

GRASS RIVER WILD FOREST

UMP AMENDMENT

Lampson Falls

February 2004

INTRODUCTION

The Grass River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan (UMP) was finalized in February 1990. It covered a 1,274 acre parcel located in the northwestern part of the Town of Clare in St Lawrence Co. Since 1990 additional tracts of forest preserve and easements have been acquired in this unit. All of these lands are centered around Lampson Falls, Harper Falls, and the main and North Branch of the Grass River. A revision to the Grass River UMP has been started.

Lampson Falls is one of the largest falls in the Adirondacks and has long been a much sought out scenic and recreation location. It is about a half-mile walk in on a gravel road to get to the top of the falls with about the first two-tenths of a mile a ROW across private land. Access to the foot of the falls, and the best view, is by foot trail.

Lampson Falls was suggested as a site to improve access for persons with disabilities for the reasons identified above and was subsequently incorporated into Appendix C of the Galusha/ADA Consent Decree signed by the Department and APA in July of 2001.

III. MANAGEMENT

C. MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

6. Grass River Amendment Access Projects

PROPOSAL AND ALTERNATIVES

The project as defined in the consent decree requires accessible parking, a kiosk, and an accessible route to Lampson Falls. A combination of alternatives to provide for access and viewing of the falls, as well as other recreational opportunities, are described below.

An area map and a map showing the location of the proposed facilities are included in Appendix F.

The first part of the project will be to get people in to a knoll immediately adjacent to the falls. The second part will be to get people to a viewing point.

Part 1.

Alternative A

1. Parking - Provide accessible parking at the junction of Lampson Mills Road and CR 27. The County is willing to provide an area for parking within its ROW along CR 27. Up to 12 spaces (2 accessible) will be provided and at least the two accessible spaces will be paved.
2. Travel to knoll near the falls - The falls would be accessed from the parking lot on CR 27 by wheelchair or other non-motorized means over the Lampson Mills Road, and the existing gravel-base administrative access road (currently gated to prevent access by non-authorized vehicles). Making this road suitable for use would require placement and replacement of some culverts and some additional material of a suitable character to level the road and make it uniformly firm enough to meet the Americans with Disability Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG). A kiosk will be placed just inside the forest preserve line.

Alternative B

1. Travel to knoll near the falls - Allow people with a CP-3 permit (Motor Vehicle Access for People with Disabilities) to drive in by motor vehicle to a parking area near the falls. Making this road suitable for use would require placement and replacement of some culverts and some additional gravel, though the road is basically in good shape. There is some question whether DEC has the legal right to provide public motor vehicle access, as the first two-thirds of the road is a ROW across private land. If it is determined there is not legal public motor vehicle access the current landowner will be contacted to see if they would be willing to grant it for limited use by those with CP-3 permits. A kiosk will be placed at the parking area.
2. Parking - Parking would be provided for three cars in an unpaved lot at a

location next to the knoll but hidden from the falls by 100 feet of woods. Some fill would be needed and a small number of trees larger than 3"dbh would have to be removed.

Part 2.

Overlook 1 - This option will require approximately 200 feet of hardened trail to be constructed to a viewing site near the top of the falls. There will be a hardened 10' by 10' viewing area adjacent to the falls. The trail and the viewing area will be built by lining the edges with local stone then filling between the lines of stone with gravel to provide for a firm surface for accessible use. The trail will not require any treated lumber boardwalk sections. Portions of the trail will be slightly elevated in order to maintain the grade in compliance with ADAAG standards. The viewing platform will not be visible from other viewing points due to its low profile and because it will be constructed of native natural materials.

Overlook 2 - This option would require approximately 400 feet of hardened trail to be constructed to a viewing site near the middle of the falls. There will be a hardened 10' by 10' viewing area adjacent to the falls. The trail and the viewing area will be built by lining the edges with local stone then filling between the lines of stone with gravel to provide for a firm surface for accessible use. The trail will not require any treated lumber boardwalk sections. Portions of the trail will be slightly elevated in order to maintain the grade in compliance with ADAAG standards. The vertical drop from the road to the viewing site is approximately 24 feet so switchbacks will be required to maintain an allowable grade for accessible use.

An alternative to allow people with disabilities the opportunity to access the north side of the falls was investigated. It was determined that excessive slope made this alternative impractical.

PREFERRED ALTERNATIVE

The preferred alternative for providing access to Lampson Falls is as follows:

Part 1. Parking and Access to the Knoll

Alternative A is the preferred alternative. This is the option preferred by the Accessibility Advisory Committee and the fee title owner of the land over which the ROW between County Rt. 27 and the forest preserve lands exists. This alternative provides a very scenic and accessible route over a narrow but fairly level woods road for about 2550' to the knoll near the top of Lampson Falls. No additional motor vehicle use on forest preserve will occur with this alternative, including parking, since parking will be provided on county land within the county highway ROW. There will be little environmental impact from altering this road to meet ADAAG accessibility guidelines.

Part 2. Viewing of Falls

Overlook 2 is the preferred location for accessible viewing of the falls. It is located about one-third of the way down the falls and provides a view to the top, to the bottom, and to nearly the entire face of the falls. The view is also framed by adjacent white cedar, enhancing the scenic quality of the location. Overlook 1 is a shorter route with less vertical drop from the woods road portion of the trail but only the top third of the falls is visible due to the configuration of the lower two-thirds of the face of the falls. The sense of elevation is an attraction for Overlook 1, but the inferior view of the falls itself makes Overlook 2 the preferred viewing spot. Both locations, as well as the hardened trails leading to them, would be mostly screened by vegetation from those viewing the falls from below or downstream of the falls, so there is no advantage between one or the other in that regards.

Appendix H includes a detailed work plan for the preferred alternative, developed in consultation with APA staff.

LEGAL/ POLICY MANDATE

All construction will comply with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, Adirondack Park Agency Rules and Regulations (such as the wetlands reg's), DEC policies and regulations, and the Regulatory Negotiation Committee on Accessibility Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas, Final Report (September 30, 1999).

This project is not already in an approved unit management plan, therefore a Long Environmental Assessment Form (EAF), a negative declaration, and a dated copy of the project notice will have to appear in the Environmental Notice Bulletin. See Appendix G for the Environmental Assessment Form.

7. The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Its Influence on Management Actions for Recreation and Related Facilities

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title V, Section 504, have had a profound effect on the manner by which people with disabilities are afforded equality in their recreational pursuits. The ADA is a comprehensive law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in employment practices, use of public transportation, use of telecommunication facilities and use of public accommodations. Title II of the ADA applies to the Department and requires, in part, that reasonable modifications must be made to its services and programs, so that when those services and programs are viewed in their entirety, they are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. This must be

done unless such modification would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the service, program or activity or an undue financial or administrative burden to the Department. Since recreation is an acknowledged public accommodation program of the Department, and there are services and activities associated with that program, the Department has the mandated obligation to comply with the ADA, Title II and ADA Accessibility Guidelines, as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

The ADA requires a public entity to thoroughly examine each of its programs and services to determine the level of accessibility provided. The examination involves the identification of all existing programs and services and a formal assessment to determine the degree of accessibility provided to each. The assessment includes the use of the standards established by Federal Department of Justice Rule as delineated by the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG, either adopted or proposed) and/or the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Codes, as appropriate. Each Unit Management Plan prepared by the Department will outline a proposed assessment process and a schedule for completing the assessment. This activity is dependent on obtaining an inventory of all the recreational facilities or assets supporting the programs and services available on the unit. The assessment will also establish the need for new or upgraded facilities or assets necessary to meet ADA mandates, consulting the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Adirondack Park State Master Plan. The Department is not required to make each of its existing facilities and assets accessible. The facilities or assets proposed in this UMP are identified in the "Proposed Management Recommendations" section.

The Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) requires public agencies to employ specific guidelines which ensure that buildings, facilities, programs and vehicles as addressed by the ADA are accessible in terms of architecture and design, transportation and communication to individuals with disabilities. A federal agency known as the Access Board has issued the ADAAG for this purpose. The Department of Justice Rule provides authority to these guidelines.

Currently adopted ADAAG address the built environment: buildings, ramps, sidewalks, rooms within buildings, etc. The Access Board has proposed guidelines to expand ADAAG to cover outdoor developed facilities: trails, camp grounds, picnic areas and beaches. The proposed ADAAG is contained in the September, 1999 Final Report of the Regulatory Negotiation Committee for Outdoor Developed Areas.

ADAAG apply to newly constructed structures and facilities and alterations to existing structures and facilities. Further, it applies to fixed structures or facilities, i.e., those that are attached to the earth or another structure that is

attached to the earth. Therefore, when the Department is planning the construction of new recreational facilities, assets that support recreational facilities, or is considering an alteration of existing recreational facilities or the assets supporting them, it must also consider providing access to the facilities or elements for people with disabilities. The standards which exist in ADAAG or are contained in the proposed ADAAG also provide guidance to achieve modifications to trails, picnic areas, campgrounds (or sites) and beaches in order to obtain programmatic compliance with the ADA.

ADAAG Application

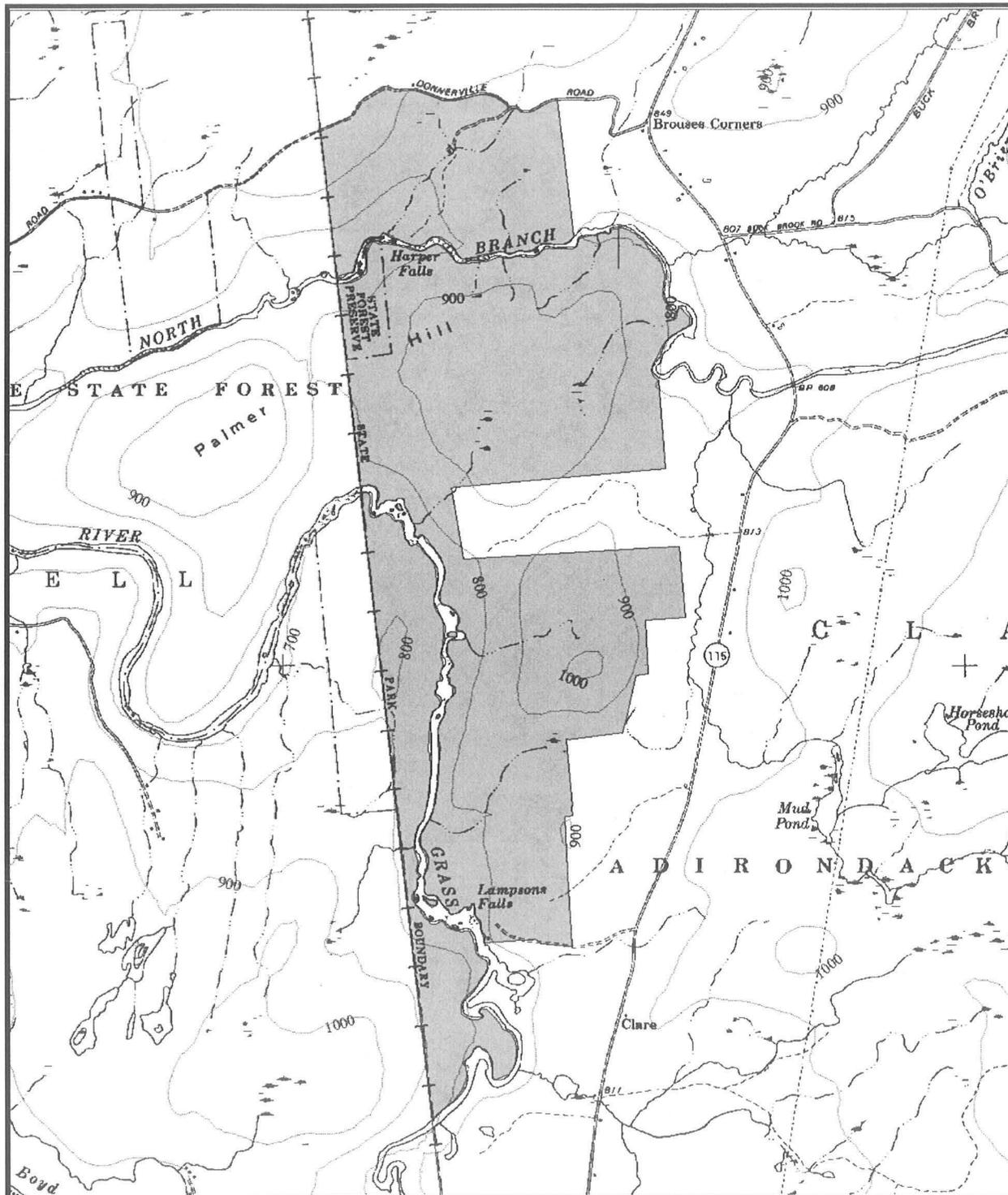
Current and proposed ADAAG will be used in assessing existing facilities or assets to determine compliance to accessibility standards. ADAAG is not intended or designed for this purpose, but using it to establish accessibility levels lends credibility to the assessment result. Management recommendations in each UMP will be proposed in accordance with the ADAAG for the built environment, the proposed ADAAG for outdoor developed areas, the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Codes, and other appropriate guiding documents. Until such time as the proposed ADAAG becomes an adopted rule of the Department of Justice, the Department is required to use the best information available to comply with the ADA; this direction includes the proposed guidelines.

IV SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

2004

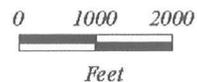
1. It is expected that the trail will be constructed in 2004 or 2005, using funds set aside for projects required by the Galusha/ADA Consent Decree.

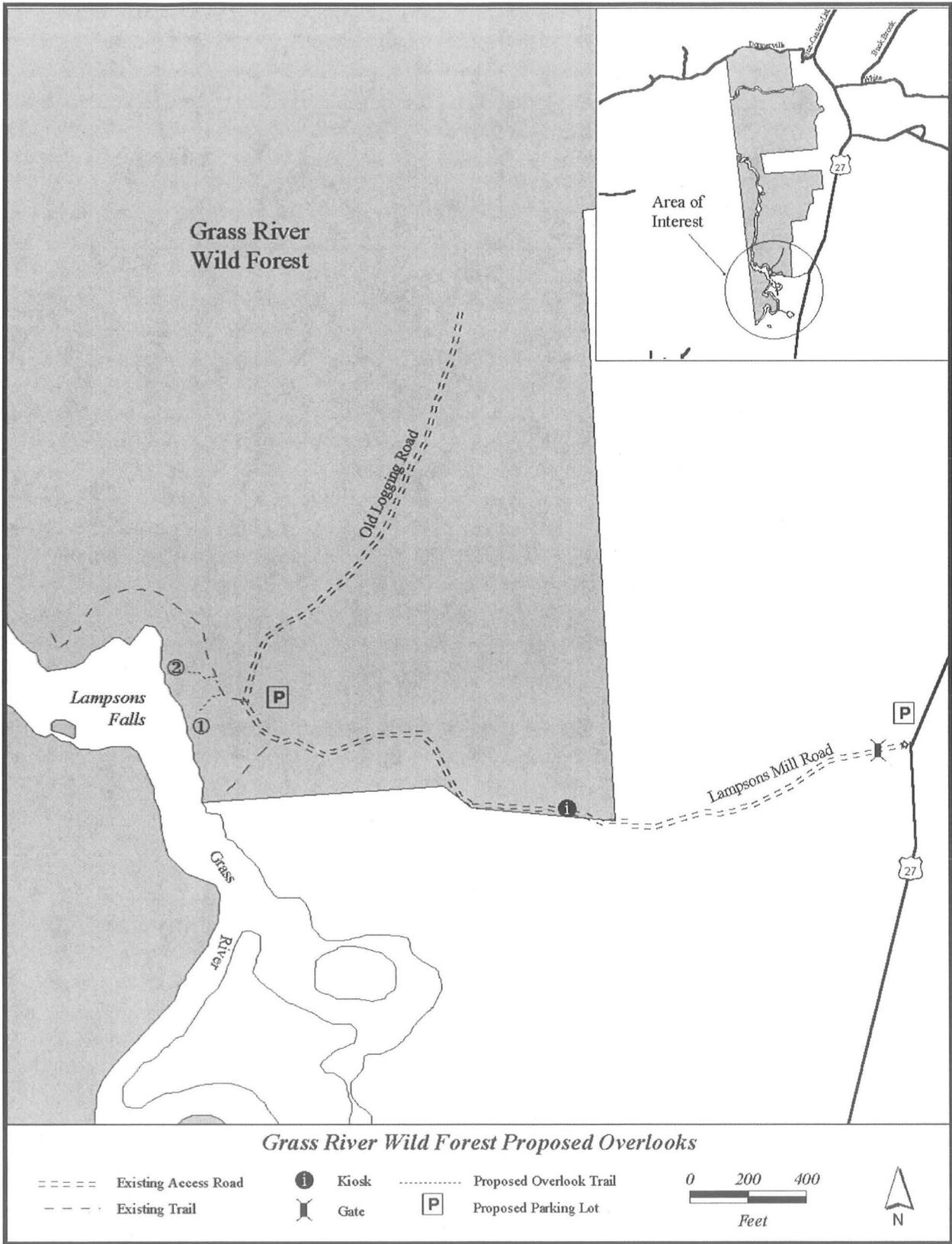
APPENDIX F



Grass River Wild Forest Location Map

Unit Boundary
 Adirondack Park Blue Line
 100 Foot Countour Lines





Grass River Wild Forest Proposed Overlooks

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|----------------------|----------|-------|----------|-------------------------|
| ===== | Existing Access Road | i | Kiosk | | Proposed Overlook Trail |
| - - - - - | Existing Trail | ⌘ | Gate | P | Proposed Parking Lot |

