

2007 Report to NYS Conservation Council from Division of Lands and Forests

Responsible for the management, protection and recreational use of public lands, including providing leadership in forestry and forest management.

Goal: Become better stewards of our land, infrastructure and natural resources.

Objective: Develop management plans for all of the state's public lands and implement the core recommendations of such plans

- *Forest Stewardship* - From 2000 until 2005 New York's State Forests were green certified by the Smartwood Program of the Rainforest Alliance as being "sustainably managed" under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) criteria. The Department is now moving forward with joint certification on 720,000 acres of State Forest from NSF International Strategic Registrations (NSF-ISR) and Scientific Certification Systems (SCS) for an assessment under both FSC and the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) criteria. In May 2007 NSF-ISR and SCS completed an audit incorporating the criteria from both certification organizations. The NSF-ISR/SCS audit team included input from biologists, foresters and ecologists to insure that our State Forests are properly managed in a sustainable manner. New York's State Forests will once again become green certified under the new joint certification through FSC and SFI by Fall 2007.
- *Unit Management Planning* -The Department of Environmental Conservation develops Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for all public lands managed by the Department. These lands include State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, Campgrounds, Environmental Education Centers and as well as Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks. Unit Management Plan development includes inventories of natural, cultural and historic resources, and discusses past and future management strategies. Their preparation provides for public input to insure that social aspects are properly considered in the decision making process. The Department's management planning teams include Foresters, Wildlife Biologists, Fisheries Biologists, Forest Rangers, and Operations (Construction and Maintenance) staff. In the Adirondacks, UMPs are developed by DEC planners in consultation with Adirondack Park Agency (APA) staff. The APA has responsibility for assuring plans are in compliance with Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) guidelines for management of forest preserve lands inside the Adirondack Park. In the Catskills, UMPs are developed in compliance with Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (CPSLMP) guidelines. UMPs for all land units receive their final approval from the Commissioner of the Department. Over the past year progress has been made in the adoption of the following Unit Management Plans:

- Tioga UMP - Fairfield, Jenksville, Oakley Corners, and Ketchumville State Forests in Tioga County
- Stewart UMP - Stewart State Forest in Orange County
- Zoar UMP - Zoar Valley Multiple Use Area in Erie and Cattaraugus Counties
- White Hill Wild Forest UMP - St. Lawrence County
- Raquette Boreal Wild Forest UMP - St. Lawrence County

Currently, the Department is continuing to work on drafting the following UMPs:

- Debar Mtn. Wild Forest Draft UMP - Franklin County
- Ferris Lake Wild Forest Draft UMP - Fulton, Hamilton and Herkimer Counties
- Grass River Wild Forest Draft UMP - St. Lawrence County
- Lake George Wild Forest Draft UMP - Warren, Washington and Essex Counties
- Moose River Plains Wild Forest Draft UMP - Hamilton and Herkimer Counties
- Watsons East Triangle Wild Forest Draft UMP - Lewis County
- West Canada Lakes Wilderness Draft UMP - Herkimer and Hamilton Counties
- Wilcox Lake Wild Forest Draft UMP - Fulton, Hamilton, Saratoga and Warren Counties
- Charleston UMP - Charleston, Rural Grove, Yatesville Falls, Lost Valley and Featherstonhaugh State Forests in Montgomery and Schenectady Counties
- Erwin UMP - McCarthy Hill and Erwin Mountain State Forests and Erwin Wildlife Management Area in Steuben County
- Five Streams UMP - Five Streams, Balsam Swamp and Red Brook State Forests in Chenango County
- Tioughnioga UMP - DeRuyter, Morrow Mountain and Stoney Pond State Forests and Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area in Madison County
- Southern Staten Island UMP - Mount Loretto, Lemon Creek, Blosser's Pond and Arden Heights Unique Areas in Richmond County

- Brasher UMP - Brasher and Bombay State Forests in St. Lawrence County
- Chenango Trails UMP - Coventry State Forest, Bobell Hill State Forest, Beaver Flow State Forest, Bumps Creek State Forest, and Oak Ridge State Forest in Chenango County.
- Virgil Mountain UMP - James D. Kennedy Memorial State Forest and Tuller Hill State Forest in Cortland County
- Muller Hill UMP - Muller Hill, Mariposa and Three Springs State Forests in Madison and Chenango Counties.
- 46 Corners UMP - Big Brook, Cobb Brook, Fall Brook, Florence Hill, Furnace Creek, Mad River, Swancott Hill and Tri-County State Forests located mostly in northwestern Oneida County.
- Keuka Lowlands UMP - Mount Washington, Birdseye Hollow and Moss Hill State Forests and Waneta-Lamoka and Cold Brook WMAs in Steuben County.
- The Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park GEIS was approved in October 2006 by then Commissioner's Denise Sheehan (DEC) and Bernadette Castro (OPRHP). The Plan GEIS is a supplement of the State of New York Snowmobile Trail Plan (Statewide Snowmobile Plan), adopted by OPRHP in 1989. It describes concepts for establishing a comprehensive and integrated Adirondack Park snowmobile system and standards for developing and maintaining trails on DEC owned lands in the Park, consistent with Article XIV of the State Constitution and respecting the rights and interests of private landowners.
- DEC is finalizing an ATV policy for Forest Preserve, State Forest, and Conservation Easement lands.
- Substantial construction of the Day Use Area portion for the new Scaroon Manor Campground on Schroon Lake has been completed. A ribbon cutting ceremony was held on July 6, 2006. The construction of the Phase 2 campground portion is expected to begin in the spring of 2007.

Objective: Develop and implement programs to improve the sustainability of the state's natural resources

- *Trail Supporter Patch* - The Division created the first Trail Supporter Patch, available for a cost of \$5 each. Patch proceeds will be deposited in the Conservation Fund's Outdoor Recreation, Trail Maintenance, and Development Account, and will help maintain and enhance non-motorized trails throughout New York State.
- *Mapping Resources: State Recreational Lands Interactive Mapper* - This interactive mapper has been running on the public website for the last few years.

This project has received many positive responses and it is a great improvement to our public website. The Lands and Forests interactive mapper shows seven types of recreational trails, parking lots and access points statewide. Starting from the state view, this application enables users to search on a town, county, address or state land name. Zooming to a closer scale, the user can view the different types of recreational trails that are available, as well as, state parks, roads and water. Additionally, users can identify an individual state land unit to view a more detailed description page where they exist. Topographic maps can be printed for many areas as well as the custom view created by the user. Please note that the trails shown are DEC officially recognized trails on lands managed by the Division of Lands and Forests, mainly on state forests and forest preserve lands. We have been and will continue improving existing data and working towards including trails located on wildlife management areas, state environmental education centers and state campgrounds. The latest endeavor is to improve this interactive mapper for ease of use, a better look and feel and to employ the latest software technology. A new product should be out for public use mid-2008.

Resource Management Plans

- *Conservation of high quality resources via private forest landowner education -* The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) was established through the 1990 Farm Bill and encourages private forest landowners to manage their lands using professionally-prepared forest stewardship plans. These plans integrate forest resources, wildlife and fish, water, aesthetics, recreation, etc., to meet landowner objectives. The recent introduction of the FSP Spatial Analysis Project (SAP) has provided a methodology to spatially display lands with important stewardship potential. These lands can be compared to actual stewardship planning accomplishments. Evaluation of Forest Stewardship planning efforts in FFY 07 shows that 72 % of the 67,099 total acres for which plans were developed, have been on lands demonstrating a high or moderate stewardship potential.
- *Implementation of sustainable land management practices -* The federally supported Forest Land Enhancement Program administered through NYS DEC, has provided opportunities for forest landowners to receive financial support to implement sustainable management practices on their lands detailed in their Forest Stewardship plans. This cost share incentive program, cooperatively implemented by NYS DEC, New York Forest Owners Association and Cornell Cooperative Extension, will terminate upon conclusion of FFY 07 per authorization language of the 2002 Farm Bill. During FFY 07, \$133,488 was provided as partial cost reimbursement to landowners that completed sustainable practices that improved 853 acres of forest, protected 630 acres of watershed, enhanced 2,403 acres of fish & wildlife habitat, addressed forest health problems on 379 acres and controlled invasive species on 39 acres. Over 1,870 acres of Stewardship planning was also supported with these funds.
- *During the life of the program some selected accomplishments in response to over 1,000 requests for assistance included the preparation of Forest Stewardship Plans*

on 23,906 acres, tree planting and establishment of natural regeneration on 84 acres, forest improvement work on 6,081 acres and fish and wildlife habitat work that impacted 11,471 acres. These selected sustainable forestry activities were underwritten with \$792,915 of FLEP program funds.

Non-native and Invasive Species

- Invasive Species implementation plan initiated - A total of \$3.25 million from the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) has been appropriated for implementing the recommendations of the New York State Invasive Species Task Force. Developments include: Creation of a Research Institute, where Cornell University has been approved as a single source for this resource and a contract is in process. The Eradication Grants received about a third more (in dollar terms) requests than the program could fund. DFWMR and Lands&Forests developed a system for equitably sharing the \$2 M available with \$1,420,000 going to the aquatic program and \$580,000 to the terrestrial program. The final review is taking place and grants are anticipated to be awarded in early September 07.
- Dissemination of invasive and nuisance species information via web and internet. Updates and general information about gypsy moth caterpillars, tent caterpillars, friendly fly, Asian long-horned beetle, emerald ash borer, sirex woodwasp and hemlock woolly adelgid were made available to the public via the DEC website. A "Don't Move Firewood" promotional campaign began this year in partnership with Division of Operations and their campsite reservations contractor, Reserve America. The goal of this effort is to reduce/prevent the expansion of invasive species through the movement of firewood.

Objective: Provide the public with enhanced opportunities to enjoy outdoor activities in a variety of natural settings

- *Land Acquisition* - During the past decade, the State has announced the conservation of more than 1,000,000 acres of land, and the overwhelming majority is open to hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, camping and other outdoor recreational activities. Highlights of projects completed in the last year include: Butler Manor Woodlands on Staten Island, Bog & Clear Lakes, Sabatis Land Co., Norowal Marina, International Paper/Lyme Timber Co Phase 1B, II & III working forest easement (completing the largest single land transaction ever undertaken by DEC) Grasse River working forest easement and the historic Edna St Vincent Millay's "Steepletop."
- *Public Fishing Rights (PFR) Acquisitions* - Acquisition of public fishing easements to New York streams and development of associated parking areas and footpaths remains a high priority program. Since March 31, 2006, almost 20 equivalent miles (miles along both banks) were formally acquired. PFR were purchased along over 2.3 miles of the Delaware River, 0.1 miles of the Butternut Creek, 16 miles along the Grasse River, 0.9 miles along the Elton Creek, 7.6 acres along Owasco Inlet, 0.2 miles along, the Neversink River, 0.1 miles along Mansfield Creek, 1 acre along Ischua Creek and 8.5 acres along Eighteen Mile

Creek. PFR holdings in New York State now encompass more than 1,300 equivalent miles on over 400 streams.

- *Access for people with disabilities* - The Department continues its focus on accessibility to enable people of all abilities to access programs on state land such as hunting, camping, fishing and horseback riding. During the last several years, more than 180 accessibility projects have been completed statewide. These include: accessible fishing piers and fishing areas along streams and lakes, accessible equestrian mounting platforms; boat and canoe launches, campsites; and road rehabilitation projects. Also, accessible buses are used to support the public at both Prospect Mountain and Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.

- As State Land units go through the formal Unit Management planning process, existing programs and services within each unit are assessed to determine the degree of accessibility provided. Unit management planning provides an opportunity for public input regarding the development of accessible opportunities.

- In July 2007, the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources issued a press release seeking input from people with disabilities on ways that DEC might better serve their needs for access to fishing and hunting opportunities. Comments are currently being reviewed by a DEC Accessibility Team.

- The Department's Motorized Access Program for People with Disabilities has issued hundreds of permits statewide to people with qualifying mobility impairments. The success of this program has been measured annually by surveying permit holders. One non-motorized opportunity under this program is free access to the Santanoni Great Camp via horse and wagon. Information on this program, including permit applications and a listing of routes that are open across the state, is available on DEC's website.

- With respect to assisting people with disabilities in their enjoyment of and access to outdoor programs, training programs have been held and will continue for DEC and Adirondack Park Agency (APA) staff, licensed guides and vendors of services involving programs in the Forest Preserve. Regional fisheries staff have held several large public fishing events at accessible facilities in Region 1 and are responsive to requests for further accommodation.

- DEC staff in Region 7 continue to annually promote pheasant hunts for people with disabilities through local fish and game clubs. In addition to supplying the birds and helping to locate appropriate locations, DEC provides information on the specific needs that people with various types of disabilities would have while hunting.

- DEC's Universal Access Program seeks to further interest in outdoor recreation through outreach and education efforts and to continue to provide new opportunities through the design and construction of facilities such as wheelchair accessible duck blinds and platform tenting.