



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

HAMMOND POND WILD FOREST

and

Port Henry Boat Launch

Proposed Final Unit Management Plan

River Area Management Plans

East Branch Ausable River, Boquet River, and Schroon River



NYSDEC, REGION 5, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS

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Executive Summary

The Hammond Pond Wild Forest (HPWF) is an Adirondack Forest Preserve unit steeped in history, occupying a significant transitional zone between the sharp terrain of the High Peaks region and the fertile Lake Champlain valley. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the HPWF was adopted in 1988. Since that time, land area has been added to the unit and recreational trends have evolved. Much of the unit lies within relatively close proximity to the Northway (I-87), giving potentially easy access to large numbers of visitors. On the other hand, the unit is home to a spectacular variety of significant ecological resources, which warrant care and protection.



Moose Mountain Pond Trail

Management Goals:

- Protect the natural resources and spectacular ecological value of the HPWF landscapes. Identify and respect sensitive areas.
- Recognize that choosing where to create recreational facilities is just as important as choosing where not to create recreational facilities. The Forest Preserve's intrinsic values are a large part of what defines it. People who have never visited (and may never visit) the region hold high value in knowing that pristine natural landscapes exist, both now and for future generations.
- Strategically connect and extend existing linear trails to create loops and interesting longer distance opportunities. This may attract some use from the more heavily used adjacent Forest Preserve units.
- Design trail configurations thoughtfully, so they are complemented by nearby facilities, adjacent Forest Preserve units, and private lands.
- Enhance existing facilities and create new facilities for high quality, universally accessible recreational opportunities.
- Contribute to the completion of the 4,600-mile North Country National Scenic Trail by providing a route connection across the HPWF.

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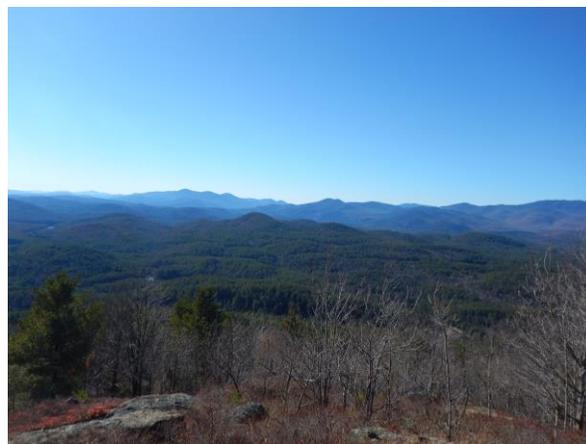
I. Introduction

A. Setting

Description of Unit

The Hammond Pond Wild Forest (HPWF) is comprised of a collection of State land parcels categorized as Forest Preserve, and as such is protected as “forever wild” by Article XIV, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution. The unit contains 56 parcels totaling approximately 45,619 acres classified as wild forest, wholly contained within Essex County.

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (“Master Plan”) area description for the HPWF reads in part:



View from Harris Hill

“Owl Pate and Hail Mountain provide great distant views, and exceptionally fine overlooks may be had from the many rocky bluffs and ledges dominating the area. Many ponds offer scenic fishing opportunities and have defined but unmarked trails leading from highways. A great variety of flora and fauna reflect an overlap of forest types where beech, birch, maple and hemlock on the cool, northern slopes give way to oak, ash, basswood and pine on the southerly exposures”(2016, p. 108).

History

The history of the HPWF is closely linked to the economic development of Essex County. The exploitation of iron ore and timber produced significant effects and far reaching impacts on the character and landscape of the HPWF.

The iron ore industry reached a peak in the 1880’s, engaged a sizeable work force and brought large numbers of people into the area. The rapid rise of this industry helped to create the communities of Hammondville, Ironville, Mineville, Moriah, Port Henry and Witherbee. With the exception of Hammondville, all of these villages exist today.

Economic depressions in the 1870’s and the eventual depletion of the iron ore and timber reserves led to the eventual demise of the industry. However, the industry would

I. Introduction

linger until the mid-1960's when the Republic Steel Corporation ceased its Mineville operations.

Faced with large, burdensome landholdings, many of the iron companies disposed of or let their lands go for unpaid taxes. With the creation of the Adirondack Forest Preserve in 1885, many of these lands were acquired by the State and now constitute much of the acreage in the HPWF.

The Sharp Bridge Campground was completed in 1920, and was one of the first ever constructed in the Forest Preserve. It is surrounded by the HPWF. With the advent of the Civilian Conservation Corps in 1933, "spike camps" from a base camp in Port Henry were established in the HPWF. Workers from these camps undertook many projects related to outdoor recreation, forest disease and insect control.

In 1972, the HPWF was codified in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

Historic Points of Interest

DEC Sharp Bridge Campground

This is one of the first campgrounds ever constructed in the Adirondack Park, around 1920. The campground is classified as Intensive Use, surrounded by HPWF lands.

Cedar Point Road

In 1828, construction of the Cedar Point Road across Moriah, North Hudson and Newcomb was authorized. Its purpose was to connect the Tawhaus iron mines to Lake Champlain for shipping transport. This old road was built across both private and public lands. Some segments are still used as road or trail corridors today, while others fade into the forest. The existing DEC trail near Round Pond and along East Mill Flow is likely located on a section of this historic road.

Deadwater

A historic settlement known as Deadwater existed in the Deadwater Pond area, where the New York Serpentarium was located in the 1950s. The Deadwater area was near the site of the 19th century Weatherhead's Inn and tavern, where there was also a sawmill. Several inns and taverns were located along Route 9 in the Town of North Hudson (the main north-south route before the Northway was constructed), and many lumbermen, drivers, sawyers, river-drivers and sportsmen frequented those establishments.

Location and Access

The HPWF is located in the eastern portion of the Adirondack Park in the Towns of Keene, Elizabethtown, Westport, North Hudson, Moriah, Crown Point, Ticonderoga and Schroon in Essex County. The unit is generally bounded on the west by the Giant, High Peaks and Hoffman Notch Wilderness Areas and the Northway (I-87); on the south by

the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area and State Route 74; on the east by Lake Champlain; and on the north by State Route 9N. Several additional parcels are located in the Town of Keene.



Due to the proximity of the Adirondack Northway (I-87) exits 28-31 and a network of County, State and Town roads, there are a variety of public access points to the HPWF. These include: Johnson Pond Road, Lincoln Pond Road, Ensign Pond Road (also known as the Moriah-North Hudson Road), Tracey Road and State Routes 9 and 74. DEC’s Sharp Bridge Campground offers trail access to East Mill

Brook and a large portion of the unit’s interior. The Frontier Town Campground, Equestrian and Day Use Area provides access to the unit near the Northway (I-87) exit 29.

Most of the existing trails in the HPWF are “out and back” trails that provide access for cross-country skiers, hikers, hunters, anglers and campers. Trailheads, along with formal and informal parking areas provide numerous entry points into the area.

Seasonal water access can be gained via portions of the Schroon River and the Boquet River along State Route 9. Lake access is possible from adjacent larger waters such as Paradox Lake, Eagle Lake and Lincoln Pond.

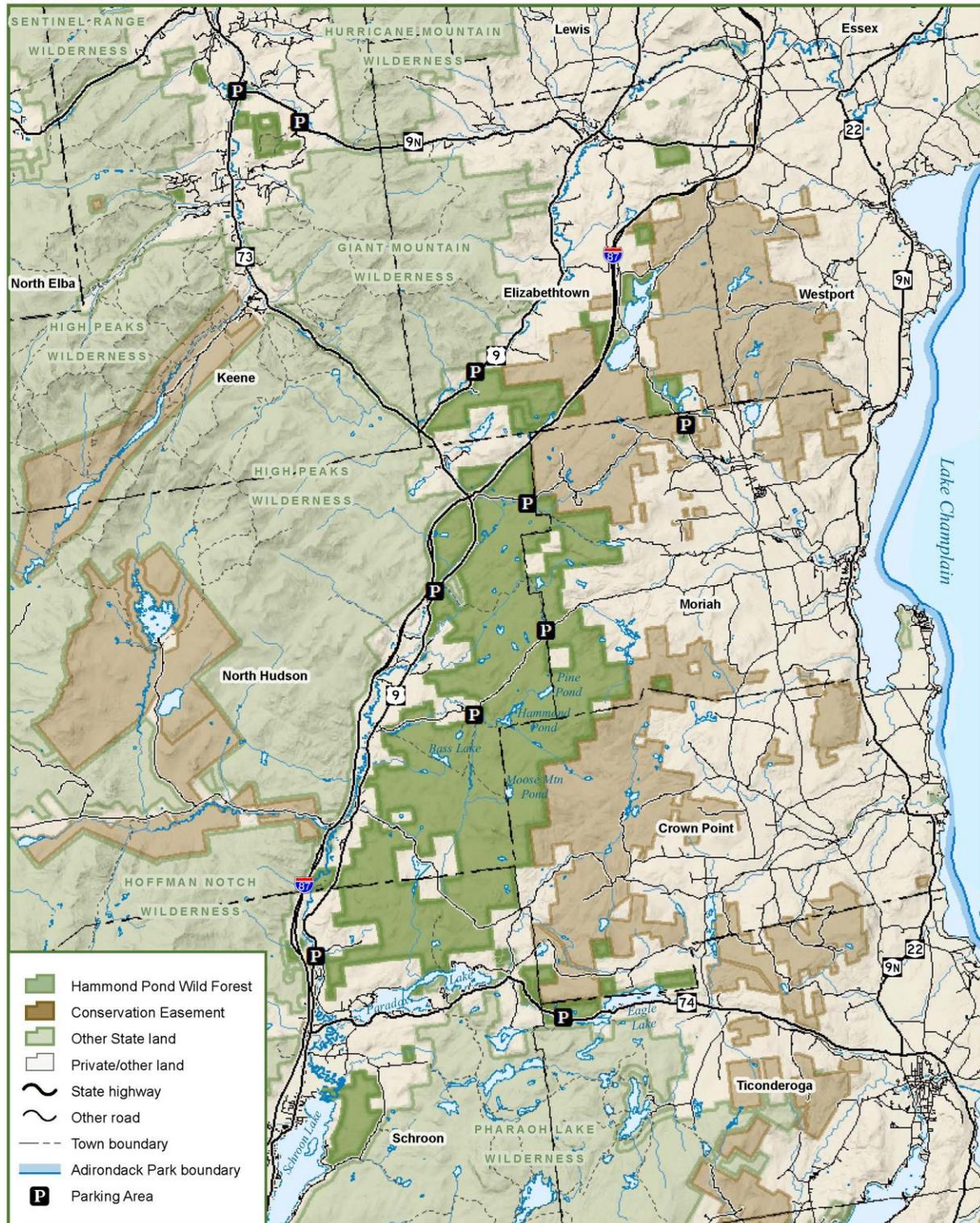
The 1988 HPWF UMP described several parcels with no legal access. Addition of lands to the HPWF since that time have resulted in some of those parcels no longer being isolated. However, there are several HPWF parcels that currently exist without any legal access. As opportunities present themselves in the future, the Department will consider acquiring lands or rights that make access to these parcels possible. The table below provides information about these parcels.

I. Introduction

Parcel Identifier	Lot	Tract	Town	Acres	Status	Book/Page
Little Knob Mountain	29	Paradox	Crown Point	164	No access	193/301
Bald Peak	329	Paradox	Moriah	114	Proposed access via NCNST	198/598
North of Lincoln Pond	197	Iron Ore	Elizabethtown	160	No access	119/400
Kerner Brook	205	Iron Ore	Elizabethtown	30	No access	93/377
Beaver Brook	92	Iron Ore	Westport	45	No access	116/572

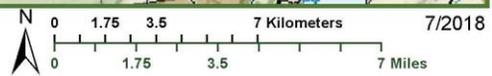
Hammond Pond Wild Forest

Location and Access



- Hammond Pond Wild Forest
- Conservation Easement
- Other State land
- Private/other land
- State highway
- Other road
- Town boundary
- Adirondack Park boundary
- Parking Area

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III. Human Uses & Recreational Resources

A. Carrying Capacity

Carrying capacity, in terms of protected public lands management, has come to be defined as managing for desired natural resource and social conditions. A variety of systems have been developed over the years to get at the root of carrying capacity. The most currently and widely accepted system is the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) framework.

The LAC framework *“recognizes that change in response to visitor use is inevitable and that decisions have to be made with regard to how much change will be permitted to occur”* (Dawson & Hendee, 2009.)

LAC can usefully be applied in some situations and not others. According to an article by Cole & McCool (1998), *“LAC’s primary usefulness is in situations where management goals are in conflict, where it is possible to compromise all goals somewhat, and where planners are willing to establish a hierarchy among goals.”*

In terms of UMP development and public land management, there certainly are conflicting goals where LAC is useful. For the LAC framework to inform management decisions (that may or may not require management actions), a hierarchy must be present between goals. An excerpt from the APSLMP reads:

“If there is a unifying theme to the master plan, it is that 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. This theme is drawn not only from the Adirondack Park Agency Act (Article 27 of the Executive Law – “The Act”) and its legislative history, but also from a century of the public’s demonstrated attitude toward the forest preserve and the Adirondack Park” (p.1).

Considering this APSLMP excerpt and the mandates entrusted to State agencies to steward the integrity of the Forest Preserve, the most important management goal is the

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

preservation of natural resource integrity. This doesn't diminish the significance of recreational access and public use, but it does hold resource protection as ultimate.

Therefore, the broad conflicting goals are:

- Protect the natural resources and ecological value of the Forest Preserve, preserving wild landscapes for the flora and fauna of the future.
(Referred to as the "natural resources" goal, below)
- Create and maintain high quality recreational and access facilities for public outdoor recreation.
(Referred to as the "recreation" goal, below)

To address and accomplish the natural resources goal to the highest order, it would be unlikely that many public recreational facilities would be constructed. To fully accomplish the recreation goal, overdevelopment of diverse recreational opportunities may fragment or alter the natural landscape. Striking a thoughtful balance between these two goals is where the LAC framework is useful.

Goal:

Protect the natural resources and ecological value of the HPWF Forest Preserve, while facilitating high-quality recreational access.

Empirical data is required to achieve the goal(s), therefore, observable indicators and standards will be developed to monitor natural resource conditions and limit impacts. Natural resource condition indicators are measurable (either directly or indirectly) and indicate when conditions become inconsistent with the defined goal(s). This means that there is some level of compromise of natural resources built into the design framework, to accommodate recreation. For example, a measurable indicator may be a certain amount of bedrock exposure from soil erosion along a trail corridor. By setting this bedrock exposure as an indicator of soil erosion (natural resource damage), the framework is acknowledging that there may be harm to natural resources (soil erosion) before a management decision related to recreational objectives is prompted (by bedrock exposure). Social indicators will also be developed to monitor social conditions and guide future management actions.

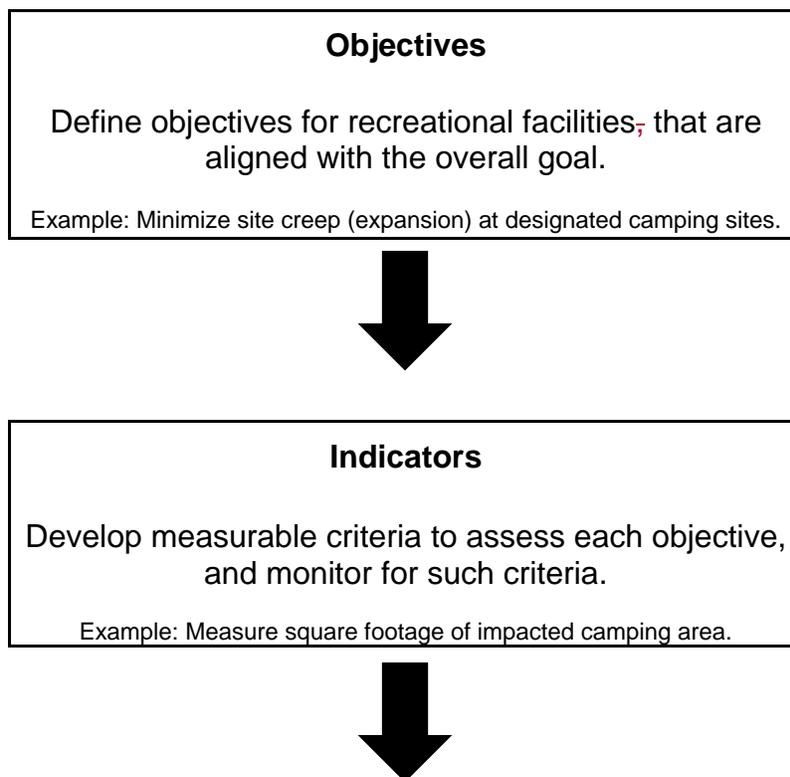
Use Levels, Impacts and Environmental Conditions

This approach shifts land management from defining (or trying to define) maximum recreational use, and instead focuses on natural resource conditions and standards that use levels do not cause to be exceeded.

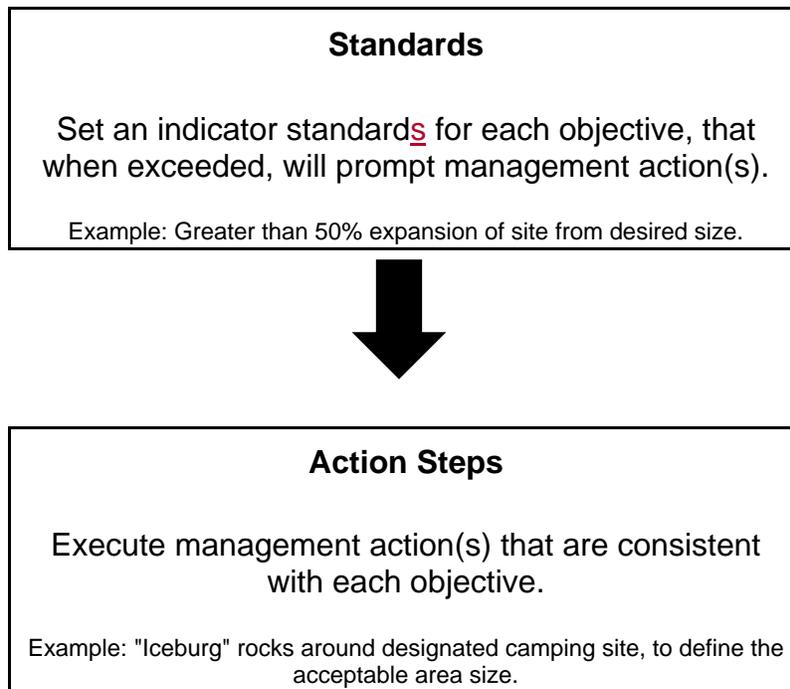
III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

Research shows that natural resource impacts resulting from recreational use occur most significantly at lower use levels, and especially at newly constructed/designated facilities. The built-in indirect management method that can mitigate user impacts is to locate desirable recreational facilities on durable, sustainable sites. Environmental conditions such as: erosiveness/slope, depth to bedrock, soil type, vegetation, and moisture all have significant effects on how much use will cause negative natural resource impacts. For example, a campsite located in an area with shallow depth to bedrock with sensitive vegetation will exhibit far greater natural resource impacts from low amounts of use than a campsite located on a level, durable surface that receives a high level of use.

Outreach and public education are critical to the success of this program, since many negative social and natural resource impacts are borne from uninformed/unintentional behaviors. Leave No Trace principles are central messages in Forest Preserve public outreach efforts, and will be a concentrated focus of HPWF management. This includes information at trailheads, on webpages/social media, in public spaces, or through any other appropriate avenues.



III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses



Wildland Monitoring & Importance

The Department and the APA are currently working together to develop a guidance framework for monitoring wildlands in the Adirondack Park which will accurately assess the effects of management actions and public use with respect to physical, biological and social conditions. The monitoring criteria will be based on the desired conditions and objectives' indicators. The wildland monitoring program to be developed will be consistent and reproducible over time, and will inform the success or failure of management, guided by the diagram above.

The first effort will be to determine existing natural resource and social conditions across the unit, at the time of UMP adoption. Some condition standards are likely to already be exceeded at some existing facilities. The wildland monitoring program is an iterative process and will be repeated at defined intervals over time. As new recreational facilities (as proposed in this UMPa phased implementation plan) are constructed, they will be incorporated into the monitoring program. New or improved facilities will be sited in sustainable locations and consistent with current best management practices. However, the monitoring of new facilities is especially important, since it's known that impacts are most prominent with lower levels of use, or as a newly-constructed facilities become used.

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

The HPWF contains a noteworthy quantity and variety of lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams, much of which has seen relatively little historic recreational use. Management proposals that may facilitate access to, increase use of, or otherwise potentially affect the water resources of the HPWF will be of particular focus for the wildland monitoring program in this unit over the life of this plan. Another emphasis for wildland monitoring in this unit will be the areas where trails (and appurtenant parking areas and tent sites) are proposed in areas that have not had these facilities before.

Developing this monitoring framework and implementing it across the HPWF is a significant, long-term commitment. However, it is a critically important aspect of public land stewardship and management.

Phasing

In ~~certain~~relevant instances, implementation of proposals in this the UMP ~~will bear~~ conditional and/or phased, and dependent on~~according to~~ the results of wildland monitoring for implementation. Additional visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions outlined in the final guidance for wildlands monitoring will inform future management of the HPWF. Any final guidance would become an appendix to the APA/DEC Memorandum of Understanding and applied to future UMPs.

New recreational opportunities proposed in this UMP have been placed into a phased hierarchy (see Appendix A), and will be implemented accordingly over the life of this plan. The phases are not iterative, in that not all projects/activities in phase one need to be completed prior to completing something in one of the later phases. Management actions that are indeed dependent or conditional upon one another are described as such, and accounted for in the phasing plan.

The phased approach acknowledges that completion of a facility and subsequent use will determine the future of that facility and the future of any other associated or dependent facility. If use level, user experience, or natural resource conditions are not optimized, then facilities may be relocated or closed and rehabilitated.

Additional visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions outlined in the final guidance for wildlands monitoring will inform future management of the HPWF. Any final guidance would become an appendix to the APA/DEC Memorandum of Understanding and applied to future UMPs.

Ecosystem-Level Changes

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

Ecosystem-level and larger-scale changes occur across time, both as a result of human impacts and as a result of natural evolutionary forces. Some of these changes may be observed over time through the monitoring process, and some may not. However, moving forward it will be critical to understand these broad processes, in order to understand and plan for the future of the area.

Landscape Relationships

Land management units don't exist as islands on the landscape; their interactions with surrounding units and other lands are essential to understanding ecological and social conditions. The HPWF Forest Preserve unit occupies an important transitional space between contrasting regions. Ecologically, the HPWF lies between the sharp topography of the High Peaks region and the low-lying, fertile Lake Champlain basin. Socially, the HPWF lies between the heavily-visited recreational areas of the High Peaks and the populous agricultural plains of the Lake Champlain basin.

The HPWF is easily accessible, due to its proximity to the Northway (I-87) and a variety of secondary road corridors. While on one hand it may seem logical to shift human use and recreation to the HPWF from the popular High Peaks region and the settled Lake Champlain basin, on the other hand, the HPWF's transitional landscape position may be all the more important to consciously preserve.

Preservation of this area may be especially true when considering wildlife, since the HPWF land base provides a critical connection for wildlife movement between the two flanking regions. The HPWF is also significant from a fisheries standpoint, since there are a multitude of brook trout ponds sprinkled across the unit. When combined, the brook trout waters of the HPWF and adjacent Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area comprise a large portion of New York State's Adirondack brook trout resource.

Current Conditions

Broadly, it appears that the HPWF sustains relatively low recreational use levels, based on natural resource and social conditions. There are a couple notable exceptions to this statement (i.e. Split Rock Falls, Baxter Mountain). ~~-These existing heavily-used and impacted areas will be prioritized in the wildland monitoring methodology, and action steps will be taken to rehabilitate and/or mitigate unacceptable impacts. Natural resource protection and rehabilitation measures will be implemented at these areas.~~

Importance

Developing this specific LAC framework and implementing it across the HPWF is a significant, long-term commitment. However, it is an important aspect of land

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

Lincoln Pond Campground's webpage shows the location of these sites and other information: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/24477.html>.

The overall condition of tent sites in the unit suggests that overnight use of the HPWF is low. This UMP does not propose designating all of the undesignated sites listed in the 1988 UMP.

This UMP addresses locations used for camping that are not described in the 1988 UMP, and land area that has been added to the HPWF land area since that UMP. A few examples of these areas already used for camping or that may provide desirable camping opportunities include: Deadwater Pond, Split Rock Falls, Crown Point Bay, and the Schroon River corridor.

There are two lean-tos in the HPWF. One is located on Moose Mountain Pond, and usually accessed from the trailhead on Ensign Pond Road. The other is located on Eagle Lake, in Crown Point Bay, and is accessible by boat, canoe or kayak.

Desired Conditions for Camping Monitoring

Tent sites and lean-tos will be located at desirable locations suitable to withstand use. Both new and existing sites will contain elements resilient to initial and long-term camping use. These elements may include: a usable, well-drained tent pad (or lean-to), fire pit, sanitary privy, and access to shoreline (where applicable). Beyond the environmental benefits and protection against impacts, these facilities contribute to positive recreational experiences. Tent site and lean-to monitoring variables will include: tracking of impacted site expansion, soil compaction, erosion, fire and firewood collection impacts, live tree damage, and presence of trash and human waste.

Proposed Management

Objectives:

- Reduce, eliminate or mitigate adverse impacts of camping on natural resources.
- Comply with the APSLMP primitive tent-site and lean-to guidelines.
- Build and maintain high quality primitive tent sites and lean-tos with associated infrastructure (access trails, fire rings, privies, hardened level areas for tents, and occasionally picnic tables), or as described in any future primitive tent site guidance.
- Improve and enhance multi-day visits to the HPWF. This includes providing desirable, appropriate range camping opportunities and providing sites that facilitate multi-day excursions through unit and beyond.

Action Steps

The map below shows locations where tent sites and lean-tos exist and where they are proposed to be constructed. Sites shown as “existing” may or may not be officially designated on the ground; they will be officially designated through this UMP. Newly designated or constructed tent sites and lean-tos will comply with APSLMP site-separation criteria.

Note: Due to the dispersion of HPWF lands across several towns, some tent sites cannot be displayed on the extent of this core HPWF land area map, but are described in the text following the map.

Additionally, other potentially existing tent sites in the unit will be inventoried. Decisions whether to designate, close, or relocate these other existing sites will be based upon: site sustainability, natural resource impacts, desirability of location, evidence of use, and relationship to other sites.

- Monitoring for the desired conditions of new tent sites will help managers measure and analyze impacts to better inform carrying-capacity assessments and long-term planning. Final specifics will be detailed in wildlands monitoring guidance framework that the Department and APA are working together to develop, but generally:
 - Desired conditions for tent sites will be ones that show minimal expansion from the designed footprint of the built facility, don't negatively impact adjacent vegetation, show minimal signs of soil compaction and erosion, are free of occurrences of human waste or litter and provide an enjoyable user experience.
 - Monitoring should make use of photo-point locations, control measuring points, trash counts, documentation of vegetative loss, and user surveys.
- Construct one accessible tent site (including a picnic table) near the end of the Schroon River Road. Any other areas previously used for camping will be closed to such use.
- Construct one tent site on HPWF land in the vicinity of the proposed Schroon River fishing and waterway access site, approximately 0.5 miles north of the North Hudson Town Beach.
- Improve, relocate or close and reclaim sites that exhibit natural resource degradation.
- Designate the existing tent site at Hammond Pond, and make it accessible.
- Construct a new lean-to near Johnson Pond Brook, along the proposed North Country National Scenic Trail section between Schroon Falls and Johnson Pond Road.

Crown Point Bay – Eagle Lake

- There are three existing tent sites and one lean-to on a relatively small HPWF land parcel at Crown Point Bay on Eagle Lake. The existing lean-to is appropriately located more than 100 feet from Eagle Lake and screened from view. There is more camping demand on Eagle Lake than the one lean-to allows for, so the Department plans to accommodate such use, while moving towards APSLMP conformance. Eagle Lake is largely privately-owned, and another small HPWF parcel on the lake contains very steep shoreline terrain that precludes the possibility of a tent site. The Crown Point Bay area, like the rest of the HPWF, is Forest Preserve land, and must be managed as such. The Department recognizes that this location has been enjoyed for many decades and does not seek to end public use and recreation. However, the grass mowing and motorized trespass from private land must be prohibited. The existing lean-to will remain and be maintained in place. Two existing tent sites will be closed and reclaimed. One tent site will remain and be located out of sight and sound from the lean-to and screened from the lake. The camping situation in the Crown Point Bay area ~~may will~~ be revisited ~~again~~ in the future, and additional management actions taken if necessary.

F. Fishing & Waterway Access

Existing Conditions

There are many ponded waters and flowages in the HPWF, many of which are accessible via designated trail or unmarked herd path.

Desired Conditions for Fishing and Waterway Access Site Monitoring

There are a variety of existing and proposed fishing and waterway access sites in the HPWF. New or expanded access to waterbodies could potentially bring negative physical, social or biological impacts. The proposals in this UMP have taken potential access/facility implications



Schroon River

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

into consideration, but unintended impacts may occur. Therefore, impacts to waterbodies will be a focal area during the wildland monitoring process.

Fishing and waterway access sites ~~These~~ will be stabilized sites that resist erosion and exhibit minimal wear over time. They will be free of invasive species, human waste and trash. The defined area of impact should remain stable and blend well into the surrounding area. Fishing and waterway access site monitoring variables will include: evidence of erosion and impacted site expansion, invasive species occurrences, presence of human waste and trash.

Proposed Management

Objective:

- Prevent the introduction of aquatic invasive species, while providing recreational access to HPWF waters.

Action Steps

The Schroon River is a prominent watercourse that is popular for fishing and recreation, as it meanders along the western edge of the HPWF and flows into Schroon Lake. This river area is also recognized as an exemplary ecosystem. Access to the river will be provided on HPWF lands in desirable and sustainable locations. The following locations are described from north to south along the river corridor:

- Construct a new Schroon River fishing and waterway access site on HPWF land, approx. 0.5 mi north of the North Hudson Town Beach. This facility will include parking for 2 vehicles along Route 9, and a short access trail from the road to the river.
- Although not on HPWF land, the North Hudson Town Beach provides access to the Schroon River. This facility has a sandy beach, picnic facilities, restrooms, and parking. The entrance to the Town Beach is located along Route 9, across from the fire house. It will be included on maps and public information that describes access to the Schroon River.
- Create a fishing and waterway access site on the Schroon River, near the end of the Schroon River Road and downriver of the fish weir. This area is already used for river access, and a sustainable route to the water's edge will be constructed to prevent further bank erosion.
- Create a new Schroon River fishing and waterway access site on the west side of Route 9, just above Schroon Falls. This site will allow paddlers coming from upriver to exit the river before the falls. The site is dry, level, and does not show

Action Steps

- Include invasive species awareness and spread prevention outreach messages at boat launches and fishing and waterway access sites.
- Install boat washing stations and/or invasive species disposal bins, when feasible and appropriate. This may be done under an agreement or contract with an outside agency or organization.

Port Henry Boat Launch – Lake Champlain

- Continue to operate boat launch under MOU with Port Henry/Moriah. If necessary, revisit the MOU, in partnership with the Town.
- Assess the feasibility of flush toilets at the Port Henry Boat Launch. If appropriate, install flush toilets, pending available funding and favorable environmental review.
- Resurface the parking area, install parking signs/ stripes, and replace bollards to demarcate parking sites.

Eagle Lake Fishing and Waterway Access Site

- There are three alternatives described below, developed in consultation with APA staff regarding the future of the Eagle Lake fishing and waterway access site.

Alternative 1 – No Action

This alternative would continue the status quo of motorized boat launching in the existing Wild Forest area.

Alternative 2

This alternative would accommodate water's edge trailered launching of small and light trailered boats but would not provide float-off, float-on traditional trailered boat launching, pursuant to Wild Forest guidelines. Boats would be pushed/lifted off the trailer, and rolled off a small, short, rolled barrier into the water. The design will allow the wheels of the trailer to reach the water's edge but prevent floating boats off the trailer. The existing wooden dock will remain. This will provide relatively easy access, particularly for those who would have difficulty moving their boat, or for single people/smaller groups. The Department recognizes the longstanding use of this site, especially its significance to Eagle Lake landowners and the local community. This approach is a commitment to maximize ease of use. This low barrier would be designed so it may be unlocked

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

by emergency responders, who would then be able to launch their boats normally during an emergency.

This alternative will support leveling and resurfacing of the existing uneven parking area. This could potentially be completed in partnership with DOT, given the site's proximity to State Route 74.

Alternative 3

This alternative allows for an assessment of Eagle Lake access and conditions to inform a future decision to either alter the site in accordance with the APSLMP Wild Forest guidelines (actions in Alternative 2) **or** propose a reclassification of the area to Intensive Use. If the area around the existing site were to become reclassified to Intensive Use, then it would become a Boat Launching Site, allowing for continued float-off, float-on boat launching.

Given the historic use of the existing Wild Forest boat access site on Eagle Lake, DEC will conduct an assessment over a period of up to ~~four~~five years prior to the implementation of Alternative 2. The focus of this assessment effort will be to assess whether reclassification of the boat access site to Intensive Use would be consistent with the APSLMP. During the assessment period, DEC will develop information necessary for the evaluation of the boat access site against the guidelines for an Intensive Use Boat Launching Site; including:

- Adequate public or private boat launching facilities open to the public are not available to meet a demonstrated need;
- The physical, biological and social carrying capacity of the lake, or a portion of the lake, or other water bodies accessible from the site will not be exceeded;
- 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 boat launching site is located in a manner to avoid adverse impact on adjacent or nearby state and private lands;
- Motor size limitations appropriate to the carrying capacity of the lake are provided; particularly for lakes with embayment or shoreline configurations providing the character of small lakes;
- There will be no material adverse impacts on physical, biological or scenic resources of the water body and surrounding land.

The assessment will consider any impact, temporary or permanent, of DOT plans for reconstructing the Route 74 bridge between the existing Eagle Lake boat

Desired Conditions for Foot, Bicycle and Equestrian Trail Monitoring

Trails will be constructed and maintained using the best available knowledge and methods. Trails will retain firm and stable surfacing with minimal maintenance. Sustainable trails protect natural resources and maximize user safety, function and enjoyment. Trails also blend well with natural surroundings. Monitoring variables for will include: erosion, tread creep/expansion, vegetation loss, occurrences of invasive species, user conflicts, adequate marking and signage.

Desired Conditions for Snowmobile Trail Monitoring

Snowmobile trails have the benefit of frozen ground and snow cover to reduce impacts to trail surfaces, if there is an adequate amount of snow. Snowmobile trails will be free of vegetative obstructions to maintain safe lines of sight, but that blend with the surrounding area and comply with the Snowmobile Management Guidance. Although snowmobiling occurs on snowpack and does not typically impact the frozen soil below, it is important to monitor these trails like other trail facilities.

Proposed Management

Objectives:

- Protect the natural resources of the HPWF through optimal trail configurations and sustainable design, construction and maintenance.
- Enhance existing trail network and create new trails that provide a variety of interesting recreational opportunities for varying abilities.

Action Steps

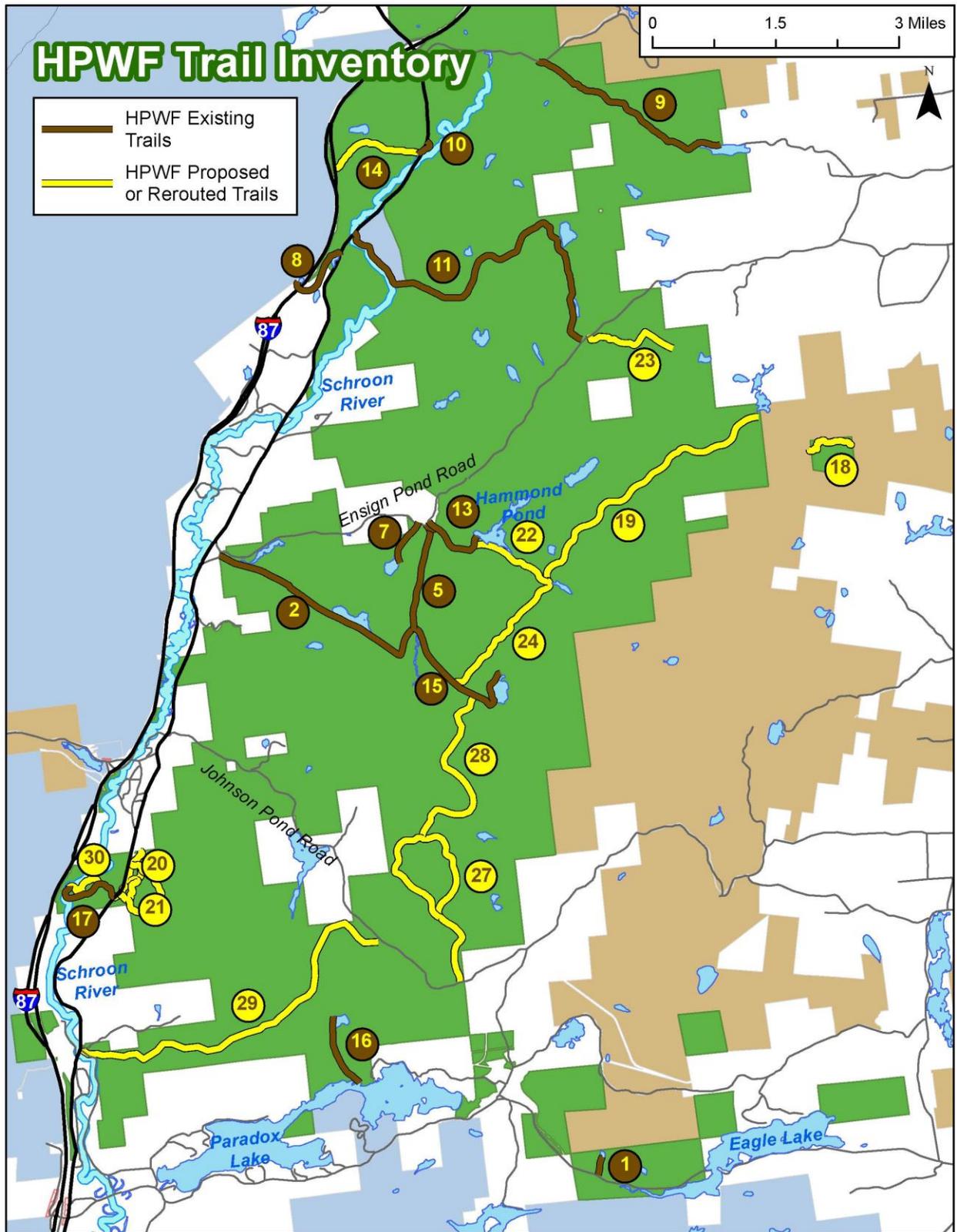
- Design and lay out new trails in order to create enjoyable, sustainable trails that minimize trail infrastructure.
- Discourage marking and/or maintaining of any trails on HPWF not recognized by the Department (unofficial trails). Efforts will be made to either legitimize such trails (if appropriate, and through the UMP process) by marking and maintaining them or closing them.
- Collect recreational use data through trail registers and/or other methods. Use this data to prioritize work planning. [Monitoring for the desired conditions of selected new trails \(other than snowmobile trails\) will help managers measure and analyze impacts to better inform carrying-capacity assessments and long-](#)

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

term planning. Final specifics will be detailed in the wildland monitoring guidance framework, but generally:

- Desired conditions for these trails will be ones that show minimal expansion from the designed footprint of the built facility, don't negatively impact trailside vegetation, are free of occurrences of human waste or litter and provide an enjoyable user experience.
 - Monitoring should make use of photo-point locations, control measuring points, trash counts, documentation of erosion and tread expansion, and user surveys.
- Continue existing partnerships and foster more volunteerism in the HPWF for trail maintenance and participation in approved trail projects.
- If and when an existing trail section is found to have negative natural resource and/or recreational impacts (and keeping a trail segment in its current location is not a reasonable option), create reasonable reroutes to avoid these negative impacts and facilitate appropriate recreational use. These reroutes may include bridges or tread improvements when necessary.
- Construct and maintain trails in accordance with Department guidance/policies and using the best available sustainable trail practices. As new trails are constructed, a monitoring methodology will be employed to measure impacts, informing future management decisions.
- Design, construct and maintain facilities with maximum accessibility in mind.

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses



III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

Icon Legend



Hiking



Bicycling



X-country Skiing



Equestrian



Snowmobiling



Snowshoeing



Accessible

****Note: Motor vehicles, ATVs, UTVs and all other motorized vehicles are prohibited on all trails, unless otherwise described.***

Trails appear on maps as they are numbered here.

Existing Trails

1. Arnold Pond Trail

Recommended Uses:



Secondary Uses:



Prohibited Uses:



Description:

The Class III Arnold Pond Trail is a short 0.3-mile trail that begins on the north side of Route 74 and rises steeply to the shore of Arnold Pond. The steep rock faces around the northern shore of the pond are an interesting sight from the end of the trail. There is an existing primitive tent site on the southern shore of the pond. Parking for the Arnold Pond Trail is located on the south side of Route 74, at the trailhead for the Short Swing Trail, which leads south into the Pharaoh Lake Wilderness Area.

2. Bass Lake Trail

Recommended Uses:



Secondary Uses:



Prohibited Uses:



Description:

The Bass Lake Trail has a western and an eastern end. The western end of the trail reaches private land, off of Caza Turn Road in North Hudson. Currently, parking occurs at an unmarked pull-off on private land. If a willing landowner is found, the Department would consider formalizing a 2-3 vehicle parking area in this vicinity. From this western end, the trail slowly ascends to the height of land, then traverses along Bass Lake through attractive forest cover, then gradually descends to an intersection with the Berryhill Flow Trail. The eastern end of the trail begins at a junction with the Berryhill Flow/Moose Mountain Pond Trail. This is a Class IV trail.

3. Baxter Mountain Trails

Recommended Uses:



Secondary Uses:



Prohibited Uses:



Description:

There are three trails up Baxter Mountain, all located in the Town of Keene. Each trail begins on private property, but the summit and surrounding area are part of the HPWF. The Department will pursue trail agreements or easements with any willing private landowners for the private land trail segments designated as DEC trails.

Baxter Mountain Trail from 9N:

By far, the most popular Baxter Mountain Trail begins from Route 9N and is maintained to a Class IV standard.— This trailhead receives a very high level of use and is often suggested to those seeking a shorter hike than a High Peak, but with a fantastic mountaintop view.

There is no parking area for this trail, and so parking occurs along the shoulder of Route 9N. If a willing landowner and appropriate site exists, then explore an agreement to construct a parking area for this trailhead.

A portion of the lower, private land section of the Baxter Mountain Trail has been improved through rerouting and the addition of switchbacks to reduce grade and prevent erosion. The upper section and summit area are HPWF land, where

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

improvements such as rerouting and tread improvements are necessary to prevent continued erosion, trail widening and braiding.

Baxter Mountain Trails from Beede Lane:

The other two lesser-used trails up Baxter Mountain are located off of Beede Lane in Keene Valley, and are Class III primitive trails. These are difficult to locate, and receive very little, if any, use by the general public. The Department will assess condition, use level, and ease of public access/parking. One, or both of these two trails may be closed. If favorable site conditions exist, then the Department ~~will~~ may potentially choose to create a loop connection between the upper portions of these Baxter Mountain trails on HPWF land. This will not preclude the ability to close one or both of the lower, private land sections.

New access to Baxter Mountain may be considered sometime in the future on HPWF land along Route 73/East Branch Ausable River. Access to Baxter Mountain will be considered holistically, and management decisions made that consider appropriateness of multiple trails up a single, small mountain that already experiences high use. Natural resource conditions, trail infrastructure, and summit resources will inform all management decisions.

Due to the known impacts and high use levels sustained, the Baxter Mountain Trails (particularly the trail from Route 9N) will be prioritized in future wildland monitoring of this unit.

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

- Install a trail register near the tower, in order to begin capturing use data. Anecdotally, this is a fairly popular hike.
- If necessary or desirable, survey and mark the HPWF corridor leading from Dalton Hill Road to the Belfry Mountain summit and fire tower. Consider relocating the trail from the road to this corridor, depending on site conditions. If this is not an appropriate trail relocation for any reason, then continue to use the access road as the designated trail.
- Maintain the fire tower structure to a safe and usable standard.
- Explore the possibility of securing an agreement with a willing private landowner to construct a 2-3 vehicle trailhead parking area.

L. Split Rock Falls

History

The Split Rock Falls gorge, located along Route 9 in the Town of Elizabethtown, was acquired by New York State in 1981. A much larger surrounding area was acquired by the State in 1992. The falls and gorge have historically been used for tourism and public enjoyment, especially before the Adirondack Northway (I-87) was constructed in the late 1960s. Route 9 was the major north-south travel corridor before the highway was built.

Existing Conditions

This area currently receives very high use during the warmer summer months. Human waste, tree cutting, and garbage are problems in this area. Parking is limited to a small paved pull-off area along Route 9.



Split Rock Falls

There are no designated trails or access points to or around Split Rock Falls. Some old pathways, roads, stone walls and foundations are reminiscent of the area's prior ownership, when it was a privately-held tourism location.

The 1988 HPWF UMP proposed that this area be restricted to day use only, however, there are two existing designated tentsites in the area around Split Rock Falls.

The 1988 HPWF UMP also proposed to repair and strengthen the existing chain link fencing along the gorge wall. This fencing pre-dates State ownership of the area. Sections of this fencing are broken, dilapidated, or missing.

Finally, the 1988 HPWF UMP described the erosion and bank destabilization occurring from heavy public use, and proposed to develop a mitigation plan. Since there are no designated trails or access points to view the falls, user impacts (erosion, bank destabilization, vegetation loss) are spread throughout the area.

Desired Conditions

An inventory of existing conditions surrounding the Split Rock Falls gorge area will provide the basis for development of a erosion mitigation and bank stabilization work plan. Implementation of work plan actions will significantly contribute to the future sustainability of the area, and concentrate public use to durable surfaces that can withstand such use. The Split Rock Falls area will also remain a priority for public outreach and education, as it is a frontcountry facility that may serve as an introduction to outdoor ethics and the Forest Preserve.

Proposed Management

Objective:

- Accommodate public use and enjoyment of the Split Rock Falls area in a manner that is safe, orderly and protective of the unique natural resources of the area.

Action Steps

- Remove the broken or dilapidated sections of existing chain link fencing.
- Install sanitary facilities, where appropriate, to address the human waste problem at Split Rock Falls.
- Install a kiosk with register box at the parking area. On the kiosk, feature the natural and geologic significance of the falls, promote Leave No Trace Principles, and provide other important information.
- Inventory existing conditions surrounding the Split Rock Falls gorge area. Using this information, develop an erosion and bank stabilization work plan to halt soil loss and river bank degradation. Eroded or potentially erosive areas will be stabilized, and public use of those areas will be discouraged. Use will be concentrated to durable, stable surfaces. Monitor conditions for impacts, and implement other measures as necessary to improve the physical, biological and social conditions of the area.

III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

- Construct a short hardened pathway from the pull-off parking area to an area where the falls may be viewed, that is designed for maximum accessibility. If a sustainable route is found, consider constructing a hardened route to the area below the falls. Without a designated route, visitors will still pick their way down to the area below the falls in an ad hoc fashion, furthering impact spread and erosion.
- There are currently two designated tent sites in the area around Split Rock Falls. Designated sites are those sites signed for camping, usually with a “Camp Here” disk, a fire ring, and a privy. While camping will be allowed to continue at designated sites in this area, sites exhibiting resource degradation may be relocated, and closed sites rehabilitated. If resource degradation continues to occur or worsen, then promulgate a regulation to make the Split Rock Falls area “day use only.”
- Work with NYSDOT on management of areas within the Route 9 ROW, and on maintenance of the existing pull-off parking area. This includes continuous signage improvements, safety features, and replacing the deteriorated wooden bollards that delineate the parking area.
- Construct a 4-vehicle parking area on HPWF land approximately 0.5 miles above the falls area, to serve the proposed Split Rock Mountain Trail and ski loops.
- Foster existing and create new partnerships that benefit the management of this area. Partnerships will be encouraged across the entire HPWF, but the Split Rock Falls area will be a focal point, due to its longstanding issues and heavy use.

M. North Country National Scenic Trail

History

In March 1980, federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) as a component of the National Trails System (which includes other long-distance trails such as the iconic Appalachian Trail.) The total length of the NCNST is projected to be approximately 4,600 miles, traversing the northern United States. Of that total mileage, roughly 2,700 miles have been completed. The legislation that created the NCNST requires that it be managed through a federal-state-local-private partnership, with the National Park Service providing overall administration and coordination. Positive collaboration between agencies, organizations, landowners and individuals is critical to the creation of this trail.

A UMP for the conceptual NCNST route across the Adirondack Park was adopted in September 2015. The specific location of the trail across the included Forest Preserve units is described and approved in that unit's individual UMP. Therefore, this UMP provides the proposed route across the HPWF. The HPWF has the most new NCNST trail miles of any Adirondack Forest Preserve unit.

Existing Conditions

The proposed NCNST route traverses the length of the core HPWF land area, and utilizes both existing and new trails. Sections of new trail are mainly named/described by their road or existing trail crossings. Several of these sections will provide a more remote trail experience that has previously been unavailable on existing trails in this unit.

The overall goal of the NCNST is to be an off-road, non-motorized trail with spectacular scenery throughout. The trail is designed for hiking, and new trail sections will be designed to primarily accommodate that use as a Class IV trail.

Desired Conditions

The NCNST route will provide a significant portion of the new trail mileage across the HPWF. The trail route proposed in this UMP is designed to complement existing trails, with a goal of providing interesting and desirable opportunities of varying distances. The NCNST route will receive an unknown amount of use, both initially and long-term. This trail connection is eagerly anticipated, and may potentially sustain high use levels. Consistent with all other trails proposed in this UMP, the NCNST route will be sustainably located, avoiding ecologically significant or sensitive areas. The trail will be constructed using current best management practices for sustainable trail construction, and maintained to that standard. Also consistent with this plan's commitment to wildland monitoring, the NCNST will be monitored over time. Impacts that exceed accepted thresholds will be mitigated as necessary.

Proposed Management

Objective:

- Combine existing and new trail sections to create a NCNST traverse across the HPWF.
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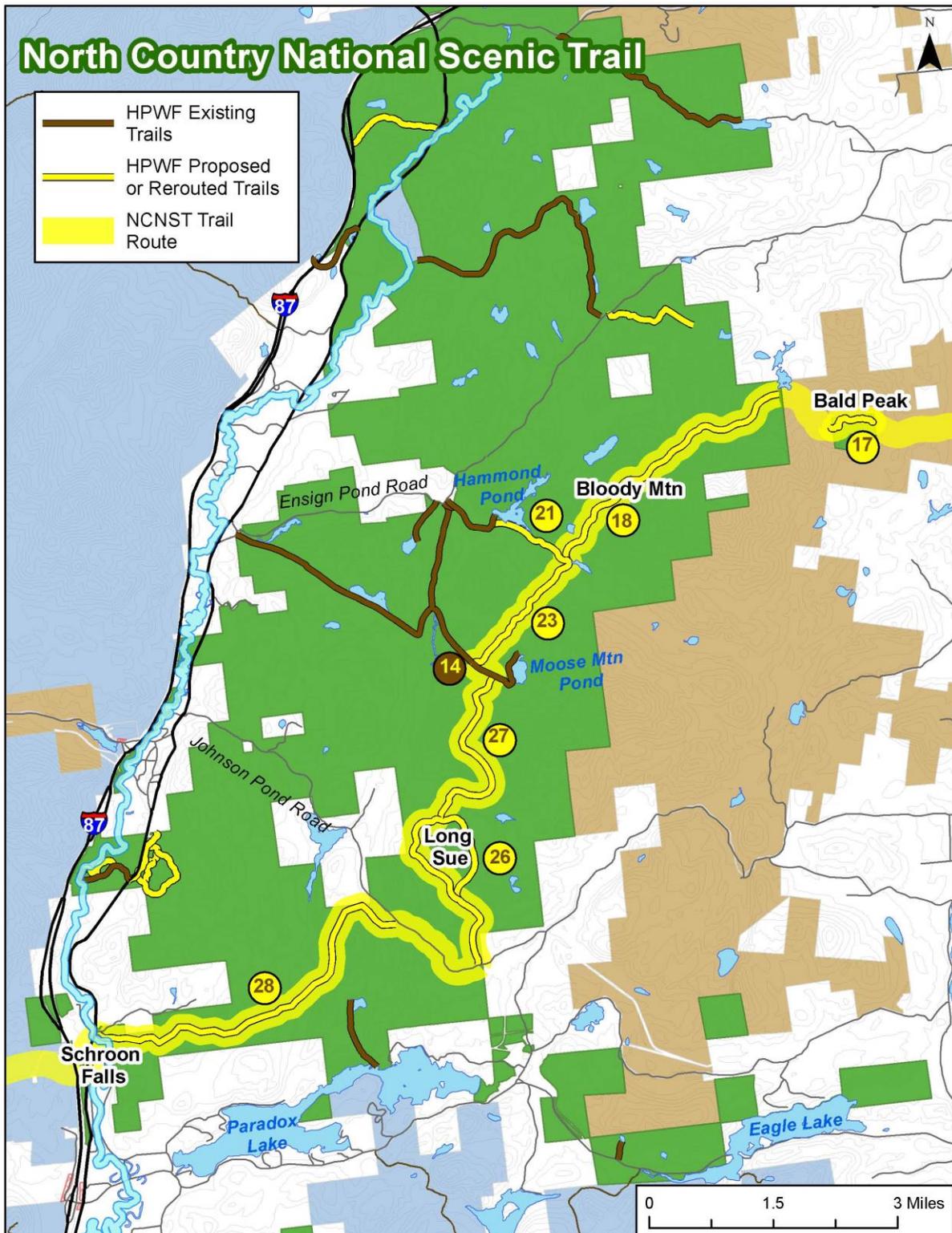
III. Recreational Resources and Human Uses

Action Steps

- Design and construct new NCNST trail segments across the HPWF that avoid sensitive natural resources, and provide scenic, enjoyable trail experiences.
- Provide primitive camping opportunities at trail intervals suitable for multi-day excursions.



View from Bald Peak, along proposed NCNST route



Appendix A – Phases of Implementation

The following five phases of implementation appear in priority order; Phase One lists the projects/activities likely to be undertaken first (given adequate allocation of time and resources). However, the phases are not iterative, in that not all projects/activities in Phase One need to be completed prior to completing something in one of the later phases. Management actions that are indeed dependent or conditional upon one another are described as such, and accounted for in the phasing plan.

The phased approach acknowledges that completion of a facility and subsequent use will determine the future of that facility and the future of any other associated or dependent facility. If use level, user experience, or natural resource conditions are not optimized, then facilities may be relocated or closed and rehabilitated.

<u>Phase One</u>
Develop wildland monitoring plan, including indicators and standards for natural resource and social conditions. Develop and implement (throughout all phases) action steps that may be triggered by exceedance of standards, as identified through the monitoring process.
<u>Monitor conditions at new and selected Inventory conditions of existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions, which may include relocation or closure. Management actions that are dependent or conditional upon one another will be monitored, and if conditions are not optimized, then dependent/conditional facilities may not be constructed.-</u>
Maintain all existing facilities. Continuously improve education and outreach programs.
Improve the Schroon River Access Road for motor vehicles, equestrians, bicycles, and other non-motorized uses. Construct a two-vehicle parking area at the end of the road, and another two-vehicle parking area at the beginning of the road.
Construct an accessible tent site near the end of the Schroon River Access Road, to be accessible from the parking area. Construct a sustainable fishing and waterway access site downriver of the fish weir.

Appendix A – Phases of Implementation

<u>Phase One</u>
Construct up to 5 miles of the Frontier Town Equestrian Trail Network, on both HPWF and Town of North Hudson lands.
Designate and improve the East of Route 9 Multiple Use Trail.
<u>Inventory existing conditions, develop and begin execution of the erosion and bank stabilization work plan for the Split Rock Falls area. Install sanitary facilities and an informational kiosk at Split Rock Falls.</u>
<u>Improve the HPWF portion of the Baxter Mountain Trail, near and around the summit area. Install sanitary facilities and an informational kiosk at Split Rock Falls.</u>
Construct a short, hardened pathway from the pull-off parking area to an area where Split Rock Falls may be viewed from above. If feasible, build a sustainable, hardened route to an area below the falls. This will be completed as part of the erosion and bank stabilization work plan.
Expand the Schroon Falls Parking Area to accommodate 4 more vehicles. Then construct a fishing and waterway access site above Schroon Falls. Relocate the existing tent site at Schroon Falls, and rehabilitate the closed site.

<u>Phase Two</u>
Maintain all existing facilities. Continuously improve education and outreach programs.
Monitor conditions at new and selected existing facilities and at new facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions, which may include relocation or closure. Management actions that are dependent or conditional upon one another will be monitored, and if conditions are not optimized, then dependent/conditional facilities may not be constructed. Inventory conditions of existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions.
Improve the existing tent site at Hammond Pond to be accessible. Perform the UTAP analysis on the Hammond Pond Trail.
If warranted by use of the existing Frontier Town Equestrian Trails, build up to 5 more miles of this network (full build out).
Construct a 2-vehicle parking area and fishing and waterway access site for the Russett, Mill, Murrey and Tanaher Ponds area. Construct two short canoe carries to connect all four ponds. Construct two tent sites.
Construct the Schroon Falls to Johnson Pond Road Trail.
After completion of the Schroon Falls to Johnson Pond Road Trail, construct a lean-to at Johnson Pond Brook.
Construct the Schroon River Loop Trail.
Rehabilitate the natural resource damage along the East Side Trail (caused by illegal, non-winter motorized use).
Construct a two-vehicle parking area, Schroon River fishing and waterway access site, and tent site on HPWF land adjacent to Route 9 approx. 0.5 mi north of the North Hudson Town Beach.

<u>Phase Three</u>
Maintain all existing facilities. Continuously improve education and outreach programs.
Monitor conditions at new and selected existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions, which may include relocation or closure. Management actions that are dependent or conditional upon one another will be monitored, and if conditions are not optimized, then dependent/conditional facilities may not be constructed. Inventory conditions of existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions.
Construct 4 vehicle parking area and three tent sites (one accessible) at Deadwater Pond.
Construct the rerouted Lindsay Brook Trail and Deadwater climbing access route.
Stabilize soil, through terracing, at the top and base of Deadwater climbing routes.
Construct the Long Sue Loop Trail and associated primitive tent site.
Construct a 4-vehicle parking area for the Long Sue Loop Trail.
If possible and desirable, construct a parking area for up to 4 horse trailers near the eastern end of Johnson Pond Road.
Construct the Split Rock Mountain Trail and 4 vehicle parking area.
Construct the Split Rock Loop Trails, if supported by public volunteer engagement.
Construct a 2-vehicle parking area and fishing and waterway access site at Johnson Pond. Then construct one tent site at the southern end of Johnson Pond.

<u>Phase Four</u>
Maintain all existing facilities. Continuously improve education and outreach programs.
Monitor conditions at new and selected existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions, which may include relocation or closure. Management actions that are dependent or conditional upon one another will be monitored, and if conditions are not optimized, then dependent/conditional facilities may not be constructed. Inventory conditions of existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions.
Construct the Hammond Pond Trail Extension and the Moose Mountain Pond to Hammond Pond Trail.
Construct a hardened, accessible fishing/wildlife viewing surface at Deadwater Pond.
Construct the universally accessible Lincoln Pond Trail.
Construct the Lincoln Pond Overlook Trail after completion of the Lincoln Pond Trail.
Construct the Long Sue to Moose Mountain Pond Trail.
Designate or construct one tent site at Moose Mountain Pond.
Assess the two trails up Baxter Mountain from the Beede Lane area. If possible, construct a two-vehicle parking area. Close one or both of the trails leading to private land (if appropriate) and construct loop trail, if site conditions are appropriate.

Appendix A – Phases of Implementation

Designate or construct one tent site at Crowfoot Pond.
Complete study of Eagle Lake boat access, and implement study findings. Resurface the parking area <u>if necessary</u> .

<u>Phase Five</u>
Maintain all existing facilities. Continuously improve education and outreach programs.
Monitor conditions at new and selected existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions, which may include relocation or closure. Management actions that are dependent or conditional upon one another will be monitored, and if conditions are not optimized, then dependent/conditional facilities may not be constructed. Inventory conditions of existing facilities throughout the unit. Implement action steps where necessary to protect natural resource integrity and desired social conditions.
Determine the location of the HPWF corridor from Dalton Hill to the summit of Belfry Mountain. If the location of this corridor is favorable for a trail, construct a foot trail in this corridor (if this is a desirable alternative to using the access road).
If NCNST access across adjoining conservation easement land is approved and completed, construct the Bloody Mountain Trail and associated primitive tent site.
If NCNST access across surrounding conservation easement land is approved and completed, construct the Bald Peak Trail and associated primitive tent site.
Determine the best location for the Harris Hill Trail, and construct it.

Inventory the HPWF for monuments, plaques and other non-Department signs. These are non-conforming, according to the APSLMP guidelines, and will be removed over the life of this UMP.