



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

HORICON BOAT LAUNCH

Draft Unit Management Plan

NYS DEC, DIVISION OF FISH & WILDLIFE

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Introduction

The Horicon Boat Launch is located along Warren County Route 62 (Glendale Road) and County Route 15 (East Shore Drive) in the Town of Horicon. The launch provides access to the Southern end of Schroon Lake just north of the hamlet of Pottersville near exit 26 off Interstate 87 (Figure 1). The Horicon Boat Launch is the largest public launch on Schroon Lake. The launch sits on 17.16 acres of land and is classified as Intensive Use (Figure 2).

The facility was reconstructed circa 1988 and the parking area was paved in 1990. The only subsequent improvement to the site occurred in the fall of 2011 when a ramp extension was added. The extension stopped the formation of a large power loading hole that had developed and caused damage to boats and trailers using the facility.

Inventory and Use

The facility accommodates 50 vehicles with trailers, four vehicle-only and an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant vehicle-only parking spot (Figure 3). The Horicon Boat Launch was included in the Galusha Consent Decree, and has been made accessible to persons with disabilities. ADA compliant portable toilets are seasonally installed within an enclosure.

Steel sheet pile bulkheads provide shore protection in the immediate dock and ramp area. Adjacent shore areas are protected with placed stone. Aluminum floating docks are placed along both sides of the 68' wide ramp, which effectively reduces the width to 55', but is still spacious when compared to most other Region 5 facilities. The two docks measure 6' wide by 70' long. The facility is in the Warrensburg "working circle" of Region 5 DEC Division of Operations. Annual maintenance including mowing and dock installation and removal is conducted by the DEC.

Management Proposals

The Horicon Boat Launch is a very important facility to the Town of Horicon and other surrounding towns. There is a great economic benefit for the towns gained from the users of the Horicon Boat Launch. Schroon Lake attracts visitors to the many campgrounds around the lake, boaters looking for a quieter water and anglers in search of warm and cold water sportfish. The various activities originating from many different locations and the presence of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in surrounding waters have prompted the Towns of Horicon, Chester and Schroon, along with other concerned groups, to implement spread prevention measures.

The East Shore Schroon Lake Association (ESSLA) has stationed lake stewards at the Horicon boat launch for many years. The stewards provide public outreach and education about the threats of ecologically harmful AIS while conducting visual inspections of all water craft and trailers being launched and retrieved on a voluntary basis. These stewards are trained through the Watershed Stewardship Program from

Paul Smith's College. The stewards at Horicon Boat Launch are also participating in a DEC program that offers boaters an opportunity to have their vessel's bilge areas, livewells, bait wells and ballast tanks rinsed prior to launching.

In 2013 Warren County enacted a local law to prevent the spread of AIS. The law made it illegal to launch a boat with visible plants or animals into any water body within Warren County or to enter a public highway with visible AIS that may have become attached while retrieving a boat. In 2014 The Department also adopted regulations (6 NYCRR [Section 59.4](#) and [190.24](#)) which prohibits:

Launching, or attempting to launch a watercraft from a state boat launching site, a fishing access site, or any other site from which a watercraft may be launched, or leaving from these sites with any plant or animal, or parts thereof, visible to the human eye, in, on, or attached to any part of the watercraft, including livewells and bilges, the motor, rudder, anchor or other appurtenants; any equipment or gear; or the trailer or any other device used to transport or launch a watercraft that may come into contact with the water, unless a written permit is obtained from the department.

And which requires that:

No person shall launch, or attempt to launch a watercraft from a state boat launching site, a fishing access site, or any other site from which a watercraft may be launched, or leave from these sites without draining the watercraft, including bilge areas, livewells, bait wells and ballast tanks, unless a written permit is obtained from the department.

The Towns of Horicon, Chester and Schroon purchased a hot water high pressure wash unit with Department of State Watershed Grant monies to be used to protect Schroon Lake, which at this time does not have a known population of small bodied AIS. The recirculating unit, which uses a water collection mat, was located in Horicon Boat Launch at the open grass area of the boat launch off of East Shore Drive during the 2015 boating season. Boats found to need washing upon inspection by the stewards were asked to drive out of the launch and around the East Shore Drive to receive a free wash. The towns along with the ESSLA paid a total of five staff to operate the wash unit and serve as stewards at the launch in 2015. They requested the DEC's help to develop a plan to reduce the number of staff needed to be on site at any one time for the 2016 boating season.

The plan that was formulated would require five trees greater than three inches to be removed from the wooded area to the South of the paved parking lot and the construction of a 210' gravel lane from the parking area to the open grass area along East Shore Drive (Figure 4). The lane is pre-existing and comprised predominantly of sand, however, it has not been used in a number of years, allowing some trees to encroach into it. The gravel lane would be 12' wide with a 20' by 40' gravel pad for the wash unit. The inspection area would be moved from near the ramp to the grassy area near the most southerly row of parking. Boats upon entering the site would be

inspected and if found in need of washing would continue south down the gravel lane to the wash unit. After washing, boaters would continue to East Shore Drive, turn north onto Glendale Road, and again enter the boat launch and head directly to the ramp. The gravel lane would allow for the operation of the inspection station by one steward, the operation of the wash unit by a second technician, and allow visual and voice contact between both staff members. Flow of traffic would also be greatly improved with less traffic within the launch parking area.

The proposed gravel lane would be constructed in a manner that would allow for its removal in the future if it was no longer needed. The path would be grubbed to remove the top five to eight inches of soil. Road fabric would be used to control erosion and to allow for the removal of the gravel. There are no plans to pave the proposed path or the grass area along East Shore Drive.

Recreational Use and Demand

The Horicon Boat Launch is one of the most popular access points to Schroon Lake. The use of the boat launch and lake has been documented, either directly or indirectly, by various surveys in recent years. During the summer of 2001 Adirondack Ecologists, LLC was contracted to perform a watercraft use survey of Schroon Lake (Town of Chester 2010). The primary objective of the survey was to obtain data on the character and volume of boating traffic experienced on the lake during two typical summer weekends (July 14-15 and August 4-5).

On each of these weekends (Saturday and Sunday from 7:00 am to 7:00 pm), all watercraft users were counted and interviewed prior to launching. Since weather often affects the level of boating use, the survey was conducted over a period of two weekends to include a variety of potential weather conditions. In addition, a lake-wide count of all watercraft moored or stored within ten feet of the shoreline between the hours of 6:00 and 8:00 am on each of the two Saturdays (July 14 and August 5) was conducted, and a survey of all watercraft using the lake between 2:00 and 2:45 pm and 5:30 and 6:15 pm on all four of the weekend days was conducted.

Shoreline counts of watercraft on July 14 yielded counts of 666 motorized, 524 non-motorized, and 94 personal watercraft (PWC). A repeat survey performed on August 4 had similar results with 677 motorized, 517 non-motorized and 101 PWC present on or near the lake.

A total of 93 and 132 watercraft were launched from the public launches on July 14 and 15, respectively, while a total of 152 and 149 watercraft were launched on August 4 and August 5, respectively. The “mobile” (in-lake) watercraft survey indicated that roughly 85% of the motorized watercraft were boats and 15% were PWC. The launch site data were similar; 88% of motorized watercraft were boats and 12% were PWC. Between 50-75% of the motorized boats on the lake on the two Saturdays surveyed, and a majority of them on the two Sundays, were “transient”. In addition, it appeared that a majority of the PWC counted during the survey were also transient in nature.

The southern basin of Schroon Lake experienced more watercraft activity than the northern basin during the survey period. Some use of the narrows for fishing and other recreation was observed, but most watercraft used the narrows to travel back and forth between the two basins. Responses to the survey administered at the launch sites indicated recreational boating was the most popular activity for watercraft users, and 50% of all respondents indicated that it was their favorite activity. Fishing was the second most popular activity at 29%, with water skiing at 14% and sailing and canoeing at 2%. Roughly 9% of those surveyed indicated that they come to the lake for all of the above-listed activities and two-thirds of the watercraft users surveyed said that they come to the lake only during the summer months.

Using the data obtained during the “mobile” surveys, it was calculated that there was one boat for every 25 acres of water surface available on the busiest day and one boat per every 88 acres of water surface on the slowest day.

Similar use figures have been generated by the Boat Launch Steward Program (Nawrot 2015). Monthly watercraft activity is recorded by stewards during their duty hours, generally 8:00 AM to 4:00 PM, seven days per week. Both launches and retrievals are counted by the stewards. In 2015, the following data were generated at the Horicon Boat Launch:

Month	Number of launches/retrievals
May	215
June	302
July	818
August	575
September	70
Total	1980

Conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan

Following is a review of the Horicon Boat Launch UMP and a description of how it meets the guidelines set forth in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP).

Location in an Intensive Use Area

The existing boat launch and connector lane between the inspection and boat washing areas is within an Intensive Use Area.

Location on a lake or waterway exceeding 1000 acres in area

According to the APSLMP, boat launch sites should be located on large lakes, or smaller lakes connected by navigable waterways where the aggregate acreage of the lake chain exceeds 1,000 acres. At 4,128 acres, Schroon Lake is listed in the APSLMP as a waterbody which exceeds 1,000 acres. The proposed modification would not impact the lake's acreage, nor increase the parking lot capacity

The physical, biological and social carrying capacity will not be exceeded

The physical and social carrying capacity of Schroon Lake for boating was discussed earlier in this plan. Biological thresholds should not be exceeded since this plan does not propose to increase the level of current use. No increase in parking lot capacity is proposed. There is no evidence of over-fishing (NYSDEC 2016) or impaired water quality (Laxson et al. 2015) caused by boaters. With respect to social carrying capacity, boats of all types are generally accepted on Schroon Lake. The Horicon Boat Launch is an integral part of the local social infrastructure and provides a recreational and economic asset to the community.

The boat launching site or attendant water uses will be compatible with the state or private land use classifications and attendant management guidelines as land use controls surrounding the water body

The Horicon Boat Launch is classified as Intensive Use. The surrounding area is predominantly private, though riparian Forest Preserve areas include both Wild Forest and Intensive Use Areas. Private land classifications on the waterway include a long section of Moderate Intensity Use along the eastern shore of Schroon Lake, and a fairly long section of Hamlet along the northwestern shoreline in the vicinity of the Village of Schroon Lake.

The boat launching site is located in a manner to avoid adverse impact on adjacent or nearby state and private lands

The Horicon Boat Launch is ideally located to reduce adverse impacts on adjacent lands. It is located in an area sheltered from the prevailing westerly and northerly winds. There are no nearby private residences and it is in easy reach of the Northway and State Route 9. Its location with easy access from the highway facilitates enforcement and administration of the facility. The inspection and washing areas and their connector, as proposed, will minimize the impact of vehicular traffic on the site, eliminate the adverse traffic flow impacts associated with conducting inspections near the ramp, and avoid the potential for boats in queue for inspection or washing to violate relevant portions of 6 NYCRR [§ 59.4](#).

Motor size limitations appropriate to the carrying capacity of the lake are provided

Currently, there is no motor size limitation on Schroon Lake. The launch is adequate for launching most boats. The lake's large size and diversity of morphometric features allows users to segregate themselves without overuse or resource degradation becoming an issue. The effect of the current proposal is not expected to increase usage from current levels.

Alternatives

The following alternatives were considered to the reconstruction of the Horicon Boat Launch as described in this UMP:

No Action

The boat launch and related infrastructure could be maintained as it exists. However, this alternative would not meet the objectives of improving staffing efficiency and improving traffic flow within the launch area.

Pave the new lane connecting the Boat Launch with the boat wash area

The option of paving the new lane between the boat launch parking area and the boat wash area as proposed was considered. However this option would be more permanent, and complicate reversion to existing conditions should the boat washing program be discontinued or modified from its current form.

Close the boat washing station

The boat washing station could be closed, but that would increase the distance boats recommended for washing would need to travel for cleaning. It is possible this would result in a decrease in the number of boats being washed, and may slightly increase the risk of an inadvertent introduction of AIS into Schroon Lake.

Literature Cited

Laxson, C.L., Kelting, D.L., and E.C. Yerger. 2015. Adirondack Lake Assessment Program: 2014 Report, Schroon Lake. Adirondack Watershed Institute of Paul Smith's College. Report No. PSCAWI 2015-57. 14p.

Nawrot, R. 2015. Schroon Lake and river steward and boat decontamination program final report. East Shore Schroon Lake Association. 16 pp.

NYSDEC. 2016. Bureau of Fisheries modern statewide fisheries database. Version 54, March 22, 2016. Albany, NY.

Town of Chester. 2010. Schroon Lake watershed management plan. 130 pp.

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Appendix 1: Maps

Horicon Boat Launch Location

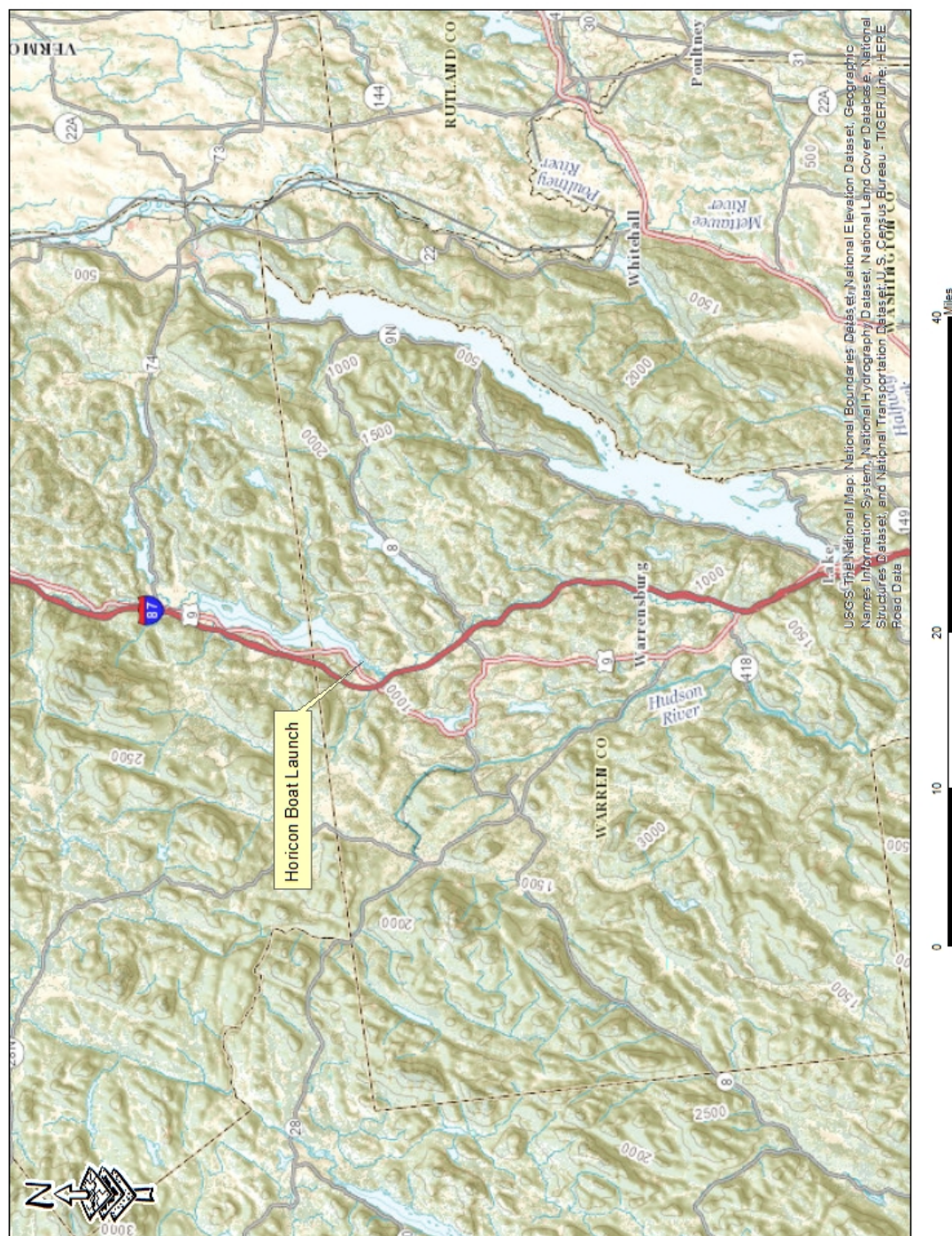


Figure 1. General location map of the Horicon Boat Launch.

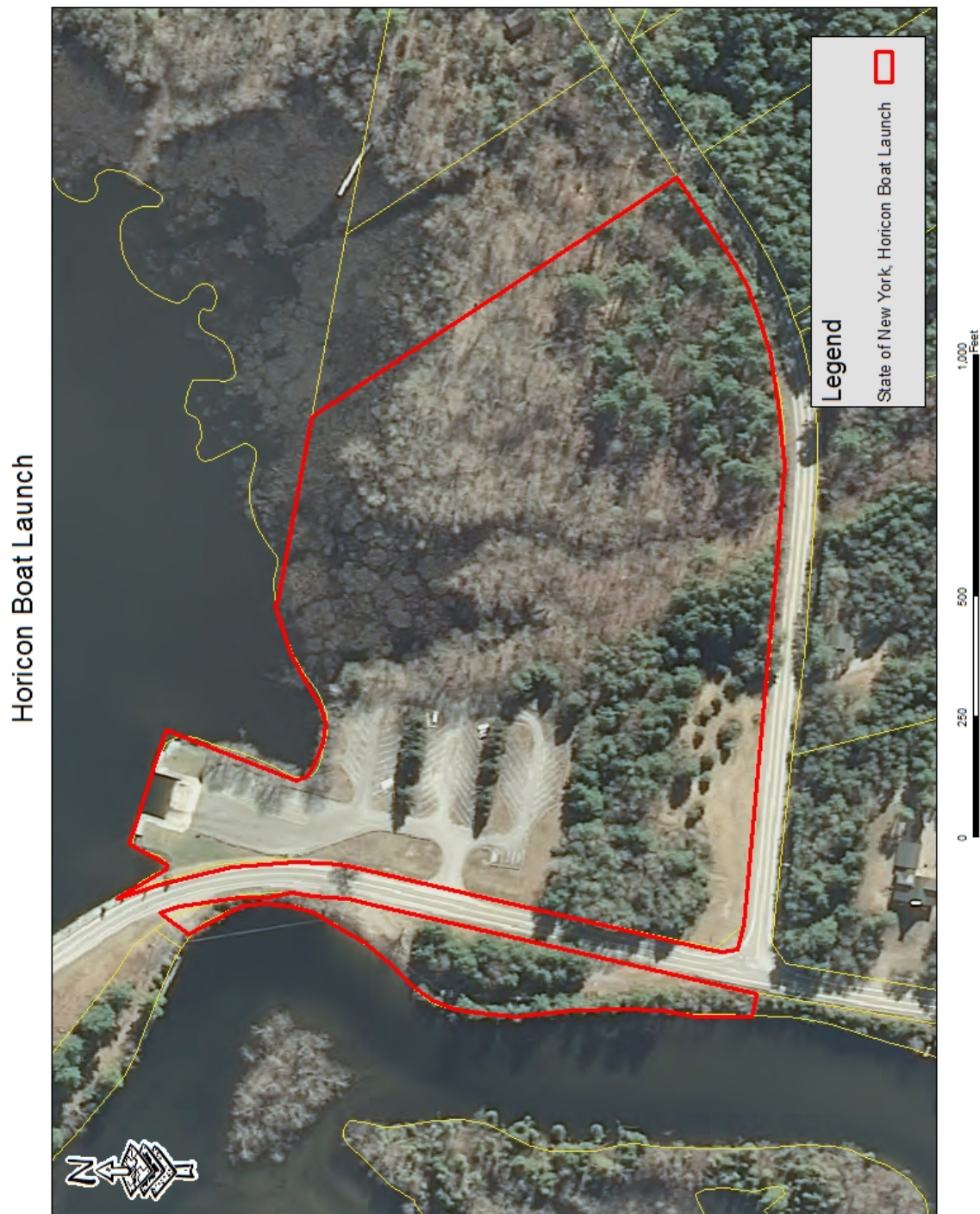


Figure 2. Property comprising the Horicon Boat Launch.

Horicon Boat Launch



Figure 4. Property comprising the Horicon Boat Launch showing approximate location of gravel lane and wash unit.

Appendix 2: River Area Management Plan for Schroon River

1. General

The Horicon Boat Launch is within the Lake George Wild Forest unit of state land. The Horicon Boat Launch is located within the Recreational River area of the Schroon River, pursuant to the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act (Rivers Act).

The Rivers Act, and its implementing regulations found in Part 666 of Title 6 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York (6 NYCRR), regulates the activities within a Recreational River Area, defined geographically as the area within ½ mile from the river on both sides.

This River Area Management Plan ("Plan") has been developed to recommend specific management actions proposed to be taken to protect and enhance the river corridor resource¹, as detailed herein.

The Draft Unit Management Plan is dated June 2016 and provides a discussion of the plan to relocate and consolidate the inspection station and boat wash stations at the Horicon Boat Launch into a more efficient station, improving access and traffic patterns for all users of the boat launch. This will increase efficiency and reduce cost while continue to assist in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species.

The Horicon Boat Launch is located along Warren County Route 62 (Glendale Road) and County Route 15 (East Shore Drive) in the Town of Horicon. The launch provides access to the southern end of Schroon Lake just north of the hamlet of Pottersville near exit 26 off Interstate 87. The Horicon Boat Launch is the largest public launch on Schroon Lake. The launch sits on 17.16 acres of land and is classified as Intensive Use.

Steel sheet pile bulkheads provide shore protection in the immediate dock and ramp area. Adjacent shore areas are protected with placed stone. Aluminum floating docks are placed along both sides of the 68 foot wide ramp, which effectively reduces the width to 55 feet. The two docks measure 6 feet wide by 70 feet long. The facility is in the Warrensburg "working circle" of Region 5 DEC Division of Operations. Annual maintenance including mowing and dock installation and removal is conducted by the DEC.

This plan proposes the installation of a 210 foot gravel lane, 12 feet wide, to a 20 by 40 foot gravel pad for the operation of a hot water high pressure boat wash unit. The lane is pre-existing, but has not been used in several years, therefore it is necessary to remove five trees greater than three inches in diameter. The creation of the gravel lane and relocation of the boat wash station is proposed to reduce the distance between the inspection station and the boat wash station at the Horicon boat launch which in its

¹ 6 NYCRR Section 666.7

current design requires a staff of five. The redesign will reduce staff needs to two and will result in a more accessible and efficient operation. The wash unit will be used to clean boats and trailers entering Schroon Lake in an effort to prevent the spread of aquatic invasive species into the lake. The wash unit collects and continuously recirculates water, minimizing water demand. A water truck will top off the unit as needed. The flow of traffic in the boat launch area will be greatly improved with less traffic within the launch parking area.

The Horicon Boat Launch is a very important facility to the Town of Horicon and other surrounding towns. There is a great economic benefit for the towns gained from the users of the Horicon Boat Launch. Schroon Lake attracts visitors to the many campgrounds around the lake, boaters looking for a quieter water and anglers in search of warm and cold water sportfish. The various activities originating from many different locations and the presence of Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) in surrounding waters have prompted the Towns of Horicon, Chester and Schroon, along with other concerned groups, to implement spread prevention measures.

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The Towns of Horicon, Chester and Schroon purchased a hot water high pressure wash unit with Department of State Watershed Grant monies to be used to protect Schroon Lake, which at this time does not have a known population of small bodied AIS. The recirculating unit, which uses a water collection mat, was located in Horicon Boat Launch at the open grass area of the boat launch off of East Shore Drive during the 2015 boating season. Boats found to need washing upon inspection by the stewards were asked to drive out of the launch and around the East Shore Drive to receive a free wash. The towns along with the ESSLA paid a total of five staff to operate the wash unit and serve as stewards at the launch in 2015. They requested the DEC's help to develop a plan to reduce the number of staff needed to be on site at any one time during the boating season.

2. Existing Conditions

The 2010 Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan was prepared for the NYS Department of State² and is hereby incorporated by reference. The Watershed

²2010. Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan. 130 pp.

Management Plan describes the 316.5 square mile watershed of Schroon Lake, including the boat launch site.

The Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan includes the results of water quality studies performed on the lake and its tributaries for more than twenty years. The Watershed Management Plan describes existing conditions in the Schroon River corridor, its tributaries and the lake, including a description of natural, cultural and recreational resources, prevailing land and water uses, land ownership patterns and existing management devices.

These data indicate that Schroon Lake and its tributaries enjoy excellent water quality and water clarity. Schroon Lake is a soft water lake that possesses sufficient levels of dissolved oxygen throughout the water column to support a healthy aquatic ecosystem. Through an analysis of the phytoplankton and zooplankton communities it is known that the food web of the lake is healthy and in balance, and that the species assemblages observed in the various sample collections are reflective of the lake's excellent water quality. The pH of the lake is circum-neutral, which suggests that acid deposition is not currently a significant problem.

The Watershed Management Plan states: "The Schroon River is a highly sinuous and meandering river, and is the primary water source for Schroon Lake. Running from its origins at New Pond in Elizabethtown, the Schroon River picks up dozens of streams both large and small, and outlets at the north end of Schroon Lake. The river itself from headwater to the lake is 31.3 miles long, but when all tributary streams to the river are added, the length of the entire flowing system exceeds 260 miles. A major tributary to the Schroon River is the Paradox chain of lakes on the eastern side of the watershed, which includes Paradox Lake and Eagle Lake."

"Streams within the Schroon Lake watershed are generally in excellent condition, with exceptions in areas along roadsides or development. Typical stream substrates are gravel/cobble, lending them to excellent fish propagation and habitat features. Macroinvertebrate (stream insect) populations in the streams reviewed showed high populations of pollution intolerant species such as caddis fly, mayfly and stonefly larvae. Presence of these species indicates that these streams maintain high water quality and good oxygenation throughout the year."

The Schroon River is classified as C(T) waters, meaning that the existing or expected best usage of these waters is for supporting fisheries and suitable for non-contact activities, and may support a trout population.

In consideration of the aesthetics of the recreational river corridor of the Schroon River, the existing boat launch was constructed in about 1988 and is visible from the lake and the river. There is an existing boat washing station at the boat launch site proposed to

be replaced by a more efficiently designed and operated station in a more accessible area. The boat wash site is within the Intensive Use area of the boat launch and may be partially visible from one section of the river as it meanders west of the boat launch. The boat launch site will have a more efficient traffic circulation pattern and allow for easier washing and launching of boats. Refer to the photographs of the boat launch site provided in Appendix 2.

Cultural resource lists and maps have been checked. Resource mapping indicates that the site is located near an archeologically sensitive site. Although the boat launch site where the boat wash station is proposed has been filled and graded in the past, and the proposed management action will not impact soils below a depth of approximately 0.5 feet, further analysis of the site is needed before a determination can be made that there will not be an impact to any archeological resources. This analysis will be done prior to any excavation, and any mitigation measures that may be needed will be identified in a work plan.

3. Resource Management Issues

The 2010 Schroon Lake Watershed Management Plan includes current and historic management practices, a summary of land use practices and upland issues which affect the river and the lake, and an array of recommendations in Chapter 5 to protect and even improve Schroon Lake for the future. The recommendations in Chapter 5 are detailed in tables containing recommendations for in-lake improvements, general stormwater runoff systems, measures to address invasive species, specific recommendations for hamlets and highways within the watershed for development and wastewater, and streams within the watershed of the lake. The recommendations include educating and outreach to streamside property owners of the benefits of maintaining vegetated buffers, consideration of required buffers for new development, addressing areas of streambank erosion, hydroseeding of bare soils and streambanks, culvert evaluation, annual review of all road ditches and banks and address as needed, de-icing alternatives and use of high-quality winter spreading equipment and training for transportation departments.

The proposed management action of the boat washing station will assist in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species and help protect the lake water quality. The re-designed wash station will be more efficient and will reduce traffic in the boat launch parking area.

4. Alternatives Considered

In the no action alternative, the boat launch and related infrastructure could be maintained as it exists. However, this alternative would not meet the objectives of improving staffing efficiency and improving traffic flow within the launch area.

The option of paving the new lane between the boat launch parking area and the boat

wash area as proposed was considered. However this option would be more permanent, and complicate reversion to existing conditions should the boat washing program be discontinued or modified from its current form.

The boat washing station could be closed, but that would increase the distance boats recommended for washing would need to travel for cleaning. It is possible this would result in a decrease in the number of boats being washed, and may slightly increase the risk of an inadvertent introduction of aquatic invasive species into Schroon Lake.

5. Proposed Goals, Objectives and Management Actions

The main objective is the protection of the recreational nature of the river resource, in the context of the presence of the interstate highway existing between the project and the river itself. The Rivers Act states³ that recreational rivers are generally readily accessible, and may have a significant amount of development in their river areas and may have been impounded or diverted in the past. Management of recreational river areas will be directed to preserving and restoring their natural, cultural, scenic and recreational qualities. The proposed management action of the boat washing station will assist in preventing the spread of aquatic invasive species and help protect the lake water quality.

With regard to the proposed relocated boat wash station and access lane, the Department has determined that the improvements in this specific instance will not affect the river resource. The Department has determined that with regard to the State Environmental Quality Review Act, this specific project in this specific location qualifies as a Type II action⁴, indicating that the project is not anticipated to have a significant negative impact on the recreational rivers resource of the Schroon River.

The construction and operation of the boat washing station within the Recreational Rivers area of the Schroon River does not need a Rivers permit, as the proposed use is accessory to the authorized boat launch⁵.

As part of the Rivers Act permitting process and in order to implement the Plan in accordance with the Rivers Act, a public hearing will be conducted on the Plan.

³ 6 NYCRR Section 666.4(c)

⁴ 6 NYCRR Section 618.2(a)(3), (4), (7) and (16)

⁵ 6 NYCRR 666.13[J][7]