



February 8, 2017

Mr. Brad Simpkins, Director
NH Department of Resources & Economic Development
Division of Forests & Lands
Attention: Nash Stream Plan
172 Pembroke Road
Concord, NH 03301

Dear Director Simpkins:

Our organizations appreciate this opportunity to present joint testimony to the Department of Resources and Economic Development (DRED) on the recreation chapter of the draft Nash Stream Forest Management Plan. Individually, some of us may submit additional testimony on other parts of the draft plan.

As the draft plan observes in its introduction, the State acquired Nash Stream Forest for three primary reasons: 1) to ensure that the property continues to contribute to forest economy through the sale of wood products, 2) to provide continued public access for traditional recreation uses, and 3) to protect the Nash Stream watershed's natural beauty and ecological values.

To protect the economic and ecological viability of the Nash Stream Forest, as well as the watershed's natural beauty, it is important to limit the fragmentation of the forest. New ATV trails create undesirable forest fragmentation --- by their construction and by their use. Unlike forest roads which may be used on a limited basis once every 30-40 years, heavily used ATV trails adversely impact the natural communities and natural systems at work in the forest. We believe this alone is a compelling argument for limiting any new ATV trails from being establishing within the Nash Stream watershed.

To protect the traditional public recreational uses of the Nash Stream Forest and watershed, limiting ATV use to the two existing trails also makes common sense. As the draft plan acknowledges, the traditional public recreational uses of the land prior to state ownership precluded motorized recreational uses aside from snowmobiling. For many decades prior to the state's acquisition of these lands, their private owners invited many public uses including fishing, hunting, hiking, snowshoeing, cross country skiing and snowmobiling. These multiple uses fit with the prior landowners' management objectives to manage the land as a working commercial forest. Four wheeled motorized use by the public did not fit with the forest management

objectives of the land, and was therefore prohibited. The initial management plan for Nash Stream adopted by DRED in 1995 precluded ATV use for these reasons.

We believe it would be most consistent with the original purpose of the state's acquisition of Nash Stream Forest to limit ATV use of the property to the West Side Trail and the Kelsey Notch Trail on terms approved by the NH Council on Resources and Development on December 8, 2016. We support Objective 1 and Objective 3 in section 10.3.4 of the draft plan. However, we oppose Objective 2.

We believe that the new management plan should limit ATV use of Nash Stream Forest to the two existing ATV trails. We urge DRED to conclude that no new ATV trails should be contemplated for the planning period covered by the draft plan.

Our organizations are committed to working with DRED, Ride the Wilds, local ATV clubs, landowners, and the many other interested stakeholders in developing a long term master plan for recreational trail use in Coos County. This should include all recreational trail stakeholders. We are ready to roll up our sleeves to work with all other interested stakeholders to find common ground on where recreational trails --- including ATV/UTV trails --- can and should be appropriately located.

Sincerely,

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