

**COVER SHEET
and
NOTICE OF COMPLETION
of
FINAL SUPPLEMENTAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

PROJECT TITLE:

Amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) involving clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition and guidelines for management and use, and amendment of related provisions.

NAME OF LEAD AGENCY AND PREPARER OF FSEIS:

NYS Adirondack Park Agency
Post Office Box 99
Ray Brook, NY 12977

PROJECT LOCATION:

The amendment proposals involve public land in New York State's Adirondack Park.

PROPOSED ACTION:

Amendments to the APSLMP involving clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and amendments to related provisions.

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DATE OF ACCEPTANCE OF FSEIS BY LEAD AGENCY:

**PUBLIC HEARINGS ON THE PROPOSED AMENDMENTS TO APSLMP
WERE HELD AT THE FOLLOWING LOCATIONS:**

April 11, 2018
7:00 pm
Adirondack Park Agency
1133 NYS Route 86
Ray Brook, NY

April 24, 2018
7:00 pm
The View
3273 NYS Route 28
Old Forge, NY

April 25, 2018
11:00 am
NYSDEC
625 Broadway
Albany, NY

DATE THRU WHICH PUBLIC COMMENTS WERE ACCEPTED: May 7, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The New York State Adirondack Park Agency (APA or Agency) has proposed amendments to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) involving clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and amendments to related provisions.

The APSLMP and the 1979 Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement: Guidelines for Amending the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (FPEIS) contain standards and guidelines for amending the APSLMP. Agency staff prepared a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) in consultation with the Department of Environmental Conservation (Department or DEC), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP).

Review of proposed amendments to the APSLMP must comply with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the FPEIS. The FPEIS provides that "[s]ignificant changes in the guidelines for management and use of existing classifications" and "[a]lteration of the definition of existing State land classifications" are both Type I actions under SEQRA. (FPEIS, pages 44-45)

The Agency, as lead agency, had determined that the proposed action may have a significant adverse impact on the environment and prepared a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement in lieu of an Environmental Assessment Form, as allowed under 6 NYCRR 617.6(a)(4). The Agency Board accepted the DSEIS on March 8, 2018 and authorized staff to hold public hearings on the DSEIS and the proposed amendments to the APSLMP. Three hearings were held, two inside and one outside the Park.

A preferred alternative is being recommended that includes revisions to the Travel Corridors definition, guidelines for management and use and related provisions. The public had an opportunity to comment at the public hearings and to submit written comments throughout the comment period. Staff considered all comments including the public's response to the DSEIS preferred alternative. Staff then incorporated comments into this Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS). The FSEIS includes staff responses to the public comments (Appendix C) and presents the preferred alternative.

The APSLMP prescribes types of permissible uses in each category but it does not specifically control the levels of use beyond providing guidelines for management and use. Careful development of guidelines for management and use in the APSLMP, through this amendment process and as applied through the Unit Management Plan (UMP) process, should avoid or minimize significant adverse environmental impacts caused by types or levels of use.

The APSLMP (page 1) states:

...the protection and preservation of the natural resources of the State lands within the Park must be paramount. Human use and enjoyment of those lands should be permitted and encouraged, so long as the resources in their physical and biological context, as well as their social or psychological aspects, are not degraded.

The action only involves amendments to the APSLMP; it does not authorize the development of new structures or improvements. Such proposals must be developed through the UMP process and an additional SEQRA assessment by the Department.

Alternative 6 is the preferred alternative. This alternative revises the Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to allow rail and rail trail use on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and future State-owned railroad corridors with existing rails. This alternative includes revisions to the Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to clarify that the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, or any section thereof, and future State-owned railroad corridors with existing rails, may be converted to and managed as a rail trail.

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APPENDIX C: Response to Public Comment on the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement of March 8, 2018

APPENDIX D: FSEIS in Legislative Format Showing Changes made from the DSEIS (redline)

SUMMARY OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Adirondack Park Agency (APA or Agency) is obligated to review proposed amendments to Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) pursuant to the Adirondack Park Agency Act (Act) and plan revisions and review provisions of the APSLMP. The Agency follows the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) and the 1979 Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement: Guidelines for Amending the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (FPEIS) when amending the APSLMP. The proposed amendment involves the clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and amendments of related provisions.

The purpose of the APSLMP amendment is to define a railroad corridor as the fee or easement lands that include a railbed for the Remsen-Lake Placid railroad and any future acquisition that may be considered for classification as a travel corridor, existing (1) for the operation of rail cars and/or (2) to serve as a rail trail. The proposed revisions to the guidelines for management and use could apply to other railroad corridors with rails, acquired by the State after classification of the corridor as a Travel Corridor. The proposed action is to recommend these amendments to the Governor.

These changes to the APSLMP Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and related amendments are evaluated in this document for potentially significant adverse environmental impacts. Copies of the proposed changes to the APSLMP are provided in Appendix A.

APSLMP BACKGROUND

In 1885, the New York State Legislature established the Forest Preserve, stating that the Preserve "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands." In 1892, the Adirondack Park (Park) was established through an act of the Legislature. At the Constitutional Convention of 1894, Article VII of the New York State Constitution (now Article XIV) was adopted and soon after was approved by the people of the State. It reads in part:

The lands of the State, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the Forest Preserve, as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

In 1971, the Adirondack Park Agency was created by the Legislature with two mandates: The Agency was directed to create a State Land Master Plan, adopted by Governor Rockefeller in 1972, to classify land and provide guidelines for the management and use of State lands within the Park. The Agency also developed a Land Use and Development Plan to control development on private land to minimize the adverse impacts upon the natural resource quality of the Park. The Land Use and Development Plan was approved by the Legislature in 1973. Through these plans, the Agency implements a mission for the protection of public and private lands in the Park.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC or Department) is responsible for the care, custody, and control of the State land in the Park; in carrying out this responsibility, DEC drafts Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for managing publicly owned lands within the Park consistent with the APSLMP. There are approximately 2.9 million acres of Forest Preserve in the Adirondack Park.

The APSLMP was adopted in 1972 following the requirement of the Adirondack Park Agency Act to “classify [State] lands according to their characteristics and capacity to withstand use....” (Former APA Act § 807). The APSLMP contains nine classifications, which are briefly described below.

Wilderness - A Wilderness area, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man--where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. A Wilderness area is further defined to mean an area of State land or water having a primeval character, without significant improvement or permanent human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve, enhance and restore, where necessary, its natural conditions.

Primitive - A Primitive area is an area of land or water that is either: essentially wilderness in character but, (a) contains structures, improvements, or uses that are inconsistent with wilderness, as defined, and whose removal, though a long term objective, cannot be provided for by a fixed deadline, and/or, (b) contains, or is contiguous to, private lands that are of a size and influence to prevent wilderness designation; or, of a size and character not meeting wilderness standards, but where the fragility of the resource, or other factors, requires wilderness management.

Canoe - A Canoe area is an area where the watercourses or the number and proximity of lakes and ponds make possible a remote and unconfined type of water-oriented recreation in an essentially wilderness setting.

Wild Forest - A Wild Forest area is an area where the resources permit a somewhat higher degree of human use than in wilderness, primitive or canoe areas, while retaining an essentially wild character. A Wild Forest area is further defined as an area that frequently lacks the sense of remoteness of Wilderness, Primitive or Canoe areas and that permits a wide variety of outdoor recreation.

Intensive Use - An Intensive Use area is an area where the State provides facilities for intensive forms of outdoor recreation by the public. There are two types of Intensive Use areas: campgrounds and day use areas including downhill ski areas.

Historic - Historic areas are locations of buildings, structures or sites owned by the State (other than the Adirondack Forest Preserve itself) that are significant in the history, architecture, archeology or culture of the Adirondack Park, the State or the Nation; that are State historic sites; properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places; or properties recommended for nomination by the Committee on Registers of the New York State Board For Historic Preservation; and that are of a scale, character and location appropriate for designation as an Historic area under the APSLMP and the State has committed resources to manage such as primarily for historic objectives.

State Administrative - State Administrative areas are areas where the State provides facilities for a variety of specific state purposes that are not primarily designed to accommodate visitors to the Park.

Wild, Scenic or Recreational River - A wild, scenic or recreational river is a river or section of river that has been designated as such by the New York State legislature. Each type of designation carries with it protections and restrictions on use on the surrounding lands.

Travel Corridors - The strip of land constituting the roadbed and right-of-way for state and interstate highways in the Adirondack Park, the Remsen to Lake Placid railroad right-of-way, and those state lands immediately adjacent to and visible from these facilities. In 1979, the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor was added to the definition of Travel Corridors. However, the guidelines for management and use focus primarily on state highways.

The Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers and Travel Corridors classifications are essentially corridor overlays to the basic land classification(s) through which the corridor passes.

The APSLMP provides basic guidelines and specific guidelines for each classification for improvements, uses and activities. These specific guidelines should be read for a detailed understanding of the APSLMP's structure and intent. The Wilderness classification sets the base line upon which each following classification then adds permitted structures or activities.

Hierarchy of Guidelines

The APSLMP guidelines for management and use are found in each land use classification and establish an important emphasis on Wilderness guidelines. The structure of the guidelines for management and use begins with Wilderness, which is listed first, and adds permitted guidelines and criteria for each subsequent category. Primitive and Canoe Areas are very close to Wilderness, and all three categories have resource considerations and values that require similarly greater protection than Wild Forest areas. For example, in Primitive areas, “All structures and improvements that conform to wilderness guidelines will be acceptable in primitive areas.” (APSLMP, page 30). The motor vehicle, road and all terrain bicycles guidelines all begin with a statement that wilderness guidelines apply and add some possibilities for administrative use of some roads “to reach and maintain existing structures and improvements.” (APSLMP, page 31). The APSLMP guidelines and criteria and the requirements of the FPEIS, discussed under the next heading, place an emphasis on resource protection, remoteness and self-sufficiency found in the Wilderness, Primitive and Canoe classifications, while permitting and encouraging human use as long as the resources are not degraded.

The area subject to this amendment includes approximately 1,078 miles of State and Interstate Highways, the 119-mile Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and any future acquisition of railroad corridors with existing rails. Primarily, the definitional changes and revisions to the guidelines for management and use and related provisions correspond to potential rail and rail trail use in the Adirondack Park.

STANDARDS FOR AGENCY REVIEW

The APSLMP and the FPEIS contain standards and guidelines for amending the APSLMP.

Agency staff prepared a DSEIS in consultation with the Department of Environmental Conservation, (Department or DEC), the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). Agency Staff received authorization from the Agency Board to hold public hearings on the DSEIS and the proposed amendments to the APSLMP to satisfy the requirements of both SEQRA and the APSLMP. Hearings were held both inside and outside the Park. The public had an opportunity to submit written comments and to make comments at the public hearings. Staff considered all comments including the public’s response to the DSEIS preferred alternative and the Response to Public Comments is attached to this FSEIS as Appendix C.

Agency staff finalized the FSEIS in consultation with DEC, DOT and OPRHP. The Agency Board will next decide (a) whether to accept the FSEIS and (b) whether to recommend the APSLMP amendments to the Governor. If the APSLMP amendments are accepted by the Agency, the resolution approving them is forwarded to the Governor for approval, at which time the changes become effective.

Procedures under SEQRA

This FSEIS is a supplement to the FPEIS, which sets forth guidelines for amending the APSLMP. This action is a Type I action according to the Agency's SEQRA regulations, 9 NYCRR 586.5(a)(6)(iii), and the FPEIS, which provides that significant changes to the guidelines for management and use of existing classifications are a Type I action. Also, the FPEIS lists "[a]lteration of the definition of existing state land classifications" as a Type I action. Agency staff have prepared a FSEIS to review potential adverse impacts to the preferred alternative.

The Agency notified the Department, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historical Preservation and the Department of Transportation of its proposed designation as lead agency by letter dated January 26, 2018. All three State agencies have consented to the Agency's designation as lead agency.

Procedures under FPEIS

The FPEIS lists the possible categories of amendments to the APSLMP, which include the Classification and Reclassification of State land, creation of a new State land classification, deletion of an existing classification, alterations of guidelines for management and use, and alterations of existing classification definitions, alterations of introductory guidelines, alterations of facility definitions, and alterations of area descriptions.

The significant changes proposed in this FSEIS provide clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and amendments to related provisions. Correspondingly, the FPEIS provides the following guidelines for the Agency to follow in making determinations regarding the appropriateness of alterations of guidelines for management and use:

1. *Guidelines should attempt to provide the highest possible quality recreational experiences for each land classification.*
2. *Guidelines should allow only those minimum recreational and administrative facilities necessary to provide such high quality recreational experiences.*
3. *Guidelines should provide for restoration and rehabilitation of lands designated Wilderness, Primitive and Canoe areas which do not now meet Wilderness, Primitive or Canoe area standards due to excessive levels of use or the existence of non-conforming uses.*
4. *Guidelines for Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe and Wild Forest should encourage the resource user to be responsible for his own health, safety and welfare.*
5. *Guidelines for all categories should require that conforming uses be designed and constructed of materials in a manner that causes no significant effects on the physical or biological resources and which do not intrude upon the wild character of such lands.*
6. *Future guidelines should prescribe desirable levels of use based upon the land's physical, biological and social carrying capacities. In its present form, the Plan prescribes only types of allowable uses.*
7. *Where an overuse problem exists, the creation of a special use zone allowing additional facilities in heavily used portions of Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe or Wild Forest areas should not be proposed. Dispersal or regulation of use would be a more appropriate response to such a problem.*
8. *Guidelines should be designed to protect the character of Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe and Wild Forest areas. The very foundation of Wilderness is the guideline which prohibits motorized access by the public and severely restricts such access by the Department of Environmental Conservation. Alteration of this guideline to permit generalized use of motor vehicles or aircraft would destroy the character of wilderness, a cornerstone of the Master Plan.*
9. *Present management guidelines for Intensive Use areas are quite general and difficult to apply to extensive development. Guidelines applicable to new development in Intensive Use areas should be no less restrictive than those applied to the private sector by the Agency and should be described with greater specificity. In any event, undeveloped State land should act as a buffer zone between Intensive Use facilities and adjacent private lands to protect the character of those private lands. Guidelines for new Intensive Use facilities should prohibit extensive vegetative cutting; extensive topographic alterations; the alteration of wetlands; and for alteration of the existing undeveloped character of State lands if that land is highly visible and forms an important component of one or more quality natural views. (FPEIS, pp 30-31)*

In addition, the FPEIS includes one Guideline for the Alteration of Existing Classification Definitions:

Each classification is defined in the Master Plan. Those definitions contain criteria critical to the classification of State lands and should not be altered except for purposes of clarification.

The Agency considered these guidelines when preparing this FSEIS and proposing the preferred alternative. The five guidelines which apply to the preferred alternative are discussed below:

- A. *(1) Guidelines should attempt to provide the highest possible quality recreational experiences for each land classification.*

The amendment and addition of guidelines for Railroad Corridors (including railroad corridors with rails and railroad corridors without rails) will clarify existing guidelines and provides for the following: vegetation management to protect scenic vistas, removal of rails in rail corridors, restoration of rails in rail corridors, and management of corridors to allow for rail trails and various modes of travel and recreational use (except public use of motor vehicles and all-terrain vehicles). Modes of travel and recreational use may include bicycling, hiking, cross-country skiing, electric bicycles, and snowmobiling to be specified in an approved UMP. The ability to use many modes of travel would provide new and enhanced recreational and commuting opportunities in railroad corridors.

- B. *(2) Guidelines should allow only those minimum recreational and administrative facilities necessary to provide such high quality recreational experiences.*

Limits on tree cutting and other vegetation management, and the use of existing hardened beds in railroad corridors will allow continued rail use. These same factors will support rail trails and multiple modes of travel and recreational uses, while enabling a high-quality experience. The new guidelines will allow the minimum recreational or administrative facilities necessary, including the rail trail and associated conforming structures, which will be addressed in a UMP.

- C. *(5) Guidelines for all categories should require that conforming uses be designed and constructed of materials in a manner that causes no significant effects on the physical or biological resources and which do not intrude upon the wild character of such lands.*

The beds in rail corridors are hardened and the natural topography has already been significantly altered. The management of some rail

corridors, or portions thereof, for railroads and the creation and management of rail trails in other corridors, or portions thereof, will not cause significant effects on the physical or biological resources in or along those corridors. Any conforming uses or structures that are required, such as bridges or interpretive signs, will be designed and constructed pursuant to an approved UMP.

- D. (6) Future guidelines should prescribe desirable levels of use based upon the land's physical, biological and social carrying capacities. In its present form, the Plan prescribes only types of allowable uses.*

Travel Corridors are unique because the beds of these corridors are already hardened and the topography has been significantly altered. The corridors have been used for highway and railroad traffic for years, and were designed for and can withstand a higher degree of public use. It is anticipated that the land's physical and biological carrying capacities will not be surpassed by the replacement of rails with rail trails for recreational use and other modes of travel. In addition, restrictions on tree cutting, vegetation management, and on the location of tent sites and lean-tos on State lands near railroad corridors will also help to ensure the protection of the corridors' carrying capacities. The proposed guidelines, like the present guidelines, do not prescribe a desirable level of use. The Department, however, has the option of employing management tools to address issues of carrying capacity in the future if deemed necessary.

- E. Classification definitions contain criteria critical to the classification of State lands and should not be altered except for purposes of clarification.*

In 1979, the 119-mile Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor was added to the APSLMP's definition of Travel Corridors for the purpose of providing visitors with rail transportation to Lake Placid for the 1980 Winter Olympics, as well as for scenic rail travel opportunities anticipated afterward. At that time, the guidelines for management and use were also modified, however, they were focused primarily on State highways. The 1996 UMP for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor recognized that the Travel Corridors description should be amended to more clearly reflect recreational management if railroad transportation use did not continue in the corridor. Such an amendment was not accomplished following the 1996 UMP.

These amendments are intended to clarify the definition and corresponding guidelines for management and use for the Travel Corridors classification category. The APSLMP's definition of Travel Corridors is being amended to define a railroad corridor as the fee or easement lands that include a railbed for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and any future acquisition of a railroad corridor with existing rails

that may be considered for classification as a travel corridor, existing (1) for the operation of rail cars and/or (2) to serve as a rail trail. A rail trail is a trail developed within a railroad corridor where the tracks have been removed to accommodate modes of travel other than rail cars including horses, snowmobiles and bicycles but excluding public use of ATVs, automobiles or other motor vehicles.

PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed action is to amend the APSLMP to clarify the Travel Corridors definition, guidelines for management and use, and related provisions.

The Agency proposes to amend the APSLMP definition of Travel Corridors and the guidelines for management and use of Travel Corridors to define a railroad corridor as the fee or easement lands that include a railbed for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and any future acquisition of a railroad corridor with existing rails that may be considered for classification as a Travel Corridor, existing either (1) for the operation of rail cars or (2) to serve as a rail trail.

Environmental Setting

The Adirondack Park encompasses an approximately 6-million-acre region of northern New York State which is split nearly evenly between State-owned land and private land. The Park contains all or portions of 12 counties, 101 towns and villages, over 3,000 lakes, 30,000 miles of rivers and streams, more than 40 mountain peaks above 4,000 feet in elevation and a wide variety of habitats, including globally unique wetland types and old growth forests. The Adirondack Park also contains the headwaters and tributaries of four major rivers including the Black River, Hudson River, Mohawk River and the St. Lawrence River.

Public Need and Benefit

The primary purposes of the APSLMP are to protect the natural resources of the Park while permitting and encouraging human use. Achievement of these two objectives is accomplished through classification of the State lands of the Park according to their characteristics and capacity to withstand public uses and the establishment of guidelines and criteria for the management of classified lands in order to: "reduce... resource degradation caused by types or levels of use" and to "provide a diversity of high-quality recreational experiences."¹

Following an extended planning process undertaken by the Department and the Agency concerning the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, the opportunity was

¹ See p.37, "Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement – Guidelines for Amending the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan" (FPEIS).

identified to diversify recreational experiences within Travel Corridors by redeveloping a segment of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor or any newly acquired rail corridors with existing rails into rail trails. Use of portions of the Remsen-Lake Placid Corridor for travel and recreational uses, including rail and snowmobiling, has existed since the corridor was classified. However, the lack of clarity within the definition and guidelines for management and use, among other issues, specifically for the Remsen-Lake Placid Corridor, prevented the removal of any segment of the rails.

Both rail and rail trail uses can contribute to recreational opportunities in the Park, while simultaneously increasing appreciation of the unparalleled landscape quality of the Adirondack Mountain region and enhancing the personal health and well-being of visitors and Park residents. The proposed amendment includes guidance to ensure that the physical, biological, scenic and open space resources of the corridor and its adjacent lands are protected.

Background and History of the Remsen – Lake Placid Travel Corridor

The original 1972 edition of the APSLMP did not define the Remsen-Lake Placid railroad line as a Travel Corridor.² In the 1979 APSLMP revision process, the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor was first added to the APSLMP’s definition of Travel Corridors, with guidelines for management and use and specific criteria (Appendix B). The APSLMP amendment coincided with the railroad line’s restoration for the purpose of providing visitors rail transportation to Lake Placid for the 1980 Winter Olympics. The 1979 APSLMP definition described the corridor as “*the Remsen to Lake Placid railroad right-of-way.*” This definition has continued to the present.

In the 1979 APSLMP edition, the corridor was identified with different language and different mileage. Under “Designation of Travel Corridors” at the conclusion of the Travel Corridors management section, the 1979 APSLMP reads:

The application of the travel corridor definition results in the designation of approximately 1,220 miles of travel corridors, of which approximately 1,100 are highway and 120 miles make up the Remsen to Lake Placid railroad.

And in Part III of the current APSLMP (Area Descriptions and Delineations), the corridor is listed as the only railroad as follows:

RAILROAD LINES
Remsen to Lake Placid

122 miles

² New York Central ceased operation of the rail line for passenger service in 1965; subsequently Penn Central operated the line for freight until 1972.

A number of references to the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor in the 1979 edition of the APSLMP added to the inconsistency. In forming part of the western boundary of the Pigeon Lake Wilderness, it was described as the “*Remsen to Lake Placid railroad tracks.*” In the Area Description for the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness it was described as the “*Remsen to Lake Placid railroad right-of-way.*” In the Five Ponds Wilderness Area Description, it was described as the “*Remsen to Lake Placid railroad.*” It can be reasonably presumed that the Agency’s staff and Board considered these to refer interchangeably to the Travel Corridor.

Following the 1980 Winter Olympics, scenic rail travel along the whole of the corridor was short-lived. In the early nineties, there was a resurgence of rail activity on a section of the corridor, followed by rail operations in the northern and southern segments. The Department completed the first UMP for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor in 1996. As approved by the Agency, the 1996 UMP called for all construction and restoration work necessary for successful promotion of railroad operations throughout the length of the corridor, with compatible trail uses to be developed. At the time, the Agency did not revise the APSLMP to clarify the definition of the Travel Corridors or add guidelines for management and use or specific criteria for the various potential uses.

Since adoption of the 1996 UMP for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, two amendments to that plan have subsequently been developed and adopted. One amendment, approved in 2008, focused only on addressing certain vegetation management needs along the corridor. The second amendment, approved in 2016, was more comprehensive.

The 2016 Unit Management Plan Amendment for the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor (2016 UMP Amendment) reviewed the same six alternatives considered in 1996, as well as a seventh alternative. The seventh alternative proposed to divide the travel corridor into two segments: an 85-mile section between the southwest Park boundary and Tupper Lake, where scenic railroad operations would be fully restored on a 45-mile segment; and a 34 mile segment between Tupper Lake and Lake Placid, where rails and ties would be completely removed and the corridor would be redeveloped solely for rail trail uses. The seventh alternative was chosen as the preferred alternative in the UMP Amendment.

In a Decision and Order dated September 26, 2017, Franklin County Supreme Court held that the 2016 UMP Amendment violated the APA Act because the 2016 UMP Amendment was not in conformance with the Travel Corridors guidelines of the APSLMP. The Supreme Court found that the APSLMP defines

Travel Corridors in terms of either automobile or railroad transportation. The court concluded that the conversion to a multi-use recreational trail in the 34-mile Tupper Lake to Lake Placid segment removed it from the definition of a Travel Corridor. Accordingly, the Supreme Court found that the 2016 UMP Amendment did not conform with the APSLMP.³

The Department and the Agency concur that the APSLMP requires a revision that includes clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the corresponding guidelines for management and use, and the amendments to related provisions, which constitute the action under SEQRA that was analyzed in this FSEIS.

ALTERNATIVE ANALYSIS

The Agency has proposed amendments to the APSLMP involving clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, the guidelines for management and use, and amendments to related provisions. The area subject to this amendment includes approximately 1,078 miles of State and Interstate Highways, the 119-mile Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and any future acquisition of railroad corridors with existing rails.

Primarily, the definitional changes and revisions to the guidelines for management and use and related provisions correspond to potential rail and rail trail use in the Adirondack Park. The following six alternatives are specific to proposed changes for Railroad Corridors.

Alternative 1: No Action

Alternative 1 is the "no action" alternative required under SEQRA. If there is no action taken, the Travel Corridors definition, guidelines for management and use, and specific criteria in the APSLMP will remain as is. There will be no provision in the APSLMP for conversion of a railroad corridor into a rail trail, regardless of the actual use of the railroad corridor. The entire railroad corridor may only be used for operating a railroad and recreation trails that run alongside working rail cars. The impacts of this alternative would be minimal, because it retains the status quo including railroad operations and snowmobiling on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor. This is not the preferred alternative.

³ The Supreme Court also ruled on other challenges to the 2016 UMP Amendment, which are not relevant to this APSLMP Amendment.

Alternative 2: Reclassify a portion of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor

Alternative 2 would involve reclassifying portions of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor as Wild Forest and Intensive Use. Specifically, Intensive Use was considered for the corridor from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake, and Wild Forest was considered for the corridor from Saranac Lake to Tupper Lake. Wild Forest was also considered for the corridor from Tupper Lake to Lake Placid.

The Intensive Use classification category in the APSLMP includes day use areas and campgrounds. The Travel Corridor does not fit into those descriptions and would have required significant modifications be made to the Intensive Use definition and guidelines for management and use. Reclassification to Wild Forest would not allow certain modifications to be made to the railbed desired for some modes of recreation and transportation.

The impacts of these reclassifications would be similar to the impacts from the preferred alternative in that Alternative 2 could result in the removal of the rails and development of a rail trail. Based on the FPEIS, it was determined that clarification of only the Travel Corridor definition and guidelines, without opening up other classifications for significant revisions in order to reclassify the lands, was preferred. Alternative 2 is not the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Create a new classification category which would allow for conversion of a former rail corridor to a rail trail and reclassify all or a section of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor to this new classification

Alternative 3 would involve (1) creation of a new classification category which would allow for the conversion of a former rail corridor to a rail trail and (2) reclassifying all or a section of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor to that new classification category. The FPEIS discourages the creation of a new classification category, stating that the classification system should be kept as simple as possible.

The impacts of an APSLMP amendment creating a new classification category and reclassification of a portion of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor would be similar to the impacts from the preferred alternative in that it could result in the removal of the rails and ties and development of a rail trail. Based on the FPEIS guidance, it was determined that a redefinition of the Travel Corridors classification was preferred to creating an entire new classification category. Alternative 3 is not the preferred alternative.

Alternative 4: Revise Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to allow a rail trail on any former railroad corridor owned by the State or on any future railroad corridors yet to be acquired by the State

Similar to Alternatives 5 and 6, Alternative 4 would revise the definition of Travel Corridors. However, Alternative 4 would not limit the definition to the Remsen - Lake Placid Travel Corridor and would add "any state-owned railroad right-of-way" to the definition. This alternative would apply to any former railroad corridor owned by the State or any future railroad corridor acquired by the State within the Adirondack Park.

This Alternative would require the classification of new acquisitions or reclassification of current State-owned railroad corridors not presently identified as a Travel Corridor. A review of the extent of this alternative shows that potentially over 800 miles of railroad corridors in the Park on State lands, conservation easement lands and private lands could be affected by this alternative.

Some of these historic railroad corridors cross lands which are currently classified as Wilderness and Wild Forest. Allowing the reclassification of these lands as Travel Corridors could lessen the current restrictions on allowable uses and could introduce non-conforming uses to remote areas of the Park. This alternative could have more significant environmental impacts than the preferred alternative. Alternative 4 is not the preferred alternative.

Alternative 5: Revise Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to allow a rail trail only on the Tupper Lake-Lake Placid portion of the Railroad Corridor

Alternative 5 would include a revision of the Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to allow conversion of the 34-mile Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor segment between Tupper Lake to Lake Placid to a rail trail. It would be similar to Alternative 2 in that it limits the scope of the APSLMP amendment to the Tupper Lake-Lake Placid portion of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor.

To remove any portion of the rails from Tupper Lake to Remsen, would require a future APSLMP amendment or reclassification action. Alternative 5 would not apply to any other railroad corridor.

Alternative 5 does not provide the flexibility to classify future acquisitions of railroad corridors with existing rails as a Travel Corridor, convert them to a rail trail and apply the new guidelines for management and use. It was determined that Alternative 5 was too narrow in geographic scope. Alternative 5 is not the preferred alternative.

Alternative 6: Revise Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to allow rail and rail trail use on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and future State-owned railroad corridors with existing rails

Alternative 6 is the preferred alternative. This alternative includes revisions to the Travel Corridors definition and guidelines for management and use to clarify that the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, or any section thereof, and future State-owned railroad corridors with existing rails, may be converted to and managed as a rail trail. The proposed revisions are attached to this FSEIS as Appendix A.

Alternative 6 allows for (1) railroad operation on the corridor and/or (2) conversion of any portion of the railroad corridor determined appropriate for a rail trail, pursuant to an approved UMP. This alternative will also allow for a rail with trail if the corridor and surrounding lands have the capacity to support that use.

The following definition of a Railroad Corridor would be added to the Travel Corridors definition:

A railroad corridor is the fee or easement lands that include a railbed for the Remsen-Lake Placid railroad and any future acquisition that may be considered for classification as a travel corridor, existing (1) for the operation of rail cars, and/or (2) to serve as a rail trail.

The proposed guidelines for management and use include guidelines applicable to all rail corridors, guidelines applicable to rail corridors with rails and guidelines applicable to rail corridors without rails.

The definition will continue to include the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor as a defined Travel Corridor. Upon approval of this APSLMP amendment, the Department could prepare a UMP amendment for removal of the rails and development of a rail trail on any section of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor. The Agency would review the UMP for conformance with the revised APSLMP guidelines prior to the Department's adoption of the UMP.

The impacts of the preferred alternative are discussed below.

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND MITIGATION OF PROPOSED ACTION

The Travel Corridors classification currently applies to State and interstate highways in the Adirondack Park and the Remsen-Lake Placid Railroad right-of-way and those State lands immediately adjacent to and visible from these facilities. The proposed action would clarify the definition of Travel Corridors to allow the State to remove rails from the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and potential future State-owned railroad corridors, thereby expanding the diversity of travel and recreational opportunities in railroad corridors to include rail transportation, rails-with-trails, and rail trails.

The APSLMP prescribes types of permissible uses in each category but it does not specifically control the levels of use beyond providing general management guidelines. The FPEIS states that: "[a]mendments to the Master Plan that cause changes in existing use or levels of use which exceed the physical, biological or social carrying capacity of State lands could result in significant adverse impacts on the natural resources and open space character of State lands." (FPEIS, page 6.)

The proposed action is evaluated below in terms of impacts in the FPEIS:

- Physical and biological resources
- Area character and landscape quality
- Adjacent private lands
- Recreational opportunities
- Local and regional economy

In addition, the proposed action was also evaluated in relation to the following:

- Historic Resources
- Unavoidable adverse effects and impacts
- Growth inducing aspects of proposed action
- Irreversible and irretrievable commitments of environmental resources

Removal of the rails and creation of rail trails will be the subject of a proposed UMP. Potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures will be further identified and evaluated during the development of the UMP with a public SEQRA process. If a particular project involves wetlands, the Agency will also review it under the Freshwater Wetlands Act. These additional levels of review for specific projects assist in addressing mitigation of potential significant adverse impacts.

The APSLMP allows the Department to manage classified lands more restrictively than the classification category guidelines. The UMP for any area could prescribe management to further mitigate impacts on specific areas deserving of additional protection.

Physical and Biological Resource Impacts and Mitigation

As outlined in the FPEIS, the physical resources of the land or water have a direct bearing on the capacity of the land to withstand use. Soil, slope, elevation and water are the primary considerations of these physical resources. These resources affect the carrying capacity of the land and water, from both the standpoint of the construction of facilities and the amount of human use the land and water itself can absorb.

The Travel Corridors category is unique in that the beds of these corridors are hardened and the natural topography has been significantly altered. In contrast to the majority of classification categories set forth in the APSLMP, these corridors were designed for and can withstand a higher degree of public use.

Historically the physical resources of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor were directly affected by the railroad construction which began in 1891 by William Seward Webb. Throughout its long history, the corridor had active rail and freight use through 1972. The resurrection of the rail use for the 1980 Olympics included rehabilitation of the rails. The reactivation of rail service on segments of the corridor in the 1990s and beyond included additional track rehabilitation.

Biological resources within the corridor also have a direct bearing upon the capacity of the land to withstand use. Wetland ecosystems, habitats of rare, threatened or endangered species and sensitive wildlife habitats are relevant to the characteristics of the land and sometimes determine whether a particular kind of human use should be permitted or prohibited. Sections of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor are associated with sensitive biological resources. Future management actions, including vegetative management and tree cutting, will be evaluated in a UMP.

Altering the definition and guidelines for the Travel Corridors classification does not add any new uses to the forest preserve. The winter activities - snowmobiling, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing - are already occurring when the snow is deep enough to safely cover the rails. The three-season activities, such as walking and cycling, have less impact on the physical and biological resources than a train. The potential conversion of any section of the railroad corridor to a rail trail eliminates the use of trains and other forms of

recreation that rely on the rails for that section. The remaining public uses described above have a lower impact on the physical and biological characteristics of the corridor than railroad operation.

Physical and biological resources within the existing Travel Corridors have been affected by the construction of the railways and highways. Definitional changes to the APSLMP will not have direct impacts on the physical and biological resources. However, these definitional changes will allow the Department to plan for specific management actions through the UMP process. Potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures will be further identified and evaluated during the development of UMPs with a separate public SEQRA process. These could include minor and temporary impacts to soils and slopes, rare species, wetlands and other natural communities during the construction of rail trails or the removal of rails. These impacts could be managed through the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

Recreational and transportation uses on railroad corridors may increase public use of adjacent Forest Preserve lands. Placement of trails on adjacent Forest Preserve will be limited to areas capable of withstanding the use and will be developed in a UMP and reviewed with a separate public SEQRA process. If necessary, mitigation options could include permit conditions, temporary closure of overused trails and the encouragement of public use elsewhere.

The land's physical and biological carrying capacities will not be surpassed by the potential replacement of rails with a rail trail for recreational use in a portion of the Travel Corridor.

Impacts on Area Character and Landscape Quality

The vegetation of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor has been maintained pursuant to a Vegetation Management Plan identified in the 2008 UMP amendment.

The overall character of the corridor would be altered if and where the rails are removed. The corridor may be maintained in its existing footprint regardless of its use as a railroad or rail trail. Therefore, the landscape quality of the corridor will not be affected.

The character of the corridor may be altered from the perspective of some individuals. The presence or absence of a train can be interpreted as a positive or a negative, depending on an individual's preferences. The removal of the rails can also potentially extend the winter season and associated uses, again interpreted as a positive or a negative, depending on an individual's preferences.

Impacts on Adjacent Private Lands

Private landowners along the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor could be adversely impacted by a change in use to the Travel Corridors definition. Any conversion of the corridor that includes a rail trail could result in an increase in public use requiring that parking, lighting, litter, and potential noise be addressed.

These potential impacts could result in landowners' concerns about a decrease in private property value, a potential loss of privacy, and an increase in crime.

While it is impossible to forecast precisely what would happen to property values following a change in the use of the Travel Corridor, studies have shown that conversion of rails to trails has resulted in positive impacts to adjacent property values.

The majority of studies examined indicate that the presence of a bike path/trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect. Studies have shown that neighbors of many bike paths/trails feel that the quality of life of their neighborhood has been improved, that the trails were a good use of open space, and in the case of abandoned railways were an improvement from before the trails went in.⁴

Trespass from a travel corridor to adjoining land, including illegal motorized access on private property, could have adverse impacts. Removal of the rail infrastructure and an increased ease of public access could increase the potential for illegal access. However, studies have shown that the increased public use of corridors discourages illegal activity.

Compared to the abandoned and forgotten corridors they recycle and replace, trails are a positive community development and a crime prevention strategy of proven value.⁵

Should alterations be made to the travel corridor, including construction of a rail trail or upgrades to accommodate increased train travel, mitigation measures should be addressed in a UMP. These mitigation measures could include, but are not limited to, identifying sufficient parking in appropriate locations, sufficient refuse containers and refuse removal, proper signage, lighting and appropriate measures to address noise in residential areas.

⁴ Project Report for Property Value/Desirability Effects of Bike Paths Adjacent to Residential Areas, prepared for: Delaware Center for Transportation and The State of Delaware Department of Transportation, David P. Racca and Amardeep Dhanju, November 2006.

⁵ Rails-to-Trails Conservancy in Cooperation with National Park Service Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program, *Rail-Trails and Safe Communities, the Experience on 372 Trails*. Washington, DC, 1998.

Impacts on Recreation Opportunities

Recreational opportunities will be altered when any portion of the rails are removed. A rail trail will affect the use of trains or other devices that use rails. Public recreational uses could expand with the possible addition of rail trails. The rail trail could be managed for multiple modes of travel, both passive and mechanically propelled. Bicycling, hiking, cross-country skiing and other non-motorized means of travel, as well as snowmobiling and riding certain types of e-bikes, are conforming uses, to be specified in an adopted UMP. Public use of motor vehicles and all-terrain vehicles will be prohibited.

Removal of any portion of the rails can potentially lengthen the winter recreation season, including cross country skiing, snowmobiling and the use of fat tire bicycles. These impacts could be interpreted as positive by trail enthusiasts.

Removal of the rails would prevent use of trains, rail bikes and other modes of travel that depend on the rails. This impact could be interpreted as negative by train enthusiasts.

In situations where a rail trail replaces rails, the loss of train service can be mitigated to the extent that the train service serves recreational users, by the construction of a rail trail in the same location. A rail trail can provide an alternative way to enjoy the travel corridor. Recreationists can stop at any point along the rail trail to enjoy the natural resources, as well as any scenic vistas.

Removal of the rails provides an opportunity to develop trails for persons with disabilities, because of the relatively gradual elevation change. However, the removal would prevent train travel that might otherwise be available for persons with disabilities. Any upgraded or new facilities would be required to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

Impacts on the Local and Regional Economy

SEQRA mandates that a "suitable balance" of economic, social, and environmental factors be taken into account and reflected in the decision-making processes of State and local agencies.

The proposed action will allow a greater diversity of uses to occur in the travel corridor, pursuant to UMPs developed by the Department, in consultation with the Agency. The tourism industry supports over 21,000 jobs in the Adirondack Park through traveler spending. Visitors to the region are attracted by a number of activities, including recreation. By allowing for more diverse recreation use of travel corridors, this action could potentially expand the number of people attracted to the Adirondack Park and thus expand visitor spending.

The Adirondack Partnership's 2012 Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy highlights that providing a diverse array of recreation opportunities is critical to maximizing the number of visitors to a region and attracting their spending.⁶ Additionally, a 2016 Wild Center report on recruiting millennial visitors to the Adirondacks articulated the need to offer varied recreation and social experiences.⁷ This proposed action will allow the new and diverse recreation opportunities advocated by these reports. Communities can then program and market these new opportunities to attract users and maximize economic benefit. Scenic train operations that operate in travel corridors have proven successful in the Adirondack region. In the Park's southwestern gateway, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad (ASR) carried over 53,000 passengers between Utica and Thendara in 2014.⁸ Additionally, in the northeastern section of the Park, the ASR accommodated over 16,400 people for Lake Placid to Saranac Lake excursions in that same year. The redefinition of Travel Corridors does not prohibit continued rail uses.

According to a 2006 report commissioned by the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center at SUNY Potsdam and performed by the firm Davidson-Peterson Associates, the average daily expenditure for one visitor to Northern New York ranges from \$179.90 for those staying overnight at a hotel to \$65.45 for a person visiting for a day (spending adjusted for inflation).⁹ The over 69,000 visitors who visited to the Adirondacks and participated in a train excursion have benefitted the region through such direct spending at local businesses. Additionally, through repairs and maintenance, the ASR has supported local vendors who maintain both the trains and the rail line.

Throughout the United States, rail trails are popular amenities for bicyclists, snowmobilers, walkers, runners, and cross-country skiers. This action will allow the opportunity for a rail trail in the Adirondack Park to be realized. A rail trail situated in a travel corridor may attract new users to a region, particularly recreational bicyclists who are not likely to use the region's existing roads or off-road trails. Further, travel corridor augmentation may induce new usage of a travel corridor by snowmobile enthusiasts. In a 2015 report commissioned by New York State Empire State Development (ESD), the firm Camoin Associates performed a survey of six rail trails in regions similar to the Adirondacks. The study found that the monthly usage numbers for these rail trails were between

⁶ Adirondack Partnership Recreation Planning Workgroup, 2013. Adirondack Park Recreation Strategy: Capitalizing on the Economic Potential of our Natural Environment.

⁷ The Wild Center, 2016. The Adirondacks and the Next Generation: A Guidebook for Marketing the Adirondacks to Millennials. Tupper Lake, NY

⁸ Camoin Associates, 2015. Adirondack Rail Corridor Economic Impact Study. Saratoga Springs, NY.

⁹ Davidson-Peterson Associates and the Northern New York Travel and Tourism Research Center, SUNY Potsdam. 2006. 2006 Economic Impact of Expenditures by Tourists on Northern New York State. Potsdam, NY.

5,000 and over 10,800 users. Any new users attracted to the region by a rail trail can be expected to spend at the average spending rates identified above and thusly generate new spending at local businesses and service providers.

To the extent that visitation and spending related to new uses on travel corridors increases, so too does this action's economic benefit. Increased visitor spending improves the market opportunity for existing and prospective local businesses that cater to these new users. As such, new spending associated with augmented visitation could reasonably be expected to result in expanded and/or new business enterprises. Further, new spending may improve the incomes and profitability of existing businesses.

Impacts on Historic Resources

Reuse of existing railroad corridors involve impacts to resources listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places and require consultation with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) by the Agency, DEC and Department of Transportation (DOT). Such consultation is required by the New York State Historic Preservation Act (SHPA) (Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law Article 14). By letter dated May 22, 2018, OPRHP stated: “[r]egarding APA’s Section 14.09 review for the current undertaking, it is the opinion of this Office that it will have no adverse impact on historic resources.”

OPRHP also noted that the “Draft SEIS discusses the importance of economic development and settlement patterns of the Adirondacks in the 21st Century and the new and different commerce, transportation, industry and recreation activities available in the travel corridors. We recommend that a more robust discussion of the historic importance of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor be included [in the FSEIS]. Expanding this context will set the stage to help ensure that all aspects of the [New York State and National Registers listed New York Central Railroad Adirondack Division Historic District (“Adirondack Division”)] will eventually be assessed in the Section 14.09 review of the UMP.”

A historic district, as defined by the National Park Service, “possesses a significant concentration, linkage, or continuity of sites, buildings, structures, or objects united historically or aesthetically by plan or physical development.” The proposal to list the Adirondack Division historic district in the registers was first raised in 1990 as New York State undertook a planning study for the abandoned line and advocates for the line sought ways to preserve it. In January 1991, a proposal to designate the rail line to the registers was received by OPRHP from the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society. They had identified their goal as the preservation and reuse of the district as a functioning railroad. At that time the railway was determined by OPRHP to be “eligible” for inclusion in the registers as a historic district composed of track, rail bed, bridges, stations and

assorted other outbuildings that collectively chronicled the Adirondack Division's history. The district was designated to the New York State Register of Historic Places on March 11, 1993 and then to the National Register on December 23, 1993.

The Adirondacks were one of the last regions of the Northeast to be developed as a result of its rugged topography. In the late 18th century and early 19th century, it was considered a desolate region. By the mid-19th century, the area was becoming known through various publications for its beautiful wilderness expanses, and became a destination for adventurous tourists seeking clean air, scenic views and chances to hunt and fish in the unspoiled outdoors. It also contained iron mines, agriculture, and a nearly inexhaustible supply of timber, along with a smattering of hamlets and villages.

After the Civil War, the public was looking for outdoor destinations to get a respite from the increasingly congested urban locations in which more and more of the population was residing. In 1872, the New York State legislature was beginning its deliberations which would result in the creation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve. At the time, there were a few rough roads that carried folks in stage coaches to the scattered settlements of the Park. In 1868 the Whitehall and Plattsburg Railroad opened. The line ran from Plattsburg to Point of Rock and was extended to Ausable Forks in 1874. The 60-mile-long Adirondack Railroad, incorporated by Dr. Thomas C. Durant, opened in 1871 connecting Saratoga with North Creek. The Chateaugay Railroad from Plattsburg to Saranac Lake and later Lake Placid opened in 1887 and the Northern and Adirondack Railroad, servicing Tupper Lake, opened in 1889. The last route was the Adirondack and St. Lawrence Railroad (A&SL) opened in 1891.

Under the direction of railroad financier William Seward Webb, multiple smaller lines leading north from Remsen were coalesced into a single line known as the Mohawk & Malone Railway. In 1892, Webb's line linked with the A&SL line creating a direct connection between Malone and New York City. In 1913 the name of the line was changed to the New York Central Adirondack Division, a portion of which is the Remsen to Lake Placid Travel Corridor.

The railroads served the wealthy in private "palace" cars bringing them to their secluded "great camps." The lines also carried vast numbers of wilderness enthusiasts to more modest hotels and other comfortable overnight accommodations deep within the Adirondack wilderness. In addition to passenger service bringing people into the Park, the lines moved large quantities of freight, including minerals and lumber out of the Adirondacks.

The rise of sanitariums to treat tuberculosis, based on breathing the clean and invigorating air of the Adirondacks, clustered in Saranac Lake, provided additional demand for rail travel to the area. The economic impact of opening rail travel to the Park can be seen most dramatically in the growth of Saranac Lake from a settlement of 533 in 1880 to one of more than 4,000 by 1903.

Like much of the United States, incremental development continued, focused in the Adirondacks on outdoor recreation, tourism and natural resource extraction. With the mass production and affordability of the automobile, more and more of the public began using cars instead of trains. Roads were incrementally increased around the periphery of the Park and ultimately into interior areas. Interstate 87 (The Adirondack Northway) was completed in 1967, enabling the motoring public easy access to the Adirondacks. Freight use on the Remsen line ended in 1964 and was a main reason (along with dwindling passenger use) for the abandonment of the line in 1972.

Since then, attempts have been made to develop passenger and freight uses for the railroad lines. As part of the development associated with the 1980 Winter Olympic Games, publicly funded passenger service redevelopment of the lines occurred. This program was discontinued shortly after the Olympic games.

By the end of the 20th century the Adirondacks has become increasingly dependent upon the ever-evolving outdoor recreation and tourism industry for its economy. Snowmobile tourism has grown significantly in the region utilizing trails and former rail lines. The conversion of former rail lines to multi-purpose, multi-seasonal rail trails has become increasingly popular nationally.

In the 21st century, the main force driving the economy of the Adirondacks is tourism and outdoor recreation. While the railroad opened the Adirondacks to development in the 19th century, the advent of the car, more family leisure time and a robust system of roads in the mid-20th century dramatically changed the region's visitor experience. At the same time the need to move heavy freight from extractive industries had diminished.

As the Adirondacks has become an outdoor recreational and tourist destination, the visitor experience now seeks ways to walk, run, or ride a bicycle, cross-country ski or snowmobile in safe, accessible locations. A plan that allows use of a portion of the corridor for trail could acknowledge these 21st Century recreation needs in the context of the history and importance of the historic district to the Adirondack Park.

The patterns of economic development and settlement on the Adirondacks in the 21st Century are an impetus for new and different commerce, transportation, industry and recreation activities in travel corridors. The historic importance of

The Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and the changed uses proposed are consistent with the changes that have occurred for the Adirondack Park and for other travel corridors throughout the US.

Prior to any management actions that were not previously approved in the 1996 UMP, a new UMP Amendment would have to be approved and found to be in conformance with the APSLMP and with § 14.09 of the State Historic Preservation Act. Such new UMP Amendment would require further consultation between APA, DEC, DOT and OPRHP. DEC on behalf of the involved agencies would enter into a letter of resolution with OPRHP regarding preservation of historic resources in implementing a UMP Amendment. Any UMP Amendment would address the impacts to historic resources and would be subject to DEC's public process.

The Section 14.09 review of the future UMP would include the sharing of site-specific, detailed design and workplans which could address the use of existing Travel Corridors for upgraded trail travel, non-train travel and other uses. Documentation could include mitigative measures highlighting the historic nature of a corridor, the provision of interpretive exhibits, and public education efforts. Future users of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor would benefit from a broad dissemination of information about the history of the corridor through kiosks, historical markers, signage and other interpretive displays, subject to an approved UMP.

Unavoidable Adverse Environmental Effects

Adverse impacts upon the resource quality and character of State lands within the Park are avoidable. The guidelines developed for the Travel Corridors classification category protect resource quality and character from overuse and degradation while still providing public recreational use opportunities.

The majority of the guidelines proposed in this action apply to railroad corridors. The last significant update to the guidelines for Travel Corridors was made in 1979 when the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor was added to the APSLMP. However, at that time, the guidelines which were introduced applied primarily to highway corridors.

The proposed action provides clarification for the Travel Corridors definition and guidelines with an emphasis on Railroad Corridors. These guidelines provide natural resource protection including, but not limited to, vegetative management plans subject to an approved UMP. The definition and guidelines also acknowledge the differences between the character and management of Highway and Railroad Corridors.

Appropriate classification will avoid most adverse impacts upon the resource quality and character of State lands within the Park. Further protection of these resources will be addressed in the UMP process.

User conflicts can involve many issues, but safety will inevitably be a concern in railroad corridors – whether travel is by train or by the permitted variety of other possible means of travel within corridors converted into rail trails. The Federal Railroad Administration and other authorities oversee and establish safety protocols for train travel. Those guidelines apply to the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor where the rail line is currently operated. Along multiple-use rail trails, a number of organizations including the Federal Highway Administration have identified management strategies and techniques that can be used to reduce recreational use conflicts along multiple-use trails.¹⁰

The Department has its own experience with successful management of multiple-use trails in the Adirondack Park. Important mitigation techniques are known to include public education at trailheads and on Department website resources, development of multiple lanes of travel where possible, proper signage, proper yielding protocols, and speed limits and hours of operation rules for snowmobiles. Proposals and adoption of such mitigation techniques are matters for UMPs and follow-up rail trail design and construction work.

Growth Inducing Aspects of the Proposed Action

The APSLMP provides alternatives for a diversity of recreation opportunities within the Park, which can have a positive impact on the local economy and the demand for local services. The number of visitors is affected by various factors including destination marketing programs and visitor accommodations.

The recreation and tourism industry is the backbone of the Adirondack economy. Lodging, food and services provide the primary source of income from this industry. These expenditures result in jobs and have a multiplier effect when the original expenditure is used to buy additional goods and services within the Park. This “ripple effect” can generate new growth throughout the Adirondack’s local communities.

The clarification of the Travel Corridors classification category definition, and the guidelines for management and use in Appendix A, support a future that can include rail and rail trail use on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and future State-owned rail corridors. In combination, these opportunities will contribute to positive growth in recreation and tourism in the Adirondack Park.

¹⁰ Federal Highway Administration and the National Recreational Trails Advisory Committee, *Conflicts on Multiple Use Trails: Synthesis of the Literature and State of the Practice*. Washington, DC, 1994.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Environmental Resources

The clarification of the classification category definition and guidelines for management and use do not provide irreversible or irretrievable commitments of resources. No development is mandated for lands classified as Travel Corridors.