

WHITE MOUNTAIN NATIONAL FOREST NEWSLETTER

JANUARY, 2004



This newsletter highlights some of the key accomplishments on the White Mountain National Forest over the last year.

The employees of the White Mountain manage a diverse program of work providing services, products and experiences to people, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of the land.

We have juggled priorities and responded to many unexpected events while working hard to complete projects and provide exemplary stakeholder service.

Much of the work accomplished on the Forest would not have been possible however without the help of the many people who care deeply about the condition and health of their National Forests.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers, contractors, state and local agencies, interest groups, partner organizations, towns and individual citizens who worked alone or along side Forest employees on various projects and programs.

I look forward to 2004 as we move ahead with new projects and the release of the Draft Forest Plan that will provide the broad vision and guidance for the White Mountain National Forest over the next 15 years.

I look forward to continuing our discussions through this year with you and others so we can continue to manage these lands in the best interest of the current and future generations.

Thank-you for your interest in the White Mountain National Forest and I wish you and your family a safe and happy New Year.

Thomas Wagner
Forest Supervisor

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RECREATION

Trail, backcountry and wilderness crews completed significant amounts of work in 2003. A significant amount of work was also accomplished by volunteer groups and partners.

In a Forest as heavily visited as the White Mountain, developed recreation facilities and visitor information services are critical. Employees, cooperative partners, and volunteers greeted an estimated 110,000 visitors at National Forest offices.

Highlights include:

- Received National Best Practices award for Scenic Byway Interpretation.
- Accomplished over 1 million dollars of fee demonstration projects.
- A contract was awarded to provide safe drinking water at Hermit Lake Shelter.
- Welch Dickey parking lot was constructed to accommodate the heavy use at this popular trailhead.

Combined, WMNF and volunteer groups reconstructed or relocated more than 56 miles of trails in 2003.



- Backcountry Ranger, Roger Collins, received the Guy Waterman Award for Alpine Stewardship.
- Forest Service crews and volunteers maintained 473 miles of trails in the backcountry and Wilderness.
- Forest Service and concessionaire employees oversaw the operation and maintenance of 23 developed campgrounds.
- Managed four alpine and four Nordic ski area permits.
- Conducted the Arthur Carhart Center Wilderness Management workshop in New England.
- Working with NH Fish & Game, we established the hikeSafe partnership to provide safety information. Through this partnership hikers throughout NH and Maine are educated about the steps they must take in order to be prepared for a safe and positive experience on the Forest.
- WMNF Employees maintained credentials for five Leave No Trace Masters, and hosted 12 train the trainers courses.

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RECREATION FEE DEMONSTRATION

The Recreation Fee Demonstration program allows the Forest to accomplish needed work which is not otherwise funded.

In 2003 fees were used to:

- improve information and interpretive services.
- repair and maintain backcountry campsites, toilets, and signs.
- provide backcountry and Wilderness patrols.
- maintain and improve trails.
- maintain over 60 developed and day use sites daily.
- collaborate with neighboring communities.
- maintain winter access for x-country ski trail system.
- construct and repair information kiosks.

To improve the program changes have included:

- discounted household passes.
- numerous and accessible vendors from Boston to Maine to northern New Hampshire.
- self-service fee stations at the most popular trailheads.
- mail-order sales.
- free passes in exchange for volunteer work.

To view the
**2003 Fee Demonstration
Annual Report**

visit our webpage at:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/white
or
contact one of our offices for a copy.

VEGETATION MANAGEMENT

In 2003, 10 timber sales were sold to accomplish resource objectives such as regeneration of selected species, diversify wildlife habitat, and provide a total of 19 million board feet wood products.

The timber program generated \$3,000,000 in receipts, \$750,000 of which will be returned to the State of New Hampshire as Payments to States.

In addition, successful bidders will also pay a 10 percent Yield Tax on all harvests, netting another \$300,000 for local towns.

The forest management program is viewed as a "showcase" for environmentally sensitive, scientifically sound, "light on the land" forest management.



Employees at all levels worked one-on-one with interested citizens, and hosted forest practices field trips for international visitors, forest industry, and interest groups.

Forest Plan Revision

The White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) managers continued revising the 1986 Land and Resource Management Plan as required by the National Forest Management Act. The WMNF Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Forest Plan are expected to be released in early summer 2004. The final document is anticipated in early 2005.

The planning team has been working with forest employees, partner agencies, and the public to review the effectiveness of past management actions, address new scientific information and other issues and concerns raised over the last 5 years.

Specific areas of interest that have been used to develop alternative management approaches for the future include:

- 1) How will lands be allocated to different management areas to accommodate the many products, services and experiences people desire from the White Mountain National Forest?
- 2) Where, and how much vegetation will be treated on the Forest to create wildlife habitat diversity, wood products and exemplary sustainable forestry approaches?
- 3) How will increasing recreation use be managed on the Forest to ensure a diversity in what the Forest can provide, while maintaining the overall character and quality of the experience?

Public Involvement

In 2003, the Planning Team used the work of the community based planning groups, and released conceptual alternative approaches for public consideration. The input received from these series of meetings allowed the team to develop detailed alternative approaches with maps for each.

These alternatives were presented in a day long Saturday meeting at Plymouth State University in March, 2003. Important dialogue occurred between attendees and Forest Service employees during a series of sessions which focused on the issues.

We received 3700 comments relative to the conceptual alternatives and the range of four alternatives. The information from people who sent written letters, form letters, e-mails and made phone calls or personal visits, has been summarized and is available for public review on our website.

We are utilizing the comments to further refine the four alternatives and ensure we have responded with a range of options that reflect feasible management approaches in response to agency review and public comments. These alternatives are described in detail on our web site, or can be requested from our Laconia office.

We will hold another public meeting when we release the DEIS. Public comments will be accepted for analysis as we work to produce the Final Revised Forest Plan.

Visit our website at:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

Forest Plan Revision con't.

Since the meetings last March, we have been working on the necessary analysis required by both the National Forest Management Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. These efforts include:

- 1) Completion of the Analysis of the Current Management Situation which looks at the resource situation on the Forest to determine if there is a need for change from the current management.
- 2) Developed the context for future management of the White Mountain National Forest.
- 3) Completion of the Standards and Guidelines for all management activities.

We have been working to stay on an ambitious timeline to complete the Revised Plan. One of the challenges has been on how to condense modeling and inventory processes originally designed for a longer timeframe. In particular, we needed to develop accelerated approaches for the roadless inventory, Wilderness recommendation, and SPECTRUM (timber volume) modeling of vegetation management. SPECTRUM is a growth and yield table used to model timber resource planning as part of plan revision.

The WMNF Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and Draft Forest Plan are expected to be released in early summer 2004, for public comment.

The final decision document is anticipated in early 2005.

- The Analysis of Management Situation was completed.
- Preliminary plan alternatives were presented to the public.
- Standards and Guidelines were drafted and are being reviewed.
- Goals and Objectives were drafted and are being reviewed.
- Spectrum Modeling is underway.
- Roadless Inventory is completed.
- Development of Effects Analysis is underway.
- Development layout for Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)
- Completed evaluation and the first peer review for Species Viability Evaluation.

Other work in progress includes:

Social-economic analysis – The socio-economic assessment, an evaluation of social and economic conditions relative to the White Mountain National Forest area, will be completed soon. The social-economic assessment has been contracted to Resource Systems Group (RSG) from White River Junction, Vermont. RSG contacted WMNF host towns and businesses in New Hampshire and Maine for information describing the relationship between the National Forest and local communities. This information will be used in the analysis of the alternatives.

Roadless Inventory—Based on public comments received since the March public meeting, the Forest Roadless inventory has been updated and inventory acres increased. The inventory is required under the National Forest Management Act and is required solely for use in determining Wilderness candidate areas. More information about the roadless inventory is available on the website at:

www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

Highlights of this year's efforts include:

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

Through partnerships we are able to provide resources that protect life and property from wildland fire, and safely and adequately respond to local, regional and national incidents.



Fourteen prescribed fire treatments were conducted on 103 acres for fuels reduction and wildlife habitat.

The White Mountain contributed to the national fire effort with six joint 20-person firefighting crews, and 78 individuals as overhead fire management.

Employees participated in the space shuttle Columbia disaster recovery, and Exotic Newcastle Disease incident (USDA poultry health issue). Personnel assisted on incidents in Nevada, New Mexico, Arizona, Colorado, Utah, Montana, Oregon, California, Idaho, Missouri, Ohio, Minnesota, Wyoming and Texas.

HEALTHY FOREST INITIATIVE

The Healthy Forests Initiative is a national initiative that recognizes the critical need for forest management in addressing community safety, forest health, and economic well being.

- The White Mountain National Forest contributes to the Healthy Forests Initiative through work on the fuels reduction program.
- The Forest has worked to improve the efficiency of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process by establishing a Forest-level position that provides: oversight and direction for the process, implementing some standard formats for environmental documents, providing improved opportunities for the public to become engaged early in the environmental analysis of proposed projects, and focusing greater attention on formal and informal monitoring of project implementation.

In 2003, 103 acres were treated with a combination of prescribed fire and mechanical treatment.

The fuel reduction program has multiple objectives including:

- improving wildlife habitat
- enhancing vistas
- reducing the potential fire hazard

FACILITIES MASTER PLAN AND DECISION TO CO-LOCATE OFFICES

The purchase of a 43.94-acre site was finalized on October 9, 2003. This future home of the White Mountain National Forest Headquarters and Ammonoosuc / Pemigewasset Ranger District Office, is located adjacent to the Blair Bridge Exit (Exit 27), on Interstate 93 in the Town of Campton.

National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis is underway to determine how best to construct the building on the purchased site. Arrangements for site survey, geotechnical exploration, and wetland delineation are also moving forward.

If funds are available, design and site work will begin in 2004, construction will begin in 2005, and occupancy in 2006.

Implementation of this project meets the following four criteria identified for the effective management of the White Mountain National Forest.

- Provides an approach to facility management for the future that ensures good public service.
- Enhances our ability to manage natural resources.
- Ensures economic efficiency and effectiveness.
- Allows for retention and recruitment of employees

INVASIVE SPECIES

The globalization of trade and travel is spreading organisms from their natural habitats into new environments and disrupting native ecosystems. This applies to the White Mountain National Forest regarding invasive plants.

Prevention is the most desired option for management of invasive plants. Eradication options include mechanical, chemical (herbicides), and biological (insects) treatments. Presently, only mechanical control has been used on the White Mountain National.

The New England Wild Flower Society has been inventorying the WMNF and adjacent lands to determine the presence and amount of invasive plants.

- Approximately 220,000 acres surveyed.
- Over 40 species in 1800 occurrences have been found.
- Two thirds of occurrences were found on adjacent private land.
- Almost half of all occurrences were intentionally planted in a garden.
- Thirty percent of occurrences are along roads.

LANDS PROGRAM

This year five land acquisition cases to provide access to public land in Carroll, Coos, and Grafton counties were completed. An additional 529 acres has been added to the WMNF.

Acquisition of the property for consolidation and office relocation in Campton, NH is complete.

Six new nonrecreation special use permits were issued, and 30 nonrecreation special use permits were inspected.

Land exchange proposals with local towns are in progress.

An additional Realty Specialist position was recently filled to assist with the backlog of lands work.

hikeSafe

You are responsible for yourself, so be prepared:

1. **With knowledge and gear.** Become self reliant by learning about the terrain, conditions, local weather and your equipment before you start.
2. **To leave your plans.** Tell someone the trails you are hiking, the gear you are taking, when you will return and your emergency plans.
3. **To stay together.** When you start as a group, hike as a group, end as a group. Pace your hike to the slowest person.
4. **To turn back.** Weather changes quickly in the mountains. Fatigue and unexpected conditions can also affect your hike. Know your limitations and when to postpone your hike. The mountains will be there another day.
5. **For emergencies,** even if you are headed out for just an hour. An injury, severe weather or a wrong turn could become life threatening. Don't assume you will be rescued; know how to rescue yourself.
6. **To share the hiker code with others.**



hikeSafe: It's Your Responsibility.

The Hiker Responsibility Code was developed and is endorsed by the White Mountain National Forest and New Hampshire Fish and Game.



COMPETITIVE SOURCING

In Fiscal Year 2003, the Forest Service had a goal to study approximately 3000 positions nationwide in three areas; Maintenance, Information Technology, and Job Corps Centers.

As of October 1, 2003 the results were:

- Job Corps Centers: All Job Corps Centers were retained by the Forest Service. There are no Job Corps Centers on the White Mountain National Forest.
- Maintenance: The Eastern Region conducted a “Streamlined” study of Road, Building, Grounds Trails and Fleet Maintenance on each of the forests in the region.

On the White Mountain National Forest this study impacted all, or portions of 5 permanent, 3 long-term temporary and 44 seasonal positions (equivalent to 14.08 full time employees).

On October 3 the Regional Forester announced that the maintenance work was to be retained on all the forests as the study indicated that the Forest Service was more cost effective than private contracting in their area.

- Information Technology: The IT study has taken a different route and is subject to a more intensive study process known as a “Full Study” which involves head to head competition between civilian contractors and a redesigned functional organization known as the “More Efficient Organization.” Results of this study are set to be released in May 2004.
- Four full-time employees on the White Mountain National Forest are impacted by this study.

The Forest Service has tentatively scheduled the functional areas to be reviewed in competitive sourcing studies between now and 2007. These areas include:

Budget and Finance
Human Resources
Wildfire Organization

These studies could impact up to 12 full-time equivalent employees on the White Mountain National Forest.

Kancamagus Scenic Byway Interpretive Plan

The theme of the Kancamagus Scenic Byway Interpretive Plan, **Changing Landscapes**, reflects the natural and historic changes along the Kancamagus. It addresses Native American uses, early settlement, tourism, partnerships, small and large-scale logging, and current Forest Service management.

The Kancamagus Scenic Byway Interpretive Project is the largest capital investment project in the Forest Service Eastern Region. Over \$ 2.9 million of recreation improvements have been accomplished on this project so far.

Sixteen sites along the “Kanc” were selected to interpret these messages. They include: visitor centers, the historic Russell-Colbath homestead, a CCC camp, a covered bridge, the Discovery Trail, and history of large scale logging where the Pemigewasset Wilderness is now located.



The Timber Framers Guild worked closely with WMNF employees and local volunteers to frame the barn at the **Russell Colbath homestead**. The Timber Framers Guild provided more than 600 person days of labor valued at approximately \$100,000.

Three locations off National Forest land were selected to provide visitor information and interpretation. They include: a visitor center, the Loon Mountain property where snowmaking is explained, and the Mill in Lincoln the history of a mill town is interpreted.

The Gateway Visitor Center in Woodstock, NH, is currently in the its final design process. Visitor services which will be provided are critical to people who use and enjoy the White Mountain National Forest.

As a part of the design an Adirondack shelter was constructed and installed in FY 03. The shelter will serve as a focal point for the audio visual center.

Installation of the permanent exhibits is expected in summer 04. These projects were funded through a combination of sources including: TEA-21, the National Scenic Byways program, and is a joint effort between White Mountain Attractions, the State of NH, and the White Mountain National Forest.

The Forest Discovery Trail is progressing well. All of the silvicultural treatments have been completed, and the trail and parking lots constructed. A total of 14 interpretive panels will be installed in FY 04.

Over 30 partners including the National Forest Foundation, New Hampshire Timberland Owners Association, Society of American Foresters, North Country RC&D and Loon Mountain Ski area have raised in excess of \$50,000 for this project.

If you have questions or would like more
information please contact any of the
offices listed below

or

visit our webpage at:
www.fs.fed.us/r9/white

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Please don't hesitate to contact us if
you have
questions, concerns or comments:

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