

Data Submitted (UTC 11): 4/27/2021 12:16:45 AM

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Comments: The last 15 winters I have camped for multiple days in one of the four-sided shelters -- Shelter 8 -- at the Hermit Lake complex. It is vital, from a safety standpoint, that there are enclosed shelters for backcountry skiers, hikers, and climbers at Hermit Lake. The three-sided shelters and tent platforms do not provide an enclosed space to protect from sub-zero temperatures, snow, wind, and rain. If there are not multiple four-sided shelter options, many winter users would be forced to stay in a three-sided shelter and would have to, in the case of inclement weather, block off the un-enclosed side of the three-sided shelter with a tarp. A tarp adds a great deal of extra weight to a pack; in addition, an individual in a three-sided shelter is constantly worried about gear inside being impacted by the weather, and has to often tend to guy lines that secure the tarp. Similarly, pitching a tent in the shelter or on a tent platform may be an option, but a tent, likewise, adds a lot of weight to a pack. Also, staying within a tent reduces the camaraderie and spontaneity that arises from sharing a shelter with others (in non-pandemic times). This community thrives on meeting and sharing experiences with fellow outdoor enthusiasts. The four-sided shelter is steadfast; a camper can depend on it keeping out the elements.

I would like the Forest Service to consider the rehabilitation of Shelter 8, with the shelter remaining in its current location and as much of the original structure as possible retained. Shelter 8 is of large capacity, and located at the easternmost end of the area, which creates a feeling of remoteness when compared to the other shelters. The Forest Service should invest in maintaining this shelter because it provides a unique alternative to those outlined in the updated scoping document March 2021. It is historically significant, as Sarah Jordan writes in "White Mountain National Forest Hiking Shelter System Historic District, New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources Area Form," which is cited in the references for the Peabody West Integrated Resource Project's Updated Scoping Newsletter from March 29, 2021.

Removing Shelter 8 and replacing it with a Mahoosuc-style structure would forever alter my experience, and many others' experiences, at Mt. Washington. In closing: 8 is great; a trip to Hermit Lake would not be the same without it.