

St. John Uplands Region Management Plan



View from Round Pond fire tower across the Round Pond Unit and Allagash River beyond.

**Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Bureau of Parks and Lands**



March 2021

ADOPTION CITATION

In accordance with the provisions of 12 M.R.S.A. § 1847(2) and consistent with the Bureau of Parks and Lands Planning Policy and Integrated Resource Policy for Public Reserved and Nonreserved Lands, State Parks, and State Historic Sites (revised December 18, 2000 and amended March 7, 2007), this Management Plan for the **St. John Uplands Region** is hereby adopted.

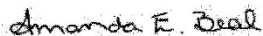
RECOMMENDED: _____



DATE: August 6, 2021

Andrew Cutko
Director
Bureau of Parks and Lands

APPROVED: _____



DATE: August 6, 2021

Amanda E. Beal
Commissioner
Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry

ADOPTED DATE: _____

8/6/21

REVISION DATE: _____

8/6/36

Table of Contents

I. Introduction	1
About this Document	1
What is the St. John Uplands Region?.....	1
The Lands of the St. John Uplands Region.....	2
Acquisition History	5
II. The Planning Process and Resource Allocation System.....	6
Statutory and Policy Guidance.....	6
Public Participation and the Planning Process.....	6
Summary of the Resource Allocation System	8
Forest Certification	9
Potential Adaptations to Climate Change in the Timber Management Program.....	10
III. Planning Context	11
Conservation Lands and Public Recreation Resources in the St. John Uplands Region	11
Recreation Resources.....	11
Other Major Conservation Lands in the Region.....	14
Summary of Planning Implications	15
IV. Resources and Management Issues for Lands in the St. John Uplands Region.....	16
General Management Focus	16
Telos Unit.....	17
Character of the Land Base.....	17
Natural Resources	17
Wildlife and Fisheries Resources.....	18
Historic and Cultural Resources	22
Access	22
Recreation Resources.....	22
Timber Resources	26
Management Issues, Concerns and Opportunities	27
Vision for the Telos Unit	30
Resource Allocations for the Telos Unit.....	30
Management Recommendations for the Telos Unit	34
Round Pond Unit.....	35
Character of the Land Base and Acquisition History	35
Natural Resources	35

Wildlife and Fisheries Resources.....	36
History and Culture.....	39
Access and Recreation Resources.....	39
Timber Resources	41
Management Issues, Concerns and Opportunities	43
Administrative Issues.....	45
Resource Allocations for the Round Pond Unit.....	46
Management Recommendations for the Round Pond Unit	49
Chamberlain Unit.....	49
Character of the Land Base and Acquisition History	49
Natural Resources	50
Wildlife and Fisheries Resources.....	51
History and Culture.....	54
Access and Recreation Resources.....	55
Timber Resources	57
Management Issues, Concerns and Opportunities	58
Administrative Issues.....	60
Resource Allocations for the Chamberlain Unit.....	61
Management Recommendations for the Chamberlain Unit.....	65
Gero Island / Chesuncook Unit.....	65
Character of the Land Base and Acquisition History	65
Natural Resources	66
Wildlife and Fisheries Resources.....	66
History and Culture.....	67
Access and Recreation Resources.....	70
Timber Resources (Chesuncook parcel only).....	73
Management Issues, Concerns and Opportunities	73
Administrative Issues.....	74
Management Recommendations for the Chesuncook/Gero Island Unit.....	79
Allagash Lots	79
Character of the Land Base.....	80
Management Recommendations for the Allagash Lots	86
Falls Pond Lot.....	90
Character of the Land Base.....	90

Management Recommendations for the Falls Pond Lot.....	91
T14 R11 and T15 R11 Public Lots	94
Character of the Land Base.....	94
Management Recommendations for the T14 R11 and T15 R11 Lots	96
V. Monitoring and Evaluation	98
Implementation of Plan Recommendations	98
Recreation	98
Wildlife	98
Timber Management.....	99

Appendices

- A. Public Consultation Process
 - Advisory Committee Members
 - Public Consultation Summary
 - Public Comments and Bureau Responses
- B. Guiding Statutes and Agreements
 - MRSA Title 12
 - Round Pond Deer Wintering Area Habitat Management Agreement
- C. Summary of BPL's Resource Allocation System - Criteria and Management Direction
- D. Allagash Wilderness Waterway Visible Areas and One-Mile Zone Maps
- E. St. John Uplands Plan Area Forest Stocking and Sustainable Harvest Levels
- F. Glossary
- G. References

Acknowledgements

The St. John Uplands Region Management Plan was prepared through a collaborative effort involving contributions from the following Bureau of Parks and Lands staff:

William Patterson – *Deputy Director (beginning 4/30/20)*

Liz Petruska – *Director of Acquisition and Planning (beginning 1/6/20)*

Vern Labbe – *Northern Region Manager, Public Reserved Lands (until 1/1/18)*

Jacob Guimond – *Northern Region Manager, Public Reserved Lands (beginning 3/4/18)*

David Pierce – *Forester, Northern Region*

Jim Vogel – *Senior Planner (Management Plan Coordinator/Author)*

Rex Turner – *Outdoor Recreation Planner*

Tom Charles – *Chief of Silviculture*

Nate Webb – *MDIF&W Wildlife Biologist assigned to the Bureau (3/13/17 through 5/6/18)*

Sarah Spencer – *MDIF&W Wildlife Biologist assigned to the Bureau (beginning 8/20/18)*

Brian Bronson – *ORV Program ATV Coordinator*

Joe Higgins – *ORV Program Snowmobile Coordinator*

Gena Denis – *Geographic Information System Coordinator*

The Bureau also acknowledges the helpful participation of the St. John Uplands Region Management Plan Advisory Committee, and the members of the public who participated in public meetings held during preparation of this Plan and submitted comments on the Plan (see Appendix A for more details on the public consultation process).

[this page is intentionally blank]

I. Introduction

About this Document

This document constitutes a fifteen-year Management Plan (the Plan) for more than 62,500 acres of Public Reserved land in the St. John Uplands Region, managed by the Maine Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL or the Bureau). This is the first regional management plan addressing this assemblage of Public Reserved Lands management units and lots. It will replace the 1980 Gero Island Land Management Plan, the 1990 Telos Unit Management Plan and the 1992 Round Pond Management Plan. It will also address the Chamberlain Public Reserved Lands and several additional smaller Public Reserved land units.

The Plan includes background information about the planning process and the regional context of the Plan. The core of the Plan is a description of the character and resources of the units, a Vision for the future of each major unit, and management allocations and recommendations.

One objective of the regional plan is to provide a balanced spectrum of opportunities across the Region, and in keeping with the opportunities and resources available in the broader surrounding St. John Uplands Region. In developing the management recommendations for the reserved lands and undeveloped park lands, the Bureau has been mindful of this broader perspective.

The St. John Uplands Region Management Plan is a commitment to the public that the Public Reserved lands in the Region will be managed in accordance with the Bureau's mission and goals, and within prescribed mandates. Revisions to the Plan commitments will occur only after providing opportunities for public comment. The Management Plan will also serve as guidance to the Bureau staff. It will provide clear management objectives, while providing a degree of flexibility in achieving these objectives. It will not, however, be a plan of operations.

An important aspect of the management of public lands is monitoring commitments made in the plans, and evaluating the outcomes of management activities relative to overall objectives. This management plan describes monitoring and evaluation procedures for recreational use, wildlife management, and timber management.

Under current policy, the Bureau's management plans cover a period of 15 years after the date of adoption. A review of current issues and progress on implementing this Plan's recommendations will be undertaken in 2026, as part of the first mandated 5-year review and update of the regional plan.

What is the St. John Uplands Region?

The St. John Uplands Region encompasses 105 townships and the Town of Allagash, a total area of about 2.8 million acres, extending from the north end of Chesuncook Lake west and north to the Canadian border and the St. Francis River (also part of the international border), and east to a line running between Baxter State Park and the St. Francis River. The entire Plan area is within northern Somerset, northern Piscataquis, and northern Aroostook Counties. Ten townships within northern Somerset County and encompassing the Baker Lake Public Reserved Lands that have formerly been included in the Seboomook Unit plan area are being added to the St. John

Uplands plan area. Because the Baker Lake lands were addressed in the 2007 Seboomook Unit Plan, that section of the Seboomook Plan is appended to this document, and those lands have not been readdressed in this planning effort.

The St. John Uplands Region is a predominantly remote, thinly populated, natural landscape that is nearly entirely also a working landscape, where commercial forestry is the predominant land use. Outside of the Town of Allagash, there are no paved roads. A significant portion of the commercial forestland in the region is managed under conservation easements held by the Bureau and other entities.

Nearly the entire Plan area, except for Baxter State Park and one township and part of another abutting the park, is within the North Maine Woods (NMW) management area. North Maine Woods, Inc. is a private, non-profit organization that manages public use of the private forest lands within the NMW area on the behalf of more than 30 private landowning companies. NMW maintains several entrance stations, where fees are charged for both day use and camping. There are nearly 350 campsite locations on the private lands within the North Maine Woods region. NMW also maintains most of the BPL campsites within the Plan area under an agreement with the Bureau.

The region is crossed by two of the most renowned wild rivers in the Northeast: the St. John, which flows northward from its headwaters at Baker Lake in northern Somerset County, and the Allagash, which flows north out of Churchill Lake, joining the St. John River in the town of Allagash. Other than the Katahdin area, within Baxter State Park, the terrain is generally rolling with fewer prominent heights than the more mountainous areas of the state to the south and west.

The region experiences some of the coldest weather and harshest winters in New England. In Allagash, the average daily high temperature in January is 18°F, and the average daily high temperature in July is 76°F. In an average year, there are only 100 or so frost free days in much of the region. Excepting the Katahdin area, average annual precipitation in the region is lower than much of the state (less than 42" in nearly the entire region and less than 38" in some portions) but average annual snowfall is 90-100 inches (Spatial Climate Analysis Service, 2000; National Weather Service 1990).

Bedrock of the region is primarily marine sandstone and slate of Devonian origin (~375 million years ago), although the area east of Chamberlain and Eagle Lakes has a more complex bedrock geology of intrusive rocks (primarily andesite and basalt) of mainly older ages. The surficial geology of much of the landscape is characterized by glacial till and thinner layers of glacial drift, often over near-surface bedrock, from the last glaciation, roughly 11,000 years ago. Other areas are characterized by peat deposits, bedrock outcrops, and ribbed moraines.

The Lands of the St. John Uplands Region

The St. John Uplands Region lands comprise a total of about 62,665 acres designated as Public Reserved Lands. The region contains two of the most extensive public lands in the north part of the State, the Telos and Round Pond Units. Other major units include the Chamberlain Unit, composed of eight non-contiguous parcels arrayed around three major lakes, and the Gero Island-Chesuncook Unit at the north end of Chesuncook Lake. Together, these four units account for more than 90 percent of the Public Reserved Lands in the region. The Allagash

Wilderness Waterway (managed by the Bureau’s Parks division and not addressed by this Plan), abuts or crosses three of the major Units (Telos, Chamberlain and Round Pond).

Seven smaller public lots, most of which are clustered in or near the Town of Allagash, complete the portfolio of Public Reserved Lands in the region. These lots range in size from about 500 to 1,000 acres, and together comprise about 5,700 acres. The table below summarizes the acreage contained in each property addressed in the Plan. A map of the Public Reserved Lands and other conservation lands of the St. John Uplands Region is provided on page 4.

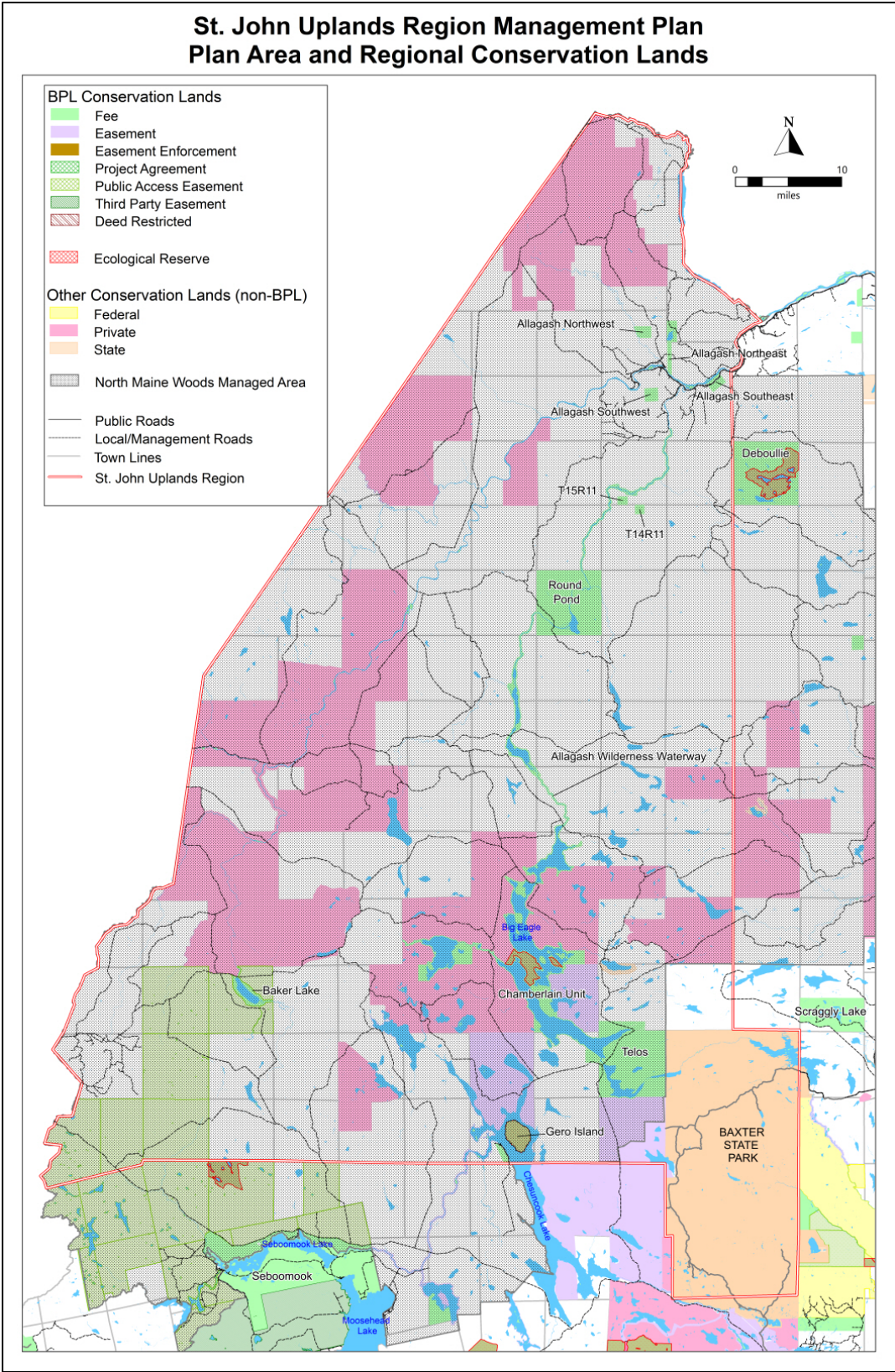
The Public Reserved Lands of the St. John Uplands Region

Name and Townships (all are WELS: West of the Easterly Line of the State)	Fee Acres
Primary Units (listed by size)	
Telos Unit (T6 R11, T7 R11 and T6 R12)	22,761
Round Pond Unit (T13 R12)	20,803
Chamberlain Unit (T7 R14, T8 R14, T7 R13, T8 R13, T9 R13, T7 R12, T8 R12)	9,462
Gero Island-Chesuncook Unit (T5 R13 [Chesuncook])	3,916
Smaller Public Lots (listed geographically, generally from north to south)	
T18 R10 (Falls Pond) Public Lot	988
Allagash Northwest Public Lot (formerly T17 R11)	982
Allagash Northeast Public Lot (formerly T17 R10)	750
Allagash Southwest Public Lot (formerly T16 R11)	1,011
Allagash Southeast Public Lot (formerly T16 R10)	993
T15 R11 Public Lot	509
T14 R11 Public Lot	490
Total	62,665

Note: Figures listed are derived from surveys or GIS; deeded acres or estimated acres for unsurveyed original public lots may differ.

In addition, the Bureau also has responsibility for monitoring compliance within the Katahdin Forest conservation easement, which falls in part within the St. John Uplands Region. In total, this easement covers nearly 190,000 acres, about 50,000 acres of which are within the plan area. Those portions of the easement are adjacent to the Gero Island, Telos and Chamberlain Units. The Katahdin Forest easement is described in more detail in the Planning Context section (Section III).

The Bureau holds a 200-foot-wide limited duration conservation easement and a 10-foot-wide perpetual easement on lands surrounding 4,600-acre Caucomgomoc Lake, west of Chamberlain Lake, to protect scenic, wildlife and recreational values. These lands are associated with the Storage hydropower project, owned by Brookfield Renewable Power; the 200-foot easement will remain in effect for the term of the current federal hydropower license (issued in 2004) and any license renewals. Lastly, the Bureau holds a conservation easement associated with the Ripogenus hydropower project around much of Chesuncook Lake (most of which is outside the Plan area) and on the portion of the West Branch Penobscot River immediately upstream of Chesuncook Lake, extending 250 feet from the high-water mark. These lands, also owned by Brookfield Renewable, are managed as part of the Penobscot River Corridor (PRC) by the Bureau’s Parks division. The Bureau monitors these easements every three years.



MAP FIGURE 1. (Note: a larger version of this map is available on the Plan webpage and from BPL)

Conservation Easements Held by the Bureau in the St. John Uplands Region

Easement Name	Townships	Acres	Notes
Katahdin Forest	T5 R13, T6 R13, and T5 R11 WELS	~49,240*	Working forest land owned by Katahdin Forest Management, LLC. Monitored by FSM on behalf of BPL.
Caucomgomoc Lake	T7 R15, T7 R14, T6 R15 and T6 R14 WELS	~770	Scenic, wildlife and recreational values associated with lake shoreline. Monitored by BPL.
Ripogenus Impoundment (Chesuncook Lk.)	T5 R13 WELS (Chesuncook Twp.)	~1,300**	Scenic, wildlife and recreational values associated with lake/river shoreline. Monitored by BPL.

* About 145,000 additional acres covered by this easement are in numerous Townships between Chesuncook Lake and Baxter State Park and to the south of Baxter State Park (within the BPL Seboomook and Central Penobscot Management Plan areas).

** Portions of easement in Plan Area only; the remainder of the easement is outside the Plan Area, consisting of several additional shoreline segments further south on Chesuncook Lake.

Acquisition History

The 22,800-acre **Telos Unit** includes three original public lots in T7 R11, T6 R11, and T6 R12, portions of which are flowed by Chamberlain Lake. The majority of the unit, comprised of nearly all T6 R11 outside the existing Public Lot, was acquired from Great Northern Nekoosa Corporation in 1975. An abutting 1,440-acre parcel in T7 R11 was acquired from Diamond International in 1978. The portions of the original public lots and acquired parcels within the AWW restricted zone (generally 500 feet from the high-water mark) were transferred to AWW management in the 1980s.

The 20,803-acre **Round Pond Unit**, comprised of all T13 R12 outside the AWW restricted zone, was acquired in a 1984 land trade with Great Northern Paper Co. (The AWW parcel had been previously acquired from Great Northern, in 1968.)

The 9,462 acres comprising the **Chamberlain Unit** includes three original public lots, with the remainder acquired in a series of land trades with Pingree Heirs, Great Northern Paper, and The Nature Conservancy between 1984 and 1988.

The 3,180-acre **Gero Island** includes an original public lot on the east side of the island (now partially flowed by the lake). Whole or partial (50% or 75% common undivided) interest was acquired in the remainder of the island in a 1975 land swap with Great Northern (the same series of transactions by which the State acquired most of the Telos Unit). The State obtained full fee ownership of the common undivided parcels in 1984. The 736 acres at **Chesuncook**, which includes land in Chesuncook Village, was also acquired in the land swap with Great Northern.

The seven smaller lots – the **Allagash Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest Public Lots and the T18 R10 (Falls Pond), T15 R11 and T14 R11 Public Lots** – totaling 5,723 acres, are original public lots or portions of such lots remaining in State ownership after various land sales and trades. The Falls Pond Public Lot was established on the ground when the State and several private timberland owners partitioned the common/undivided ownership in T18 R10 in the late 1980s.

II. The Planning Process and Resource Allocation System

This section describes the Bureau's planning process for development of its management plans and the statutes and policies that guide its management decisions. The planning process includes a robust public participation effort, intended to provide input to the Bureau's management. In addition, the Bureau is guided by statutes requiring and directing the Bureau to develop management plans. Overall, management of Bureau lands is guided by the *Integrated Resource Policy* (IRP), which itself was developed with a significant public process. Finally, the Bureau's forest management, where allowed under the multiple purpose management system defined by the IRP, is conducted sustainably, and is third party certified under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forestry Stewardship Council (FSC) programs. The following describes these important influences guiding the development of this Plan in further detail.

Statutory and Policy Guidance

Multiple use management plans are statutorily required for Public Reserved Lands pursuant to Title 12 MRSA § 1847 (2) (see Appendix B), and must be prepared in accordance with the guidelines set forth in the IRP revised and adopted in December 2000 by the Bureau. The IRP provides further policy guidance for development of resource management plans, and applies to Parks as well as Public Reserved Lands. These laws and policies direct the Bureau to identify and protect important natural, ecological, and historic attributes; enhance important fisheries and wildlife habitat; provide opportunities for a variety of quality outdoor recreation experiences; and provide a sustained yield of forest products by utilizing forest management techniques and silvicultural practices that enhance the forest environment. Revenues received from timber harvesting are retained by the Bureau to manage Public Reserved Lands.

The portion of the IRP addressing management of fisheries and wildlife resources makes reference to the Bureau's *Wildlife Guidelines* (1988). The guidelines provide specific management objectives and strategies for wetland, riparian and upland ecosystems on the public reserved lands, including areas designated for timber harvesting. Additional guidance is provided for management of special habitat features such as mast trees, snags, and forest openings/old fields, and for species of particular concern, such as bald eagle, osprey and great blue heron. (Note: The *Wildlife Guidelines* are currently being updated by MDIF&W and will address a broader array of potential special habitats and larger landscape features such as rare and exemplary ecosystems and natural communities, as listed in the IRP.) The overall fisheries and wildlife resources policy of the Bureau is to strive to maintain a landscape characterized by a rich variety of native species and the functioning ecosystems on which they depend.

This plan meets the requirements for multiple use management plans for the Public Reserved Land properties set forth in Title 12 M.R.S.A. § 1847 (2) and is consistent with the Integrated Resource Policy.

Public Participation and the Planning Process

Overall, the development of Management Plans includes a series of steps, each involving interdisciplinary review, as well as extensive efforts to solicit and consider public comment, in order to achieve a Plan that integrates the various perspectives and needs while protecting and conserving the resources of the Public Reserved Lands. In total three public meetings were held in the development of this Final Draft Plan, as described below.

Resource Assessments: The first phase of the planning process includes a thorough study of the resources and opportunities available on the Public Reserved Lands. Beginning in the summer of 2017, Bureau staff undertook a review of the natural and geological, historic and cultural, fisheries and wildlife, recreation, and timber and renewable resources. In anticipation of this Plan, surveys were conducted between 2012 and 2017 by the Maine Natural Areas Program (MNAP), which focused on improving and updating data on important natural resources including wetlands, late successional forest, and other areas to be managed as special resources. The Telos, Chamberlain, Round Pond, Gero Island and Allagash Public Reserve Lands were included in these new surveys. Additional field data were gleaned from previous visits to some of these areas by MNAP and others. Resource professionals from within the Bureau provided information on wildlife, recreation, and timber resources. Mapping and GIS-related information was also obtained as part of this phase.

Staff also participated in reconnaissance field trips to the major units and some of the smaller lots to view first-hand and characterize the land-based resources and recreational features. In July and August 2017, the Plan Coordinator and several other Bureau staff participated in planned tours of the Telos, Chamberlain, and Round Pond Units focused on examining existing recreational development, road access and condition, and forest conditions. Some of the small Allagash lots were also visited. Other staff visits in the fall of 2017 included Gero Island and Chesuncook and additional portions of the Telos Unit. In August 2019, the new Northern Region Manager visited the Telos, Chamberlain and Chesuncook Units with the Plan Coordinator and other staff. In July 2020, BPL and MNAP staff visited the Boot and Pump Handle peninsulas on Big Eagle Lake to examine the exemplary communities and discuss potential addition of the peninsulas to the ecological reserve system.

Advisory Committee: A St. John Uplands Region Advisory Committee was convened in August 2017 at the start of the Plan process and invited to a public scoping meeting that would formally kick off the Plan's development.

Issue Identification/Public Scoping Session: The first step in the planning process is a public scoping meeting. The purpose of the scoping meeting is to help ensure broad-based public input regarding management direction and other issues needing to be addressed by the Plan. A public scoping meeting was held in Ashland on August 30, 2017. Attendees were invited to submit written comments during the one month period following the meeting.

First Advisory Committee Meeting: The initial Advisory Committee meeting was held on November 29, 2017 in Ashland. The purpose of the meeting was to gain a fuller understanding of the issues and opportunities to be addressed in the Plan, including guidance on developing an overall Vision for each of the major properties covered by the Plan. In addition, the group explored concerns of user groups and management challenges that may be associated with certain issues and opportunities. The meeting was guided by the list of St. John Uplands Region Issues, Needs and Opportunities developed during scoping and subsequent BPL staff discussions, and which was distributed to the AC in advance. Subsequent to the meeting, several AC members and members of the public submitted written comments on management issues and their vision for the region and specific management units.

Second Advisory Committee Meeting: Through 2018 and into the spring of 2019 the Bureau compiled the resources and management issues identified as described above, and drafted vision statements, proposed resource allocations and management recommendations into a Draft Plan. An Advisory Committee meeting to review the Draft Plan was held November 21, 2019. Comments on the Draft Plan from the Advisory Committee and the public are included in the Appendices of this report and were reflected in the Final Draft Plan.

Public Meeting on the Final Draft Plan: The Final Draft Plan was presented and discussed during a virtual public meeting[s] held via Microsoft Teams on January 27, 2021.

Commissioner's Review of the Final Proposed Plan, and Plan Adoption: Comments received on the Final Draft Plan were considered in preparing the Final Management Plan. Upon recommendation from the Bureau of Parks and Lands, the Plan was then reviewed and approved of the Commissioner of the Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry.

5-Year Plan Review and Updates: The Bureau's management plans are normally adopted for a 15-year period. The Bureau is required to report to the St. John Uplands Region Advisory Committee at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan. The first mandated 5-Year Review of the regional plan is scheduled for 2026. Advisory Committee members will review the Bureau's report on actions taken to implement management recommendations in the Plan and will be asked to identify any new issues or circumstances they feel warrant Committee input or action. If neither the Bureau nor the Advisory Committee identifies any new issues or circumstances that warrant Committee input or action, the 5-year review process is completed.

If any of the Advisory Committee members identifies new issues or circumstances that, in their opinion, may require an amendment to the plan, or that should be discussed with the Committee prior to the Bureau taking action without amending the plan, then the Bureau will seek Committee comment through correspondence or a meeting. Depending on Committee input, a decision will be made to formally amend the plan or to take action without amending the plan. If a decision is made to formally amend the plan, the Bureau will hold a public meeting to gather public input on the proposed amendment(s), document public comments and Bureau responses, and adopt the plan amendment. If a decision is made to take action without amending the plan, the Bureau will document the Committee discussion and the specific actions that can be taken without a plan amendment.

Summary of the Resource Allocation System

The Bureau's Resource Allocation System is a land management-planning tool first developed in the 1980's and formalized in the IRP. The current version of the IRP was adopted December 18, 2000, following a public review and refinement process. The Resource Allocation System, which assigns appropriate management based on resource characteristics and values, is based on a *hierarchy* of natural and cultural resource attributes found on the land base. The hierarchy ranks resources along a scale from those that are scarce and/or most sensitive to management activities and where dispersed recreation facilities or activities are most appropriate, to those that are less sensitive and where more intensive recreation facilities or activities may be appropriate. The resource attributes are aggregated into seven categories or "allocations".

The hierarchy of the allocation system defines the type of management that will be applied depending on the particular resource attributes present, with *dominant* and *secondary* use or management designations as appropriate to achieve an integrated, multi-use management.

Allocations, from most sensitive to least, include:

- **Special Protection Areas** (including Ecological Reserves and Significant Natural Areas)
- **Backcountry Recreation Areas** (Motorized and Non-mechanized)
- **Wildlife Areas** (essential wildlife habitat, significant habitats, and specialized habitat areas and features including rare natural communities)
- **Remote Recreation Areas**
- **Visual Protection Areas**
- **Developed Recreation Areas**
- **Timber Management Areas**

Appendix C includes a more detailed description of the Resource Allocation System categories and the management direction defined for each category.

Forest Certification

In 1999 the Bureau made the decision to demonstrate exemplary forest management through participation in two nationally recognized sustainable forestry certification programs. The Bureau was awarded certification of its forestlands under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) programs in 2002. These third-party audits were conducted to determine if these lands were being managed on a sustainable basis. Successful completion of the FSC/SFI systems also qualified the Bureau to enter into the “chain of custody” program to market its “green-certified” wood. The process for enrollment in this program was completed in 2003, with certified wood now being marketed from Bureau managed lands.

The process for conducting the SFI and FSC audits was rigorous and unique in that the Bureau underwent the two audit programs simultaneously. The audit was comprised of a field analysis of forest management practices at selected sites around the state, and an analysis of the Bureau's financial, personnel, policy development, and record-keeping systems. A Bureau-wide certification team was implemented to address “conditions” and “minor non-conformances” stipulated in the audit reports, including: significant enhancements to forest inventory data, development of a computerized forest-modeling program, a timeline for updating management plans for the entire land base, improvements in the use of Best Management Practices to protect water quality, and new commitments to public outreach and education programs. The Bureau is required to meet these conditions within certain timeframes in order to keep its certification status in good standing over the five-year certification period.

In 2006, the Bureau hosted its first full recertification by FSC, concurrently undergoing its first surveillance audit by SFI, the latter now required under SFI's updated standards. It was concluded that Best Management Practices implemented on Bureau lands were working well, and certifiers for both systems were very pleased with Bureau silviculture at all sites visited. As is usually the case, there were several conditions (now called Corrective Action Requests, or CARs) made by each certification system, which the Bureau needed to satisfy as it continues to improve its forest management which has already been certified as being exemplary. The Bureau's second full recertification audit for FSC took place in December of 2011. The BPL

forests were again certified as being well managed, with only a small number of corrective action requests (now known as minor non-conformances).

Audits conducted in early December of 2016 included a full recertification audit for FSC and an annual surveillance audit for SFI. Therefore, the auditors visited all three BPL regions and over 30 sites, including several within the Plan area. All non-conformances arising from that audit have been addressed and closed. Most recently, concurrent annual surveillance audits were conducted in October 2017 and 2018, in the North and East Regions, respectively.

Potential Adaptations to Climate Change in the Timber Management Program

As the most forested state in the country, Maine's forests play an important role in the state's carbon cycle – they annually capture more than half the state's emissions of CO₂ from fossil fuels. BPL's management approach of maintaining healthy, diverse, resilient stands aligns well with emerging concepts of 'carbon friendly' forestry. In addition, the Bureau is considering several responses to climate change in both forest management and forest harvest operations, and other established practices may also be beneficial. For example, forest management approaches include favoring white pine and red oak, two species well adapted to cope with projected change in climate in Maine (which the Bureau has been doing for several decades, for timber value and wildlife reasons). It may also be feasible to plant these species to increase their presence in the forests managed by the Bureau.

The primary operational changes being considered are in response to a documented trend of shorter, warmer cold seasons (December-March), and a greater chance of mid-winter thaws. One response is to favor shortwood harvest systems (also known as 'cut to length') to help extend the winter harvest while minimizing soil disturbance. The Bureau's construction of summer (gravel) roads, even for probable winter harvests, is also a means of mitigating the impact of these "cold season" changes while enabling access for recreation.

Another observed result of climate change is an increase in large precipitation events. Appropriate type, sizing and placement of water crossings on roads and trails and using "Smart Stream" techniques for the design and maintenance of water crossings will be increasingly important for both aquatic resources and road maintenance.

BPL staff are also increasingly aware of potential impacts from invasive species – both plants and insects. Staff have been trained to recognize, document, and where feasible, remove early infestations of invasive plants.

The Bureau will continue to study and discuss the effectiveness of these and other potential responses to climate change and will work to implement those that show the greatest benefit to the forests of Maine in the long term.

III. Planning Context

The purpose of this Plan is to identify management allocations and recommendations for the Public Reserved Lands in the region. The Plan has been developed taking into account the context of the region's other conservation lands and recreation resources.

Conservation Lands and Public Recreation Resources in the St. John Uplands Region

The southernmost public lands in the region, Telos and Chesuncook, are about a 3-hour drive from Bangor, the nearest major population center, and about a 4-hour drive from Augusta and 4.5-hour drive from Portland. The more northerly units are at a considerably greater distance from these major communities, but relatively close to smaller communities such as Allagash and Fort Kent (population ~4,100). The town of Millinocket (population ~5,000) is about a 1.5-hour drive from Telos and Chesuncook. The broader region includes a substantial amount of conservation lands within a matrix of commercial forest lands, with commercial camps and lodges at Chesuncook Village and several locations on the AWW adjacent to the public reserved lands.

Recreation Resources

North Maine Woods Management Area

The St. John Uplands Region is inextricably linked with North Maine Woods, Inc. (NMW). NMW is a private, non-profit organization that manages public use of 3.5 million acres of private commercial forestland within the northwest part of the state on behalf of more than 30 landowning companies. The NMW management area encompasses nearly the entire Plan area and surrounds all the public reserved lands addressed in this Plan. NMW maintains more than 330 authorized campsites and additional fire permit campsites where overnight camping is allowed but where building a campfire requires a MFS fire permit. Several of the authorized campsites are on the public reserved lands and are maintained under a contract with the Bureau. NMW also manages numerous designated bear bait sites, which include more than 20 sites on the BPL lands addressed in this plan.

NMW collects day use and camping fees (including for the AWW) at their checkpoints, some of which are manned from mid-May until mid-November, while others are automated. The day use fees are correlated to the state's minimum wage. Current day use fees are \$11 for Maine residents and \$16 for non-residents. Camping fees (in addition to the day use fee) are \$12/night for Maine residents and \$15 for non-residents. Visitors aged 70 and over pay no day use fee, and no fees are charged for visitors under 18 years old. Annual passes, special reduced seasonal rates, and special rates for visitors to sporting camps are also offered.

Access

All of the access routes into the region are private timber management roads maintained by the landowners. The primary route into the region from the south is the Telos Road, which extends northward from the Golden Road west of Baxter State Park. The primary routes from the east are Pinkham Road, which meets the Telos Road just north of the Telos Unit, and Realty Road, which joins the Blanchette/Maibec Road south of the Round Pond Unit. The primary route from the north is the Michaud Farm Road, which begins in Allagash and winds south to join the

Blanchette/Maibec Road west of the Round Pond Unit. NMW checkpoints control access to each of these routes.

Visitors may also cross into the region from Quebec, Canada via four NMW checkpoints, although those routes are mainly used by logging trucks. Passage at these border checkpoints requires proper US Customs clearance. US Customs operates an international border crossing station at each of these locations.

Camping and Hiking

As will be described in more detail later, several boat access and drive-to campsites are available within the Bureau's Gero Island/Chesuncook and Telos Units. However, most of the campsites on the public lands within the region are within the AWW, with 80 boat-access campsites on the waterway. Most of the more than 300 authorized campsites managed by NMW are within the Plan area. Most of the NMW sites are accessible by vehicle; 63 are on the St. John River, all accessible by canoe. All BPL and NMW sites are primitive campsites, with no potable water and vault or pit toilets.

Outside of Baxter State Park, hiking opportunities in this region are not extensive. Other than portage routes, trails are limited to relatively short day-hike routes to fire towers or other special destinations.

Fishing

The many lakes, ponds and rivers in the St. John Uplands Region provide diverse destinations for cold-water fishing. Among the popular species are brook trout, landlocked salmon, and togue (lake trout). The larger waters such as Chesuncook, Chamberlain, Eagle and Churchill Lakes are accessible from the private road system. Chesuncook and Chamberlain have developed boat launch facilities. MDIF&W's fishing guide highlights wild brook trout and lake trout fishing on Chamberlain, Churchill, Eagle and Allagash Lakes. These lakes are also known for their lake whitefish, a species less widely distributed in the state than trout and salmon. As for the region's rivers, MDIF&W directs anglers to the St. John for wild brook trout, landlocked salmon and small mouth bass, and to the Little Black for walk-in wild brook trout fishing. In recent years, the St. John and lower Allagash have also become known for the muskellunge (muskie) that migrated to the rivers from Canada. Local sporting camps and guides offer guided fishing on these rivers. Special regulations apply to various sections of the Allagash, St. John, and other streams in the region to protect the self-sustaining populations of trout, togue and whitefish.

A number of ponds in the region, several of which are on the Public Reserved Lands, are classified by MDIF&W as heritage brook trout waters. Most of these waters have never been stocked; others have not been stocked in at least 25 years and now have self-sustaining trout populations. Allagash Lake has the distinction of being the largest never-stocked water in Maine. Special regulations to protect the self-sustaining populations of brook trout have been enacted for these waters. A few ponds in the region are managed for trophy brook trout, with a more restrictive bag limits, minimum size and/or catch and release restriction. Unlike some other regions of the state, few ponds and streams in the region are stocked by MDIF&W.

Boating

The region is perhaps best known for the outstanding wilderness paddling opportunities on the AWW and the St. John River. Local outfitters offer guided canoe trips, rental equipment and some offer shuttle services. Canoeing and kayaking are also common activities on a number of the region's lakes and ponds outside the AWW.

A segment of the Northern Forest Canoe Trail (NFCT), which stretches from the Adirondacks of New York to the Canadian border at Fort Kent, Maine, runs the length of the St. John Uplands Region. This section exits the West Branch Penobscot River, crosses the upper end of Chesuncook Lake to reach Umbazooksus Stream and Lake, and via a portage and a crossing of Mud Lake, reaches Chamberlain Lake, within the AWW. The route then follows Chamberlain Lake north to a portage along the historic tramway to Eagle Lake, runs the length of Eagle and Churchill Lakes to the Allagash, and thence downstream to the St. John. BPL campsites on the PRC, Chesuncook, and Gero Island (managed by PRC), and within the AWW, are on the NFCT. All are fee campsites.

As alluded to above, both anglers and pleasure boaters have trailer-launching access to a few of the larger lakes and ponds in the region, including Chesuncook and Chamberlain Lakes. NMW also maintains a gravel ramp on Caucomgomoc Lake. Watercraft use and access restrictions, including on boat size and motors, have been implemented within the AWW to preserve the traditional canoe route experience. Only canoes and kayaks without motors or motors not exceeding 10 HP are permitted on Eagle and Churchill Lakes and downstream from there; there is a trailer launch facility on Churchill Lake near the dam.

Snowmobiling

In winter, snowmobiling provides access into remote areas of the region, for both ice fishing and touring. Unlike the rest of the state, the Integrated Trail System (ITS) does not extend into this region. However, an informal trail system connecting various destinations (most within the AWW) exists, varying somewhat from year to year based on landowner harvesting and road-plowing needs. Access to the AWW by snowmobile is limited to 19 specific locations enumerated in the AWW regulations.

Most riding in the southern part of the region occurs on the large lakes, with short overland connecting routes established in several locations to connect those water bodies. There are also trails linking Chesuncook Village with points to the south, outside the region, and with Allagash Lake and then Chamberlain Lake to the north. A favorite snowmobile destination is the historic locomotives sitting near the south shore of Eagle Lake since the 1930s, within the AWW but abutting a portion of the Chamberlain Unit.

In the northern part of the region, trails have been established within the Town of Allagash and nearby areas, linking to the BPL Deboullie Unit (Northern Aroostook Region) and other points east. The local club maintains 74 miles of trail in and around the town.

Winter trailer campsites are provided for snowmobilers and others at Kellogg Brook and the Chamberlain Thoroughfare parking area, at the south end of Chamberlain Lake, by special

agreement between the BPL Lands division and the AWW. AWW collects a monthly fee for the sites at those locations.

ATV Riding

ATVs are not permitted at any time of year within the great majority of the NMW management area, nor within Baxter State Park, thus ATV riding is only a minor activity in this Plan area. The exception is within the Town of Allagash, where the local club maintains 45 miles of trail, a portion of which are on state or town roads. Club membership is required to access the trails.

Hunting

Ample hunting opportunities exist in the St. John Uplands region for deer, black bear, moose, ruffed grouse, snowshoe hare and coyote. In addition to the State lands addressed in this plan, most of the commercial forestland in the region is open to hunting. Hunting is permitted within the AWW, with certain restrictions. The north part of the region records sizable moose harvests, and the wildlife management districts within the region record some of the largest bear harvest in the state, with less hunting pressure than other areas. Outside the Town of Allagash and environs, deer harvests are generally low. A number of sporting camps and guides offer deer, moose, bear and upland game bird hunts.

Other Major Conservation Lands in the Region

There are several working forest conservation easements that involve a major portion of the St. John Uplands Region, all of which are intended to support the long-term sustainable management of the protected properties including unique natural features, diverse wildlife and plant habitats, public access and traditional dispersed recreation opportunities. Substantial private conservation lands in the region are managed both as reserves and as working forest.

In 1998, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) purchased the St. John River Forest, 160,000 acres of forest bordering 40 miles of the Upper St. John River, on the western side of the region. The area shelters the second highest concentration of rare plants in Maine, stands of black spruce over 300 years old, and a dozen rare dragonflies. The land also offers prime habitat for American marten, otter, black bear, and the federally threatened Canada lynx. Two-thirds of the property is managed as a working forest, with timber harvested sustainably, and forest management FSC certified. One third of the forest is set aside as “forever-wild” un-harvested reserves to provide mature forest habitat for species like American marten. The Forest Society of Maine (FSM) holds and oversees a conservation easement on 6,300 acres of TNC-owned reserve lands surrounding Corner Pond, northeast of Baker Lake, an addition to the St. John River Forest acquired in 2014.

TNC also owns the Big Reed Forest Reserve, about 5,000 acres surrounding Big Reed Pond and located eight miles north of Baxter State Park off the Pinkham Road. The reserve encompasses the largest known remnant old-growth forest in the Northeast and one of the few ponds in the state with a native arctic char population. Data from Big Reed is used by MNAP to compare with old growth forests on the state’s ecological reserves.

In 2001, New England Forestry Foundation (NEFF) purchased the Pingree easement, covering more than 762,000 acres of the north Maine woods, the largest conservation easement in US

history. These lands, a majority of which lie within the Plan area and surround Allagash Lake and much of Chamberlain and Eagle Lakes, are managed as a working forest, with dual FSC and SFI certification. The forests contain numerous active bald eagle nests, 24,800 acres of managed deeryards, 72,000 acres of wetland habitat, Maine's most productive peregrine falcon nesting area, and at least 67 rare and endangered plant sites.

The Forest Society of Maine (FSM) holds the 282,000-acre West Branch Penobscot River Conservation Easement, a portion of which is in the southwest corner of the Plan area, surrounding Baker Lake and several additional townships to the west and south of the lake. The easement was established in 2003 to ensure sustainable forestry, ecological protections, and traditional recreation access on the protected lands. The St. John River's headwater ponds are also in the easement area, just outside the Plan area.

Since 2006 the State of Maine has held the Katahdin Forest Easement, covering nearly 195,000 acres of commercial forest and other lands west and south of Baxter State Park. (The easement was originally granted to TNC, which later transferred it to the State.) The northernmost portion of the easement lands, totaling about 65,000 acres, abut the Telos, Chamberlain and Gero Island Units and includes several exemplary natural communities and rare plants identified by MNAP. FSM conducts annual monitoring of the easement on behalf of the Bureau.

Summary of Planning Implications

1. The St. John Uplands Region Public Reserved Lands lie in an area highly valued for its natural resources. The culture and economy of the area are historically linked to the forest resources and outdoor recreation.
2. The recreation opportunities on the Public Reserved Lands are part of a much larger landscape-level system connecting the numerous lakes and ponds and historic travel routes including the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and the Northern Forest Canoe Trail.
3. The long-standing collaborative relationship the Bureau has maintained with North Maine Woods, Inc. for the management of road access to the public lands as well as maintenance of the widely scattered primitive campsites is and will remain indispensable to the public's use and enjoyment of the public lands.
4. Public and private initiatives to support the recreation-based economy and to conserve the special natural areas in the Region are strong. The hundreds of thousands of acres of conservation easement lands spread throughout the region, primarily on the Pingree and Katahdin Forest easements, as well as the large area of private conservation lands held in fee, are central to both objectives.
5. The overriding attraction of the area for recreationists is the region's many lakes, ponds and streams – particularly those associated with the Allagash Wilderness Waterway and the St. John River -- and the mix of undeveloped backcountry and commercial forest land open to traditional recreation uses. Careful stewardship is needed to protect these values while making the public lands available to enjoy.