

Rutland Plan Revision Meeting September 23, 2003: Public Comments

Break-Out Session: 6 Question Stations

1. What Kinds of Features are Important to have in Potential Wilderness?
2. What Kinds of Features are a Concern if Included in Potential Wilderness?
3. Which Evaluation Criteria do you Consider Most Important?
4. Which Specific Geographic areas to Include or Exclude from Potential Wilderness?
5. Are there Current Wilderness Mgm't Issues that the Plan Revision should Address.
6. Are there Other Special Areas that are Important to Protect? i.e. Botanical areas, National Recreation areas, Natural Research areas...

Public Comments

Question 1: What Kinds of Features are Important to have in Potential Wilderness?

High quality waters including wetlands
Areas that have large, unobstructed views of undeveloped areas and natural landscapes
High quality wildlife habitat for unique or imperiled species
Old growth
Large blocks of unfragmented habitat for native species-including those that might be reintroduced (marten)
Range of successional stages to provide diversity
Corridors for wildlife
Primitive trails to allow access through Wilderness in a non-invasive manner
Large enough areas to be able to sustain natural disturbance regimes
Entire watershed boundaries rather than scale
Old growth and potential future old growth
Opportunities for education-backcountry (locations that are conducive to manage for this)
Wildlife habitat-diversity of successional stages
Water for swimming and paddling-primitive recreation opportunities
Opportunity for multi-day off trail travel
Black bear habitat
Natural habitat
Ecological baseline for study and comparison-to other FS lands and private lands
To understand the characteristics of old growth-which are different now than 500 years ago
Large enough for natural processes to occur
There aren't any
Opportunities for shy, human-sensitive species

Question 2: What Kinds of Features are a Concern if Included in Potential Wilderness?

Bird habitat created by natural processes is important

We need as much land possible left alone to natural processes

Concern that by designating Wilderness we eliminate other uses (such as timber harvesting and motorized recreation)

Wilderness runs counter to sustainable timber harvest-particularly in a society that demands a lot of wood

Concern: loss of wildlife habitat-deer winter yards if Wilderness is expanded

Cultivate old growth

Concern" lack of timber harvest in Wilderness-with the Vermont economy, each time we take land out of timber harvest, process go up-more and more expensive for local people to build

Handicap accessibility: these maps potentially take a large part Vermont out of use by people who can't hike

Access is not a concern-Wilderness has value as habitat and resource protection

Preserve access and existing snowmobile trails to cultural heritage sites within Wilderness (Lamb Brook, Glastenbury)

Town history right-of-ways need to be researched to make sure legal right-of-ways don't exist in potential Wilderness

Unique recreation (cliffs for rock climbing)-if designated Wilderness, people may not be able to access

Wilderness designation has a negative economic impact on community

Concern" negative physical impact on surrounding land-if uses are restricted in one area, they will increase in other areas creating a negative social and physical impact

Don't permit ATV access into Wilderness

Question 3: Which Evaluation Criteria do you Consider Most Important?

Solitude and serenity should be on top of the list

Need to consider lower elevation Wilderness to designate

Include watershed systems in Wilderness

Cultivate/promote old growth for study/experience over a period of time

Need: we should ask if there is a need to keep land as non-Wilderness for present/future use...If not, or you can't find an answer, it should all be Wilderness

Emphasize large tracts of land for older trees

Consider old growth to be the most important criteria for Wilderness areas

Consider statistics and impacts to wildlife when converting land to Wilderness-we will lose deer winter yards, grouse, and other game animals

Wilderness needs to be preserved/added for its own sake, for natural processes-it is a natural laboratory. The recreation value is secondary-

Wilderness does not have to be accessible to be valued. Air, watersheds, and other natural processes are all connected and keep the ecosystems healthy, including human

Need to provide sanctuary for species and have ability to provide preservation of landform types and ecosystems

Serenity, primitive recreation uses and the importance of Wilderness protecting water quality as a watershed

Consider local, national distribution of Wilderness for need as a state percentage (15% of forest now)

Consider future needs for Wilderness, not just current needs

Consider more monitoring (not just recreation sampling) to get visitor uses and numbers in the future

Consider managing or adding Wilderness so that three day, off trail trips are possible, incorporating primitive challenges away from human influences (primitive and unconfined recreation)

Promote biological feature of common Vermont forests

Silence is important

Existing human uses should be considered in designating Wilderness areas

Clean water-streams that have high quality water should be part of the new Wilderness designation

Consider cultural sites and artifacts as part of Wilderness-not an exclusionary item (example: Glastenbury Tower)

Economic impact to local communities

Consider physical impact of Wilderness on surrounding natural resources

Consider negative social impacts on surrounding areas

For capability, Wilderness should be away from human influences

Consider increased resource demands on other lands-adjacent or not

Under availability, constraints and encumbrances-old county roads, rights of ways, should be properly researched to insure that these rights of ways no longer exist-check with Bears Atlas 1882

A need has been demonstrated by political reality based on public opinion to have more Wilderness

In the biological features-consider threats of insect and disease in Wilderness. State, private and research stations can be involved

Question 4: Which Specific Geographic areas to Include or Exclude from Potential Wilderness?

Include Glastenbury Mt. And surrounding area

Exclude areas in Glastenbury where existing snowmobile trails are located

Include low elevation areas

Include Wallingford Pond

Include Lamb Brook

Include White Rocks NRA

Include extensions of existing Wilderness areas

Exclude 55 and 53

Exclude winter deer yards

Include Lamb Brook!

Include part of 55 along western section of LT

Exclude areas that negatively impact community

Include Glastenbury as the "crown jewel"

Include Romance Mt.

Question 5: Are there Current Wilderness Mgm't Issues that the Plan Revision should Address.

Develop prescribed natural fire plans

Figure out how to control ATV use on state and federal land

Examine group size in Wilderness areas-notice inability of youth-serving outfitter are financially unable to provide Wilderness experiences for small groups-advocating no decrease in 10 person group size
Consider no geocaching or letterboxing in Wilderness
Provide additional parking areas for access (how about shuttling people?)
AT/LT and trails with heavy use would be better managed near edges of Wilderness, not dissecting the core interior
Should consider the ability to manage for wildlife habitat
Insure ability/right to maintain existing shelters (both existing and future)
Evaluations should include the economic impact to surrounding communities (should include social and physical)
Adequate plans to control the increasing problem of illegal motorized access on NF lands
Limits on maintenance of shelters
Manage for ecological diversity
Guidelines for control of invasive/exotic species
Limits/guidelines on numbers of groups using an area at the same time

Question 6: Are there Other Special Areas that are Important to Protect? i.e. Botanical areas, National Recreation areas, Natural Research areas...

Moosalamoo NRA
Catamount Trail corridor
Acquire and protect Somerset
Designate more NRAs to allow motorized recreation to balance increased Wilderness
Wetland areas and bogs
Winter deer yards
Wildlife habitat-partridges
Cape RNA-adequate buffer
Chittenden Reservoir-NRA
Acquire Coolidge West (state forest) and manage to National standards
Lamb Brook RNA
Increase utilization of RNA across forest for unique wetland complexes and threatened and endangered species habitat

General Comments

Can you hold a few meetings to inform people in parts of the state further from Forest boundaries? People at a distance also have a stake in the Forest, even though they make less direct personal use of its resources. Thanks!
Have wilderness with a little "w"-so that the Forest Service has flexibility to manage-don't limit management with Congressional designation

Corrections