BLACK RIVER WILD FOREST

and

J.P Lewis (North Lake) Tract Conservation Easement

Draft Amendment

to the

1996 Black River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan

NYS DEC, REGION 6, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS

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Introduction

The Black River Wild Forest is located in the Towns of Ohio and Webb in Herkimer County, the Town of Forestport in Oneida County, the Town of Lyonsdale in Lewis County and the Town of Morehouse in Hamilton County. The unit contains approximately 121,506 acres. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) for this block of forest preserve land was completed in 1996. One amendment has been completed and approved since the original adoption of the UMP.

The primary purpose of this UMP amendment is to classify snowmobile trails to conform to the new trail classification system and guidelines set forth in the Management Guidance for Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction, and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park (Guidance). Also included are plans for an additional parking lot at North Lake and several new foot trails in support of the proposed North Country Scenic Trail.

In October 2006 the Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement (Snowmobile Plan) was released. It was a conceptual snowmobile plan with the goal of creating a system of snowmobile trails between communities in the Adirondack Park (community connectors) as well as designating secondary trails for a more traditional type of Adirondack snowmobiling experience. It also proposed that some existing snowmobile trails (i.e. those within the interior of Wild Forest areas or adjacent to private in-holdings) be re-designated for non-motorized use or abandoned as trails altogether. The Snowmobile Plan identifies the UMP process as the vehicle for reconfiguring the existing snowmobile trail network across the Forest Preserve.

Following the completion of the Snowmobile Plan, the Department of Environmental Conservation, in coordination with the Adirondack Park Agency, developed the Guidance and released it in November of 2009. This document provides specific guidelines for trail classification as well as for siting, construction and maintenance of trails. With regards to classification of trails, the Guidance defined two classes of trails on Forest Preserve lands, aside from trails on roads.

Class II Trails: Community Connector Trails

Snowmobile trails or trail segments that serve to connect communities and provide the main travel routes for snowmobiles within a unit are Community Connector Trails. These trails are located in the periphery of Wild Forest or other Forest Preserve areas (see Figure 1 below). They are always located as close as possible to motorized travel

corridors, given safety, terrain and environmental constraints, and only rarely are any segments of them located further than one mile away from the nearest of these corridors. They are not duplicated or paralleled by other snowmobile trails.
Some can be short, linking communities to longer Class II trails that connect two or more other communities.

Class I Trails: Secondary Snowmobile Trails

All other snowmobile trails that are not Community Connector Trails are Secondary Snowmobile Trails. These trails are located in the periphery of Wild Forest and other Forest Preserve areas where snowmobile trails are designated. They may be spur trails (perhaps leading to population areas and services such as repair shops, service stations, restaurants and lodging), short loop trails or longer recreational trails. If directly connected to Class II trails, new and rerouted Class I trails are always located as close as possible to – and no farther than one mile from – motorized travel corridors. If not directly connected to Class II trails, they are generally located within one mile of motorized travel corridors, although some – with high recreational value – may be located beyond one mile and may approach a remote interior area.

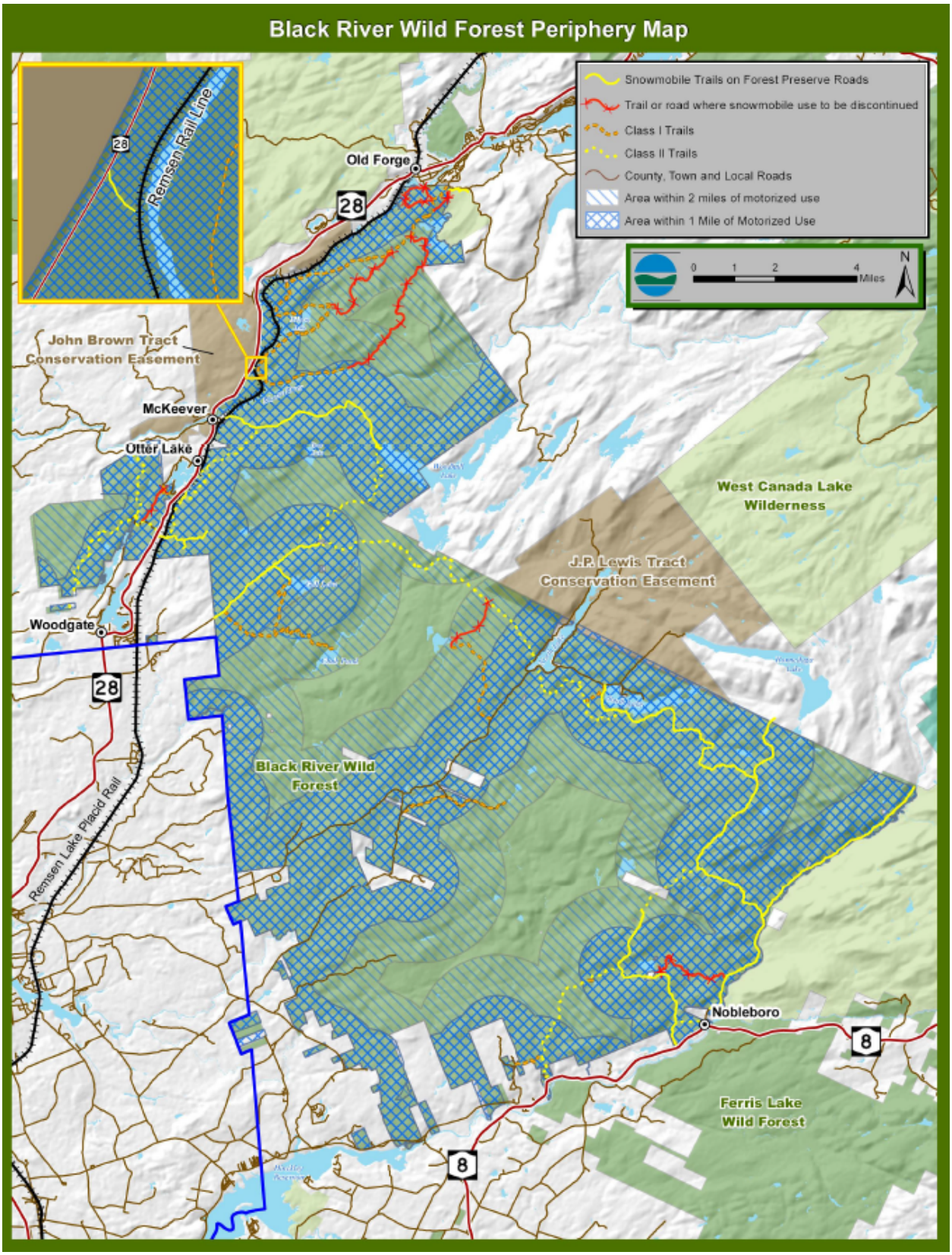

Figure 1. Map of Areas Defined as the Periphery of the Black River Wild Forest

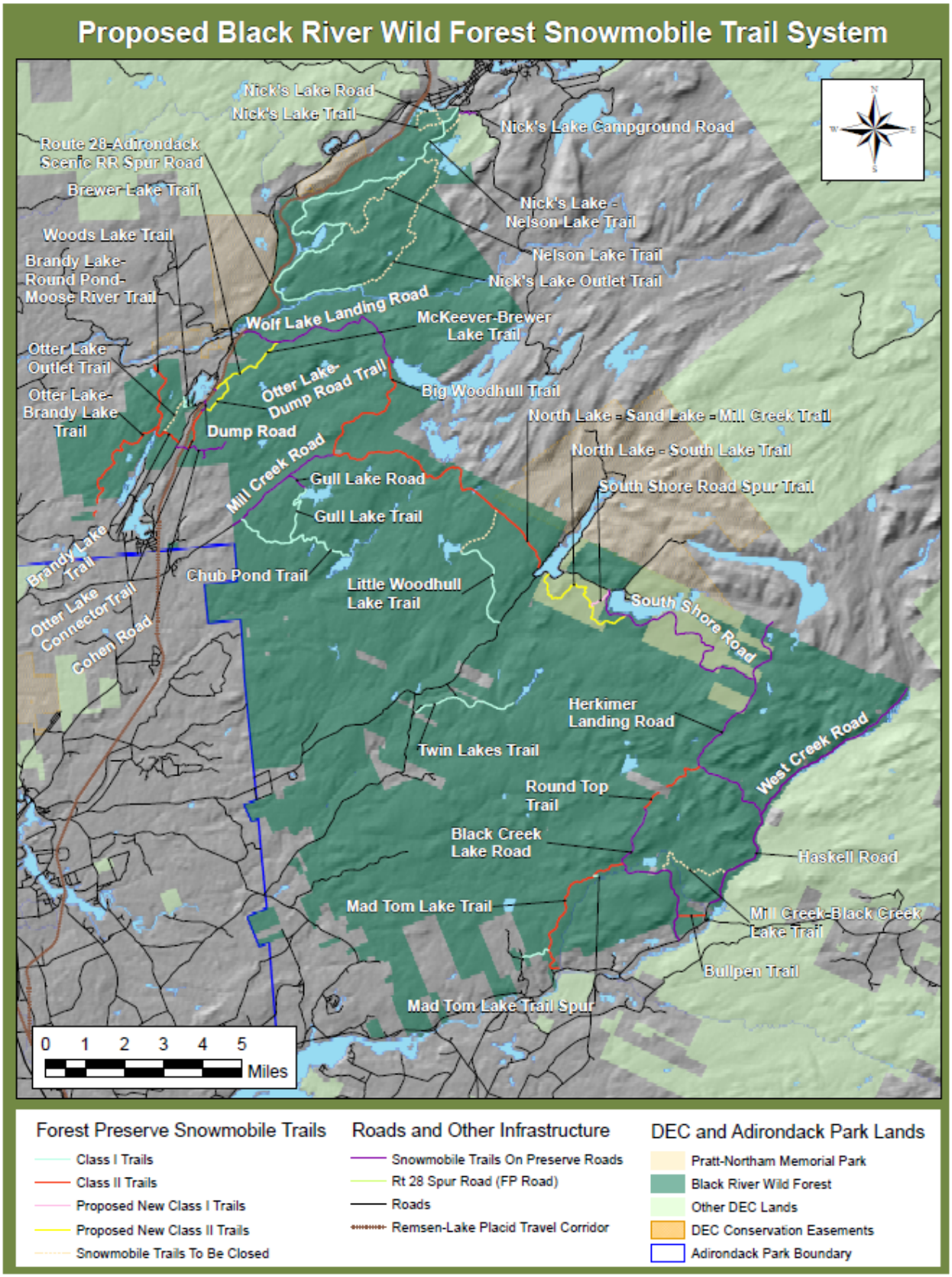

Figure 2. Map of Proposed Snowmobile Trail System in Black River Wild Forest

IV. PROJECTED USE AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSED

A. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT AND/OR REMOVAL

1. Snowmobile Trail Class Designation

The snowmobile trail system proposed in this amendment (see Figure 2 above) is designed to provide connections between important destinations and communities within and surrounding the Black River Wild Forest. The trail system is also designed to: a) reduce environmental impacts of the trails; b) provide for limited alternatives in the community connection network in anticipation of periodic disruptions in the most commonly used corridors where Forest Preserve roads with private rights of ways may be plowed for winter logging, and c) accommodate the high volume of snowmobile traffic that typically occurs in this lake effect snow-belt area when other regions of New York are receiving less than normal snowfall. The net result of this proposal is a better system of trails for the snowmobiling community and a system that is more environmentally benign. This system is consistent with the snowmobile trail designation, classification, and best management practices set forth in the Guidance.

Class II: **Community Connector Routes**

There are two main community connector routes within the Unit. The listing below includes existing trails and roads as well as a limited amount of new trails, which will be described in more detail following this listing.

Woodgate to Old Forge – *see Figure 3 below*

Designated as the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation's (OPRHP) "C-7" corridor trail, this route connects the communities of Woodgate, White Lake, Otter Lake and Old Forge. It also provides access to route "C-7C", which connects these communities to the village of Boonville and other communities in the Southern Tug Hill Plateau. This area is one of the most popular snowmobiling destinations in the country and the economic impact this form of recreation has is vital.

Table 1. Woodgate to Old Forge Community Connector Trails and Roads

Name	Miles
Otter Lake - Brandy Lake Trail	4.1
Brandy Lake - Round Pond - Moose River Trail	2.1
Brandy Lake Trail	0.5
Cohen Road	1.7
Otter Lake Connector Trail	1.1
Otter Lake - Dump Road Trail	1.2
Dump Road	0.3
Brewer Lake Trail	1.3
McKeever - Brewer Lake Trail	1.0
Rt. 28-Adirondack RR Spur Road	0.1
Total	13.4

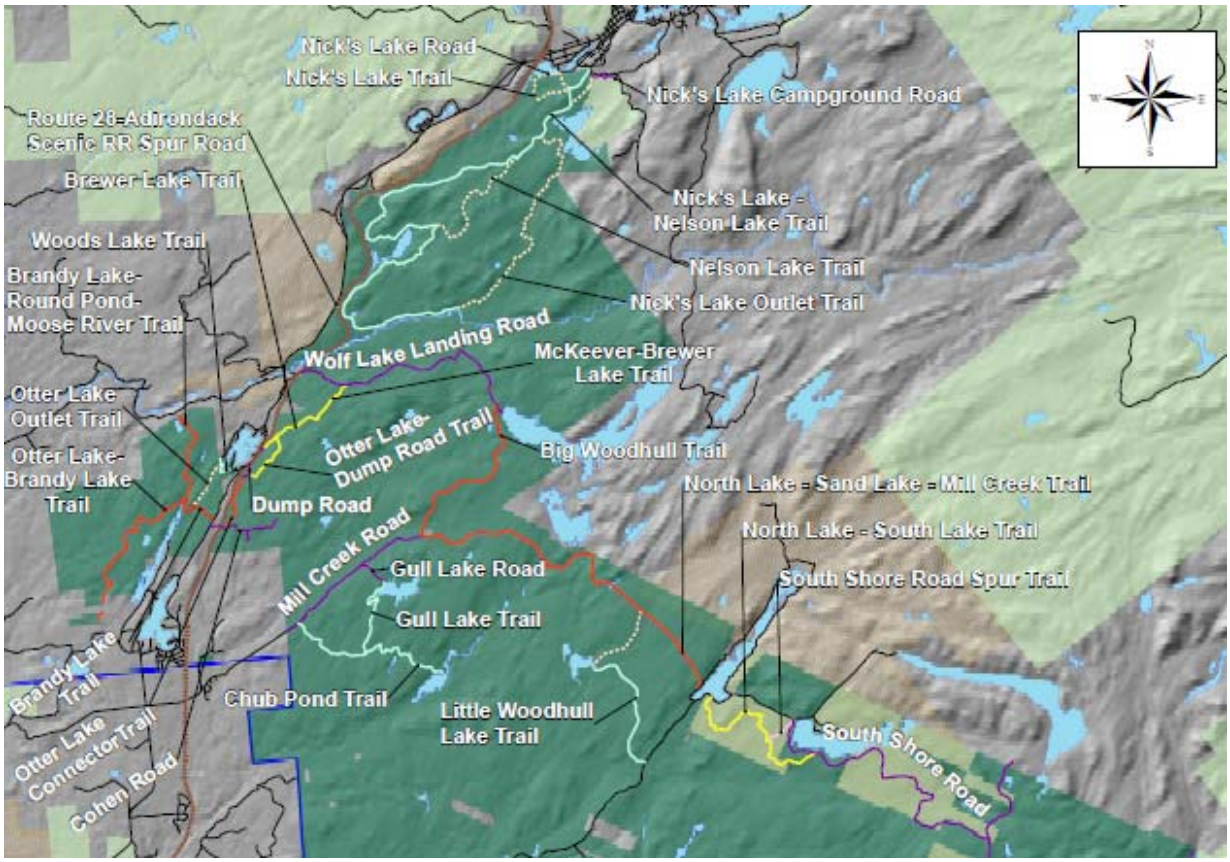

Figure 3. Woodgate - Proposed and Existing Old Forge Community Connector Trails and Roads

McKeever to Forestport to Nobleboro/Ohio – *see Figure 4 below*

This route is designated as OPRHP's "C-4H" corridor trail and "S-46A" secondary trail. It connects the communities of McKeever, Atwell (North Lake/South Lake), Forestport, Nobleboro and Ohio. This main connector route across the southwestern Adirondacks primarily follows a series of existing open motor vehicle roads and trails.

Table 2. McKeever to Forestport to Nobleboro Community Connector Trails and Roads

Name	Miles
Wolf Lake Landing Rd.	5.1
Big Woodhull Trail	3.7
North Lake – Sand Lake – Mill Creek Trail	7.7
Mill Creek Road	3.4
North Lake -South Lake Trail	4.2
South Shore Road	6.7
Herkimer Landing Road	7.2
Haskell Road	3.0
West Creek Road	5.2
Round Top Trail	1.8
Black Creek Lake Road	1.7
Bull Pen Trail	0.7
Mad Tom Lake Trail	4.3
Total	54.7

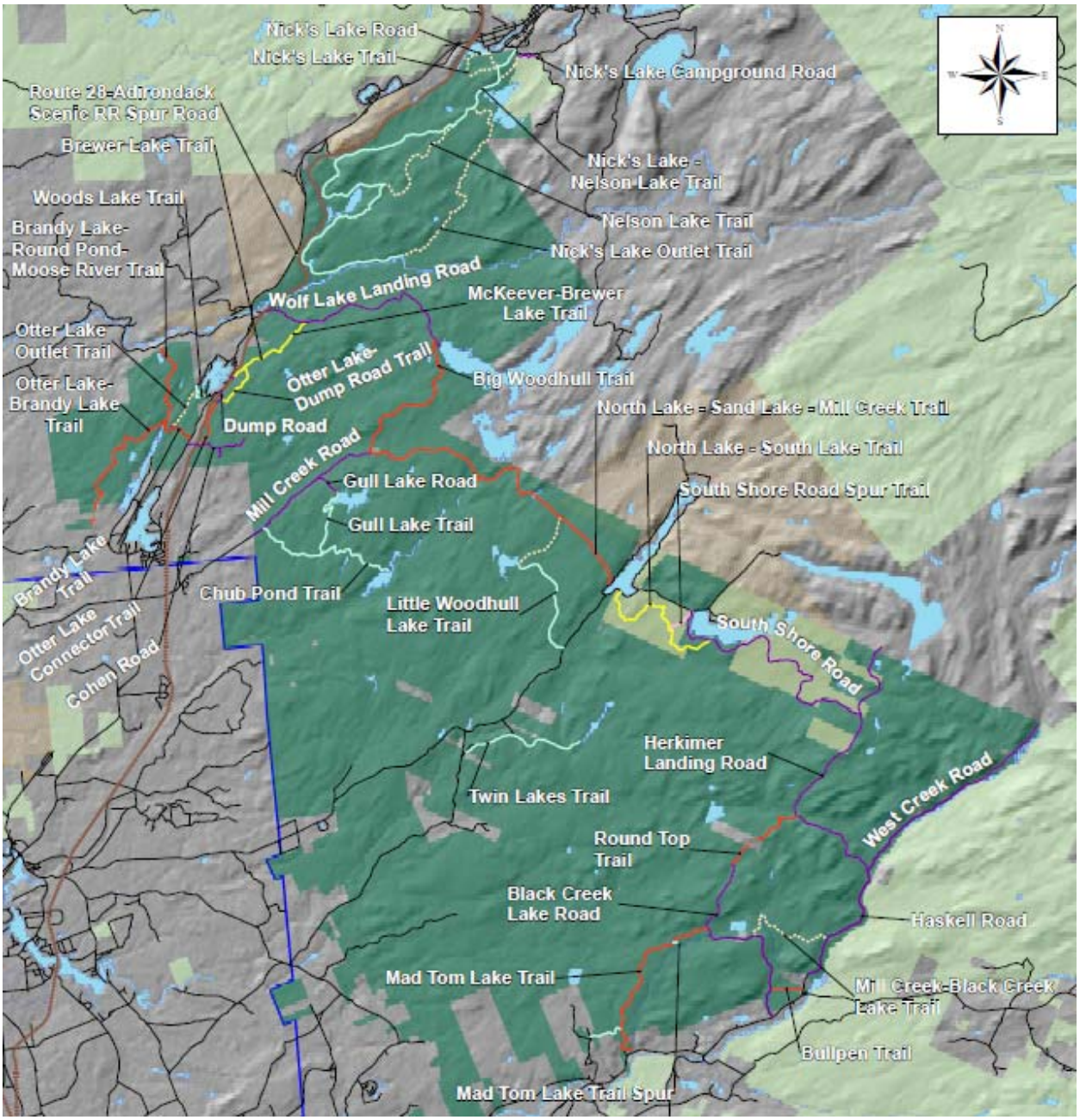

Figure 4. McKeever - Forestport – Nobleboro Proposed and Existing Community Connector Trails and Roads

2. Management Actions

Based on the community connector routes identified above and the existing network of snowmobile routes, the following modifications to the existing UMP are proposed:

a. Classify 26.0 miles of existing snowmobile trails as “Class II” snowmobile trails on Forest Preserve lands (see Figure 5 below). These trails act as community connector trails, linking towns and villages within the Adirondack Park, and usually serve as snowmobile “Corridor Trails”, as identified by the N.Y. State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

Table 3. Existing Snowmobile Trails Classified as Class II Trails

Name	Miles
Brandy Lake - Round Pond - Moose River Trail	2.1
Brandy Lake Trail	0.5
Otter Lake - Brandy Lake Trail	4.1
Otter Lake Connector Trail	1.1
Big Woodhull Trail	3.7
North Lake - Sand Lake - Mill Creek Trail	7.7
Round Top Trail	1.8
Bullpen Trail	0.7
Mad Tom Lake Trail	4.3
Total	26.0

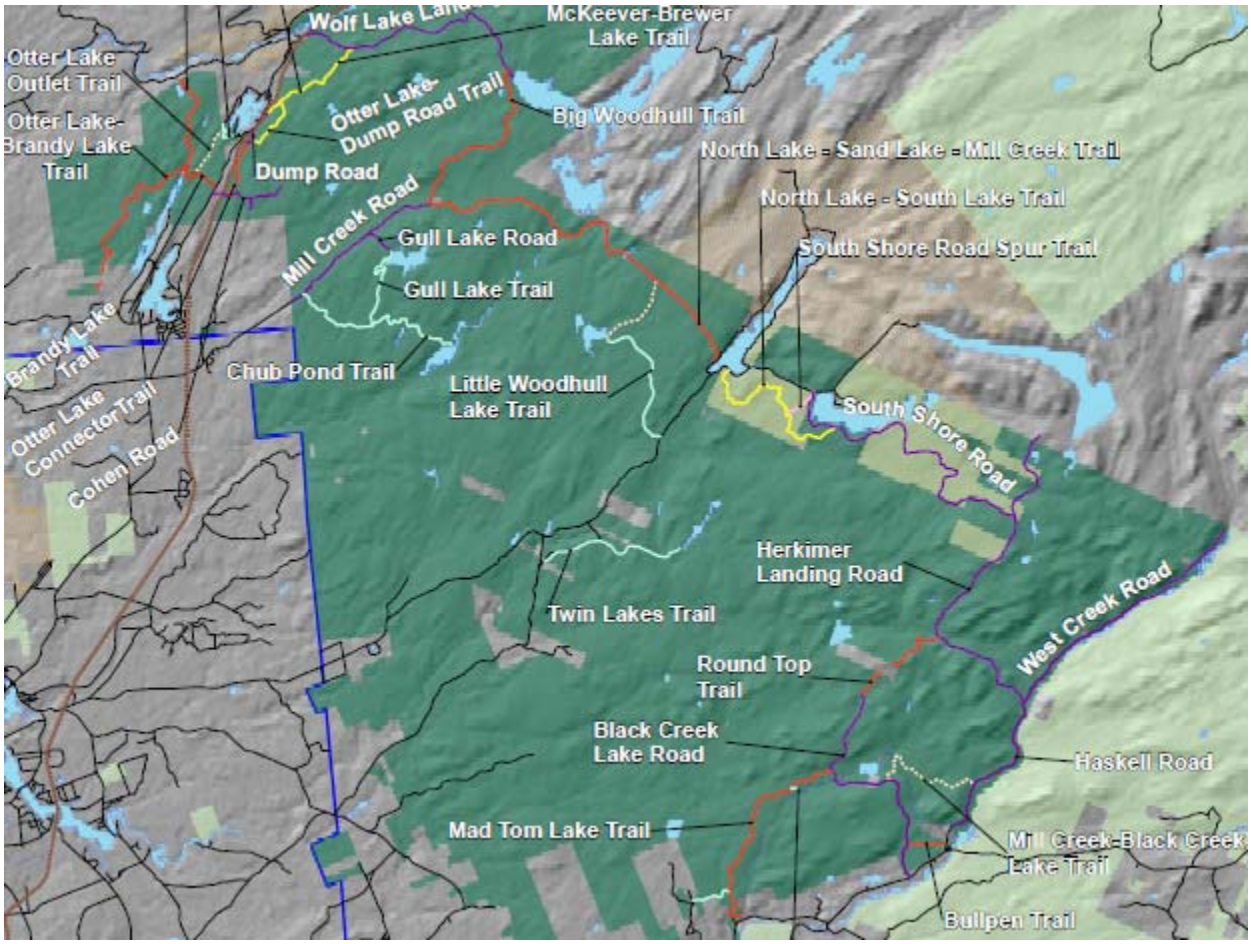

Figure 5. Red Trails - Existing Trails to be classified as Class II

b. Construct (if necessary) & classify 7.6 miles of new Class II snowmobile trails (see Figure 6 below).

Table 4. New Snowmobile Trails Classified as Class II

Name	Miles
McKeever - Brewer Lake Trail	1.0
Brewer Lake Trail (portion of existing foot trail)	1.2
Otter Lake - Dump Road Trail	1.2
North-South Lake Trail	4.2
Total	7.6

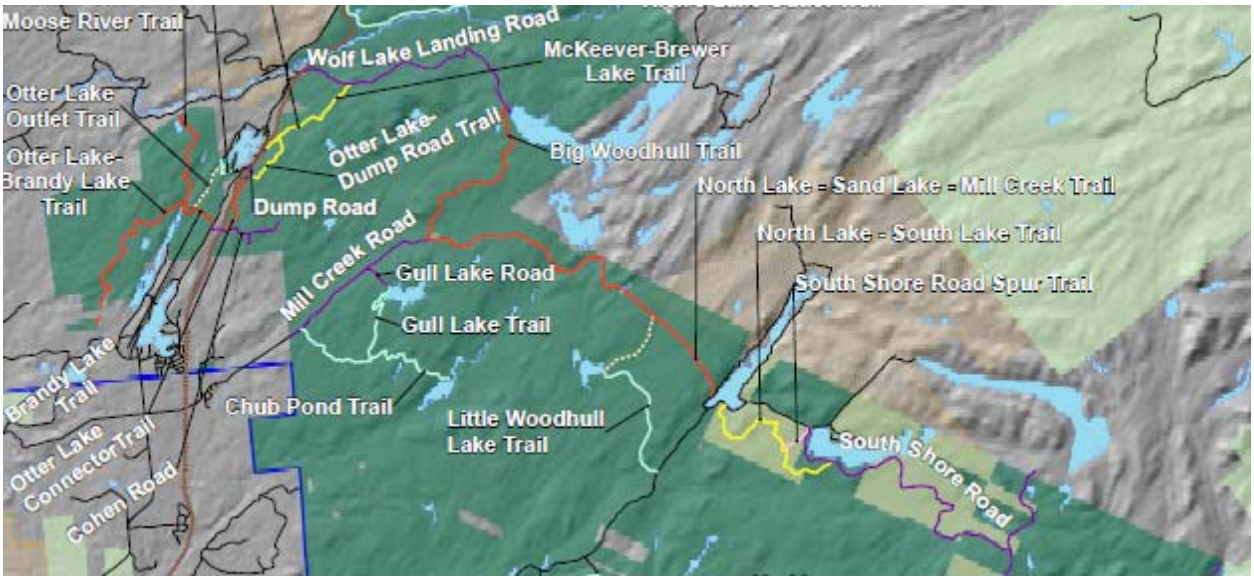

Figure 6. Yellow Trails – Proposed New Class II Trails

Otter Lake to McKeever Trails – *see Figure 7 below*

The C7 snowmobile corridor trail from McKeever through Otter Lake is located on the shoulder of State Route 28, a major motor vehicle traffic route through the southeastern Adirondacks, or the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor (AKA the Adirondack Scenic Railroad), a route of inconsistent reliability due to the amount of snow cover needed to cover the ties and rails and thus provide a safe route for snowmobilers Utilization of Rt. 28 by both snowmobiles and motor vehicles presents a major safety concern, as does use of the Railroad when snow depths are low. The routes described below meet the Guidance requirements with respect to avoiding interior locations/keeping trails near the periphery of the unit.

Section IV (Projected Use and Management Proposed), subsection A-5, of the present Black River Wild Forest UMP recommends development of “a connection between the Dump Road (Otter Lake) and the Wolf Lake Landing Road (McKeever)” that would become part of the C7 snowmobile corridor trail. Consistent with this direction, a new trail from Wolf Lake Landing Road to the existing Brewer Lake Trail will be constructed (the McKeever-Brewer Lake Trail, approximately 1.0 miles in length). Approximately 1.2 miles of the Brewer Lake Trail, from its intersection with the McKeever-Brewer Lake Trail southwest to the trailhead, will be reclassified as a Class II snowmobile trail; the remainder of this trail east to Brewer Lake will remain closed to snowmobile use. Benchmark Road, an existing Forest Preserve public motor vehicle road which leads to the Brewer Lake Trailhead from Rt. 28 and the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor (and past the trailhead to seasonal camps) will be opened for snowmobile use (a

“Snowmobile Trail on Forest Preserve Roads” per the Guidance) in order to provide snowmobilers with an access point to this proposed trail system as well as the services available in the community of Otter Lake.

Around 0.3 mile east of the Brewer Lake trailhead a second new Class II trail (the Otter Lake-Dump Road Trail) will be constructed that will diverge from the Brewer Lake Trail heading roughly southwest to Dump Road (also known as Overlook or Airport Road). The end of this road intersects with the Otter Lake Connector Trail which heads south to Cohen Road and the Brandy Lake snowmobile trail system (see attached map). These two proposed sections of trail along with the reclassification of a section of the Brewer Lake Trail were developed with input from Adirondack Park Agency staff.

No Action Alternative – Leaving the existing snowmobile trail route on the shoulder of State Route 28 or on the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor leaves a frequently unsafe situation in place, and provides a more unreliable route for snowmobilers. Creating these new segments of community connector trail will eliminate 2.5 miles of snowmobile traffic along the side of the highway or on the Railroad, reduce the potential for snowmobile-motor vehicle accidents, and provide a safer alternative to the Railroad when snow depths are low.

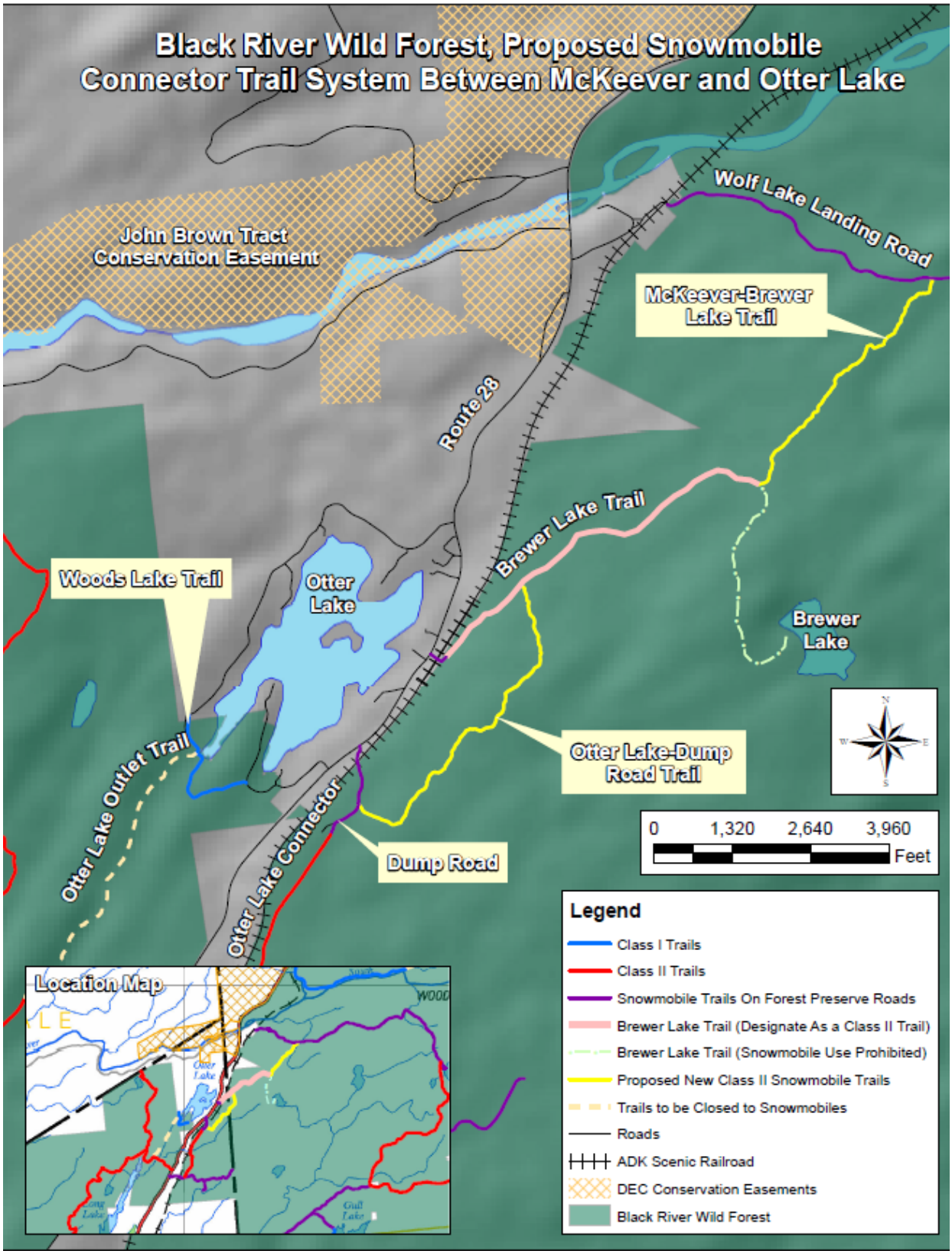

Figure 7. McKeever and Otter Lake Connector Trail

North Lake-South Lake Trail – *see Figure 8 below*

The current C-4H snowmobile trail follows the South Lake Road, from the vicinity of North Lake, for approximately 2 miles and then continues down the South Shore Road around South Lake. South Lake Road, an open town road that is plowed during the winter time, provides access to private properties at South Lake and to the Adirondack League Club property beyond South Lake. There is also logging vehicle traffic along this road when timber harvesting is occurring on either the Adirondack League Club or the neighboring North Lake Conservation Easement property. South Shore Road is a Forest Preserve road that used to be open for public motor vehicle use for a limited distance and for snowmobile use all the way southeast to the Herkimer Landing Road. However, after the plan was completed it was determined that the private in-holders on the south shore of South Lake have a right of way to their property on this road, thus creating a conflict with its use as a designated snowmobile trail. Following this determination, the landowner made road improvements, which DEC did not participate in due to lack of funds, to access their property. In addition, the owner decided to plow the road in the winter. These events created a hazardous situation where motor vehicles and snowmobiles were using the same narrow plowed route. Since DEC did not participate in the road improvements and could not help maintain the road due to very limited budgets, a decision was made to gate the road until such time DEC acquired the funds to help maintain it, and to keep it gated in the winter to prevent motor vehicle-snowmobile conflicts. Establishing the North Lake-South Lake Trail, as identified in the BRWF UMP, would resolve much of the conflict at that location.

The North Lake-South Lake Trail would move the existing C-4H trail off of South Lake Road and part of South Shore Road and re-route it through the Pratt-Northam Memorial Park and other adjacent Forest Preserve lands. The trail would leave South Lake Road at an existing unnamed forest road, east of the North Lake Road and South Lake Road intersection, that leads south to an abandoned gravel pit, continue for 4.2 miles east through the above mentioned forest lands and then connect to South Shore Road east of the private in-holdings. This proposed route is listed in the existing and approved Black River Wild Forest UMP, under section H-7 of the “Sub-Plans for Pratt-Northam Memorial Park and Bank Lot.” The proposed location of this trail was developed with input and advice from Adirondack Park Agency staff.

Layout of the trail generally sought to follow old skid trails, haul roads and areas with open understory through the Pratt-Northam Memorial Park and adjoining Forest Preserve lands; however some trees will have to be cut during the construction of this trail. An exact count is currently unknown but will be enumerated during the work planning process. Approximately seven snowmobile bridges are expected to be constructed along this route in addition to erosion control measures (e.g., water bars on

old skid trails and steep sections) where appropriate. The Adirondack Park Snowmobile Trail Project Work Plan: Work Plan Development and Implementation guidance document from the NYS-DEC Division of Lands & Forests will be adhered to in this project.

No Action Alternative – The “no action” alternative, in this case, would leave the present C-4H snowmobile corridor trail in its present location on South Lake Road and South Shore Road. Since both roads are used by motor vehicle traffic, this increases the risk for snowmobile-motor vehicle conflicts. The present trail location on South Shore Road has also led to illegal trespassing by snowmobilers onto the private in-holder’s property. The gating of the South Shore Road near its intersection with the South Lake Road has reduced public access to South Lake, and created a break in the snowmobile route from Nobleboro to South Lake, which is part of one of the community connector routes proposed for BRWF. Re-routing of the trail to the proposed North Lake-South Lake Trail as described above would alleviate these issues.

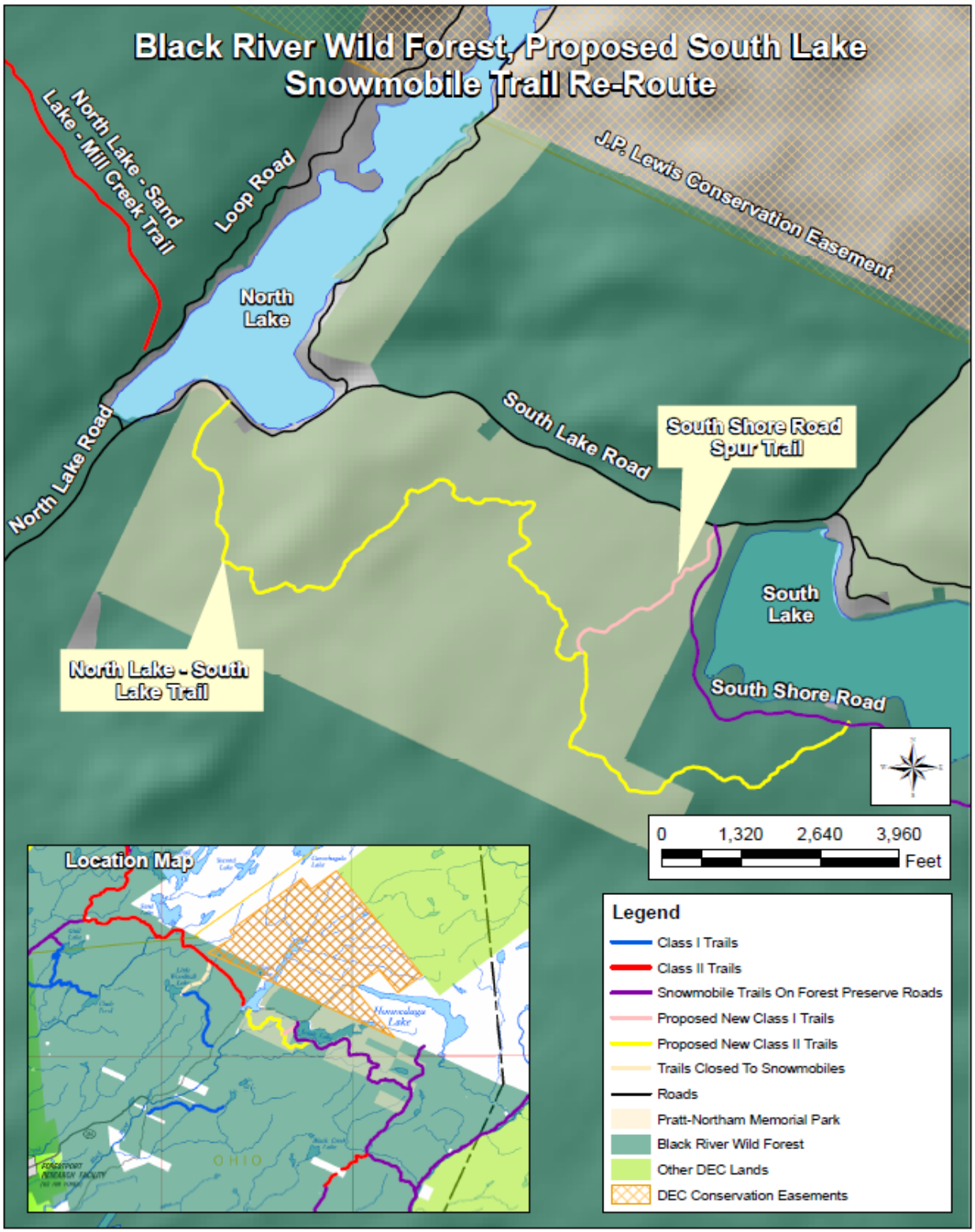

Figure 8. North Lake - South Lake Trail

c. Classify 25.8 miles of existing snowmobile trails as “Class I” snowmobile trails (see figure 9 below).

Table 5. Existing Snowmobile Trails to be Classified as Class I

Trail Name	Miles
Chub Pond Trail	3.7
Gull Lake Trail	2.0
Little Woodhull Lake Trail (Southern Part)	2.7
Mad Tom Lake Trail (SW Part)	0.8
Mad Tom Lake Trail Spur	0.1
Nick's Lake - Nelson Lake Trail	13.1
Twin Lakes Trail	2.9
Woods Lake Trail	0.5
Total	25.8

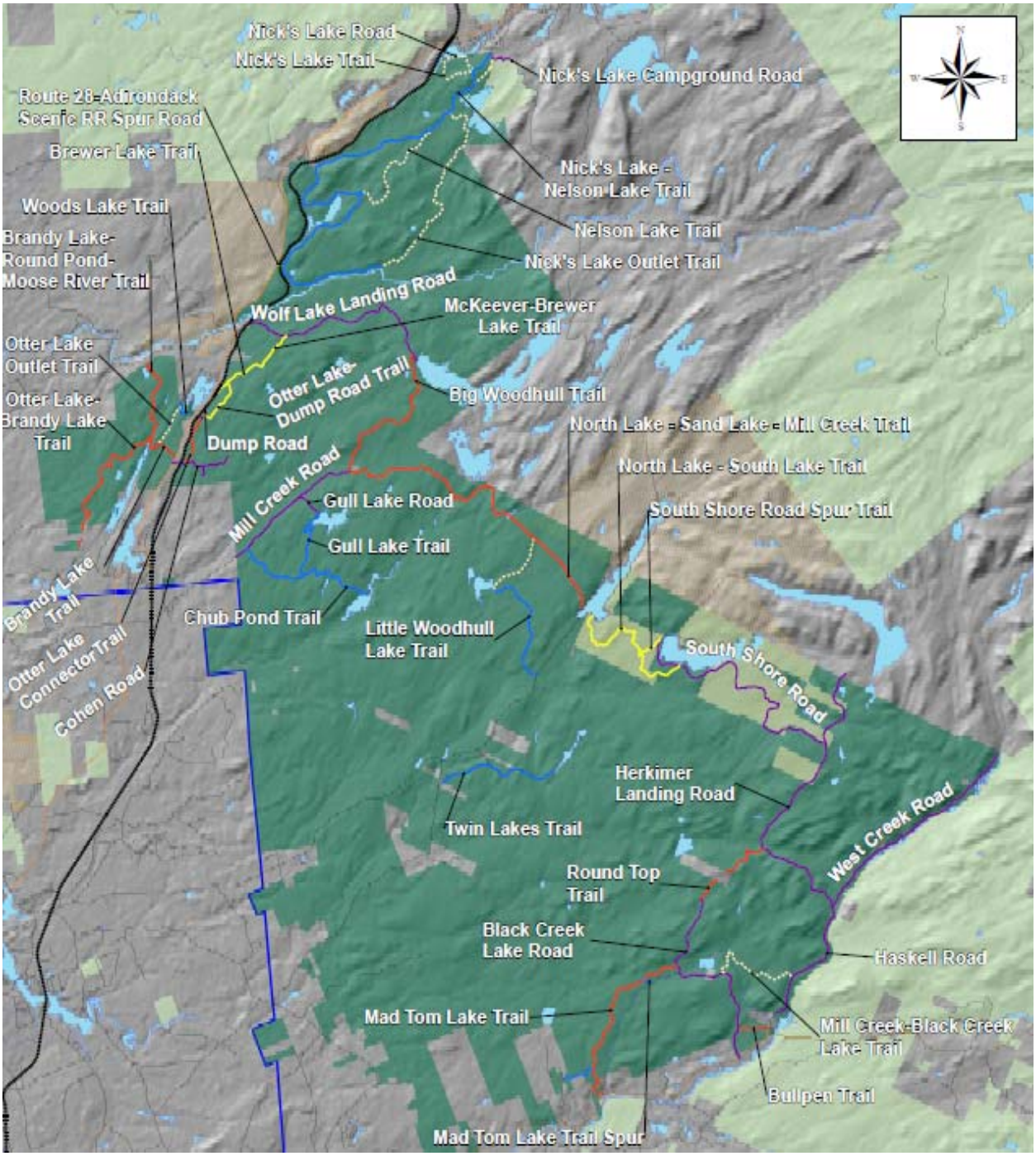

Figure 9. Blue Trails - Existing Trails to be classified as Class I

d. Construct (if necessary) & classify 0.7 miles of new Class I snowmobile trails (see Figure 8 above).

Table 6. New Snowmobile Trails Classified as Class I

Name	Miles
South Shore Road Spur Trail	0.7
Total	0.7

South Shore Road Spur Trail

Many snowmobilers park and unload their sleds at the public fishing access and campsites at South Lake, head west to North Lake along the South Lake Road or travel a short distance west on South Lake Road and attempt to access the present C-4H snowmobile trail on South Shore Road. As noted above, the locked gate near the intersection of South Lake and South Shore Road prevents access for snowmobilers that want to head south towards Nobleboro or north to McKeever. This barrier directs many to travel across the ice on South Lake and through the adjacent forest in order to access the snowmobile trail system if they do not turn around altogether.

To provide access from South Lake to the snowmobile trail system, a spur trail is proposed from the beginning of South Shore Road (just west of the locked gate) generally heading southwest following old skid trails in the Pratt-Northam Memorial Park to link up with the North Lake - South Lake Trail and bypass the first mile of South Shore Road (along with the private in-holdings) altogether. This new Class I trail will be around 0.7 miles long; it is expected that this route will not require any bridge construction and no trees over three inches in diameter at breast height (4.5 feet above the ground on the uphill side of the tree) will have to be cut. Input from Adirondack Park Agency staff will be sought before proceeding with development of this trail.

To restore public vehicular access to this area, South Shore Road will be rehabilitated as far as Parcel II of the Pratt-Northam Memorial Park and a 15 car parking lot will be constructed there per the recommendations given in the current Black River Wild Forest UMP. Following the completion of this project, the gate at the beginning of this Forest Preserve road will be closed only from the beginning of snowmobile season (December 15th) through the end of “mud season” (generally mid-March to mid-late May) as well as during other times of the year when road conditions or other administrative needs dictate. This approach, along with the construction of the North Lake-South Lake and South Shore Road Spur Trails, improves public access to the area while helping to prevent conflicts between snowmobilers and the private in-holders on South Shore Road.

No Action Alternative- The locked gate at the beginning of South Shore Road prevents snowmobilers, including those wishing to park and unload their sleds at South Lake, from accessing this portion of the current C-4H snowmobile corridor trail, which has been identified as an important community connector route in this amendment. It also prevents public motor vehicle access on this road which had been available in the past. Just unlocking the gate to provide this snowmobile access is not an acceptable option due to the danger of motor vehicles and snowmobiles trying to share a narrow plowed road.

e. Classify an existing publicly used gravel road, the Route 28 RR Spur, mistakenly not identified in the original BRWF UMP, as a public motor vehicle road, and designate it as a snowmobile route/community connector.

New York State Route 28 to Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Spur – *see Figure 10 below*

The present OPRHP "C-7" corridor trail connects the hamlet of Old Forge to the McKeever area and points south using the shoulders of public roads including New York State Route 28, the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, and the John Brown Tract and Flat Rock Mountain conservation easement lands. In the vicinity of McKeever, the trail crosses over the Moose River by utilizing the existing NY State Route 28 Bridge, a major motor vehicle travel corridor. This long, narrow bridge is unsuitable for accommodating both snowmobile traffic and motor vehicle traffic. This amendment proposes identifying an existing roadway on Forest Preserve lands which was not listed in the Black River Wild Forest UMP as a legitimate Forest Preserve road. It extends from State Route 28 down to an unused gravel pit that is adjacent to the Adirondack Scenic Railroad, a distance of approximately 400 feet. The C-7 corridor trail would then be moved off of a small section of conservation easement lands and placed on the above referenced roadway so that snowmobile traffic is able to access the Railroad bed, identified as an important snowmobile corridor in Section VII-B of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Management Plan, and use the existing railroad bridge that crosses the Moose River. Through correctly identifying and designating this Forest Preserve road as such and utilizing the railroad corridor and bridge across the Moose River, motor vehicle and snowmobile conflicts on the State Route 28 Bridge would be eliminated.

No Action Alternative – The "no action" alternative would leave the present C-7 snowmobile corridor trail in its present location on the State Route 28 Bridge across the Moose River. This bridge and the railroad bridge are the only two across this watercourse within ten miles of this area. Leaving the C-7 corridor trail in its present

location dramatically increases the risk of a motor vehicle-snowmobile collision due to its length and narrow width. Considering the minimal impact to the Forest Preserve (an existing road approximately 400 feet long), versus the high risk to human safety, this alternative will not be considered. This roadway has been, and is presently used as, a road, so it should be correctly identified as such.

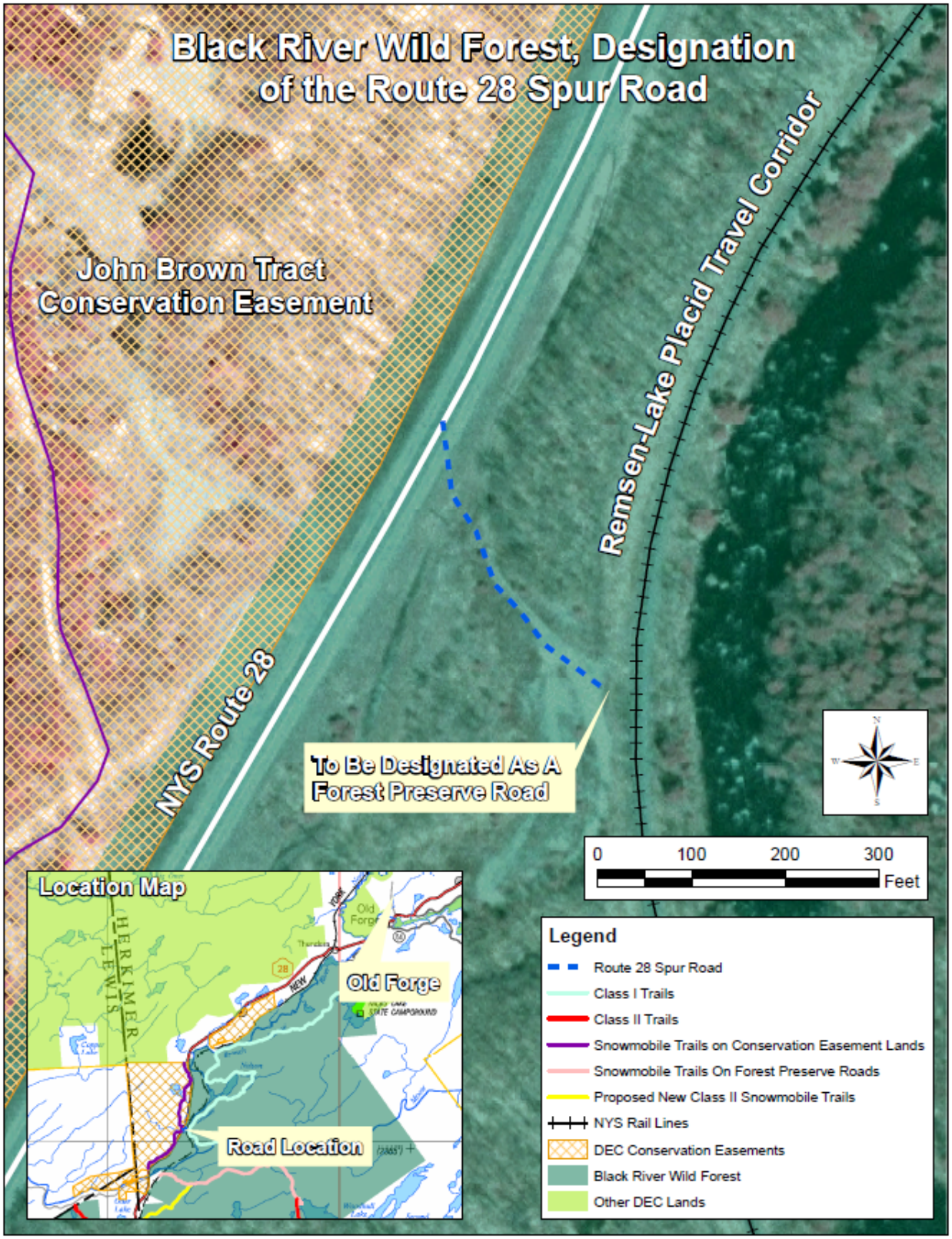

Figure 10. Route 28 Spur

f. Approximately 15.7 miles of present snowmobile trails will be reclassified and maintained as Class I hiking trails (i.e. trunk trails – see Figure 11 below). These trails have seen little snowmobile use in over ten years and do not conform to the Guidance since they penetrate into the forest interior or are redundant.

Table 6. Snowmobile Trails Reclassified as Hiking Trails

Name	Miles
Little Woodhull Lake Trail (Northern Part)	1.6
Mill Creek-Black Creek Lake Trail	2.5
Nelson Lake Trail	2.8
Nick's Lake Outlet Trail	5.1
Nick's Lake Road*	0.8
Nick's Lake Trail	1.9
Otter Lake Outlet Trail	1.0
Total	15.7

*This administrative road is mistakenly classified as a “trail” in the BRWF UMP and will be closed to snowmobile use.

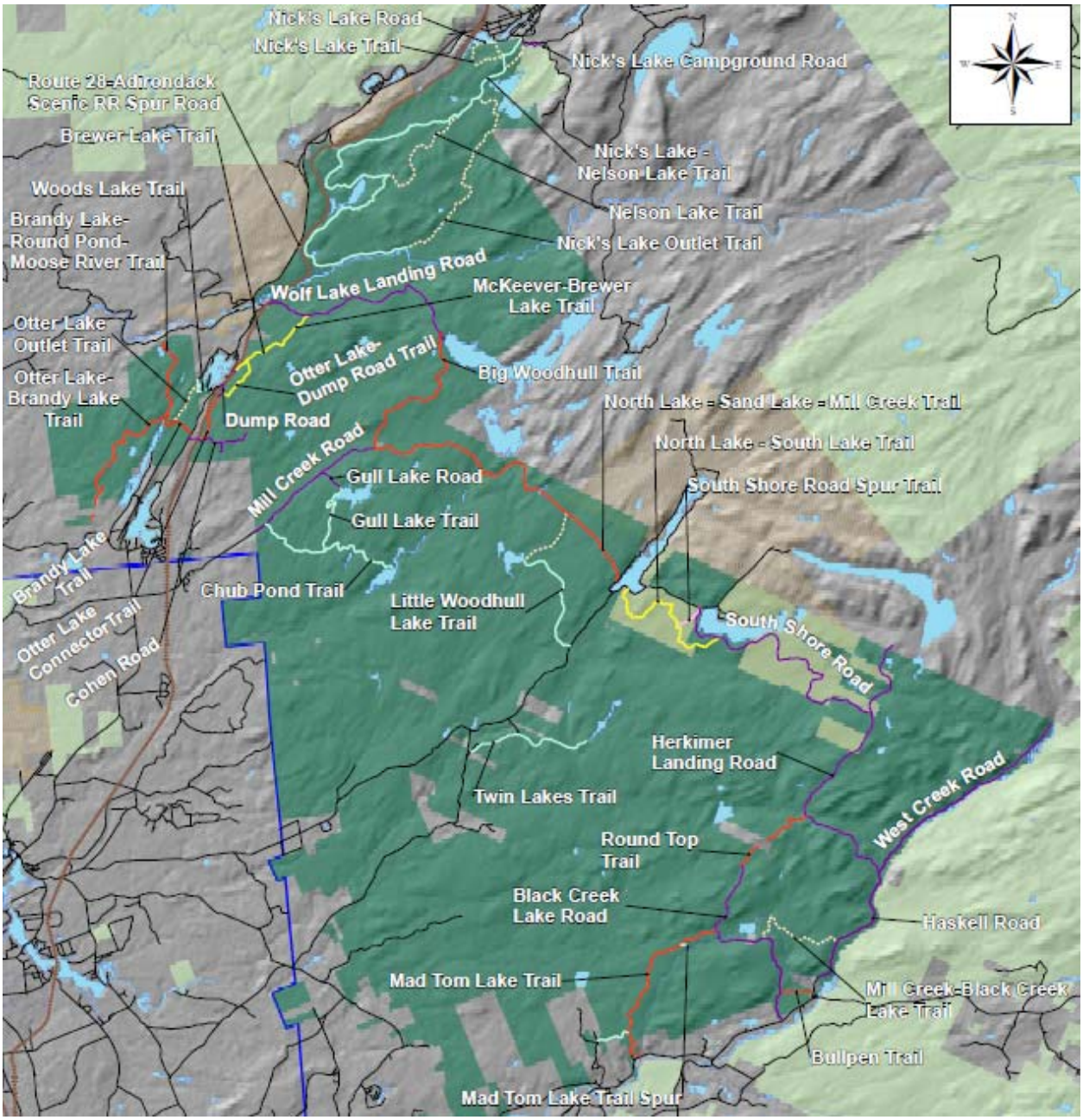

Figure 11. Dashed Lines - Snowmobile Trails to be Reclassified as Class I Hiking Trails

3. Discussion of "No Material Increase"

In March of 2008 the Adirondack Park Agency adopted a resolution which found that existing DEC policy, which places a cap on the total snowmobile trail mileage on all wild forest units at 848.88 miles, is consistent with the APSLMP. The resolution also outlined the format in which snowmobile trail mileage should be presented in future UMPs and UMP amendments. This table is presented below.

BRWF Unit Management Plan Amendment

Base Snowmobile Trail Mileage (Pre-UMP Amendment): 67.5 (*The 1996 BRWF UMP lists 79.8 miles; an erroneous figure that includes a few roads open to snowmobiling*)

Proposed Closure Mileage: 15.7

Proposed New Trail Mileage: 8.3

Proposed Trail Mileage (Post-UMP Amendment): 60.1

Park-wide Snowmobile Trail Mileage

1972 Mileage	**Estimated Existing Mileage in All Wild Forest Units**	**Proposed Net Gain/(Loss) of Mileage in BRWF**	**New Total Estimated Mileage in All Wild Forest Units**	**Total Allowable Wild Forest Mileage *** ***Mileage beyond which would be considered a "material increase"**
740	762.14	(7.4)	Fill in later	848.88

4. North Lake Parking Area

A five car parking lot at the southern end of North Lake (just north of the intersection of Loop Road and North Lake Road, across from the kiosk on the other side of Loop Road) will be constructed to provide day use parking (see Figure 12 below). The current concentration of existing parking areas on adjacent North Lake Conservation Easement lands at the northern end of the lake leaves limited parking options for those wishing to recreate in the Forest Preserve at the opposite end. Often, designated campsites are used only for day use parking which conflicts with the high demand for lakeside camping. Installing this parking lot will help address this problem.

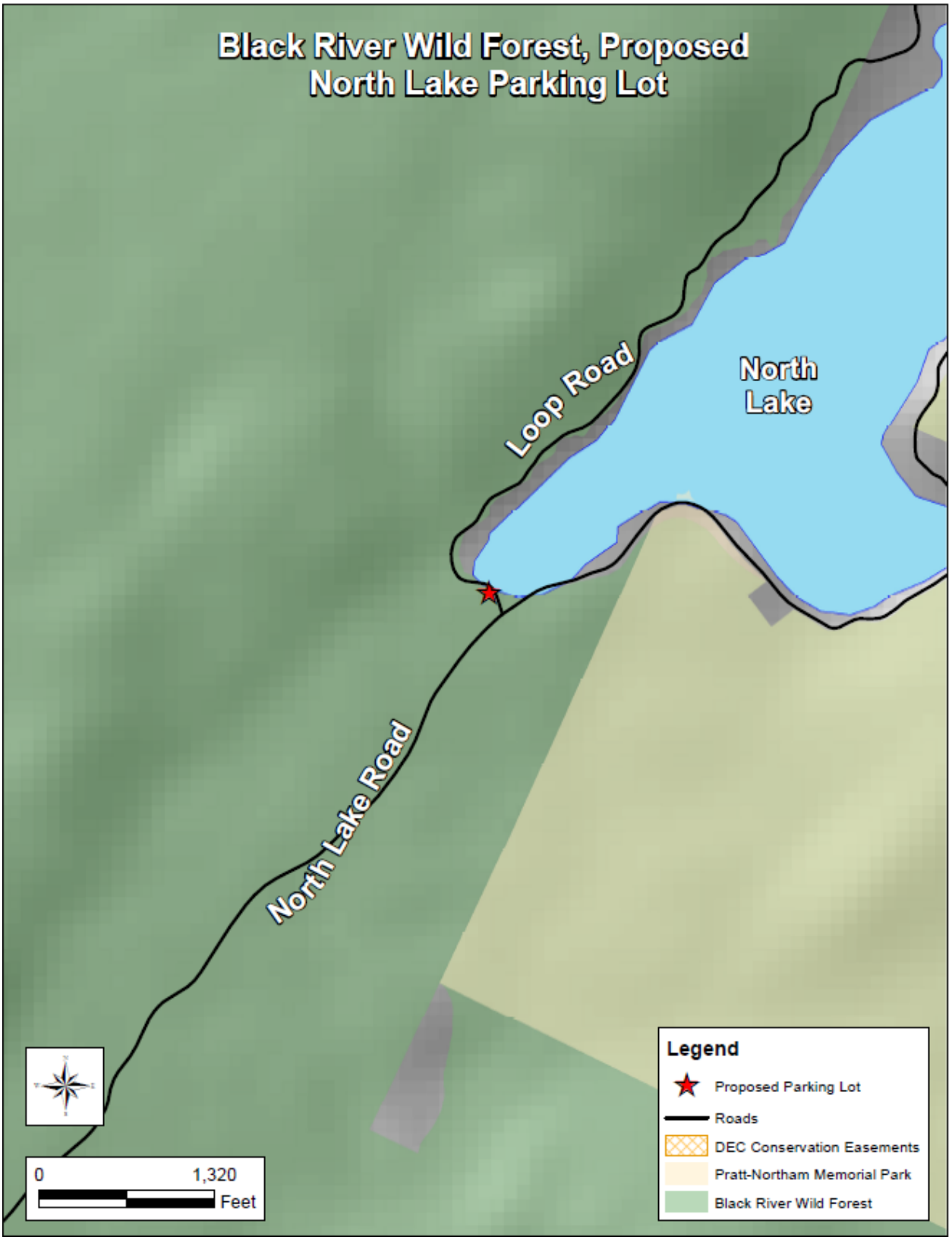

Figure 12. Proposed North Lake Parking Lot

5. North Country Scenic Trail

The North Country Scenic Trail Revised Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (June 2014) identifies a proposed route of the North Country Scenic Trail through the Black River Wild Forest and the adjacent North Lake Conservation Easement Lands (see Figure 13 below). Existing trails, specifically portions of the Stone Dam, Little Woodhull Lake, Grindstone Creek and North Branch Trails, will be used. However, these trails do not link up directly with each other so this proposal also identifies areas (each called a “Corridor of Opportunity”) where new trails would have to be constructed to connect this existing network. For the North Country Scenic Trail to traverse these sections, approximately 4.1 miles of new Class I foot trail (trunk or primary trails) will be constructed on the Black River Wild Forest with around 0.9 miles of new trail on the North Lake Conservation Easement Lands. These new sections of trail will be developed with input from the Adirondack Park Agency.

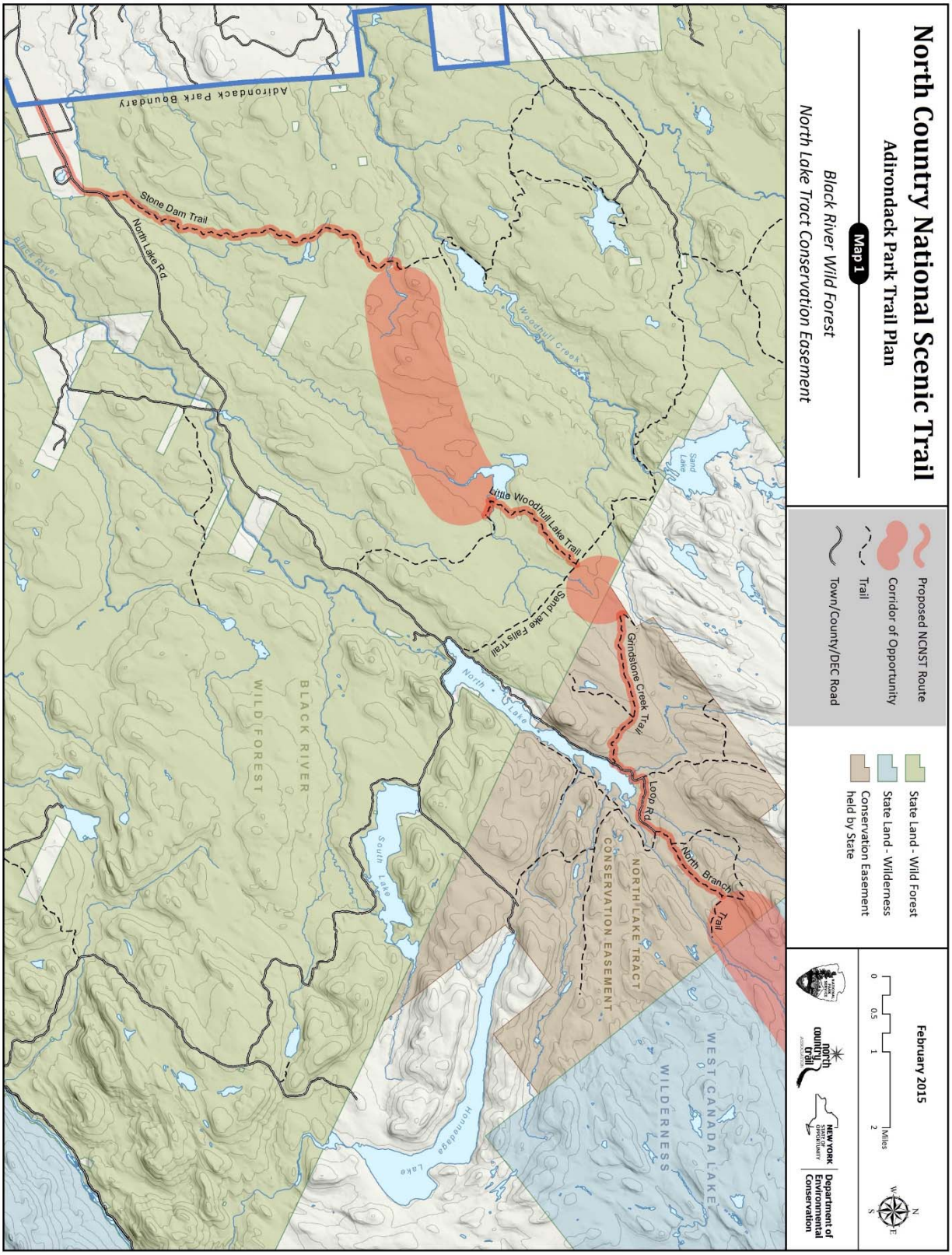

Figure 13. Proposed Route of the North Country Scenic Trail

6. Otter Lake Outlet Trail Ski Loop

As part of this UMP Amendment, the Otter Lake Outlet Trail is being closed to further snowmobile use. In order to expand non-motorized recreational opportunities in the immediate area, the concept of constructing a hiking and cross country ski loop trail off of this trail will be explored with the input of the Adirondack Park Agency. A five car parking lot will also be constructed in conjunction with this project in order to prevent conflicts with users parking in the adjacent snow plow turn-around area at the end of Lake View Drive (hamlet of Otter Lake).