



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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August 2, 2016

Re: Proposed and existing OHRV trails at Nash Steam Forest

Glenn Normandeau, Executive Director

Glenn,

I would like to share with you my observations and thoughts relative to the proposed new OHRV trail that would connect the existing West Side Trail to North Road in Stark via the Amos Emory Road. The proposed route was described by Will Staats in an August 1, 2016 memo to you.

There are two existing OHRV trails on Nash Stream Forest. The West Side Trail has been used by OHRVs since about 2002 and was formerly and is today a logging road that is used occasionally when DRED conducts forest management activities in that area on Nash Stream Forest. The Kelsey Notch Trail is in the very northern part of Nash Stream Forest and has been used by OHRVs since about 2013. There is some question about whether or not the State followed the law in adopting this as an OHRV trail, and recent correspondence between DRED and the Society for the Protection of New Hampshire Forests, Appalachian Mountain Club and The Nature Conservancy have not culminated in a final determination of that legality.

Currently, it appears the West Side Trail gets some OHRV use, but nothing like what most of the Ride the Wilds trails. This is due to the fact that this trail does not connect easily to the Ride the Wilds trails and is a self-contained loop for the most part. If any Ride the Wilds trail is connected to the West Side trail, especially if the intent is to make it part of a larger Ride the Wilds loop, it is likely that the OHRV use on the West Side Trail will increase dramatically. From my many hours walking in the mainstem of Nash Stream, a dramatic increase in OHRV traffic will certainly negatively impact the angling experience in Nash Stream. This would be particularly unfortunate given that NH Fish and Game, DRED-Division of Forests and Land and Trout Unlimited have spent more than 10 years and \$1.3 million restoring Nash Stream and its tributaries specifically for angling for wild brook trout. This is literally one of the largest stream restoration projects in the northeast. Over the years, I have heard from the mainstem of Nash Stream OHRVs on the West Side Trail, even when they are several hundred feet away. Most anglers that fish the part of Nash Stream near the West Side Trail do so for the overall experience of being away from multitudes of cars, dwellings, OHRVs and other human activities. That experience will surely be impacted by the increased OHRV use that any Ride the Wilds

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connector trail would bring.

The Technical Team responsible for writing the Nash Steam Forest Management Plan visited the Kelsey Notch Trail in November 2015. I was disappointed to see the road erosion problems on this trail and the resulting truckloads of sediment that were obviously entering the perennial streams there. This is the direct result of a lack of suitable erosion control on this OHRV trail. My understanding is that there is supposed to be in place a signed agreement between DRED and the OHRV club that states the monitoring required and timelines for restoration work to preclude such erosion issues. However, no such agreement has been sent to the Technical Team. We were told during our November 2015 visit that DRED Bureau of Trails staff would speak with the local OHRV club to get the club to fix the erosion problems. My understanding is that some work was done in 2016, but that the erosion issues may be even worse now because the needed work still has not been done. Therefore, it seems that this trail should be closed until a solid, signed agreement is in place and the erosion problems are fixed. Furthermore, the agreement should include details about how often and when assessments will be done and by when erosion issues will be fixed. Again, the sediment coming off this road and entering perennial streams is tremendous.

The site visit of the proposed new OHRV trail from the Amos Emory Road to North Road by the Technical Team was conducted on July 28, 2016. While driving on the road, I was informed by the Forest Managers of Nash Stream Forest, Maggie Machinist and Todd Caron, that this road is typically very wet and was only dry on the site visit day because of the significant drought this summer. Indeed, where they pointed out locations where the road is typically very wet, it appeared there were obligate wetland plants such as rushes growing in the road. They also told me that the loggers could not operate on the road this late winter because the road is simply too wet and we noted several hardwood log piles that had not been removed (most were logs too short for the mill but till useable for firewood). Where logging traffic had occurred this winter, plants had not yet filled in the road, however grasses fully covered the road in those sections where logging equipment had not been on the road. Notably, at least one of these areas was on a very steep slope and at the bottom of this was a perennial stream. If OHRVs were allowed on this trail, the grass cover would certainly be gone and erosion issues could easily be a problem, with the potential of a situation similar to that on the Kelsey Notch Trail.

Overall, if any connector trail is allowed on Nash Steam Forest, the angling experience, and possibly also fish habitat and water quality, will be negatively impacted. Currently, the West Side Trail goes through the heart of Nash Steam Forest, following the mainstem of Nash Stream for several miles. The impact to the resources from the Kelsey Notch Trail is probably less only because I suspect very few people fish the stream in that area.

Sincerely,

John A. Magee
Fish Habitat Biologist

Cc: Maggie Machinist
Jim Oehler
Will Staats
Dianne Timmins
Captain John Wimsatt
Jason Smith
Scott Decker