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First name: Reuben

Last name: Rajala

Organization:

Title:

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[External Email]

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Hello,

I'm the Maintenance Director at the Horton Center, a seasonal summer camp and retreat center, which is located on an 80 acre+ inholding on Pine Mt. It's owned and operated by the NH Conference United Church of Christ (NHCUCC), with it's beginning dating back to the 1940's with Dr. Douglas Horton and his family.

In previous years I was the Trails Program Director for the AMC, working on trails and backcountry sites throughout the White Mt. region and beyond. I also represented the Club on every Forest Service Unit Plan Working Group and also routinely responded to Forest EAs of all types. So, I'm writing these observations and suggestions based on my diverse experiences since moving up to the White Mountains in the 1970's and working in the area since then.

I attended the US Forest Service Open House at the District, in 2019 and offered some verbal comments and questions to Forest staff. I don't believe the Horton Center officially submitted any written comments, based on the limited information that was available at that early part of the planning process.

I have some suggestions on issues and needs as well as a few questions based on the current more detailed proposals, as we understand them. Tim Hughes, Camp Director and others involved with the NH Conference UCC owned summer camp and retreat center, may also have questions and comments.

Pine Mt. Rd.

In one chart rebuilding .9 mile of the Pine Mt. Rd is referenced. It's hard to know exactly what and where this will occur and when it will be done.

I know the road well, having done basic maintenance on it for the past 8 years or so. During Hurricane Sandy, we did see a washout within the Camp property, which spilled over onto the very top of the USFS section, as two of our undersized culverts were plugged and overwhelmed. We have since replaced these two culverts with larger ones and added a third which should accommodate future flows. At some point we plan on doing some rip rap to harden the steep, deep drainage ditch down to the Forest boundary line.

The final steep upper section of USFS road, close to mile in length, includes two distinct segments. The upper half was rebuilt by the USFS Bartlett Road Crew some 10-12 years ago, after an earlier washout. Many more culverts of larger size were installed and significant gravel and drainage work was done. This section held up quite well, overall, during Sandy and other rain events.

The lower section of this long steep hill, which was not part of the earlier work done by the Bartlett crew, saw significant damage during Sandy, due to culverts that were too infrequent, and too small. With permission from the Forest and working with the Forest Engineer, the NH Conference UCC hired a local contractor, Lee Corrigan, to do emergency repairs to this section and our section to allow the summer camp to operate the following

summer.

In the aftermath of Sandy we heard talk of improving this section but nothing was ever done. This section is clearly the most threatened with repeated washouts, based on the nature of the road, marginal drainage and past history. I made some general comments about this at the Open House, but no one seemed to have much information on what was planned for timber harvesting or road repairs at that point.

I had heard that the beginning of the Pine Mt. Rd. might be relocated a bit, if possible, or at least widened and improved. This is a narrow section with a steep drop off in the first 100 yards or so. It also has two undersized culverts that I always worried about every season. The first gentle corner to the left has probably the most wet and soft spot on the road due to what appears to be inadequate side drainage and not enough gravel. It may also need another culvert to drain this area or the ditch on the right needs to be extended to the 3rd culvert on the road, about 200' or more around the corner. I've maintained a small drainage swale here to get the water across the road, temporarily.

Another soft area is beyond the gate, on the gentle climb up to the hairpin corner. There apparently were old railroad ties tossed into a wet spot long ago during logging operations and covered over with gravel. The long drainage ditch that comes down on the right side bears off into the wood near this point. During heavy rains this ditch carries quite a bit of water.

Beyond the hairpin turn there is a culvert that is undersized and tends to plug with floating leaf mats, especially in late fall rainstorms. The ditch that feeds it appears to be way too long, maybe 300' or more. The next culvert, on a small flat spot, is undersized and got damaged at some point during road maintenance a decade or more ago. The Bartlett crew left a larger plastic culvert several years ago for replacement but I've not been able to install it by myself, with our tiny tractor and backhoe and no helping hands. The ditch above this culvert is deep and the edge of the road is often soft, which sometimes catches vehicles.

At the top of what I call "the plateau" there is a tiny 4-6" metal culvert that needs to be replaced. It's draining a small seasonal wet spot on the R side of the road. Then we head down into a col before we begin climbing up to the jct. with the Ledge Trail and the steep 1 mile long hill climb up to the Camp, which I wrote about earlier. In this area, by the trail junction, the road is somewhat narrow, on a corner and there can be lots of water in the R side ditching. Too much at times, as the ditches above drain quite some distance. And the culverts are small and infrequent from the Pinkham Ledge Trail on up to about the halfway point in the hill.

Oh, one final thing. Along the Pine Mt. Rd there are a number of small and some larger pullouts, which I'm assuming were cleared or built during road work, during logging or for limited hiker parking. During the camp season and will contractors working on the cell tower, etc. these pullouts are important for vehicles to be able to pull over and let others pass, especially trucks or camp vans. I weed whack and cut limbs to keeps these open and available every summer.

Timber Harvesting

It appears that there is quite a bit of diverse timber harvesting planned for much of the Pine Mt. area. Having seen many timber sales across the Forest, since I started working for the AMC in the 1970's, my only concern is for views from the Pine Mt. Road/Pine Mt. Trail and especially the very popular Pinkham Ledge.

I'm hoping that there will be modest cutting (careful, selective harvesting) along this scenic road/trail corridor up Pine Mt, for the sake of Camp visitors and the many hikers that enjoy Pine Mt. Road/Pine Mt. Trail and views from the south end of Pine Mt. The col or plateau on the south side of Pine Mt., below Pinkham Ledge, provides hikers wonderful expansive and scenic views of the Carter and Wildcat Ranges, Pinkham Notch and the Presidential Range, as well as some views to the west, down the Pinkham B. Rd. Hopefully cutting in this view

shed can be tempered.

A final question that we have is about the timing of logging, if any, during Camp season (typically early/mid May through Columbus Day). We'll need to coordinate on any road repairs and logging operations. I may be wrong but did I hear that many of the logging operations may be done in the winter? If so, then conflicts may be minimal, all things considered.

We'll also have to work with the cell tower owner, tenants and their contractors who may need to access the site at different times for service, repairs or fuel deliveries to their generators from the early summer through the fall typically. Eversource also sometimes comes up for work on the utility line.

Glade Skiing on the West Side

Last summer or fall I met some of the USFS staff and glade skiers when they were flagging potential areas/routes. Personally I don't see any conflicts between this winter activity and the summer hiking or camp operation.

Pine Link Trail

Having managed the AMC Trails Program across the National Forest and in nearby areas, I'm quite familiar with the Pine Link Trail and the small USFS parking lot (capacity 6-8 cars?) that serves it and the very popular Pine Mt. Trail. This old parking lot was always limited and generally undersized for one trail, let alone two paths. It not uncommon of the lot to be filled and to have cars parked on both sides of the narrow and winding Pinkham B. Rd. Sometimes it's hard for camp vans, delivery trucks and others to get through or out of the Pine Mt. Rd.

Some hikers end up driving down the Pine Mt. Rd., which has two spaces before the USFS gate. Others drive up the Pine Mt. Road, when the gate is open during camp season, and park opposite the Pinkham Ledge Trail/Ledge Trail (2-3 spaces). And a few others drive up to the camp property boundary and park in several small pullouts near the Pine Mt Loop Trail, a short trail bypassing the camp and accessing the upper Pine Mt. Trail.

I was surprised to see no improvements planned for this limited and problematic parking area on the Pinkham B. Rd. This was one item that I also talked about at the Open House. It strikes me that the time to make improvements is now, while the Peabody West Management Area is being focused on. Otherwise it'll be another 20-30 years or longer before anything is addressed.

Potential Pine Mt. Pocket Vista

Pine Mountain is a beautiful and scenic mountain. Unfortunately it is hard to see from any vantage point along Rt. 16 or the Pinkham B. Rd. There is a decent view from a riverside opening on the loop trail behind the Androscoggin Ranger District, but not every gets out on this trail. There are fleeting glimpses from Rt. 16.

However, there is good potential of a very nice pocket vista off the north side of the Pinkham B. Rd. that would allow a dramatic view, summer and winter, of the south face of the mountain, Pinkham Ledges. You can see the potential when leaves are off, near a small pullout that is maybe 300 yards east of the Pine Mt. Rd. It strikes me a simple small scale project with big potential for those looking for a dramatic mountain view. I recently put three pink flags on the R side of this pullout, if anyone from the District can look at it.

Trails on Pine Mt.

Over the years several trails from the Randolph side apparently were abandoned in the aftermath of the 1938 Hurricane. The remaining trails, like the Pine Mt. Trail and Ledge Trail, are mostly on USFS land but some segments are on camp property.

Part of the original Pine Mt. Trail used to run right through the camp property. Eventually two short bypass sections were built some years ago, working with the USFS, to route hikers around the east side of the camp. One bypass section, called the Pine Mt. Loop, starts at the southern boundary of the camp, on the Pine Mt. Rd/Pine Mt. Trail. It connects to the original fire tower trail to the top of Pine Mt. Hikers can bear right, to get to Pine Mt. or go straight, on another bypass segment, over to the Chapel Rock Trail and continue down to Gorham via the northern leg of the Pine Mt. Trail. The camp also owns a narrow ridge piece, up to the top of Pine Mt. and down the upper section of the Ledge Trail, to the popular Pinkham Ledge, with it's expansive views. The USFS Ledge Trail, starts on the Pine Mt. Rd/Pine Mt. Trail below the southern end of Pine Mt. and climbs up to Pinkham Ledge and ends at the old fire tower site. The camp also owns much of the land on the Chapel Rock Trail. We also have a small trail, all within camp property, on the west side of the property.

Over the decades I think both the USFS, Camp staff and volunteers have maintained the trails on Pine Mt, with the Camp focused mostly on the segments within Camp property. With my decades of trailwork experience, my sense is that overall most of the trails on the mountain are in decent shape. There a few areas on the top of the mountain that could use some additional drainage here and there, scattered steps and sometimes other tread hardening. Being mostly ledge, with shallow soils on the upper reaches of the mountain, it's relatively stable. Signs should be replaced and we should work together to develop some interpretive maps/signs for the many hikers to the Pine Mt. area so they can better understand where the trails go and where the camp property is.

Reuben Rajala, Maintenance Director
Horton Center
Gorham, NH