will not create any new wildlife openings. All the

			"openings" do in fact encourage deer overpopulation since that is exactly the habitat they like. i do not think you should be encouraging the growth of one species over another. we should leave it natural and without your harmful tinkering.	sites considered in the proposed project are currently open habitat. The proposed project will maintain these sites as openings, an uncommon habitat on the WMNF. The white tail deer population on the WMNF is on average 6-7 individuals per square mile, the lowest in NH. Since we do not propose to change the habitat in the project area, only maintain it, the project would not affect the number of deer in the area. While these sites will provide habitat for deer, many other species of plant and animal will also benefit.
6-3	8/26/06	B. Sachau	far too often the "reduce hazardous fuels" is a thinly veiled attempt to let local lumber barons make a killing on land that belongs to every american taxpayer. for that reason, we dont need this meretricious scheme. the extensive amount of burning you plan is indeed very very harmful.	The proposed project will not be part of a timber sale. Only non-native Scotch pine and saplings will be removed to maintain the open habitat in the sites. The hazardous fuels to be reduced in the proposed project are cured grasses and shrubs that could support a wildfire in dry conditions.
6-4	8/26/06	B. Sachau	one also wonders why you do not establish an 800 number so that poor people may call you with comments against this plan. the 603 exchange and its attendant costs may not be easy for all to afford.	The WMNF values input from the public on proposed projects and has tried to make the process easy and inexpensive. We accept emails, telephone calls, faxes, spoken comments, and letters. At this time, the number of comments we receive is not enough to justify the costs of installing a 1-800 line. We may consider this option in the future.
7-1	8/27/06	Emily Wolf	(This letter) is a vote in favor of the project, which would improve and maintain designated areas for the benefit of native plant and animal species, particularly those whose needs are not met by the generally prevailing forest environment. I am familiar with the areas under consideration around Warren and Piermont, places of considerable beauty which could only be enhanced by the creation of some variety in the environment.	Comment is noted and appreciated
7-2	8/27/06	Emily Wolf	I approve of the benign methods chosen to achieve this aim, particularly the non-use of herbicides and the minimal extent of road building. Also commendable is the aim to	Comment is noted and appreciated. Please note that no road building is proposed as part of this project.

			eliminate invasive plant species.	
8-1	8/29/06	Alice Schori	I didn't realize that Breezy Point wasn't already a WLO. It's a beautiful spot, and I strongly approve of keeping it open. Getting rid of Scotch pine at Lake Tarleton- 2 thumbs up and 3 cheers!!!. Rather than being adversely affected by this project, Carex cumulata, if present, would probably benefit, especially if you do any burning.	Comment is noted and appreciated
9-1	8/29/06	Robert Richardson	All of these project objectives are incremental elements of the new 2005 Forest Plan. The Forest Service, various organizations and the public spent nearly ten years developing this plan. The time to debate and negotiate the Plan's content and objectives has past. Now it is time to move ahead aggressively and implement these objectives. In this specific project the Forest Service has selected six ideal sites for conducting the objectives of the project which in turn will move the Forest towards the desired condition as stated in the Plan and will help to acquaint the visiting public with forest management techniques. I am in full support of this project and encourage you to launch additional projects like this one to continue to move the condition of the Forest towards the Plan's intent.	Comment is noted and appreciated
10-1	8/30/06	Lewis Parker	I agree with the project completely	Comment is noted and appreciated
10-2	8/30/06	Lewis Parker	In the orchard that is being mowed and burned over, are the orchard trees being left or is there some reason not to leave them?	The orchard trees in the wildlife openings will be left in place. One of the reasons for doing this maintenance is to keep other vegetation from crowding out the orchard trees. We want the orchard trees to be healthy and produce fruit for the wildlife.
10-3	8/30/06	Lewis Parker	There was mention of wildlife planting that will be done. What is being planted?	A variety of species native to the specific area would be planted after the removal of Scotch pine along the shores of Lake Katherine. Such species may include, willow, silky dogwood and high bush blueberry.
11-1	9/12/06	Mike DiPietro	Maintaining forest openings is important for wildlife and people. The abandoned golf courses in Piermont and Warren represent excellent opportunities for	Comment is noted and appreciated

			grasslands in the WMNF. These places are easily accessible, for men and equipment from a maintenance point of view, and the general public for recreational use. The removal of NNIS would be a great bonus. Other than the ski areas and the power lines, there are few large openings in the forest. Huge efforts were made to clear these openings, it would be a shame to have the golf courses go back to forest. If maintained, these openings will continue to provide wildlife habitat, and public recreation at a reasonable cost.	
11-2	9/12/06	Mike DiPietro	I am also in favor of maintaining the smaller openings in the WMNF. Old orchards, farms and roadways would be a natural choice. Many of these places are still savable and very accessible. I would like to see the roadways at Tarleton Shores opened and maintained so that the forest does not take them over.	Comment is noted and appreciated. The roadways at Tarleton Shores are not WMNF property.
11-3	9/12/06	Mike DiPietro	Prescribed fire has a long history of successful vegetation control. It is very cost effective and environmentally friendly. Fire removes unwanted plants, seeds, and fuels without the use of herbicides or mechanical means, and promotes grass growth without the use of chemical fertilizers. As a volunteer fire fighter I have been involved with many prescribed burns. The nearby ponds and streams provide a ready water supply for control and safety. I'm sure that the Forest service will utilize best practices and local man power.	Comment is noted and appreciated
11-4	9/12/06	Mike DiPietro	The Ore Hill Mine site, once it is cleaned up, may also be a Wildlife Opening candidate in the area	Currently the Ore Hill mine site is undergoing restoration in a separate project. Whether it will be maintained as an opening will be evaluated after restoration work is completed.
11-5	9/12/06	Mike DiPietro	It looks like you have a good plan, I am glad you are taking these initiatives in our area	Comment is noted and appreciated
12-1	9/08/06	Jill Muntz	will planting blueberries or other native vegetation along the lakeshore limit Canada goose access to the openings and help reduce goose numbers in the area?	Planting vegetation along a shoreline will limit Canada goose access to the openings, especially during their flightless phase and while raising goslings.
13-1	9/08/06	Vic Dazena	Prescribed fire is great for wildlife	Comment is noted and appreciated

			and vegetation and (Vic) supports the proposal	
14-1	9/08/06	Charley Muntz	Would the FS burn the whole hatched area on the project maps?	Portions of the hatched area on the Lake Tarleton map will be burned, mowed or mechanically treated on a 3-5 year rotational basis. The entire unit will not be treated in the same year. The smaller units in Linclon, Warren, and Thornton could be mowed, burned or mechanically treated in their entirety in the same year, but not every year.
14-2	9/08/06	Charley Muntz	What survives or responds to fire?	Fire stimulates new growth in grasses and shrubs by removing dead plant material and releasing nutrients into the soil.
14-3	9/08/06	Charley Muntz	How quickly do blueberries recover from fire?	After a fire, blueberries regrow from underground rhizomes or from sprouting from unconsumed buds. While response depends on the pre fire condition of the plants, the season of the burn, fire behavior, and subsequent weather conditions, blueberries generally respond very favorably after a burn. Fruit may not be produced for the first year or season after the burn, but has been shown to regain production and rapidly increase in cover and biomass during the first 2-3 years after the fire. ¹
14-4	9/08/06	Charley Muntz	Does the WMNF do many similar burns?	The WMNF burns approximately 100 acres of habitat every year.
14-5	9/08/06	Charley Muntz	How much would the proposed action cost and what else would that money be spent on?	The WMNF Fish and Wildlife and Fire programs have a set amount of acres we are required to maintain every year. There is an established budget we use specifically for these projects, so the money is not taken from other projects. Prescribed burns generally cost less than \$200.00 an acre. Mowing contracts generally cost \$200.00 to \$250.00 an acre.
15-1	9/08/06	Betsy Uline	Controlled fire, as proposed, is preferred over the risk of an uncontrolled wildfire.	Comment is noted and appreciated
15-2	9/08/06	Betsy Uline	When will this project occur?	Most of our WLO maintenance work occurs during the Spring and Fall months, reducing the effects on nesting birds and other wildlife that may be in the area.
16-1	9/08/06	Bill Morris	Would any trees other than Scotch pine be felled?	Scotch pine are the only large (9"+ diameter) trees that will be felled during this project. However the

				goal is to maintain the areas in an open condition and as a result small trees and saplings of other species may also be cut.
16-2	9/08/06	Bill Morris	Would all the Scotch pine along the shore be felled into the water?	The goal is to remove the non-native species of scotch pine from the area so we do plan to cut all of them. However it may be undertaken over the course of a few years to let the native species grow up in their place over time. The WMNF is in the process of obtaining the necessary permits for this aspect of the project from the New Hampshire Department of Environmental Services (NHDES). The WMNF will need to review NHDES recommendations before deciding how much of the Scotch pine along the shore will be placed into Lake Katherine.
16-3	9/08/06	Bill Morris	Will the FS provide improved parking and access to Lake Katherine?	The WMNF recognizes a need for improved parking and access to Lake Katherine. It is beyond the scope of the proposed WLO project to address this issue. A separate project will be needed to address this issue.
16-4	9/08/06	Bill Morris	Blueberry pickers would like to have at least some blueberries every year. They don't want years without any blueberries in the Lake Tarleton openings due to recovery from fire. Could we arrange it so some patches are producing at any given time?	Due to the rotating schedule of burn sites at the Lake Katherine opening, all blueberry patches will not be burned at the same time. Field assessments were completed to ensure that some blueberry patches were present in each of the 3 treatment units south of the road. During the short period of non-production directly following each burn, pickers can go to other areas where production will be unchanged or have recovered from a previous burn. Blueberry production is expected to increase within a year of burning the units. ¹
17-1	9/08/06	George Tompkins	Could the project also include the state land adjacent to the FS land proposed for opening maintenance?	The WMNF currently has no agreements with the NH State Parks and Recreation Department to include their land in this project. Maintaining the State land is their responsibility. If the State is interested in burning or mowing their land at the same time as we implement this project, we would be glad to work with them to achieve efficiency wherever possible.
18-1	9/08/06	Nancy Uline	Burned or mowed is better and safer than letting it grow and get shrubbier. It will result in good	Comment is noted and appreciated

			views and less wildfire risk.	
19-1	9/08/06	Unidentified speaker	FS needs to prevent the fire from reaching the lakeshore	Our burn plans provide for the protection of water sources including lake shores. Under typical burning conditions, the prescription would provide an adequate buffer to the lake.
19-2	9/08/06	Unidentified speaker	Can we estimate what a wildfire might cost compared to the cost of the prescribed burn?	Economically, it would be hard to make this comparison because of the unknown factors involved in fighting a wildfire. If the fire was detected and controlled to roughly the same size as the proposed prescribed fire, the costs would be comparable due to the similar number of person hours (the prescribed fire would have a bit more cost in preparation and planning, but the wildfire would probably require more efforts in securing the area). Because we have to be prepared for wildfire regardless, equipment, training and other preparedness costs would be covered in either situation. However, since wildfires are not set in a controlled circumstance as a prescribed fire would be, the components to estimate cost, such as time and size of the fire would not be easily predicted. The value of the private land, timber, and structures surrounding or consumed by the wildfire area as well as safety to the public and fire fighters would need to be considered to fully assess the cost of a wildfire in this area.
20-1	9/11/06	Morris/Conroy	If there must be a burn (at the Lake Tarleton South unit) we would argue for a partial burn of the 50 acres rather than burning or mowing the entire tract.	The entire tract will not be burned, mowed, or mechanically treated at the same time.
20-2	9/11/06	Morris/Conroy	We would suggest the possibility of a limited burn of one third of the acreage rotating through the entire 50 acres every 6-9 years depending on the frequency of maintenance burns. If you chose to pursue this option we would suggest you start at the most northwesterly end of the acreage and move southeasterly by thirds. That would recharge the blueberry fields most in current need of resuscitation.	Please see the previous response to comment 16-4.
20-3	9/11/06	Morris/Conroy	We are sympathetic to the proposal to eliminate encroaching Scotch pine so as to preserve open	The larger Scotch pine will be removed using a chainsaw or girdling. The seedling Scotch pine

			views but this could be done through cutting or some other method	will be removed using prescribed fire.
21-1	9/12/06	Linda Luck	Goes to the Breezy Point opening every year to pick blueberries. Is concerned that the planned activities will eliminate the berry crop. Also, will the same berries grow back? (telephone)	After a fire, blueberries regrow from underground rhizomes or from sprouting from unconsumed buds. While response depends on the pre fire condition of the plants, the season of the burn, fire behavior, and subsequent weather conditions, blueberries generally respond very favorably after a burn. The blueberry plants (the same as the ones that existed before the burn) have been shown to regain production and rapidly increase in cover and biomass during the first 2-3 years after a fire. ¹
22-1	9/16/06	Jill Muntz	Regarding your proposal to initiate controlled burning on 65 acres of land on the shores of Lakes Tarleton and Katherine...I urge you to give grave consideration to the ongoing, serious threat of the ever-expanding population of Canada geese that inhabit that same area. The first two pair of Canada geese arrived on Lake Tarleton in 2001. The following year, their number doubled, and has continued to double each year since. True to Canada goose behavior, they must return to their natal nesting site to breed. By 2005, forty Canada geese were thriving on our shore. Realizing we were confronted with a serious situation, we worked to develop strategies to try to control the population growth. Previous efforts such as placing pinwheels along the shore, blasting air horns and banging on pots and pans had had no real effect. The public beach had to be closed several times during the summer of 2005 and once again in 2006 due to e-coli levels. In consultation with Sara Sumner, DES and Kevin Donovan, DRED we established a several pronged plan for spring 2006. Signs stating "Do Not Feed the Geese" were erected on the public beach and we were assured that the grasses nearby would be left unmowed.	The WMNF was unaware of the issue of nuisance Canada geese in the Lake Tarleton State Park/Lake Tarleton Association area prior to initiating this project. After receiving verbal and written comments regarding Canada geese we began an analysis of the effects our proposed activities could have on the goose population and the landowner's quality of life. The WMNF consulted with landowners, NH Fish and Game, APHIS, NH State Parks, as well as Natural Resource managers from private and state agencies. From our analysis we have determined that: 1. Prescribed burning or mowing the proposed project areas will initially produce a flush of new vegetation growth that could provide forage and nesting habitat for Canada geese ² . 2. This new growth will only be attractive to geese for a short while then it will grow up to a point where geese will no longer use it ³ . The area where we plan to burn or mow is not along Lake Tarleton, and our activities may draw the geese away from Lake Tarleton and the State Park. Personnel from APHIS, NH Fish and Game, and UNH believe we will not increase the population of Canada geese in this area (see project record). 3. Not burning or mowing the area will result in a gradual succession

			<p>We were also given permission to apply spray. We sprayed a few acres of land most used by the geese with "Flight Control Plus" and placed two swan decoys on the same area. The "swans" were moved every few days until they were placed in the water, as soon as the ice opened enough for them to float at anchor. The expense for all this was born by lake residents; Dave Staples, Joyce and George Tompkins, Jill and Charley Muntz and the Lake Tarleton Association. Thanks to these efforts, the 2006 population was reduced a bit. Instead of the 80 we might well have had, the number was closer [to] 30. Canada Geese are extremely adaptable, as we all know, so new and sturdier measures must be continually employed. We're highly motivated to continue the struggle to keep the Canada goose population within bounds, in order to protect the health, beauty and tranquility of these very special lakes. Controlled burning, as you have proposed, would run counter to all our efforts to stem the overpopulation of the geese. The close cropped and nutritious new grass would provide a perfect habitat for them. They would quickly take over-- doubling their number each year-- and severely pollute the land and water. Each goose deposits three lbs. of fecal matter every day! On behalf of all of us who live on and/or love Lake Tarleton, I ask that you consider my remarks as you evaluate your proposal to burn over the land. I request that you table the burning plans until more careful study can be done. The study should acknowledge the presence of geese, and cite the effects of the wildlife opening on this goose population. I know your goal is to provide the best possible environment for all to enjoy.</p>	<p>of hardwoods and pine, creating a forested habitat that geese will not use. The loss of open habitat will also remove the existing populations of grassland birds and reduce the blueberries. The Lake Tarleton State Park, directly adjacent to Lake Tarleton and the public beach contains approximately 20 acres of grassland which they intend to maintain as open habitat. The result of allowing the Forest Service land to succeed to hardwoods and pine while the State land remained open would concentrate the goose population onto the State land, further affecting the beach and Lake Tarleton area.</p> <p>4. If the proposed project is initiated, the WMNF will begin a monitoring program to determine our effects on the goose population. The units will undergo the NEPA process again in 2009 and a decision will be made whether to continue maintenance or remove them from the WLO system. Because there is no proof that our activities will affect the goose population negatively or positively, we feel it is better to begin implementation of the project and monitor the effects of our actions on the goose population rather than lose the open habitat at Lake Tarleton.</p>
23-1	9/19/06	Betsy and Nancy Uline	We support this project including prescribed burning	Comment noted and appreciated
24-1	9/19/06	Peter and Robin Ascher	We have recently gone to contract on the property adjoining the public beach on Lake Tarleton.	Please see the previous response to comment 22-1.

			<p>We love Lake Tarleton and plan to keep this property in the family for generations to come. Regarding your proposal to initiate controlled burning on 65 acres of land on the shores of Lakes Tarleton and Katherine as part of the Pemigewasset Wildlife Opening Project, we urge you to give grave consideration to the ongoing, serious threat of the ever-expanding population of Canada Geese that inhabit that same area. We are aware of the measures our prospective neighbors have taken over the past few years to deal with the Canada goose problem. We, too, are motivated to continue the struggle to keep the Canada goose population within bounds, in order to protect the health, beauty, and tranquility of the lake</p>	
25-1	9-22	Karen Bordeau	<p>The grasslands proposed for maintenance in Piermont do not appear to be in agricultural use and would benefit from a rotational mowing schedule to prevent growth of woody vegetation. Timing of mowing is crucial to survival of nesting grassland birds. Early mowing in June and frequent mowing destroy nest and young. Therefore, mowing after Aug. 1 is recommended. It is not necessary to mow every year for grassland birds. Limit mowing to every two to three years. Use conservative mowing practices which include raising mowing blades to six inches or more to reduce injuries to roosting birds or young.</p>	<p>.No mowing or prescribed burning will take place during the nesting period (June-August) for grassland and open habitat bird species. Mowing or prescribed burning will be limited to a 3-5 year rotation. Conservative mowing practices will be timed to avoid destroying nests and young as suggested.</p>
25-2	9/22/06	Karen Bordeau	<p>Prescribed burning can benefit grassland birds within one or two years following the burn. Burning every two to six years provides the best habitat. If possible provide adjacent unburned grassland habitat for nesting birds during the burn year</p>	<p>Please see the previous response to comment 16-4. Wherever possible, there will be unburned areas in any given year that will provide habitat for nesting birds. The proposal is to burn or mow portions of the project area every 3-5 years.</p>
25-3	9/22/06	Karen Bordeau	<p>The shrub/sapling habitat proposed for mechanical maintenance is currently providing a much needed habitat for wildlife. This early successional habitat, with its proximity to a wetland, is one the WMNF is fortunate to have in its management lands. Since old-field and shrubland</p>	<p>Comment noted and appreciated</p>

			<p>habitats are relatively short lived, periodic management must be conducted to maintain this habitat condition. It is important to maintain a mix of the shrub/sapling habitat while selecting and scheduling mechanical maintenance. Currently the early successional habitat is providing nesting sites, escape cover and food for wildlife.</p>	
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¹ <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/vacmyt/all.html> and <http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/plants/shrub/vacang/all.html>

² D. Govatski, M. Ciranka personal communication

³ M. Marsden, APHIS Specialist Report

APPENDIX B
Project Requirements Timeline

Spring or fall 2007 prescribed burn portions of Lake Tarleton and Breezy Point sites.

Spring/summer 2007-2008 obtain wetlands permit from State of New Hampshire, begin removal of priority Scotch pine at Lake Tarleton.

Spring/summer 2007 monitor effects of prescribed burns on Canada goose/grassland bird/blueberry populations at Lake Tarleton.

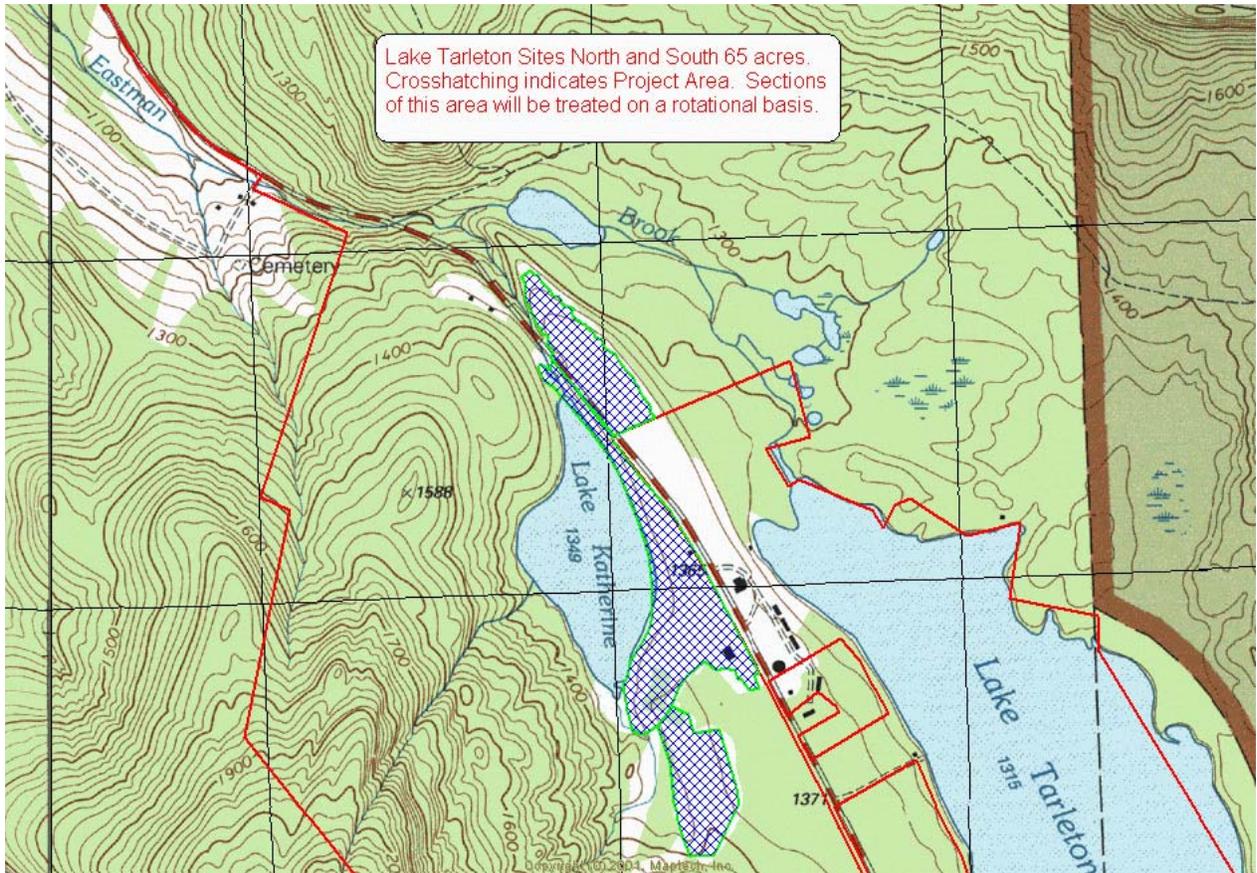
Summer 2007 design and implement interpretive sign for Discovery Trail site.

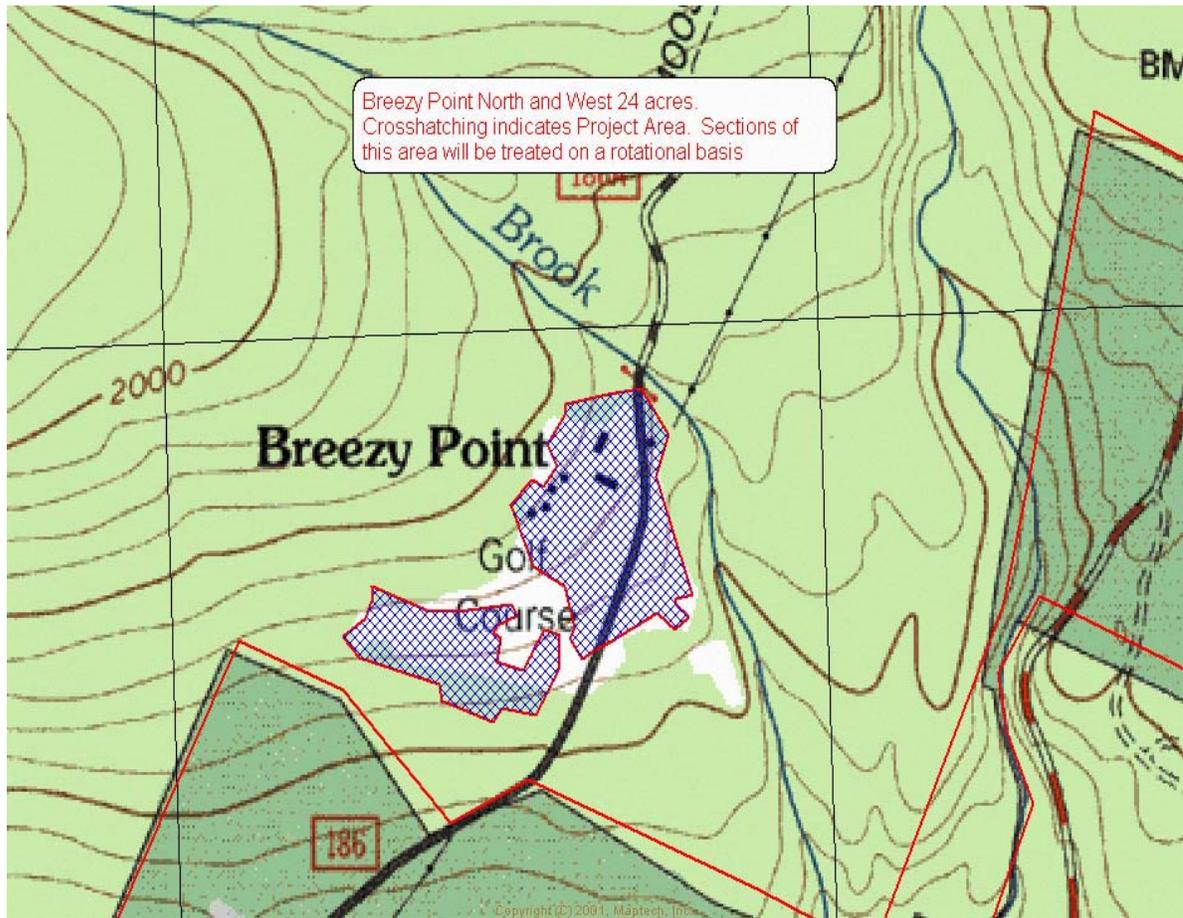
Fall 2007 treat Martin Flats orchard.

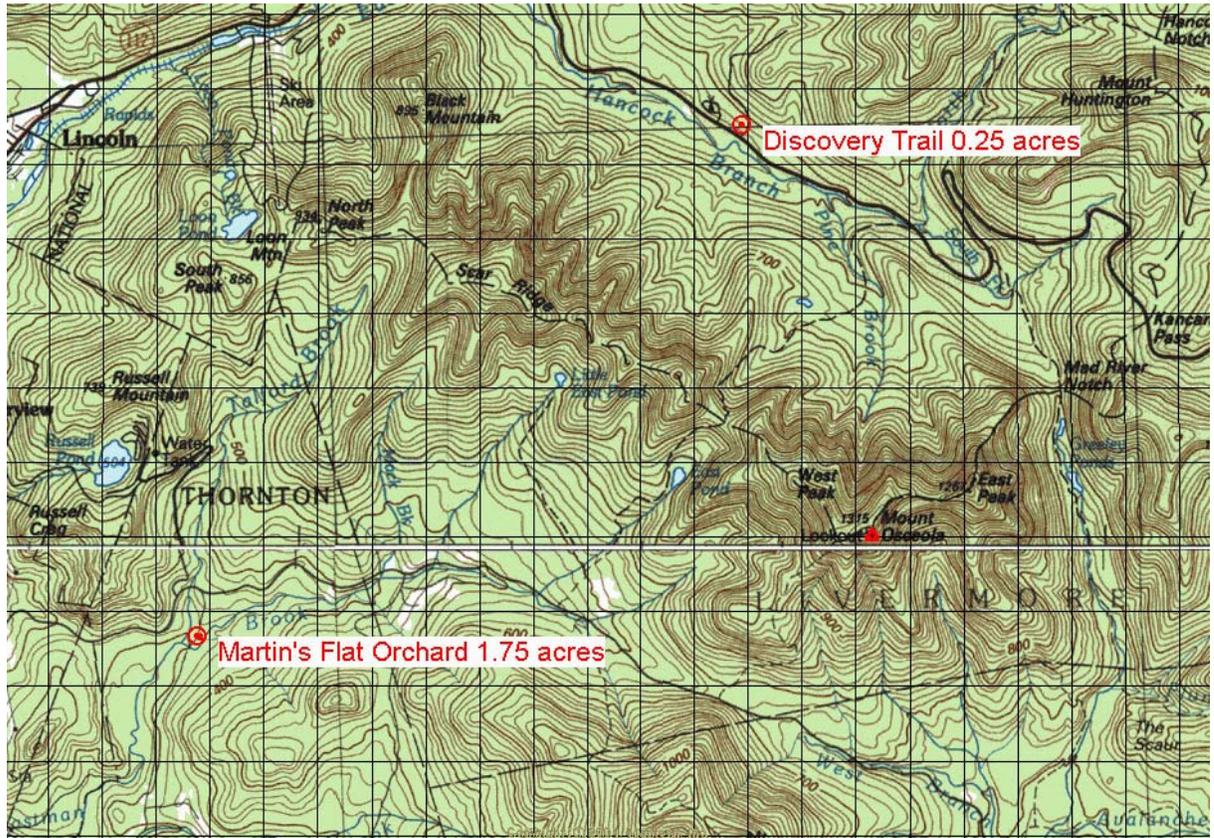
Spring or fall 2008 prescribed burn Discovery Trail site and portions of Lake Tarleton. Begin mechanical treatment of portions of Lake Tarleton.

Fall 2008 begin environmental analysis on WLO's, scenic vistas and hazardous fuel reduction units for next 5 years.

APPENDIX C Project Area Maps







This document is available in large print.

Contact the Pemigewasset Ranger District Office

1-603-536-1315

TTY 1-603-536-3281

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