

2009 Report to NYS Conservation Council from Division of Lands and Forests

Connect New Yorkers to Nature

Land Acquisition - During the past decade, the State has announced the conservation of more than 1 million acres of land, and the overwhelming majority is open to hunting, fishing, hiking, birdwatching, camping and other outdoor recreational activities. The main highlights of the previous year's projects are the 25,608-acre Sable Highlands fee title addition to the Adirondack Preserve, and 84,000-acre Sable Highlands conservation easement (both 4th quarter 2008), and a 237.5-acre addition to the Braddock Bay Wildlife Management Area (1st quarter 2009) – a very popular spot for duck hunting. Detailed quarterly lists of acquired lands, conservation easements and public fishing rights can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/5069.html>.

Snowmobile Guidelines - The Department and Adirondack Park Agency have been working together to develop guidelines for the Siting, Construction and Maintenance of Snowmobile Trails on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park. These guidelines will reflect the goals approved in the 2006 Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondacks/FGEIS to reconfigure the Adirondack snowmobile trail systems to create trail connections between communities in the Park and establish trail management practices for Forest Preserve lands.

Bog River Complex Unit Management Plan - An amendment to the Bog River Complex unit management plan was approved by Commissioner Grannis. This amendment revises the timeline for phase out of commercial float plane access in the 2008 Bog River complex unit management plan. The Unit Management Plan for the Bog River Flow Complex called for the end of floatplane access to Lows Lake by 2008. The amendment extends floatplane access until December 31, 2012. Lows Lake is a popular destination for fishermen and hunters. More information can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/22579.html>.

Mountain Biking - The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and its partners celebrated the opening of the Flume Trail System, the first on Adirondack forest preserve lands for mountain biking. The Flume Trail System includes approximately eight miles of trails for four-season recreational activities, including mountain biking, hiking, cross-country skiing and snowshoeing. The trails meet the specifications of the International Mountain Bicycling Association and are rated as easy, moderate and hard. The system includes a trail along the West Branch of the Ausable River and a trail to Flume Knob for hiking only. Most of the trails lie within the Wilmington Wild Forest unit of the forest preserve. However, approximately two miles of trail are located on the Whiteface Mountain Ski Area, which the Olympic Regional Development Authority operates.

The Department revised the Windham High Peak Wild Forest unit management plan (UMP) to accommodate increased interest in mountain biking. Since the adoption of the 1994 Windham

High Peak UMP, the popularity of mountain biking has increased, as has the interest in developing mountain bike trails in the Catskill Forest Preserve. While the UMP identified a 1.9 mile length of trail suitable for designation as a bicycle route, the plan went on to state that this stretch of trail is too short to act as a stand-alone bicycle trail, and that the designation should be done as part of a larger network of bicycle trails. A proposal to develop such a system of trails was received in early 2006 from local mountain bike enthusiasts. A decision was made to revise the Windham High Peak Wild Forest UMP after evaluating the proposal and its compatibility with the guidance for developing facilities in Wild Forest areas. In addition to mountain bike trail development, this amendment also makes recommendations to address other issues raised at the public information meeting including the need for multi-use trails and additional parking at the Peck Road parking area.

Rerouting of Northville-Lake Placid Trail Completed - A rerouting of the Northville-Lake Placid Trail that moved the trail from Cedar River Road into the interior of the Blue Ridge Wilderness has been completed. The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) professional trail crew performed the work under a contract with DEC. After two years of construction by the ADK, the original 132-mile Northville-Lake Placid Trail opened 85 years ago. It initially followed the Cedar River Road for 6.6 miles between Wakely Dam and the former McCane's Resort in the Town of Indian Lake, Hamilton County. The new trail section, eliminating all but 0.7 mile of roadway hiking, passes through magnificent old growth forest, with impressive specimens of sugar maple, yellow birch, hemlock and red spruce.

Safeguard New York's Unique Natural Assets

Firewood Regulation – The emergency regulation was instituted in June 2008 to reduce the risk of introduction and spread of invasive insects and diseases of trees by preventing untreated firewood from entering New York State and restricting the movement, sale and possession, within the State, of untreated firewood that originates in New York State was made permanent. Outreach efforts are continuing and expanding and the Department is working on increasing enforcement, addressing local firewood supply issues, and confiscation and disposal concerns. More information can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/28722.html>.

Emerald Ash Borer - In mid-June of 2009, the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) was discovered for the first time in NYS in the Town of Randolph, Cattaraugus County. A quarantine has been established within Cattaraugus and Chautauqua Counties to control the spread of this destructive insect that poses a serious threat to ash trees statewide. The coordinated response includes the coordination of DEC, Department of Agriculture and Markets, Cornell Cooperative Extension and USDA Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS). 1,800 EAB traps were deployed and 39 ash trees with known infestations were removed. USDA APHIS is expected to issue a parallel Federal quarantine restricting interstate movement of ash and firewood in the near future. More information can be found on DEC's EAB webpage at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/7253.html>.

Giant Hogweed - The Division of Lands and Forests continued eradication efforts of Giant Hogweed at some of the over 400 currently known sites. The sap from this plant combined with sunlight can cause burns on the skin. More information can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/39809.html>.

State Lands Natural Heritage Inventories - The Natural Heritage Program has completed a detailed assessment of one million acres of State Forests, Reforestation Areas, Multiple Use Areas, Unique Areas, and Forest Preserve for rare animals, rare plants, and significant ecological communities. This five-year project included on the ground assessments, modeling to predict and identify new populations, and the development of conservation guides for State Foresters that will help them manage and protect biodiversity resources on their properties. The project has also improved our understanding of New York's overall biodiversity, which will enhance informed conservation outside of state lands. We hope to secure funding to extend this assessment to remaining conservation easement and forest preserve acreage.

Trail Supporter Patch - The Division of Lands and Forests created and released the first Trail Supporter Patch in 2007. The proceeds from the sale of the patch, which costs \$5, are 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. Since its release sales of the Trail Supporter Patch have raised \$6,140. More information can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/36016.html>.

State Forest Management Plan - Within the next year the Department will be holding a series of public meetings to obtain input on the future management of the over 790,000 acres of State Forests, Unique Areas and Multiple Use Areas administered by the Division of Lands and Forests. This state-wide plan will serve as a foundation for all future State Forest Unit Management Plans. It will be crucial for all user groups to contribute their input in this process.

State Lands Regulations - The Department recently revised the "Use of State Lands" Regulations (6 NYCRR Part 190 State Lands) to modernize state land management and to reduce inappropriate private uses of state lands so that state land resources are available to the public including the sportsmen and sportswomen community.

Temporary Revocable Permit (TRP) Policy - Revisions are being made to the Department's TRP Policy, for use of lands administered by the Divisions of Lands and Forests and Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources. The changes will streamline the process by adding a new permit level for low impact activities. Unlike the existing Routine and Non-Routine permits, this new permit type will be free and will not require liability insurance coverage from the applicant. We expect the revisions to be completed prior to Spring of 2010.

Catskill Park State Land Master Plan - A new Catskill Park State Land Master Plan was completed and incorporates balanced recreational opportunities with enhanced environmental protection. The revised plan will guide the future management of the State's 292,000-acre holdings within the Catskill Forest Preserve. This revised Master Plan will assist DEC in continuing to manage the Catskill Forest Preserve in ways that are sensitive to public needs and protect the region's natural resources for the future. The Master Plan is for Forest Preserve and other lands administered by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) within the

Catskill Park, as well as Forest Preserve land outside the Park within Ulster, Greene, Delaware and Sullivan Counties. The Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (CPSLMP) establishes geographic management units, and classifies each unit based on the area's characteristics and level of public use. More information can be found on the DEC website at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/43013.html>.

Combat Climate Change

Forests and the Environment - The Division of Lands and Forests has created a series of web pages which describe the importance of trees and forests in our environment. Topics include Carbon Sequestration and Forests and How Plants Run the Carbon Cycle. Additional topics will be added to DEC's Forests and the Environment webpage at <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/41769.html> .