



New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

Division of Lands & Forests, Region 5

INTERIM ACCESS PLAN
for
“Former Finch” Forest Preserve Acquisitions
Spring/Summer 2013

Hudson River
Cedar River
OK Slip Falls

Essex and Hamilton Counties
Towns of Indian Lake, Minerva and Newcomb

June 2013

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

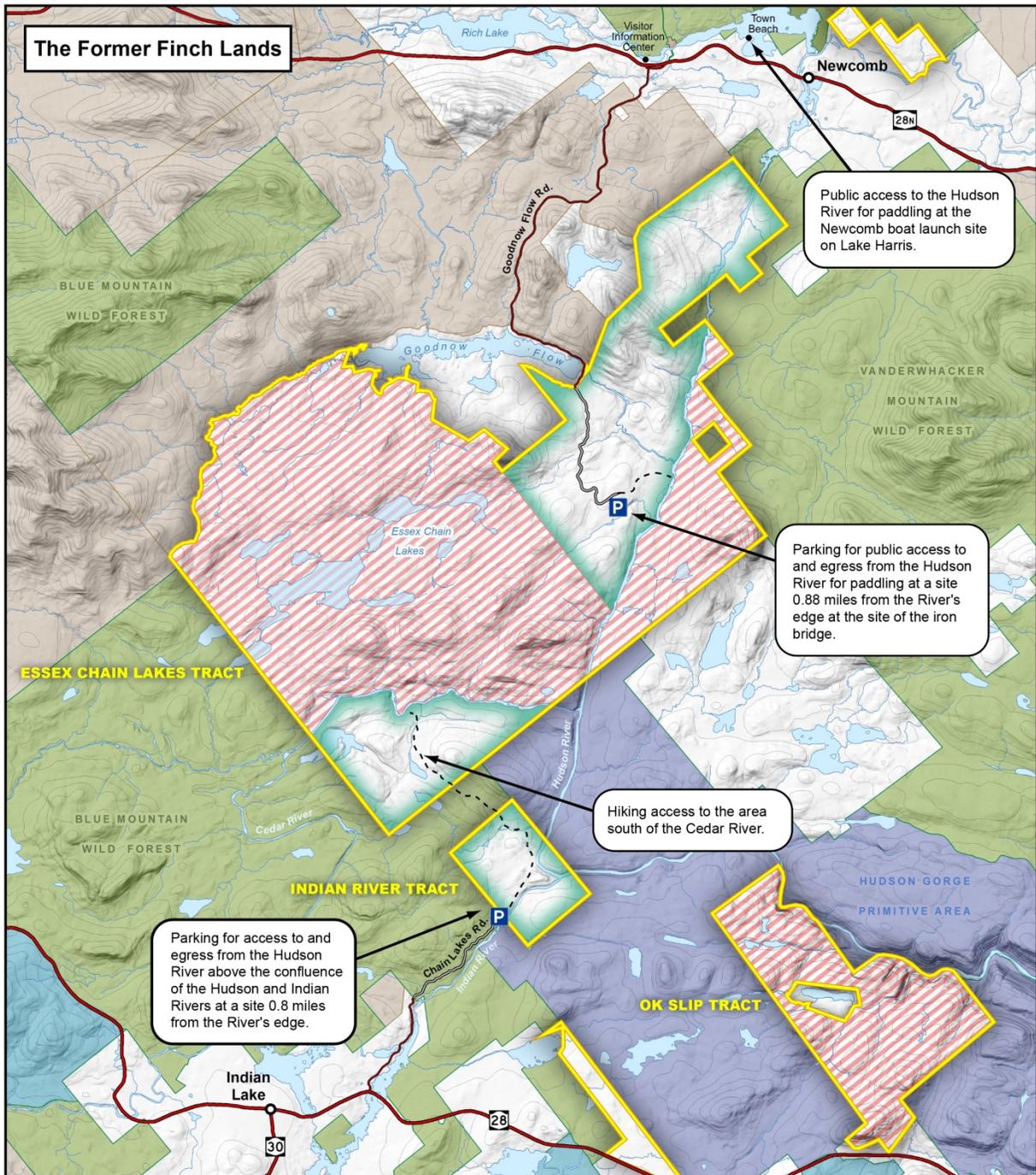
Joe Martens, Commissioner

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Overview Map



Existing State Lands

- Wild Forest
- Primitive
- Wilderness
- Intensive Use
- Historic

Other Lands

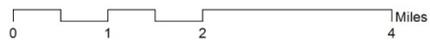
- DEC Conservation Easement
- Former Finch Land

Public access will be available:

- Spring 2013
- Fall 2013

P Parking Area

- State Highway
- Town Road
- Access Road
- Trail



Purpose and Goals

The purpose of this plan is to establish interim public access to the Hudson and Cedar River areas within the Essex Chain Lakes and Indian River Tracts, while protecting their natural resources. Associated infrastructure will be developed for the primary purpose of facilitating recreational use of the Hudson and Cedar Rivers prior to Adirondack Park Agency (APA) land classification and development of unit management plans (UMPs) for the area. The overall goal is to allow public access to specified areas in the spring and summer, but not to preclude classification with the proposed access provisions. Temporary motor vehicle access will be provided to a certain extent, but may change in the future pending APA classification. This plan does not affect or suggest what access and uses will be allowed after APA classification.

Use History

The Essex Chain Lakes, Indian River, and OK Slip Tracts are part of the former Finch, Pruyn & Co. lands purchased by New York State from The Nature Conservancy (TNC). Much of this land has been logged using sustainable practices for the last century, and both tracts have historically been leased to the Gooley and Polaris Clubs. Portions of the Essex Chain Lakes Tract are still being leased and the clubs have exclusive use of these leased lands through September 2013. At that time the leases become one-acre envelopes around the camp buildings. The lessees will have motorized access to the camp buildings year-round and on designated roads during mud season and big game hunting season. All current leases will expire in 2018.

The OK Slip Tract has historically had a private inholding (approximately 38 acres, with an access road) owned by the Northern Frontier Camp. In April 2013, the camp purchased additional acreage surrounding the existing inholding, creating a 166 acre private envelope around OK Slip Pond. They will continue to use the right-of-way off of Route 28 to access the parcel.

Issues

Since this land has been purchased in fee by NYS, there is a reasonable expectation the Department will provide for limited public access prior to formal APA land classification and UMP development by the Department. This plan seeks to specify what public access and use will be provided to the Hudson and Cedar River areas and OK Slip Falls, beginning in Spring 2013. Access to the Essex Chain Lakes for the Fall of 2013 will be addressed in a separate plan.

This plan is consistent with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), since it does not preclude any classification options. According to the APSLMP: *“Prior to classification by the Agency, lands acquired by the Department of Environmental Conservation...will be administered in a manner consistent with the character of the land and its capacity to withstand use and which will not foreclose options for eventual classification.”* All trail access set forth in this Interim Plan will be on previously constructed trails or roads.

Some species of special concern, listed in the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) occur on these lands. This interim plan is designed to protect those areas by directing the public away from those areas. In an effort to maintain confidentiality and to protect these critical resources, the specific locations of sensitive species are not identified here. See Appendix 2 for a list of “Threatened, Endangered, and Species of Special Concern” for each tract.

The protection of species identified in the NYNHP inventory (and perhaps others) will be addressed during the APA land classification process and DEC UMP planning process.

Camping and the designation of primitive tent sites are not addressed in this interim access plan. Camping will be allowed, however, pursuant to existing DEC camping regulations (6 NYCRR Section 190.3(b)). <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/7872.html>

Access Provisions

1. Northern Access- Upper Hudson River (*See Appendix Map 1*)

Public access to and egress from the Hudson River within the eastern portion of the Essex Chain Lakes Tract will be provided in the vicinity of the Iron Bridge (See Appendix 1 for map). Here the public will be able to access the Hudson River for recreation. This will also be the egress point for paddlers who put in at the Newcomb Town Beach and choose not to continue on to the point of egress just north of the confluence of the Hudson and Indian Rivers.

Prior to the Spring 2013 opening date, a permit system for Gooley Club and Polaris Club motor vehicle access will be developed and administered along with the marking of key lessee boundaries. The intent of this permit system and clearly marked boundaries is to separate public access from lessee access.

Parking:

The overarching goal for the parking area at the Iron Bridge take-out is to site the interim parking lot as close to the river as possible without precluding classification options. The parking area will be located no closer than one-half mile from the mean high water mark of the Hudson River. A suitable temporary site has been identified 0.6 miles from the river, and is a 0.88 mile walk from the take-out at the Iron Bridge. This site was chosen over several other possible cleared areas because of its size, proximity to the take-out and appropriateness for gate installation. This area is already cleared and is reasonably level. Improvements will have minimal impact on the existing resources, so if they need to be removed or their use discontinued after classification of the land there will be no long-term impacts.

Gates and Barriers:

- Gate 1: The existing gate at the Goodnow Flow Road entrance to the Essex Chain Lakes Tract will be moved further north. This gate will be open for public motorized access outside of mud season.
- Gates 2 and 3: Gate 2 will be installed at the beginning of the road leading to the Gooley Club buildings, and lessees will have exclusive motorized access until Fall 2013. Gate 3 will be installed at the beginning of the road that extends south towards Cedar Mountain, and potential use of this gate will not be addressed until Fall 2013.
- Gate 4: This gate will be installed just after the designated parking area. Its location is based on the minimum 0.5 mile straight distance from the Hudson River, to not foreclose future classification options. Polaris Club lessees will have motorized access beyond this gate to access their camp buildings.

- Gate 5: The existing gate on the west side of the Iron Bridge is currently in the appropriate location. Polaris Club members will have access beyond this gate also.
- Barrier 1: A rock barrier will be installed to keep motor vehicles from traveling down this former logging road.

Signage:

- A Type I kiosk will be placed at the Newcomb Town Beach to provide information for paddlers about the Hudson River and take-outs at the Iron Bridge and on the Indian River Tract.
- A Type II kiosk will be placed at the Iron Bridge parking area with maps and other information concerning the potential danger of the Hudson Gorge and exiting the river at the Indian River Tract.
- Signs will be placed on the Hudson River to provide sufficient warning to paddlers to prepare them for the opportunity to egress the river at the Iron Bridge or on the Indian River Tract.

2. Southern Access- Southern Hudson Indian River Tract (See Appendix Map 2)

Public access within the Indian River Tract will provide a location for egress from the Hudson River just prior to the Class IV – V rapids of the Hudson River Gorge, just north of the confluence with the Indian River.

Parking:

Public parking for 6-8 cars will be provided at the existing clearing before the existing gate on the Chain Lakes Road at the southern boundary of the Indian River Tract parcel. The parking area is approximately 0.8 miles from the take-out. There will not be any public motor vehicle access beyond this parking lot.

Trails:

Public access to the Cedar River will be provided from the parking lot along the existing road to the take out and on past the former Outer Gooley Club buildings. This route extends north passing through a section of the Blue Mountain Wild Forest, passing Clear and Mud Ponds and ending at the Cedar River. The hike from the parking area on the Chain Lakes Road to the Cedar River is approximately 3.7 miles. The lands north of the Cedar River within the Essex Chain Lakes Tract are still being leased by the Gooley Club and will not be open for public use until Fall 2013.

Public use will not be encouraged at the confluence of the Indian and Hudson Rivers where there is a sandy delta that is highly erodible and not likely to withstand any significant use. The capacity for this area to withstand public use will be more fully addressed in the UMP process. In the interim, barriers will be placed at the southern entrance to the existing loop off the Chain Lakes Road along with a “No Public Access” sign. The northern loop entrance will be an administrative access entrance, but will only be used for emergency purposes.

The point of the confluence of the Hudson River with the Indian River is also the “very last chance” to take-out from the Hudson River prior to the Hudson Gorge. It will be designated as a take out for emergency purposes only. Visible notification that the “very last chance” to exit the river will be placed along the river after the designated take-out in the vicinity of the Outer Gooley buildings. The designated take-out is located along an old road that extends from the river to the trail leading to the parking area.

Gates and Barriers:

Gate 1: The existing gate on the Chain Lakes Road is in the appropriate location. No modification is necessary.

- Barrier and Brushing: A rock barrier and brushing will be installed where the closed southern confluence loop meets the main trail.

Signage:

- A Type II kiosk will be placed at the parking area with maps and clear messages about the Hudson River take-out at the Outer Gooley buildings. There will also be messages and maps about the Cedar River fishing opportunities and existing regulations.
- The confluence point:
 - Southern entrance – “No Public Access” sign, and a directional trail marker.
 - Northern entrance – “Administrative Access Only” and “No Public Access” signs, along with a directional trail marker.
- Directional signage at Outer Gooley building area:
 - Sign indicating access to the Hudson River.
 - A trail sign indicating mileage to the Cedar River, Corner Pond, Clear Pond and Mud Pond.

3. OK Slip Falls

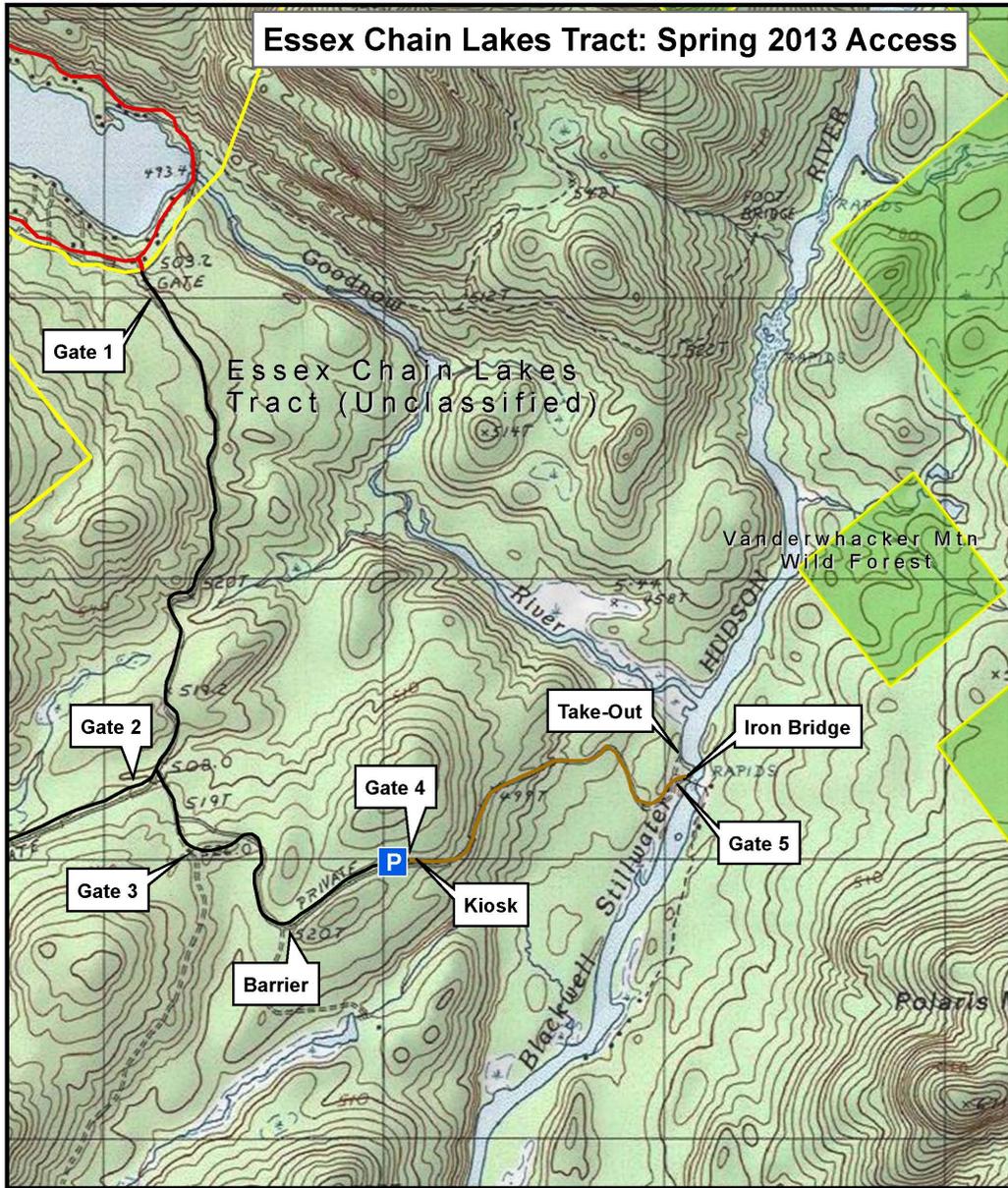
The 2780 acre OK Slip Tract is located in the Town of Indian Lake, Hamilton County. The tract contains one of the Adirondack’s highest waterfalls, OK Slip Falls, which drops nearly 250 feet before reaching the Hudson River below, and is surrounded by the existing public lands within the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area. OK Slip Pond is located in the center of this parcel and is encompassed within a 166 acre envelope of private land.

In anticipation of the interest of the recreating public to visit the waterfall, DEC will be identifying the most appropriate route for a foot trail to accommodate public access to this area. The new trail will be developed in a manner that is respectful of the private inholding and ensures the safety of the public visiting this spectacular parcel. Public access to the OK Slip tract will be open when the designated trail for public access to the waterfall has been developed. This is expected to be in the Fall of 2013.

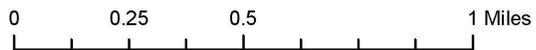
APPENDIX 1: Maps

Map 1

Northern Access- Upper Hudson River

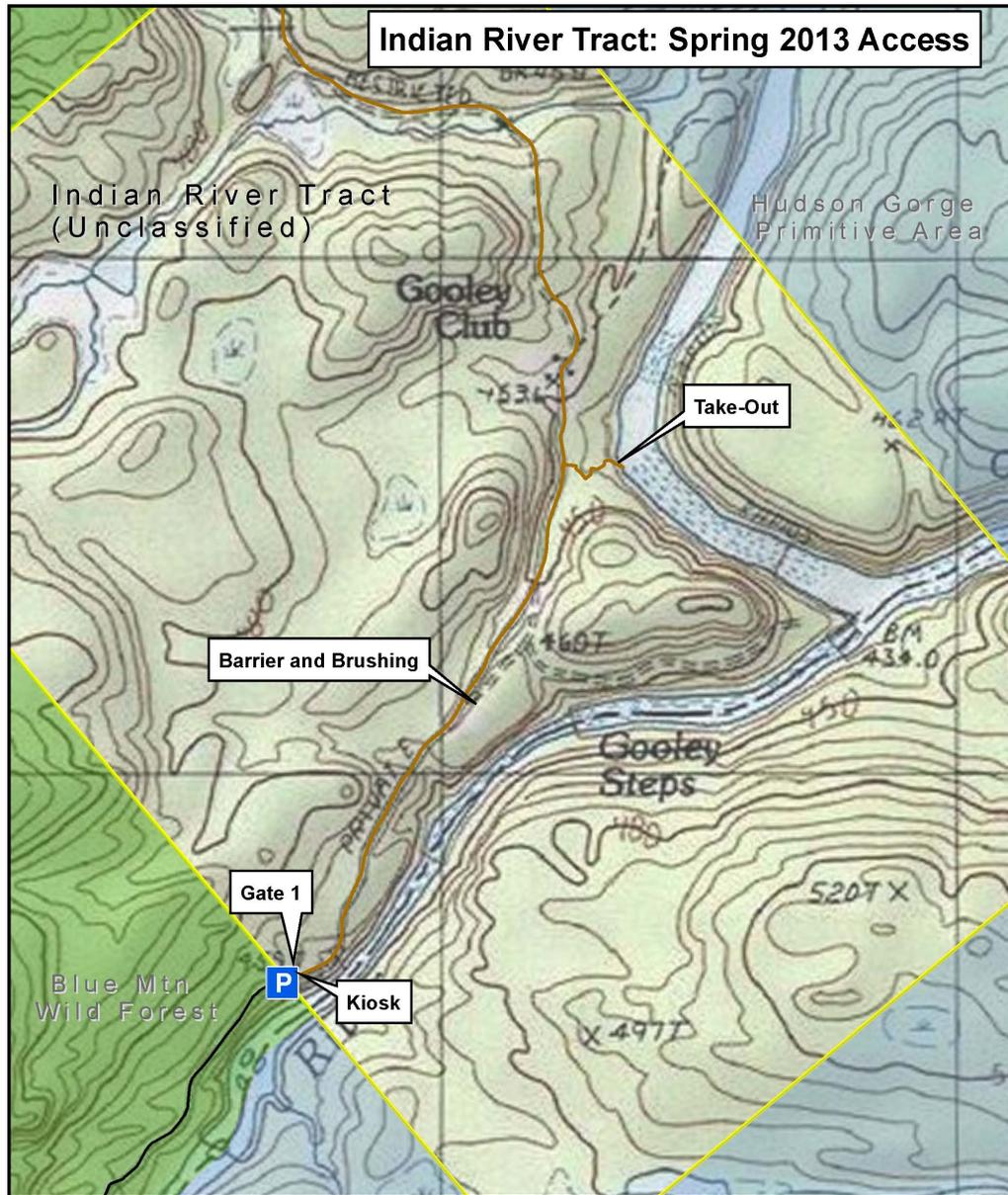


- Trail
- Access Road
- Forest Preserve Boundary
- Town Road



Map 2

Southern Access- Southern Hudson Indian River Tract



- Trail
- Access Road
- Forest Preserve Boundary



APPENDIX 2: Threatened, Endangered, and Species of Special Concern

Essex Chain Lakes and Indian River Tracts:

- Common Loon (*Gavia Immer*): Special Concern Species
Last observed 1993
- Spurred Gentian (*Halenia deflexa*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1989
- Melic-oats (*Trisetum melicoides*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Northern White Cedar Rocky Summit: Ecological Community
Last observed 1996

OK Slip Tract:

- Rock Cress (*Draba arabisans*): Threatened Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Daisy Fleabane (*Erigeron hyssopifolius*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Dwarf Sand-Cherry (*Prunus pumila* var. *depressa*): Threatened Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Spurred Gentian (*Halenia deflexa*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- New England Northern Reedgrass (*Calamagrostis stricta*): Threatened Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Smooth Cliff Fern (*Woodsia glabella*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Purple Mountain Saxi-Frage (*Saxifraga oppositifolia*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- Hair-Like Sedge (*Carex capillaries*): Endangered Plant Species
Last observed 1990
- False Willow Moss (*Platydictya jungermannioides*): Unlisted Plant Species
Last observed 2005
- Dingy Dry Rock Moss (*Grimmia unicolor*): Unlisted Plant Species
Last observed 2005
- Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*): Threatened Animal Species
Last observed 1927
- Calcareous Talus Slope Woodland: Ecological Community
Last observed 1997
- Calcareous Cliff Community: Ecological Community
Last observed 1997