



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

INTERIM ACCESS PLAN

for
Forest Preserve Land at

Boreas Ponds

*Essex County
Towns of North Hudson and Newcomb*

NYS DEC, REGION 5, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS

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Purpose and Goals

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) recognizes that there is public interest in immediately accessing and recreating on the Boreas Ponds Tract (Boreas Tract). This Interim Access Plan (Interim Plan) identifies opportunities for the public to access and use the Boreas Ponds Tract beginning in summer 2016 subject to the retained rights of the lease holders and The Nature Conservancy (TNC). This Interim Plan will allow public access to specified areas of the Boreas Tract and provide for appropriate protective measures now that the lands are open to the public. Associated infrastructure will be developed for the primary purpose of accommodating recreational use of the Boreas Tract prior to the approval of the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) land classification recommendation by the Governor and prior to the development of unit management plans (UMPs) for the area.

According to the SLMP: *“Prior to classification by the Agency, lands acquired by the Department of Environmental Conservation...will be administered in a manner consistent with the character of the land and its capacity to withstand use and **which will not foreclose options for eventual classification.**”* This Interim Plan does not foreclose any options for eventual classification.

This Interim plan does not affect or suggest what access and uses will be allowed after classification. It will serve to guide management on the Boreas Tract until a full Unit Management Plan for the area is developed.

Background and Use History

The Boreas Tract comprises approximately 20,000 acres of former Finch, Pruyn & Co. (Finch Pruyn) lands which were acquired from The Nature Conservancy (TNC) by New York State in April 2016 “for inclusion into the Forest Preserve”. The lands are now open for public use. (See Overview Map on page 8).

For the past century much of this land has been logged using sustainable forestry practices, including the use of motor vehicles and motorized equipment. The Boreas Tract has also historically been leased to several hunting clubs that have used these lands for recreational purposes. These private hunting clubs have used motor vehicles, snowmobiles and All-Terrain Vehicles (ATV) on the Tract’s extensive gravel road network. There are 53 miles of roads on the Boreas tract. *(See attached map of existing road system currently accessible by TNC and lessees for motor vehicle access on page 9.)* Thus, the land has supported a significant amount of mechanized and motor vehicle use prior to State acquisition. The Tract also contains a lodge and other associated support buildings such as a garage. The lodge was used by Finch Pruyn as a corporate retreat for staff and guests.

Existing Leases

Portions of the Tract are leased from TNC by four hunting clubs. These lessees have exclusive use of camps and other buildings located on the Tract until their leases expire in September 2018. These buildings are not open for public use, and one-acre zones have been established around each building that exclude public access. The public is not allowed access to these exclusion zones and must maintain a distance greater than 200 feet from each building. The lessees will continue to have unrestricted and motorized access rights to the camp buildings year-round on designated roads except during 'mud season' when the gates will be locked to prevent motorized access. Motorized access by TNC can continue through September 30, 2019.

The Interim Plan takes into account the rights of existing lease holders.

Lodge Area

The lodge and garage were recently removed, and the site will remain closed to the public until the vegetation recovers from the recent demolition activity.

Administrative Access

While this Interim Plan is in effect, the DEC will have administrative access throughout the tract. This access will include, but not be limited to improving proposed parking lots and removal of structures within the tract. DEC also intends to maintain the dam which creates the three ponds on the tract. Administrative access will include unhindered access to, and egress from, specific sites throughout the Tract using motor vehicles and motorized equipment. The safe use of this Tract by the public and DEC staff during these activities will be aided by measures designed to manage access. If necessary, some road segments may be restricted or closed for structure removal operations, in which case they will be posted as such.

Public Recreation and Access

This Interim Plan establishes interim public recreation and appropriate public access to specified areas in a manner consistent with the character of the land and its capacity to withstand use prior to the issuance of a unit management plan. As noted earlier, this Interim Plan does not affect or suggest whether this access will be allowed after classification of these lands.

Horse and Horse and Wagons

Horse and horse and wagon use will be allowed on existing roads and former roads signed as open for horse and horse and wagon travel. Parking of horse trailers will be allowed at parking lot (P-1) at the entrance of the former Sand Pond Road, at parking lot (P-2) at the entrance to the Gulf Brook Road and at parking lot (P-3) at the entrance to the Ragged Mountain Road.

Hunting, Fishing and Trapping

The Tract is open to public hunting, fishing, and trapping pursuant to New York State hunting, fishing, and trapping regulations; however, trespassing on the leased-building exclusion zones is prohibited.

Camping

Although designation of official primitive tent sites is not addressed in this Interim Plan, backcountry or primitive camping and campfires will be allowed in this Tract pursuant to existing DEC camping regulations (6 NYCRR Section 190.3(b)).

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7872.html>

Biking

This Interim Plan calls for biking to be allowed from the entrance of the parcel at the Blue Ridge Highway 6.7 miles along the Gulf Brook Road and the road to the dam at Boreas Ponds. Biking will not be permitted east of the dam.

Public Motor Vehicle Access and Parking

Public access to these lands is currently allowed from any point along a public road or right-of-way that intersects with State land. Public parking will be allowed on any point along an existing public road or right-of-way that intersects with the lands of this unit except where such parking would block a road or gate. There are several miles of suitable public parking along Blue Ridge Road.

There is reasonable expectation, however, that DEC will provide for limited public access and parking within the tract prior to classification and UMP development. This Interim Plan includes an evaluation of alternatives and a preferred alternative for public motor vehicle access and associated parking within the Boreas Tract.

Evaluation of Alternatives

DEC evaluated several alternatives for interim public access into the Boreas Tract prior to classification. These included public motor vehicle access to a number of cleared areas along the Gulf Brook and Trout Pond Roads, both for summer and seasonal parking during fall hunting season.

There were several areas evaluated for their parking potential. These included:

- Cleared areas along the periphery of the Boreas Tract along Town and County Roads.
- Cleared areas between the gated entrance to the Boreas Tract from Gulf Brook Road and the “four corners” intersection with the Trout Pond Road. These included old log landings, old borrow pits, and old gravel pits.
- Cleared areas along the Trout Pond Road for seasonal access only.

Several issues were considered when evaluating any of these alternatives for public motor vehicle access and parking:

- The existing roads within the Tract are single-lane roads.
- The surface of existing roads get soft during wet weather.
- The Gulf Brook Road contains several pinch points, where the narrow travel surface may result in issues of vehicles getting stuck.
- Construction traffic will be periodically heavy on interior roads through September 2019 - large trucks and machines on the narrow road with public motor vehicles, pedestrian and horse use pose safety concerns.
- There will be more motor vehicles on the roads during hunting season by lessees.
- This interior roads were designed for hauling forest products.
- There are concerns with sight distances and safe pull offs for vehicles passing each other, especially vehicles with trailers.
- There are multiple areas along interior roads where the road surface is rough, soft or narrow and motor vehicles may result in impacts to the road surface and possible run off and erosion, leading to increase maintenance costs and impacts to the natural resources.

Based on these potential issues, DEC considered how motor vehicle use could be controlled if allowed along the Gulf Brook and Trout Pond Roads. Options include the installation of gates, issuance of permits and providing a limited series of internal parking lots within existing cleared areas.

Further consideration was given to the following issues:

- Unmonitored public motor vehicle access and parking may result in parking beyond designated parking areas and the blocking of internal gates and pull offs, leading to conflicts with TNC, lease holders, contractors and any DEC search and rescue efforts.
- Managing parking lot capacity will be difficult with no way to turn traffic back from internal lots, moving motor vehicles to other parking areas.
- Vehicles with trailers will not be able to turn around within internal parking lots and existing pull offs.

Preferred Alternative for Public Motor Vehicle Access and Parking

This Interim Plan establishes that public motor vehicle access and parking will be available in specific cleared areas on the periphery and within the Boreas Tract in the fall of 2016. The DEC believes the configuration of public motor vehicle access and parking described below is best suited to avoid the issues identified on the previous section and will provide adequate, interim access for the public until such time these lands are classified and a UMP or UMP amendment is completed.

DEC will establish parking lots located in a manner that will provide sustainable and convenient access to different areas of the Boreas Ponds Tract. All lots with greater than 5 car spaces will have at least one space dedicated to people with disabilities.

These parking lots will be established at:

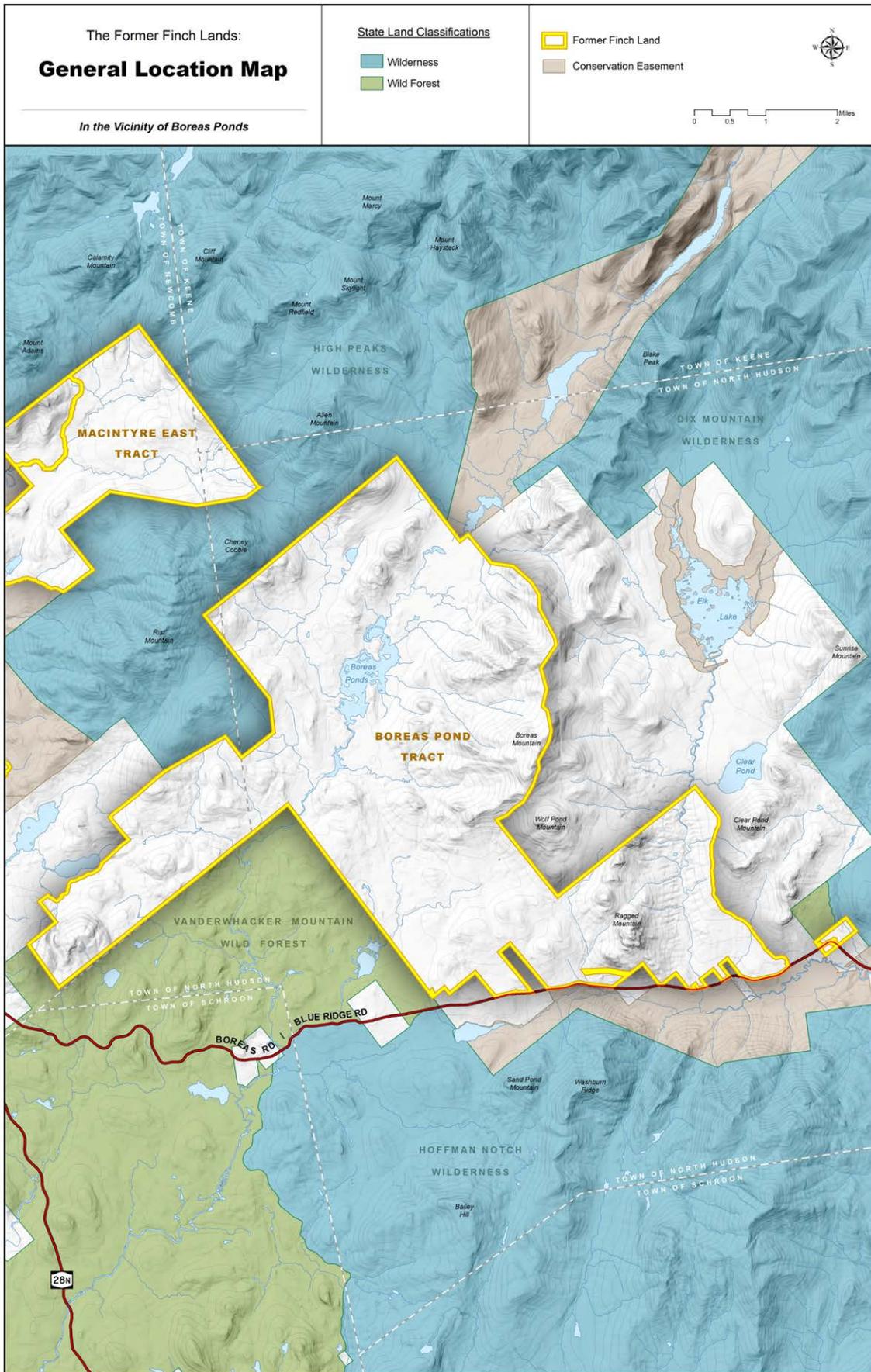
- (5) existing cleared areas along the periphery of the Boreas Tract along Town and County Roads. These include:
 - Parking Lot 1 (P-1): Sand Pond Road
 - Parking Lot 2 (P-2): Gulf Brook Road Entrance
 - Parking Lot 3 (P-3): Ragged Mountain Road (River Road)
 - Parking Lot 4 (P-4): Elk Lake-Fishing Access
 - Parking Lot 5 (P-5): Elk Lake-Upper lot

- Designated parking areas (P-6, P-7 and P-8) along the Gulf Brook Road to the gate at approximately 3.2 miles from the Blue Ridge Road. “No Parking” signs will be placed along the road in locations where parking is not suitable.

See map on page 10 for parking area locations.

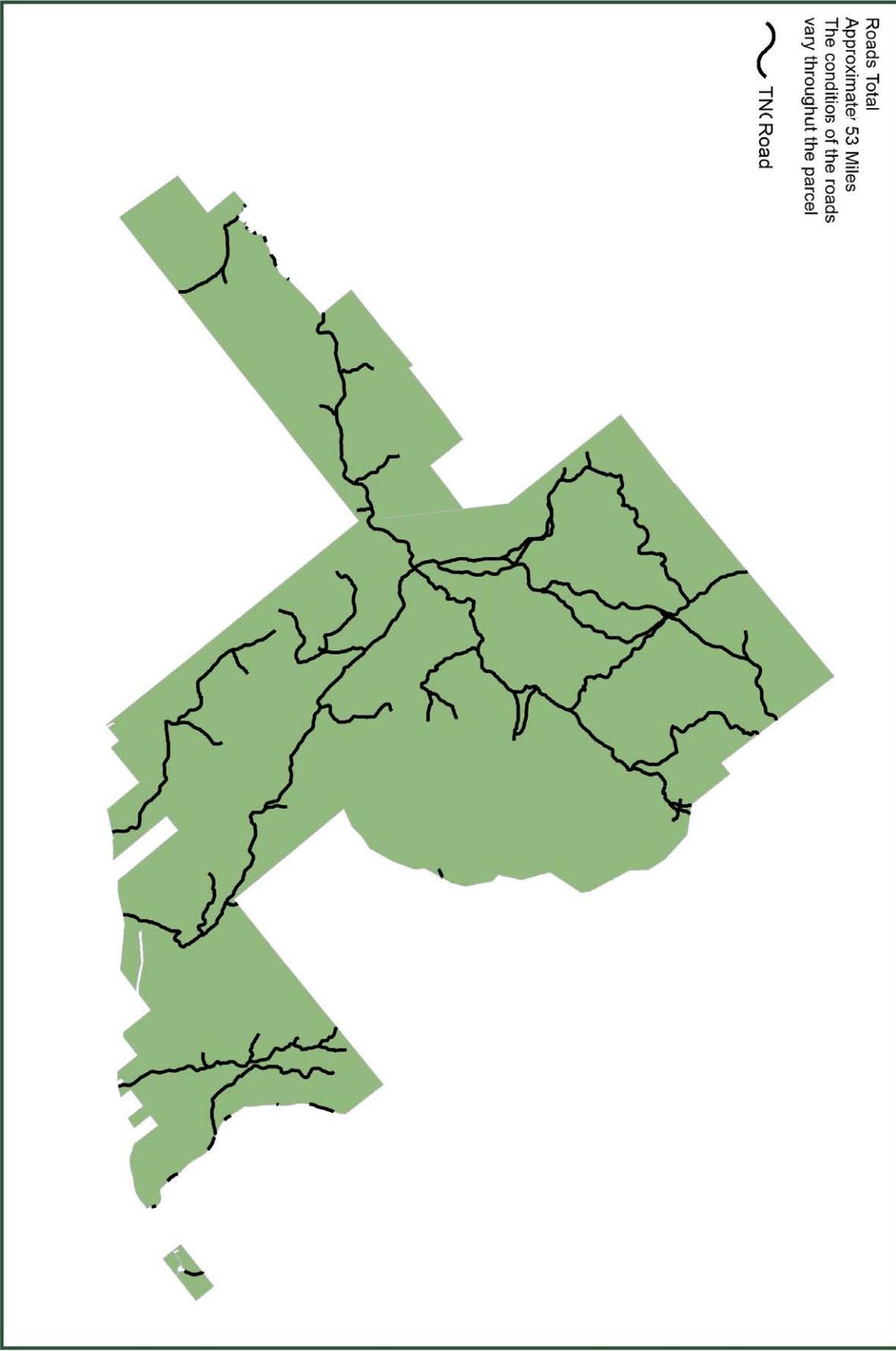
Conclusions

This Interim Plan takes a conservative approach in opening these lands to public use. Specifically, this Interim Plan proposes to leave gates in place to prevent public motor vehicle travel into interior areas beyond the approximate 3.2-mile mark from Blue Ridge Road, allow for biking access to the dam at Boreas Ponds, and non-motorized recreation (e.g., hunting, fishing, trapping, hiking, paddling, snowshoeing, cross country skiing) by the public within the Boreas Tract while this Interim Plan is in effect. These management parameters will serve to eliminate or reduce significant adverse environmental impacts. This Interim Plan will also enable the Department to evaluate the impacts of public use of the Tract while developing long-term proposals to be contained in a UMP or UMP amendments for the area.



The Nature Conservancy Roads

Roads Total
Approximate: 53 Miles
The conditions of the roads
vary throughout the parcel



Boreas Ponds Interim Access Plan

