



### **AFM Managed Roads Update**

Road systems on private lands managed by American Forest Management, Inc. (AFM) will periodically be shut down during wet conditions typically during the spring mud season. The purpose of this closure is to reduce the impact that occurs on roads from travel in saturated conditions. Excessive rutting leads to erosion that can potentially impact water resources and results in increased maintenance costs for landowners. Road systems will re-open when AFM foresters decide that conditions are adequate for travel with minimal damage risk. For the latest information on the status of specific AFM managed road systems, please call **(207) 827-3700 x. 100** for a recorded message. Thank you for your cooperation in protecting AFM managed roads.

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John Holyoke – Bangor Daily News

### **Stud Mill Road closed again for mud season**

**By John Holyoke**

BDN Staff

Many outdoors enthusiasts pack up their trucks at this time of year, head for a favorite stretch of dirt road and look for a special time to fish.

If you're one of those, and your secret fishing spot is off the Stud Mill Road — one of Maine's many unpaved sporting thoroughfares — I've got a piece of advice for you.

With apologies to Marshall Dodge, you can't get there from here.

For the second straight spring, American Forest Management, the company that manages much of the land that is accessed via the Stud Mill Road, has temporarily closed that major east-west woods road.

Al Beeson, AFM's road engineer, said other spur roads off Route 9 have been closed at this time of year for more than a decade.

When you think about things from AFM's point of view, the road closures during the sloppy mud season make perfect sense.

"We close in order to keep pickup traffic off our roads and prevent the roads from being rutted up, so we don't have to maintain them at all, if possible," Beeson said.

When outdoors enthusiasts figure a four-wheel-drive truck gives them the right — not to mention the ability — to access recreational spots during seasons when the roads are muddy and sloppy, it can cost companies like AFM a lot of money.

How much?

"It's a pretty big number," Beeson said. "Usually, it costs us about \$350 a mile to grade the road. That's if we don't

have to go in there and haul gravel in, if the road hasn't fallen apart."

The problem is, one truck traveling on an unstable road can cause plenty of damage. A few trucks, or more, and a simple grading job might not do the trick.

Beeson said AFM manages about 1 million acres in the state. About 750,000 acres are in what the company calls its Down East section, which stretches from Guilford all the way down the Stud Mill Road into Washington County. Overall, he said that about 1,000 miles of roads are closed right now.

The Stud Mill Road itself stretches 55 miles, from Costigan to Wesley, according to Beeson.

AFM usually stops using the roads at the beginning of April, when they thaw and soften, Beeson said. "This year we got out of the woods at the end of February. It was two or three weeks earlier than normal."

The roads were shut down to public traffic on March 17.

Beeson said last year's road closures paid dividends for the company.

"By closing them down, the roads are definitely in better shape than they are when they're wide open [for] traffic," Beeson said.

Beeson said AFM contacted people who hold leases on land in the affected territory. Those who actually own land outright were more difficult to notify of the closures, he said.

"The only problem we've had is that people from away didn't get the message that the roads are closed. That only happened in one case," Beeson said. "Other than that, nobody's given us any flak. Now that the roads are drying out, people are getting anxious, and so are we."

Beeson said AFM wants to get back in the woods and start working as much as anglers want to drive to their favorite ponds or brooks.

"I know [during] fishing season people are a little upset about it, but things are a little tender right now," Beeson said.

AFM has a dedicated phone line for those seeking information about road closures. Call 827-3700, extension 100, for updated information or to find out when the roads will reopen.

And rest assured: AFM officials want to reopen the roads as soon as they can do so without causing further damage.

"We talked about it today," Beeson said. "I hate to give a day, because that becomes the day. But if the weather continues like this, which is really pretty good, I envision in another two weeks we'd open them up."