



## **Management Area Descriptions**

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**The following Management Area (MA) descriptions are included in this handout:**

- 1. General Forest MA: a combination of existing MAs 2, 3, and 4**
- 2. Areas Not Managed for Timber due to Economic Conditions ("B" Land MAs)**
- 3. Remote Backcountry 6.1**
- 4. Backcountry Motorized 6.2**
- 5. Escarpment 8.X/6.X**
- 6. Alpine/Subalpine Special Area 8.X**
- 7. Newly Acquired (9.2) Lands**

**The following MAs have minor or no recommended changes to their general description and purpose:**

- **Wilderness (MA 5.1)**
- **Highly Developed Recreation Areas (MA 7.1A)**
- **Significant Streams (MA 9.4 only contains Eligible Rivers)**
- **Special Areas (MA 8.1 areas would be grouped into similar categories, which would be assigned separate MAs)**
- **White Rocks NRA**
- **AT/LT Special Area**

## **1. Management Area Description for General Forest MA (combination of existing MAs 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.2)**

Plan Revision Team proposes: remove MAs 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 4.1, and 4.2 and replace them with a combined General Forest Management Area

### **Description of existing MAs that this Management Area proposes to replace:**

MA 2.1 – Continuous forest canopy, roaded natural recreation, only uneven-aged silviculture

MA 2.2 – Continuous forest canopy, semi-primitive recreation, only uneven-aged silviculture

MA 3.1 – Mosaic of vegetative conditions, roaded natural recreation, primarily even-aged silviculture

MA 4.1 – Emphasis on conifers for deer wintering habitat, roaded natural recreation, even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture

MA 4.2 – Emphasis on conifers for deer wintering habitat, semi-primitive recreation, even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture

### **Major Emphasis:**

- Provide high quality sawtimber and other timber products on a sustained yield basis.
- Provide a mix of habitats for wildlife species, including deer wintering habitat.
- Provide a range of recreation opportunities, from low-use hiking trails to developed campgrounds.

**Desired Future Condition:** The Forest will be a mix of deciduous and coniferous forest stands of various types. The stands will vary in size, shape, height and tree species. Both even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture systems will be used. As a result, two different conditions will occur among the stands: some stands will consist of trees of about the same age and size; the remaining stands will consist of a mix of tree sizes and ages ranging from seedlings to very large mature trees.

Silvicultural practices will be used to meet timber, ecological, visual, and recreation objectives. Most stands will provide high quality sawtimber. Suitable habitat will be provided for a variety of wildlife and plant species. Deer wintering habitat will be emphasized in mostly conifer stands designated by Vermont Dept. of Fish & Wildlife.

Habitat at the landscape level will include a sustainable mix of young and mature forest. Permanent and temporary openings will occur across the landscape in shapes and sizes that are consistent with scenic objectives in an area. All forest communities that would naturally be present, such as aspen and oak, will be retained and enhanced where feasible.

Along major road corridors, large diameter trees of different species with a variety of bark and foliage characteristics will predominate. Numerous views of broad, changing landscapes will be provided along roads and trails. Views, ecological processes, and management practices will be interpreted at many stationary vista sites.

### **Compatible Uses:**

- A wide range of recreation opportunities that may include low use hiking trails to motorized recreation, potentially including ATVs on designated trails.
- Possible wind turbine sites for electric generation

**Incompatible Uses:** Winter recreation opportunities generally would not be compatible with deer wintering areas.

## **General Forest MA Continued...**

### **Advantages:**

- Even-aged and uneven-aged silvicultural systems could be used across the landscape
- Compatible with WMNF
- More flexibility for resource managers
- Apply Forest Plan age class & type composition objectives (wildlife) across the landscape

### **Disadvantages:**

- Some people want to maintain only uneven-aged silviculture in MA 2.1
- More project planning would be required. Forest Plan will determine mix of even-aged and uneven-aged silviculture.
- Would require more monitoring

## **2. Management Area Description for Areas Not Managed for Timber due to Economic Conditions ("B" Lands):**

Plan Revision Team proposes: remove the "B" Land MAs to provide clearer direction and to simplify forest management areas.

**Major Emphasis:** Same as the A lands except that trees will not be managed for timber production until economic conditions change or technologies improve. The B land designations emphasize a naturally appearing forest with continuous forest cover. B lands have a range of recreational emphasis from roaded natural to semi primitive.

**Desired Future Condition:** The Forest has trees of many ages and sizes and a continuous canopy. No large clearings will be created. The dominant trees are those that reproduce in shade (beech, red and sugar maple, hemlock). Uneven-age timber management will be the predominate technique for achieving desired conditions when it becomes economically practicable. There is no evidence of management from a distance.

Total Number of acres in B Lands: 14,969 (figures from current GIS coverage), 3.8% of the current land base. Of the 14,969 acres in B lands, 4,198 acres (28%) are tentatively suitable for harvesting timber.

### **Advantages:**

- Removing this MA would give these areas a more definitive MA and remove the need to reassess them – especially since most of them are not suitable for timber harvesting
- Removing this MA would allow lands suitable for timber harvesting to be placed in a MA where these lands could be managed and harvested
- Removing this MA would allow lands that are not suitable to be managed for other uses such as a non motorized recreation

### **3. Management Area Description for Remote Backcountry Forest (6.1)**

Plan Revision Team proposes: Modifying the current Primitive Area 6.1 description.

#### **Major Emphasis:**

This management area emphasizes large expanses of relatively undisturbed landscapes where terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems develop under natural disturbance regimes. Management actions are limited to those that help restore or maintain natural processes, natural communities, and all associated species within their natural ranges of variation in the landscape. Public use is managed at a scale and intensity that either helps keep species or processes within their natural range of variation, or has minimal effect on the area's integrity. Hiking, backpacking, and related foot trail recreational opportunities will be available which will provide a relative sense of isolation and remoteness in a predominantly natural or natural-appearing environment.

#### **Desired Future Condition:**

Extensive areas of northern hardwoods and conifers will dominate. These areas will contain a mix of tree sizes and ages, including very large live and dead trees, young trees and canopy gaps that occur as a result of natural disturbances. This management area will normally occur in patches of at least 2500 acres of consolidated land. There will be little evidence of current human development. Some historical evidence of human activities that have become overgrown or dilapidated by natural forces is acceptable.

The Forest will be accessible by foot and other non-motorized means of transport, such as skis, snowshoes, and mountain bikes. Such uses will tend to be concentrated around trail corridors. Motorized trails are not present. There will be no roads or non-recreational facilities. Recreation facilities, such as fire rings, may be present but will be primitive and must complement the desired recreation opportunities. Away from trails, evidence of, and interaction with, other users will be low. Recreational impacts will be managed to protect natural resources such as water quality and rare plants and animals, to minimize visual disturbance, and to preserve a sense of "wildness."

Changes in vegetation will predominantly be the result of natural processes. Under some circumstances, management actions that further the ecological goals and objectives of this MA may be appropriate. Management activities may be used to conserve and protect populations of threatened, endangered, or sensitive species (TES). Ecological restoration within these areas may occur through control of non-native invasive species, removal of forest plantations, road closures, maintenance of deer wintering areas, anadromous and native inland fish stocking, and aquatic habitat restoration. Small and unique wildlife habitat features, such as historical apple orchards, may be maintained. The minimum managerial controls necessary will be used to maintain acceptable ecological and social standards.

## **Remote Backcountry Forest Continued...**

### **Compatible Uses:**

- Non-motorized recreation
- Mountain bike recreation
- Management to conserve and protect water quality, threatened, endangered and sensitive species, existing apple orchards, deer wintering areas
- Control of non-native invasive species (plants, animals, insects, and disease)
- Maintenance of existing overlooks and vistas
- Removal of forest plantations
- Aquatic habitat restoration
- Research
- Motorized equipment for administrative purposes
- Fire use within ecosystems naturally regulated by fire

### **Incompatible Uses:**

- Motorized equipment for non-administrative uses
- Motorized recreation
- Horse recreation
- Wind and communication tower development
- Surface oil, gas, and mineral exploration and development
- Road-building
- Utility corridors
- Construction of non-recreational facilities
- Control of native insects and disease
- Prescribed fire in ecosystems not naturally regulated by fire

### **Advantages:**

- Relative to the existing 6.1 management area, the changes are minor and are generally for clarity and ecological language updates. This MA clarifies that management can be used for certain purposes, such as for TES species or ecological restoration. It does not define the management method, although it does restrict methods using motorized equipment. The primary addition here is ecological restoration management that includes removal of plantations and maintenance of deer wintering areas (specifically the thermal cover). Overall, this MA provides a middle ground between Wilderness and General Forest Area (GFA), allowing active management for very specific purposes, more than Wilderness and less than GFA. Sled dogs trails and mountain bike trails may be designed and designated.

### **Disadvantages:**

- This MA may be less like Wilderness than the existing MA, given that management is allowed for more purposes. This MA does not distinguish between commercial and non-commercial methods, and does not preclude commercial timber sales if they are for achieving the noted restoration goals.

#### 4. Management Area Description for Backcountry Motorized (6.2)

Plan Revision Team proposes: Change name from "Semi-Primitive Recreation" to "Backcountry Motorized."

**Major Emphasis:** This management area would allow timber harvests, winter motorized recreation, and potentially summer motorized trail use. It would remove confusion as it does not use a Recreation Opportunity Spectrum (ROS) category in the title.

**Desired Future Condition:** These areas are located at least ½ mile from high standard roads and are larger than 2,500 acres. Areas in this category are often in a setting appearing to have a mixture of tree sizes and types. In areas less used by recreationists, activities such as timber harvesting may be evident but will be scattered over time and space. When viewed from a distance, human activity would not be evident on some of the upper elevations of sensitive peaks and ridges. Some evidence of activity may be noticeable on lower levels, but will blend with surrounding landscape. Roads will be of a low maintenance standard, and unimproved. Some stands will have trees about the same age and size while other stands will have a mixture of these. Some areas of undisturbed forest will have many large, old trees with a few scattered openings created by wind, ice, old age or other natural forces. Wildlife habitats will support moderate populations of both game and non-game species, and animals requiring extensive areas of remote, undisturbed forest will be present.

#### **Compatible Uses:**

- Motorized Recreation: snowmobile trails, potentially including ATVs
- Non-motorized Recreation: mountain bikes, horse use, and sled dogs on designated trails, hiking, snowshoeing, and x-c skiing
- New temporary roads may be built, but would be closed and restored at project completion
- New trail systems may be built
- Permanent openings will be maintained
- Wood fiber would be available, with constraints below

#### **Incompatible Uses:**

- Roads built to a high standard for permanent addition to the Forest Roads system
- Timber harvest and other human disturbances would not dominate the landscape
- Cell phone towers and wind-powered turbines
- Timber harvest has some constraints such as extended rotation, fewer intermediate cultural treatments and other modifications to benefit backcountry settings

#### **Advantages:**

- Makes the distinction between winter and summer motorized-use trails
- Horse trails, sled dogs and mountain bike trails may be designed and designated
- Defines what types of trail use may be allowed.
- Provides clarity. The previous MA description stated "Semi-Primitive" and allowed motorized use in the description, but did not spell out season of motorized use or other trail uses
- Provides a more remote setting that would include some timber harvest and types of trail uses that are in addition to pedestrian activities like hiking, x-c skiing, snow shoeing

## **5. Management Area Description for Green Mountain Escarpment (8.X or 6.x)**

Plan Revision Team proposes: Creating this Management Area

### **Major Emphasis:**

To emphasize the management of natural communities along the escarpment (definition - a long cliff or steep slope separating two comparatively level or more gently sloping surfaces and resulting from erosion or faulting) which forms the western boundary of the Forest. Several of these natural communities are rare or uncommon, and provide habitat for trees, herbs, and ferns considered rare or uncommon on the Forest or within the State. Emphasis is on active management of natural community diversity to maintain and enhance populations of rare or uncommon plant and animal populations.

### **Desired Future Condition:**

This management area will provide a diverse array of natural communities and stages of vegetation development. Steep cliffs and outcrops frequently dominate this management area. Oaks and hemlock mixed with northern hardwoods will form the dominant vegetation. Areas of large older trees will be interspersed with regenerating areas, as well as with small patch communities of forest, woodland, and open types, including such rare and uncommon types as pitch pine-oak-heath-rocky summit, temperate calcareous cliffs and outcrops, natural red pine forest, dry oak forests and woodlands, and dry oak-hickory-hop hornbeam forest. The variety of natural communities is reflective of the diversity in the terrain, and the mix of calcareous and acidic bedrock along the escarpment. As several rare species and uncommon habitats in this area require limited shade, vegetation management to maintain some of these communities may require the use of commercial and non-commercial tree harvesting, and fire. Experimentation with a variety of traditional and experimental silvicultural practices for management of the forested natural communities will be evident.

Both non-motorized and motorized dispersed use is allowed. Motorized trail use is limited to the winter months, and will be confined to trail corridors. Levels of use will range from high use to low use areas, and management will emphasize maintaining this range, that is, low use areas will be managed to remain low use and high use areas will be managed to remain high use. Interaction between users will vary by season. There will be obvious evidence of trail signs, grooming, and snowmobiles on motorized trails in the winter. Some evidence of motorized use, such as sound, may go beyond trail corridors. In summer, use will be concentrated on trail corridors. Away from trails and in low use portions of this Management Area, evidence of, and interaction with, other users will be low.

The escarpment has areas of high concentration of heritage resources. Such areas may be explored and developed for education and interpretation purposes, so long as the conservation goals of the management area are met.

## **Green Mountain Escarpment Continued...**

### **Compatible Uses:**

- Vegetation management for maintenance of TES species, red oak, deer wintering habitat, and other natural communities
- Fire management for maintenance of fire-dependent natural communities and species, as well as those uncommon communities that may benefit from fire management
- Existing non-motorized and winter motorized recreational opportunities (and associated roads and trails), except when in conflict with the conservation goals of this management area
- Research (both manipulative and non-manipulative, especially as it relates to management to perpetuate rare and uncommon natural communities and species)
- Mountain bike recreation
- New road construction (Class 1 or 2 type) only if it furthers the conservation goals of the area and the benefits outweigh the negative effects
- Existing utility corridors
- NNIS management

### **Incompatible Uses:**

- Horse recreation
- Wind and communication tower development
- Surface oil, gas, and mineral exploration and development
- New utility corridors
- Control of native insects and disease
- New motorized trails

### **Advantages:**

- The escarpment is a unique landscape that includes a high proportion of rare and uncommon natural communities and species on the Forest. Several of these natural communities rely on natural disturbance much more frequently than typical northern hardwood stands to continue to exist. There is a great deal of research in the Eastern Region on management of natural communities that are regulated by fire and other natural disturbances that occur at more frequent intervals, yet only a limited amount of this research may be applicable to these communities along the escarpment. The primary advantage of the MA is to recognize the values that the escarpment provides in terms of species and natural community diversity, recognize their particular vulnerability to loss due to removal of fire as a disturbance element in these systems, and recognize the need for research and careful adaptive management in application of new silvicultural and other management techniques to perpetuate these communities.

### **Disadvantages:**

- None noted, except that this MA may be perceived as unnecessary to achieve the goals noted – that this could happen just as easily in the General Forest Area.

## 6. Management Area Description for Alpine and Subalpine Special Area (8.X)

Plan Revision Team proposes: Creating this Management Area

**Major Emphasis:** To recognize, conserve, and interpret the alpine and subalpine zone, and its associated ecological values, along the northern Green Mountain ridgeline.

**Desired Future Condition:** The areas will continue to be dominated by low growing alpine and subalpine plants mixed with bedrock, talus, or gravel. Soils go through a freeze-thaw cycle and can be subject to landslides. Broad vegetation groupings include heath barrens and heath-krummholz. Species that are unique to these habitats, such as Bigelow's sedge and Bicknell's thrush, will be found here. These areas are concentrated in an elevation zone between 3500' to over 4000'. Changes in vegetation will be primarily the result of natural processes. Management of the alpine and subalpine areas will recognize and conserve the cultural values of Native Americans inherent to these lands.

Evidence of human activity will be limited to primarily hiking trails. Recreational facilities such as ski trails and lift lines will be limited, as will other administrative facilities, such as towers. There will be no new roads on the Forest in this area. The primary recreational uses will be hiking and winter orienteering, and efforts will be made to confine use to designated trails or use areas, in particular when in conflict with protection of alpine and subalpine species and habitat. This habitat is particularly fragile and vulnerable on the National Forest. It represents the southern-most extension of these communities in Vermont, and so is of very limited extent.

### **Compatible Uses:**

- Hiking
- Existing facilities and roads
- Further use restrictions may be applicable based on monitoring
- Vegetation and recreation management to perpetuate these natural communities
- Interpretive signage

### **Incompatible Uses:**

- New cell and wind towers
- Open campfires
- New facilities and roads
- Motorized recreation
- Horse and mountain bike use

### **Advantages:**

- Expands the existing MA 8.1 (Mount Abraham) Special Area to include related natural communities upon which certain rare species are dependent. It also recognizes the value of krummholz to rare species like Bicknell's thrush. The extension of MA 8.1 is fairly small in acreage and does not represent any suitable lands.

### **Disadvantages:**

- There may be additional constraints on ski area development at Sugarbush, and other recreational opportunities in these areas, depending on the effects on these fragile or rare resources.
- Confusion may be caused: much of this MA may be included in other existing MAs, such as Wilderness and the AT/LT corridor. In such a case, the most restrictive Standards and Guidelines would apply.

## 8. **Management Area Recommendation for 9.2 lands:**

Plan Revision Team proposes: eliminating MA 9.2

### Option 1:

- The tract should have the same MA classification as the surrounding or adjacent National Forest lands if it has similar attributes or;
- If the land has attributes that are unique or different from the surrounding land, the Forest Supervisor and an integrated team will evaluate the tract and decide, within two years from the date of purchase, whether a new MA Designation is needed.

### Option 2:

Map existing Forest Service ownership and delineate Management Area (MA) boundaries. Also, delineate MA boundaries for all lands within the proclamation boundary to show what MA parcels would be placed in if they were to be acquired.