

Brief Description of Public Use on the Kingdom Heritage Lands  
(including West Mountain WMA)

Doug Morin  
Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department  
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a. Overview

Overall, the level of use on the West Mountain WMA lands is light for most uses except snowmobiling and hunting. This was the overall conclusion resulting from a series of focus meetings aimed at specific user-groups, held during 2000, and subsequent surveys, and is consistent with the experience of ANR land managers since that time. Present use was considered light enough to maintain a sense of remoteness. The fall and winter hunting seasons were perceived to have a higher use than the spring and summer, and summer use was heavier than spring use. The highest daily use for the peak season (fall hunting) was estimated by participants to be in the high hundreds of users for the whole of the West Mountain WMA.

b. User surveys

A survey of recreational users was conducted for the Conte Refuge in 2000 and 2001. User characteristics as determined from the Conte Refuge survey provide an indication of user characteristics on other Kingdom Heritage Lands (since patterns of use on the Conte Refuge lands are expected to be similar to that on the Plum Creek lands and West Mountain WMA).

- All of the respondents during the winter season (January through March) indicated they participated in snowmobiling.
- September through December was dominated by hunting (over 90% of the respondents indicated they were hunting during this period),
- The most common vehicle was a truck with two occupants.
- Most visitors travel 50-200 miles to visit the area

c. Fall Use

Based on data from motor vehicle counters, fall appears to be second only to winter in terms of visitation and use. Traffic counter data were collected at three points on the West Mountain WMA. Assuming that one-third of the weekend users are camp owners who stayed an average of 1.5 days per visit, and assuming a vehicle occupancy of 2.5 persons for camp users and 2.0 for day users, use for the West Mountain WMA for the Fall in the year 2000 is conservatively estimated as roughly 17,000 user-days.

The pattern of use of the West Mountain WMA lands is similar to that observed on the Conte Refuge lands, with a higher level of use during weekends, and during the peak hunting season, October and November.

d. Winter Use

Based on data from snowmobile counters, winter appears to be the time of heaviest visitation and use. To estimate the level of snowmobiling use, snowmobile counters were installed for the 2000-2001 season at five major trail locations. Use was monitored from the last week in December through the first week in April. For all stations combined, the heaviest use occurred in January and February (66%), and on weekends (50%). The total use is estimated to be in the range of 40,000 to 60,000 user-days for the entire area encompassed by the Kingdom Heritage Lands.

e. Spring/Summer Use

Traffic counter data were collected from May 17, 2001 through August 12, 2001 at three points on the West Mountain WMA (on Notch Pond Road, Paul Stream Road, and South America Pond Road). This yielded a total vehicle count of roughly 5,000. Assuming that one-half of the weekend users are camp owners who stayed an average of 2 days per weekend visit, and assuming an average vehicle occupancy of 2.5 persons for camp users and 2.0 for day users, use for the West Mountain WMA for the spring/summer period in the year 2001 is estimated as roughly 14,000 user-days.

f. Other uses

Use for fishing is considered common, especially in association with many of the privately leased camps on the WMA. Other uses, such as biking, hiking, wildlife observation, and photography are known to occur, but at substantially lower levels than hunting and snowmobiling.