

APPENDIX D. Public Input **Responses to Comments Received regarding Management of Gale Meadows WMA**

Vehicles: The amount of traffic on the access road and access area is a problem and growing. Something needs to be done.

Vehicle use of the Gale Meadows Road and access area will likely increase in the future. This is a town road maintained by the town of Londonderry, and the district stewardship team cannot limit use. Due to the adjacent private land and wetlands, pond, and dam, there is no option for expanding the current size of the parking area. Elimination of commercial users should help with overcrowding of the parking area. We will ask the town for a 15 MPH speed limit with signage for the access road.

Motor Boats: Motorboats are disliked due to noise, pollution, and speed.

Motor boats must be allowed on Gale Meadows Pond and access area due to funding sources used to purchase the dam and access area. Better enforcement of speed limits will be instituted.

Float Planes: Much support for not allowing float planes to land/take off from pond.

Currently float planes are allowed to use the pond. The only way to change this is to petition the Water Resources Board.

Gas Engines: Gas Engines in general should not be allowed on property.

The only gas engines allowed on the property are vehicles at the access area, motor boats on the pond and float planes (See Motor Boats).

Day Use Fee: Charge users and put proceeds into maintaining the house.

The Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have the authorization to collect day use fees.

Swimming Problems: Swimming/picnicking at access area is a problem. Develop separate swimming/picnicking/non-motorized pond access.

Informal swimming is restricted only at the boat launch and dam area. This is due to the legal conditions attached to the funding the area was purchased with. No additional facilities will be constructed. Appropriate kiosk signage will be posted and law enforcement notified.

Dogs: Dogs at access area are a problem for excrement, swimming, presence, lack of supervision.

Law enforcement will be notified to uphold current regulations pertaining to leash laws in Londonderry and Winhall which state, "dogs must be under control at all times." Signage to this effect will be posted on a kiosk.

Commercial Activity: Complaints about local vendors utilizing access area.

At this time commercial activities are not permitted on wildlife management areas. Vendors will be contacted by the state to stop these activities, law enforcement will be notified, and kiosk signage will be posted.

Geese Conflicts: Report of unknown problem w/geese.

Promoting healthy habitat and wildlife populations is a primary goal of wildlife management areas. Legal hunting is allowed.

Caretaker/Citizen Volunteers: Utilize citizen/volunteer help to monitor/clean-up property.

Volunteers are used successfully by district staff on other properties and will be investigated for Gale Meadows.

Mountain Bikes: Complaints of riding on hiking trails.

The Fish & Wildlife Department does not allow mountain bikes or horseback riding on wildlife management areas unless on gravel roads or by designation by the commissioner.

Access Area Facilities: Requests for porta-potties. Requests for information materials.

Complaints regarding trash. Request for better management.

The Fish & Wildlife Department will consider providing toilet facilities at the access area. The kiosk will contain information regarding allowed and not allowed uses and carry in/carry out policy on trash.

Recreation Trails: Requests for more hiking trails.

There are no plans for creating any additional recreation trails. However, proposals from the general public or interest groups may be considered if the goals of wildlife management and conservation are met.

Snowmobiles: Complaint due to number of trails on pond.

There are no designated snowmobile trails on the property. Snowmobiles are allowed on the ice for fishing purposes only. Law enforcement will be notified should use become excessive or disturbing to other users.

Overcrowding: Complaints on overcrowding both on the pond and at the access area.

As a result of population increases and few water-based recreational opportunities in this area of Vermont more people are going to want to utilize this resource. Currently there is no policy or regulation that would allow F&W to limit individual use. Should uses of the WMA become in conflict with management objectives of Fish & Wildlife Department, appropriate actions may be taken.

Educational: Comments on the creation of an educational facility in the house area.

A Request For Proposal (RFP) process has been initiated for this type of use and management of the house and barn area. An educational facility would be considered if proposed by an appropriate organization.

Timber Management: Comments in favor of current recommendations. Put timber sale receipts into house maintenance.

Utilizing timber sale receipts from the property for house repairs will need approval but will be further investigated.

Aquatic Habitat: Complaint on aquatic habitat and lack of structure, suggestion to remove stumps in water. *No management will occur in the water, nor will the stumps, which provide fish habitat, be removed.*

Future Acquisition: Recommendation to acquire property to the west of Gale Meadows WMA.
Conservation of surrounding lands is very important to wildlife and wildlife habitat. F&W will continue to work with the VLT and others to conserve additional land through easement or acquisition.

Taxes: Complaint on lack of taxes paid by the state to the town.
Several studies have been conducted on the impacts of conserved land to property tax base with regard to taxes and conserved lands. These studies have demonstrated that, in many cases, conserved lands reduce overall tax rates for towns due to less demand for services. The state makes a payment in lieu of taxes to the towns every year for acres in Gale Meadows WMA.

House: Sentiment was mixed on the Tralee buildings, though most felt use was better than removal.
In light of public request for salvaging the structures, an updated Request For Proposal will be instituted to solicit conservation groups. If no conservation groups step forward, the buildings will be removed and hopefully salvaged. Due to conflicts with public use, they will not be leased or sold to private individuals for use on site.

Recreation: Comments on general recreation development.
Developing recreational infrastructure is not a primary goal for the property. However, consideration will be given to proposals that match previously stated goals.

Shooting Range: Suggestion to develop outdoor shooting range.
In the opinion of the district stewardship team construction of a shooting range would not match previously stated goals nor would it be appropriate given the density of housing on nearby lands.

Public Involvement Format: In favor of the format, timing and venue. Send out more plans to town clerk and allow more time between advertisement and meeting.
Future advertisement for public involvement meetings will have a longer time span between the advertisement and the meeting. Plan summaries will also be mailed to formally identified stakeholders and to others who are interested on request.