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DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
BUREAU OF PARKS AND LANDS
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AMANDA E. BEAL
COMMISSIONER

Date: November 3, 2026

To: St. John Uplands Region Management Plan Advisory Committee Members
From: Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Bureau of Parks and Lands
Re: 1st Five-Year Review of the St. John Uplands Region Management Plan – Final Report

By this memorandum, the Bureau is reporting the results of the 1st Five-Year Review of the St. John Uplands Region Management Plan adopted in August 2021. The St. John Uplands plan guides the management activities of the Bureau on over 62,000 acres of Public Reserved Lands, which includes the Gero Island Unit on Chesuncook Lake; the Telos and Chamberlain Lake Units on Chamberlain, Eagle, and Allagash Lakes; the Round Pond Unit on the Allagash River; and six smaller lots mainly located near the Town of Allagash. Most of these public lands are adjacent to the Allagash Wilderness Waterway.

While the plan was adopted for a 15-year period, the Bureau is required to report to the Advisory Committee at five-year intervals on accomplishments and changing conditions that may warrant amendments to the plan. This Five-Year Review covered the period of 2021 through 2026.

The Bureau emailed its 1st Five-Year Report for the St. John Uplands Plan to the Advisory Committee members on September 14, 2026, and requested comments on the report via an attached memo. Several accomplishments and other actions taken were highlighted, and updates on a number of management issues identified in the plan were provided. The Bureau did not identify any new issues that were not addressed in the 2021 plan.

We also reminded the Advisory Committee of the Bureau's Feb. 2026 final decision to designate the entire 690-acre Allagash Mountain subunit of Chamberlain Public Lands as ecological reserve, with a Special Protection – Ecological Reserve allocation. The plan amendment that incorporates this change in designation and allocations into the St. John Uplands Plan was enclosed with the Five-Year Report.

The Bureau received written comments from one Advisory Committee member. The comments and the Bureau's response to each are presented in the attached table.

With this memo, the 1st Five-Year Review process is completed, and the plan amendment is adopted. Thank you for your continued participation in the St. John Uplands Region Plan Advisory Committee.

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Summary of Advisory Committee Comments and Bureau of Parks and Lands Responses on the St. John Uplands Management Plan 1st 5-Year Review

Comment Period Sept. 14 – Oct. 14, 2026

Comment	Response
From: Frances Killea, Natural Resources Council of Maine	
Ecological Reserve addition at Allagash Mtn	
I had the privilege of assisting with the ecological survey that contributed to the addition of the Allagash Mountain subunit to the Chamberlain Ecological Reserve, and I'm pleased to see its 700 acres of beautiful yellow birch and sugar maple join the unit. NRCM supports growing Maine's ecological reserve system for the protection of such exemplary units.	• Comment noted
Conservation of late-successional and old-growth forest	
The St. John Uplands and Allagash River watershed are part of the largest intact temperate forest in North America, encompassing diverse forested and wetland natural communities, providing habitat for numerous wildlife species, and harboring waterways that can support native cold water fish species; this watershed is the most important of its kind for such species east of the Mississippi.[1] These ecological services are balanced with the timber value of the region. Recent evidence based on publicly available National Agriculture Imagery Program (NAIP) imagery, or high-resolution aerial imagery (2025), indicates a loss of some of the region's mature forest, which was mapped beginning in 2017 by Our Climate Common.[2] While not all the land within the Allagash River Watershed is under the jurisdiction of the Bureau of Parks and Lands (BPL), it is worth noting these losses and encouraging BPL to consider management for late-successional forest characteristics, as mature/old forests provide unique and irreplicable biological services. For these reasons, existing late-successional and old-growth stands should be a high priority for conservation within the St. John Uplands project area.	• The Bureau's timber management policy directives include: "Particular attention will be paid to maintaining an adequate area of mature forest with mid- and late-successional characteristics. These biodiversity objectives will encompass the entire landbase, including both managed and unmanaged acres." • The designated ecological reserves areas described in the plan include substantial forest areas with old-growth characteristics and are excluded from timber management. Portions of these reserves that are at earlier successional stages will move toward mature/old forest over time. In additional the Round Pond Unit contains small old-growth areas totaling ~80 acres, allocated to Special Protection (see plan p. 86). o Chamberlain Unit: Ecological Reserve at Bear Mountain (2,890 acres) and on the two Eagle Lake peninsulas added to the ecoreserve in the plan (613 acres) o Gero Island/Chesuncook Unit: Gero Island Ecological Reserve (3,175 acres)

(note – footnoted references are provided at bottom of table)	• While conserving existing late-successional and old-growth stands is an important consideration, the Bureau's forest management strategy ensures that managed stands will naturally develop and maintain a late-successional component over time.
Consideration of recommendations contained in the AWW ecological assessment	
In addition to the management recommendations in the current St. John Uplands plan, future iterations of the plan should consider recommendations detailed in section V of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway assessment *A River in Space and Time*.	• The plan will be due for a comprehensive review and update at the 15-year date (2036). At that time, the Bureau will consider whether and to what degree the AWW ecological assessment report's recommendations apply to the adjacent Bureau lands in the plan area, and whether any changes in management direction (expressed as new management recommendations or revised allocations) are justified.
Potential sales of leased lots or undeveloped camplots at Chesuncook Unit	
The plan states that any prospective sales of leased lots or undeveloped camplots would be subject to third-party appraisal and presented to the legislature before finalization. How many acres do these lots comprise? Is there an opportunity for the public to engage in the decision-making process around selling camplots to private landowners?	• Only two small leased lots remain: the lot hosting the historic village church/ community center and adjacent parsonage, and a camplot at the far south end of the village. There are about a dozen BPL-owned undeveloped camplots in Chesuncook Village. As stated on p. 74 of the plan, "In most cases, there appears to be little public value in the lots, most of which are less than 0.5 acre and abut one or more private camplots." Landlocked lots between private lots could be sold to adjacent camplot owners. • By statute, approval of the legislature is required for the sale of public reserved lands (for parcels greater than ¼ acre). The statute also addresses public notice and engagement: "Before requesting approval from the Legislature, the director shall give notice of the proposed sale, exchange or relocation and may hold a public hearing. A public hearing must be held by the director if requested by any party." (MSRA Title 12, Section 1851)

References provided in comment:

1, 3. McMahon, J. 2023. A River in Space and Time: An Ecological Assessment of the Allagash Wilderness Waterway. Allagash Wilderness Waterway Foundation, Portland, Maine.

2. Hagan, J., Shamgochian, B., Taylor, M., Reed, J. (2026). Using LiDAR to quantify, map, and conserve late-successional and old-growth forest in Maine, USA. Ecosphere 17.10.1002/ecs2.70670