



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Forest
Service

White Mountain National Forest
Saco Ranger District

33 Kancamagus Highway
Conway, NH 03818
Comm: (603) 447-5448
TTY: (603) 447-3121

File Code: 1950

Date: December 17, 2007

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to invite you to comment on the Province Pond Dam Restoration and Site Improvement Project. This project is being proposed to restore the dam at Province Pond and includes relocating the shelter and toilet away from the riparian area or removing the shelter and toilet completely.

The enclosed Scoping Report provides additional detail about this project, instructions on how to comment, as well as maps for your reference. This document is also posted on our WMNF web page: www.fs.fed.us/r9/white.

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

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

Sincerely,

//TERRY MILLER//

TERRY MILLER
District Ranger





Province Pond Dam Restoration & Site Improvement Project

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Saco Ranger District

December 17, 2007

Scoping Notice

Saco Ranger District



For Information Contact:
Anna Johnston
Saco Ranger District
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**Province Pond Dam Restoration & Site
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White Mountain National Forest
Saco Ranger District**

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**Province Pond Dam
Restoration & Site Improvement Project
White Mountain National Forest
Saco Ranger District**

Introduction

The Saco Ranger District of the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) is initiating a public scoping and formal 30-day comment period for the Province Pond Dam Restoration & Site Improvement Project on WMNF land in the Town of Chatham, New Hampshire.

This Report includes a description of the Proposed Action, the Purpose and Need for the project, the Decisions to be Made, and information on How You Can Submit Comments to the Forest Service.

Background

Province Pond was created by New Hampshire Fish and Game in 1960 by the construction of an earthen dam with a timber crib. The dam no longer holds water due to the collapse of the timber crib in 2003. The local beaver population recently formed a dam in the vicinity of the 1960 structure which has kept a small pond in the area. However the beaver dam is not structurally sound and may give out at anytime potentially damaging trails and bridges downstream. Relying on the beaver population to maintain the water level is not a long term solution and it would ultimately result in the loss of the pond. Before the manmade structure gave way, the pond was stocked with fish by the New Hampshire Fish and Game Department for recreational fishing purposes. Recreation facilities at the site include an outhouse and a 1930's Adirondack style shelter. The Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) built the log shelter at the edge of what was then a wetland. The pond and adjacent shelter are frequently used by visitors looking for a quiet place to fish, camp, hike, snowmobile, view wildlife or just enjoy the scenic pond and surrounding mountains.

The Province Pond site is located on the Province Brook trail approximately 1.5 miles from the trailhead located at the end of, Peaked Hill Road in Chatham, New Hampshire. The Province Brook trail is primarily used for snowmobiling in winter, but is also frequently used for year round foot travel.

Proposed Action

The proposed action is to restore the dam and to relocate or remove the shelter and outhouse at Province Pond in Chatham, NH.

The proposed action includes the following components;

1. Improvements to the trail to allow for transportation of equipment and materials.
2. Restoration of the dam including clearing the dam of trees and stumps and restoring the embankment. The spillway will be replaced with concrete weirs.
3. Either relocation of the shelter no less than 50 feet away from its current location, or the complete removal of the shelter.

4. Relocation and reconstruction of the Province Pond toilet, including the rehabilitation of the current location or if the shelter is removed, the toilet would also be removed.

Project components are displayed in the attached maps.

Purpose and Need

The purpose of this project is to address past and ongoing resource concerns, including damage to riparian vegetation and aquatic resources and erosion.

Both the reconstruction of the dam and the relocation or removal of the shelter and outhouse are consistent with the goals and objectives in the WMNF Plan:

- The WMNF will protect, restore or improve riparian area conditions to benefit riparian dependant resources and values. (WMNF LMP p1-15)
- The WMNF will maintain existing impoundment structures constructed for fish and wildlife management...to prevent downstream resource damage. (WMNF LMP p1-16)
- Current development levels in the backcountry will be maintained or lowered where appropriate. (WMNF LMP p2-17)

The proposed project will also:

- Restore Province Pond to its previous water levels and in doing so; provide angling opportunities, scenic hiking and snowmobiling.
- Replace the existing beaver dam with a structurally sound, manmade dam with concrete weirs.
- Increase the distance between the wetland and the centralized area around the shelter and outhouse by moving the two structures away from the water or removing them completely.

The proposed improvements are compatible with the standards and objectives identified in the 2005 Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA-Forest Service, 2005). The project area is entirely within Management Area 2.1 (General Forest Area). The Forest Plan provides goals and objectives for MA 2.1 that the White Mountain National Forest should manage scenic areas and facilities to meet visitor needs, while providing for long-term sustainability.

Decisions to be Made

After receiving your input, other public comments, and recommendations from an interdisciplinary team of resource specialists, Saco District Ranger Terry Miller, as the Responsible Official, will decide:

1. The level of analysis necessary to assess and document the environmental effects of this proposed project. This includes determining whether this project meets criteria for categorical exclusion from documentation in an environmental impact statement or environmental assessment, including an assessment of any extraordinary circumstances (as defined in FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.3), and

whether there is sufficient information and analysis to make a decision to implement the proposed project.

2. What mitigation measures and monitoring requirements will help assure the proposed project meets LRMP standards and guidelines for all resources.
3. Whether a Forest Plan amendment will be required to accommodate this project.

If no significant issues or extraordinary circumstances are identified, it is possible that the project may be categorically excluded from documentation in an Environmental Assessment or Environmental Impact Statement under FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.7, Modification or maintenance of stream or lake aquatic habitat improvement structures using native material or normal practices and FSH 1909.15, Chapter 30.5, Repair and maintenance of recreational sites and facilities. Once the level of documentation is determined and the analysis is completed, copies of the environmental and decision documents will be mailed to people who submit comments during this scoping period, and to people who request copies.

Findings of Preliminary Analysis

A preliminary analysis has been completed in accordance with FS Handbook 1909.15, to determine “whether extraordinary circumstances related to the proposed action warrant further analysis”. Preliminary reviews and surveys of the project areas by resource specialists indicate that the following resource conditions exist:

1. Threatened and Endangered Species or Their Critical Habitat

To date, no Federally Listed Threatened or Endangered Species or Designated Critical Habitat, Species Proposed for Federal Listing or Proposed Critical Habitat, or Forest Service Sensitive Species have been observed or are known to be present. However, habitat around the edge of the wetland exists for two Regional Forester Sensitive Species, *Sphagnum angermanicum* and *Sphagnum andersonianum*. A field visit will be conducted in June of 2008 by the Forest Botanist to determine whether these species exist in the Province Pond area.

A complete Biological Evaluation will be included during the environmental analysis process.

2. Floodplains, Wetlands, or Municipal Watersheds

The project will not result in an adverse effect to any floodplains, wetlands, or any municipal water supply.

3. Congressionally Designated Areas

The Project Area does not include any Congressionally Designated Areas, Wilderness, Wilderness Study Areas, or National Recreation Areas.

4. Inventoried Roadless Areas

As mentioned above, the proposed project area and the trail leading to it are entirely within Management Area 2.1 (General Forest Area). Portions of the project area are also located within the Kearsarge inventoried roadless area identified as part of the 2001 Roadless Area Conservation Rule, as well as the 2005 Forest Plan Revision. More specifically:

- a) The camping shelter lies within the inventoried roadless area,
- b) The snowmobile trail leading to the project area, and to be used for the project, lies entirely outside the inventoried roadless area, and
- c) The dam lies right on the edge of the inventoried roadless area boundary.

The Kearsarge inventoried roadless area (in its entirety) was analyzed for its potential as Wilderness in the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the 2005 Land and Resource Management Plan (USDA-Forest Service, 2005 FEIS, Appendix C). The Province Pond area, including the pond, shelter, winter motorized trail and earthen dam were discussed at length in the evaluation. It was not proposed in any of the Plan alternatives or in the signed Record of Decision.

A preliminary analysis of the proposed action suggests that the scale and intensity of this project is small and should not significantly affect the area's future eligibility for consideration as a roadless area. Furthermore, the proposed improvements (trail shelter and dam) are of a primitive type that should be entirely compatible with maintaining the area's roadless character. Therefore, the proposed project does not appear to constitute an extraordinary circumstance warranting further analysis.

5. Research Natural Areas

The proposed project area is not located within or adjacent to a Research Natural Area (RNA) or a candidate RNA (CRNA). The closest candidate RNAs are Mountain Pond approximately 3 miles northwest and Shingle Pond 2.5 miles southwest of the proposed projects.

6. American Indians and Alaska Native religious or cultural sites & Archaeological Sites, or Historic Properties or Areas.

The WMNF Cultural Resources Atlas shows one known cultural site in the project area, the Province Pond Shelter. Prior to implementation, additional site specific surveys will be completed and an Archaeological Resource Report will be prepared for review by the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO).

How to Submit Comments

Comments should be addressed to Saco District Ranger Terry Miller as follows: Written comments must be postmarked by the Postal Service, e-mailed, Faxed or otherwise submitted by 11:59 pm ET on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice in the New Hampshire Union Leader. When the comment period ends on a Saturday, Sunday or Federal holiday, comments will be accepted until the end of

the next Federal working day. The publication date in the Manchester Union Leader is the exclusive means for calculating the comment period. Do not rely upon dates or timeframe information provided by any other source.

Mail: Send to Anna Johnston, Project Team Leader, Saco Ranger Station, 33 Kancamagus Highway, Conway, NH 03818. Letters can be hand delivered Monday 9:00am-4:30pm and Tuesday through Sunday, 8:00am-4:30pm.

FAX: Send to Attn: Anna Johnston @ 603-447-8405.

E-mail: Send to (comments-eastern-white-mountain-saco@fs.fed.us), and must include an identifiable name. Comments submitted as electronic documents must be in plain text (.txt), rich text format (.rft) or Word (.doc) format. You should receive an automated electronic acknowledgement as confirmation of receipt of your comments. If you do not receive acknowledgement, it is your responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means.

Oral comments may be submitted Monday through Friday, 8:00am-4:30pm, by phone (603-447-5448 x119) or in person; and must be received by close of business on the 30th calendar day following publication of the legal notice.

Comments should include the following information:

Your name, address, and if possible, your phone number and e-mail address.

The title of the project you are commenting on.

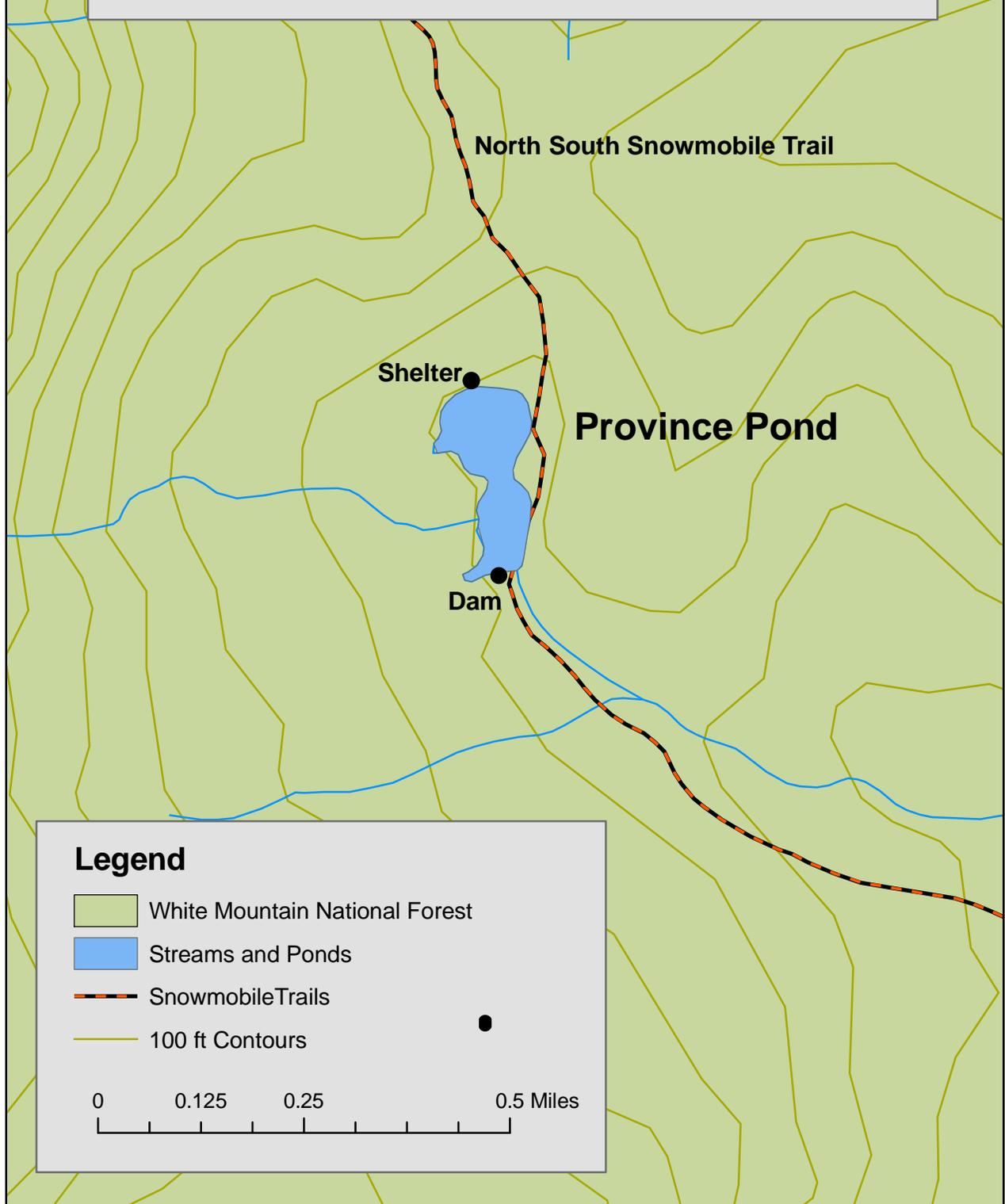
Your specific concern and reasons the concern may lead to environmental effects.

The purpose of soliciting your comments during this scoping period is to collect additional information and to identify any unresolved issues regarding the proposal. To make your comments substantive they should be specific to the proposed action. Be sure to provide supporting rationale for your comments, including concerns about environmental effects of the proposed project. Please be aware that your name, address and comments will become part of the public record and may be available for public inspection.

Province Pond Chatham, New Hampshire



Province Pond Chatham, New Hampshire



North South Snowmobile Trail

Shelter

Province Pond

Dam

Legend

 White Mountain National Forest

 Streams and Ponds

 Snowmobile Trails

 100 ft Contours

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles