

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
Fish and Wildlife Service
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Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge (NWR)
Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP)
Public Hearing - August 6, 2007
Concord, New Hampshire

Tom Goettel (Hearing Officer): Welcome to the public hearing for the Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge Comprehensive Conservation Plan. My name is Tom Goettel and I'll be your hearing officer tonight. I work for the Fish and Wildlife Service in the Regional Office in Hadley, MA. My role is to facilitate the recording of your oral comments on the draft CCP. There will be no further presentation by the Service tonight; instead, this is your opportunity to give us your thoughts and ideas and our opportunity to listen. I think, let me clarify that a little bit, because I think Nancy said earlier, that we might have a full presentation later, but during the hearing itself, there will be no presentation. We will be recording your testimony on video and on audio tapes. The tapes will be transcribed by a professional court reporter, and posted on our web site in September. The transcription will become part of the CCP's Official Administrative Record. Your comments will be considered along with any written comments received. The Service's response to these comments will be an appendix in the final plan. Okay, so here's the process for the rest of the evening, plus we have a few ground rules. First of all, I'll call individuals to the podium in the order in which they are on the sign-in sheet. If anybody wants to add their name, this is the time to do it. Although you won't be restricted...you don't have to sign-in on the sign-in sheet. After being called up, the first thing you need to do is to state your name and spell it out. So, for example, you stand up to the podium and state my name is Tom Goettel, G-O-E-T-T-E-L and then just give your testimony. You can read from prepared text or speak off the cuff. We need to stick to the allotted time, so Ian Drew over here, will alert you with a flash card when you've got 2 minutes left, then 30 seconds left, and when your four minutes are up. Please be respectful of this timeline. If time permits, you can sign-up for a second opportunity to speak. The only thing we ask is that the second time you provide new or different comments from what you provided the first time. Only one person will have the floor at a time, so if you're not at the podium, we ask that you respect whomever is speaking and remain quiet. I want to reiterate that our purpose tonight is to listen and record your comments. So, during the hearing itself, we will not be answering any questions or responding to your comments. We will end the hearing after the last speaker, or at 9:30 p.m., whichever comes first. Um... do you have some comments, Nancy?

McGarigal: Yeah, I have a couple.

Goettel: Okay, let me give the floor back to Nancy and she has a couple of additional remarks.

McGarigal: Thanks Tom. As I mentioned earlier, this is the fourth in a series of five public hearings advertised. Tomorrow night we will be in Augusta. We welcome everybody to attend any or all them. Some of you have been with us before on some other nights. So, tomorrow is in Augusta. And, we've also announced that we're going to have another information session in Errol, New Hampshire on the 20th - excuse me - on August 16th. Thursday, August 16th. And the format of that will be an open house with these same displays and Paul will give his presentation again. We feel the need to go back again and clarify, and we will hopefully address and we will provide highlights of some of the comments that have been coming in, and clarify those. It will be in a question and answer format. It's not going to be another hearing; it's merely to try to um... have a discussion, to clarify things. The whole idea is try to get your questions answered before you provide us comments, so that your comments when they come in are substantive and to the point. I will be the person taking the lead on synthesizing and summarizing the comments as they come in. One point I wanted to make is um... the hearing bears no more weight than the written comments or the emails that are coming in. I've received over 100 emails; probably at least 25 letters and then we've had this series of hearings, so none of those forums provide any more weight than the others. So, even if you don't feel comfortable speaking tonight, um... and you prefer to write us, that will be fine. There is a comment form in the back of the room, that is just to facilitate your comment writing. You don't need to stick to that format. You can write it as a separate letter. Whatever. And, my name and contact information is back there, and I should be the one receiving it primarily. Some people have been dropping it off with Paul, and he's been giving them to me, but I will be the final repository for these comments. Again, what we're trying to do with the open houses and the information sessions is to answer your questions ahead of time. It's not real helpful to me when letters come in and they have a whole lot of questions on them; I'm not really sure what point you're trying to make. Um... or what the core of your concern might be. So, please get your questions answered right here by Paul or myself. Again, it helps if you can really elaborate on your opinions. To just say, um... "I don't like your environmental education program" is not real helpful to me. I'm not quite sure how to respond to that. What is it about it that you don't like? I mean we have very specific proposals in our plan. I'd like to know why. What is it about it - the aspects that cause you to have concerns. You know that's just an offhand example, so when you make your comments, it would be really helpful to elaborate on them, and tell us why you have this opinion. I'd also be very happy if you note errors on our maps. A couple of people have already pointed out errors on the map. Pretty minor but, um... anything that will help us make a final plan accurate, and/or if there are points that you think need to be clarified on the plan, or something that needs to be better defined, we'd be happy to do that too. So those are all things I would like to know about too... errors or clarifications. As Paul indicated, I'll be taking all the comments this fall and summarizing them, and will begin to address them. What will come out in the final plan, as an appendix, is what we call "Response to Public Comments." So you should see in there, how your comment is treated and our response to it. Now some of the changes - some of your comments may warrant changes to the document; we may go back and

rethink some of our proposals. And, we will modify the final plan as a result. In other cases, we may just be providing additional clarification or providing additional rationale. There are all sorts of things that can result from your comments coming in. You should see those changes in the final plan. As a reminder, the decision maker in this case is the Regional Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service; his name is Marvin Moriarty. His office is with me in our building in Hadley, MA. We - another thing we did is because we heard loud and clear from people in the beginning that the document is very complex, a lot of pages - a lot to digest - we've extended the public comment period. Most of you, I hope, have been alerted to that. That's what that yellow post card is telling you about, that we have a new meeting is in Errol and that the public comment period has been extended to September 21st. Also, keep in mind that if you speak here tonight, you can also submit your comments in writing - that's fine. Um... and I believe that's it. Thank you.

Goettel: Okay, how's it sound back there? Any questions on the procedures at all? Remember step up to the podium, say your name, spell your name, please and then your four minutes will begin. Any questions?

Speaker: So, if we have questions about the plan, we won't get answers to them? Or, how do we get answers to our questions?

Goettel: You won't get answers during the hearing itself. You can get answers afterwards, when the hearing is completed; we'll be around here afterwards. Okay, any other questions? Okay our first speaker is Susan Fournier.

Fournier: Good evening. My name is Susan Fournier; I'm from Milford, NH. Fournier - F (as Fran) -O-U-R-N (for Nancy)-I-E-R. This evening, my comments will focus on the wrong thinking of including trapping as furbearer management in Plans B and C. True furbearer management would include installing water flow devices to prevent flooding by beavers, wrapping trees or fencing around trees to prevent chewing by beavers, and making modifications to the environment to help bring about satisfactory outcomes for wildlife in their habitats. Next, I'd like to give you my top eight reasons, out of a longer list, why allowing trapping on a Refuge is a very wrong decision. #1 as you say in your compatibility determination, and I quote "indirect impacts may include displacing migratory birds during the pair bonding, nesting season, or the destruction of nests by trampling. Direct impacts may include the catch of non-target species or the removal of species that induce habitat change, for example, beavers." And you add, "non target species could be taken through the trapping program." Reason #1 to not allow trapping is, why would you allow trapping knowing ahead of time that such negative impacts, such as trampling and catch of non targets would take place? Reason #2 to not allow trapping, is that the New Hampshire trapping season does indeed continue into spring when all the wildlife comes alive ready for reproducing. It's not as you stated in the compatibility determination, through only mid-March. Many New Hampshire seasons run through March 31st, and several through April 10th, such as for beaver and otter. Reason #3 - is that recreational fur trapping is motivated by the sale of pelts which is commercial use of the refuge for personal gain - commercial use. Reason #4 is that fur

trapping is recreational to trappers, like hunting is to hunters. So, why is it snuck under Goal #1, and isn't dealt with more appropriately under Goal #4. And, the reason must be because, as stated in the determination, trapping "is not a priority public use" of the refuge system. I repeat, trapping is not a priority public use. Reason #5 – is that the Service is failing to recognize that fur bearers manage their own population in natural predator/prey relationships with each other, such as fishers preying on porcupines, or coyotes preying on beavers or small rodents. The refuge belongs to all native fur bearer species. Loons and other threatened and endangered species ought to be protected without destroying fur bearers. Reason #6 is that the New Hampshire Wildlife Action Plan lists the bobcat and pine marten as two species of conservation concern, and yet these two species would be trapped on the Maine side of the refuge, which doesn't seem very helpful to New Hampshire that's trying to recover the strength of the species. Pine marten are routinely trapped in fisher sets, and the Service ought to have zero tolerance for that. Reason #7 is that refuge and its wildlife such as loons are already suffering the effects of various user groups. Why would you propose adding fur trappers tromping through the woods onto sensitive wetlands? My final reason this evening is that trapping was identified dead last in public responses about the importance of activities when respondents visited Lake Umbagog. I'm referring to Question 7 - Table 4. Whereas "being in natural undeveloped land" got a whopping 91% importance rating; trapping got a miniscule 19%. Obviously indicating that trappers and their families are the only ones desiring the commercial and recreational benefits of trapping. Finally, when all the critique of trapping is examined, it leaves the Service with no good reason to allow trapping in the refuge. Remember to put wildlife first. This is not a people refuge; it is a wildlife refuge. Thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Thank you. Our next speaker is Ann Blake. (Inaudible) Our next speaker then is Stan Wentzell.

Wentzell: Stan Wentzell, W-E-N-T-Z-E-L-L, and I'm from Kingston, NH. And I have to apologize, but I haven't had time to really put anything together here. I have some thoughts; and I'll try to get them together quickly. But I was here really because I was so surprised at some of the comments that came from the Errol meeting, which I still don't really understand. So I'm - I have some definite suggestions that I'll be sending through later, so my comments now are more general to try to address some of things that came out of that meeting. But, I'm basically speaking in - more than basically speaking, in favor of Plan C because it gives the National Wildlife Refuge flexibility for the future, which I think is tremendously important. And, I think it is tremendously important to get as much of the land as we can in that area into some form of preservation. Ah... there are parts of the plan that I don't agree with, Plan C, and I'll be sending those over later. My - I have a strong connection to the area, my grandfather was the Woods Manager for the Brown Company back in the - he retired in the 60s. Fifty years ago, I used to go into the woods with him. He was the guy responsible for bringing the wood down from Parmachenee and Kennebago and handle the log drives. And, I remember 50 years - well this past year my son and I kayaked over to the point where the Rapid River comes in and camped on the point there, and I remember 50 years ago, I was there in that same spot with my grandfather and he was putting together a boom to bring across Umbagog and

into the Androscoggin. So over the years I have seen a huge change in the area, and it's tough. I mean I would like to see it the way it was 50 years ago, but that's not going to be. And, we camped on the point, there were pontoon boats...a lot of stuff going on, which I would rather see a more wilderness experience. But, if it wasn't for the National Wildlife group we would be - we could very well have camp, or a building, on that location. So, it is very important that we preserve as much as we can. And, very quickly I have personal experience with this in Maine. We have a cottage, or a log cabin, up in the Moosehead area of Maine we've owned for 25 years. We've gone from **Estee Warren**(?), which culturally managed the way we - over the years in Maine where we had access to the land, could use it. Scott Paper Company came in, still had access, but they you know, started logging pretty heavily. Things started changing. Then Plum Creek is in there now. Where they are also in Umbagog area. And things are changing dramatically. The places where we could snowmobile, ATV, hike - in their recent plan which is being presented, they are going to be house lots. You know, I don't mind other people having the opportunity to have the experience on the lakes and all, too, but it cuts out everything that we've had in the past. Our hunting areas, our fishing areas, one of our prime fishing areas for example now is becoming overrun with use because Plum Creek has opened the roads. And, if we had someone like the National Wildlife, or if it were under protection, we would at least have some control. I mean I would like it the way it was 25 years ago, but it is never going to be that way, but we need some control. So I would just urge all of you- especially the people in Errol - the Errol area, to go along with Plan C and preserve as much as we possibly can. Even what we are preserving is such a small part. We are only looking at some very key areas. (applause)

Goettel: The next speaker is Carolyn - I'm sorry I can't read your writing -

Scarinza: My name is Carolyn Scarinza S-C-A-R-I-N-Z-A. I live in Concord, but I am a Berlin native and I might say...I could almost say a native of Lake Umbagog since I was there the first time at age four months. We went to my grandparent's cottage and I was four months old at that time. I was...I spent every summer until my father passed away, at Lake Umbagog, and I have seen from 1950's on we had wildlife...an abundance of wildlife, we had eagles. I have seen a lot of changes in the lake. We currently have a lease, I don't own the cottage that my grandparents had; however, I do have a lease on the south end of the lake which is owned...the lease itself is with the State, not with the wildlife preserve, but my point is that I have seen a lot of changes through the years. We have spent every summer on that lake. And, since the wildlife took over there has been an increase of kayakers and canoers, which I can understand why they would want to be there, it is absolutely beautiful up there. However, I believe strongly that they are disturbing the wildlife because they get so close to them. We have always had a motorboat, we have a canoe, but we respect the wildlife because...I just the love the wildlife. I mean it is just something that is part of my life. I feel this year, at our cottage, we have seen maybe three loons all summer long. And, that's not together; I mean occasionally we have seen them. In the past, we have had an abundance of loons out front, and we have watched them, but the kayakers get so close to the shoreline that they are disturbing the wildlife and it is upsetting to us. I would...since my time is running out, and I didn't realize I was being so wordy... I just want to go on record to say that

I'm for Plan A. I don't think an expansion should go forward. I think that what we have now should be managed properly, and that should be the extent of the preserve. I guess that's all I have to say at this time. I intend to pursue this a little further with a written comment. Thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Our next speaker is Fred Shepherd.

Shepard: My name is Fred Shepard, S-H-E-P-A-R-D. I'm the Fish and Game Director for the New Hampshire Trappers Association. At the present time, we have a membership of around 350 and we are here in support of Plan B and furbearer management. Thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Our next speaker is Linda Dionne.

Dionne: Hello, my name is Linda Dionne, D-I-O-N-N-E. I'm here to speak for the animals, A-N-I-M-A-L-S. I oppose fur trapping that would be allowed in Plan B and Plan C. Over 40,000,000 people visit National Wildlife Refuges each year; 25,000,000 of these visitors are wildlife watchers. The sight of a defenseless animal caught in a trap sickens wildlife watchers. Do you really want to sicken and offend the majority of people who visit? What are you thinking? With all due respect, Mr. Casey, what are you thinking? I took a trapping class yesterday, and all I need to do now is turn this in with some money, and I will be a licensed trapper. Me, along with 15 other novices from the class yesterday - if they all pass, and I can't imagine that they didn't, it wasn't very difficult; are now allowed to trap, although we really don't know what the heck we are doing. Do you really want to let me, and 15 others and who knows how many others - other novices - into the pristine areas of Lake Umbagog to maim and kill its wildlife? What are you thinking? With all due respect Mr. Casey, what are you thinking? Since its establishment in 1992, trapping has been prohibited at the Lake Umbagog National Wildlife Refuge, so why is it that 15 years later, trapping is included in two out of the three plans? We have all been fed the same propaganda over and over; that trapping is needed to control animal populations, especially with beaver. And yet, refuge director Mr. Casey, informed me that the Umbagog Refuge doesn't have that many beaver. Lake Umbagog, and I have trouble pronouncing that word, for the most part, is a success story except for the loons it seems like, and there is no trapping. Don't let trappers into our refuge to maim and kill animals and to mess up the balanced homeostasis which has been working well all these years without trapping. Please think of what you're doing. Thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Anybody else? If nobody else has signed up (inaudible)

Eames: Hi, my name is Bonnie Eames, E-A-M-E-S. I came in contact with the lake through my husband's family, and we have gone up there for, and raised our children on the lake, and we have seen some changes with the lake - with a lot of the kayakers the woman had spoke about. We have seen a lot more of the people coming to check on nests and such. We have some concerns. We actually just got our paperwork because they didn't - weren't notified that the property has been passed over to my

husband, so we weren't able to read all the plans and I apologize for not having that. But, we do see a problem with the kayakers visiting too close to the nests. We do have loons that are right out in front of the camp, and they are pretty curious animals and great to watch, but I feel like a lot of the - even the boats coming to check on them, whether it be the biologists or the kayakers, they are getting very, very close. There is an island the loons tend to nest on right off the side of the camp, and the kayakers tend to converge there; going through and stopping and getting off their kayaks. They don't really seem to be respecting that area around where they tend to nest. I don't know whether there should be a sign there posted that they nest in that area not to stop there, or to stay so many feet away from the island or the shore. Maybe better education that way would help them; but it does seem to really bother them. And, we do have - we have seen the population of loons not be as they were before. That is just the only concern that we really have had. I mean we had some other concerns about road usage and stuff, but that might be a wrong assumption until we get more information, so that's more my concern. Thanks. (applause)

Goettel: Thank you.

Martin: My name is Gene Martin M-A-R-T-I-N. I'm from Temple, NH and I've been associated with Lake Umbagog for 40 years. I have a question that I'm curious about that is in your land program on Page A-21, "We estimated the market value for lands in the acquisition area at \$500 an acre based on the recent sale of forest land to the Refuge." Who came up with that figure? It's not realistic. Very few pieces of land have been sold on Lake Umbagog. The ones that have been sold have been camps that have been sold at a tremendous amount of money - much more than \$500 an acre. Now, also you have the Priority 1 - Priority 2 - Priority 3 and Priority 1, the 6,392 acres, which is the original land acquisition boundary; that's the piece of land that you want to really make it a nice uniform boundary. Do you have \$500/acre for that acreage? Priority 1 - \$500 an acre, for Priority 2 - and 3 - I don't know where you got that figure. We've just had an appraisal on our property on Lake Umbagog, and this is so out of line, it's unbelievable. So that's what I would like to find out. Where that amount of money, that estimate, came from? Do you have an answer Paul?

Paul: I can talk to you after; we are not responding to questions at this time, but I would be happy to talk to you after, okay?

Martin: Okay. (applause)

Goettel: Thank you. Anybody else? Plenty of time here. Yes ma'am ...

Jose: My name is Leslie Jose, J-O-S-E, and I live in Sandwich, NH. Much of my younger life and passion has been up on Umbagog, and I think as a young teenager I was paranoid when it was first going to become a preserve thinking it was going to be advertising, and seeing lots and lots more people come. But, as I have matured, I have seen the importance of protecting that area and I have been involved with the passage of the Wilderness Bill in New Hampshire, and have seen this process work and do great

things. And I really think that all of the efforts that you all have been putting out to gather this information is phenomenal. So, bravo. But, I would really encourage everyone to research and think and understand and educate themselves as much as possible so your true voices are heard in making comments, and don't rely on other people to make the comments, but truly get out there and write and call and email and get the comments out. I would very much be in support of C; I think protecting as much as we can in the state that is growing faster than we can even see is really important, so thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Anybody else?

Slitt: My name is Laura Slitt, S-L-I-T-T. I will submit what I have in writing. On my way here, and for the last few months, this is sort of philosophical feeling for me. I have been seeing lots and lots of road kill. Lots of skunks, lots of raccoons, baby fox, lots of chipmunks, umm... couple of other species. A couple of them were alive when I stopped to check on them. And, it makes me understand how much of their natural habitat is being carved away. Where I live in Bartlett, we are carving in roads and we're destroying what I feel is habitat that we share. I have a very different view of animals than a lot of people. I view them as having an inherent right, I guess you could call it, to survive and live out their lifespan. And, I wouldn't go - I would love to go to a place like Umbagog, but I wouldn't go because as it traumatizes me terribly to see animals dead in the road; not just that they are dead in the road, but people have such a disrespect for them that they just keep running over them and over them and over them. And, at some point, I have to scrape them up off the road to at least give them the dignity I feel they deserve, because to me they are not products, they are not commodities. They're family members. Maybe they are a mother who just had babies; maybe they are great grandmothers - who knows - but they have their own families and social structures and habitats that we as humans feel some kind of inherent right to take over. And, now we're all upset because it is our habitats that are being taken over, but we feel that we have a right to take over the other creatures. It traumatizes me personally to see kids being taught to fish, because I am thinking... what's the - it might sound silly, but what does the fish go through? It traumatizes me, which is why I like Plan A, but I would change Plan A to not include hunting or fishing. And a new Plan A that would preserve and expand the boundaries to create what would be a true refuge, not just for the animals, but for me as somebody who cares deeply about the pain and suffering of other creatures so that I could go there. When I am in my back yard in Bartlett, NH, and I hear gun fire and I know that perhaps a bear or a deer or moose that crossed through my property is being killed, it really does traumatize me and it makes me feel bad. And, I think if we nurture children to be merciful and more compassionate, to think of animals as their own beings with their own families and their own habitats, to be respectful and compassionate, we'd have a much different world then we have today. So, I am in favor of Plan A, and I think we should do whatever we can to preserve not conserve, but preserve, these creatures who if they had the voice, that we have the luxury of having, they could speak. We have such a luxury that we can stand in a hearing like this and say, I feel this and I feel that, and I want this. If they had it and we asked them, what would they say, and that's what we should honor. Thank you. (applause)

Goettel: Is there anybody else who would like speak? It's your last chance, I would encourage anybody to get up. Is there anybody from the first group that would like to speak for another four minutes? Nobody. Okay. Um... I encourage everybody to either talk to Paul, Nancy or Ian after the meeting. If you have questions, and as always, please submit written comments. Like Nancy said, your written comments or your verbal comments that you have today, are equally important. Okay - anybody else? Any other issues? Okay. This concludes our fourth public hearing and thank you all for attending and for all your interest.

END OF TAPE

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