

April 1, 1974

Dear Fellow WODC Members

The length of this letter may be sufficient to discourage the reading! Martha Chandler and I do think you want to be kept informed of events which affect the Wonalancet Region. During the months since the Annual Meeting there have been three developments which may be of concern to WODC members:

1. Early in the Fall of 1973 the White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) announced a series of hearings on the issue of the winter use of National Forest trails and areas. I attended the Manchester, N.H. hearings and read a prepared statement. Later, in November, I was requested by the Forest Service to attend a meeting in Conway on the same topic. At the hearings it became apparent that there was a conflict of interest between those who would like to use the WMNF area for hiking and ski touring only, and those who would like to have unrestricted use of the national Forests--- that is, use snowmobiles on WMNF land wherever there are no physical barriers.

On December 21, 1973 the WMNF released its regulations on the use of snowmobiles on forest lands. Over 60% of the National Forest lands were left open to snowmobile use. The final statement released on December 21 by the WMNF concerning the use of snowmobiles in the Wonalancet area was not the statement which the Forest Service had proposed at an earlier date. (The earlier statement proposed restrictions on snowmobile use throughout the Wonalancet Region.)

The misunderstandings which developed are obvious to all who know Wonalancet-- there is no access to WMNF lands in the Wonalancet area over public land. All access is across private land. And in most instances private landowners do not wish to have public "rights-of-way" for snowmobiles on their land.

This issue of the winter use of Forest Service lands is not closed. There will be revisions and reconsiderations. Martha and I urge you to think about the issues and to aid in the formulation of some sort of "Position Statement" which might be acted upon at the annual meeting.

- 2 On March 15, 1974 I received from the District Ranger of the Saco River District of WMNF an "Environmental Analysis" for the "Spring Brook Sale". (Since it is a fourteen (14) page document, I hesitate to send a copy to each member.) In essence, the WMNF plans to clearcut a total of about 100 acres of forest located on the eastern flanks of Mt. Wonalancet and Mt. Hibbard. Unquestionably, these areas will be visible and apparent to anyone who "lifts up his eyes unto the hills" from the Wonalancet Intervale. On the other hand, the timber to be removed is almost wholly dead and and dying beech and birch severely injured by the attacks of the saddled prominent and oyster shell scale. The flanks of Wonalancet and Hibbard would be unsightly for many years with dead and dying forest until natural regeneration takes place. It is believed that clearcutting may speed the regeneration process.

In my opinion, of much greater concern to WODC is the plan to construct a permanent road leading about 0.8 mile into the WMNF. Here is the appropriate quote.

"Impacts - This sale will require the construction of 0.8 mile of specified road, and the installation of two permanent drainages. We are now in the process of obtaining a permanent right-of-way across the land of Gertrude and Charles Behr. Just east of the junction of the right-of-way and the Ferncroft Road, an

extra 20 foot wide strip of land will be purchased for the purpose of making a parking lot.

Much of the road location across Behr's land is on a flood plain. Our specified road will be kept level with the flood plain to avoid losing our surface material during periods of high water. The road will be narrow, low standard, with minimum cuts and fills, and on a general grade of less than 10% with short pitches going up to 15%. This specified road will not be special service, nor will it be closed to public travel."

At a subsequent meeting with Verland Ohlson, District Ranger, I stated my strong opposition to the construction of the specified road open to public use. Following is the prepared statement I have made to the WMNF.

"Access Roads

The proposed access roads should be reconsidered. Whereas the clearcut areas will be temporary visual scars which will be healed by forest regeneration in a few years, it is the usual fate of forest roads to become "improved", widened, lengthened, and eventually paved. Road building tends to be irreversible. Snowmobiles, then trail-bikes, all-terrain vehicles, four-wheel drive vehicles follow where a bull-dozer has preceded. In my opinion, there will be much greater concern among local residents and Wonalancet Out Door Club members over the construction of access roads than over clearcutting.

- a. There is no justification given in the "Environmental Analysis" for the construction of the specified road. One can speculate that the construction of the specified road has been a condition for obtaining a right-of-way over private land. If so, is there any reason for constructing a specified road on Forest Service land?
- b. Since the specified road will serve as the lower portion of the two mile secondary road, cannot a secondary road serve the needs of the Spring Brook sale?
- c. No justification is given for making the specified road open to public travel. I urge that the road constructed on National Forest land be a secondary road, closed to public travel by the installation of signs prohibiting public use, and further that after the cutting is completed that it be water-barred and physically closed to snowfree season use.
- d. The logging roads on National Forest land should be allowed to become overgrown, eventually becoming reforested."

Martha Chandler, Ned Behr, and I met to discuss the proposed "Spring Brook Sale", and especially the access roads. Ned Behr was not aware that use of the

road beyond the proposed parking lot would be available to public use by motorized vehicles. Since Ned had not signed any agreement at that time, he stated that he would oppose use of the access road beyond the parking space by all motorized travel except that required by the Forest Service to remove the lumber from the Spring Brook Sale.

In addition there have been discussions with Forest Service personnel concerning the development of the proposed parking lot, and the proper maintenance of the Wonalancet Range Trail during lumber operations.

3. We have been informed that there will be hearings held by the Forest Service on the summer use of the WMNF by off-road vehicles (ORV) and all-terrain vehicles (ATV). These hearings will take place this Spring.

It is anticipated that WODC will be asked to attend hearings and have some role in determining policy.

There is not a very strong organization in New England among those who like to use ATV's (trail-bikes, 4-wheel drive vehicles, etc.), and there is strong opposition to their use on National Forests by hikers and Forest Service personnel. (The evidence for environmental degradation by their use in the forests is widely admitted.) So, the issue may be dealt with quickly and without much antagonism.

All this indicates to me that WODC needs somewhat of an "overhaul" to deal realistically with such issues. Should we have an "Executive Committee" which can meet quickly and act for the Club when required to do so? Should we publish a bulletin of information to members whenever an issue arises? Should we set up a balloting-by-mail system so that member opinions can be determined between annual meetings? Should we join forces with other groups such as the Sierra Club Appalachian Mountain Club, and the Society for the Protection Of New Hampshire Forests, so that our voice might be strengthened?

Martha and I would like to have any of your opinions and thoughts on the three issues described earlier. Should you wish to make personal statements to the Forest Service, the appropriate addresses are:

Paul Weingart, Forest Supervisor
White Mountain National Forest
P.O. Box 638
Laconia, New Hampshire 03246

Verland Ohlson, District Ranger
Saco Ranger District, WMNF
Conway, New Hampshire 03818

Sincerely,

George E. Zink
President WODC

April 1 - June 15 (Address)
G.E. Zink
Farmers Row
Groton, Mass. 01450

Martha W. Chandler
16 Orchard Street
Laconia, N.H. 03246

June 15 -
Wonalancet, N.H. 03897

June 20 - Labor Day
Wonalancet, N.H. 03897

Postscript from the Secretary-Treasurer

I have been in close touch with persons at the National Forest offices in Laconia. They assure me they understand our concern about vehicular use of the new road beyond the proposed parking lot and are considering ways to bar this from public vehicular use. So far there is no certain commitment on their part, but they have agreed to discuss this with us before any final decision is made. They also say they plan to seed over this specified road after any logging use but would plan to reopen the specified road in future years for access to other proposed cuttings.

Of real interest is the latest draft in the White Mountain National Forest's survey and planning for future use of the Forest. Two days ago I received a copy of "Draft Forest Plan" dated January but just released. It has more in the way of specifics but we are still in the dark as to exact proposals for any particular areas. Send for a copy from the WMNF office in Laconia; I have checked and they will send one on request. Read it carefully; send your comments to the WMNF; and please let George and me know your thoughts. The Forest has contacted me and wishes to get together with George and me soon to discuss more of their details for the Wonalancet area. As you will see in the report, development will probably be at a minimum in the Wonalancet area, but there are lots of questions to be asked. Be sure to respond to the report; they want responses. We will let you know about our meetings in a subsequent newsletter.

A final word-----as secretary I am eager to hear from you, and as treasurer I am also eager to hear from you! Dues are still welcomed for the year 1973-1974 which ends in August. Please check your records and see if you are a current member.-----\$3.00 per person and \$5.00 per family.

Martha W. Chandler
Secretary-Treasurer

FLASH! Hearings by the WMNF concerning off-highway-vehicle regulations have been announced for:

Bethel, Maine April 16

Cambridge, Mass. April 17

Plymouth, N.H. April 22
(High School Auditorium)

All meetings are 7:30 P.M.

If you can't attend a meeting and wish to make a comment, send it to the Forest Supervisor.