

**Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation
Bureau of Forest Fire Control and Forestry
Proposed Timber Harvest Summary
Name: Potter Mtn Rd**

Date Posted: January 21, 2015

End of Comment Period: March 7, 2015

Region: West
Recreation District: Lakes
Forest Management District: Northern Berkshires
State Forest: Pittsfield
Closest Road: Potter Mtn Rd
Town: Lanesborough

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The Potter Mtn. Rd proposal will include multiple timber sales to be accomplished over a four or five year period. It covers approximately 420 acres located on the lower slopes of the Taconic Mountain range in the towns of Lanesborough and Hancock. It is bisected by Potter Mtn. Rd which is a town road that is closed to traffic for most of the year.

The area was selected for a forest management project because:

- It offers an excellent opportunity to demonstrate and fulfill objectives for DCR Woodlands. Among these objectives are sustainable production of wood products, restore and maintain structural diversity, provide benefits to wildlife, contribute to DCR recreational goals, and provide benefits to local economies.
- The area contains high volumes of large ash trees which are threatened by ash decline and the emerald ash borer which has recently been confirmed as present in the immediate vicinity.
- Past forest management activities (timber and firewood sales) have started the development of a complex forest structure (multiple species, sizes and ages) in the unit. This set of proposed treatments will further that goal.

The Potter Mtn. Forest Management Project endeavors to:

- Demonstrate silvicultural techniques such as thinning and gap expansion to create and maintain species and structural complexity in an area of multiple forest types.
- Demonstrate harvesting techniques and best management practices that protect forest productivity, soil, water resources and wildlife habitat.
- Fulfill management approaches for Woodlands as directed by the Forest Futures Visioning Process (2010) and subsequent Management Guidelines (2012), specifically manage for diversity/ complexity.
- Follow general guidelines of the Northern Berkshires Forest Resource Management Plan.
- Capture a portion of the potential significant loss of resource value due to emerald ash borer caused mortality.

- Reduce white ash basal area, per standard recommendations, to slow spread of the ash borer. (see <http://files.dnr.state.mn.us/forestry/ecssilviculture/policies/guidelinesManagingAshMinnesotaForestryLands-100723.pdf>, www.emeraldashborer.info)
- Prevent proliferation of American beech infected with beech bark disease complex.
- Accelerate growth of advanced regeneration from previous timber sales.
- Invest timber sale revenue into recreational trail improvements.

Previous Silvicultural treatments:

Most of this proposed area has been harvested within the past 50 years. Beginning in 1975 and continuing through at least the mid 90s this area served as one of the sites for popular the homeowner firewood programs, cut a cord and home fuelwood. From 1979-1994 multiple sales were conducted here. These were mostly commercial thinnings designed to increase tree growth and quality and to guide the species mix of the remaining trees. The most recent harvest occurred in 1994 and was the first cut of a shelterwood series designed to create conditions suitable for establishment of new young trees and to release already established young trees.

Site Description:

- **Topography:**
The project is located on the lower slopes of the Taconic Mtn Range. In the southern section, slopes are generally moderate with a maximum slope of approximately 15%. On the northern section slopes are steeper ranging from approximately 20-40%. Elevation ranges from 1450 to 1800 feet.
- **Soils:**
Soils are predominately in the Taconic-Macomber or Lanesborough- Dummerston associations. Macomber and Lanesborough soils, which are generally located on the lower parts of the unit, have moderate permeability with a slight windthrow or erosion hazard. The lowest slopes of the Lanesborough soil have numerous intermittent streams, storm runoff channels and large seep areas. Site index ranges from 55 to 70 for sugar maple and red oak with the Macomber soils being more productive than Lanesborough.

Stand Description:

The following descriptions are based field reconnaissance and visual assessment. A formal inventory or stand exam will be conducted when specific treatment plans are prepared.

- **Species composition:**
In the southern section, the primarily forest type is Oak/hardwood (OH) with a smaller area of northern hardwood (BB) and another small area of white pine/hardwood (WH). The northern section is primarily northern hardwood.

Overstory:

Map 2 shows forest types as mapped by the Sewall stand mapping project. On this map, stands designated as RM, BW or BM are included in the BB category.

OH-This type is a mix of red oak, white ash, sugar maple, red maple, with smaller numbers of black cherry, white birch, beech and big tooth aspen. Where past harvest has created enough daylight, there are some pockets or large groups of yellow/black birch with some young red oaks.

BB- Here the overstory is primarily sugar maple with a significant proportion of white ash. A few red oak and black cherry and patches of mature white birch are scattered in.

WH- This type is made up of a mix of hardwood species found in the adjacent areas and a significant proportion of white pine.

Understory:

The species found in the understory vary considerably across the proposal area due to a variety of factors including soil type and moisture, topography past land use and overstory. In general, the principal species in the understory is beech. Other woody species are striped maple, witch hazel, hazelnut, shadbush, ironwood, maple leaf viburnum and a smaller number of the species found in the overstory. A population of burning bush (*Euonymus alatus*) has become established at the southern end of the proposal area.

Ground layer:

As with the understory, this layer varies. In general, it is composed of a variety of ferns including Christmas, hayscented, wood, sensitive, interrupted and cinnamon ferns. Other herbaceous plants include Canada mayflower, partridgeberry, trout lily, wild oats, and trillium. Tree species are mostly beech with some red oak, red and sugar maple, ash and white pine.

- **Size classes present:**

In addition to the above diversity of tree species there is a diversity of tree sizes. Most tree species are present in a variety of size classes. Red oak, maples, ash and cherry are present in small numbers as seedling, saplings and poles, but are most common as medium (16-24 inch diameter) and large trees (greater than 24 inch diameter). The various birches are present as occasional medium to large trees, but are most common as large sapling to pole size (4 inch to 10 inch) with some small trees. Beech are most common in the seedling – small pole size classes, but are present in the larger sizes in varying numbers throughout the area. Most white pines are medium to large trees.

- **Stand and tree vigor:**

In general, the stand is very healthy and vigorous. Past thinnings have resulted in large crowned trees of all species. Some beech appears to be resistant to beech bark disease, but most show some signs of the complex. White birch is nearing the upper end of its life cycle and most trees are declining. While most ash is very healthy on this site, some individuals show signs of ash decline. Ash decline is a poorly understood condition, probably caused by a variety of factors including disease and past drought which has been effecting ash for a couple of decades. Given the presence of emerald ash borer in the immediate area, virtually all the remaining ash are almost certain to be killed.

- **Stocking level:**

The forest here is fully stocked with appropriate tree species.

Aesthetic, Recreation, Wetlands, Cultural, Rare Species and Wildlife Considerations:

Aesthetic:

This harvest should not have an unacceptable aesthetic impact on the roadside. Other than DCR or Town authorized management equipment and ORVs, the road is not open to vehicular traffic except during hunting season. Unfortunately Potter Mtn. Rd has historically been known for illegal dumping and unauthorized vehicle use. Remnants of these activities impact the aesthetics of the area.

Recreation:

Hunting:

The Potter Mtn. area is heavily used for hunting. As mentioned above the road is reopened during legal hunting seasons.

Trails:

The Burgoyne trail runs along the southern edge of the proposed sale area. It is currently designated for hiking, biking and snow mobile use. It is in poor condition and is currently being considered for restoration. Portions of the trail will be used for skidding and a landing will be located along the trail at the site of a previously used landing.

The Taconic Crest hiking trail crosses the northern portion of the area and runs down Potter Mtn Rd.

The Balance Rock Trail will be used for a short distance for trucking logs from a landing to Potter Mtn. This section has been traditionally used for this purpose. It is designated for hiking, biking, snowmobile and ORV use. Potter Mtn. Road is used for hiking, biking, snowmobile and ORV use. With approval of the Town Highway Dept, it is anticipated that the road will be used for trucking, forwarding, and landing logs.

While there are no authorized mountain bike trails, a couple of unauthorized trails have been noted.

Geocaching:

Location of geocaching sites are not coordinated with DCR and there does not appear to be a list of sites on State property readily available. It is therefore not possible to know if any sites are located in the proposed area.

However, the location near the city, available parking and occasional cars with geocaching stickers in the Potter Mtn. parking lot would seem to indicate that there may be a site or sites nearby.

Wetlands:**Streams:**

Tributaries to Daniels Brook proposal area cross through the area, other streams form much of the southern and southeastern edges. Intermittent streams and seeps are common on the lower slopes. One wooded wetland is located on the southeast edge.

No wetland crossings are anticipated. There will be filter strips at least 50 feet wide along all streams.

Cultural Resources:

The DEM cultural resource inventory lists two sites in the southwestern corner of the proposed area.

Newton cellar hole: This cellar hole is no longer apparent. It seems likely that it was adjacent to Potter Mtn. Rd and was filled in from erosion or road construction. A low intermittent stone wall appears to be the only remaining indication of the farmstead.

Cemetery: The Churchill/Baker burial ground, small family cemetery is located across the road from the Newton site. The stones have been broken and are no longer readable. Harvesting will not occur within at least 75 feet of the cemetery.

Rare and Endangered Species:

There are no priority habitats of rare species or estimated habitats of rare wildlife listed in the 13th edition of the Mass Natural Heritage Atlas.

Wildlife:

Wildlife found here are typical of the area. There are no known rare or unusual species and no critical habitat. Standard harvest guidelines and practices will ensure the retention of the recommended minimum number of cavity and dead trees/ acre. Retention of hard mast trees (oak, cherry, beech) adjacent to seep areas will maintain winter access to mast. The anticipated harvest should have no adverse affect on wildlife habitat. It will temporarily increase deer browse and may provide an increased variety of ecological niches

Sale Layout and Harvesting Limitations:

Landings: Past harvests have resulted in multiple landing areas. These will be reused, but depending on final sale area, some may be consolidated. (see map 2)

Skid/ truck roads: Existing skid roads will be reviewed and where appropriate will be reused and/or new trails will be created. No stream crossings are anticipated but if further review determines them to be necessary all crossings will be bridged.

Buffers: Standard 50 foot road and trail buffers will be maintained. Within these buffers no more than 50 % of the basal area will be removed. Following standard best management practices a variable filter strip will be maintained along all vegetated wetlands and streams. Within these areas no more than 50% of the basal area will be harvested and logging equipment will not be allowed.

Areas excluded from harvest: Vegetated wetlands and seep areas will not be harvested.

In-kind services: after consultation with DCR trail managers and with the Town of Lanesborough, improvements to the Bugoyne and Balanced Rock Trails and/or Potter Mtn Rd may be required.

Silviculture:

Harvest Schedule:

Harvest of the proposal area is anticipated to occur in a series of timber sales over a period of several years. The first harvest will occur at the southern side of the area.

Goals and objectives:

There are three primary goals:

1. the continuation of a varied and complex forest capable of buffering future disturbance, and maintaining the current species, size and genetic diversity and the demonstration of a system which can obtain these goals.
2. the maintenance of a variety of ecological niches and therefore wildlife habitats resulting from retention of large trees, cavity trees and coarse woody debris as well as a variable mix of species, size, density and vertical structure.
3. the dramatic reduction of ash basal area to potentially slow the spread of emerald ash borer and the removal of ash trees along roads and trails to reduce potential hazard trees.

Secondary goals include supporting local wood products industry, salvaging the value of damaged and diseased trees, providing income to the town and to the general fund. Another goal is the establishment of ash regeneration which might survive the expected borer infestation and provide seeds for a future population.

Methods used to accomplish these goals:

Within the road corridor all ash will be removed. In addition any other dead or otherwise hazardous tree which is tall enough to reach the road may be removed.

In the remainder of the proposal area, the method used will be an irregular shelterwood system, including thinning to promote very large trees, reduction of overstory density to release existing young trees and creation of small group harvests centered on mature or declining trees to encourage regeneration or to release existing trees. In some sections of the proposal area specific silvicultural techniques will be dictated by density and spacing of ash. Large disease free beech trees will be retained to maintain a variety of mast producing trees and to improve the genetics of the existing beech forest. Following harvest, where necessary, a program to reduce the percentage of beech using a variety of chemical controls will be instituted. As part of the timber harvest, control of Euonymous plants will be required.

Short and long term desired conditions:

The most important desired condition is a safer roadside corridor with fewer hazard trees.

Both the short and long term desired condition is a forest composed of a variety of tree, shrub and herbaceous species, size classes and overstory densities. This forest will have a component of very large trees (greater than 26" diameter) and will primarily be composed of medium to large trees (16-26" diameter). Smaller trees, seedlings and saplings will be found throughout the area and in scattered small patches and will provide a varied level of vertical structure. The desired species mix is one with a lesser percentage of ash and a continued small percentage of beech.

Future silvicultural treatments:

It is anticipated that future management will continue these types of harvesting methods (multiage regeneration systems).

District Forester:

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Date:

12/22/14

Park Supervisor:

Chris Lynn

Date:

12/22/14

Regional Director:

Robert S. McElroy

Date:

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Management Forestry

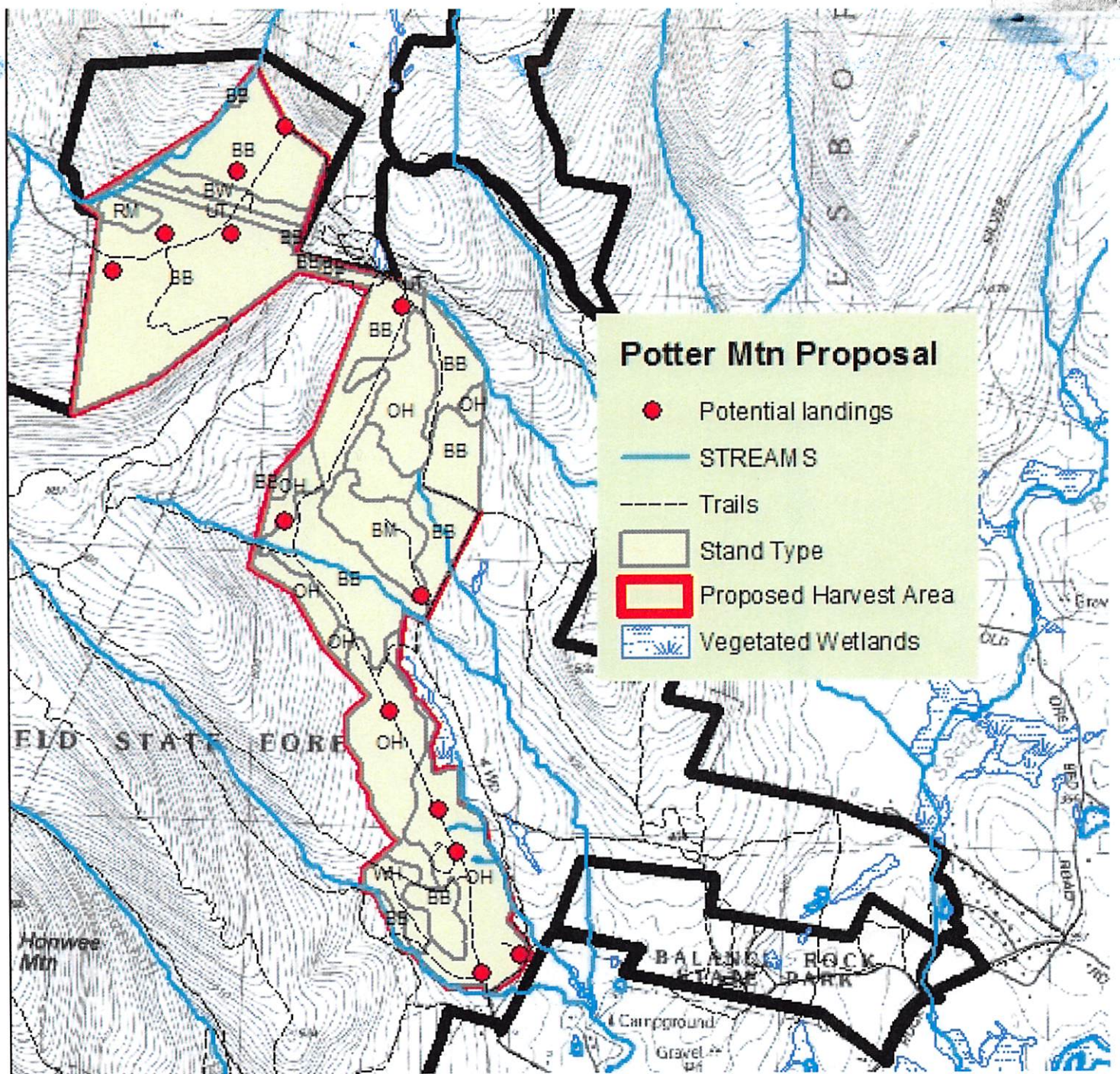
Program Supervisor:

Shelli Hill

Date:

1/12/15

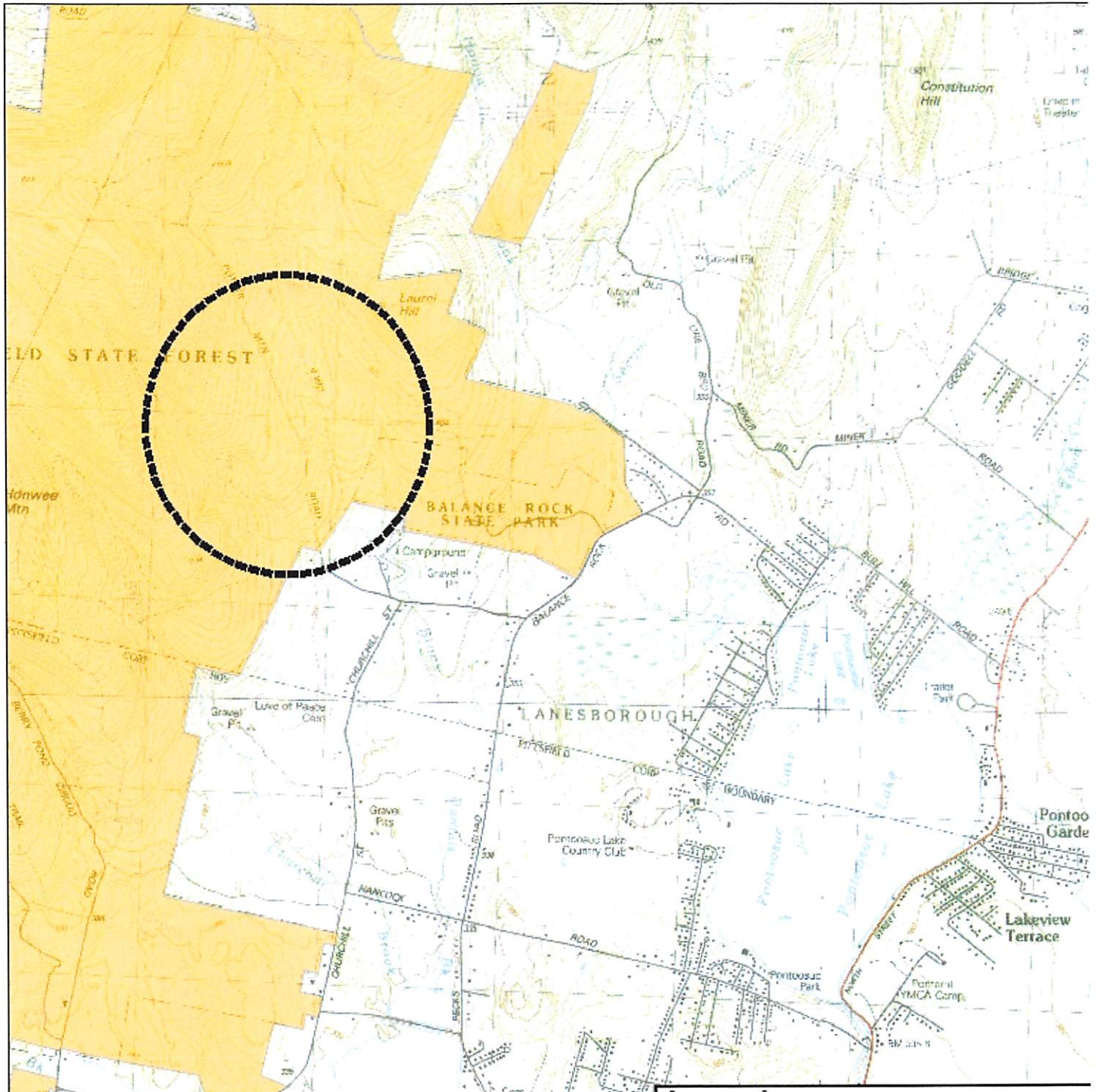
Attached: Topographic map showing location of Forest Products Sale Area



MAP 2

Potter Mountain Forestry Proposal

Pittsfield State Forest



Map 1- locus