



New Hampshire Fish and Game Department

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Glen Normandeau, Director

Glen,

Due to the fact that you serve on CORD I felt it was important to provide you with a few notes regarding the proposed East–West ATV trail on Nash Stream. Jim Oehler, John Magee, Dianne Timmins and I are members of the Nash Stream technical committee and have been heavily involved with the re-write of the management plan. Jim Oehler and John Magee may have been keeping you apprised regarding this controversial trail as well.

Earlier this year a straw vote was taken where most tech team members had strong reservations about any further ATV trail development in the forest. There also continues to be questions surrounding the issue of allowing any ATV trails in the Nash Forest and whether or not this recreational activity fits with the Vision. SPNHF, TNC and AMC have raised concerns over the legitimacy of ATVs on Nash and have also questioned the approach used to review trail proposals.

For the first time the Tech team walked the proposed trail location last Thursday (July 29). Present from Fish and Game were myself and John Magee. This trail location had been laid out earlier by trails bureau personnel and the local ATV club. This trail starts on the gravel Amos Emery Road and progress to a woods road which is currently grassed over and passable with some difficulty by pickups. From the end of this road it takes the Cohos trail until it crosses Rowell Brook and then forges through undisturbed forest along the side of the mountain above Christine Lake where no trail presently exists. It then rejoins the Cohos trail leading to the highway in Stark. Along the route it also intersects with several historic hiking trails which originate at Christine Lake.

Here are my brief observations regarding impacts to wildlife and wildlife habitat along the route. I would also refer you to the notes that Jim Oehler has made when he cast his vote to not allow any further ATV trails on the Forest.

1. The proposed trail route passes within northern hardwoods stands which have substantial

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American beech stocking. The beech in this area has been used historically by black bears for feeding as evidenced by historic scarring. Currently the gate to this area is locked to protect the forest management road. Restricting vehicular access also inadvertently helps to prevent excessive disturbance to these animals in both the fall and spring when they may be feeding. Were this trail to go in there is the potential for considerable disturbance to these animals during the fall and spring which could lead to some avoidance of the area by bears or at least influence feeding times and duration. This would apply to other species of wildlife that utilize beech nuts or for those predators which prey upon animals using this food source and would include marten, fisher, coyote, fox and various raptor species.

2. I was very concerned over the location of where the trail will be entirely new construction as it leaves Rowell Brook and parallels the Nash Stream boundary line. Here the trail would be built for some distance on a side hill which is strewn with boulders and would pass through exceptional spruce and fir stands. Portions of these stands consist of mature spruce and fir over topping a dense understory of softwood regeneration. Historic moose browsing is in evidence here along with snowshoe hare sign. These stands are located adjacent to significant ledge outcrops which provide excellent den sites for bear, bobcat and other animals. The dense softwood provides excellent cover and prey habitat for bobcat, marten and lynx. Lynx were detected in the Phillips Brook drainage several years ago which is not a long distance from this location.
3. As such the new trail will be a significant fragmenting feature on a landscape that is not fragmented at present. The Nash Stream Forest throughout the proposed route, but particularly at the eastern end, is relatively remote, and adjacent to protected undeveloped forestland. This new trail is essentially a road carrying motorized traffic and associated noise. I am concerned that this trail as proposed will have a detrimental impact to the use of this habitat by wildlife. I would not recommend that this trail go through as proposed.

Sincerely,



William W. Staats
Regional Wildlife Biologist

Cc: Maggie Machinist
Jim Oehler
John Magee
Dianne Timmins