NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

Community Connector Trail Plan

for the Towns of

Newcomb, Minerva, and North Hudson – Essex County

Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement

River Area Management Plan

for the

Boreas River

Unit Management Plan Amendments

to the

2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan
1995 Lake Harris Public Campground Unit Management Plan
2000 Camp Santanoni Historic Area Unit Management Plan

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

MARC S. GERSTMAN
Acting Commissioner

Final SEIS accepted by Lead Agency on: **June 17, 2015**.

Lead Agency:
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-4254

For Further Information Contact:
Josh Clague, Natural Resources Planner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-4254
adirondackpark@dec.ny.gov

July 2015

This page intentionally left blank

OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway, 14th Floor, Albany, New York 12233-1010
P: (518) 402-8545 | F: (518) 402-8541
www.dec.ny.gov

MEMORANDUM

JUL 29 2015

TO: The Record

FROM: Marc S. Gerstman

SUBJECT: Community Connector Trail Plan

The Community Connector Trail Plan for the Towns of Newcomb, Minerva, and North Hudson (Plan) has been completed. The Plan serves as an amendment to Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the Camp Santanoni Historic Area, and the Lake Harris Public Campground, and the Adirondack Park Agency has found it to be in conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

The Plan is consistent with Environmental Conservation Law and Department Rules, Regulations and Policies and is hereby approved and adopted.

This page intentionally left blank

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Adirondack Park Agency

LEILANI CRAFTS ULRICH
Chairwoman

TERRY MARTINO
Executive Director

RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY
THE ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY
WITH RESPECT TO AMENDMENTS TO THE 2005 VANDERWHACKER MOUNTAIN WILD FOREST UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN, 1995 LAKE HARRIS PUBLIC CAMPGROUND UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN, 2000 CAMP SANTANONI HISTORIC AREA UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN (COMMUNITY CONNECTOR TRAIL PLAN)

July 9, 2015

WHEREAS, Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop, in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency, individual management plans for units of land classified in the Master Plan for Management of State Lands and requires such management plans to conform to the general guidelines and criteria of the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, in addition to such guidelines and criteria, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan prescribes the contents of unit management plans and provides that the Adirondack Park Agency will determine whether a proposed individual unit management plan complies with such general guidelines and criteria; and

WHEREAS, in 2005 the Department of Environmental Conservation (the Department) adopted the first unit management plan for the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, located in Essex County, and has now prepared an amendment to the plan dated May, 2015; and

WHEREAS, in 1995 the Department adopted a unit management plan for the Lake Harris Campground, located in Essex County; and

WHEREAS, in 2000 the Department adopted a unit management plan for the Camp Santanoni Historic Area, located in Essex County; and

WHEREAS, the Department has prepared an amendment to these plans dated May, 2015 referred to as “Community Connector Trail Plan”, which plan also contains a River Area Management Plan for the Boreas River; and

WHEREAS, the Community Connector Plan includes a proposed management action to establish a snowmobile and multi-use recreational trail system between the towns of Minerva, Newcomb and North Hudson across Forest Preserve and private lands; and

WHEREAS, the Department has filed a Notice of Positive Declaration and Acceptance of a Draft Environmental Impact Statement on June 18, 2014 and thereafter, filed a notice of Acceptance of a Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement on June 17, 2015 in the Environmental Notice Bulletin; and

WHEREAS, the Department is the lead agency, and the Adirondack Park Agency is an involved agency whose staff have been consulted in the preparation of the proposed plan amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Agency is requested to determine whether the Final Amendments to the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan, the 1995 Lake Harris Public Campground Unit Management Plan, the 2000 Camp Santanoni Historic Area Unit Management Plan with an associated River Management Plan for the Boreas River (Community Connector Trail Plan) dated, May, 2015, as amended by the transfer of a potential snowmobile trail to a different unit management plan, are consistent with the guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Community Connector Trail Plan does not put forward a preferred alternative for Section 3, from the junction of Sections 1 and 2 near the Roosevelt Truck Trail to the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement; Section 3 will be the subject of a future amendment to the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the River Management Plan proposes that the crossing of the Boreas River at Route 28N be adjacent or attached to the highway bridge; and

WHEREAS, the Adirondack Park Agency has reviewed the proposed Community Connector Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Amendment recognizes the need to protect the natural resources, improve public use and enjoyment of the area, avoid user conflicts and prevent overuse according to the guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Amendments propose to provide a snowmobile and multi-use trail recreational trail system in the Towns of Minerva, Newcomb and North Hudson, Essex County;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, the Adirondack Park Agency finds the Final Amendments to the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan, the 1995 Lake Harris Public Campground Unit Management Plan, the 2000 Camp Santanoni Historic Area Unit Management Plan with an associated River Management Plan for the Boreas River (Community Connector Trail Plan) dated, May, 2015 , conform with the general guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Adirondack Park Agency authorizes its Executive Director to advise the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation of the Agency's determination in this matter.

Resolution adopted on this date, July 9, 2015.

AYES: Chairwoman Lani Ulrich, Richard Booth, Sherman Craig, Karen Feldman, Arthur Lussi, William Thomas, Dan Wilt, Brad Austin (DED), Deidre Scozzafava (DOS), Robert Stegemann (DEC)

NAYS: NONE

ABSTENTIONS: NONE

ABSENT: NONE

This page intentionally left blank

Executive Summary

The Community Connector Trail Plan Unit Management Plan and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) provides a discussion of plans for multi-use recreational trails and campsites to be established on DEC administered Forest Preserve lands, in order to connect the communities of North Hudson, Newcomb, and Minerva and the support facilities within these communities. This document also serves to amend the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan, the 1995 Lake Harris Public Campground Unit Management Plan and the 2000 Camp Santanoni Historic Area Unit Management Plan. Alternatives to the multi-use recreational trail design as well as the potential environmental impacts and mitigation measures proposed to mitigate such impacts are provided. The Draft Community Connector Trail Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement was issued in June 2014. Responses are provided herein to comments made by the public on the Draft Trail Plan during the public comment period held from June 18, 2014 to July 25, 2014.

The proposed trails on DEC administered lands are located in the Forest Preserve units of Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the Camp Santanoni Historic Area and the Lake Harris Public Campground (Intensive Use Area), as well as the Hudson River Hyslop Conservation Easement and the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement. Consideration is also given to an alternative trail layout that would utilize the Boreas Ponds tract, a 22,000 acre parcel of private land which the State of New York is under contract to purchase and expected to acquire in the next few years. The Boreas Tract is located in the Town of North Hudson and borders the High Peaks and Dix Mountain Wilderness Areas along the northern boundary and borders Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest to the south.

The Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (VMWF) is located in the central Adirondack Park region within the towns of Minerva, Newcomb, Schroon Lake, North Hudson (Essex County), Johnsburg, Chester (Warren County), and Indian Lake (Hamilton County). The unit is located within the Hudson River watershed and the lesser watersheds of the Boreas and Schroon rivers. The unit is made up of almost 2 dozen noncontiguous parcels, covering 91,854 acres in area and has 204 miles of boundary line. The bulk of the unit is made up of a single parcel of approximately sixty thousand acres, located mainly within the town of Minerva. The remainder of the parcels range in size from a hundred acres to more than six thousand acres. The planning area is bounded on the north by the High Peaks Wilderness Area (HPWA), on the east by Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area (HNWA) and Schroon Lake, on the south by State Route 8 and the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area (SPWA), and on the west by the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area (HGPA) and the westerly Newcomb town line.

Within the planning area are privately-owned lands most of which are classified as “Resource Management” and “Rural Use” by the Adirondack Park Agency. There are several private “rod and gun” clubs with small to moderate land holdings, including the Northwoods Club, Moose Pond Club, and Beaver Meadow Club. In addition, there are two children’s summer camps on the shores of Balfour Lake, which use VMWF for education and recreation.

Camp Santanoni Historic Area consists of 32.2 acres of land formerly classified as Wild Forest which were reclassified in 2000 to Historic Area by the Adirondack Park Agency pursuant to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. The site is listed in the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Camp Santanoni is one of the oldest and largest of the early great camps and was acquired by the state

in 1972. The Camp contains three distinct groups of buildings: the Gate Lodge Complex, the Farm Complex and the Great Camp Complex, as well as the 4.7 mile carriage road now referred to as the Newcomb Lake Road. The Gate Lodge Complex is located north of NY Route 28N and contains a stone gate lodge, boat house and frame guide house remain. The Farm Complex is located approximately one mile from the state highway and consists of the ruins of a large dairy and horse barn, a stone dairy building and several houses. The Great Camp is located on Newcomb Lake and includes the 15,000 square foot main lodge, stone Artists Studio, boat house and several smaller structures. Other related remains scattered about the original estate include a bath house on Newcomb Lake, a maple sugaring complex, farm sheds, as well as the ruins of a hunting camp and boat house on Moose Pond.

Lake Harris Campground is located on the northern shore of 275 acre Lake Harris. There are 89 campsites (57 shoreline campsites and 32 off of the water), bathhouse, boat launch, canoe and boat rentals and picnic area on the site. Camping equipment from tents to 40 foot RVs can be accommodated. Lake Harris Campground offers a variety of recreational opportunities including canoeing and boating, fishing, hiking and bicycling.

This document also constitutes a River Area Management Plan as the project site contains the Boreas River, a watercourse classified under the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act (WSRRS Act.) The construction of multi-use recreational trails and support facilities within a designated river area requires the Department to issue permits for these activities as appropriate.

A permit will be issued if the proposed land use is consistent with the purposes of the WSRRS Act regulations, the river resources are protected, the proposed activity will not have an undue adverse environmental impact, and no reasonable alternative exists for modifying or locating the proposed activity outside of the designated river area, among others. One of the purposes of the WSRRS Act is to grant to the Department the authority to adopt regulations in order to place "primary emphasis on protecting ecological, recreational, aesthetic, botanical, scenic, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, cultural, archeological and scientific features of the area." (See Environmental Conservation Law Section 15-2709.1) The Department staff has proposed the location of the facilities in the river corridor area that minimizes the potential for adverse environmental impacts by locating the trails within existing travel corridors, limiting the number of trees cut, avoiding wetlands and minimizing stream crossings.

This Community Connector Trail Plan UMP/FSEIS has been prepared in order for the Department to provide for the management of appropriate public access within these lands. The management actions outlined are specific to guiding public access and use which otherwise would be established in an ad hoc fashion by the public's desire to access these areas for recreation. These management actions will serve to protect the area's natural resources and set the stage for how these areas will be accessed and used into the future. The management actions will serve to protect the sensitive resources by a series of protective measures and administrative and management practices. These actions include establishing multi-use trails, parking, campsites and connection points to community trail networks and support facilities such as parking, restaurants, hotels, stables, campgrounds and retail establishments.

Contents

I. Introduction 1
A. Purpose and Need for the Project 1
B. State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) 2
II. Planning Area Overview 5
III. Guiding Documents 7
A. Article XIV of the New York State Constitution 7
C. Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan ("SLMP") 7
D. 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan ("UMP") and Final Environmental Impact Statement ("FEIS") 7
E. Adirondack Park Agency Resolution on SLMP Wild Forest Basic Guideline #4 ("No Material Increase") 7
F. 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final GEIS ("Snowmobile Plan") 8
G. 2009 Management Guidance - Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park ("Management Guidance") 8
IV. Trail Alternatives 11
No Action Alternative 11
Section 1: Camp Santanoni to Roosevelt Truck Trail 11
Section 2: Roosevelt Truck Trail to Minerva 14
Section 3: Roosevelt Truck Trail to the Intersection of the Blue Ridge and Gulf Brook Roads 18
Section 4: The Intersection of the Blue Ridge and Gulf Brook Roads to North Hudson 20
V. Classification of Existing Trails 23
VI. Trail Closures 25
VII. No Material Increase 27
VIII. Primitive Tent Site Configuration 29
IX. Existing Public Use 31
X. Schedule of Implementation 37
Appendix 1 – Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures 39
Appendix 2 – Palmer Pond Bridge Alternatives 65
Appendix 3 – Response to Public Comment 67
Appendix 4 – Inventory of Existing Facilities near the Preferred Alternative Trail System 73
Appendix 5 – Maps and Photos 75

This page intentionally left blank

Acknowledgments

Plan Contributors:

Josh Clague	Natural Resources Planner, DEC Division of Lands and Forests
Robert Ripp	Forester, DEC Division of Lands and Forests – Region 5
Tad Norton	Forester, DEC Division of Lands and Forests – Formerly Region 5
Steve Guglielmi	Forester, DEC Division of Lands and Forests – Region 5
Ben Thomas	Supervising Forester, DEC Division of Lands and Forests – Region 5
Kris Alberga	Regional Forester, DEC Division of Lands and Forests – Region 5
Tom Martin	Regional Supervisor of Natural Resources, DEC – Region 5
Holly Kneeshaw	Special Assistant to the Commissioner, DEC
Max Wolckenhauer	Natural Resources Planner, DEC Division of Lands and Forests
Kathy Regan	Deputy Director of Planning, Adirondack Park Agency
Walt Linck	Natural Resources Planner, Adirondack Park Agency

This page intentionally left blank

I. Introduction

A. Purpose and Need for the Project

The primary purpose of this Community Connector Trail Plan (Plan) and Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) is to analyze alternatives and select preferred locations for proposed community connector multiple-use trails between the towns of Newcomb, Minerva, and North Hudson.

An alternatives analysis of potential snowmobile trail connections between the towns of Newcomb and Minerva was completed in the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan ("UMP"), but no preferred alternative was selected at that time. The following paragraphs from Appendix I (page 170) of the 2005 UMP are as true today as when they were written, and summarize the primary need being addressed in this Trail Plan:

"Despite its position in the center of the Adirondacks, the Town of Newcomb is relatively isolated from the regional snowmobile trail system. Snowmobile access to communities in Essex and Warren Counties to the south and east is difficult and extremely roundabout. The town's only connection to the larger regional system is via a single trail leading roughly 15 miles west across private lands to the hamlet of Long Lake, from where snowmobilers can access the Hamilton County system.

"From the Town of Minerva, approximately 16 miles southeast of Newcomb, it is equally difficult to access the larger snowmobile trail system. Local snowmobile clubs have established routes to the southeast across private land to connect Minerva to Pottersville in northern Warren County. Once in Pottersville, snowmobilers can access the Warren County trail system to the south. However, snowmobile access from Minerva to communities to the north and west in Essex and Hamilton Counties is extremely circuitous. For example, snowmobile access to Newcomb, less than 20 miles away, entails a roughly 175-mile trip by way of Pottersville, Chestertown, Warrensburg, Thurman, Wells, Speculator, Indian Lake (via the lake itself), Inlet, Raquette Lake and eventually to Long Lake and Newcomb.

"Snowmobile clubs in the Towns of Newcomb and Minerva, as well as surrounding communities have sought to improve snowmobile access between these communities for the benefit of local residents, as well as tourists. They assert that improving and expanding recreational opportunities in the Adirondack Park, in particular through improved snowmobile trail systems facilitating access between communities, has the potential to improve the economic situation in those communities. They argue not only do opportunities for snowmobiling draw visitors during a season traditionally slow for tourism, they also draw a group apt to spend considerable amounts of money for goods and services like gas, meals, and overnight accommodations. Many local business owners echo these sentiments.

"The Department recognizes the assertion by local communities that such an improvement to the snowmobile trail system has the potential to increase economic benefits for local communities. (One need look only as far as Old Forge and Tug Hill). In addition, the establishment of any snowmobile access between Minerva and Newcomb would have to cross state land, by necessity of topography and state ownership of much of the land between the two hamlets."

While snowmobiles were the focus of the analysis in the 2005 UMP, this amendment proposes to open the trails to multiple uses, including horseback riding, mountain biking, hiking, and snowmobiling. Information from the Adirondack Park Mountain Biking Initiative states that consideration should be given to offering inn-to-inn (or hotel-to-hotel) riding possibilities. This would also apply to snowmobiling and equestrian use of the trails. Inn-to-inn or hotel-to-hotel rides are especially appealing to cyclists and others because they allow people to ride freely and lightly, point-to-point, while the innkeeper(s) arrange for transfer of baggage. These venues are popular in other areas of the country, such as in Colorado.

The proposed trails on DEC administered lands are located in the Forest Preserve units of Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the Camp Santanoni Historic Area and the Lake Harris Public Campground (Intensive Use Area), as well as the Hudson River Hyslop Conservation Easement and the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement. The Plan also considers an alternative that would utilize the Boreas Ponds tract, a parcel of private land which the State of New York is under contract to purchase and expected to acquire in the coming years.

Additionally, this Plan proposes the construction of a bridge near Palmer Pond that will serve two purposes: 1) to provide administrative motor vehicle access to the south side of the dam that impounds Palmer Pond, and 2) to provide a crossing for the Newcomb-to-North Hudson community connector trail that is also proposed in this Plan.

Finally, this plan proposes to reconfigure the designated camping in several locations within VMWF, including the addition of a lean-to near Great Camp Santanoni to protect the historic structures from accidental damage caused by inappropriate use of the complex.

This Plan is being put forth as an amendment to existing Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (2005), the Camp Santanoni Historic Area (2000), and the Lake Harris Public Campground (1995). Recreation Management Plans (RMPs) will be developed at a later time for the two conservation easement tracts before any trail construction occurs in those areas. If the future state land classification of the Boreas Ponds Tract includes any wild forest areas, a separate UMP or UMP amendment will need to be completed before snowmobile use can occur in that area.

This document also constitutes a River Area Management Plan as the project site contains the Boreas River, a watercourse classified under the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act (WSRRS Act.

DEC holds recreation rights on the two conservation easement tracts; however, this document does not authorize the use or construction of trails on other private property. Where connections are needed across private property permission will be sought from the owner.

B. State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR)

The generic potential impacts of snowmobile use and trail construction in the Adirondack Park were analyzed in the 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement. As provided on page 51 of that document, “construction of new trails anywhere in the Forest Preserve will require approval in a UMP and be subject to SEQRA.”

The 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP/Environmental Impact Statement analyzed alternatives and the potential impacts of the Newcomb to Minerva community connector trail. This Trail Plan serves as a Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement, which builds upon the 2005 UMP/FEIS and evaluates alternatives and identifies potential site-specific environmental impacts associated with the proposals outlined herein as well as for the future RMPs and UMPs/UMP amendments that will need to be developed before implementing this Trail Plan.

A discussion of potential environmental impacts and proposed mitigation measures associated with this project can be found in Appendix 1.

This page intentionally left blank

II. Planning Area Overview

The Towns of Newcomb, Minerva, and North Hudson are within the Adirondack Park and the southwestern part of Essex County. Publicly-owned Forest Preserve lands make up a significant portion of the land area in each town and serves as the setting for the trail proposals contained in this Plan. Additionally, the Plan proposes to utilize recreational trail rights held by the State on working forest conservation easements to help connect the state land parcels. Descriptions of these areas are found below.

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

In its entirety, the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest is located in the Towns of Newcomb, Minerva, North Hudson, and Schroon in Essex County, the Town of Chester and Johnsburg in Warren County, and the Town of Indian Lake in Hamilton County. The total unit area is nearly 92,000 acres spread out over 30 parcels. The trails proposed in this document only fall within Newcomb, Minerva, and North Hudson and on the largest tract (63,000 acres) in the unit. Being a wild forest, there are many roads and access points within the unit. The preferred alternative within this plan calls for the crossing of several of those roads.

Since the adoption of the 2005 UMP, the acquisition of several tracts of land near the Hudson River has led to a slight reconfiguration of the Vanderwhacker Mountain and Blue Mountain Wild Forest Areas. The result of the most recent land classification in 2013 is that Wild Forest lands west of the Hudson now fall within the Blue Mountain unit, and Wild Forest lands east of the Hudson fall within the Vanderwhacker Mountain unit.

Camp Santanoni Historic Area

The Camp Santanoni Historic Area is located in the Town of Newcomb. The primary access and only motor vehicle entrance to the property is from Route 28N. The entire historic area consists of approximately 32.2 acres in one contiguous parcel, but the proposed trail will fall only within the Gate Lodge Complex, which contains about 6.0 acres, and will cross the Newcomb Lake Road just north of the Gate Lodge Complex.

Lake Harris Public Campground

The Lake Harris Public Campground “Intensive Use Area” is located in the Town of Newcomb along the northern and eastern shores of Lake Harris. The entire intensive use area is 28 acres, and the new trail proposed in this document falls within a 7-acre undeveloped area on the west end of the campground. A section of the developed road system within the campground is also proposed for use in the overall snowmobile route.

Boreas Ponds Tract

The state is under contract to purchase the 20,400 acre Boreas Ponds Tract, which falls primarily in the Town of North Hudson and is located north of and is partially adjacent to the Blue Ridge Road. When acquired, this parcel will automatically become Forest Preserve. Classification of the land, however, will

not happen until the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) recommends and the Governor approves a classification configuration for the tract.

Hudson River Hyslop Tract Conservation Easement

This 750-acre tract has frontage on State Route 28N to the north and is adjacent to the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest to the south. The terms of the conservation easement allow the Department to construct a linear, motorized and non-motorized-use recreation corridor through the tract for the purpose of connecting Newcomb to North Hudson and Minerva.

Blue Ridge Road Tract Conservation Easement

This long, 3,400-acre tract runs parallel to and primarily south of Blue Ridge Road and north of the Hoffman Notch Wilderness. As with the Hudson River Hyslop tract, the terms of the conservation easement allow the Department to construct a linear, motorized and non-motorized-use recreation corridor through the tract for the purpose of connecting Newcomb to North Hudson.

III. Guiding Documents

A. Article XIV of the New York State Constitution

Article XIV, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution provides the foundation for the management of these lands as forever wild. This section reads, in part:

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

B. Environmental Conservation Law

The body of law that established DEC and authorizes its programs is called Environmental Conservation Law (ECL). DEC is responsible for administration and enforcement of the ECL, and Article 9 authorizes, among other things, the management of the Adirondack and Catskill forest preserves and the recreational facilities contained thereon.

C. Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan ("SLMP")

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP) provides the overall framework for developing UMPs and UMP amendments for areas within the Adirondack Park. A final UMP or UMP amendment must be found to be in conformance with the SLMP by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) prior to the DEC Commissioner's approval of that plan.

D. 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan ("UMP") and Final Environmental Impact Statement ("FEIS")

As mentioned previously, an alternatives analysis of potential snowmobile trail connections between the towns of Newcomb and Minerva was completed in the original UMP/FEIS. The UMP did not take the final step of recommending a preferred alternative, however, because at the time of its approval, there had not yet been final approval of the Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park (see below). A footnote on page 195 of the UMP stated that the UMP would be amended to reflect recommendations in the final Snowmobile Plan if appropriate.

E. Adirondack Park Agency Resolution on SLMP Wild Forest Basic Guideline #4 ("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 SLMP Wild Forest Basic Guideline #4, which states:

> Public use of motor vehicles will not be encouraged and there will not be any material increase in the mileage of roads and snowmobile trails open to motorized use by the public in wild forest areas that conformed to the master plan at the time of its original adoption in 1972.

The approval of every UMP and UMP amendment for wild forest areas is contingent upon the assurance that there will not be a material increase in the mileage of snowmobile trails in wild forest areas Park-wide. The trail mileage documentation for Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest can be found in Section VII.

F. 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final GEIS ("Snowmobile Plan")

In October 2006, then DEC Commissioner Denise Sheehan and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) Commissioner Bernadette Castro released the final Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final GEIS (Snowmobile Plan). The Plan is a supplement of the State of New York Snowmobile Trail Plan (Statewide Snowmobile Plan), adopted by OPRHP in 1989.

The Adirondack Park snowmobile trail system encompasses more than 1,800 miles of trail on both public and private land. As part of the planning and environmental review process of the Snowmobile Plan, the trail system was analyzed and a preferred alternative was developed. Included in the preferred alternative is a proposal for the establishment of a community connection trail system across the Park. The potential generic environmental impacts associated with snowmobiling in the Adirondack Park were identified in the Snowmobile Plan, including those impacts on air and water quality, wildlife, terrestrial and aquatic plant communities and soils. The economic benefits of snowmobiling and the potential for user conflicts were also discussed. The following appendices in the Snowmobile Plan contain this information: Response to Public comments (Appendix I, page 197), Discussion of Literature related to the Environmental Effects of Snowmobiling (Appendix E, page 99), Discussion of Economic Impacts of Snowmobiling (Appendix F, page 113) and Environmental Review (Appendix H, page 183).

G. 2009 Management Guidance - Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park ("Management Guidance")

Additional management guidance was provided in the 2009 Management Guidance - Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park. The foundation for this guidance is found in the Snowmobile Plan both on page 49 and in Appendix G (page 135).

Definitions

The Management Guidance provides the following definitions, which are used to describe certain conditions that guide the siting of new snowmobile trails:

"Motorized travel corridor" - non-snowmobile public motor vehicle routes and motorized water bodies.

"Motorized waterbodies" - waterbodies upon which year-round, public motorized uses (including snowmobiling) occur to a moderate or great extent, typically facilitated by direct motorized route access to shorelines and boat launching facilities.

"Periphery" - the geographic area within two miles of a motorized travel corridor.

"Remote interior" - the geographic area more distant than two miles from the nearest motorized travel corridors in all directions.

Classifications

The Management Guidance contains the following snowmobile trail classification system, which is currently in use:

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. 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 populated 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 re-routed 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. Several of the alternatives identified for potential snowmobile trail locations in the VMWF UMP do not meet the criteria set forth in the 2009 snowmobile trail management guidance.

Consultation with Adirondack Park Agency (APA)

As stated in the Management Guidance, "snowmobile route design, construction and non-ordinary maintenance activities will be carried out pursuant to Snowmobile Trail Work Plans developed by DEC staff in consultation with APA staff."

This page intentionally left blank

IV. Trail Alternatives

There are four distinct trail sections proposed in this Trail Plan, and for each section a separate analysis of alternatives was conducted.

A map of each section as well as an overview map are included in Appendix 5.

Note regarding multiple-uses: for the majority of the distance of trail proposed in this Plan, both warm-season and cold-season uses will share the same trails. In some locations, however, environmental constraints such as water and terrain will require the different seasonal uses to be separated for short distances. For example, if an area contains challenging terrain that prevents the construction of a trail to 9 feet in width—as allowed by the Management Guidance—and the only alternative is crossing an area that is too wet for summer uses, then the snowmobile trail may be designated over the wet area while the warm-season uses will be directed on a narrower trail around the wet area. This approach greatly reduces the need for bog bridging—where the summer uses would have to cross the wet area—and/or reduces the need for excessive bench cutting, where a 9+ foot-wide snowmobile trail would have to traverse challenging terrain. Preliminary field work indicates that there will be approximately 20 locations where this "braiding" approach will be beneficial. Signage will be used to direct the different uses accordingly, and all trail construction will be done pursuant to a work plan and in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency.

No Action Alternative

Between 1998 and 2009, snowmobile use on state lands within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks was subject to Office of Natural Resources Policy #2 (ONR-2). In 2009, ONR-2 was rescinded, as it applied to the Adirondack Park, and replaced by the Management Guidance. As explained previously, the foundation for the Management Guidance can be found in the 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park, which conceptually laid out the community connector snowmobile trail network for the entire Park.

The "No Action" alternative would require the Department to continue managing the snowmobile trails in the area in a manner that is inconsistent with the Management Guidance. As such, the Vision and Goals of the Snowmobile Plan would remain unrealized. This includes, but is not limited to, the linkage of communities within the Adirondack Park by snowmobile trails and all of the benefits derived from those linkages. Additionally, the preferred alternatives presented on the following pages include an abundance of opportunities for many recreational users. For these reasons, the No Action alternative is not supported by this Plan.

Section 1: Camp Santanoni to Roosevelt Truck Trail

A map of Section 1 can be found in Appendix 5.

This section will be utilized for both the Newcomb-to-Minerva and Newcomb-to-North Hudson community connector routes. The route begins from the west at the entrance to the Camp Santanoni Historic Area off of Route 28N in Newcomb, and ends just north of the southern terminus of the

Roosevelt Truck Trail, where trail sections 1, 2 and 3 converge. Where this route is not a motor vehicle road and exists on Forest Preserve lands, it will be classified as Class II community connector snowmobile trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.
Additional discussion of the potential environmental impacts associated with the Section 1 alternatives can be found in the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP.

Alternative A – Preferred Alternative

Camp Santanoni Vicinity *(0.01 miles on existing road in Camp Santanoni Historic Area, 0.02 miles of new trail in Camp Santanoni Historic Area, and 0.3 miles of new trail in VMWF)*

Currently, an existing snowmobile trail crosses over Lake Harris, creating an unsafe condition. The 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (VMWF) Unit Management Plan authorized the construction of a new trail north of Lake Harris between the Camp Santanoni Gate Lodge Complex and the Lake Harris Campground that would remove the snowmobile trail from the frozen lake surface. Construction of this trail segment has been put on hold pending approval to cross the Gate Lodge Complex, as proposed in this Trail Plan.

The new snowmobile route is proposed to cross the bridge over the inlet of Lake Harris on the Newcomb Lake Road. From the bridge, the route will continue north up the road about 100 feet before leaving the road, heading northwest on a proposed new trail for another 75 feet, leaving the historic area and entering the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest.

From here the trail will head northerly for approximately 500 feet before turning east and briefly entering the historic area for the last time when it crosses the Newcomb Lake Road north of the existing gate, then re-entering the VMWF on the other side of the road and continuing on towards the Lake Harris Intensive Use area (campground). This crossing will require an additional gate to be installed on the Newcomb Lake Road north of the trail to prohibit snowmobiles from traveling into the historic area.

This short section of trail around the Gate Lodge Complex will be designed specifically for snowmobiles as a way to separate that use from other potentially conflicting uses, particularly x-country skiing and the parking associated with that use. Skiing and other uses such as hiking, horseback riding, and mountain biking will continue to be allowed on the roads within the entire Historic Area. The multiple-use aspect of the proposed trail will begin as it heads east from the Camp Santanoni Historic Area.

The motor vehicle parking at Santanoni Historic Area is limited during the winter due to the snow banks and the popularity of the area for cross-country skiing. Therefore, parking within the Gate Lodge Complex will be limited to non-trailered vehicles during the winter months. Visitors with trailers will be encouraged to park at one of the public or private parking areas along the snowmobile trail in Newcomb. Off-site parking will reduce congestion at the Santanoni Historic Area and allow visitors to patronize the local businesses.

Camp Santanoni to Lake Harris Campground *(1.3 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

As mentioned previously, this segment of trail is entirely within the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (VMWF), and was approved in the 2005 VMWF Unit Management Plan.

Within Lake Harris Campground *(0.5 miles on new trail, 1.0 mile on Lake Harris Campground road)*

Upon entering the area from the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the route will follow a ½ mile section of proposed new trail through an undeveloped section of the campground before reaching the existing road system. This Plan proposes the use of another 1.0 mile of existing road within the campground before exiting the campground. Anyone entering the campground on this trail while the facility is open for camping will have to register with the facility supervisor or their designated representative.

Lake Harris Campground to Hudson River Hyslop Tract (*0.9 miles on town road, 1.6 miles on existing town trail, 0.9 miles of new trail on town and private property)*

After leaving the campground, the route continues on Campsite Road, a town road designated for snowmobile use. The trail then leaves Campsite Road and continues southeast on an existing snowmobile trail to the Newcomb golf course. The trail is located on town property.

The connection from the Newcomb golf course to the Hyslop Pond Tract will be developed on private property on the north side of Route 28N. The trail location would be negotiated by the local snowmobile club, private landowners, and town/county officials. It will exit the private property and cross Route 28N near the northwestern corner of the Hudson River Hyslop conservation easement. This segment of trail is not located on DEC-administered lands. The corridor shown on the maps is an approximate location. The exact location of this trail segment will rely on the owner's permission and meeting local zoning requirements, but is preferred over the alternative of using the road shoulder along the entire Campsite Road and Route 28N because it will provide a safer, more enjoyable user experience.

Within Hudson River Hyslop Tract *(2.4 miles of new trail on DEC-held easement lands)*

The Hudson River Hyslop Tract is part of the former Finch-Pruyn holdings. NYS now holds an easement for the development of a multi-use trail to facilitate a connection to the adjacent Forest Preserve. The proposed trail will follow existing roads and skid trails where appropriate and avoid the numerous wetlands on this tract. Trail placement will be a collaborative effort between DEC and the landowner. The corridor shown on the attached maps is an approximate location.

Hudson River Hyslop Tract to Roosevelt Truck Trail (*3.0 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

For this segment, a new trail will be developed inside the tree line and outside of the NYS DOT right-of-way of Route 28N. Where possible, the trail will avoid wetlands and minimize tree cutting. Finding a safe location to cross Route 28N will be a limiting factor, as will finding a suitable location for a bridge over Vanderwhacker Brook. Due to the previously mentioned safety and user experience concerns, however, a new trail outside the DOT right-of-way will be preferable to locating the trail on the road shoulder of Route 28N.

Alternative B

Within Camp Santanoni *(0.2 miles on existing road)*

Consideration was given to locating this segment along the Newcomb Lake Road, past the parking areas, and in front of the Maintenance shop. This alternative was not selected because it would increase the risk of user conflicts in an area where cross-country skiers already park and walk/ski towards the trailhead at the north end of the Gate Lodge Complex.

Camp Santanoni to Lake Harris Campground *(1.3 miles of new trail)*

This segment will be the same as in Alternative A, utilizing a new section of trail was approved in the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (VMWF) Unit Management Plan.

Within Lake Harris Campground *(0.5 miles on new trail, 1.0 mile on Lake Harris Campground road)*

This segment will also be the same as in Alternative A. Upon entering the area from the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the route will follow a ½ mile section of proposed new trail through an undeveloped section of the campground before reaching the existing road system. This Plan proposes the use of another 1 mile of existing road within the campground before exiting the campground. Anyone entering the campground on this trail while the facility is open for camping will have to register with the facility supervisor or their designated representative.

Campsite Road (Lake Harris Campground to Route 28N) (*1.4 miles on town road)*

Upon leaving the campground, the route will utilize Campsite Road until reaching Route 28N. While using a road shoulder as a temporary trail is a viable alternative where no other options exist, it is less preferable, from both a user experience and a safety standpoint, than using a trail completely separated from the road. This constraint is compounded by the fact that multiple user groups will be utilizing this route.

Route 28N (Campsite Road to Hudson River Hyslop Tract) *(2.3 miles on state highway shoulder)*

Beginning at the intersection of State Route 28N and Campsite Road, the route will continue to utilize the shoulder, this time on Route 28N, until reaching the northwestern corner of the Hudson River Hyslop Conservation Easement property. As mentioned in the last segment, this option will not be preferred due to the safety concerns and less desirable user experience of sharing a road corridor with motor vehicles.

Within Hudson River Hyslop Tract *(2.4 miles of new trail on DEC-held easement lands)*

This segment of trail will be the same as in Alternative A. The trail will follow existing roads and skid trails , and avoid the numerous wetlands where appropriate. The corridor shown on the attached maps is an approximate location.

Hudson River Hyslop Tract to Roosevelt Truck Trail (*1.8 miles existing rail corridor)*

The western part of this segment will be identical to Alternative A. As the trail nears the railroad, consideration was also given to utilizing that corridor as the “trail”. As described in more detail under Alternative B for Section 2, use of the railroad by snowmobiles has historically occurred. However, recreational uses during the non-winter months are not permitted on the railroad, which is not consistent with the long-term goal of creating a multiple-use connector route from Newcomb to North Hudson and Minerva.

Section 2: Roosevelt Truck Trail to Minerva

A map of Section 2 can be found in Appendix 5.

This Section begins just north of the southern terminus of the Roosevelt Truck Trail, where Sections 1, 2, and 3 converge, and ends in the community of Minerva. It will be used as part of the Newcomb to

Minerva community connector trail. Where this route is not a motor vehicle road and exists on Forest Preserve lands, it will be classified as Class II community connector snowmobile trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.

Additional discussion of the potential environmental impacts associated with the Section 2 alternatives can be found in the 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP.

Note regarding the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act: the first segment of each alternative of the proposed multi-use trail enters into the Boreas River Corridor. The Boreas River, in this vicinity, is designated as a Scenic River pursuant to the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act (WSRRS Act). The WSRRS Act, and its implementing regulations found in Part 666 of Title 6 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York (6 NYCRR), regulates the activities within a Scenic River Area, defined geographically as the area within ½ mile from the river on both sides. The construction of a multi-use trail within a Scenic River Corridor requires the Department to issue a permit in accordance with 6 NYCRR Section 666.13[E][3]. This permit is subject to the public notice processes as set forth in Article 70 of the New York State Environmental Conservation Law (ECL) and its implementing regulations found in 6 NYCRR Part 621. The application requirements, and the applicable criteria for the issuance of the permit, are found in Section 666.8 of the WSRRS Act regulations. A permit will be issued if the proposed land use is consistent with the purposes of the WSRRS Act regulations, the river resources are protected, the proposed activity will not have an undue adverse environmental impact, and no reasonable alternative exists for modifying or locating the proposed activity outside of the designated river area, among others.

One of the purposes of the WSRRS Act is to grant to the Department the authority to adopt regulations in order to place "primary emphasis on protecting ecological, ***recreational***, aesthetic, botanical, scenic, geological, fish and wildlife, historical, cultural, archeological and scientific features of the area." (*See* ECL Section 15-2709.1)(emphasis added). The Department staff has proposed the location of the multi-use trail in the river corridor area that minimizes the potential for adverse environmental impacts by locating the trail close to the existing highway and rail corridors, limiting the number of trees cut, avoiding wetlands, and minimizing stream crossings consistent with the snowmobile Management Guidance. Each alternative of the proposed multi-use trail utilizes areas in the river corridor that do not have reasonable alternatives. The preferred alternative is located near an existing highway corridor, and Alternative B is co-located with an existing railway within the river area corridor. The location of this snowmobile trail, while not on the road shoulder, will be placed close to the highway so as to consolidate the visual and noise intrusion with the existing motor vehicle use in the area. For this reason, the Department has determined that this trail will not affect the river resource.

The first segment of Alternative A will also cross over the Boreas River. This will require the issuance of a permit in accordance with the Department regulations for the preferred alternative. (*See* 6 NYCRR 666.13[E][5][b]). The permit will allow the construction of the bridge for those non-motorized open space recreational uses. In order for snowmobiles to cross the Scenic River Corridor and use the bridge, a determination must be made by the Department that the use will not adversely impact any affected river resource, and the proposal satisfies all other applicable standards and criteria for the issuance of the permit in accordance with the WSRRS Act regulations. (*See* 6 NYCRR 666.9[d]). Department staff propose to co-locate the bridge attached to, or as close as possible to, the existing bridge that carries Route 28N over the Boreas River. The impacts associated with the use of the bridge by motorized

equipment are mitigated by the fact that there is existing automobile and truck traffic on the existing Route 28N bridge.

Alternative A was selected as the preferred alternative because, among other reasons, it will have the least impact to the Forest Preserve and the Boreas River corridor. The Scenic River designation extends over eight miles in this area with physical (lakes) and legal (wilderness) obstacles marking both ends of the designated area. By locating the trail and crossing the Boreas River as close to Route 28N as practical, it ensures that both the length of trail on Forest Preserve and the distance within the Boreas River Scenic Corridor are as short as possible.

Alternative A – Preferred Alternative

Roosevelt Truck Trail to Boreas River *(2.0 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

A proposed new trail will be developed inside the tree line and outside of the NYS DOT right-of-way along Route 28N. Where possible, the trail will avoid wetlands and minimize tree cutting. A bridge will be needed to cross the Boreas River, which is designated as a Scenic River in this section. The existing motor vehicle bridge on 28N is not suitable for concurrent snowmobile use. At this location the sight distance is limited and the shoulder of the road is too narrow. An additional lane will be attached to the existing bridge on Route 28N or a separate bridge will be constructed as close as possible to the existing bridge. Additional field work will be required to avoid wetlands, minimize stream crossings, minimize tree cutting, and provide a safe trail in accordance with the requirements of the Management Guidance.

Boreas River to Stony Pond Trail *(4.7 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

A proposed new trail will be developed primarily inside the tree line and outside of the NYS DOT right-of-way for this segment. If an agreement to cross a private inholding in this area can't be secured, a short section of the trail will have to be located within the DOT right-of-way to avoid the private land. Where possible the trail will be located to avoid wetlands and minimize tree cutting. Additional field work will be required to locate this new trail to avoid wetlands, minimize stream crossings, minimize tree cutting, and provide a safe trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.

Stony Pond Trail to Minerva Woods Trail on private property *(2.7 miles on new trail in VMWF)*

The majority of the trail will be constructed upslope in northern hardwoods forest type to minimize tree cutting and impacts to wetlands. The southern portion of this trail will connect with an old woods trail on private property. Additional fieldwork and agreements with private landowners will be needed to connect the route into Minerva. Once this new section of trail is built the Stony Pond Trail, south of the Stony Pond lean-to, will be closed to snowmobiles with a barrier but remain as a foot, ski and bike trail, creating a loop trail for non-snowmobilers. It will also need minor work and/or minor reroutes to correct or avoid wet areas. The Stony Pond Trail, west of this trail, will remain open to snowmobiles as a Class I trail per the Management Guidance.

Existing snowmobile trail to hamlet of Minerva *(1.3 miles on existing trail on private property, 0.2 miles on VMWF)*

Between the state land boundary to the hamlet of Minerva, the trail location will be negotiated by the local snowmobile club, private landowners, and town/county officials.

Alternative B

Railroad (Roosevelt Truck Trail to Northwoods Club Road) *(8.1 miles on existing railroad corridor)*

This segment of "trail" will utilize the existing railroad over the Forest Preserve in the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest.

The grade and sight-lines of the railroad are suitable for snowmobile use, but surface of the tracks make it challenging to maintain a suitable riding surface. Additionally, the corridor becomes an active rail line in the warmer months, effectively restricting the tracks to winter recreational uses only. Because the Department is proposing to designate a four-season multiple-use trail, the use of the railroad is proposed only in the short term as a snowmobile community connector route, but will be discontinued for use by snowmobiles upon completion of the preferred alternative for a multiple-use trail.

Northwoods Club Road (Railroad to Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail) *(0.3 miles on Northwoods Club Road)*

This section of Minerva town road is currently open to snowmobiles, and will continue to be used if the Department is able to secure winter access to the railroad. Once the preferred alternative is implemented, this section of road will not be necessary for snowmobiles.

Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail (Northwoods Club Road to Route 28N) *(3.7 miles on existing DEC snowmobile trail)*

The Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail is a DEC-designated snowmobile trail that connects the Northwoods Club Road with the Stony Pond Trail. The trail was approved in the 2005 VMWF UMP before the entire community connector trail network was developed for this area. When the preferred alternative in this Trail Plan is implemented, the railroad corridor will no longer be used by snowmobiles. Therefore, no modifications will be necessary on this trail segment and it will be classified as a Class I snowmobile trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.

Stony Pond Trail (Route 28N to New Multiple Use Trail Segment) *(0.9 miles on existing DEC snowmobile trail in VMWF)*

This alternative proposes to use 0.9 miles of this existing snowmobile trail from Route 28N to a point which a proposed new trail will be constructed heading south towards Minerva. Upon implementation of the preferred alternative, the railroad corridor will no longer be used by snowmobiles and this section of trail will be classified as a Class I snowmobile trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.

Stony Pond Trail to Minerva Woods Trail on private property *(2.0 miles on new trail in VMWF)*

This segment of trail is the same as in Alternative A. The majority of the trail will be constructed upslope in northern hardwoods forest type to minimize tree cutting and impacts to wetlands. The southern portion of this trail will enter private property and continue into the hamlet of Minerva.

Upon completion of this new section of trail, the Stony Pond Trail, east of this new trail, will be closed to snowmobiles but remain as a foot, ski and bike trail, creating a loop trail for non-snowmobilers. The Stony Pond Trail, west of this new trail, will remain open to snowmobiles and be maintained as a Class I trail in accordance with the Management Guidance. This includes maintaining the width of the trail to eight feet.

Existing snowmobile trail to hamlet of Minerva *(1.3 miles on existing trail on private property, 0.30 miles on existing DEC trail on VMWF)*

This segment of trail is the same as in Alternative A. Between the state land boundary and the hamlet of Minerva, the trail location will be negotiated by the local snowmobile club, private landowners, and town officials.

Section 3: Roosevelt Truck Trail to the Intersection of the Blue Ridge and Gulf Brook Roads

A map of Section 3 can be found in Appendix 5.

This section will begin just north of the southern terminus of the Roosevelt Truck Trail, where Sections 1, 2, and 3 converge, and ends at the intersection of the Gulf Brook Road and Blue Ridge Road. It will be used as part of the Newcomb to North Hudson community connector trail. Where this route is not a motor vehicle road and exists on Forest Preserve lands, it will be classified as Class II community connector snowmobile trail in accordance with the Management Guidance.

At this time the Department has not selected a preferred alternative for Section 3. A preferred alternative will be selected after the acquisition and classification of the Boreas Ponds tract.

Alternative A

Roosevelt Truck Trail to Blue Ridge Road *(1.8 miles on roads, 2.1 miles of new trail in VMWF, 0.6 miles on existing snowmobile trail)*

The Roosevelt Truck Trail is an old road that has been maintained to a 12-foot width to provide access to DEC programs for persons with mobility impairments.
Instead of going all the way to Blue Ridge Road in this location, a new trail will be constructed on the south side of the Blue Ridge Road in the vicinity of “unnamed hill.” This trail will require numerous small stream crossings and possible wetland permitting, but will hold snow longer, is vegetated predominately by mature northern hardwoods (which are easier to work around than younger evergreen trees), is less than a mile from an existing motor vehicle road, and will eliminate two major stream crossings on the shoulder of Blue Ridge Road. The proposed trail will connect with the Cheney Pond-Irishtown Trail and then continue north along the Cheney Pond Road. The Cheney Pond-Irishtown Trail and Cheney Pond Road are currently designated as snowmobile trails. Before reaching the Blue Ridge Road, the route will follow a new proposed trail heading east across state land to a point where the Blue Ridge Road intersects private land.

A GIS model indicates potential deer yard habitat along this trail segment. As the 2005 VMWF UMP suggests, this is a very large potential deer yarding area. Additionally, the proposed trail intersects the edge of the dear yard model, and as such, trail use may not greatly impact deer yarding habitat. The vast majority of the trail is located in Northern Hardwoods, which is not desirable yarding habitat.

Blue Ridge Road/Forest Preserve/private land *(2.2 miles on county highway, 1.4 miles of new trail on VMWF, 1.7 miles on private land)*

Once along the Blue Ridge road and across Wolf Creek the trail will head northeasterly onto Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest staying north of the private lands along Blue Ridge Rd. The trail

will then proceed in an easterly direction, continuing onto the Boreas Ponds tract, and connecting with old woods roads, then heading southeast until reaching the Blue Ridge Road. The route then parallels Blue Ridge Road for another 0.6 miles until reaching the end of Section 3.

Alternative B

Roosevelt Truck Trail to Blue Ridge Road *(2.3 miles on road)*

This alternative proceeds north, generally along the Roosevelt Truck Trail to a suitable crossing at the Blue Ridge Road. A final crossing location will be decided in consultation with the APA, Essex County Highway Department and New York State Department of Transportation.

Blue Ridge Road to Boreas Ponds Tract *(1.8 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

The grade and terrain on the north side of the Blue Ridge Road in this area are suitable for the construction of a proposed new trail. This segment would avoid using the shoulder of the Blue Ridge Road.

Forest Preserve Boundary to Gulf Brook Road *(2.1 miles of new trail on future Forest Preserve)*

There are existing skid trails on the former Finch-Pruyn lands within the Boreas Ponds Tract that could provide a suitable trail from the property boundary northeast of Vanderwhacker Pond to the Gulf Brook Road. Where these skid trails cannot be sustainably maintained, new trails would be constructed to connect the sustainable sections.

Gulf Brook Road *(8.9 miles on road on future Forest Preserve)*

The Gulf Brook Road is an existing motor vehicle road within Boreas Ponds Tract. Currently owned by the Nature Conservancy, this tract is slated for acquisition by the state sometime in the next few years. If this part of the tract is classified Wild Forest, the Gulf Brook Road could become a snowmobile route and be maintained exclusively for winter recreational uses during the colder months (i.e. not plowed). The design and unpaved surface of the road also mean that motor vehicles will travel slowly during the warmer months, making the route suitable for other recreational uses as well.

Alternative C

Roosevelt Truck Trail to Blue Ridge Road *(2.0 miles on roads, 1.1 miles of new trail in VMWF, 0.6 miles on existing snowmobile trail)*

The majority of this segment will be identical to the first segment in Alternative A. Where the route leaves the Cheney Pond Road in Alternative A to head east across state land, this alternative will follow a route near the northern terminus of the Cheney Pond Rd to be constructed from the Cheney Pond Road to a suitable crossing at the Blue Ridge Road. A final crossing location will be decided in consultation with APA, Essex County Highway Department and New York State Department of Transportation.

Blue Ridge Road to Boreas Ponds Tract *(2.2 miles of new trail on VMWF)*

Similar to Alternative B but beginning further to the east on Blue Ridge Road. There are existing skid trails on the former Finch-Pruyn lands within the Boreas Ponds Tract that could provide a suitable trail from the property boundary northeast of Vanderwhacker Pond to the Gulf Brook Road. Where these

skid trails cannot be sustainably maintained, new trails would be constructed to connect the sustainable sections.

Forest Preserve Boundary to Gulf Brook Road

Same as Alternative B

Gulf Brook Road

Same as Alternative B

Alternative D

Roosevelt Truck Trail to Blue Ridge Road

Same as Alternative A

Blue Ridge Road/Forest Preserve/private land *(4.8 miles on road)*

This option proposes to build a trail corridor generally following the Blue Ridge Road using the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, the shoulder of the Blue Ridge Road, along with private lands if appropriate agreements can be made with landowners. This segment will continue until reaching the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement where it is located on the south side of Blue Ridge Road. The trail will either have to proceed across two private properties that are subject to trail agreements, or proceed along the side of Blue Ridge Road during these stretches, and possibly others in order to avoid wet areas and terrain constraints. It also may not be entirely safe to mix the multiple user groups along a county highway for proposed extended distances. While this option is not desirable from a public safety, user experience, and private land restriction standpoint, the Wilderness restrictions to the south make this the most viable choice at the current time.

Section 4: The Intersection of the Blue Ridge and Gulf Brook Roads to North Hudson

A map of Section 4 can be found in Appendix 5.

Alternative A – Preferred Alternative

Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement (and Private Inholding) *(7.7 miles on conservation easement, 0.5 miles on private land)*

The Blue Ridge Road Tract is part of the former Finch-Pruyn holdings that is now owned by Upper Hudson Woodlands. NYS holds a conservation easement over this parcel which included the right to establish a multi-use trail to facilitate a connection to the adjacent Forest Preserve. The proposed new trail will follow existing roads and skid trails and avoid the numerous wetlands where appropriate..

There is also a private land in-holding within the conservation easement, and an agreement will be pursued to allow for a snowmobile crossing of this property. While less direct than using the Blue Ridge Road, this section provides a safer, more enjoyable riding experience.

Palmer Pond Outlet *(0.4 miles on VMWF and possible private land)*

A small parcel of the VMWF borders Palmer Pond to the east of the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement. The pond itself, as well as its outlet (the Branch), is a significant obstacle for a trail crossing in this area. This Plan proposes a new trail segment which will enter the parcel from the west, cross the Branch, and continue north in VMWF until reaching Blue Ridge Road.

Palmer Pond is a man-made impoundment, created by a DEC-owned dam on the east side of the pond. Historically, dam maintenance requiring heavy equipment has been performed by using a long boom extended from a large truck on the north side of the dam. Because of the combined need for a trail crossing in this location and better access to the dam for maintenance, this Plan proposes that an administrative motor vehicle bridge be constructed over the outlet of Palmer Pond. On the entire north side of the outlet as well as the south side up to the dam, the route will be designed to accommodate administrative motor vehicles. West of the dam, the route will be designed to Class II snowmobile trail standards in accordance with the Management Guidance.

On the south side of the outlet, a private land corridor bisects the Palmer Pond parcel. It is highly likely that use of this corridor will be needed to successfully connect the trail to the Blue Ridge Conservation Easement to the west, and an agreement for such use is being pursued with the landowner at this time. An alternatives analysis for bridge locations is found in Appendix 1.

Blue Ridge Road into North Hudson *(0.5 miles on public road)*

This final segment will utilize Blue Ridge Road traveling under the Northway into the community of North Hudson. The Northway is a formidable barrier, and Blue Ridge Road underpass is the only existing way to get from one side of the highway to the other in this vicinity.

Alternative B

Blue Ridge Rd *(2.9 miles on county highway)*

From the Gulf Brook Rd the route proceeds east along Blue Ridge Rd to the vicinity of a conservation easement haul road that crosses The Branch. Although this is not as favorable from a safety, and user experience standpoint, it is beneficial in that is does avoid several stream crossings and wet areas that will require additional resources to overcome.

Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement (and Private Inholding) *(3.3 miles on conservation easement, 0.5 miles on private land)*

Once on the conservation easement on the haul road, the trail will cross over The Branch on the existing bridge. It will then proceed as Alternative A did though the conservation easement and private inholdings.

Palmer Pond Outlet

Same as Alternative A.

Alternative C

Blue Ridge Road *(7.4 miles on county highway)*

This segment begins at the intersection of the Gulf Brook Road and Blue Ridge Road, and utilizes the road shoulder all the way into the hamlet of North Hudson. As mentioned previously, the Northway is a formidable barrier, and Blue Ridge Road underpass is the only existing way to get from one side to the other in this vicinity.

Alternative D

Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement

The first half of this segment starts out like Alternative A. The Blue Ridge Road Tract is part of the former Finch-Pruyn holdings that is now owned by Upper Hudson Woodlands. NYS holds a conservation easement over this parcel which included the right to establish a multi-use trail to facilitate a connection to the adjacent Forest Preserve. The proposed new trail will follow existing roads and skid trails, and avoid the numerous wetlands and existing camps located on this tract where appropriate.

Blue Ridge Road into North Hudson

At the intersection of the multiple use trail and the haul road, the trail will head north across the bridge that spans the Branch and on to Blue Ridge Rd. Once on Blue Ridge Rd it will proceed east into North Hudson like the eastern half of Alternative C. This is not preferred, because although it does utilize the conservation easement to distance the trail from Blue Ridge Rd in the beginning, it does use the road for the latter half which brings in previously mentioned safety and user experience concerns.

V. Classification of Existing Trails

In addition to the new trails proposed in the previous sections of this Trail Plan, there are several other existing trail segments within VMWF that need to be classified in accordance with the Management Guidance. Some of these trail segments were briefly discussed in previous sections as they relate to the proposed community connector trails. A map of the entire proposed snowmobile trail network in VMWF, including trail classifications, can be found in Appendix 5.

Horseshoe Pond Bypass Trail *(0.2 miles on existing trail)*

This trail connects the Charley Hill Road to the Horseshoe Pond Road. Most of the trail is on private property, with just a 0.2-mile segment crossing Forest Preserve. This trail will need additional water management and brushing, and a small section of it will also need bench cutting to make it more sustainable. This will be a Class I trail.

Unnamed Trail south of Scaroon Manor Campground *(1.8 miles on existing trail)*

This trail is part of a connection between the communities of Schroon Lake and Pottersville. The trail will need light brushing and some water management to keep it in good condition. The trail as a whole is largely on private land, so the Forest Preserve portion is relatively small. It does, however, go though some fairly steep terrain in areas so it should be regularly monitored for erosion. This will be a Class II trail.

Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail *(3.7 miles on existing trail)*

This snowmobile trail connects the Northwoods Club Rd to Rt 28N at the Stony Pond trailhead. While in fairly good condition, the trail will need some brushing, side slope and drainage work, and likely some new bridges. This will be a Class I trail.

Stony Pond Snowmobile Trail (portion) *(1.7 miles on existing trail)*

The East-West section of the Stony Pond Trail is in generally good shape, and will need very little work to maintain it as such. The trail is built in mainly upland soil and tends to be firm and rocky. Should the preferred alternative in this Trail Plan be implemented, this trail segment will be a Class I trail between Route 28N and the lean-to at Stony Pond, with the exception of about 300 feet near the middle which will be Class II and used as part of the Newcomb to Minerva community connector trail. South of the lean-to, the Stony Pond Trail will be closed to snowmobiles but remain open to other non-motorized uses.

Irishtown to Cheney Pond Trail (portion) *(0.7 miles on existing trail)*

The majority of this trail is proposed for closure to snowmobiles in this Trail Plan. A 0.7-mile segment is proposed for use in the Newcomb-to-Minerva Community Connector trail, and as such will remain open and be classified as a Class II trail.

This page intentionally left blank

VI. Trail Closures

The following trail segments in the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest are not consistent with the Management Guidance and will no longer be maintained or designated as DEC snowmobile trails. These trails will remain open for other uses such as hiking. A map of the entire proposed snowmobile trail network in VMWF, including proposed trail closures, can be found in Appendix 5.

Irishtown to Cheney Pond Trail (portion) *(8.37 miles)*

This has been a designated DEC snowmobile trail since at least the late 1960s. It has been reported that this also is an abandoned Minerva town road. However, there has been no documentation found to validate or refute this claim. The middle portion of this trail is in a remote interior area. Therefore, the majority of this trail will be closed to snowmobiles, but remain open for other non-motorized uses. Some maintenance, including bridge work, will be required to once again make this a suitable trail for these uses. The northern portion of the trail, near Cheney Pond, will remain open to snowmobiles and be utilized as part of the Newcomb-to-North Hudson Class II Community Connector Trail.

There may be private rights to the use of this trail for access to the private property near Mud Pond in the town of Minerva. This document and the UMP process are not the appropriate mechanism for determining the validity of any such private rights. Therefore, this Trail Plan does not make a determination related to possible private rights to the use of this trail. If documentation is found to support a decision it will be reflected in a future revision or amendment of the VMWF UMP.

Stony Pond Trail (portion) *(2.64 miles)*

The north-south section of the trail from the lean-to at Stony Pond south to John Brannon Road will be closed to snowmobiles, as it is in extreme disrepair and will be redundant once the new proposed trail is built.

This page intentionally left blank

VII. 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 Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan Wild Forest Basic Guideline #4. The resolution also outlined the format in which snowmobile trail mileage should be presented in unit management plans to ensure continued compliance with Basic Guideline #4.

This information is presented below, and only includes mileage within what is currently classified as the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, on roads and trails under DEC's jurisdiction, that is proposed as new trail construction and of existing trails to remain open*.

VMWF Snowmobile Trail Mileage

Base Snowmobile Trail Mileage (pre-2015 UMP amendment):	21.01 miles
Proposed Closure Mileage:	11.01 miles
Proposed New Trail Mileage:	14.60 miles
Total Proposed Trail Mileage (post-2015 UMP amendment):	24.60 miles

Park-wide Snowmobile Trail Mileage

1972 Mileage	Estimated Existing Mileage in All Wild Forest Units	Proposed Net Gain/(Loss) of Mileage in VMWF	New Total Estimated Mileage in All Wild Forest Units	Total Allowable Wild Forest Mileage * *Mileage beyond which would be considered a "material increase"
740	758.55	3.59	762.14	848.88

** This Park-wide Snowmobile Trail Mileage figure does not include mileage in Section 3, as no preferred alternative was selected for that section. Once the Boreas Ponds tract has been acquired by the state and the land has been classified, the Department will amend the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest UMP to select a preferred alternative route between the intersection of Route 28N / Roosevelt Truck Trail and the intersection of Blue Ridge Road / Gulf Brook Road. At that time, the Park-wide Snowmobile Trail Mileage figure will be updated to include the preferred alternative for Section 3.*

This page intentionally left blank

VIII. Primitive Tent Site Configuration

Since completion of the 2005 VMWF UMP, it has become apparent that several locations within the unit are in need of additional tent sites, and in one instance, tent site closures, to ensure the protection of both natural resources and DEC facilities. Each of the proposed tent sites, the lean-to site, and access to each site will be evaluated and where possible, constructed to provide access to people with disabilities. Maps of the proposed changes to the tent site configuration can be found in Appendix 5.

Vicinity of Camp Santanoni Great Lodge Complex

The five tent sites near the last bridge and the Great Camp do not meet SLMP separation guidelines. For this reason, this Plan proposes to close two sites and brush them in, and to continue to maintain three sites. The northernmost site, closest to the boat house, will eventually be replaced by a lean-to in order to provide a sheltered location to campers, thereby reducing the probability that nearby structures will be used for overnight camping and related activities.

In addition to the new lean-to, this Plan proposes two new tent sites in this area. The first will be on the east side of the Newcomb Lake outlet, approximately ¼ mile southeast of the road. The next site will be approximately ¼ mile further south near the northern shore of Lower Duck Hole.

Vicinity of Camp Santanoni Gate Lodge Complex

The parking area on the west side of the Gate Lodge Complex is currently used for equestrian trailer parking. In order to allow horseback riders to be near their animals and equipment overnight, this Plan proposes the construction of a new tent site just to the northwest of this parking lot. This site could also be used by any users who arrive at the historic area late in the evening and would prefer to camp near the parking lot rather than risk getting caught in the dark before reaching one of the backcountry camp sites.

Vicinity of Northwoods Club Road

There are several existing tent sites in the vicinity of Northwoods Club Road, both along the road itself and along the Boreas River, that are heavily used. This plan proposes the designation of two new sites to help with overflow. One will be north of Northwoods Club Road along the Boreas River, and the other site will be along the river south of Northwoods Club Road. Both sites will be at least ¼ mile from existing tent sites.

Vicinity of Ranger Cabin on Route 28N

There is an existing, unofficial tent site with a two-car parking area located on the northeastern side of Route 28N, about 0.5 miles southeast of the Newcomb/Minerva town line. The site is properly located from a sustainability standpoint, and is currently being used during the big game hunting season. It is also located along the Newcomb to Minerva preferred trail location, so those using it as a tent site will also be able to easily access the trail. The Department will formally designate and begin maintenance of this site.

This page intentionally left blank

IX. Existing Public Use

Trail Register Data

A wide variety of uses are allowed on VMWF and its facilities. Existing trail use registers regarding public use is limited to the Stony Pond Snowmobile Trail which forms a portion of the Community Connector Trail Plan. The following trail register information was collected:

	Stony Pond snowmobile trail		
year	entries	visitors	days
1994	189	453	-
1995	279	622	-
1996	224	644	-
1997	208	539	-
1998	35*	106*	-
1999	226	562	-
2000	150*	382*	-
2001	200	532	597
2002	221	473	545
2003	182	455	473
2004	181	448	528
2005	206	514	569
2006	183	467	550
2007	215	571	628
2008	191	497	604
2009	216^	559^	626^
2010	143*	375*	430*
2011	40*	107*	175*
2012	30*	77*	87*
2013	-	-	-
2014	-	-	-

*denotes partial data – not all register pages were recovered for this location and time period.

^denotes estimated data – generally 1 month or less has been estimated using data from other years

-denotes no data available

2010 numbers reflect only months January-August (remaining data missing)
2011 numbers reflect only January – April and December (remaining data missing)
2012 numbers reflect only January and February (remaining data missing)

This data indicate that, for the last year in which the most data was collected, 2009, the use was at its' highest point of the register information collected since 1994. In that year, approximately 626 visitor days were reported. The number of visitors for that year, 559, is the third highest that has been recorded since 1994.

As noted in the 2005 VMWF UMP, register numbers for the Stony Pond snowmobile trails probably do not reflect actual snowmobile use, in part due to the location of the trail register at just one end.

Upper Hudson Recreational Hub Grants

In terms of projecting future demand and use of the Community Connector Trails, it is important to note that the communities that are proposed to be connected also have existing and proposed recreational facilities which will support use of the proposed multi-use trails. Upper Hudson Recreation Hub Grants were announced in November of 2014 along with additional special grants to fund projects that increase tourism opportunities, support small business growth and expand recreational offerings in order to strengthen the region's local economy and support jobs.

Following are Upper Hudson Recreation Hub project descriptions and related impacts on visitor use of State lands:

- $30,000 to the Town of Newcomb to install horse stables at the High Peaks Kitchen and Campground that can be used by visitors to the area. Visitors may camp at the private campground and will be provided with equestrian facilities. The campground is across the road (Route 28N) from Santanoni Gatehouse Complex / Newcomb Lake Road which is ideal for equestrian access. Access to other State lands would require driving to a trailhead. Equestrian facilities including horse stalls, manure pits and parking will enhance the capacity of the community to accommodate new and existing users of the multi-use trail system.

  Equestrian facilities supported by grants include five parking areas for horse trailers in each town, pole barn with concrete floor and water, a 1,000 gallon holding tank for disposal of gray water and wastewater from trailers, two accessible mounting platforms, and a horse washing station.

- $100,000 to the Town of Newcomb for equipment to be used by a new local guide service, Newcomb Guides Service LLC. Newcomb Guide Service (NGS) will utilize the pre-existing private business properties of Cloudsplitter Outfitters and The Hoot Owl Lodge as staging/initial client contact areas for all expeditions. The housing accommodations at Cloudsplitter Outfitters and The Hoot Owl Lodge will continue providing necessary lodging. NGS will also provide a shuttle service to intended areas of operation as well as to and from transportation hubs such as airports, bus stations, and train stations.

  Visitors will either be shuttled into the area or will park at Cloudsplitter Outfitters or Hoot Owl Lodge in Newcomb. Hudson River excursions may put in directly at Cloudsplitter Outfitters property and a 15 passenger van will be used to bring visitors onto other lands.

- $60,000 to the Town of Newcomb for Visitor Center & Implementation of Marketing Plan.

- $60,000 to the Town of North Hudson for Route 9 Multi-Use Trail Access Improvements to create trailhead parking and equestrian facilities. Visitors will park and/or camp at the staging area on town-owned land to access State lands via an extensive system of multi-use trails located on municipal property on the east and west sides of NYS Rt. 9.

  $38,375 to Town of Minerva for Minerva Lake Campground Upgrades and Expansion. The grant will fund improvements to visitor services at the town-owned campground through the installation of water and electrical hookups, creation of new full-service campsites and installation of a new dumping station and new, high-efficiency LED lighting.

Each of the towns have public beaches, hiking, mountain biking, cross-country and alpine ski trails, camping and picnic areas, playgrounds, fishing and canoe access, historic sites and visitor's center and golf course (Newcomb) among many other recreational and cultural opportunities.

Primitive Camping

With regard to the use of the proposed Primitive Tent Sites on Newcomb Lake, existing data from campsite use at the Camp Santanoni Historic Area is pertinent.

Primitive Tent Sites are tent sites of an undeveloped character designated by the Department. The public uses Primitive Tent Sites on a first come first serve basis. Camping in one location for longer than three consecutive nights or with a group size of more than nine individuals requires a camping permit issued by a Forest Ranger. There is currently no hard data available to track Primitive Tent Site use. The most reliable way to gauge such use has been gathered through estimations by Division of Operations staff at Santanoni who are most familiar with the site. Staff at Santanoni often work near these sites and also encounter people as they are parking their vehicles or heading into or out from these campsites. An inquiry to Santanoni operations staff resulted in the following report: The eight sites at this location see combined use of approximately 100 times each year. Peak season use occurs between July 1st through August 31st and the average group size consists of four individuals. Within this Community Connector Trail Plan it is proposed that one Primitive Tent Site be removed and two be constructed, along with one lean-to.

Existing Snowmobile Activities in the Adirondack Park

The 2012 New York State Snowmobile Association (NYSSA) report entitled "Economic Impact of the Snowmobile Industry in New York State – 2010-2011" states that the total economic impact of the snowmobile industry in New York State is estimated to be $868 million. This figure was calculated by estimating the expenditures of the statewide snowmobiling community from data collected from the random sample group of snowmobile owners conducted by the Potsdam Institute for Applied Research at SUNY Potsdam.

The report notes that the largest percentage of the days spent snowmobiling was in the Adirondack region (28.3%), followed by the Tug Hill Plateau region (19.0%) and the Central New York region (18.8%). The report states that with a full 28 percent of snowmobile person/days occurring within the Adirondack Park it should be a reminder of the importance of public trails within that area and the role snowmobiling plays in the small communities of the Adirondack Park.

From the 2012 report: "Total direct spending by snowmobile owners in New York State during 2010-2011 is estimated to be approximately $434 million dollars. In addition to direct spending, indirect spending must be considered. Indirect spending occurs when the money spent by snowmobilers at snowmobile dealer establishments, motels, restaurants, etc. is re-circulated in the local economy. Indirect spending is calculated by determining how much a dollar spent will result in additional spending. Similar studies, including the New York State Snowmobile Study conducted in 1996-1997, have determined that for each dollar spent, one additional dollar of indirect spending will result.

It is likely that this is a conservative estimate of the New York State snowmobiler's spending during the 2010-2011 season due to careful economic assumptions and calculations. Nevertheless, the total economic impact of spending by the snowmobiling community in New York State is estimated at $868 million dollars."

Expenditures for indirect spending include: club dues, club donations, snowmobile purchases, snowmobile rentals, insurance, highway tolls, trailer expenses, maintenance, parts and supplies for vehicle, gasoline, oil and supplies for snowmobile, parts, service and repairs for snowmobile, clothing and accessories, overnight trips in hotels/motels, meals and registration fees.

Forty percent of respondents indicated that they had taken an overnight snowmobiling trip during 2010-2011 and that the average number of snowmobiles owned was 2.42. The average number of days spent snowmobiling was 22. Approximately 14 percent of New York snowmobilers are non-residents generating millions in tourism expenditures for New York. Two-thirds of all snowmobilers trailer their snowmobile to other areas of the state generating outside income in those receiver areas. Over the course of a season, they averaged 8.5 days where they traveled to another area. The average age of respondents was 48.42 years and 90 percent were male. A follow up study undertaken in 2013 found that the average age of a NY snowmobiler is 52 and that 37 percent of all snowmobile rides take place in the Adirondack Park. This number grew significantly from 2010-11 where it was reported that 28.3 percent of all snowmobile rides occurred in the park. Based on the findings of the report it has been estimated that the 2011-12 season of "no snow" resulted in at least a $264 million dollar loss in economic activity in the state just from reduced snowmobile activity.

The economic impact of mountain biking in the Adirondacks has been estimated to be $4 million annually, based on extrapolation from data collected in Moab, Utah (see http://www.bikeadirondacks.org/mtbike/econ_impact_of_mtnbiking.htm). The results of the data showed the average length of a trip was five days, the group size was 3.74 and the average age was 27.

Projected Public Use and Discussion of Potential Impacts of Such Use

The October 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement provides a detailed examination of the siting and maintenance standards for snowmobile trails as well as a discussion of environmental impacts and appropriate mitigation measures. While present in the Generic Environmental Impact Statement (beginning on page 187), the following discussion repeated from that document also applies directly to the Community Connector Trail Plan:

"The Adirondack Park Snowmobile Trail System will be designed to enhance the recreational opportunities within the Park for a variety of users, to create trail connections between communities and to minimize adverse environmental and other impacts on both the Forest Preserve and other public and private lands. It is envisioned that the new trail system will involve trails on both public and private lands. There will be no material increase in the miles of snowmobile trails within the Forest Preserve.

Creation of this new system will involve modification of the existing system on public and private lands, including the designation and creation of community connector trails/trail segments and the re-designation of existing snowmobile trails located within the interior of Wild Forest Units or adjacent to private inholdings as non-motorized trails. It may also require the relocation or development of trails on private lands through the acquisition of fee title or conservation easements by the state, or the conveyance of access rights by willing sellers to snowmobile clubs or local governments. Any modification of the existing trail system within the Forest Preserve will be considered through the UMP process. Through this process, alternatives to and environmental impacts associated with any change will be considered and the location of the trail will be determined. Community connectors through private land will require local snowmobile clubs/sponsors securing agreements with the landowners.

In general, the concepts for the reconfiguring the trail system in the Final Plan/GEIS will improve the character of the interior areas of the Wild Forest areas through the designation of some interior snowmobile trails to non-motorized trails and development of community connectors along the periphery of the Wild Forest Units and along major transportation corridors. By concentrating the majority of snowmobile use along the periphery of Forest Preserve units and along transportation corridors, the interior areas of those units will have less motorized traffic, lower exhaust emission levels, lower noise levels, reduced user conflicts between motorized and non-motorized forms of recreation and decreased impacts on wildlife. Additionally, snowmobile trails that are re-designated for non-motorized use will re-vegetate to narrower widths and a more consistently closed canopy, thereby improving the aesthetic experience of trail users. This will also reduce the off season trail maintenance that is required in the interior Wild Forest areas. As the Final Plan/GEIS is implemented, it is expected that there will be additional snowmobilers attracted to the Adirondack Park. As a result, there will be increased economic benefits to the local communities. Along with increased use, there will likely be a minor, if any, adverse impact to the air quality. Since the activity is dispersed throughout the Adirondack Park with many access points to the trail system, there will be minimal adverse impacts. In addition, with more stringent air quality emission standards and improved technologies, the impact on air quality will decrease over time.

Any increase in usage will likely occur as the trail system evolves over a period of time. This may take a number of years due to the level of cooperation, coordination and process that will have to occur to develop a trail system that involves Forest Preserve and private lands. In addition, the total impact of the trail system will be distributed throughout the park. Unlike other areas of the country, there are multiple entry and exit points to the trail system.

The development of a community connector system will focus more of the snowmobile use within the Adirondack Park to those trails. It will also attract more touring snowmobilers and generate economic benefits to the communities. Most long distance users require food, fuel and lodging.

The trail system will have negligible impacts on noise and the air quality of the Adirondack Park. There will be no material increase in the trail system within the Forest Preserve. The noise generated from snowmobiles will decrease in interior Wild Forest areas as trails are re-designated and increase to areas near travel corridors. This will benefit non-motorized users of the interior Wild Forest but may have a negative impact on residents near travel corridors. The Environmental Protection Agency will be implementing more stringent emission standards for snowmobiles over the next few years. This will result in improved air quality."

From the 2005 VMWF UMP:

"Hard data is unavailable, but current snowmobile use of the existing snowmobile trails in VMWF is believed to be low. This is perhaps due in part to the disjointed system of trails in VMWF and the unit's isolation from other trail systems. Trail register data, lean-to journals, and staff observation suggest that the Stony Pond trail is more heavily-used than the Cheney Pond snowmobile trail, but even the former does not see large numbers of users. In years of deep snow cover, high snowbanks may preclude access to the Stony Pond trail from the 28N side, leaving the trail accessible only from the Longs Hill Road end. It is not uncommon to see much more use on the Longs Hill Road end than on the 28N trailhead, during winters of less snow cover, as well. This suggests that most riders are local, since the parking area at the south end is quite small in comparison.

By facilitating access between the hamlets, use of the existing trails that become a part of that trail facilitating access between the hamlets will no doubt increase. However, it is difficult to predict how large the increase will be. Use of the trail facilitating access between the hamlets by local riders wishing to make longer trips, will certainly increase, but the Towns are also interested in increasing tourism by attracting downstate and out-of-state snowmobilers as well as snowmobile touring enthusiasts from other parts of the Park. DEC is committed to developing and implementing a system to improve tracking of existing and future use of this trail. This trail facilitating access between the hamlets will be a part of a larger system of snowmobile trails connecting trails in northern Warren County with northern Hamilton County, and ultimately with the rest of the Park. This will certainly lead to increased snowmobile use in the area, but it will not be the only route connecting Warren, Essex, and Hamilton Counties. Existing and potential routes in southwestern Warren County, eastern Essex County, and elsewhere will provide similar long-distance connections. Any increase in use of VMWF snowmobile trails will be limited by a number of factors, including the number of hotel rooms, restaurants, attractions, and other services (including gas) available in the area. The increase will likely be slow, since these factors do not currently exist in great numbers in the area.

Monitoring will be important to ensure that environmental degradation as a result of over use of the trail is minimized. If degradation occurs, the Department will take appropriate actions to mitigate the degradation, including increased maintenance activities, temporary trail closures, education, and other management actions. The Department will work with local snowmobile clubs to monitor use and possible overuse of the trail and to coordinate maintenance activities through the use of Volunteer Stewardship Agreements, when possible."

X. Schedule of Implementation

The below schedule of implementation is an estimated timeline based on ideal working conditions, resource allocations, and with the assumption that DEC Division of Operations, Student Conservation Association (SCA), Town governments, local snowmobile clubs, correction work crews, etc. will be heavily relied upon for various duties including labor, equipment use, and equipment operation. It is also dependent on timely UMP/RMP completions, private landowner agreements, and obtaining all required regulatory permits.

Year 1

Section 1 & 2

- Implement all trail classification and closures, except for the Stony Pond Trail
- Maintain the existing Horseshoe Pond Bypass, Scaroon Manor, and Cheney Pond snowmobile trails in compliance with Snowmobile Guidance
- Close Santanoni campsite by great camp
- Build Santanoni Gate lodge campsite
- Finish western section of the Camp Santanoni to Lake Harris trail, including bridges and trail manipulation
- Clear and build the Santanoni Gate lodge snowmobile route
- Clear the eastern section of the Camp Santanoni to Lake Harris trail
- Start cutting the segment from the Hyslop Tract to the Roosevelt Truck Trail south of the Route 28N campsites, to make passable for material hauling
- Haul materials in to bridge sites on eastern section of the Santanoni to Lake Harris trail
- Start hauling materials to the cleared portions of the Hyslop Tract to the Roosevelt Truck Trail south of the Route 28N campsites

Section 3 & 4

- Start construction on the Palmer Pond Bridge

Year 2

Section 1 & 2

- Build Northwoods Club Rd primitive campsites along the Boreas River
- Build Camp Santanoni lean-to
- Build primitive campsites along Upper and Lower Duckhole
- Maintain and rehabilitate as required, to make the Lost Pond Mountain snowmobile trail compliant with current snowmobile guidelines
- Build bridges and finish trail manipulation on the Lake Harris section to complete segment
- Clear, complete trail manipulation, build bridges and complete construction on Hyslop Easement
- Finish cutting from the western end of Hyslop Tract to the ranger cabin on 28N
- Build bridges, complete trail manipulation, and complete segment from ranger cabin on 28N to the Roosevelt Truck Trail

- Clear from the Stony Pond Trail to Minerva private lands to make it passable to haul materials
- Haul materials into section from the Stony Pond Trail to Minerva private lands
- Start construction on the Boreas Bridge

Section 3 & 4

- Finish constructing the Palmer Pond Bridge
- Build the Hoffman Notch Brook Bridge (if this trail alternative is chosen)
- Clear and complete trail manipulation on the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement and private lands in that vicinity
- Haul bridge materials throughout the Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement and private lands

Year 3

Section 1 & 2

- Build bridges, complete trail manipulation, and complete segment from the Stony Pond Trail to Minerva private lands
- Close the Stony Pond Trail south of the Stony Pond lean-to to snowmobiles once segment from the Stony Pond Trail to Minerva private lands is constructed
- Rehabilitate, re-locate, and build facilities on the Stony Pond to Irishtown non-snowmobile trail
- Clear segment from Roosevelt Truck Trail to Boreas bridge
- Haul materials into segment from Roosevelt Truck Trail to Boreas bridge
- Finish constructing the Boreas Bridge

Section 3 & 4

- Build bridges and complete section in Blue Ridge Road Conservation Easement vicinity

Year 4

Section 1 & 2

- Build bridges, complete trail manipulation, and complete segment from Roosevelt Truck Trail to Boreas bridge
- Clear segment from the Boreas bridge to the Stony Pond Trail
- Haul materials into segment from the Boreas bridge to the Stony Pond Trail

Section 3 & 4

- Clear all new segments, and brush all existing roads used in section 3
- Haul materials and start trail manipulation on section 3

Year 5

Section 1 & 2

- Build bridges, complete trail manipulation, and complete segment from Roosevelt Truck Trail to Boreas bridge
- Construct and install all privies, kiosks, and horse mounting platforms for sections 1 & 2

Section 3 & 4

- Build bridges, complete trail manipulation, and complete section 3
- Construct and install all privies, kiosks, and horse mounting platforms for sections 3 & 4

Appendix 1 – Potential Environmental Impacts and Proposed Mitigation Measures

A. Mitigation by Design

The design and siting of the multi-use trails proposed herein is based on the 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Environmental Impact Statement and the 2009 Management Guidance for Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park. These documents are incorporated by reference and portions are reiterated herein as appropriate. Multi-use trail siting and design is accomplished using the guidance documents and inherent in the process is the avoidance of valuable natural resources such as wetlands and wildlife habitat and use of appropriate slopes, avoidance of trees and rocks and reuse of existing skid trails or old woods roads or existing trails. This approach results in mitigation by design to avoid potential significant environmental impacts. Through the planning process, significant adverse environmental impacts of both a temporary and long-term nature are avoided or minimized by utilizing the established design criteria.

In terms of trail design for the multi-use Community Connector Trail Plan, using established design standards for the trails ensures that they will be sited and constructed to be sustainable for all of the proposed uses, including horseback riding, mountain biking, snowmobiling, cross country skiing and show shoeing.

The 2006 Snowmobile Plan included a comprehensive Environmental Impact Statement that recommended a conceptual plan to create a system of snowmobile trail connections between communities in the Adirondack Park. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation were co-lead agencies and the Adirondack Park Agency and the New York State Department of Transportation were Involved Agencies in the SEQRA process. Key to the conceptual plan that was developed is the reconfiguration of the existing system to ensure protection of sensitive resources on both public and private land. The 2006 Plan outlines guidelines and criteria for how snowmobile trails and trail segments will be developed and maintained, particularly when and if they are located on Forest Preserve lands within the Park. The concepts in the 2006 Plan/EIS are put forth in recognition that snowmobiling is a winter recreation activity that is critical to supporting the economies of the communities in the Park. It recognizes that motorized winter recreation in and among the wild lands that make up the Forest Preserve and on sensitive private lands must be configured in a manner that protects the wild forest. The 2006 Plan/EIS proposed the concept that, in establishing a snowmobile trail system that connects communities in the Park, it is essential to create a new benefit to the Forest Preserve lands. This net benefit will result through the reconfiguration of the existing snowmobile trail system, with a focus on shifting snowmobile trails to the periphery of the Forest Preserve, re-designating existing snowmobile trails in the interior for non-motorized use and avoiding sensitive private lands.

The 2006 Snowmobile Plan outlines the concept of reconfiguring the existing snowmobile trail network across the Forest Preserve through the UMP process. Implementation is supported by the 2009 Management Guidance, establishing a DEC snowmobile trail classification system with standards and guidelines for snowmobile trail siting, construction and maintenance.

The designation of a class of snowmobile trail to establish and improve community connections (Class II trails) will be complemented by the designation of another class of trail (Class I trails) intended to preserve a more traditional type of Adirondack snowmobiling experience. Some existing snowmobile trails (usually within the interior of Wild Forest areas or adjacent to private inholdings) will be re-designated for non-motorized use or abandoned as trails altogether. These actions will serve to ensure available, wintertime recreational opportunities in Wild Forest areas are not dominated by snowmobile use to the exclusion or near exclusion of passive recreational uses. The 2009 Management Guidance notes that all snowmobile trails, regardless of class, will be carefully sited, constructed and maintained to preserve the most essential characteristics of foot trails and to serve, where appropriate, hiking, mountain biking and other non-motorized recreational pursuits in spring, summer and fall. The guidance helps ensure protection of sensitive natural resources on public lands and the minimization of snowmobiling safety hazards.

As stated in the 2009 Management Guidance beginning on page 7:

"Snowmobile Trail Siting Standards:

1. In cases where closure or abandonment of a motorized travel corridor results in an existing snowmobile trail location being inconsistent with these guidelines, such trail will, if practicable and as soon as possible, be relocated or reclassified to comply with these guidelines.

2. New and rerouted snowmobile trails will be sited, when possible, along existing routes or previously existing old routes such as foot trails, woods roads, utility rights of way and abandoned railroad beds in lieu of constructing entirely new trails.

3. New and rerouted snowmobile trails will be sited with an objective to avoid locations that present safety hazards such as the edges of ravines or ledges, major highway crossings and crossings of frozen surfaces of water bodies such as rivers, lakes and ponds. If suitable alternative routes are designated or developed, trails that lead riders to unsafe locations will be closed to snowmobile use in favor of the alternative routes in order to lower risks and eliminate unnecessary snowmobile trail mileage.

4. New and rerouted snowmobile trails will be sited with an objective to avoid areas considered environmentally sensitive, such as: wetlands; endangered plant or animal populations that might be harmed by the trails and/or their use; remote interior areas as defined by these guidelines and forested corridors connecting such remote interior areas; and deer wintering areas and other significant habitats, so that the values of these areas are not diminished.

5. New and rerouted snowmobile trails will not be established without an evaluation of potential significant impacts on adjacent private holdings.

6. New and rerouted snowmobile trails, including spur trails, will not provide access to private lands where public snowmobile access is not permitted.

7. New and rerouted snowmobile trails, through the acquisition of easements or other access rights from willing sellers, will be sited on private lands rather than State lands wherever possible to minimize impacts on the Forest Preserve."

Trail siting goals include the following:

- For safety reasons, trails should be kept off highways (especially major highways) and water bodies whenever possible.
- Trails should be free of dangerous obstructions, such as trees and boulders.
- Trails must also be sited with environmental considerations in mind:
  - rare and endangered plant and animal species and their habitats should be avoided;
  - deer wintering yards should be avoided;
  - vegetative disturbance should be minimized;
  - wetlands, areas with poor drainage and steep slopes should be avoided;
  - tree cutting should be minimized and the trail canopy preserved; and
  - user group conflicts should be avoided.
- The Department will not place snowmobile trails on private land without the owner's permission. Where an owner of private property agrees to allow a snowmobile trail on their property, the Department's partners should, whenever possible, secure a snowmobile trail agreement.

Snowmobile Route Design, Construction and Maintenance Standards

Snowmobile route design, construction and non-ordinary maintenance activities[1] will be carried out pursuant to Snowmobile Trail Work Plans developed by DEC staff in consultation with APA staff. The following standards will be followed in order to preserve the trail-like character of snowmobile trails while ensuring they are appropriately safe to ride. When undertaking any of the types of work described below with motorized landscaping equipment (almost exclusively on Class II Trails), only careful use of appropriate low-impact landscaping equipment will be approved, as determined by a "minimum requirement" decision making approach set forth in the Snowmobile Trail Work Plan. For example, use of bulldozers and creation of "dugways" will not be approved. Operators of low-impact landscaping equipment will conduct their work in optimal environmental conditions and in a manner that will not contribute to any potential degradation of the wild forest setting.

For new snowmobile trails of both classes to retain essential characteristics of foot trails, management practices must integrate thorough knowledge of the standards and guidance below, with efforts to appropriately balance them and the underlying concerns as the trails are sited, constructed and maintained thereafter. The end result should be trails that are both enjoyable and safe to ride for essentially the same reason – for the way the trails snake through the wild landscape of the Adirondacks in a natural fashion because construction and maintenance practices having altered the terrain enough to allow for an acceptable degree of riding comfort, but not so much as to create potential for high-speed, disruptive and unsafe snowmobiling experiences.

Many existing snowmobile trails are sited on old woods roads and other routes originally constructed and maintained for use of motor vehicles other than snowmobiles. In such cases, the standards set forth below may also be used to reroute or otherwise minimally alter such trails with the objective to

[1] Ordinary maintenance activities are defined in the "Memorandum of Understanding Between the Adirondack Park Agency and the Department of Environmental Conservation Concerning Implementation of the State Land Master Plan for the Adirondack Park" (APA/DEC MOU).

achieve the same end result.

Alignment and Grade:

1. Trail alignment will not result in blind curves and abrupt changes in either horizontal or vertical direction; trails will be designed to ensure:

   a) Sight distance will be 50 feet or more wherever possible;

   b) Curves will have a radius of at least 25 feet;

   c) The maximum grade of trails will not exceed 20% unless deemed necessary to minimize environmental impacts associated with trail construction;

   d) Trails will not normally be laid out on existing cross slopes greater than 12%;

2. To the greatest extent possible, trails will not be aligned with long straight sections. Trails will follow the natural contours of the terrain as much as possible and will be laid out to balance and minimize necessary tree cutting, rock removal and terrain alteration.

3. Trails will be laid out to avoid rocky areas and drainage features such as wetlands and streams to the greatest possible extent.

4. In locations where serious environmental or safety conditions exist along a trail, the trail will be rerouted rather than rehabilitated at that location.

Trail Width:

1. Class I Trails may be maintained to an 8-foot maximum cleared trail width.

2. Class II Trails may be maintained to a 9-foot maximum cleared trail width except on sharp curves (inside turning radius of 25-35 feet) and steep running slopes (over 15%) where they may be maintained to a 12-foot maximum cleared trail width.

Class I and II trails wider than their classification allows will be actively restored to these limits.

Tree Cutting:

DEC policy requires that cutting trees should be minimized, but where cutting is required, trees must be identified, tallied and included in a Work Plan in accordance with ***DEC Program Policy LF91-2 Cutting and Removal of Trees in the Forest Preserve.***

1. Cutting of overstory trees will be avoided in order to maintain a closed canopy wherever possible. Large and old growth trees should be protected.

2. Cutting trees to expand a trail from its current width or otherwise improve a trail will be carried out only pursuant to a Work Plan.

3. All snowmobile trails may be kept clear to a height of 12 feet, as measured from ground level.

4. No trees, except trees that due to structural problems or fallen/tipped conditions present an immediate hazard to the safe use of the trail by snowmobilers, will be cut outside the cleared trail width.

5. Trees should be felled away from the trail to minimize the amount of material that needs to be moved. If the tree trunks are not used to help delineate the trail, felled trees should be delimbed and cut into short enough lengths to lie flat on the ground. Once delimbed and cut up, the short lengths should be dispersed and not left in piles next to the trail. If the tree trunks are used to help delineate the trail, the cut ends of the trunks should be located outside the intended edge of the trail by at least one foot for safety reasons.

6. When trees are cut within the cleared trail width, they will be cut flush with the ground, and the preference will be to leave the root masses in place.

    a) On Class II trails, if it is important to remove a root mass because it presents an obstacle in the trail surface, the preference will be to grind the stump and roots. If grinding is not feasible, the root mass may be dug up, rolled or placed off the trail into the woods without removing intervening vegetation and organic matter; the root mass will be set down so as to have the lowest profile possible.

    b) Grinding will not occur on Class I trails.

7. No brushing will occur outside the cleared trail width of any snowmobile trails.

<u>Trail Surface:</u>

1. Grading:
    a) <u>Class I Trails</u>. Trail surfaces should generally follow the existing contours of the natural forest floor and not be graded flat. While limited leveling and grading may be undertaken, this work will be done using hand tools almost exclusively. In rare circumstances, appropriate low-impact landscaping equipment may be used as specified in a Work Plan.

    b) <u>Class II Trails</u>. Trail surfaces should generally follow the existing contours of the natural forest floor and not be graded flat. Limited leveling and grading may be undertaken using appropriate low-impact landscaping equipment as specified in a Work Plan.

2. Rock Removal:

    a) Removal of boulders and rocks from snowmobile trail surfaces will be minimized to the greatest extent possible. No boulders or rocks will be removed outside the cleared trail width.

    b) On Class I Trails, rock removal will occur using hand tools only, except in rare circumstances in new trail construction and trail reconstruction when use of low-impact landscaping equipment may be approved. Rock removal on Class I trails will be primarily limited to

uncommon, major obstacles that present demonstrable safety hazards to snowmobile riders and which cannot be avoided by appropriate trail layout or rerouting.

c) On Class II Trails, rock removal may occur using low-impact landscaping equipment and may include removal of rocks determined to present demonstrable safety hazards to snowmobile riders or to be very likely to damage grooming equipment. Many rocks in snowmobile trails, due to their specific shapes and/or locations, do not present themselves so as to cause these problems, and these may not be removed regardless of how high above the trail surface they project. Conversely, some rocks in snowmobile trails – while small – do present themselves so as to cause these problems, and if they are identified in an approved Work Plan, they may be removed.

d) Boulders and rocks removed from trails will preferably be buried in the trails to minimize disturbance. Earth moved to dig the holes into which the boulders or rocks are to be placed will be used to fill the holes that result from the rock removal. When removed boulders and rocks are not buried, but are instead set to the side of the trail, they will be dispersed with care and not left in windrows or piles next to the trail. If a boulder or rock is used to help delineate the trail, it should be placed outside the intended edge of the trail by at least one foot for safety reasons.

e) Alternatives to rock removal should be considered to minimize the need for disturbance of the ground, to reduce the likelihood of creating drainage problems and to reduce the potential need for fill. Such alternatives may include covering or minor relocation of the trail where a boulder or rock may be too large or the number too great to deal with by any other method.

f) Removal of boulders and rocks from the surrounding natural, wild forest setting for use in snowmobile trail construction and maintenance work will be minimized and may occur only on a limited, carefully selective basis for small-scale projects. On Class II trails, where large-scale trail construction projects using stone material may be approved, importation of native stone from appropriate, specified sources may occur.

3. Side Slope Management:

a) On Class I trails, elimination or reduction of side slopes by means of bench cuts will be accomplished using hand tools exclusively. The need for bench cuts will be minimized through proper trail layout. The maximum amount of cut, measured vertically, will be 20% of the tread width. Side slopes of newly constructed trails and reroutes will be dressed and tapered within the cleared trail width; side slopes of some existing, degraded trails may be dressed and tapered outside the cleared trail width if this is determined the best way to address the degradation and restore environmentally sound, safe conditions.

b) On Class II trails, elimination or reduction of side slopes will be accomplished primarily by means of full bench cuts for which appropriate landscaping equipment may be used. The need for bench cuts will be minimized through proper trail layout. The tapering of side slopes will be allowed outside the cleared trail width. The areas dressed and tapered will be re-vegetated to restore stability and natural site conditions after the full bench cut is created.

Drainage:

1. Adequate drainage will be provided within the cleared trail width to prevent trail erosion and washout and to maintain a safe trail. All snowmobile trails will be constructed so as not to intercept groundwater to the greatest extent possible; natural drainage patterns will be maintained. In areas where the natural drainage patterns may be affected, bridges will be the preferred method for crossing wet areas. Bridges will be constructed pursuant to approved snowmobile trail bridge designs.

2. Water bars and broad-based dips may extend beyond the cleared trail width to the extent necessary to effectively remove water from the trail surface, provided that no trees are cut outside the cleared trail width. Culverts will not be installed as drainage devices. Any existing culverts will be removed unless the culverts are very large and their removal is essentially not possible.

Wetlands:

1. Wetlands will be avoided to the greatest extent possible.

2. When wetlands crossings or trail locations adjacent to wetlands are proposed, the trail will be designed to minimize potential adverse impacts.

3. Any activity in a wetland or that may impact a wetland will be undertaken with prior consultation with the APA and with recognition of Army Corps of Engineers' permit requirements.

B. Inventory of Existing Natural and Cultural Resources

With regard to the inventory of natural and cultural resources along the proposed trails that make up the Community Connector Trail Plan, the April 2005 Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (VMWF UMP/EIS) provides a thorough discussion of the physical, biological, visual/scenic resources and rare ecological communities that are present in this area (refer to VMWF UMP/EIS pages 10 through 61 and Appendices B, C, D, E, F and H).

The UMP/EIS discusses geology, soils, terrain/topography, water resources and wetlands, climate, air resources, plant life, wildlife and fish, along with reference to other state and federal programs which are involved in inventorying and protecting such resources such as the Natural Heritage Program, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and State Historic Preservation Office. Man-made facilities such as trails, roads and historic and archeological resources are also inventoried in the 2005 UMP/EIS. Actual and projected public use of the VMWF is provided and discussed. All of this information is incorporated herein by reference. This information is updated herein as necessary.

Information that has been developed since the 2005 VMWF UMP/EIS includes the April 1, 2015 listing of the northern long-eared bat as a threatened species by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Note that the nearest proposed multi-use trail to a known bat hibernaculum is over three miles away. Following is an update on bat species and their status in New York. It is unlikely that all of these species are present on the project site, but it is possible.

Cave Bats

All six species of New York's cave bats spend the winter hibernating in caves and mines where they live off stored fat reserves. However, during the summer they live in a variety of places, including bridges, buildings, rock crevices, beneath loose bark, or in cracks or crevices in trees. Cave bats are identified by the lack of fur on their tail membranes and their rather plain brownish coloring. Indiana bats are more greyish and Pipistrelle bats can be nearly reddish yellow. Cave bats in New York have been devastated by White Nose Syndrome.

Northern long-eared Bat *(Myotis septentrionalis)*

- Federally threatened (4d)
- Once widely distributed in NY
- Population has declined 98-99% because of White Nose Syndrome (WNS)

Little Brown Bat *(Myotis lucifugus)*

- Severely affected by WNS
- Less than 10% of the population from pre-WNS time is left

Indiana Bat *(Myotis sodalist)*

- Federally endangered
- State of NY endangered
- Severely affected by WNS with less than 10% of the population left in NY

Eastern Pipistrelle (*Perimyotis subflavus)*

- Population has declined by 98-99% in New York due to WNS
- Potential to be listed as threatened or endangered in NYS

Small-footed Bat (*Myotis leibii)*

- Was proposed to be listed by USFWS as either threatened or endangered but listing was determined to be not warranted
- New York State population has not declined like it has in other northeastern states
- Therefore, New York is the only state in Northeast not to list this species

Big Brown Bat *(Eptesicus fuscus)*

- Largest and now the most common cave bat in NY
- Rarely show signs of WNS
- Increasing population trend

Tree Bats

As the name suggests, tree bats live year round in trees. They are more colorful than the generally brown cave bats, and red bats and hoary bats have distinct dark and tan wing membranes. Tree bats have fully furred tail membranes which they can curl up around their bodies like a blanket. Because tree bats do not typically enter caves or mines or form large colonies, these species are harder to study. It is known that red bats and hoary bats roost alone from branches, hiding among leaves, and silver-haired bats form small colonies and use crevices and hollows in trees. While most cave bats have one young

per year, hoary bats and silver-haired bats typically have two; red bats as many as three or four. All three species fly south in winter to where warmer temperatures make finding a meal more reliable. Tree, or migratory, bats don't seem to be affected by WNS. DEC has seen no declines in these species over the last four years of monitoring.

Red Bat *(Lasiurus borealis)*

- Uncommon in New York
- More common in warmer southern states

Hoary Bat (*Lasiurus cinereus)*

- Uncommon in New York
- Most abundant in Adirondacks

Silver-haired Bat *(Lasyionicterius noctivagans)*

- Least common bat in NY and the northeast

Not included in the discussion of existing natural resources in the 2005 UMP/EIS is the 20,400 acre Boreas Ponds Tract, which the state is under contract to purchase and is present in Sections 3 and 4 of this Community Connector Trail Plan. This land is described in a report by Jerry Jenkins, dated November 2001, and entitled "Finch-Pruyn Biological Survey." The report notes that the Boreas tract is located just south of the High Peaks and contains two mountains with an elevation of over 3,500 feet above mean sea level (AMSL), three peaks with an elevation ranging between 3,000 and 3,500 feet AMSL and several which range between 2,500 and 3,000 feet AMSL. The report states that three miles of the Opalescent River are located here and due to its position on the edge of the High Peaks and the large amount of spruce in its floodplain, exhibits a boreal nature, that is, it is a northern biotic area dominated by coniferous forest. The headwaters of the Boreas River is located here and it drains a large wetland complex. Sand Pond Brook is present and is adjacent to several hundred acres of alluvial forest. Jenkins notes the presence of two large open peaty wetlands and a large spruce-fir swamp in the area of Boreas Ponds. The Boreas Ponds and associated wetlands also seem to have the highest diversity of boreal species of birds, with nine of the twelve boreal species observed occurring there. Jenkins states that scattered observations of waterfowl suggest that all the large ponds have a number of breeding species, and that the Boreas Ponds, which are large and well vegetated, have the largest number.

The 2001 Biological Survey states that more than half of the Finch lands are hardwood forest and hardwood-dominated mixed forests, typically with beech, yellow birch, sugar maple, red maple, red spruce and hemlock as the common canopy trees. White birch and aspens are common in disturbed or regenerating sites, balsam fir on the swamps and on ridges, white pine on sandy terraces and rocky slopes, with ash and black cherry present also, mostly at lower elevations and on more fertile sites. Jenkins observes that the forests here are typical of those elsewhere in the eastern Adirondacks.

Along Sand Pond Brook there is a low alluvial forest dominated by silver maples. The soils are low and mucky, with much clay.

Jenkins notes that the Third Pond of the Boreas Ponds constitutes a bog pond. This is a low-nutrient wetland, isolated from mineral-rich groundwater and receiving most of its water from rainfall, on deep peaty soils, dominated by a mixture of sphagnum moss, low small-leaved evergreen shrubs, and narrow-

leaved sedges. Bogs are slow-growing communities which form over a long period of time, on the order of decades. The bogs at the third Boreas Pond are small but in good condition. Adirondack bogs tend to have uncommon or regionally significant species, but not rare species.

The wetland type present at the Boreas Ponds is a lowland boreal community which includes spruce-fir swamps. It is characterized by a group of northern plants and birds that are found where the lowland boreal is well developed, but are uncommon in the rest of the Adirondacks, and rare or absent outside of them. Examples are the boreal chickadee, gray jay, blackpoll warbler, and a number of wetland and bog plants including the sedges *Carex Pauciflora*, *C. exilis* and *C. oligosperma*, the three-leaved solomon's seal, the black spruce, and the clubbed-spur orchid. The Third Pond area of the Boreas Ponds is an open, boggy wetland referred to as a beaver flow wetland and the stable-water level wetland typical of the remainder of Boreas Ponds is a lake shore or basin wetland. These are very similar types of wetland and consist of sedge-shrub marshes with less pea than bogs and more contact with groundwater, and so are more fertile. Due to their fertility they have a taller, broader-leaved and less evergreen flora, typically some mixture of sedges, herbs, and medium-sized to tall shrubs. The mixture varies with fertility, history and water level.

The 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement concludes that, generally speaking, public lands within the Adirondack Park provide relatively poor deer habitat when compared to managed forests or a mixture of agricultural and small woodlots. As forests mature, the amount of available browse provided by openings, agricultural land and forest edges begins to decrease as trees mature, saplings grow out of reach of deer and the forest understory begins to die back from a lack of sunlight. Deer wintering areas, for example, while providing protection from the elements, are extremely deficient in available and/or nutritious foods that deer need to survive the winter. Overall, severity of weather, availability of good habitat and hunting are more influential factors affecting deer mortality in the Adirondacks than is snowmobile traffic.

Photographs of some key elements of the Community Connector Trail Plan are provided in Appendix 5, entitled "Photograph Location Map" and "Photographs." The Stony Pond trail head, Hewett Pond trailhead parking area, facing north at the existing Route 28N bridge crossing at the Boreas River (where a snowmobile crossing will be needed), parking area near Roosevelt Truck Trail, western approach of the Blue Ridge Road to the intersection with Gulf Brook Road (refer to Section 3 trail layout alternatives), and Palmer Pond Dam (three photographs) are shown. Note the location of the Northway I-87 in relation to the dam on Palmer Pond indicated by the presence of the blue tractor trailer to the east of the dam. The preferred alternative is sited relatively closer to the Northway, so it would not be immediately visible to travelers on the highway. The dam is shown in one photograph and the remaining photograph shows the location of the two other layouts considered for this crossing.

All of this information is pertinent to the Community Connector Trail Plan. Following is a discussion of the potential impacts and proposed mitigation measures specific to the year-round multi-use Community Connector Trail Plan.

C. Environmental Impacts of Plan Implementation and Measures Proposed to Mitigate Such Impacts.

SEQRA requires an objective description of potential significant environmental impacts, to the degree possible and include both quantitative and qualitative information to determine how likely it is that an impact will occur, how large the impact will be, how important the impact will be and the time frame in which the impact is anticipated.

One of the basic purposes of SEQRA is to incorporate the consideration of environmental factors at an early stage of project development. This often means that an EIS will be prepared before final plans are available. As a general rule, the amount of detail regarding a specific impact in an EIS should depend on the magnitude and importance of the impact. For instance, in terms of ground disturbance, the EIS should use accepted methods of calculating the area of ground disturbance, identify the structural and non-structural best management practices (BMP's) for minimizing ground disturbance and identify the approximate location and size of structures. Although final plans are not necessary, the EIS should contain enough detail on size, location and elements of the proposal to allow an understanding of the proposed action, the associated impacts and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation.

In this case, alternatives to trail layout for each section of the proposed multi-use trail have been considered and are discussed in detail in Section IV of this Plan.

Maps depicting the topography, soil drainage classes and potential wetlands present in the area of each alternative layout for each trail section that constitute the Community Connector Trail System can be found in Appendix 5. As can be seen in these maps, the trail layouts avoid steep slopes and wetlands and utilize well drained soils, to the maximum extent practicable. By avoiding wetlands, the experience of trail users other than snowmobilers is improved, since trails will be better suited for non-winter seasonal use. The wetland map layer is a model provided by the APA and exact locations need to be delineated in the field.

The project consists of constructing an approximately 47.14 mile long multiple use trail in the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest and adjacent lands, including 20.19 miles on existing State land, 10 miles on Conservation Easement lands, potentially 11.6 miles on the future preserve made up of the Boreas Pond Tract, and 5.35 miles on private land, some of which is owned by the towns.

Refer to the 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement for a thorough discussion of potential impacts and mitigation measures relating to soils, air quality, wildlife, sound, water quality and economic impacts (see Appendices E, F and H).

It is anticipated that there will be minor, temporary impacts to soils and slopes during construction. A Stormwater Pollution Prevention Plan (SWPPP) utilizing best management practices will be in place and maintained on-site during trail construction.

The trail plan lays out the location of trail modification, bridges, and other trail structures. The SWPPP designates the procedures and BMPs to be used in construction of these structures. The SWPPP is an integral part of the trail project plans.

Water is by far the worst enemy of a sustainable trail. Through proper layout the trail is designed to avoid or minimize developed drainage devices. Using water bars, broad-based dips, trail hardening and other trail building methods, water will be diverted off the trail tread and minimize down-trail water travel to reduce erosion and sedimentation and create a sustainable trail tread. New construction where possible will be built in a method that results in water being shed to the side of the trail, preventing "trail rutting." Bench-cut areas will be out-sloped to encourage lateral shedding of water.

Soils:

Most soils in VMWF are derived from glacial deposits that have been moved and deposited as glaciers advanced and retreated and are thus, quite different from the bedrock beneath them. These soils are divided into two broad categories: those derived from glacial till and those derived from glacial outwash, or eskers and moraines. Soils from glacial till are much more common on VMWF and somewhat richer than those from outwash. Organically derived soils make up a third, albeit less common soil type of VMWF. The predominant soils on the unit are those in the Becket, Tunbridge, and Lyman series, comprising approximately 75% of soils on the unit and found mostly at the middle elevations. Becket series consists of very deep, well-drained loamy soils, formed in glacial till. Tunbridge series consists of moderately deep, well-drained soils that formed in loamy glacial till. Lyman series consists of shallow, somewhat excessively drained soils formed in glacial till. Soils in the Becket, Tunbridge, and Lyman series are found in the vicinity of Muller, Oliver and Bigsby Ponds; in the area between the Lake Harris Campground and the Lower Duck Hole of Newcomb Lake; as well as around Moxham Mountain. Because soils in these three series are well-drained, they can be appropriate for trail development. Soils in these series are often bouldery, sometimes hindering bicycle and snowmobile trail layout. However, soil classifications are rarely the limiting factor in trail layout. Wetlands, topography, and scenery (among other things) generally dictate trail layout. Most proposed trail development in the unit is planned for areas in which these three series occur, partly because of their ubiquity. Additional information on area soils may be obtained from the Essex County Soil & Water Conservation District office located at the Cornell Cooperative Extension Center in Westport, New York or can be found online at the USDA NRCS soil survey website. Examples of the most frequently encountered associations along the trail corridor are:

- **721D—Becket-Tunbridge complex, 15 to 35 percent slopes, rocky, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **23% (see Max)** of the trail area and is well drained. This soil type is found on hillsides or mountainsides parent material consists of a loamy till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is B.

- **725B—Skerry-Becket complex, 3 to 15 percent slopes, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **22 %** of the trail area and is moderately well drained. This soil type is found on hillsides and mountainsides parent material consists of loamy lodgment till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is B/D.

- **BkC—Becket-Tunbridge complex, 8 to 15 percent slopes, rocky, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **13%** of the trail area and is well drained. This soil type is found on hillsides and mountainsides. Parent material consists of a loamy till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is B.

- **705B—Adirondack-Tahawus complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **12%** of the trail area and is somewhat poorly to very poorly drained.

This soil type is found on hillsides and mountainsides. Parent material consists of a loamy lodgement till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is C/D to B/D.

- **13A—Burnt Vly-Rumney-Pleasant Lake complex, 0 to 2 percent slopes.** This soil type comprises approximately **8%** of the trail area and is very poorly drained. This soil type is found in bogs and flood plains. Parent materials loamy alluvium derived from gneiss and organic material. Hydrologic soil group is B/D.

- **BkD—Becket-Tunbridge complex, 15 to 35 percent slopes, rocky, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **7%** of the trail area and is well drained. This soil type is found on hillsides or mountainsides. Parent materials are loamy till and loamy lodgment till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is B.

- **727B—Skerry-Adirondack complex, 0 to 8 percent slopes, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **5%** of the trail area and is moderately well drained to somewhat poorly drained. This soil type is found on hillsides and mountainsides. Parent materials are loamy lodgment till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil groups are B/D to C/D.

- **TuD—Tunbridge-Lyman complex, 15 to 35 percent slopes, very rocky, very bouldery.** This soil type comprises approximately **5%** of the trail area and is well drained. This soil type is found on hillsides or mountainsides. Parent material is loamy till derived from gneiss. Hydrologic soil group is B.

Trail construction will consist of three main phases:

- Tree cutting and blowdown removal.
- Bridge construction
- Terrain modification and installation of erosion control best management practices.

Tree cutting as a first step will remove identified and marked trees which fall inside the trail corridor. Trees will be cut flush to the ground with chainsaws and removed from the trail.

Bridge construction will be another step of the trail construction process. Once the trees have been removed from the trail bed, bridge materials will be brought to the bridge sites either during the winter or during times when the soil conditions will support the transportation of these materials.

Terrain modification and installation of water control devices performed by the mini excavator will be another step of the trail construction process. During this process the mini excavator will make one planned trip along the trail length. This trip will allow for terrain modification in select locations consisting of bench cuts, rearrangement of specific rocks, installation of water bars, and repair of any eroded portions of pre-existing woods roads that may have been utilized during placement of this trail.

Water/sediment control structures will be installed at locations of bridge construction and terrain modification locations as required to minimize any potential sources of erosion or sedimentation. When active work is complete, disturbed portions of this trail will be seeded and mulched and any temporary erosion and sediment control structures will be left in place until the site is stabilized.

Refer to the Implementation Schedule in Section X of this Plan for a discussion of the estimated timing for construction of trail segments. It is expected that clearing of vegetation from trail bed will be completed, followed by installation of water/erosion/sediment control structures as necessary for bridge construction or terrain modification. Then trail segments will be completed with various portions being put to bed, with seeding and mulch as they are individually completed. Temporary drainage/erosion/sediment control structures will remain in place until the areas have stabilized.

Description of the minimum erosion and sediment control practices:

All erosion and control practices will be installed during the terrain modification or bridge construction phases of the project. Areas targeted for ground manipulation or rehabilitation and subject to erosion will be identified and control practices will be installed to avoid, minimize, or repair erosion hazards. All temporary practices will remain in place until the areas have stabilized.

The following sedimentation and erosion control practices will be utilized in implementation of a work plan:

DRAINAGE

- Proper drainage will carry the water either over the trail, under the trail, or will intercept the water before it crosses the trail.
- Surface runoff which is intercepted by erosion-control measures must be collected by drainage ways and discharged in stabilized areas or sediment basins.
- The drier the terrain, the more stable the trail, which keeps potential erosion problems at a minimum, and also minimizes the need to perform maintenance.
- Examine topography, surface flow patterns, soils, and the water table to help determine the area's potential wetness, preferably during the wettest months of the year, to help prevent future erosion problems.
- The ideal trail would be located on soil which has a seasonal high water table of two to four feet below the surface.
- Poor drainage is the primary cause of a majority of trail maintenance problems which can be avoided with proper planning.
- Cross-drainage techniques, such as swales, and water bars should be utilized to divert water off of the trail as soon as possible.
- Attempts should always be made to maintain natural drainage patterns.

Outsloping

- Outslope will be used on bench cuts and other locations prescribed in the work plan.
- Outsloping is a process where the trail surface is sloped in the same direction (with) as the slope on which it is located
- Outsloping is appropriate in areas where the grade of the slope is relatively high and in areas where the amount of water flow is relatively low.
- Be sure to maintain the slope pitch at approximately 1-2%.
- No intermittent or perennial streams should cross over the trail.
- No drainage ditches should be laid on the upslope side of the trail.
- Make sure the water is not being diverted towards streams or other bodies of water. If water drainage is unavoidable in areas adjacent to streams, make sure there are vegetative buffers.

- If water flow is more extensive than outsloping can control, larger structures such as diversion ditches may be necessary.

Swales, Dips and Berms

- These features constitute a depression constructed across a slope, above and in conjunction with an earthen berm.
- These features are used in areas where surface runoff might create erosion problems running across a trail.
- These features are used on slopes which have a trail grade less than 10%.
- Install swales at the top of any slope and at proper spacing along sloping sections of the trail.
- The swale can be as shallow or as deep as necessary, taking into consideration the expected trail use and the conditions.
- Soil should be removed from the swale and transferred to the downhill side to form the berm.
- The swale should be constructed at a 30-45 degree angle downslope from a line perpendicular to the direction of the trail.
- The downhill end of the swale should extend far enough to disperse the water flow away from the trail.
- If erosion is a potential problem at the outlet (downhill end) of the swale, riprap or other velocity dissipaters should be utilized.
- The uphill end of the swale should extend far enough beyond the trail in order to fully intercept the flow of water.
- Alternative water drainage techniques may be required if the swales are consistently becoming filled or breached.
- The frequency that the swale and the berm may need to be cleaned or restored depends on the amount of sedimentation which occurs.
- A broad-based dip is the recommended practice on trails where distinct bumps pose an erosion problem.

Water Bars

- These features consist of a rock, earthen, or log barrier, or excavated channel, angled across a trail to divert the runoff water off of a trail.
- In general, the greater the slope and the higher the velocity or volume of water, the greater the need for water bars as opposed to other drainage techniques.
- Earthen water bars will be the preferred method of construction.
- Place each rock or log solidly into the ground, preferably using flat rocks or rot-resistant logs.
- Water bars will be installed at locations prescribed and as needed in other locations to prevent erosion of the trail tread.
- All water bars prescribed in the work plan will be constructed according to New York State Forestry Best Management Practices for Water Quality 2011 Edition.
- All water bars prescribed within 100 feet of a stream will have a catchment basin/rock trap to prevent sedimentation of the stream.
- Install water bars at the top of slopes and at steep sections of the trail as needed.
- The water bar should be constructed at a 30-45 degree angle downslope from a line perpendicular to the direction of the trail.
- Extend the outlet end of the water bar beyond the edge of the trail and place rocks or logs there to filter the water.
- Construct the water bar so that it extends at least 12 inches beyond both sides of the trail.

- As a minimum, the water bar should drain at a 3% outslope.
- In a rock water bar, each rock should overlap the rock below it and be overlapped by the rock directly above it.
- A log water bar should be constructed with peeled logs at least 10 inches in diameter.
- Log water bars should be held in place with large stones.
- Observe the trail during a rainstorm to more accurately determine the need for water bars.
- The channel created by the water bar outlet and the water bar itself can be lined with stone to reduce erosion.
- Tree species appropriate for log water bars include spruce, hemlock, beech and oak.
- Consider using box culverts where the bumps caused by water bars pose a problem.

Spacing for Water Bars

Road/Trail Grade (percent)	Spacing Between Water Bars (feet)
2 %	250 ft.
5	135
10	80
15	60
20	45
30	35

Open Top Culverts

- Open top culverts constructed of 4”x4”s will be used where small drainages and seeps cross high traffic sections of the trail.
- Open top culverts will be in place before machinery crosses small drainages.
- Larger drainage crossings will follow BMP guidelines appropriate for the site.
- Crossing streams prior to bridge construction will follow BMP guidelines.
- Open top culverts can be constructed of either stone or sawn timber, depending on the availability of materials.
- Log culverts may be constructed with two 6-10" logs set into the trail and pinned to prevent movement.
- Line the base of the culvert with riprap and install spreaders if necessary.
- Sawn timber open-top culverts are usually constructed of two 3" x 8" planks set on a 3" x 12" plank, spiked at the bottom. This would create a water flow area 8" deep x 6" wide.
- Open-top culverts are most appropriate when water runoff is light.

SEDIMENT BARRIERS

Silt Fences

- Silt fences will be used around all bridge foundations where possible to keep sediment from entering the stream. Silt Fences will remain in place until the area is firm and stable. After the area has stabilized the silt fence can be removed. If silt fences will not fit beneath and around bridge foundations, any exposed soil will be covered with native stone to slow runoff and prevent erosion until the area is stabilized with grass seed and mulch.

- The filter fabric should be purchased in a continuous roll and cut to the length of the carrier to avoid the use of joints. When joints are unavoidable, filter cloth should be spliced together only at a support post, with a minimum of a six-inch overlap, and sealed.
- When wire support is used, a standard-strength filter cloth may be used. When wire support is not being used, extra-strength cloth should be used.
- The fabric should be stapled or wired to the fence and a minimum of 4 inches of the fabric should be extended into the trench.
- The trench should be backfilled and the soil compacted over the filter fabric.
- Inspect bales and barriers after heavy rains.
- Sediment deposits should be removed when the level of deposits reaches one-half of the height of the bale or the silt fencing.
- Barriers should be removed when the area has re-vegetated and the barriers are no longer needed. The sediment should be removed or graded out before removal.
- Straw (weed free) barriers require more maintenance than geotextiles due to the permeability of the bales being less than that of silt fencing.
- Silt fences should be removed when they have served their useful purpose, but not before the upslope area has been permanently stabilized.

STABILIZATION

Mulching and Seeding

- Upon completion of the trail, the area will be seeded with a DEC approved conservation mix and mulched with straw to stabilize the trail tread. Disturbed areas outside of the trail tread may also be additionally mulched with woody debris from on site to aid in stabilization.
- Active work areas will not require mulch, until work in the area is completed.
- Seed will be non-invasive grass species.
- Seeded areas should be inspected periodically and after heavy rain events to check for erosion and loss of vegetative cover.
- Areas that have lost mulch prior to establishment of vegetation will be re-established.

Water Crossings

- Water crossings are a major concern in the construction and use of trails because of the potential for large amounts of sediment to enter a stream.
- Avoid water crossings if at all possible. Rerouting the trail away from water crossings will save construction time and money, as well as create less of an impact to the environment.
- When needed, crossing sites should be selected at right angles to the stream and should not interfere with natural water flow.
- Erosion and sedimentation-control devices should be utilized whenever trail construction occurs in or near a wetland, stream, or water body.
- Before constructing any type of water crossing on trails, a permit or notification from the APA is needed.

Fords

- A ford is a shallow stream crossing that utilizes the hardened streambed.
- Fords will only be used as a temporary crossing for machinery, until a bridge is constructed.

- Fords will be used only on perennial streams having intermittent flow.
- Fording should be a last resort due to the potential impacts on water quality.
- Fords will be used only where the streambed is hard or easily hardened.
- Fords will be used where recreational use is non-motorized.
- Fords will be used when no other stream crossing alternative is viable or permitted.
- Attempt to minimize extensive work within the streambed.
- Provide for a hardened stream bank to prevent bank erosion.
- Fording can generate bank erosion, disturb aquatic life and may be potentially dangerous for the user.
- Fords will be closed if water turbidity is increased.

Boardwalks

- Boardwalks are used in wet or seasonally wet areas, to allow for sustainable travel by non-winter users. Winter users will not use the boardwalks, as they will have a frozen and snow covered surface to travel over.
- Boardwalks are constructed of 6”x6”x4’ pressure treated lumber that is set on top of the wet area. The 4”x4” stringers are placed across them, and then 2”x4” decking back across the stringers.
- Decking is spaced at 1” intervals to allow for a sufficient amount of light to enter under the structure in order to allow vegetation to flourish.

Constructed Bridges

- Bridges will be constructed to cross streams at prescribed locations according to the Department’s snowmobile bridge design and in accord with APA policy (Agency Guidance, State Land -2).
- Culvert bridges will not be used as a permanent structure, and will be used only for temporary crossings during the first winter if bridges are not able to be constructed (not anticipated).
- A constructed bridge will be used only when the terrain is not conducive to any other type of construction or there is a need to protect/maintain the stream bed in an unaltered condition.
- Place the sills back from the top of the bank and have no work or materials within the banks (bank-to bank bridge.)
- Bank-to-bank bridges (outside top of banks) are preferred. The bridge should span the total width of a stream and its adjacent flood plain.
- It is a good idea to be prepared for washouts by anchoring one end of the bridge with a cable, so that in the event of the bridge being swept away, it can be retrieved and reset.
- Use large rocks or ledges as abutments whenever possible.
- For larger streams, complete hydrologic studies to compute peak flow rates for proper design of the bridge.
- A dredge and fill permit or notification is required for work within the body of a stream or water body, or within the banks of a stream and in any adjacent seasonal wetlands.
- Bridges should use native materials compatible with the adjacent trail environment whenever possible.
- Because of the proximity to wetlands, it is especially important to have erosion-control measures in place before bridge work begins.
- Rocks or logs should be used as fill around logs to bring the trail surface up to the level of the bridge deck to allow for drainage.

- Abutments, such as rock, logs, and sawn timbers should be firmly anchored into the stream bank and placed parallel to the stream thread.

Wet Soil Crossings

- Avoid constructing new trails through wet soils and consider rerouting those sections of existing trails that cross wet soils.
- Trails located on wet soils may not be appropriate for frozen ground conditions.
- When designing trails, attempt to provide alternative routes during wet seasons.
- Rake out ruts caused by machinery.

Corduroy

- Corduroy is a structural unit composed of a series of logs or other material placed perpendicular on the trail to provide a method of crossing wet areas.
- Corduroy can be used as a temporary means of stabilizing a wet area of a trail until more extensive construction can be arranged.
- Corduroy can be used on winter-use trails to protect wet areas which are usually frozen but may soften occasionally during the winter months.
- Lay a mat of green brush, posts, or small logs parallel to the direction of the trail.
- Use geotextile fabric or other appropriate bedding if needed.
- Cover the mat with a series of logs laid side by side, perpendicular to the trail.
- The corduroy should be removed in the spring to prevent damage to the area and should be left in place during the summer until drainage problems can be corrected or until trail rerouting can be completed.
- Cover logs with gravel or native material to create the treadway.
- An alternative to constructing corduroy is geotextiles with gravel cover.

Temporary Culverts

- Temporary culverts consist of a metal, plastic, cement, or wood pipe placed under a trail to permit crossing an intermittent or active stream.
- Temporary culverts are used on trails where water consists of small or intermittent flows that have not been bridged before winter.
- In general, cross-drainage culverts are more effective for drainage areas under ten acres.
- Culverts should be of a size appropriate to carry potential maximum water flow. The minimum size recommended is 12" to facilitate cleaning with a shovel.
- The culvert should extend one foot beyond the base of the trail on either side.
- Culverts should be sloped at least 6% to produce water velocities that will prevent the pipe from becoming unduly silted.
- It may be necessary to construct a berm across the side ditch to assist in water removal.
- Stream alignment should be straight at the point of crossing and of uniform profile so as not to obstruct the flow of water.
- For larger water flows, a corrugated metal culvert is recommended.
- Seat the pipe, backfill to half the diameter with clean fill, and tamp.
- Then fill over and around the culvert with snow and tamp at six inch intervals to pack in, add strength to the pipe, and to prevent seepage along the pipe. Cover the pipe with 12” of snow.

Temporary and Permanent Soil Stabilization Plan:

Trail construction will begin with clearing of identified and marked trees, clearing of blowdown and grubbing. All water/sediment control structures will be installed on the first pass of the mini excavator or around bridge sites if bridge construction begins before the pass of the mini excavator. When active work is complete on the trail, it will be mulched and seeded. Any temporary structures will be removed only after the trail is stabilized.

Bridge materials will be transported to identify sites during winter or times when soil conditions allow. Installation of water/erosion/sediment control structures or other terrain manipulation will take place when soil conditions permit and will be stabilized section by section as work is completed. Upon completion of the trail, temporary water/erosion/sediment control structures can be removed once the trail has become firm and stable.

Maintenance Inspection Schedule:

No contractors will be used in construction of the facility (trail). Maintenance inspections will be carried out by Departmental personnel on a weekly basis and after significant rain events and after the spring thaw. After completion, the trail will be inspected seasonally.

Pollution Prevention Measures:

- All equipment and machinery will be maintained in accordance with manufacturer's maintenance recommendations.
- All equipment will be inspected for leaks.
- Care will be taking during refueling of equipment to avoid spills.
- Refueling will be done at least 100 feet from wetlands and streams.
- A spill kit will be available on site in case of fuel spills.
- Carry it in, carry it out. All materials and litter not used in construction of the trail or trail structures will be removed from the site.
- Work areas will be inspected for litter at the end of each day.

Conformance with New York State Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control:

All proposed structures are in conformance with required standards.

Construction Plans

Note that thorough site specific construction level work plans are developed prior to each segment of trail construction which detail (step by step in hundredths of a mile) every area of proposed work, including leveling of each hummock, padding at each rock approach as deemed necessary, every relocation of a protruding rock or boulder, installation of boardwalks or other methods of water crossing, and areas which need APA wetland delineation and potentially a permit. During this process it is important to note that the least intrusive method of construction is always preferred, for instance, if a wet area has several rocks in it, the rocks are padded around instead of being removed, if possible.

Work plans identify that all aspects of the trail construction are covered, including brushing, tree cutting, rock removal, drainage, terrain modifications, tread development and bridging activities. In the case of the Community Connector Trail Plan, work plans state that the trail segment is being developed as a multipurpose trail following the Snowmobile Trail Management Guidance. The core objective of the

Guidance is to balance tree cutting, rock removal and terrain modification, using careful layout to design a trail that has the character of a foot trail and can be safe and sustainable for the multiple users of the trail. Specific All Terrain Bicycle and hiking accommodations will be made, as the trail will be used for that purpose in non-winter months. Through a thorough examination of the trail corridor as it is laid out and developed the Department will further adjust, as needed, the plan and actions to build the trail through work plan modifications. Using this method allows for necessary flexibility as staff look at each section of trail as trees are cut or tread defined. Snowmobile Trail Work Project Plan Modification reports will be submitted to document changes. These reports will amend this plan so the complete process of the design and thinking process and work completed are pulled together in a document that captures the entire story of the construction of each trail segment.

a) **Tree Cutting-** A tally of proposed tree cuts by species and size (diameter at breast height) is detailed by a DEC Forester. Notice of this is provided in the DEC Environmental Notice Bulletin as required by DEC policy LF-91. The trees to be cut are marked with orange paint. The work plan notes the number of trees that are healthy, distressed, diseased, or dead snags. <u>ALL STUMPS WILL BE CUT FLUSH with the GROUND</u>. High stumps will result in safety hazards to workers and future snowmobile use, once the ground around them is compacted and they stick out more. Cutters will take the time to flush stumps as they go. Trees will be dispersed off the trail; however tree trunks of larger sized trees may be used to delineate the trail at certain locations or may be used to modify the trail tread through a future work plan.

b) **Brushing and Pruning -** The width of the trail is defined. Brush will be cleared to a specified width and overhead branches trimmed to a specified height. All brush and stumps will be cut level or with the slope of the terrain. Branches will be pruned with proper cuts to avoid leaving branch stubs and allow for trees to heal properly. Small brush that hangs into the trail width from beyond the specified width can be cut at the base instead of creating “hedge” cuts. Any brush to be cut on a curve or slope will be marked to delineate the allowable width.

c) **Rock Removal-** Rock Removal is included in the list of terrain modifications below. Any additional rock work that is needed will be identified in a Snowmobile Work Project Plan Modification Report.

d) **Drainage Devices-** Through proper layout the trail is designed to avoid or minimize developed drainage devices. Using water bars, broad-based dips, cross drains, trail hardening and other trail building methods we will divert water off the trail tread and minimize down-trail travel of water to create a sustainable trail tread. Areas along that trail that have slope or potential drainage needs will be built in a method that results in water being shed to the side of the trail, preventing “Trail Rutting.” Bench-cut areas will be out-sloped to encourage lateral shedding of water. Drainage devices will be installed when deemed necessary and in accordance with the BMP guide. Any more substantial work that may be needed will be identified in a Snowmobile Work Project Plan Modification Report.

e) **Terrain Modification-** When trails are built through unbroken forest, there needs to be a balance of what trees are cut and what dirt is moved or areas leveled. The balance of tree cutting and terrain modification is important to achieve, to help the trail have the character of a foot trail and be sustainable to multiple users. Where there is moderate side slope present there will be full bench cuts and have proper and sustainable upslope cuts that can re-vegetate

to a natural forest cover. Any additional work that may be needed will be identified in a Snowmobile Work Project Plan Modification Report. Due to the fact that this will be a multi-use trail used by snowmobiles, hikers, and mountain bikes, there will need to be some hardening done throughout the trail. Although this is a more intensive trail manipulation, it will only be implemented on a smaller 36" to 48" (depending on specific site needs, and in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines) wide path on necessary sections. Any hardening will also be done in accordance with International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) standards to insure proper installation.

f) **Trail Markers and Signs-** This trail will be marked with Blue trail markers. These will either be DEC Snowmobile Trail Markers or markers that say TRAIL.

g) Trail rehabilitation – any rehabilitation work necessary, will be performed by the work crews as they make their way out of the work area. Ruts caused by All Terrain Vehicles will be raked smooth and drainage areas impacted by ruts will be restored to working order. Areas disturbed around the bridge sites during the construction process will be raked out, seeded with native grasses, and covered in straw. All scraps of lumber will be removed from bridge sites.

h) **Bridges** – The number of bridges and boardwalks required for the trail are detailed. The work plans note that the bridges will conform to the adopted Forest Preserve Bridge Design. Bridge materials will be transported to each bridge site via an ATV, snowmobile, landscaping equipment or groomer. Each bridge will be built to allow for the transportation of materials for any bridge construction that may occur beyond that location, unless a method can be used to create zero impacts on stream bed and banks. The construction of bridges will involve the mud sills being placed on exposed mineral soil or rock. Boardwalks will be 4 feet wide and will be decked with 2x4's in 1" spacing in order to allow light to pass through to the soil and vegetation below.

IMPACTS OF PLAN IMPLEMENTATION

Short-Term Impacts

The immediate short-term impact of implementing the Community Connector Trail Plan will be in the form of increased DEC staff time and materials necessary to plan and construct the trails. Similarly, the communities will spend staff and volunteer time as well as materials to plan and construct the trail connections to merge with recreational facilities in the individual towns.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term impacts include a possible increase in overall levels of mountain bike, cross-country ski, snow shoe, horseback and snowmobile traffic, with an attendant increase in economic benefit to local communities. Increasingly stringent EPA emissions standards for snowmobiles should mitigate any increase in emissions and impacts to air quality, although it is impossible to estimate the likely increase in snowmobile traffic or the estimated change in emissions levels. Shifting of recreational traffic to the periphery of Forest Preserve units and along transportation corridors should decrease user conflicts and wildlife impacts. New standards should reduce soil impacts and water quality impacts.

Cumulative Impacts

Full implementation of the entire Community Connector Trail Plan will occur over a number of years. Further, due to the many points of access to the multi-use trail system, the increase in use will be dispersed throughout the communities to be connected by the trail system. Therefore, significant impacts to any one area are not likely.

While the anticipated increase in snowmobile traffic within the Adirondack Park may increase exhaust emissions above what they would be without implementing the Community Connector Trail Plan, stricter emissions standards will reduce the overall impact of this increase. In particular, the EPA regulations call for a three-phase reduction in snowmobile emissions to have been implemented by 2012. By 2006, emission levels were required to be reduced to 70 percent of levels permitted in 2002. By 2010, emissions were required to be reduced to half of 2006 levels, and by 2012 emissions were allowed to amount to only 30 percent of 2006 levels.

The plan will redirect the level snowmobile use from interior Wild Forest areas to the peripheral areas, where motor vehicle traffic is already concentrated. This will enhance the non-motorized user experience in the interior Wild Forest areas while providing better connections with wider trails to the communities. User conflicts should be reduced for all user groups. These factors should result in increased tourism and economic benefits to local communities. However, the re-designation of trails will reduce the opportunities for snowmobilers to experience the Wild Forest character of interior areas and make it more challenging for cross-country skiers who prefer to use trails groomed for snowmobiling.

Increased education and law enforcement efforts are anticipated to reduce unauthorized use of both public and private lands. Utilization of trail siting guidelines should result in reduced potential for trespass onto private lands and wilderness areas.

Soil impacts are anticipated to decrease as a result of implementing the Community Connector Trail Plan. Trail grades and cross slopes will be reduced, wetland crossings will be minimized and trail surface guidelines will reduce soil disturbance during construction and maintenance of trails.

Safety is expected to improve as a result of implementation of trail design and construction guidance. Improved education efforts should allow the public to better anticipate the conditions likely to be encountered on the Adirondack Forest Preserve multi-use trail system; trail surface guidelines allow for removal of protruding rocks that could pose safety hazards: tree cutting standards allow for expedient clearing of hazard trees and trees that have fallen across trails.

The overall impact of snowmobiles on wildlife is anticipated to decrease as a result of implementing the Community Connector Trail Plan. Snowmobile, horseback and mountain bike traffic will be reduced in interior areas and will be shifted to areas where motor vehicle traffic already exists. Snowmobile trails that are re-designated as non-motorized trails will re-vegetate, narrowing or even eliminating the fragmentation effect that they may currently have on forested areas.

The UMP process includes SEQR analysis of the alternatives for trail alignment and provides for public input. The environmental impacts of re-designating trails or developing additional trails are evaluated through this process. Elements considered within this process include but are not limited to:

- Soils/Wetlands
- Drainage
- Vegetation
- Fish/Wildlife
- User Conflicts
- Relationships with adjacent landowners and other public lands
- Tourism/Economic impacts.

The evaluation considers both short and long term impacts. Short term impacts will primarily relate to those associated with the construction of new trails and functions related to the operation and maintenance of the trail system, as noted above.

D. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

New trail layout and trail re-designation decisions made in the UMP process are guided by sound environmental principles. Multi-use trail siting and design is accomplished using established guidance documents and inherent in the process is the avoidance of valuable natural resources such as wetlands and wildlife habitat and use of appropriate slopes, avoidance of trees and rocks and reuse of existing skid trails or old woods roads or existing trails. This approach results in mitigation by design to avoid potential significant environmental impacts.

During the trail construction process, resources including staff time and materials will be utilized. Grading will occur as deemed necessary and soils and surface water resources will be subject to short term impacts. Vegetation will be removed. The number, species and size of trees to be removed is calculated carefully during the formulation of specific work plans for each trail segment. Tree density (number of trees per acre) varies with stand age, species composition and site quality. The number of trees cut will be mitigated by re-designated trails re-vegetating to narrower widths.

E. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

The planning, development and implementation of this Community Connector Trail Plan will involve irreversible and irretrievable commitments of public funds in the form of time, labor and materials. Also, there is a commitment to the long-term maintenance of a multi-use trail system for the Adirondack Park. This commitment will be made by all state agencies, local municipalities, snowmobile groups/clubs and private landowners involved in the administration of this trail system. Acquisition of trail corridors through easement, or fee title by the State will lead to a commitment to expend time, labor and materials to maintain these trail corridors for snowmobile use.

F. Growth Inducement

SEQRA requires that public need and other social, economic and environmental benefits of the project be weighed and balanced against identified environmental harm. Implementation of the Community Connector Trail Plan may result in increased snowmobile use as well as other users of the multi-use trails throughout the region. These community connector trails are meant to link Adirondack communities that offer travelers services such as food, lodging, fuel, repair service and other support services. The creation of community connector trails may increase the Adirondack Park's attractiveness to the touring market as well as increase the local recreational enthusiasts' territory. This will bring positive, on-going, economic impacts to the Adirondack communities. Impact will be in the form of

increased business investment in the community, increased tax revenue, and possibly more year-round business and employment opportunities.

G. No Action Alternative

Taking no action at this time would result in the continuation of snowmobile traffic at current levels in interior areas of Wild Forest areas, with an anticipated continuation of the trend of increasing traffic as the sport of snowmobiling grows. Conflicts with other winter users of the Forest Preserve and adjacent land owners would likely increase with the increase in snowmobile traffic. Potential positive economic impacts from use of the multi-use trail system would not accrue to the local communities. State grants provided to the communities would not have the desired effect of increased economic opportunities from increased recreation traffic.

This page intentionally left blank

Appendix 2 – Palmer Pond Bridge Alternatives

Northway ROW – Bridge length: 100 ft +/-, relatively level grade

This site was considered because it would place the bridge below the sight line of moving Northway traffic. Due to flooding during a 100 yr storm, 16 ft of clearance is needed below the bridge to protect the bridge from damage. This site would require a lot of fill to raise bridge approaches to provide this clearance, therefore is not a viable option.

Alternative A - Bridge length: 134 ft, up to 7.5% grade

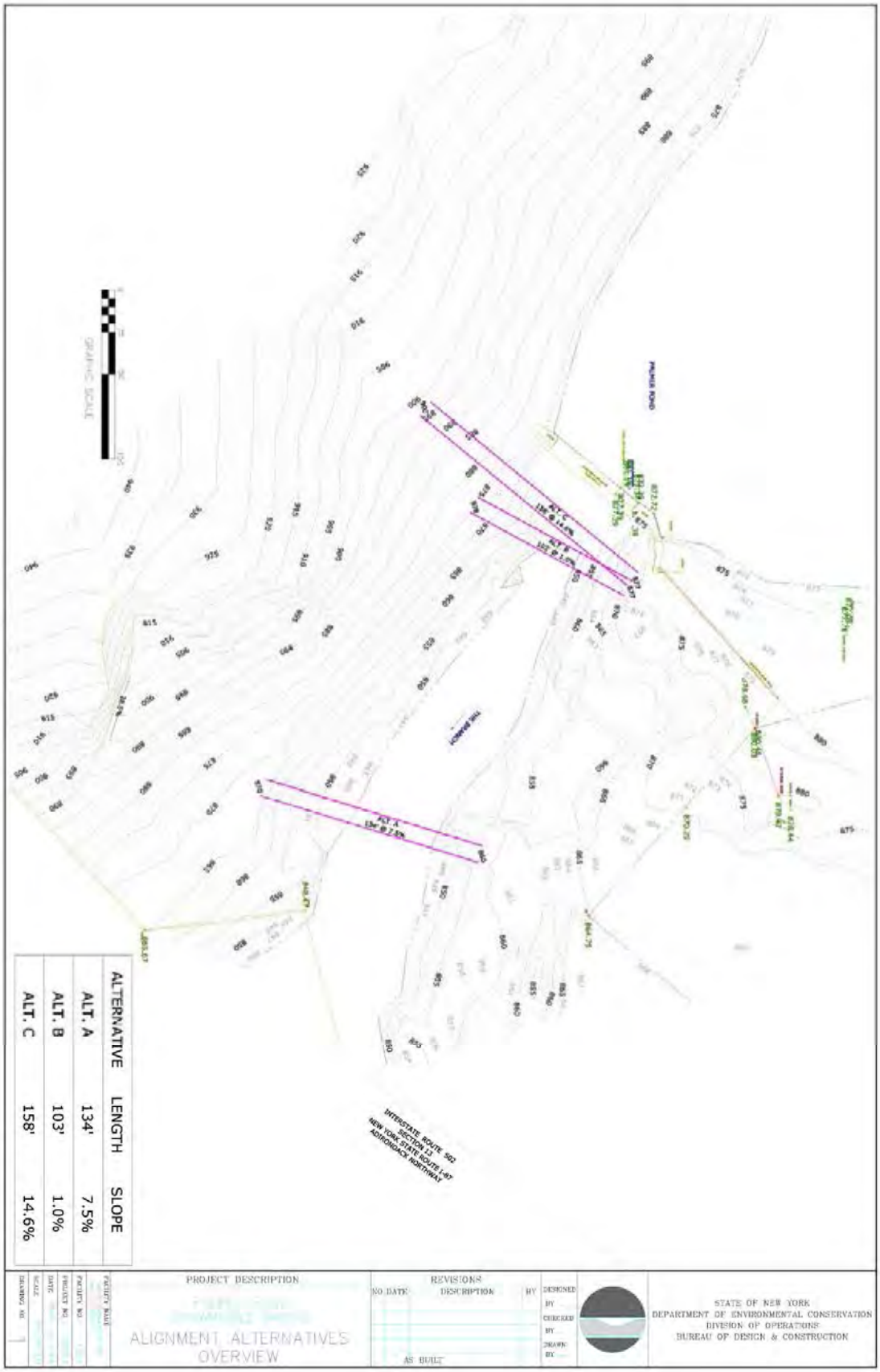
This site provides the required storm clearance under the bridge. There are relatively level spots on both banks to provide staging area to cross the bridge. Approach from the North would require some clearing of small trees. Approach from the South will require clearing heavier trees and may require some earth benching as the trail turns and heads west. This trail would also provide equipment access to the South end of the dam for maintenance. The relative elevation of the bridge is below the sight lines of the casual observer traveling down the Northway. This is the preferred alternative.

Alternative B - Bridge length: 103 ft, 1% grade

This location is above the 100 storm flow water surface elevation; however the North abutment is located in an area that receives flow during the 25 year storm event. This would affect water surface elevation of storm flows going over the dam, and the flow would impact the abutment and northern approach. 35 ft of approach is affected by 25 yr storm and an additional 40 ft of approach is affected by 50 yr flows. The South abutment lands on a steep slope. There is little room to create a staging area for bridge entry. Trail alignment would be critical to safe travel. Icy trail conditions could present a real safety concern with snowmobiles/groomers sliding into the gorge. Clearing of old hemlocks would be required on North side. South side clearing is minimized. This site would be clearly visible from the Northway. This site is not recommended.

Alternative C - Bridge length: 158 ft, 14.6% slope

Very similar location as Alternative B except South abutment is rotated and extended to land at a higher location with better natural grades. Same storm flow concerns exist on the North Abutment as Alt B. South abutment is located about 20 ft higher in elevation and 55 ft further south. This avoids the steep ground slope but creates a fairly steep bridge deck slope. Staging area on the south approach is available. This bridge alignment is above the lower portion of the dam spillway. This would limit future dam rehabilitation access, as the bridge would block crane access to the spillway. If required the bridge could be removed for construction adding to future costs. This site would be clearly visible from the Northway. Clearing of old hemlocks would be required on North side. South side clearing is minimized. This site is not recommended.



ALTERNATIVE	LENGTH	SLOPE
ALT. A	134'	7.5%
ALT. B	103'	1.0%
ALT. C	158'	14.6%

Appendix 3 – Response to Public Comment

The Department held a public comment period on the Draft Trail Plan from June 18, 2014 to July 25, 2014. Below is a summary of those comments with the Department's response.

General

- All disabled veterans, wounded warriors, and elderly are banned from this trail.
    - *The primary purpose of the trail proposals are for snowmobiling, horseback riding and mountain biking. These activities do not exclude participation by all individuals with disabilities. Accessibility accommodations already exist to support the equestrian activities.*

- There is no motorized access for those less than physically fit.
    - *Snowmobiles are motor vehicles which are open for use on the trail. The trail can also be accessed in the non-winter months via horseback, and mountain bikes.*

- Creating 4-season trails for multiple uses is appropriate.
    - *Noted*

- The UMP should include a timeline for implementation.
    - *This is a UMP amendment, and a timeline is inappropriate, without first knowing a budget and available resource allocations.*

- The release of the Draft UMP represents a lack of information, inadequate analysis, and a phased approach that is not keeping the intent of the UMP process outlined in the APAPSLMP.
    - *This is a Draft UMP Amendment that relies on significant info and analysis that was carried out in the full UMPs that this draft amends. The department is confident that the intent and process outlined in the APSLMP has been followed.*

- There is no good way to connect Newcomb to Minerva by trail. Real obstacles prevent it.
    - *The trail complies with the terms, restrictions, and guidelines outlined in our snowmobile management guidance, and is a viable and sustainable route between communities.*

- DEC should include long-term snowfall data in UMPs to support construction of new trails.
    - *These proposals are for multiple use trails so snowfall is not required for all uses.*

- An agreement with the railroad operator is needed before utilizing the railroad for recreation.
    - *The Department is working with the owner of the railroad to secure permission to use the railroad in the short-term while the preferred alternative is being implemented.*

- This UMP should be rescinded with the Essex Chain UMP and the Upper Hudson Woodlands RMP. Interim plans should be completed, then a comprehensive plan that includes snowmobiling and mountain biking should be released for all three areas.
    - *All of the trails proposed are in the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, not the Essex Chain Management Complex. This is a comprehensive plan of 4 major areas that complies with the comprehensive snowmobile plan and guidance.*

- The entrance to Camp Santanoni needs to be reconstructed for better visibility, and access for pedestrian and snowmobile access. This would align with ongoing efforts in the community, such as the Newcomb Smart Growth Hamlet Plan.
    - *The Historic land classification guides the department to retain historic features of the area. Due to this, the department cannot relocate the bridge or road. This is outside the scope of the ump amendment, but it could be taken up in the next Camp Santanoni Historic Area UMP.*

- The plan needs to state a priority order for the completion of the trails.
    - *The department will complete trails as funding and staffing allows.*

Snowmobiling

- The snowmobile trails as proposed are appropriate
    - *Noted*

- The loss of the railroad as a riding opportunity has created a need for an alternative in this area.
    - *The Department is working with the owner of the railroad to secure permission to use the railroad in the short-term while the preferred alternative is being implemented.*

- Snowmobile trails should remain open.
    - *The department is obligated to comply with guideline 4 of the APSLMP and the Management Guidance. Some trails will be duplicated or made redundant with new connections, so they will be closed.*

- Closure of the two underutilized trails is appropriate.
    - *The department is obligated to comply with guideline 4 of the APSLMP, as a no material increase in snowmobile trails is allowed. Some trails will be duplicated or made redundant with new connections, so they will be closed.*

- Trails shouldn't be closed just because they are underutilized. Many snowmobilers seek out these opportunities.
    - *The department is obligated to comply with guideline 4 of the APSLMP, as a no material increase in snowmobile trails is allowed. Some trails will be duplicated or made redundant with new connections, so they will be closed.*

- The trail from Route 28N to the Iron (Polaris) bridge should be Class II instead of Class I.
    - *This trail segment is no longer proposed in this Plan.*

- There is no need to use the Polaris Bridge for snowmobiling because the Newcomb to Minerva route proposed elsewhere in the plan would make it duplicative.
    - *The proposal to use the Polaris Bridge has been removed from this Plan.*

- There has been extensive analysis of snowmobiling options in this area, and it is time to move forward without delay.
    - *Noted*

- Trails should not be closed until new trails are opened.
    - *This is also the department's position, and our normal operating procedure.*

- Trails shouldn't be closed just because they don't meet the "multi-use" criteria.
    - *The department is not proposing to close any trails due to not meeting multiple use trail criteria.*

- The proposed trail from Route 28N to the Polaris Bridge goes "nowhere", as no trails are proposed in the Essex Chain area at this time.
    - *This trail segment is no longer being proposed in this Plan.*

- The UMP fails to document that Section 5 is contingent upon approval of snowmobiling in the Essex Chain UMP.
    - *The proposal for this trail segment has been removed from this Plan.*

- The absence of snowmobile planning in the Essex Chain UMP is considered segmentation pursuant to SEQR. The impacts of motorized use proposed in vicinity of the Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area, the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, and Upper Hudson Woodlands conservation easement must be considered in the same document.
    - *The Department considers this to be permissible segmentation.*

- The preferred alternative in Section 5 intersects a remote interior area as defined by the 2009 management guidance.
    - *Section 5 is no longer being proposed in this Plan.*

- DEC should wait until acquisition of the Boreas Ponds tract is complete before finalizing this plan.
    - *Final decisions on whether or not a snowmobile trail will transect the Boreas Ponds tract will be determined through a classification and planning process after the purchase of the Boreas Ponds tract.*

- The Department needs to disclose the effect of these proposals on the snowmobile mileage cap for the Adirondack Park.
    - *There is a chart located in Section VIII of the Plan that shows the effect of these proposals on the snowmobile mileage cap for the Adirondack Park.*

- Use of the Gulf Brook Road is a better alternative than riding the shoulder of Blue Ridge Road.
    - *Noted*

- DEC needs to plan for moving the trail off the Blue Ridge Road and Route 28N as soon as possible.
    - *Noted*

- It is important to maintain a separation of parking for skiing/snowshoeing and snowmobiling in the Santanoni area.
    - *No parking for snowmobiles is proposed in the Camp Santanoni Historic Area*

- There needs to be clear separation of motorized and non-motorized trails in the Santanoni area.
    - *Snowmobiles are not proposed to overlap with non-motorized used anywhere in the Camp Santanoni Area, with the exception of crossing the Newcomb Lake Road.*

- On the Hyslop tract trails, DEC needs to work with the Town of Newcomb to ensure siting of trails preserve wetlands and property rights, and ensure a safe riding experience.
    - *Discussion of the Hyslop tract will be found in the Hyslop RMP.*

- The old north-south Vanderwhacker trail cannot support year-round recreation, and as attractive an option as the newly proposed east-west trail.
    - *This was an alternative that was evaluated, but has been determined to not be the preferred alternative.*

Economic Development

- These trails will help businesses thrive in the winter months.
    - *Noted*

- These trails will benefit Newcomb and Minerva.
    - *Noted*

Private Land

- Use of the National Lead right-of-way is not appropriate.
    - *The department feels that this is a viable alternative, but it is not its preferred alternative. The Department is working with the owner of the railroad to secure permission to use the railroad in the short-term while the preferred alternative is being implemented.*

- The DEIS does not address the impacts on adjacent private property, such as air quality, noise, and the potential for trespass.
    - *These issues have been addressed in the UMP's for these areas and in the Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park.*

- Where the trail is proposed to use the road shoulder, adjacent property owners should be indemnified for any property damage or personal injury.
    - *Travel would be proposed in the highway right-of-way which is an acceptable use as per highway law. In addition, private landowners would be covered by the New York State Snowmobile Associations insurance policy, and the general obligations law.*

Conservation Easements

- Uses other than snowmobiling may not be allowed under the terms of the two conservation easements.
    - *There is one easement document that regulates both easement tracts, and other non-motorized uses are clearly allowed under the terms of the easement document.*

Use of Railroad

- The presence of the railroad is a logical location for a trail because many of the obstacles have already been overcome.
    - *The department's assessment of the preferred alternatives are based on a long term desire to develop and establish a stable multi-use trail that is not dependent on the operating schedule of the railroad owner.*

Palmer Pond Bridge

- The shortest option is not always the best.
    - *The department has identified a number of alternatives, and the preferred alternative balances the issues raised, as well as additional issues and constraints, including those listed above.*

- All efforts should be made to keep the bridge flat.
    - *The department has identified a number of alternatives, and the preferred alternative balances the issues raised, as well as additional issues and constraints, including those listed above.*

- This bridge is essential for trail connectivity and wetland preservation.
    - *The department has identified a number of alternatives, and the preferred alternative balances the issues raised, as well as additional issues and constraints, including those listed above.*
- Alternative A would provide the least amount of environmental disturbance and flooding protection.

- *The department has identified a number of alternatives, and the preferred alternative balances the issues raised, as well as additional issues and constraints, including those listed above*.

- The bridge needs to be of a sufficient width to accommodate horses, hikers, and wagons together.
    - *The department has identified a number of alternatives, and the preferred alternative balances the issues raised, as well as additional issues and constraints, including those listed above.*

Iron (Polaris) Bridge

- Use of the bridge after the expiration of the Polaris Club's leases would be a violation of the APSLMP and the WSRRSA.
    - *The department's agreement with the former landowner allows lessee access until September 30, 2018, and the Nature Conservancy access until September 30, 2019. The future of this bridge may be determined prior to these dates and acted upon afterwards. Note that this bridge was constructed under WSRRSA permits issued by DEC and APA.*

Boreas River Bridge

- A snowmobile bridge would be very expensive and DEC has not provided any documentation showing DOT support for attaching a bridge to the existing motor vehicle bridge.
    - *Construction will only occur after funding is identified and any required permits and agreements are issued.*

- In order for the Section 2 preferred alternative to be viable, this bridge is essential.
    - *noted*

Wildlife

- The DEIS does not address the impacts on wildlife, particularly deer wintering yards.
    - *These issues are addressed in the UMP's for these areas and in the Adirondack snowmobile plan.*

Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act (WSRRSA)

- Use of the Polaris Bridge and crossing of the Boreas River by snowmobiles is not permissible under the WSRRSA.
    - *The Department has determined that existing statutory and regulatory authorities allow staff to consider whether a permit can be issued to locate a trail, designed for use by snowmobiles, within a WSRRSA-designated river corridor.*

Appendix 4 – Inventory of Existing Facilities near the Preferred Alternative Trail System

Santanoni Gate Lodge

- horse mounting platform
- accessible privy
- 1 parking area for trucks with trailers
- 1 parking area for vehicles without trailers

Santanoni Great Camp

- 8 primitive campsites (1 of which will be closed in accordance with this Plan)
- 8 privies
- 1 accessible privy
- 1 horse mounting platform

Route 28N site below Ranger Cabin

- primitive tent site (to be designated in this Trail Plan)

Roosevelt Truck Trail

- parking area
- CP-3 gate
- 2 accessible primitive campsites with accessible privies

Boreas River at Route 28N

- group of 3 primitive tent sites
- 2 privies

Hewitt Road

- 1 parking area at Route 28N
- 1 parking area at Hewitt Pond Trail

Stony Pond

- 1 lean-to
- 1 wilderness privy
- 1 parking area

Northwoods Club Road

- 3 primitive camp sites at the Boreas River
- 1 wilderness privy
- 2 privies
- 1 parking area

Cheney Pond

- 1 lean-to site
- 1 primitive camp site
- 2 privies

Cheney Pond Overlook

- 1 primitive camp site

Boreas River / Blue Ridge Road

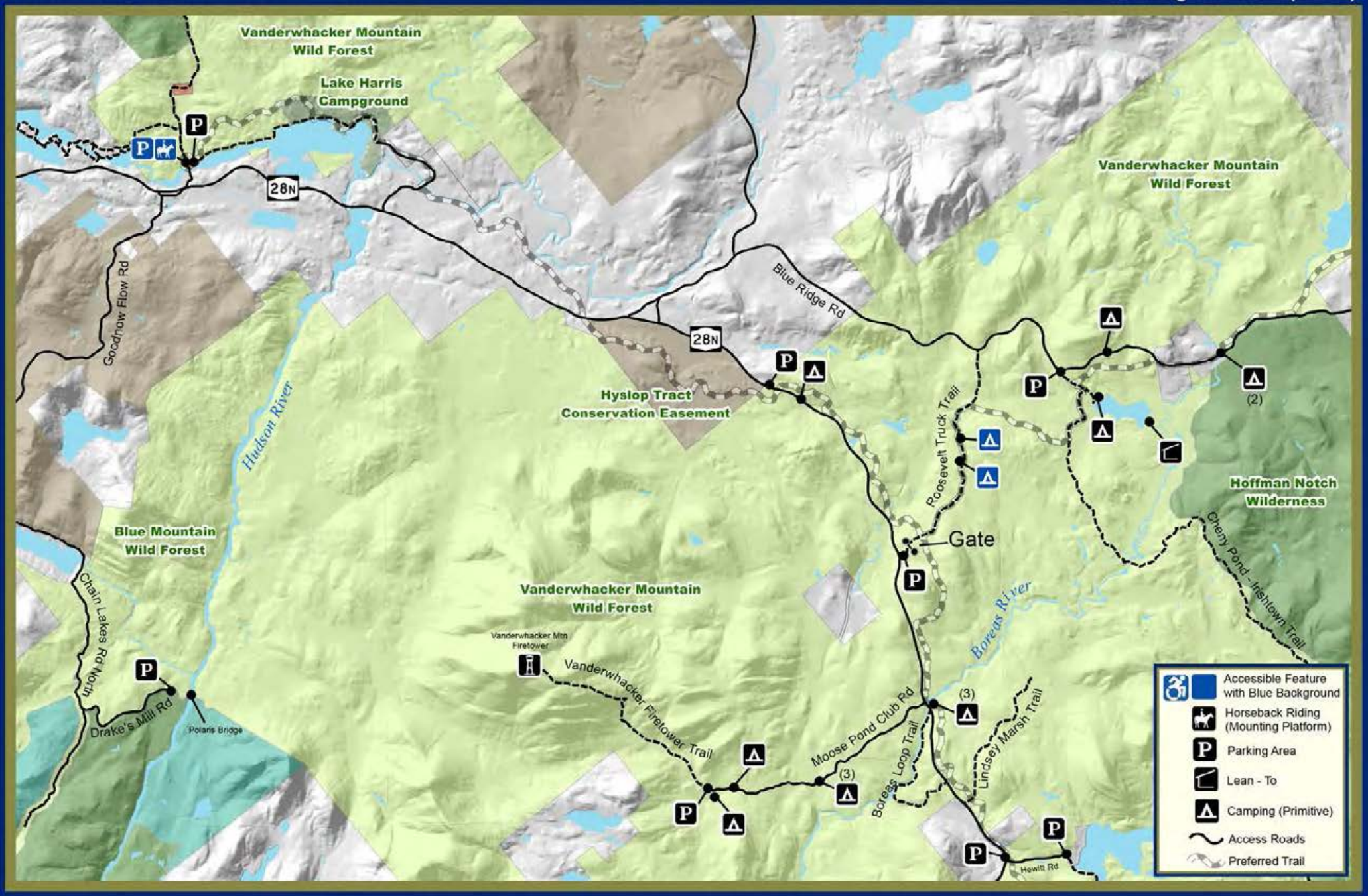
- 2 primitive camp sites
- 1 privy

Appendix 5 – Maps and Photos

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Existing Facilities (North)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 1 2 4 Miles

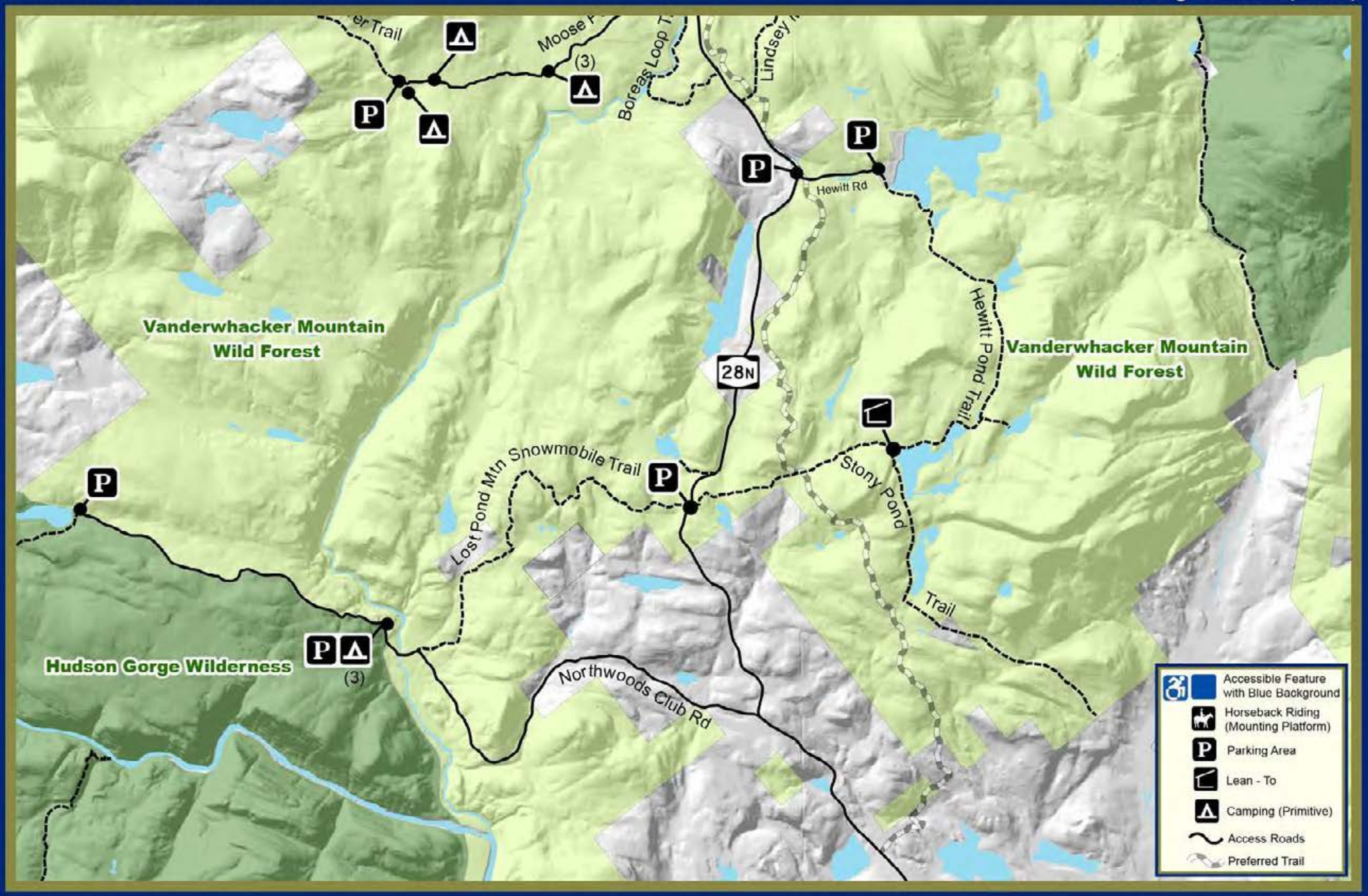
0 1 2 4 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Existing Facilities (South)

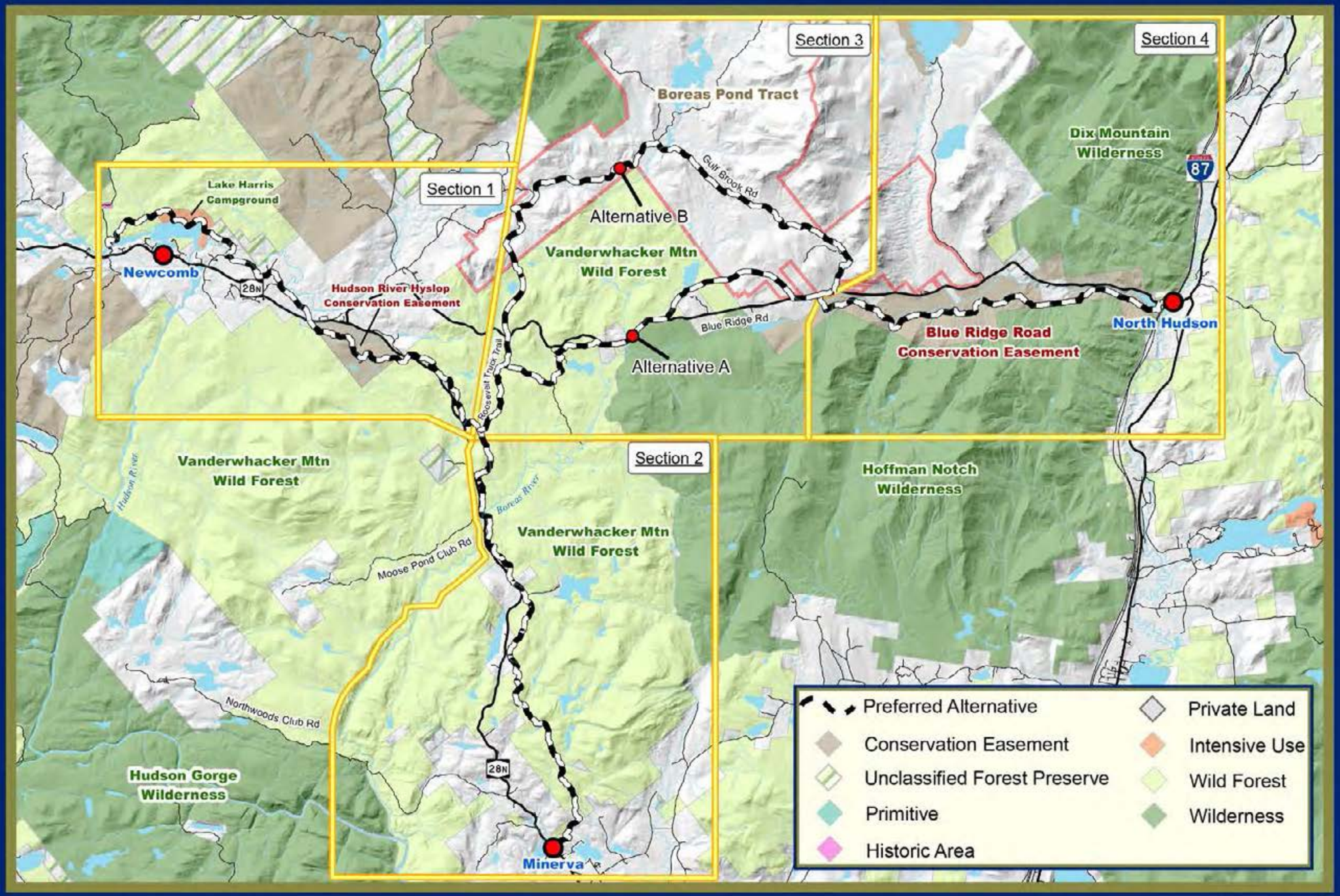


NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

0 0.75 1.5 3 Kilometers

N

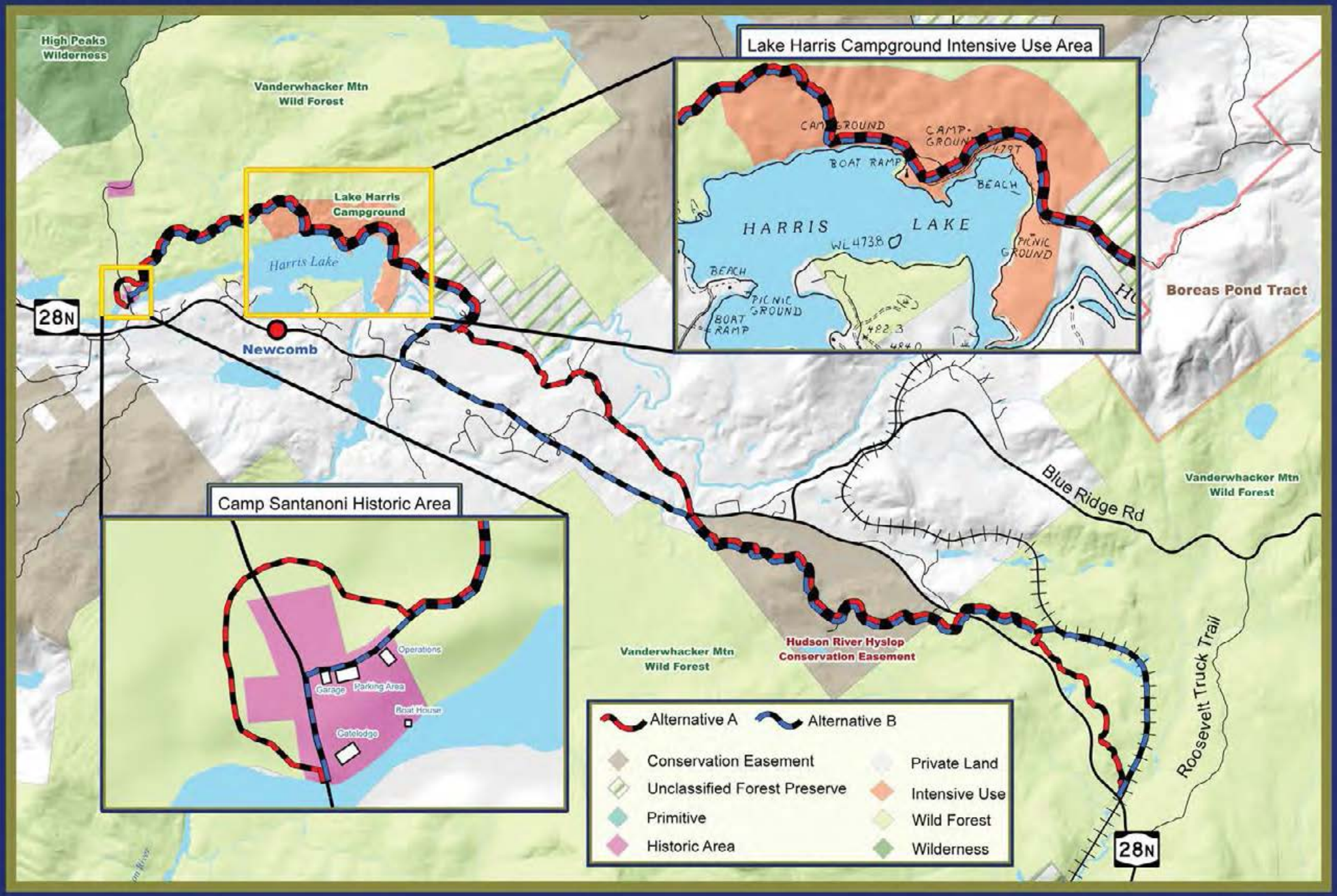


NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Unit Management Plan - Section 1 Alternatives

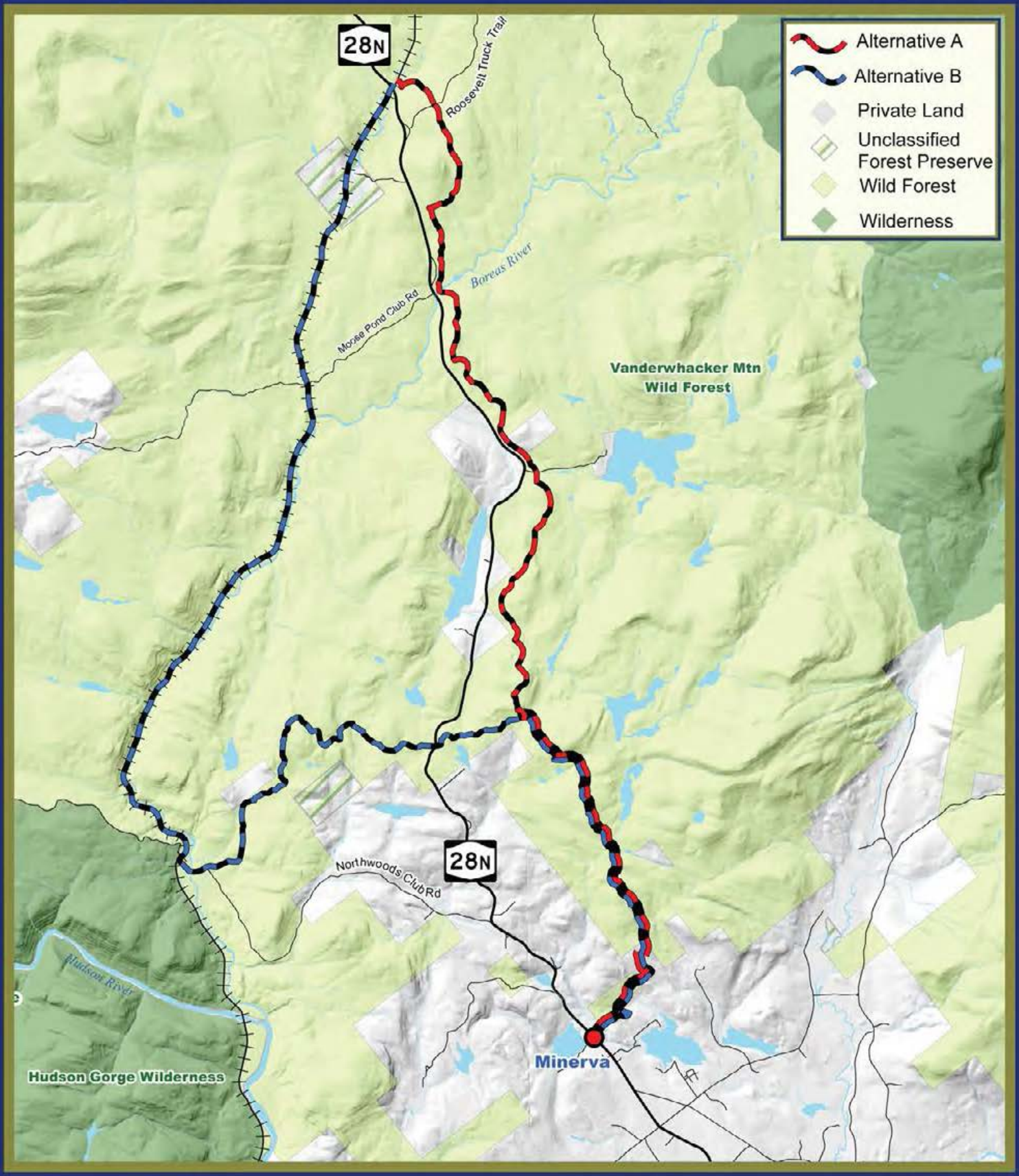


NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Unit Management Plan - Section 2 Alternatives

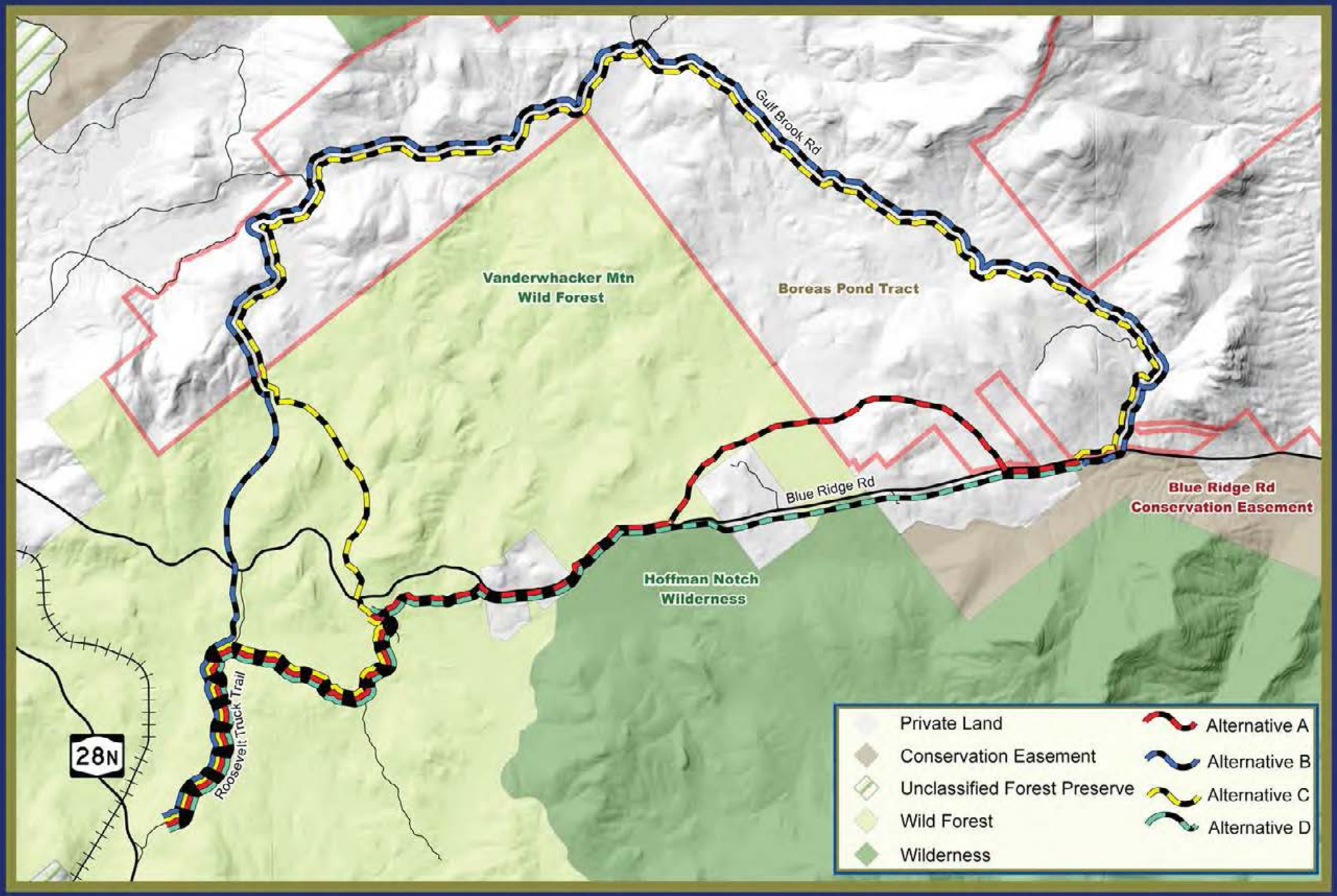


NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

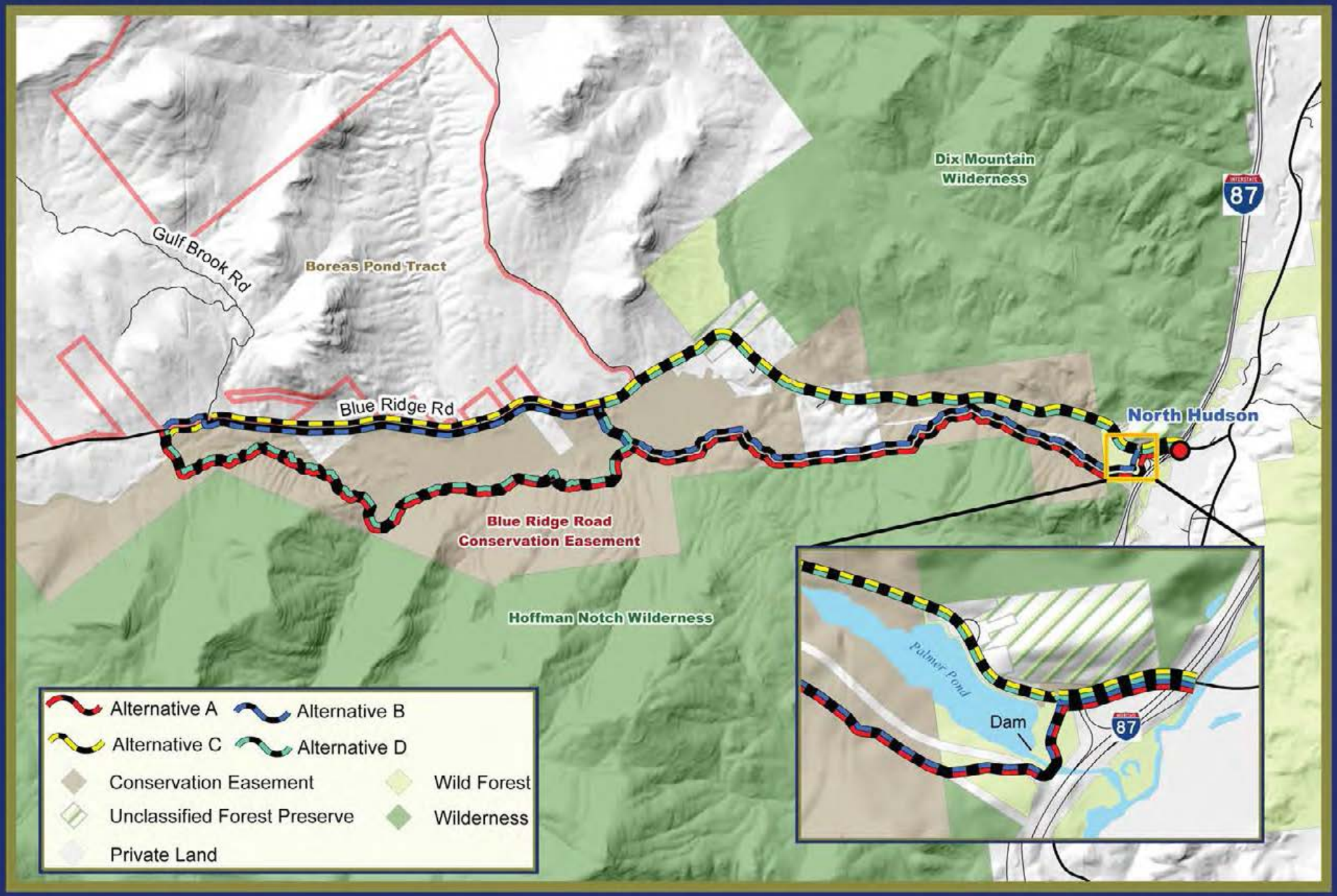
0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

0 0.75 1.5 3 Kilometers

N


Gulf Brook Rd
Vanderwhacker Mtn
Wild Forest
Boreas Pond Tract
Blue Ridge Rd
Blue Ridge Rd
Conservation Easement
Hoffman Notch
Wilderness
Roosevelt Truck Trail
28N
Private Land
Conservation Easement
Unclassified Forest Preserve
Wild Forest
Wilderness
Alternative A
Alternative B
Alternative C
Alternative D
0
0.75
1.5
3 Miles
0
0.75
1.5
3 Kilometers
N

Community Connector Trail Plan



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 0.5 1 2 Miles

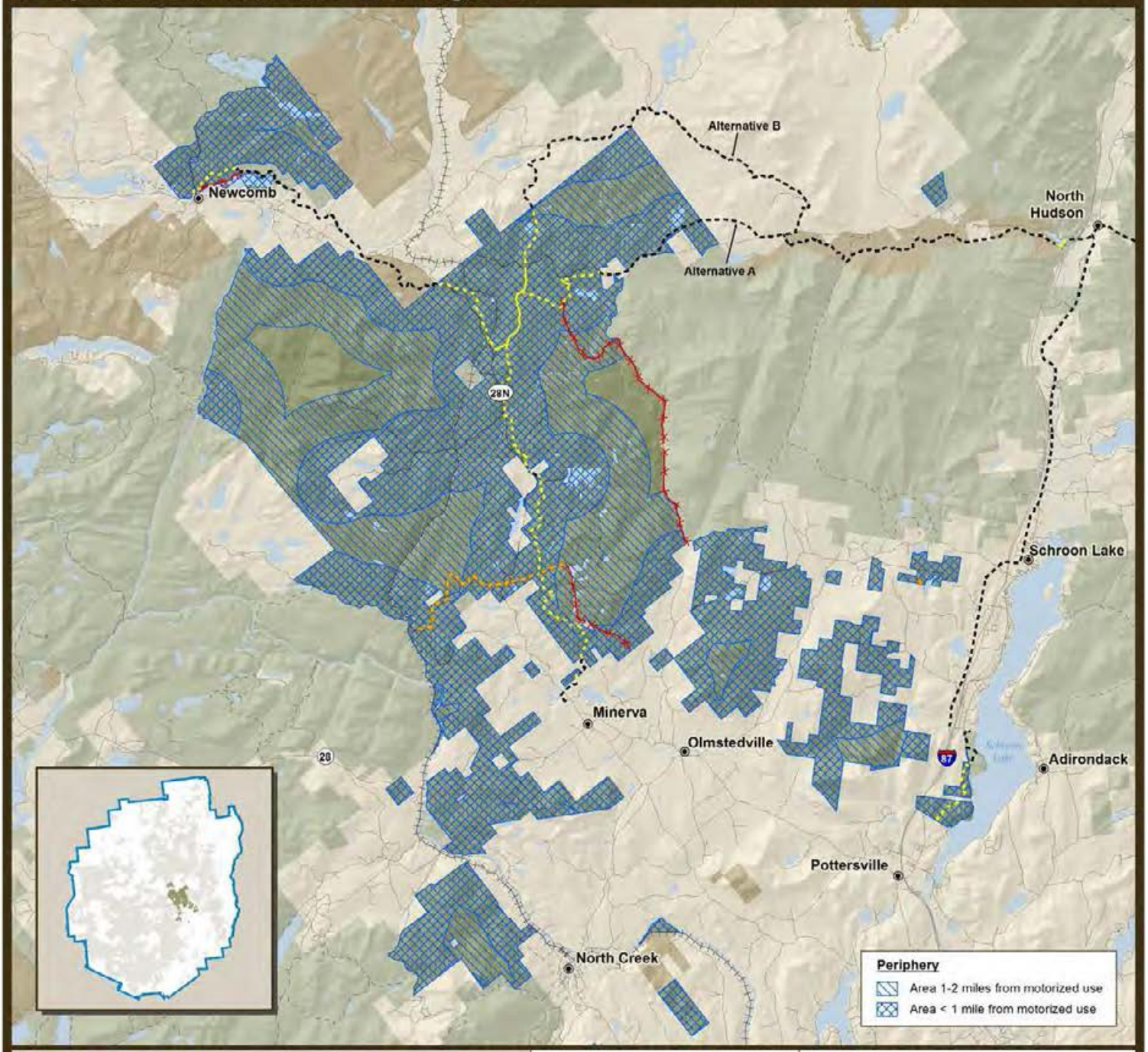
0 0.5 1 2 Kilometers

N

Adirondack Forest Preserve

Proposed Snowmobile Trail System

PERIPHERY AREAS in the VANDERWHACKER MOUNTAIN WILD FOREST



Proposed Wild Forest Snowmobile Trails Under DEC Jurisdiction

- Class I snowmobile trail
- Class II snowmobile trail
- Snowmobile trail on Forest Preserve road
- Trail or road on which snowmobile use to be discontinued

Other Proposed Snowmobile Trails

- Other Proposed Snowmobile Trails

- Vanderwhacker Mtn. Wild Forest
- Other DEC land
- DEC conservation easement
- Other road
- Other trail

April 2015

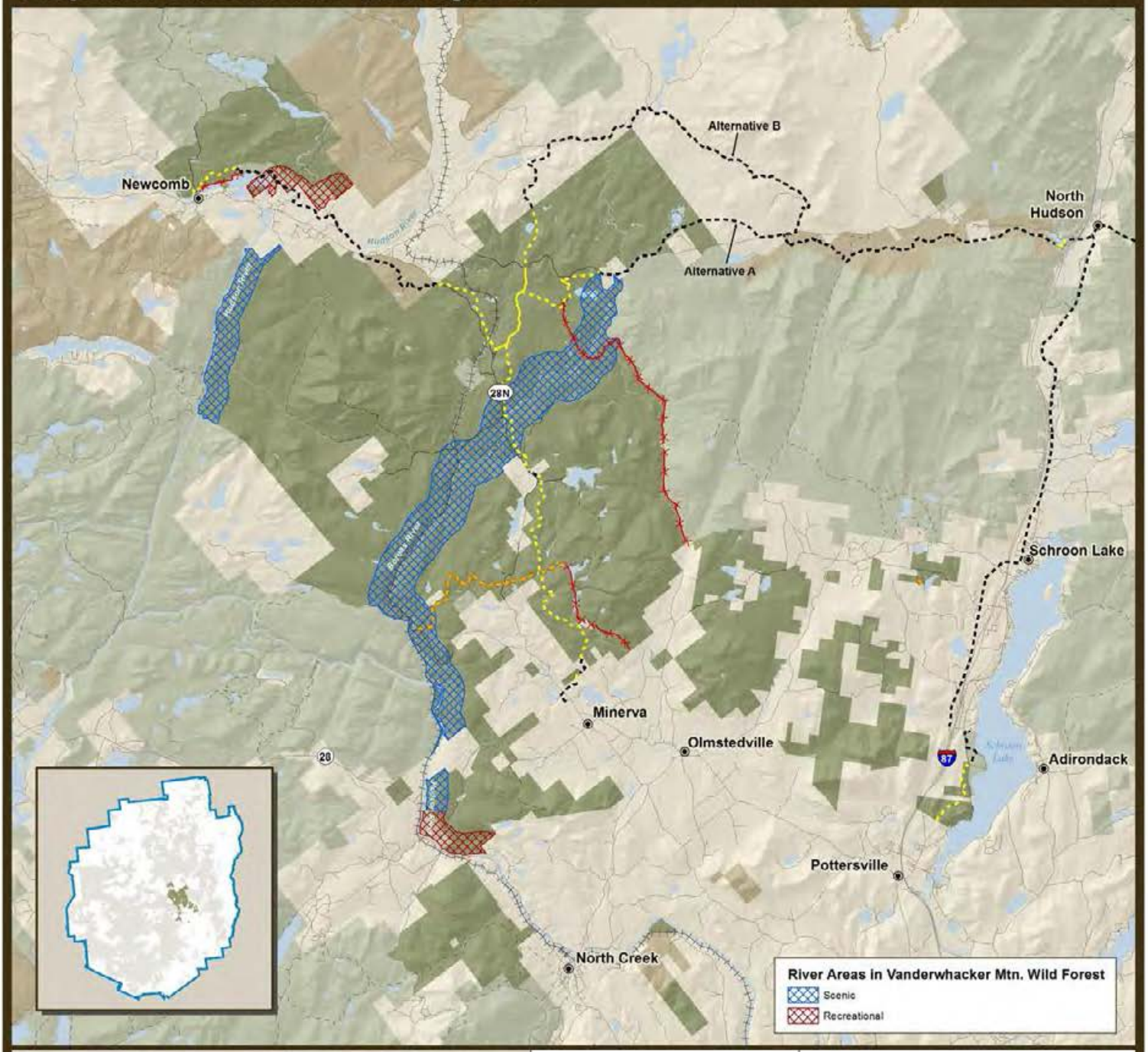
Miles 0 1 2 4

Map produced by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests, Bureau of Forest Preserve Management

Adirondack Forest Preserve

Proposed Snowmobile Trail System

WILD, SCENIC and RECREATIONAL RIVERS in the VANDERWHACKER MOUNTAIN WILD FOREST



Proposed Wild Forest Snowmobile Trails Under DEC Jurisdiction

- Class I snowmobile trail
- Class II snowmobile trail
- Snowmobile trail on Forest Preserve road
- Trail or road on which snowmobile use to be discontinued

Other Proposed Snowmobile Trails

- Other Proposed Snowmobile Trails

- Vanderwhacker Mtn. Wild Forest
- Other DEC land
- DEC conservation easement
- Other road
- Other trail

April 2015

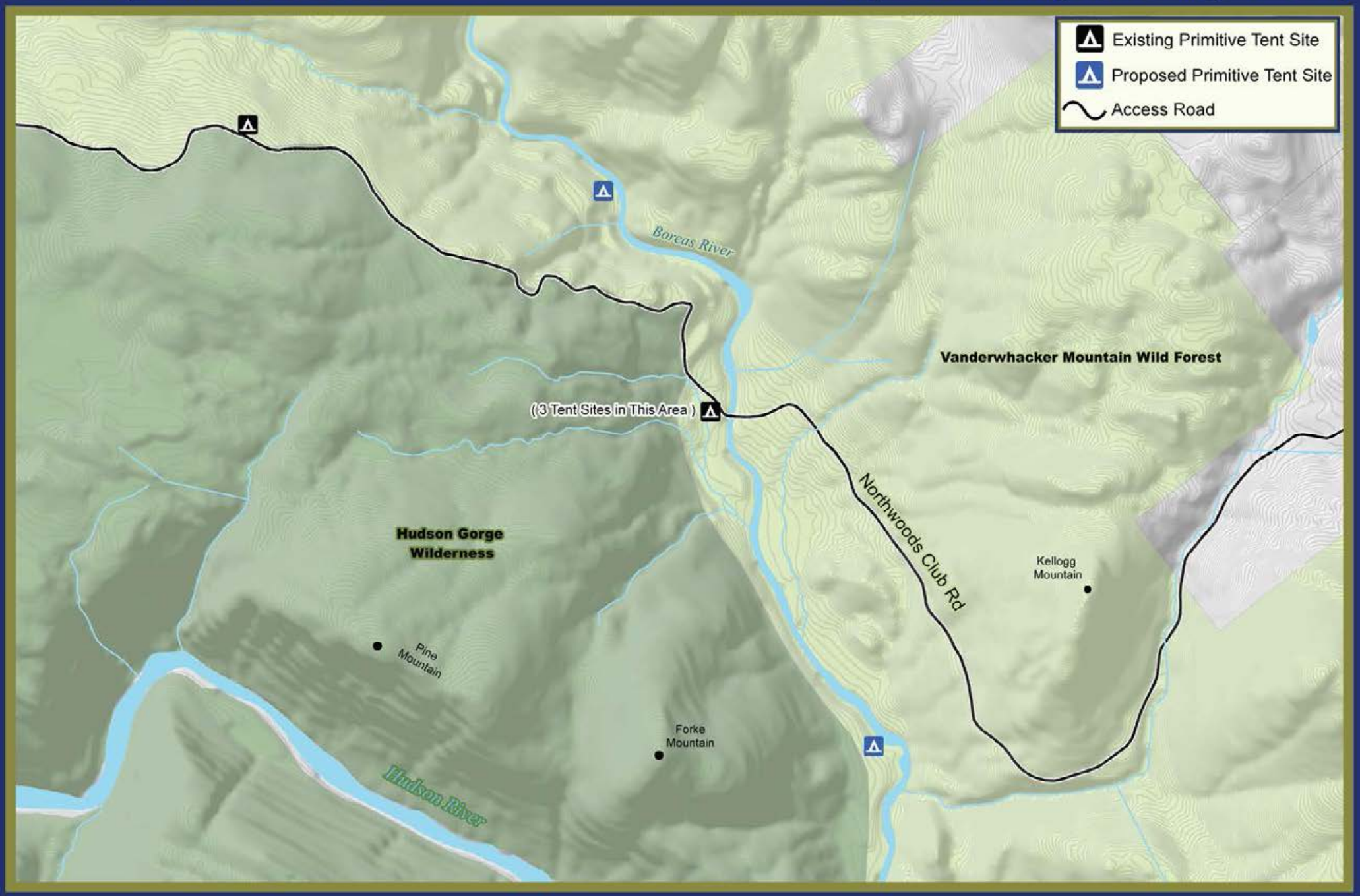
Miles 0 1 2 4

Map produced by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests, Bureau of Forest Preserve Management

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Proposed Actions Campsite Locations (Boreas River)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles

0 0.25 0.5 1 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Proposed Actions Campsite Locations (Camp Santanoni)

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Miles

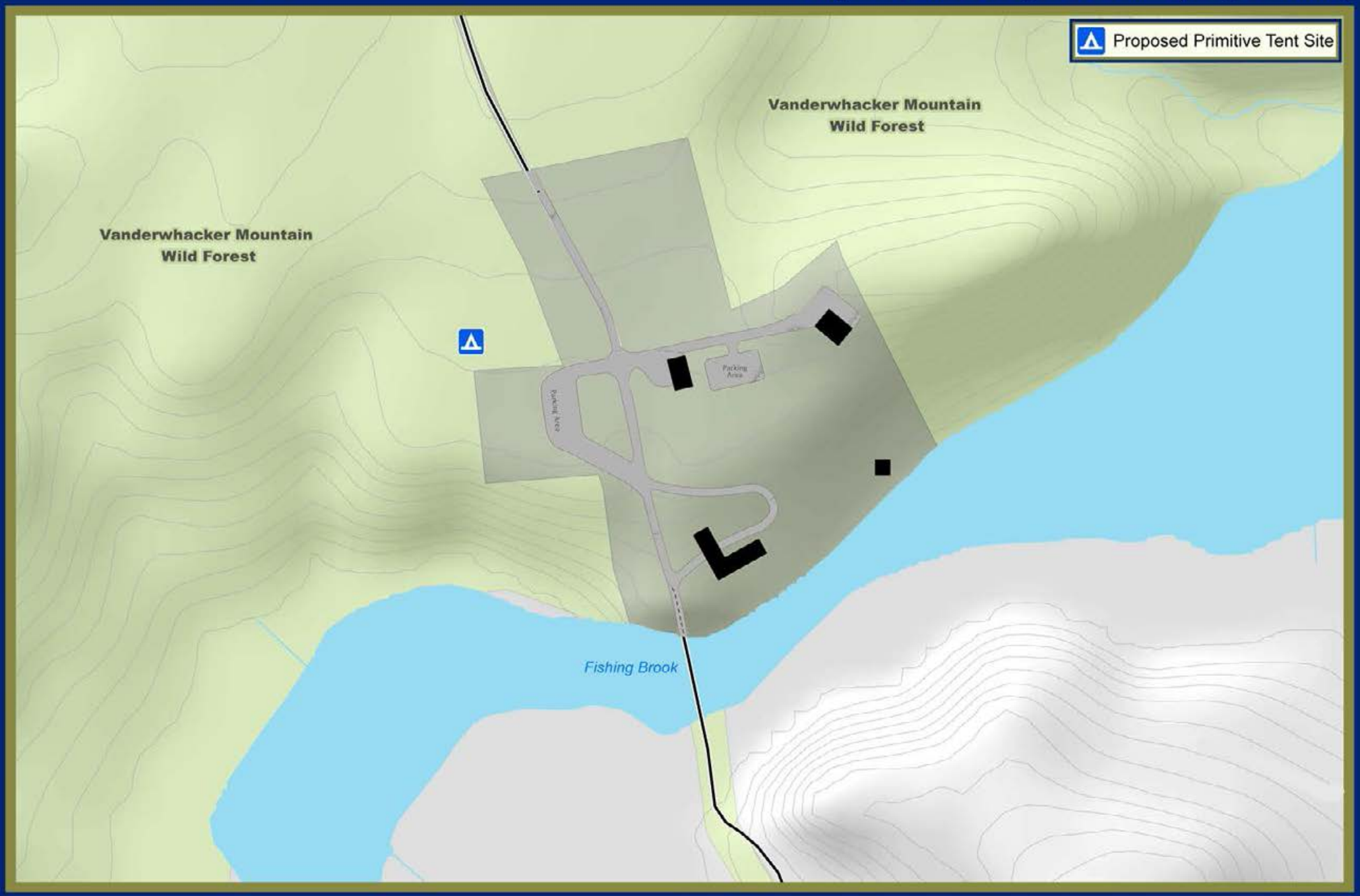
0 0.125 0.25 0.5 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Proposed Actions Campsite Locations (Camp Santanoni)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 175 350 700 Feet

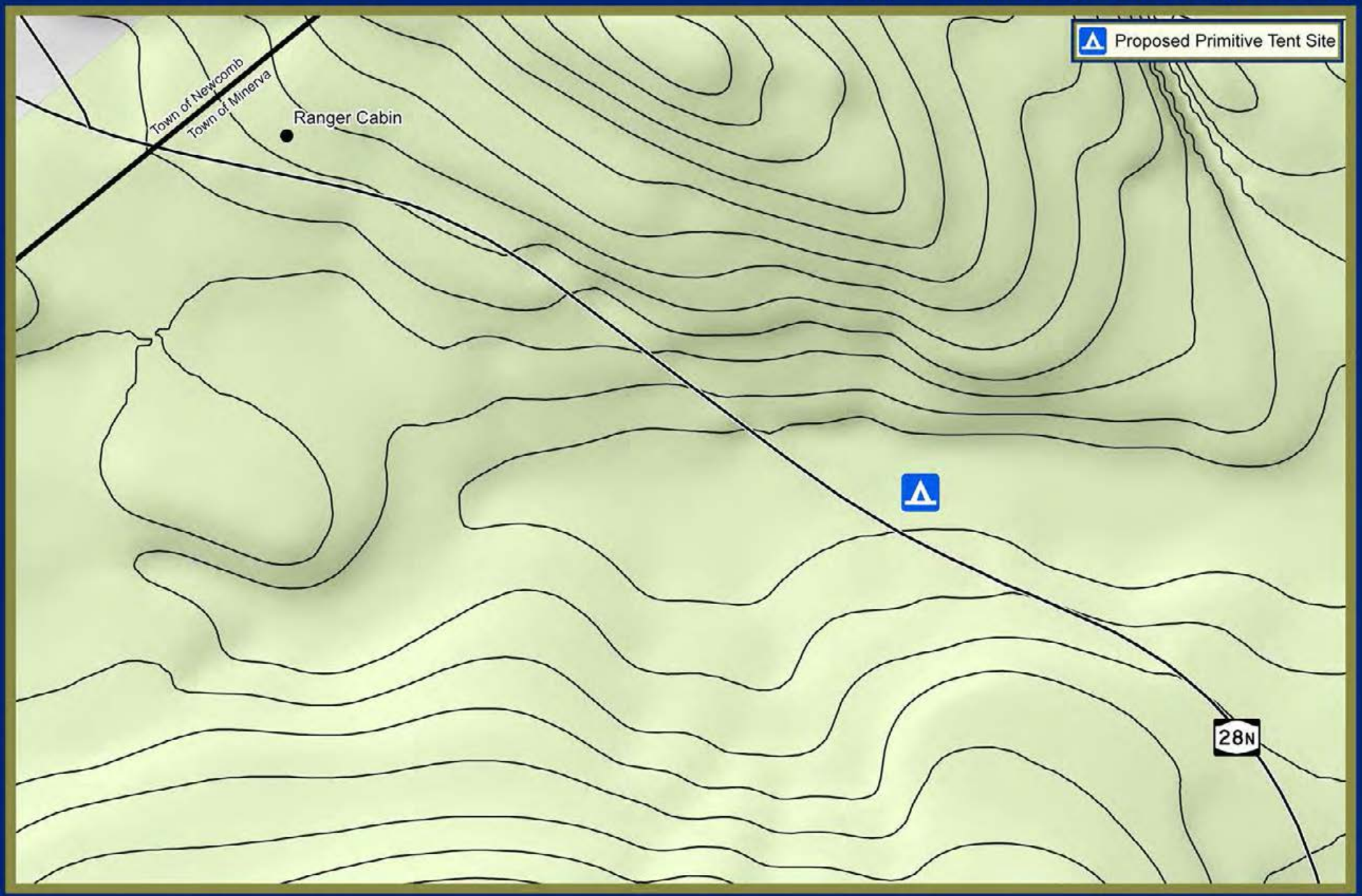
0 30 60 120 Meters

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Proposed Actions Campsite Locations (Rt 28 North)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 350 700 1,400 Feet

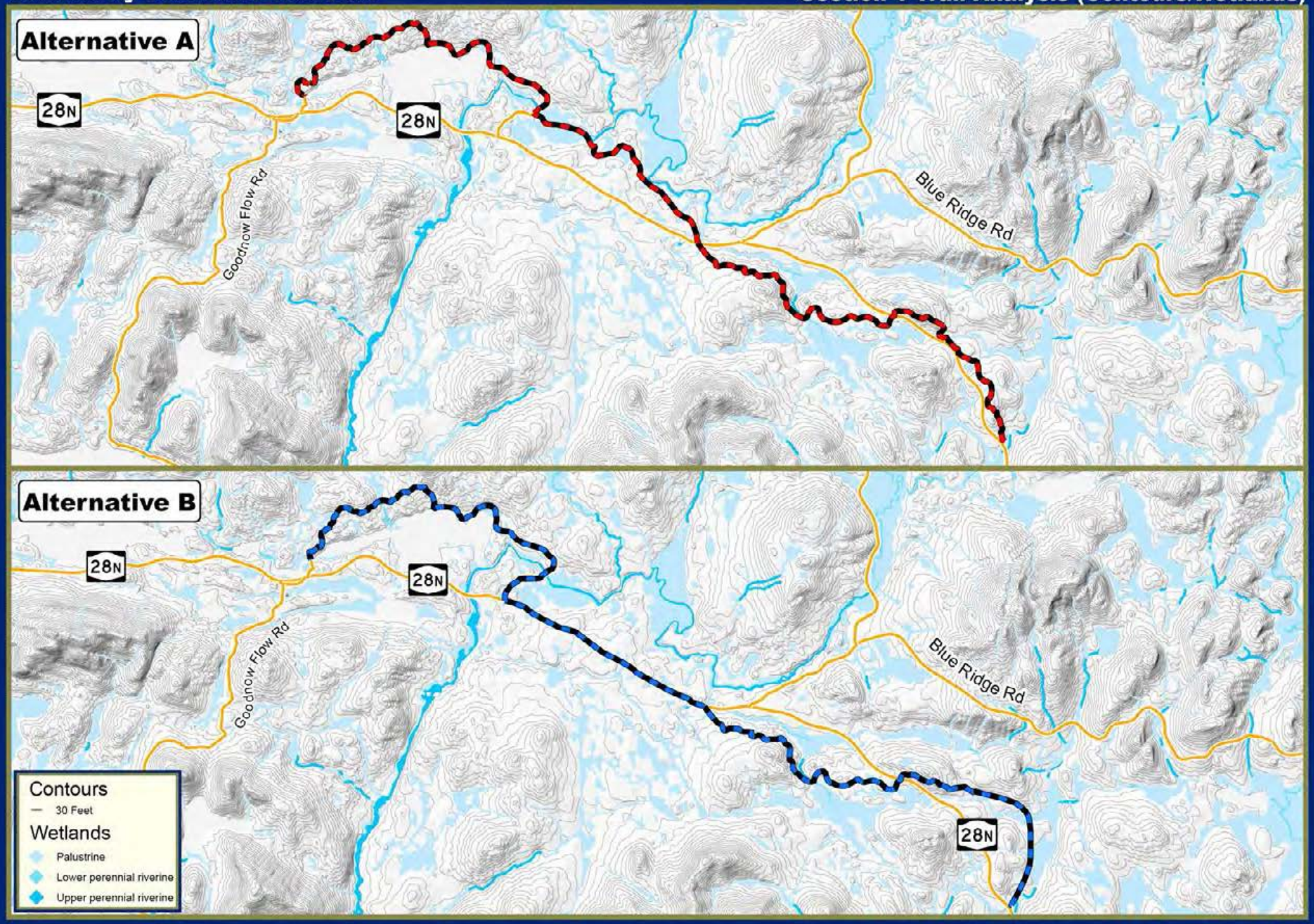
0 70 140 280 Meters

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Section 1 Trail Analysis (Contours/Wetlands)

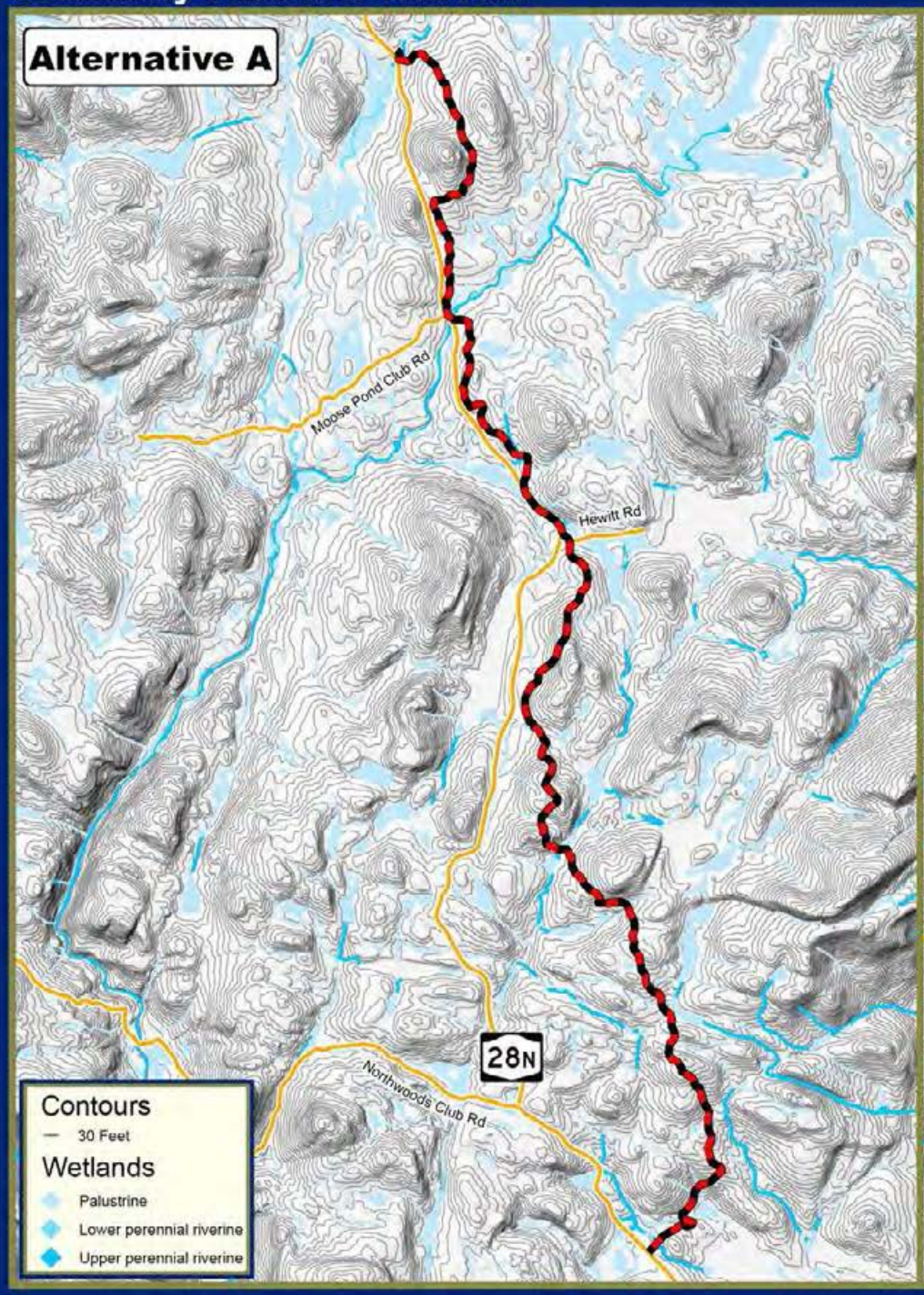


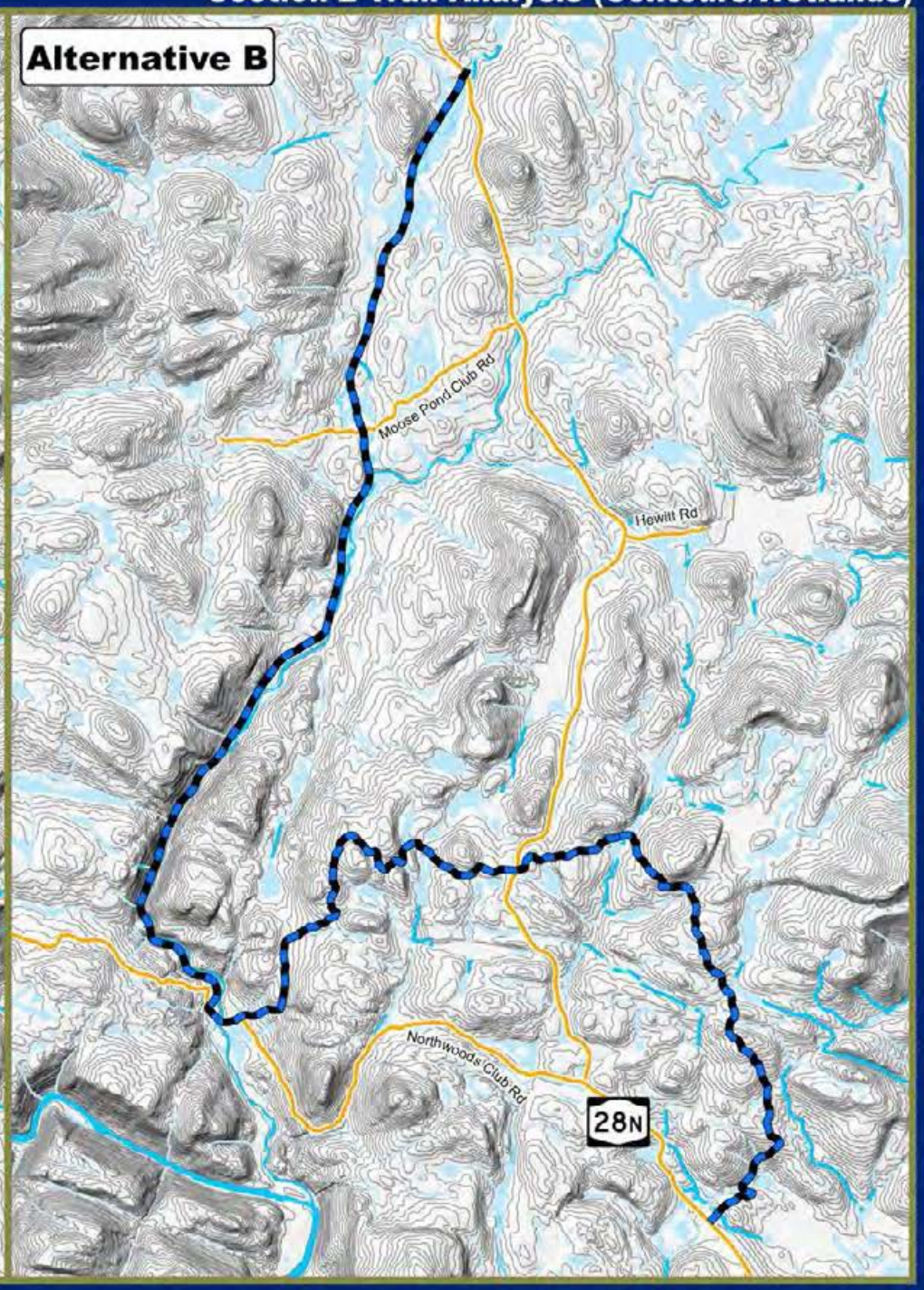
NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Section 2 Trail Analysis (Contours/Wetlands)





NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 0.75 1.5 3 Miles

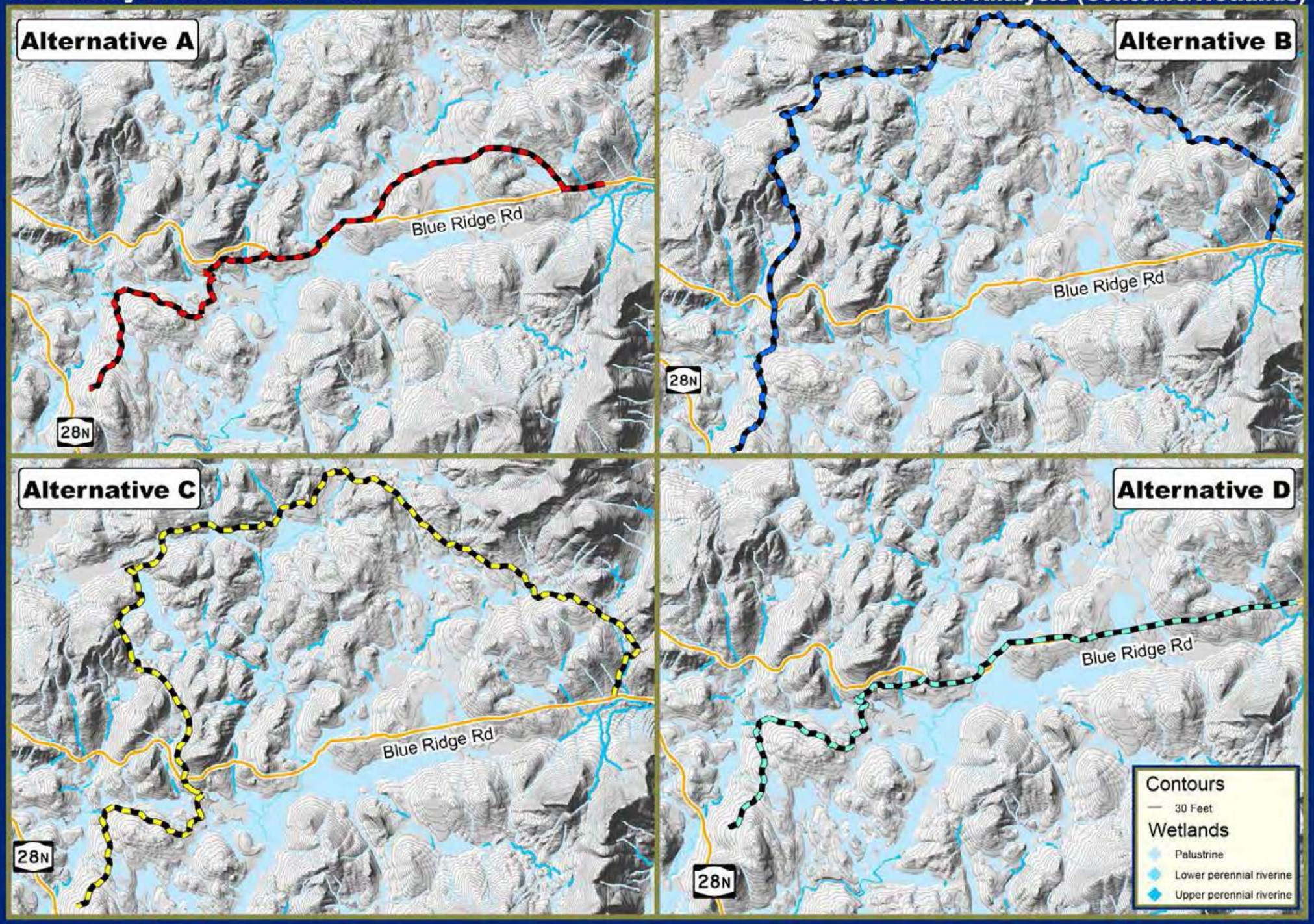
0 0.75 1.5 3 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Section 3 Trail Analysis (Contours/Wetlands)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 1 2 4 Miles

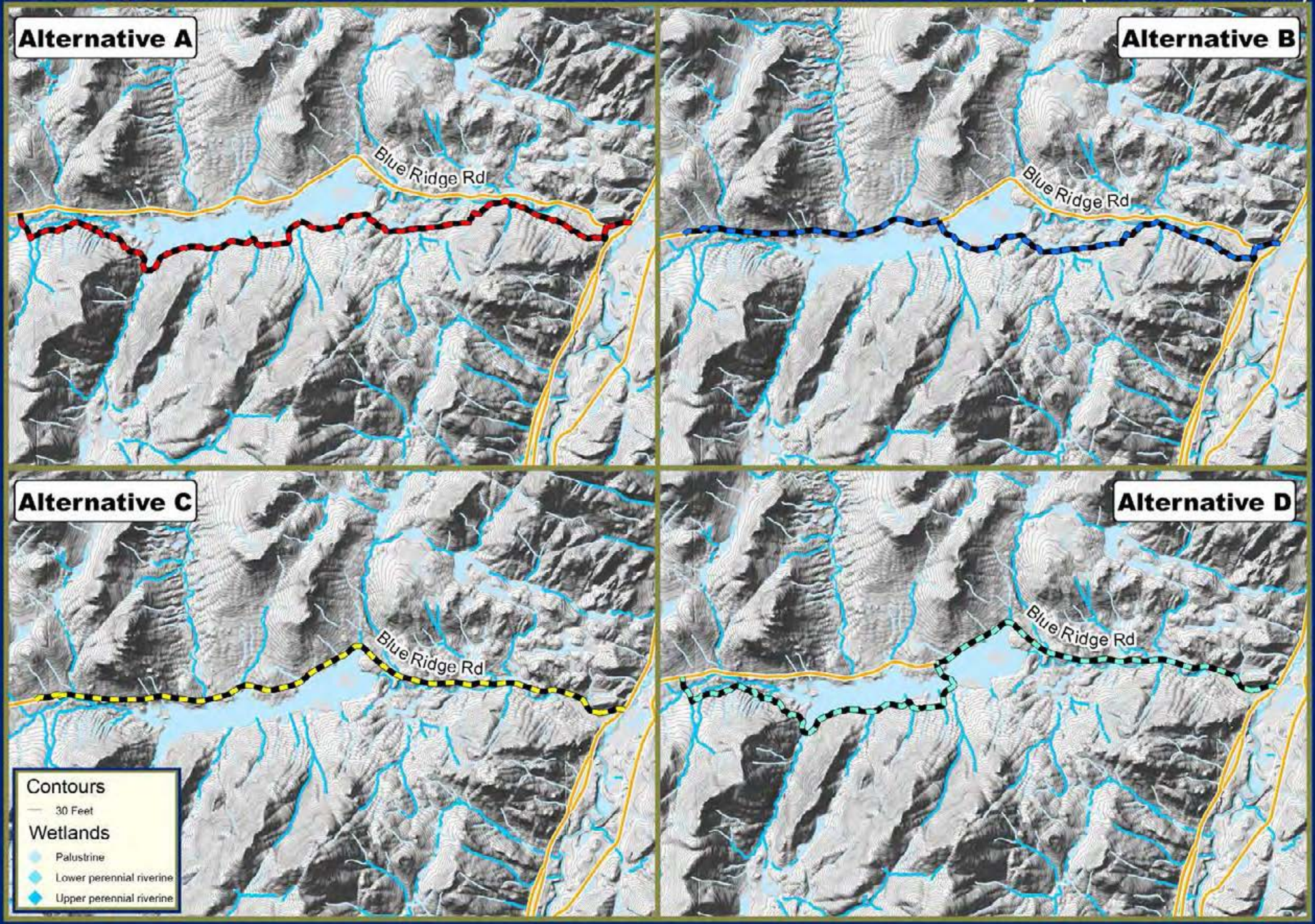
0 1 2 4 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Section 4 Trail Analysis (Contours/Wetlands)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 1 2 4 Miles

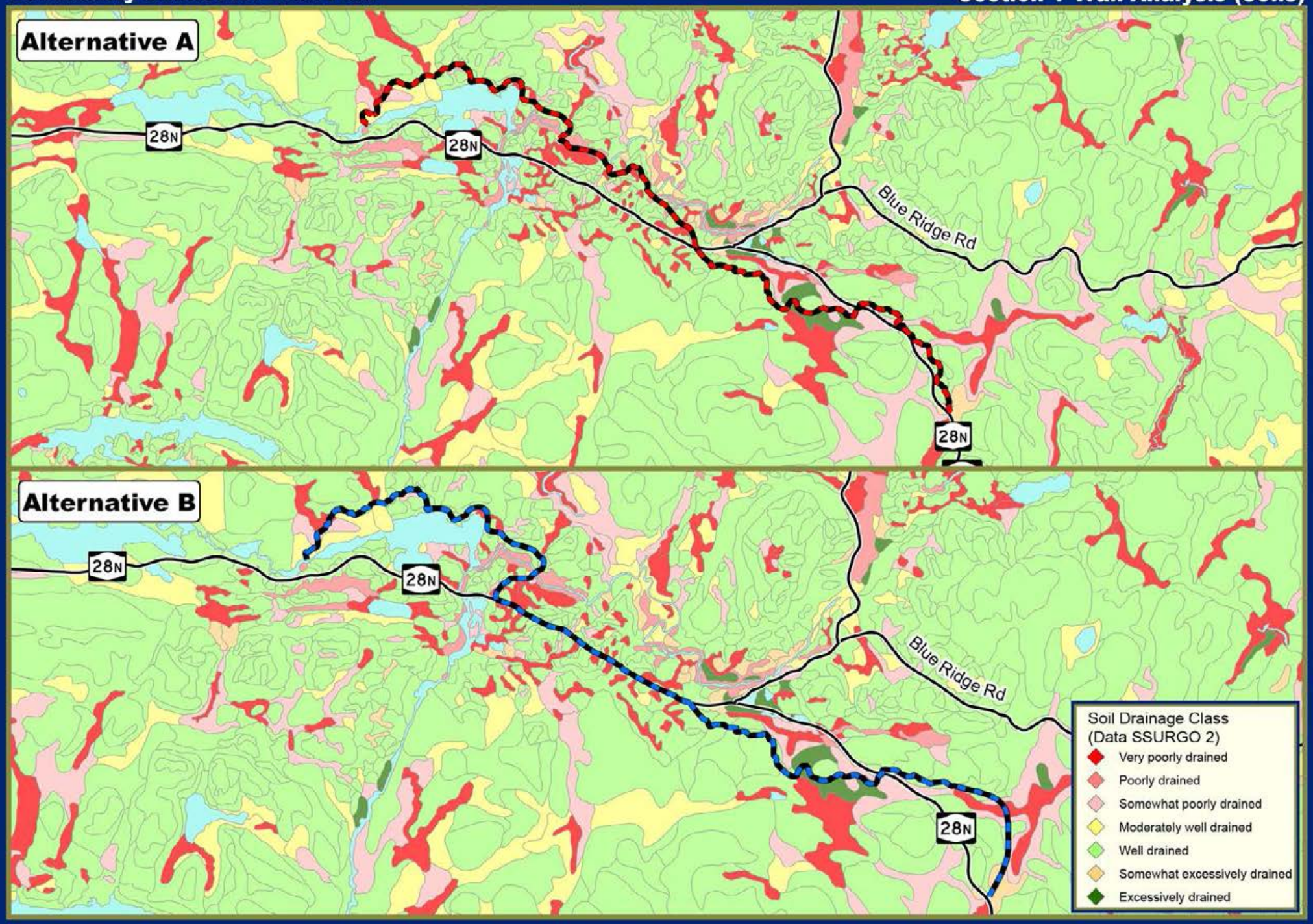
0 1 2 4 Kilometers

N

New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

Section 1 Trail Analysis (Soils)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation

0 1 2 4 Miles

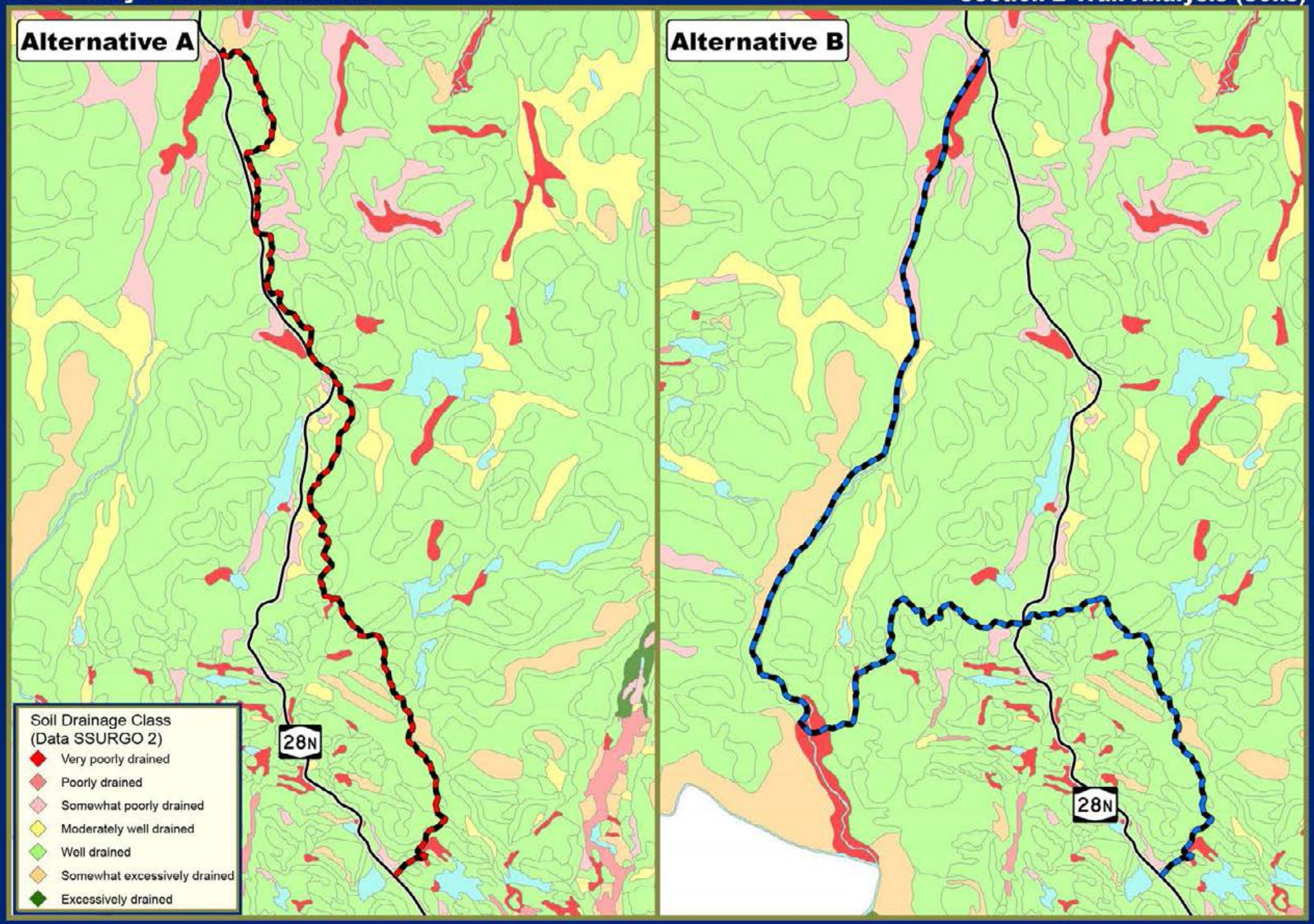
0 1 2 4 Kilometers

N

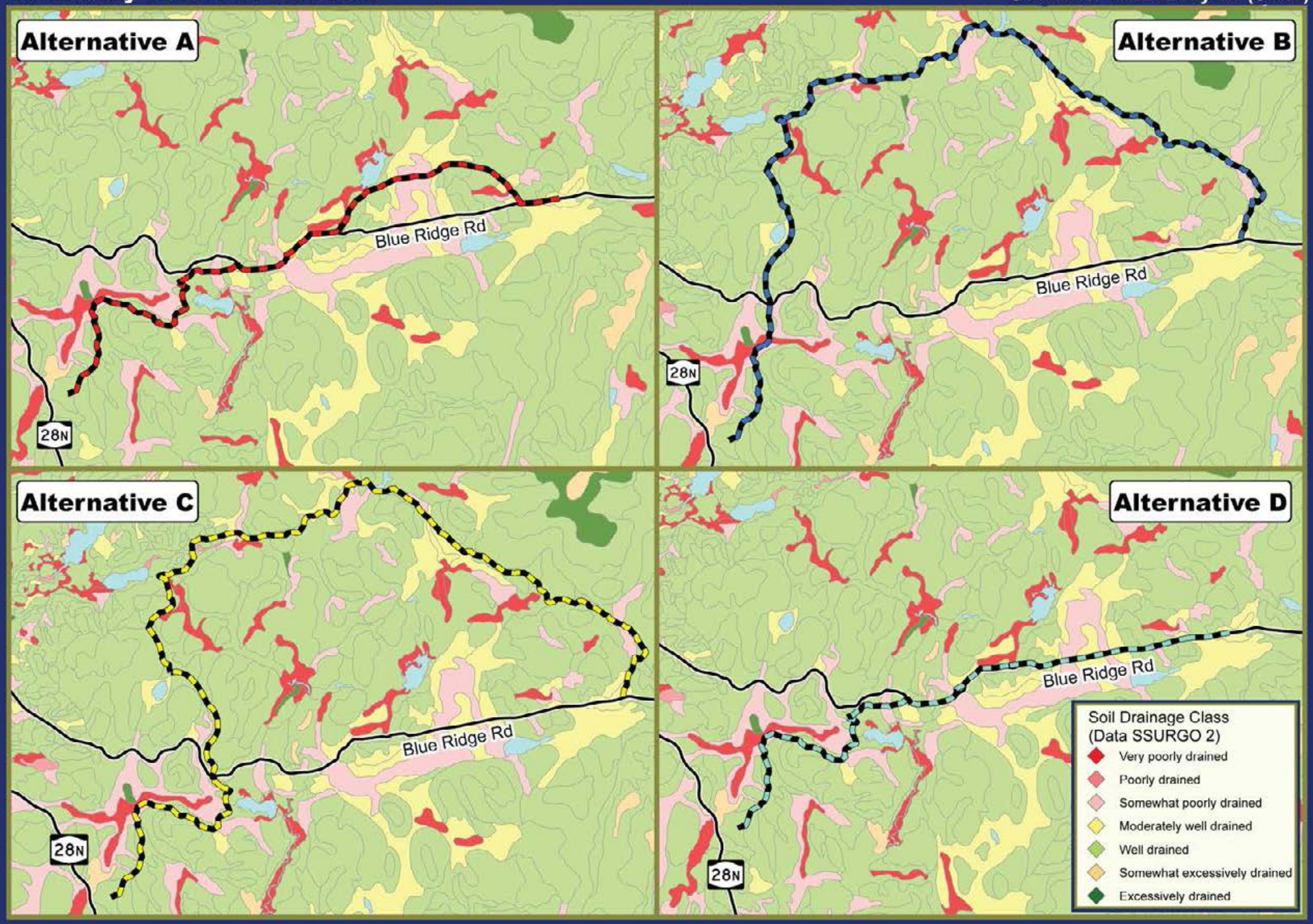
New York's Forest Preserve

Community Connector Trail Plan

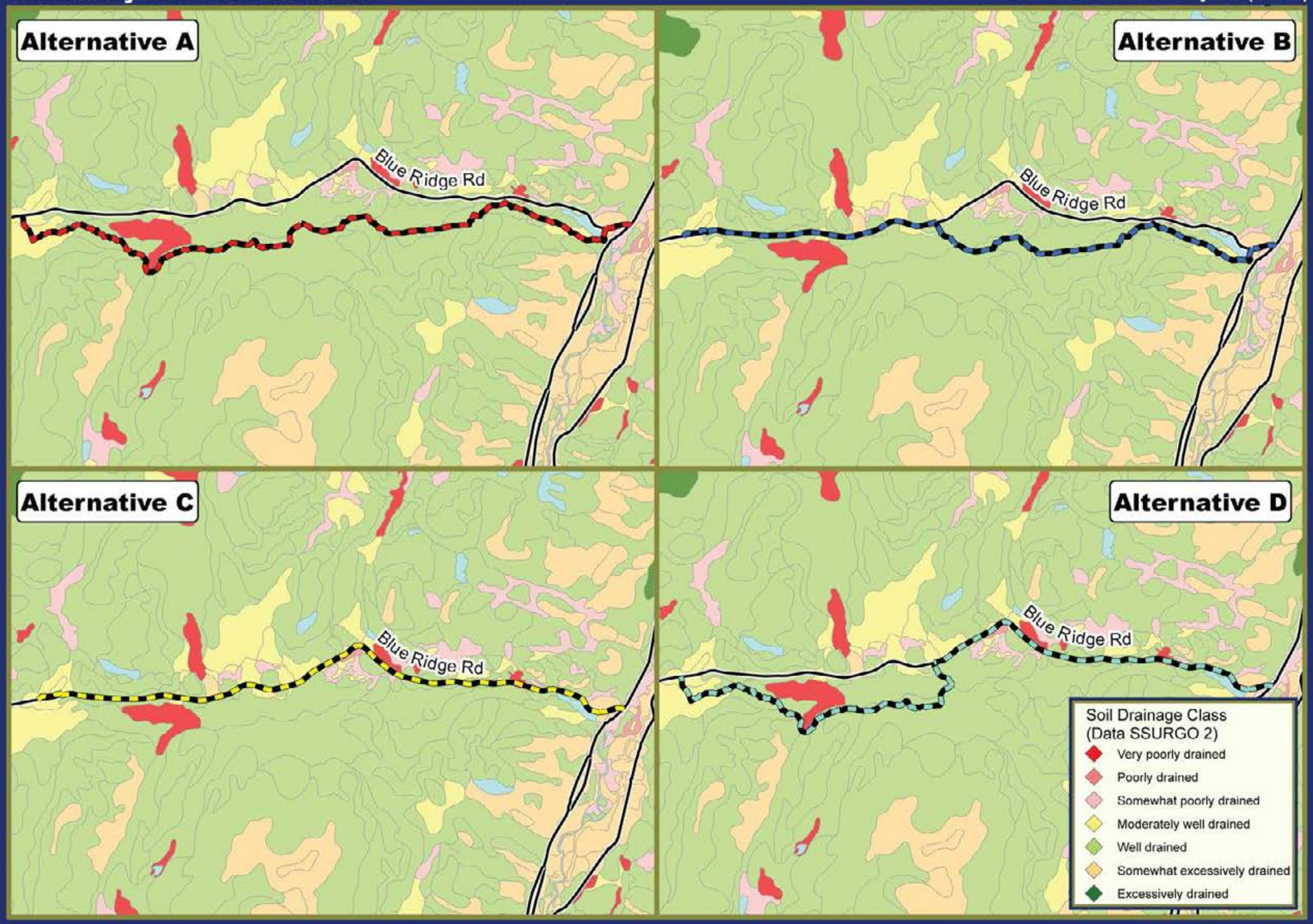
Section 2 Trail Analysis (Soils)



NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY | Department of Environmental Conservation



0 1.25 2.5 5 Miles
0 1.25 2.5 5 Kilometers
N



0 1 2 4 Miles
0 1 2 4 Kilometers
N

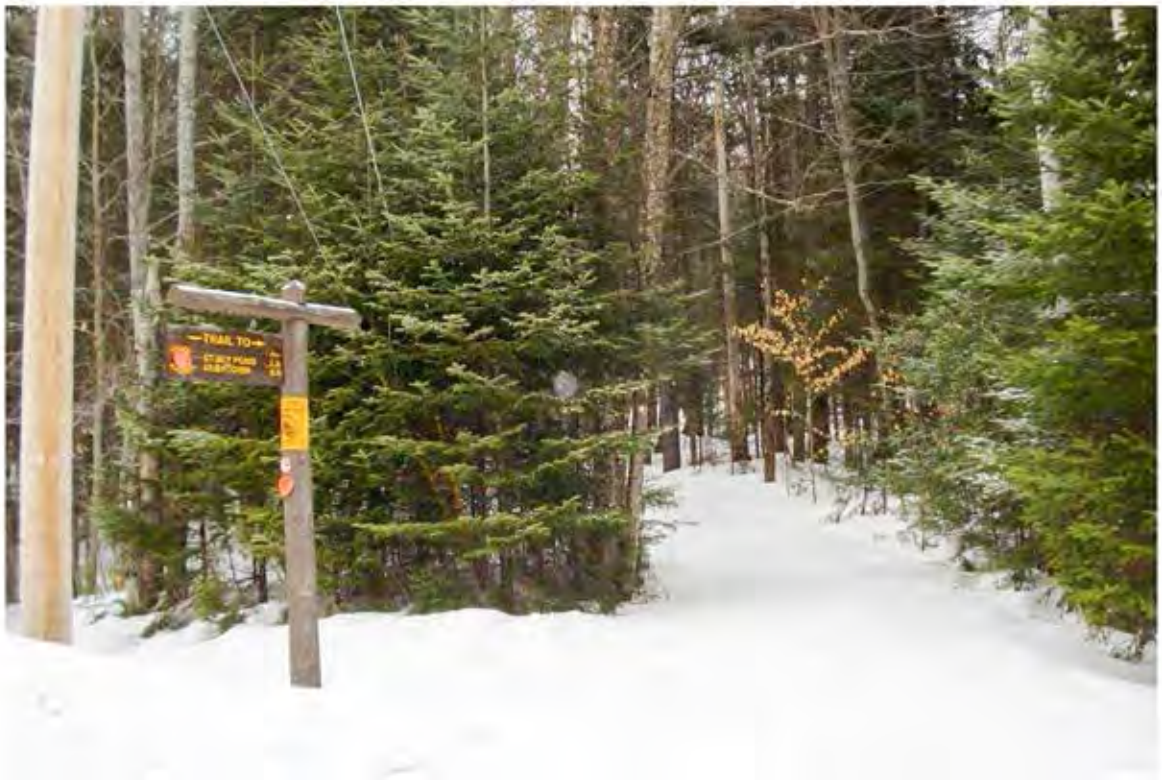


Photo 1 - Stony Pond Trailhead on Route 28N

Photo 2 - Hewitt Road parking.

Photo 3 - Route 28N bridge over the Boreas River.

Photo 4 - Ranger cabin and parking on Route 28N.

Photo 5 - Entrance to Gulf Brook Road on Route 28N.

Photo 6 - Palmer Pond Dam.

Photo 7 - Outlet of Palmer Pond.

Photo 8 - Outlet of Palmer Pond with Interstate 87 in background.