

White Mountain National Forest (WMNF) Maps

Background

The WMNF was formally established by President Woodrow Wilson in 1918. The authorizing legislation was the Weeks Act of March 1, 1911. As a result of the Weeks Act, a National Forest Reservation Commission (NFRC) was created in 1911 to determine the acquisition boundaries. This boundary is called the Proclamation Boundary and specifies where land can be acquired without special rules. The Proclamation Boundary has changed several times over the years including the elimination of the Mahoosuc Range Purchase Unit in New Hampshire and Maine in 1928.

Approval of the Proclamation Boundary allowed the US Forest Service to begin acquiring land in 1914, even before it was established as a national forest in 1918. Lands were purchased by a team of foresters led by William Logan Hall who in a little over a year had purchased a quarter million acres from willing sellers. The first tract acquired under the Weeks Act, according to the WMNF land status records was the E. Bertram Pike Tract, US Tract 59, 7,079 acres in Benton, NH that was acquired on January 2, 1914. The next acquisition was US Tract 11 from the Berlin Timber Land Company on January 20, 1914 consisting of 30,296 acres in the Northern Presidential Range, Wild River and Cherry Mountain regions.

The first WMNF map for the public was issued in 1914 with a map title of White Mountain Region. The maps were then free for the asking. The 1914 map showed the first three large acquisitions including the two previously mentioned and a large tract of land in Bethlehem in the headwaters of the Gale River. The map was black and white and used simple hachure lines to denote topography. Later maps used color, contour lines and illustrations or photos and were printed on both sides.

Over 30 WMNF maps have been produced by the US Forest Service since the first map came out in 1914. In the early years maps were updated annually to reflect the rapid changes in public ownership brought about by the Weeks Act. Recreational opportunities such as trails and campgrounds were features in early editions. After the Great Hurricane of 1938, the maps in 1939-1942 denoted areas closed to the public because of the high fire danger posed by the hurricane ravaged forest. Later years brought less frequent map products including a large gap from 1942 to 1963. The last WMNF map produced was in 1993.

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Maps by Year

1914. The first public map of the WMNF was issued in 1914 and showed the first land acquisitions and the proclamation boundary. It was free to the public and printed on one side. The Supervisor's Office was in Gorham.

1915. The second WMNF map was issued in May 1915 in time for the recreation season and included a message to the public about the WMNF area. Information about preventing forest fires was also included. The map showed lands being acquired by the United States in green.

1916. The Zealand Valley was acquired from the Henry Estate. Crawford Notch State Park was established and shown on the map. Additional lands in Maine had been included in the expanded Proclamation Boundary. 305,000 acres had already been purchased.

1917. The fourth WMNF map uses White Mountain National Forest for the first time. The Mahoosuc Purchase unit is established. Some trails are now shown. This map lacks the green overprint .

1918. Presidential Proclamation by President Woodrow Wilson on May 16, 1918 and was attached to the 1918 map.

1918. The southern boundary around Ellsworth and Sandwich has been better defined. This map came in two versions, one with the green overprint and the other just black and white.

1920. The 1920 map showed more land having been acquired in the last two years. The area around the Mount Washington Hotel at Bretton Woods is now out of the Proclamation Boundary.

1924. By 1924 the WMNF had acquired most of the land in the Presidential and Carter Ranges. State Forests and Parks are shown in brown. An ownership along the Dry River is hand corrected using a stamp and purple ink stating "Private Land." This later was sold to the US government. A huge area in the Pemigewasset River country in Lincoln shows logging railroads and private land.

1929. Three state game refuges managed by the WMNF are shown. They are the Hubbard Brook, Wild River and York Pond state game refuges. WMNF campgrounds and shelters are shown in red for the first time. The Mahoosuc Purchase unit is dropped. The Supervisor's Office is now in Laconia.

1931. A double sided map with a picture of the Presidential Range from Gen Road is on the cover. The map had camping and other information on the back side. The Pemigewasset wilderness, now largely cut over was designated for acquisition.

1937. The 1937 WMNF map came in two versions. One was a thematic Geology map that may have had limited public distribution. The black and white map issued to the public did not show

CCC camps. The purchase unit boundaries in Maine were expanded. Franconia Notch State Forest Reserve was shown.

1939. The Great Hurricane of September 1938 devastated large swaths of the WMNF. The fire hazard from the downed trees was extreme and large areas of the forest were closed to public use. The 1939 map showed areas in red closed to public entry and other areas such as trails and roads in cross lines where special precautions must be observed.

1940. By 1940 many of the areas closed to public use a year earlier had been reopened after hazard reduction work had been completed. The western half of the forest still had a considerable area closed to public use. This map used a grid numbering system for the first time for help in locating a spot on the ground. Several new forest fire lookout stations had been established.

1941. The WMNF map for 1941 still showed a few areas closed to public use but the big addition was all of the trail names and numbers were shown in a box for the first time. This double sided map featured Chocorua Lake on the cover.

1942. The trail names and numbers were still listed in a box. The areas closed to the public were now shown in an amber color.

1963. There was a 21 year gap in WMNF maps between 1942 and 1963 when two different maps were offered. This version shows national forest land in green and features a table of developed recreation facilities. The Great Gulf is shown as a Wild Area and not a Wilderness. Kilkenny, Livermore and Waterville Valley are shown as Wildlife Management Areas. New Scenic Areas are shown on the map at Greeley Ponds, Pinkham Notch, Nancy Pond, Lincoln Woods, Sawyer Ponds, Snyder Brook, Lafayette Brook, Gibbs Brook and Rocky Gorge.

1967. The 1967 WMNF map marked the switch from planimetric maps to a topographic map using contour lines. This was also the first color map and featured a winter color cover of Mount Washington from Wildcat Mountain. The Great Gulf was now a Wilderness and highlighted by a separate enlarged map insert. The back side featured a series of black and white photos of the forest.

1970. This 1970 map is an example of a thematic map that the WMNF produced to help manage a specific issue. In this case it was for snowmobiles that had become quite popular and were traveling in remote areas of the forest. The snow machines in those days were light and able to travel off trail more than today's trail machines. This map shows a closure of certain areas for a four month period.

1982. The WMNF map for 1982 was similar in design to the classic 1967 version but reverted to planimetric except for the insert of the Presidential Range which stayed topographic. Cartoons were used to present information on the Leave No Trace campaign. The cover picture was of Hillman's Highway in Tuckerman Ravine.

1984. The 1984 map was planimetric and featured the same cover picture as the 1982 issue. The map was considerably larger in size. The Pemigewasset, Sandwich Range and Presidential Range– Dry River Wildernesses were featured.

Definitions

- **Planimetric Map:** A map accurately representing only the horizontal position of features such as buildings, campgrounds, roads, rivers, trails and other cultural features. Terrain or topography is omitted.
- **Thematic Map:** A map designed to show a particular theme connected with a specific geographic area such as high fire danger from hurricane damage on the 1939 map.
- **Topographic Map:** A map characterized by large-scale detail and quantitative representation of relief, usually using contour lines as in the 1967 WMNF map. Earlier WMNF maps often used hachure lines to denote mountains and ridges.

Reference

“Purchase of Land Under the Weeks Law in the Southern Appalachian and White Mountains. “
http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/WeeksAct/lands_1911.pdf

“Weeks Law Purchase Units.”

http://www.foresthistory.org/ASPNET/Policy/WeeksAct/WeeksPurchaseUnits_Map.htm

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