

PO Box 428
Rochester, VT 05767

July 4, 2018

admin@rochesterhistorical.org

RE: Robinson IRP

Dear Jay,

The Rochester Historical Society (RHS) thanks the USFS for the opportunity to comment on the Robinson Integrated Resource Project (RIRP)EA for Public Comment.

We look forward to working cooperatively with the FS in implementing the proposed improvements to the Rochester Company # 1143 CCC camp. We feel it will be an important site highlighting the projects accomplished by the young men assigned to this camp and the lasting effects of their work.

As you are aware, the RIRP area is rich in historic and prehistoric resources. We feel that there are more sites yet to be identified. Much progress has been made in locating sites in the last 40 or so years, but there is more work to be done. For example, there were early schools in both Rochester and Hancock. Can the FS positively say where these were located?

How can the FS protect sites without knowing where they are and what the extent of the feature may be. A single cellar hole may not be the extent of a feature. Many New England farms consisted of a house, sheds, barns and other out-buildings. Many had a "kitchen garden". All of these are important in understanding the lives of the past occupants of the land which is now included in the RIRP.

In that respect, we feel that the sections of the EA dealing with Heritage is somewhat weak. It's even listed last in section 3! We feel that if Timber Resources were to be treated the same. It would simply say "we'll follow the Forest Plan Standards and Guidelines and the State of Vermont Best Management Practices, and deal with the specifics later".

It appears that much of the Heritage Resource work is postponed, and will impose a significant workload on heritage personnel during sale planning and during the harvest activities. Is the FS able to "staff-up" to meet these obligations?

We also encourage the FS to seek a partnership, perhaps with a UVM or other college, graduate student, to study the West Hill area to better understand the socio-economic relations in this "hill farm community". I think it would lead to a better understanding of other similar communities located on the GMNF and perhaps on the WMNF.

We support the efforts of the FS to study the rock cairns on West Hill and would like to see further research into the origins of these structures. It would be nice to know, if possible, if these have some regional or national significant importance. From our

experience they do seem to be unique.

We are very much in support of the FS working with the Town of Rochester to protect and perhaps restore the “sheep chute” on the West Hill Road. It is certainly unique and the only one we know of.

We are disappointed that the “Fassett Basin loop trail” was not included in the list of proposed trail activities. It would provide an opportunity for a self-guided interpretive trail with a glimpse into the lives of those living in that area between the 1850' and 1900's. The RHS will be exploring possible partnerships to make that trail a reality.

Thank you again for the opportunity to comment.

Bruce

Bruce K. Flewelling

President, Rochester Historical Society