

BUREAU OF
FOREST PRESERVE
MANAGEMENT

**INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST
UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN**

October 1986

INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST

UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

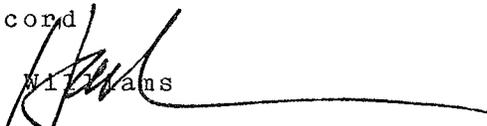
New York State / Department of Environmental Conservation

Mario Cuomo
Governor

Henry G. Williams
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM FROM
HENRY G. WILLIAMS, Commissioner
New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

OCT 20 1986

TO: The Record
FROM: Hank Williams 
SUBJECT: Unit Management Plan
Independence River Wild Forest

The final Unit Management Plan for the Independence River Wild Forest, which has been developed in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency, is consistent with guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack State Land Master Plan, involved citizens participation, is consistent with the State Constitution, Environmental Conservation Law, rules, regulations and policy, and projects stated management objectives of such area for a five-year period, accordingly is hereby approved and adopted.

cc: J. Marsh

Independence River
Wild Forest
Unit Management Plan

The Independence River, once the facilitator of great log drives, now the provider of a sense of tranquility, forms the axis of this unit. The forests, perched north and south, work silently to recapture a natural balance, after two centuries of man's consumptive intrusions.

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INTRODUCTION-GENESIS

In 1972, Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller approved the Adirondack Park Agency Master Plan for State-owned lands in the Adirondack Park. This culminated many years of work by several legislative study groups and, ultimately, the Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks, appointed by the Governor in 1968.

The Temporary Study Commission on the Future of the Adirondacks made nearly 200 specific recommendations regarding the Adirondack Park but among its major recommendations were:

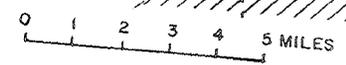
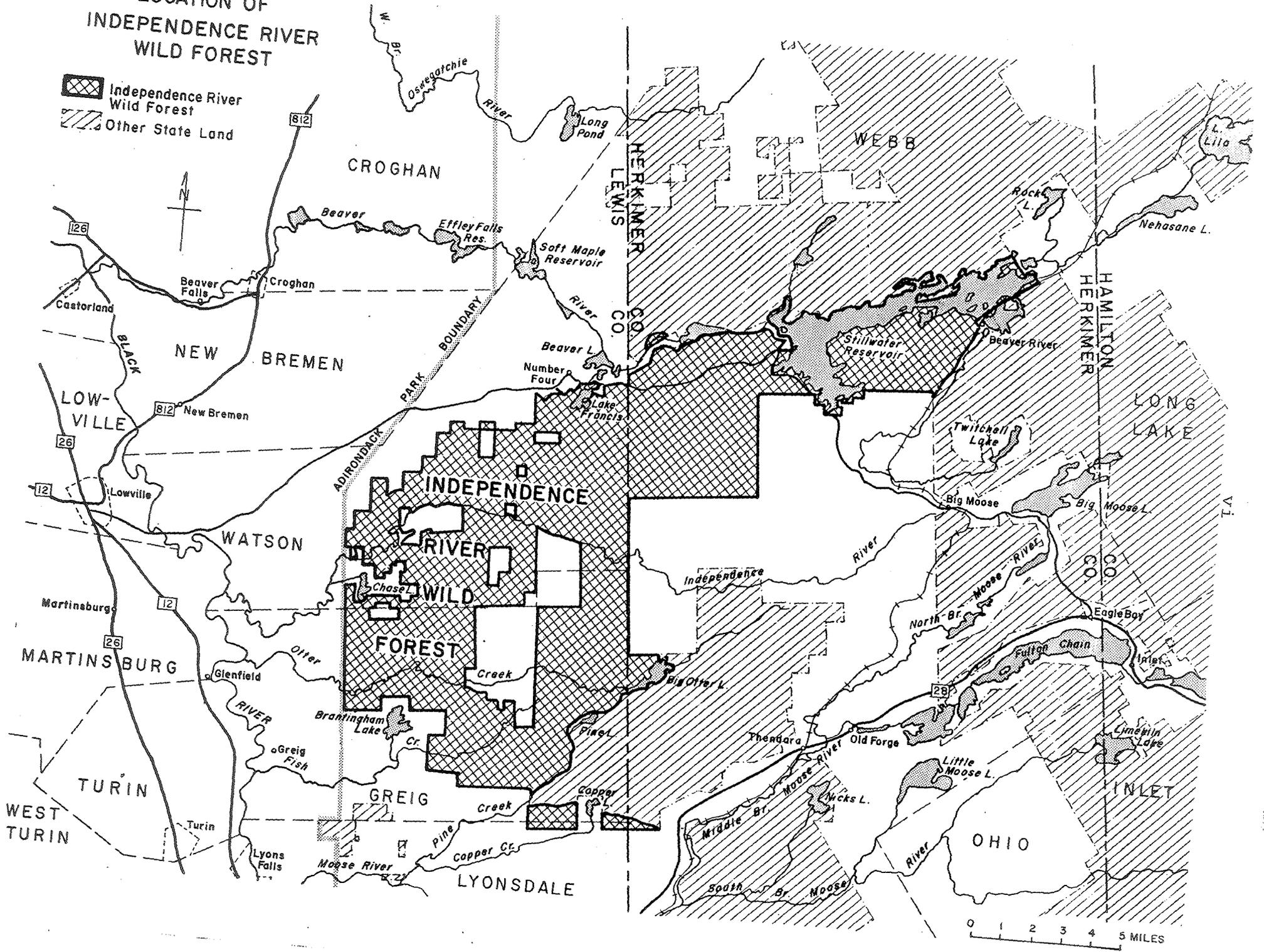
- The creation of the Adirondack Park Agency;
- The preparation of a Master Plan for State-owned lands by the Agency;
- The classification of these lands "according to their characteristics and capacity to withstand use", and
- A set of extensive guidelines for the care, custody and control of State-owned lands under the Master Plan with particular emphasis on proposed wilderness and primitive areas.

The Temporary Study Commission also prepared legislation in final draft form, not only establishing the agency, but providing a comprehensive framework for land use, both public and private.

The final legislative mandate provided for the Agency's Master Plan for State-owned lands in the Adirondack Park. A revised master plan in accordance with Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, Article 27 of the Executive Law, was signed by Governor Hugh Carey on October 24, 1979. The Independence River Unit Plan has been prepared by the NYSDEC with the Adirondack State Land Master Plan setting the parameters and local citizens providing additional review.

LOCATION OF INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST

 Independence River Wild Forest
 Other State Land



Independence River
Wild Forest
Unit Management Plan

I. Introduction

A. Area Description

1. General Location

The Independence River Wild Forest is described as that Western Adirondack Forest Preserve acreage lying north of New York State Route 28 and south of the Beaver River. It touches the Adirondack Park Boundary on the west and sprawls 25 miles easterly to the Pigeon Lake Wilderness Area bordering on the Stillwater Reservoir. Included are lands in Watson's West Triangle, Brantingham Tract, Macomb's Purchase, and John Brown's Tract, encompassing both Lewis and Herkimer Counties. U.S.G.S. 15½ minute quadrangle maps required to cover this unit are: Big Moose, Lowville, Mc Keever, Number Four and Port Leyden.

Bounded by:

North: Number 4 Road; Beaver River; Stillwater Reservoir;
West: Exterior Forest Preserve Boundaries in the Towns of Greig, Lyonsdale and Watson; and Adirondack Park Boundary.
South: Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Area; East: Railroad Tract from Big Moose to Beaver River Station, International Paper Company lands.

2. AcreageLewis County

Town of Watson	26,157.32
Town of Greig	25,598.95
Town of Lyonsdale	256.00

Herkimer County

Town of Webb	<u>21,545.00</u>
Grand Total	73,557.27 acres

The westerly two-thirds of the area is heavily checkerboarded with private land, with approximately 12,000 acres being totally surrounded or bordered on three sides by State lands.

B. History

Acquisition of lands in this Unit in Lewis County began in 1882 with the transfer of title through tax sale of 48 acres in Lot 240 in the Town of Watson. The Copper Lake Tract was purchased in 1919 and the bulk of the land area was added to the Preserve in the 1950's and later. The Herkimer County parcels were acquired in four transactions beginning with the easterly portion in 1896, from William S. Webb,; the Reservoir impoundment was appropriated in 1898 and two other large parcels were acquired from the Fisher Forestry and Realty Company in 1931 and 1958. See Section VIII for a map showing acquisition by tracts.

The entire area has an extensive history of logging which occurred around the turn of the century. High-grading practices led to a preponderance of beech and a scarcity of hemlock, still apparent in the residual stands. Logs were floated down the Beaver River to one of the largest mills in New York State in 1899 located in Castorland, New York, just outside the Park boundary. Railroad main lines and spurs known as the Glenfield and Eastern were built by Keystone Chemical Company in 1928 to transport pulp and logs from the Brantingham Lake area and tied the southwestern portion of the Independence River Unit to a huge band mill in Glenfield. A number of mills were located within the Unit itself, including one on the Steam Mill Road and one at Beaches Mill Pond.

It is interesting that the Stillwater Reservoir impoundment is related to the need to regulate water in the Black River for canal purposes. In 1851 a study commission concluded that the Reservoir was needed to maintain a constant flow of water throughout the prime travel route of the Black River Canal system.

In 1881 a law was passed authorizing the impoundment "To restore the Black River its natural supply of water". The autumn of 1887 ushered in the completion of the first dam which, in the spring of 1888, inundated some 1,594 acres of William Seward Webb's land. An 1892 piece of legislation authorized the raising of the dam five feet and the work was finished in 1893.

At this time, W. S. Webb filed a lawsuit claiming that the impoundment had isolated some 66,000 acres of land making it unavailable for timber harvest. The suit eventually resulted in the largest acquisition and addition to the Forest Preserve ever made; some 47,326 acres of unharvested land were acquired from Webb in 1896.

On May 7, 1919 the Black River Regulating District was created as a unit under the Superintendent of Public Works and this unit soon finalized plans to enlarge the Reservoir again. Work resumed in 1923 and was completed in 1925 raising the dam another 19 feet to the current elevation of 1,679.3 feet. This flooded an additional 2,957.84 acres, bringing the total water area to 6,700 acres.

The dam is currently under the control of the Commissioner of the New York State Department of Transportation through its combined regulating district created in 1959 - The Board of the Hudson River-Black River Regulating District. Pursuant to

Environmental Conservation Law 15-1507, since 1925 the District has paid rent on lands inundated to the 1660.3 foot elevation (3,092 acres valued at \$8 per acre and rented annually at 6% of value or \$1,484.16) and has paid taxes on the land between 1660.3 and 1679.3 (3,364.5 acres.)

A 1891 map of the "Great Forest" depicting the proposed Adirondack Park shows denuded and burned areas at Stillwater, Sunday Creek, Francis Lake, Burnt Creek, Otter Creek, and the north shore of Big Otter Lake. A number of large fires occurred in the southern third of the area in the early 1900's, changing species composition and creating a variation of forest types within the Unit. The Dutch elm disease was responsible for nearly eliminating elm from this Unit.

The Otter Creek area in the eastern part of the Town of Greig once supported a spruce sawmill owned by Alfred Dolges, employing up to 20 men and producing fine quality piano sounding boards and flooring. Below that mill was a second sawmill owned by Charles Partridge. Further downstream a tannery, 350 feet long, owned by the Botchford brothers, utilized 4,000 cords of bark per year. The bark mill went out of business in 1889 due to a dwindling supply of hemlock bark. Species composition was altered as northern hardwoods and spruce-fir replaced much of the hemlock component. Otter Creek was also the scene of early river log and pulp drives with the first driving dam at Big Otter Lake. A second hemlock tannery mill was located on the Chases Lake outlet in

1871, and sawmills could be found at Sperryville and the outlet of Francis Lake. Before the turn of the century, spruce gum was sought after by "pickers". Hough's History (4) recites pickers coming out of the woods in 1887 with 25 to 100 lbs. of gum. A hotel was built on the north shore of Big Otter Lake in the late 1800's and visitors were brought in from Glenfield by stagecoach.

The Number Four area in the Town of Watson, was an early concentration point for "sports" who came into the Beaver Lake resort area for summer camping, fishing and hunting. Clarence Fisher, a well known lumberman and landowner, held large tracts of land in this area and later conveyed two large parcels in Lewis County to New York State as additions to the Forest Preserve. The most recent significant conveyance from the Fisher Estate included most of Francis Lake, one of the most scenic lakes in Lewis County.

The hamlet of Beaver River on the northeasterly bounds of this unit is unique and it has been inaccessible by road since the construction of the Stillwater Dam. Access at present is by barge or boat from the hamlet of Stillwater. Noridgewock IV Hotel and the old Railroad Station and connection rail-line, are part of the local atmosphere of this remote and secluded corner of the Unit. The line was originally built before 1900 by Dr. William Seward Webb of Nehasane Park. It was once known as "The Golden Chariot Route" because it hauled private cars for vacationing millionaires en route

to their Adirondack "Camps". It became the Adirondack Division of New York Central, which dropped passenger service in 1965.

When Penn Central abandoned the line in 1972, New York State took over the trackage. Adirondack Railway Company proposed a plan to operate it as a tourist line and in 1977 was granted a 30-year lease. Extensive rehabilitation was followed by its debut in the fall of 1979, with a limited number of runs including transportation to the 1980 Olympics in Lake Placid. The lease has since been reviewed by the Department of Transportation and the line is once again idle. If the lease is cancelled, DEC will acquire the right-of-way and evaluate its possible recreational uses.

There are two interesting survey markers located near jeep roads, or trails, making them quite accessible. The first is a County line marker on the Herkimer-Lewis boundary, just north of Big Otter Lake on the north edge of the jeep trail leading to the Old Hotel site. It reads: 1899, Number 18, 7.40 miles. The second monument is located approximately 400 feet east of the flow road leading from Grassy Point to Beaver River Station. Carved into a large boulder is found the following: 1878 Station Mark 38A, T&C (Totten and Crossfield line) V.C. (Verplank Colvin - reknowned Adirondack Surveyor).

II. Resource and Public Use Inventory Overview

A. Natural Resources

1. Physical

a. Geology - Old precambrian sedimentary rocks now called the Grenville series were uplifted by massive batholithic intrusions of granites and syenitic gneisses. Subsequent erosion cycles have left almost entirely igneous material; Grenville remnants occur now as metamorphosed marble schist and quartzite, with complex rocks at the igneous contacts. The entire area has been glaciated leaving a mantle of relatively coarse non-calcareous till and outwash. These deposits have greatly altered the pre-glacial drainage and formed numerous lakes and swamps.(2)

Some detailed geological data (see Appendix C) was gathered in anticipation of the installation of a dam at Sperryville before the land was acquired as an addition to the Forest Preserve.

The glacial ponds are common in the westerly third of the area where sands were deposited many centuries ago in the bottom of glacial lakes. Bedrock outcroppings are more common in the Panther Pond, Fourth Creek areas and along the southeasterly border of the unit.

Mineral potential is lacking in the entire area. The granites are not generally susceptible to weathering and consequent release of nutrients.

b. Soils - Soils in this area are characterized by Colton Sands on the west border, with the predominant type being Herman-Becket-Ridgebury in the interior portions.(2) There are also pockets of peat, occasional Rockland and scattered shallow areas of gneiss and granite. Some of the sands were cleared for farming and later abandoned. See Appendix D for Soils Map.

Soils may be grouped into the following major components in descending order of occurrence:

- 1) Herman Becket-Ridgebury soils, sometimes deep soils in glacial till. In a belt extending along the Lewis-Herkimer County line, a layer of silt 6" to two feet thick covers coarse, loamy to sandy till like that of the Becket. Most of the central portion of this unit is composed of this soil - approximately 65%. These soils are not suited to heavy traffic without capital expenditures.
- 2) Adams Colton droughty sands predominate along the westerly border covering approximately 20% of the area. These sands characterize areas that were cleared for agriculture and abandoned when winds removed the topsoil, leaving large areas of depleted subsoils

severely lacking in potassium and nitrogen. The well-drained nature of these soils makes them adaptable to heavier useage without significant deterioration. However, once the vegetative cover is removed, they are slow to revegetate except where spirea roots are present. Numerous jeep trails occur on these soils.

3) Rock outcrop areas are present on the easterly bounds of the unit and comprise approximately 10% of the area.

4) There are limited pockets of peat and shallow areas of gneiss and granite which comprise the final 5% of the unit.

c. Terrain - Hough's History (4) describes this area as "The eastern slopes appear rising by insensible degrees until lost in the blue level range of the forests of Herkimer County." These Adirondack foothills range in elevation from 1,100 feet in the Brantingham Lake area on the west to 2,300 feet south of the Stillwater Reservoir on the east. The sand barren areas near Chases Lake, with level expanses and numerous frost pockets, clothed in splashes of spirea brush, provide a unique contrast to more typical hardwood forests to the east. Numerous small ponds dot the western quarter while large wetlands and beaver impoundments inundate parts of the central area. While there are no "mountains" to climb, the rapidly changing land forms make this a singularly interesting area for the hiker.

d. Water - This unit contains an abundance of water resources. Over 80 individual ponds and lakes, ranging from less than 1/2 acre to 6,200 acres provide a wide range of aquatic environments. From the fisheries standpoint, 35 waters listed in Appendix F-2 are considered either significant fishing waters, potential fishing waters or officially numbered aquatic habitats which do not currently include fishable populations of game or pan fish. There are about 125 miles of streams in this unit of which 25 streams (100.1 miles) are significant fisheries. Rainfall averages 25" to 30" per year throughout the unit.

The largest aquatic feature of this wild forest is the Stillwater Reservoir, which is nine miles long, two miles wide and has 70 miles of shoreline. The reservoir covers almost 6,200 acres when full and is a major water control facility for the Black River system. Severe variation in water level, from full pool in spring to maximum drawdown in fall, are annual occurrences. Despite this, in recent years, the reservoir has sustained increasingly heavy use year round.

Francis Lake, in Lewis County, and Big Otter Lake, in Herkimer County, are the only other large lakes within the unit.

Chemical conditions are generally satisfactory in most waters to support a fishery although low pH is becoming more

significant as the acid precipitation problem continues to exert its influence. This is especially true in areas of carbonate-poor geology, where low alkalinities render waters more sensitive to acid ion inputs. See Appendix I for detailed pH data by specific waters.

A 1980 report by Bloomfield et.al. (11) warns that Stillwater Reservoir fish at the higher trophic levels, particularly small mouth bass and splake, have yielded elevated levels of mercury. "Small mouth bass in Stillwater Reservoir display a slightly greater increase in mercury accumulation with age compared to Cranberry Lake." (The other Adirondack water with higher than average mercury levels.) "More mercury may be available to the fish in Stillwater Reservoir via food composition or increased mercury availability in the environment." Related to this is the "Health Advisory" inside the cover of the 1983-84 New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Fish, Small Game Hunting and Trapping Regulations Guide which advises "eat no more than one meal per month" of splake.

During the summer of 1984 the Department of Health Utica Office, tested the water near the boat launch site, Rock Island, Big Burnt Lake, Little Rapids and others. The report indicates there are no serious problems but advised boiling all drinking water. The water is safe for swimming. There is no quality data available of other waters within the unit with the exception of pH values.

e. Wetlands - Wetlands occur throughout the unit.

They are inventoried, mapped and protected under the 1975 NYS Fresh Water Wetlands Act by the Department of Environmental Conservation and the Adirondack Park Agency. The inventory for this area was completed in 1983 and is reflected on detailed 7½ minute quad. centered photos (APA 1924). Tentative and final wetland maps and related hearings are not anticipated before FY 1986-87 for this area.

The recent APA inventory using the Cowardin National Wetlands Inventory and Classification portrays information useful in describing the wetland cover types and hydrological regimes. This information can be used to assess general wetland values which also depend on other information such as wildlife use, rare plant species, fish spawning, etc. 1:80,000 scale black and white panchromatic photo reproductions of the following maps cover this unit: Soft Maple, Stillwater, Big Moose, #4, Stillwater Mt. , Copper Lake and Beaver River.

The cove wetlands identified by the Adirondack Park Agency and Cornell in 1973 based on 1968 photography, are generally found in relationship to major drainages including Fish Creek, Little Otter Creek, Crooked Creek, Upper Chases Inlet, Sunday Lake, Lizzard Springs Brook, Mud Lake and Big Creek. Perhaps the largest conglomeration of wetlands interspersed with small oases of uplands, occurs in the relatively remote area between

Stoney Lake and Burnt Creek. It is here that overland travel is made difficult due to the profuse interspersion of wetlands supplemented by heavy beaver activity. Second Creek, Pine Creek, Mike's Pond, Beaver Meadow Creek and Burnt Creek all contribute to this considerable juxtaposition of wetland forms. These wetlands are important and beneficial to wildlife as they present a break in the solid forest cover and provide nesting sites for waterfowl and furbearers.

2. Biological

a. Vegetation - There is a unique change in vegetative types as one proceeds from the western edges of this unit, easterly into the interior (Appendix G). The Colton Sands which predominate the area north of Otter Creek and west of Half Moon Lake, Fish Pond and Partridgeville, display

remnants of agricultural activity and fire. As a result of both, large acreages of open spirea with occasional aspen, black cherry, pin cherry and shadbush (about 10% of the unit) present a contrast to the vegetative forms found deeper in the interior. Pioneer species, especially red maple, white pine, big tooth and trembling aspen, dominate the forest cover on the Colton Sands. Small ponds are bordered with red spruce, balsam fir and tamarack, with occasional black spruce being found in the natural bogs. Much of the level sands were predominantly white pine. The balance of the unit is more typically Adirondack. Northern hardwoods, primarily beech, sugar maple and yellow birch dominate the forest. Black cherry and red maple are also abundant while lesser quantities of basswood, white ash and hemlock are present. The drainages and wetlands contain masses of common alder often in association with red spruce, balsam fir, black spruce, tamarack and white pine. Gray birch is found scattered in the western third of the unit, and striped maple, although representing little volume, is common throughout. (Appendix G.)

The former New York State champion balsam fir is located in this unit, adjacent to the Beach Mill Pond Foot Trail at its intersection with Nickel Creek. In 1976, it measured 6'8" in circumference at breast height and 96' tall.

Lesser vegetation commonly found includes witch hopple viburnum, evergreen wood fern, Christmas fern, red stemmed dogwood, bracken fern, wild raisin, winterberry and lowbush blueberry. Wetlands shrubs include leather leaf, Labrador tea, sheep laurel, and pinkster.

Vegetation is affected by a relatively short growing season of only 120 days. Growth is extremely slow in the once-cleared sand plains where poor air drainage creates numerous frost pockets, which stymie nearly all vegetation except spirea.

b. Wildlife - Principal species in the unit include the white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare, eastern coyote, bobcat, beaver, muskrat, fisher, otter, mink, ruffed grouse and raccoon (See Appendix H-2). Conditions for high deer populations are better than usual for the Central Adirondacks, particularly in the western portion of the Independence River Wild Forest unit. This is due to fairly low elevations, moderate snowfall and juxtaposition with nearby logged lands outside of the Forest Preserve. Important deer wintering areas occur within the unit in association with softwood cover (see Appendix H). Undoubtedly, the greatest public use of the unit is by deer and bear hunters and those seeking trout. Their higher success levels continue to be related to the ease of accessibility from key Forest Preserve access roads.

No known endangered species occur within the unit. Only the pine marten appears to be rare, of those animals associated with the Adirondacks, although suitable habitat is present. Black ducks and wood ducks nest throughout the area and geese are common during migration periods. Loons nest at Stillwater Reservoir, Francis Lake, Stoney Lake, Big and Little Otter Lakes. Although Stillwater Reservoir has the largest number of nesting loons in the Adirondacks, fledging success is poor because of fluctuating water levels. Osprey may be found at possibly one site per season with two former known nests on the Stillwater north shore. Eagles may be sighted but there is only one significant habitat report of possible nesting on the west boundary.

The New York State Breeding Atlas has indicated 120 species as possibly, probably or confirmed nesting within the blocks that cover the Independence River Wild Forest. A summary sheet is included in Appendix H and copies of the specific survey blocks are on file in the Wildlife Resources Center, Delmar, New York. Further field work during the summer of 1984 may identify additional species or change the status from possible or probable to confirmed. The Atlas has attempted to identify those species of birds actually breeding and nesting. Additional species undoubtedly utilize the area during spring and fall migration.

The Independence River Wild Forest is located primarily in deer management unit 25 with the small section south of Stillwater Reservoir being in DMU 28 (See appendix H-4). Deer management unit 25 is comprised of 839.36 sq. miles or 537,190 acres of land area. Approximately 31.87 of the DMU can be proportioned to the Independence River Wild Forest as follows:

Adult Buck Take

	Year 1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	
DMU 25	648	698	675	701	846	714
IRWF @.138	90	97	93	97	117	99

Whitetail deer are common in this unit. This unit is located in the Western Adirondack Foothills Ecological Zone. The Zone is characterized by an elevation of 1200' to 2000', low soil productivity, 120"-140" of snowfall and 105 to 135 days of growing season.

Bobcats occur in the zone but are scarce. The unit is at a lower elevation and has somewhat milder winters than the Central Adirondacks Ecological Zone. Habitat is also suitable for moose. However, moose are not resident, and along with the wolf, are considered extirpated. It is probable that this species will move into the unit in the future. Occasional unsubstantiated reports of transient lynx, puma and wolf are received but re-introduction of extirpated species is not recommended in

this more accessible unit. Reintroduction is being considered in the adjacent Five Ponds Wilderness. There is a Fish and Wildlife Management Cooperative Area on the east edge of this unit at Twitchell Creek. The parking area and day use - camping area is maintained by DEC and provides additional overnight camping for day users and hunters. International Paper Company is the host landowner.

c. Fish - Lakes and ponds in the management unit provide a

variety of fishing opportunities. Brook trout are the primary game species in many smaller ponds, while brown trout, splake, pickerel and panfish are present in a limited number of waters. Stream fisheries include 24 waters which support wild trout populations and three stocked trout waters. The quality of these fisheries range from fair to excellent in a wide variety of settings. (See Appendix I for specific pond and stream data.) The fisheries resource in this area is supported mainly by native fish species. Two exotic species, the brown trout and the splake, play a significant role in the overall fishery of this unit. They are found, as both stocked populations and introduced, naturally reproducing populations, in all presently suitable habitats within this management unit.

3. Visual

Perhaps nowhere in the Adirondack Park are myriad scenes of water interspersed with forest and wetland more evident than in this unit. The Independence River is classified as a scenic river from Little Independence Pond downriver to the Sperryville Bridge and then a recreational river to the Park boundary. (Appendix F). The Gleasman's Falls area, just east of Second Creek, on this river provides a series of waterfalls dropping 60 feet in three tenths of a mile, wedged between sheer 75 feet high rock cliffs. It is well worth the hike from Beaches Mill Pond

Parking Lot to see. The confluence of Fourth Creek and the Independence is scenic and there is a handsome white water gorge 800 feet long about three tenths of a mile upriver from Fourth Creek. The Otter Creek - Big Otter Lake, and particularly the Stillwater Reservoir also provide spectacular Adirondack scenery. Some find Chases Lake spirea plains equally unique and scenic in their own way due to their failure to regenerate tree growth after several decades. The recently acquired Francis Lake has few equals with large old growth white pine ringing the north shoreline. A pleasing view of the northerly part of the area may be had by climbing the Number Four Tower during periods when it is active. The drive from Number Four to Stillwater is particularly scenic and after crossing into Herkimer County, old growth yellow birch, hard maple and beech abound on both sides of the Town Road. Other scenic areas include Shingle Mill Falls on Otter Creek, Poison Brook and Fish Creek Beaver Meadow, and the Long Pond - Florence Pond areas with associated bogs.

4. Unique/Historical Areas

No truly unique areas are known to exist in the unit. The historical significance is in perspective with other management units which provided great quantities of forest products, around the turn of the century, and were the scene of monumental river log and pulp drives. The

Stillwater Road is part of an early east-west route which knifed through the Park from the St. Lawrence River to Lake Champlain, as far back as 1864. There are several interesting gravel eskers east of Sunday Lake, near Evies and Lond Pond, and numerous small bogs south of Lizzard Springs Brook.

Catspaw Lake has a number of floating bogs off shore and due to shoreline springs, never completely freezes over. Pitcher Pond, a clear water pond, is perched 15 foot above Little Otter Creek with only a narrow esker retaining it.

B. Man-Made Facilities

Even though this is a wild forest, numerous man-made facilities exist. The major structures are two lean-tos, two observer cabins, one fire tower, one ranger's cabin and garage, toilet facilities unit at the boat launch site and parking lot at Stillwater; nine major bridges including two on the Independence River and one each on Otter Creek and the Beaver River with approximately 100 feet spans. One additional bridge below Stillwater Dam on the Raven Lake Road is actually on Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation lands but provides the only current foot access to the southeast corner of the Pepperbox Wilderness. The bridge will be maintained by Creative Forest Enterprises until the lease expires in 1990. Many gravel roads enter the area from the north and west. Some of these cross private lands before entering Forest Preserve lands. Appendix L contains a listing and description of facilities.

C. Cultural

The Forest Preserve area in the sand flats near Chases Lake was originally farmed by Hungarian immigrants and some of the old furrows are still visible. Lands located in Townships 3, 4, 5 and 6 of the John Brown's Tract were named after the John Brown who participated in the Revolutionary War, founded Brown University, and served as the Governor of Rhode Island. Francis Lake was named after another and related Governor of Rhode Island, John Brown Francis.

D. Economic

The economy interwoven with this unit and adjoining sparsely settled private land is dependent upon summer camps, tourist trade, camping, hunting, fishing, snowmobiling, boating and hiking.

1. Impact of State Ownership on Private Land

In some cases, property values are increased and land may be advertised and sold by pointing out that it is adjacent to public land. The availability of uncut winter softwood refuge areas on State lands often improves deer survival and later hunting on cut-over adjacent private lands. Recreational opportunities are vastly improved for neighboring residents and landowners. The impact of no taxable improvements on State lands may increase the tax load for other owners in that town, assuming that the State land would otherwise have been divided and improved, but also assuming that the additional property owners required no new services. See Appendix P for summary of taxes paid on the lands in Lewis Co. There are occasional

complaints from landowners regarding poor manners on the part of the public.

2. Impact of Private Lands on State Holdings

Private lands are generally either indiscriminately cut over or the forests are managed to some degree. This increases the feeding potential and variety of wildlife that inhabit both land categories, and helps to sustain a larger deer herd, which in turn draws more hunter dollars into the area. Cutting strategies may produce increased administrative costs for the management of adjacent Forest Preserve lands, including the processing of Crossing Permits and the need to have well identified property lines. Adjacent camps are often the source of rubbish deposited on State land and attempted exclusive uses including erection of small buildings and storage of property on State land, developing illegal access roads, mowing State land and similar offenses. Domestic animals from residences near the western boundary have some negative impact on wildlife. Some private inholdings block access to more distant Forest Preserve lands. The overall impact is minor.

E. Public Use of the Area

The current public use of the area is generally for consumptive purposes. Very little back-packing and hiking take place without the goal of taking fish or game. The Stillwater Reservoir area is the only exception and does receive heavy shoreline camping use during late spring,

summer and early fall. There are 46 designated campsites on the shoreline and islands 26 of which are actually within this unit. Over 15,000 camper days utilize the Reservoir annually. The Boat Launch Site at Stillwater also draws large numbers of boaters and is the embarking point for camp owners at Beaver River Station. Snowmobile use of the Stillwater area after freeze-up is also exceptionally heavy. There have been up to 200 cars crammed into the parking lot on peak weekends.

The balance of the area is more in keeping with "day use" activities due to easy accessibility.

The Pine Lake lean-to and Big Otter Lake get heavy use during the early spring trout fishing season, summer, and again during the first two weeks of deer season (about 250 persons per year based on register tallys and observations of the ranger stationed at Brantingham.). The Independence River in the confined Sperryville area, is utilized by about 200 persons per year for camping picnicing and fishing. The Panther Pond lean-to gets only occasional use (about 75 persons per year), although it is located on a most attractive foot-trail network. Some camping pressure occurs at Payne Lake (75 persons per year), and Francis Lake gets light day use from canoers and car top fishing excursions. The balance of use in the area comes from deer hunting and fishing pursuits and generally light use of the crisscrossing snowmobile trails which divide the unit into small segments.

Use counts for the last 10 years have shown an average of about 1,000 snowmobile trips per winter. Camping permits indicate about 200 persons per year use the interior, excluding Stillwater, for overnight camping exceeding three nights.

Unauthorized use by ATVs is heavy between Brantingham and Chases Lake and generally occurs on most snowmobile trails and some foot trails. The Big Otter Lake Road is badly rutted in wet areas and several bypasses occur.

F. Capacity of Resource to Withstand Use

This unit receives relatively light user pressure with the exception of the Stillwater Shoreline area and popular sites at Payne Lake, Sperryville, Big Otter Lake, and the spring fishing season and fall hunting season at the Pine Lake lean-to. The characteristics of the area are such that with the exception of Stillwater, the overall use could probably be multiplied several times before the resource capacity is reached.

Camping at Stillwater Reservoir is now confined to designated sites (See appendix L-6) to protect the balance of the shoreline. The New York State Department of Health finds that bacteria counts are measureable but not serious, and recommends boiling the water for drinking.

The Sand Flats area between the Beaches Mill Pond and Brantingham is particularly resilient to heavy use. The well-drained Colton Sands will support a variety of trail

systems without significant degradation. Moving easterly into the area, however, a soil type change is encountered and roads and trails, without graveling, are deeply rutted in wet areas by repeated travel by jeeps and all-terrain vehicles. This is particularly evident on the Big Otter Lake Road, the easterly end of the Florence Pond Road and the Emmett Hill Road.

Present use levels are low, but acceptable in both major fisheries in this area. In the future, higher use could be accepted in most of the waters, especially the remote smaller ponds and small streams. It should be noted that the physical character of the unit serves to spread use among the various waters, and maintains use levels well below the point where exploitation would become a serious factor in the quality of the fisheries resource. Wildlife populations within the unit can withstand normal harvest under current hunting regulations and current public use. One exception may occur. Several major deer wintering areas occur in this unit including Cleveland Lake, Brantingham-Partridgeville, and Big Otter Lake. Snowmobile activity in these yards may cause stress in deer during severe winter conditions. The Big Otter Lake Road is proposed for closing, east of the county line and will provide less snowmobile related stress to deer wintering near the northwesterly shore of the lake.

III. Management and Policy

A. Past Management

The management prerogatives on Forest Preserve lands are generally limited to those which are constitutionally permissible as outlined under Section I, Article XIV of the State Constitution. Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law provides specific care, custody and control mandates directed at protecting the Forest Preserve from encroachment, illegal cutting or removal of vegetative or other material components, fire, and obstrusive signs.

Nearly all of the applied land management in this unit prior to 1963 had been oriented toward fire protection and law enforcement as provided by a staff of forest rangers and seasonally employed observers. The Number Four and Stillwater Mountain Fire Towers and cabins were constructed in the mid-1930's to provide early fire detection. The ranger staff was effective in discouraging timber trespass, littering and illegal uses of the Forest Preserve while maintaining a fire control vigilance.

The 1950 blowdown, which created severe fire danger conditions, led to an Attorney General's opinion that the down material could be sold to lessen the fire hazard. This opinion gave rise to Chapter 6 laws of 1951 allowing controlled salvage of wind damaged trees. Construction of low standard access roads followed, which were utilized for

blowdown removal and subsequently were closed. However, approximately 72 miles of jeep trails (See appendix L-1-3,4) in existence when the land was acquired are still actively used by the public for recreational access. Management efforts in the past have been directed at preventing the extension of these trails into new areas and allowing other unnecessary trails to revert to natural cover.

Boundary line maintenance efforts were generally directed at painting lines adjacent to active logging jobs on private lands resulting in long intervals of maintenance. Roadsides were posted as sign availability permitted.

Active fisheries management began with the biological survey in 1931. Subsequent activities have included stocking, reclamation, enactment of special regulations, tagging studies, growth/survival studies, and creel census studies.

Past wildlife management has not involved intensive surveys, studies or other management. Deer and bear harvest data have been obtained from DEC deer check stations and from reports sent by successful hunters. Harvest of important furbearers has been determined by mandatory pelt tagging and reporting. Furbearer biological data has been obtained through examination of carcasses provided by cooperating trappers. Reports of rare or endangered species are solicited from DEC personnel and other reliable observers.

Nearly all other past management was performed in reaction

to the need for permits for road widening, power and phone line establishment, and maintenance; crossing to private land for the removal of forest products, burning of brush, temporary camping for deer hunters during the fall season, and shoreline camping at the Stillwater Reservoir.

As the unit began to develop some sense of contiguity as lands were purchased, trail systems could be laid out to provide recreational access. Key purchases from Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation in 1954, Burdick in 1955, Black River National Bank in 1956, Maloney in 1957, Fisher in 1958, Acee in 1962, Kovach in 1963, and Haller in 1965, supplemented the Snell Purchase of 1919 to provide over 50,000 acres of contiguous lands. Although these holdings were still interspersed with private lands, many possibilities for linear recreation were beginning to unfold. Further and dominating impetus mushroomed in October of 1983 when the Rules and Regulations were amended to allow snowmobiles on designated trails, and connecting lakes and ponds, when covered with ice or snow.

The popularity of snowmobiling resulted in a policy permitting the development and maintenance of an extensive trail network in this unit. Trails were budgeted for and projects were accomplished using forest rangers as supervisors of seasonal laborers. These efforts resulted in nearly 100 miles of marked snowmobile trails by 1970. Foot trails were added, tying the snowmobile trail system in with

Lost Lake and Panther Pond. Lean-tos were built at Pine Lake and Panther Pond to accommodate overnight users. The Independence River itself was designated a scenic river within the confines of this unit. Two trails, the Steam Mill Trail and the Beach Mill Pond Trail proved too difficult to negotiate with snowmobiles and were converted to foot trails in 1977.

The Stillwater area has received increasingly heavier pressure during the last two decades. Snowmobiles have given it heavy use when the Flow is frozen during the winter. Summer campers, boaters and canoeists have increased sharply during the last 10 years with the installation of the boat launch site and accompanying parking area and chemical toilets. As more private camp lots were sold at Beaver River Station there has been increasingly longer-term use of the parking lot by those private landowners. The forest ranger at Stillwater has acted in an educational and protective capacity, issuing mandatory camping permits for primitive camping and providing recreation guidance and information.

In 1971, aerial detection contracts were issued and two fixed wing flights, Six-Hotel and Six-Kilo, now provide supplementary fire detection information during critical fire weather periods.

The development of Field Services and the Operations Unit in 1972 relieved the forest ranger force of construction and

recreational development and maintenance responsibilities.

Trail maintenance interior projects and rehabilitations since that date have come from the Operations Unit based on work plans and budgets developed by the regional forester.

Trailhead parking areas have more recently been constructed by Operations on the Steam Mill Road, Partridgeville Road and Sand Pond Road, which provide a variety of recreational users with parking adjacent to multi-purpose trails.

Management efforts in the last decade have been curtailed due to lack of funding and the remaining skeleton Operations' Staff have concentrated on policing and garbage pickup in heavily used areas, blowdown removal, signing and occasional mowing of trail systems, installation of minor snow-mobile bridges, and the maintenance of bridges, major wooden signs, gates, support posts, lean-tos and pit privies.

The land acquisition programs supported by the 1960 and 1972 Bond Programs have been responsible for continuing consolidation, improved access, and in the case of the Francis Lake property acquired in 1979, additional multi-recreational opportunities.

B. Goals

1. Land Management

a. Sustain and Protect the Wild Forest Setting

In accordance with the State Land Master Plan, this unit will be managed to protect the natural wild forest setting, although it lacks a sense of remoteness throughout most of

the western half in Lewis County. This setting is subject to several interacting public recreational uses involving motorized foot, or horse access. The dominating forces will be natural as associated with the plant communities present and their interrelationship with land forms and water systems. Delicate wetland ecosystems need protection from non-compatible intrusions.

2. Wildlife Management

Maintain all native wildlife species at levels compatible with their environment and make these species reasonably accessible in a wild forest atmosphere.

3. Fisheries Management

Perpetuate the unique, high quality fishing experience provided in this management unit and develop the capabilities of all appropriate unit waters to provide angling diversity.

4. Public Use Management

a. Provide For a Variety of Recreational Pursuits Which Are Compatible With the Spirit of the Wild Forest Concept as Stated in the State Land Master Plan

The wide variety of recreational potential in this unit is unique due in part to an abundance of readily-accessible land. This is further magnified by the ability of the westerly portion, with Colton Sands predominating, to withstand use. Trail systems and jeep trails provide the user with ease of penetration to allow for compatible uses which should continue to be encouraged.

b. Segregate and Further Refine the Trail and Road Systems to Protect the Non-Motorized Oriented Wild Forest Users' Experiences from Encroachment by Those Allowable Motorized Pursuits

Current use patterns allow some overlap of jeep trails and snowmobile trails used for foot travel in the summer. Others allow penetration by jeeps and all-terrain vehicles (ATVs) on trails not capable of handling nor desirable or necessary for that traffic. Access systems should inherently meet the access goals without negative impact on the lands or waters traversed.

c. Provide for the Special Needs of the Stillwater Reservoir Area to Retain the Natural Beauty of the Shoreline which Currently Attracts Significant Use

This area is contiguous with three wilderness areas including the Pepperbox, Five Ponds and Pigeon Lakes Units. Special attention needs to be given in monitoring and planning to protect the adjacent units from degradation while continuing to provide acceptable levels of use of the Stillwater area, based on its capacity to withstand use.

5. Water Quality Management

a. Maintain productive environments within the unit as habitat for fish, to protect critical elements of habitats essential to the maintenance of fish populations, and to

preserve the aquatic environments within the area.

b. Control and minimize erosion and sedimentation resulting from man's activities within the unit and extending outside to riparian limits.

C. Objectives: Long and Short Term

1. Land Management Objectives

Long Term:

a. Sustain an annual detection system for early fire warning and adequately protect the plant-soil community from fire.

b. Maintain a staffing of four forest rangers on the east, west, and north bounds for a continuous on-site evaluation, public education and control of land management concerns.

c. Acquire 16 key parcels totalling 2,450 acres to consolidate this unit, help facilitate access, and reduce administrative costs. (a 3.3% increase from current size)

d. Improve the level of maintenance on 18.2 miles of jeep trails and roads, 26.1 miles of foot trails, and 97 miles of snowmobile trails by providing adequate gravel, surface drainage, and stream crossings to control erosion and improve access.

e. Improve the boundary line maintenance program by shortening the rotation cycle of painting and signing to five years.

Short Term:

a. Identify jeep trails which should be closed to jeep

and ATV travel due to excessive rutting and their failure to provide the public with meaningful access. Soil types, aesthetics and fragile ecosystems will play a role in this decision-making.

2. Public Use Management Objectives

Long Term:

- a. Promote camping in accordance with the rules and regulations the state land master plan, including the enforcement of the permit system, with emphasis on teaching the public to carry out what they carried in, to eliminate burying debris. Monitoring sites will assist in protecting and rehabilitating the resource.
- b. Revitalize the Western Adirondack's Search and Rescue Team to be maintained at full strength for the protection and well-being of the using public in this and adjacent wilderness areas.
- c. Provide for an active publicity effort to keep the public abreast of the values, limitations and opportunities available in this unit, including the distribution of updated pamphlets, brochures and maps.
- d. Identify and monitor existing informal camping sites.

Short Term:

- a. Make all road and trail systems visible, and

safe to travel by providing adequate trailhead parking, signing, and appropriate levels of maintenance and policing from the Operations Unit. Special emphasis will be placed on identifying access and easement locations at pertinent road, trail and waterway points. Easements for administrative use only should be so identified.

b. Maintain public use control at Stillwater to insure that island, shoreline and primitive camping uses do not exceed the ability of the sites to recover.

c. Develop a system and signing procedure which will designate those roads where motorized vehicle travel will be allowed.

3. Wildlife Management Objectives

Long Term:

a. Provide harvest programs which will maximize recreational opportunities but will perpetuate game animals and furbearers found in this unit.

b. Monitor for the presence of rare or endangered wildlife species and improve habitat where possible.

Short Term:

a. Improve the identification of legal access to all sides of the area for the benefit of wildlife users with emphasis on foot travel. (A brochure and map will greatly improve public knowledge).

b. Eliminate where feasible, snowmobile trails passing through or

immediately adjacent to critical deer winter concentration areas in the unit.

4. Fisheries Management Objectives

Long Term:

- a. Perpetuate all existing species of fish and attempt to restore extirpated native species of fish within the management unit by the application of sound management policies.
- b. Maintain and improve fish habitat in streams and lakes in accordance with policies outlined in the Adirondack park State Land Master Plan, using techniques including liming, stream bank planting, in-stream devices for bank stabilization, flow concentration and the production of shelter, cover or spawning habitat.

Short Term:

- a. Produce diverse and satisfactory fishing opportunities to meet the anticipated annual demand as outlined in "A Comprehensive Outline for Fisheries Management in the Adirondack Zone" (Pfeiffer 1979) (7) by the application of accepted management practices including stocking, reclamation, imposition of various season and bag limits, and promoting additional use of certain existing fisheries.
- b. Lime traditional brook trout pond fisheries in accordance with DEC policy to create acceptable chemical conditions for the production of satisfactory fish populations.

5. Water Quality Management Objectives

Long Term:

a. Insure that logging operations on interspersed private tracts are in compliance with Article 15 of the Environmental Conservation Law, including the wild, scenic and recreational river law and all phases of the Stream Protection Law, and that timber harvesters are encouraged to follow the Timber Harvesting Guidelines (6).

Short Term:

- a. Insure that where jeep trails cross streams, those streams will be adequately protected to prevent siltation.
- b. Continue to coordinate efforts with the Department of Health to monitor water quality at Stillwater Reservoir.

IV. Projected Use and Management Proposed

A. Facilities Development or Removal

1. Campground Evaluation

The acquisition of the Francis Lake Property was originally conceived as the first step in establishing a campground which is truly in the Western Adirondacks. This is the last picturesque lake in Lewis County which has not been significantly sub-divided and whose size and location lend themselves to campground development. The only other public campground in the entire County, Whetstone Gulf State Park, is outside the Park and located on a different travel corridor. A campground here would undoubtedly receive moderately heavy use by fall big game hunters.

Francis Lake should have a detailed evaluation made of it during the ensuing five-year plan period to determine if it can be planned and managed as a campground in concert with the inherent beauty of the lake. This evaluation if positive, would serve as the base for budgeting in the succeeding five-year plan. If the preliminary study is positive, it would be submitted to the Adirondack Park Agency with a request for a State Land Master Plan amendment reclassifying the desired area to intensive use.

2. Trailhead Parking Development

There are specific areas receiving considerable public

use where congestion occurs and limited parking either creates a hazard or has a negative impact on the immediately adjacent forest. The development or upgrading of small parking areas with minimal crushed gravel surfacing would alleviate stress and provide a needed public service. The size and location of these parking areas can influence the fall hunting pressure by helping to distribute hunters in underutilized areas.

The following trailhead parking areas will facilitate these needs and solve existing parking problems in this unit:

<u>County</u>	<u>Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Prime Use</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Herkimer	Dam Road- Raven Lake Road	Stillwater Dam	Pepperbox Wilderness	8 cars
Herkimer	Stillwater	McCarthy Rd.	Snowmobilers	6 cars
Herkimer	Basket Factory	End of jeep trail	General Rec.	4 cars
Lewis	Smith Jeep Trail	Pine Creek	General Rec.	6 cars
*Lewis	#4 Road	Smith Road	Snowmobilers	12 cars
Lewis	Half Moon Road	Tuttle Creek	General Rec.	4 cars
Lewis	Mt. Tom Rd.	E. of Fish Trail	General Rec.	6 cars
Lewis	Catspaw Jeep Trail	Catspaw Lake	Fishing	4 cars
Lewis	Patridge- ville Rd.	10 Mile Crossing	General Rec.	12 cars
Lewis	Otter Lake Jeep Trail	Otter Lake	General Rec.	8 cars

*Would require acquisition.

<u>County</u>	<u>Road</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Prime Use</u>	<u>Capacity</u>
Lewis	Shingle Mills Rd.	0.1 mile South of Otter Creek	General Rec.	4 cars

3. Snowmobile Trail Development

The Hinching Pond Trail ties in with the Stoney Lake Road at a point where the road is plowed and snowmobilers then must go east or west on a plowed road. The trail at this point could be extended northerly to tie in with the Fish Pond, Long Pond, Evies Pond network. This would also eliminate the need to cross private land at Upper Chases Lake. However, this trail should only be established if an easement can be obtained to tie the system in with the Bailey Road near Beaver Meadow Creek to permit through travel.

The possibility of a trail through International Paper Company lands beginning on the Moose River Road at Twitchell Creek and running westerly to the Basket Factory Road and McCarthy Road via Sunday Lake, will be explored. This would give snowmobilers the option of staying off plowed town roads.

4. Snowmobile Trail Removal

A number of trails are seldom used and their continued maintenance serves no useful purpose. In addition, stretching the few man days available on those surplus trails detracts from the possibility of doing a

satisfactory job on the balance of the trails. The following trails or spurs will be scheduled for elimination:

a. Big Otter Lake Outlet to former Hotel site. (This will provide a better buffer for the adjacent wilderness and deer yard.) 1.3 mile

b. Pine Creek Loop from Drunkard Creek corridor to Pine Creek to Spring Hill intersection. (This loop is seldom used. Its removal will also help eliminate illegal motorized travel by ATV's from the "Tin Camp" into the Mud Hole area once the snowmobile trail is no longer maintained.) The northerly segment will be retained as part of a new foot trail spur to the Mud Hole.

3.2 miles

c. Abbey Trail to Copper Lake. This trail now has two gates on it west of the State boundary and legal access is lost. Although this segment has not been signed for several years, it will be officially dropped.

1.4 mile

d. All trails south of the Stillwater Road and east of the McCarthy Road except the Basket Factory road and for a route, if negotiated, with International Paper Company through to the Big Moose Road.

5.8 miles

e. The loop from the Smith Road Southerly across Pine, Third and Snake Creeks is seldom used and will be eliminated. 1.7 miles

f. Access on the Fish Trail has been lost. This trail from the Stony Lake Road north and along fourth a. to its intersection with the Panther Pond loop at the east bridge trail connection should be dropped unless legal access is proven. 4.1 miles

TOTAL 17.5 miles

5. Foot Trail Development

a. Independence River along the north shore from Fourth Creek easterly to the snowmobile trail. This is a very scenic part of the Independence River upriver from the Fourth Creek intersection which would be well served by a foot trail. This was also suggested in the study report (Appendix M) done for the purpose of classifying the river.

approx. distance: 1.3 mile

b. Drunkard Creek to Mud Hole Pond. This trail would utilize portions of an existing snowmobile trail as well as a currently heavily-used bushwack trail and provide a direct access for fishermen and hunters. This would also help to deter illegal motorized use coming from the "Tin Camp Area" into the Mud Hole, since the new route would be shorter and quite direct. Little actual construction work would be necessary. approx. distance: 3.0 miles

c. The Fish Trail segment lost to snowmobiling should be relocated onto State land for 0.5 miles from the proposed parking lot to utilize the existing Independence River

bridge and tie in with the foot trail.

approx. distance 1.7 miles

6. Foot Trail Conversion

Steam Mill Parking Lot to Spring Hill (Five Corners).
This trail remains relatively unused. It was originally opened as a foot trail and later converted to a snowmobile trail but the terrain was too difficult to accommodate snowmobiles. It was again reduced to foot trail status but

serves a very limited public, since it parallels the Steam Mill Jeep Trail which provides easy access to the same area. It will be converted (the westerly portion) to a nordic ski trail with a potential loop as far east as Fish Creek. It will be tied in with proposed trailhead parking at the Ten Mile Crossing-Partridgeville Road intersection. The balance of the trail to the Spring Hill intersection will be allowed to revert to natural conditions.

approx. distance: 5.39 miles

7. Nordic Ski Trail Development

This will be done in conjunction with converting the western part of the foot trail at item 6 (about 2.6 miles). New development required to make a loop:

4.5 miles

8. Jeep Trail Removal

a. Otter Lake Road

In order to provide an adequate buffer to the Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness Area, in the vicinity of Big Otter Lake and indeed the Lake itself, jeep and ATV travel needs to be terminated at a trailhead parking site, perhaps near the westerly end of Big Otter Lake. This will also prevent the continuing decline in the area due to the development of "herd path" type jeep trails as mud holes and swamp areas are continually being by-passed with new routes. See Appendix Report by Forest Ranger

D. King (L-6). Only a short carry will then be required to put small non-motorized boats on Big Otter Lake. Miles eliminated: 1.3 mile

b. If lot 60 north of the Independence River is acquired, the so-called Fish Trail Jeep Road should be closed to motorized public travel to eliminate motorized fording of the Independence River. Landowners in lot 60 are currently fording the river by jeep or illegally crossing the snowmobile bridge using ATV's. and this is the only known non-bridged crossing of the entire classified length:
1.8 mile

c. Mount Tom Road

An easement across the Mt. Tom Road was acquired by appropriation in 1968, including the right to travel the road by jeep. However, public travel across private land causes additional road deterioration and rutting. A number of streams have no culverts and are wet mud holes. Public motor vehicular travel will be stopped at the Mt. Tom Club's west line until such time as funds might be made available to share in the maintenance and rehabilitation of this road, should that be desirable.

d. Sand Flats Area

In addition, a maze of jeep roads in the Sand Flats areas between Brantingham Lake and Crystal Lake will

44a.

gradually be reduced by developing a signing system designating those trails which are open to jeep travel. Many of these roads generally serve no specific destination but rather serve as temptations for continuing Jeep and ATV herd path meanderings.

B. Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Facilities

Maintenance

The following facilities require annual maintenance at the support levels indicated:

<u>Facilities</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Contractual</u>	<u>Total M.D.</u>	<u>Equip. Charge Back</u>	<u>Material</u>
Lean-to	2 each		20	\$ 50	\$ 100
Fire Towers	2 each		10	75	200
Observer Cabins	2 each		20	75	200
Telephone Lines	.25 mile		2	25	25
Ranger Headquarters	1		10	50	200
Boat Docks	4		6	25	240
Impoundments	3		4	25	50
Foot Trails	24.6 miles	(includes signs and bridges)	125	1200	500
*Snowmobile Trails	106.9 miles	(includes signs and bridges)	300	2000	2000
Jeep Trails and Roads	14.1 miles		100	2000	1400
Boat Launch Site	1		4	50	550
Toilet Facilities	1	100	20	50	500
Boundary Line Maintenance	36 miles		180	500	1000

*Includes trails which double as jeep trails but need only maintenance to suffice for snowmobile use.

<u>Facilities</u>	<u>Quantity</u>	<u>Contractual</u>	<u>Total M.D.</u>	<u>Equip. Charge Back</u>	<u>Materials</u>
Trailhead Parking Lots	6		15	50	60
Gates and Barriers	12		12	50	200
Major Signs	15		20	100	400
Trail Registers	7		7	25	100
General Policing and Clean-up			<u>60</u>	<u>500</u>	<u>200</u>
Contract Plowing Stillwater P.L.		<u>\$1000</u>			
Total required per year for maintenance**		\$1100	915	6850	7925

**Includes a permanent three man crew: one labor-supervisor, two construction equipment operators, and a seasonal crew of three laborers (one for six months and two for three months).

Rehabilitation

1. Bridges- The Poison Creek and Fish Creek bridges on the Steam Mill Road and Sunday Creek Bridge on the Basket Factory Road need new headwalls, stringers and plank.
\$15,000
2. Parking - The dock at Beaver River Station at the Grassy Point landing is under permit and was just repaired by property owners at a cost of \$5000. The adjacent parking area on State lands used in conjunction with the dock and the six mile landing need

to be evaluated for long term parking impact.

3. Impoundments - Rehabilitation of the dam at Big Otter Lake should be evaluated during this plan period for fisheries improvements and if desirable, should be reconstructed during the succeeding plan period.

4. Foot Trails

- a. Beach Mill Pond Trail. A major bridge and beaver pond by-pass may be needed, just west of Pine Creek. Relocate if required. \$6000
- b. Trails to Evies and Long Pond require stabilization to prevent recurrent erosion between the road and ponds. \$1000

5. Snowmobile Trails

- a. Panther Pond East corridor to Emmett Hill Road and the East Bridge trail. - Major brushing is required. \$3500
- b. Pine Lake - Otter Lake Loop from Otter Creek, Silvermine trailhead parking lot. This loop requires major brushing. \$4800

6. Jeep Roads and Trails

- a. Halfmoon Jeep Road - Mud holes require gravel into Burnt Creek 1.5 miles \$3000
- b. Confusion Flats Jeep Road - Mud holes require gravel for the entire length. 2.5 miles \$8000
- c. Smith Jeep Road - Requires gravelling and culvert replacement from trout pond gate to trailhead parking area north of Pine Creek. 1.6 miles \$12000

- d. Stoney Lake Road - From Stoney Lake to trailhead parking on Mt. Tom Road needs gravel and culvert replacement
0.5 mile \$6000
- e. Basket Factory Road - resurface to trailhead parking.
3.2 mi. \$27000
- f. Fill mudholes Evies Pond Road \$3500
- g. Fill mudholes Florence Pd Rd. and repair bridge over Little Otter Creek outlet \$5000
- h. Fill mudholes and construct parking lot on Basket Factory Road \$27,000
7. Trailhead Parking - Complete surfacing of the second Stillwater lot. \$2000
8. Gates - The existing cable gates at the following locations need to be replaced with iron frame gates and reflectorized and signed:
- a. Mount Tom Road at Mount Tom west line. \$1000
- b. Fish Trail at Independence River* \$1000
- * This will become a barrier if the courts fail to support a public easement on the Fish Trail.
9. Barriers - More permanent barriers are required to prevent motorized vehicle entry other than snowmobiles, at the following points:
- a. Independence River north side to stop eastbound traffic from the Fish Trail.

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- b. Ten Mile Crossing Road at the Silvermine trail intersection both north and south sides.
- c. Silvermine Trail north from the Partridgeville Road.
- d. Railroad bed east of Brantingham Lake, both ends.
- e. North Crossover snowmobile trail at McCarthy Road.
- f. Emmett Hill Road spur at County line.
- g. Big Otter Lake Road at proposed trailhead parking.
- h. Basket Factory Road at road terminus.

10 each at \$200 = \$2000

10. Designated Sites - The loss of the FWMA cooperation area on the Big Moose Road has resulted in a lack of parking and camping opportunity for fall hunting. A designated site system on the Basket Factory Road and Smith Road will be identified to fill this need. Ten sites will be designated on each road.

In addition to the Rehabilitation Projects listed above, there are a number of outstanding surveys required to handle

the identification of State boundaries. Since they were never originally established, or have been lost due to lack of maintenance over the years, they require survey at this time. Due to a lack of staffing, the regional survey unit has been unable to complete these surveys unless they involve a trespass. One alternative would be to include them in the rehabilitation budget. However, since a functional regional survey staff is needed on a full-time basis for the sustenance of all Department lands, it is more logical to adequately staff that unit and insure that boundaries fall into the maintenance category.

C. Public Use Management and Controls

With the notable exception of the Stillwater Reservoir Area, public use of this unit is light in terms of user days (See IIE). This is supported by recently installed trail registers and observations made by forest rangers. There is a keen interest in big game hunting and seasonal use by deer hunters does occur. The Stillwater Reservoir provides a unique and valuable waterway access for early big game hunters. Further documentation of use levels would be desirable through the employment of a park ranger through the end of the deer season. The following uses will require individual evaluation:

1. Camping - excepting Stillwater Reservoir

Camping is relatively well distributed throughout the

area to take advantage of the trout fishery. Camping related to backpacking is very light and primarily occurs along the boundary of the Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness Unit on the Southeast. Limited short-term camping occurs along the Independence River from Sperryville to Wilson Bridge and at Payne Lake. Longer-term camping requiring a permit occurs almost exclusively in relation to hunters establishing camps for the deer season. The Fish and Wildlife Coop. area on the Big Moose Road is no longer available for public use, creating a problem for fall hunters. A designated campsite system of 10 sites each on the McCarthy Road and Smith Road will alleviate that loss. Continuing efforts need to be made to educate the public to carry out camping litter. This effort can include signs, personal contacts, warnings, pamphlets, and media presentations.

2. Camping - Stillwater Reservoir

As with other high use areas, peak weekends and good summer weather draw the near capacity crowds. The forest ranger's efforts to separate camping parties and request carry out of litter have been most effective to date. A notable increase in use has triggered re-evaluation of the shoreline and a designated site system for all sites within 150 feet of water was instigated in 1984. (See Appendix L-8). The advantage the area currently has to lessen resource impact is the early drawdown to maintain a continuous hydropower source. This automatically increases

the size of non-vegetated beach which attracts campers away from the vegetated sites. Those sunny, exposed sand beaches also make ideal camping for early fall big game hunters. The resident ranger plays an important role in

distributing campers and resulting hunting pressure. The ranger stationed at Stillwater needs an assistant from April thru November to maintain the kind of vigilance required to continue to promote good camping manners and protect the resource.

3. Snowmobiling

Heaviest use occurs in the Stillwater area where riders come in from the Old Forge - Big Moose area where trails are groomed. Use of the balance of the trail systems is relatively light since most riders prefer groomed trails. Some litter occurs from snowmobilers and their occasional use of foot trails or cross country travel is noted. An adequate staffing of forest rangers with scheduled patrol can help minimize these problems. Cooperation with the Towns of Greig, Watson and Webb is extremely important in order to get key trailhead parking lots plowed for snowmobilers' use in the winter months.

4. Boating

The only significant motor boating occurring within the unit is at Stillwater Reservoir. The local ranger has maps available which point out the desired routes to avoid shoals. These routes should be incorporated in any final unit map which may be made available for public use. The Reservoir offers one of the few areas where motor boats can be used for access to both wild forest and wilderness for remote camping during the big game season.

All other waters within the unit (excepting Woods Lake which is two-thirds on International Paper Company lands) are considered too small or undesirable for motor boats. Rules and regulations should be promulgated prohibiting motorized boats on all lakes and ponds that are totally State-owned.

5. Motorized Off-Road Vehicles

Heavy use by jeep, doodlebugs, ATVs, and trail bikes is already being experienced in the Sand Flats area between the Beach Mill Pond and Brantingham Lake. Numerous sandy trails crisscross this area and open sandy hillsides seem to present challenges for trail bikes and ATVs to leave the trails. The off-trail assaults are occasionally damaging fragile plant life and instigating erosion. Warning signs have been erected at strategic places but are not always helpful. The main trails should be designated for motorized use and publicity efforts increased to encourage limiting travel to the designated and signed routes only. This would generally shrink the number of miles of trail needing patrol and observation and concentrate use south of Chases Lake where numerous opportunities exist.

D. Fish and Wildlife

1. Fish

With regard to regulation of public use as it affects fish resources within the management unit, season lengths,

minimum size limits and creel limits are set to allow maximum opportunity while guarding against over-harvest. Imposition of special restrictive regulations in certain waters provide a higher level of control on use and raise the quality of opportunity available to fishermen.

Levels of use anticipated in area fisheries are as described in "A Comprehensive Plan for Fish Resource Management in the Adirondack Zone," Pfeiffer, M.H. 1979 (7). Anticipated management activities within the unit are listed for each water in Appendix I. Implementation of these activities will depend upon staffing levels, budget constraints and assessment of the need for each project in terms of cost to benefit ratio.

Temiscamie X domestic hybrids will be used to maintain fisheries in brook trout waters affected by acid precipitation. This strain of trout has demonstrated superior ability to withstand low pH (12).

2. Wildlife

The regulation of public use affecting wildlife species has traditionally been through manipulation of season lengths and bag limits to insure maximum recreational opportunity while still guarding against over harvest. The completion of Ecological Zone studies in the late 1970's has resulted in the development of Deer Management Units (Appendix H-3) and Furbearer Management Units (Appendix H-4) based upon Ecological factors. The Independence River Wild Forest includes parts

of DMU 28 (Central Adirondack Foothills or transition). It is entirely in FMU 4. Using the ecological zone concept, different seasons for different species will evolve as management techniques become more refined. Public utilization of wildlife species within the unit can be greatly influenced by the development of new or closure of existing access facilities such as trailhead parking areas, jeep, snowmobile and foot trails. Identification of all access points, and public lands and rights-of-way is of particular importance in insuring equitable recreative opportunity as well as achieving better distribution of recreational users.

E. Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

The Independence River is classified as scenic from its source to the former Sperryville Bridge site and recreational from the Sperryville Bridge site down river to the Adirondack Park boundary (Appendix M). It enters this unit at mile 15 and leaves it 200 feet west of the former Sperryville Bridge. Within the unit there are is one bridge span on a Town Road - Wilson's Bridge on the Bailey Road. There is a river ford at mile 19.8 which services private camps north of the river in Lot 60. The only other crossings within the unit are DEC snowmobile bridges at mile 17.4 and a foot trail bridge at mile 19.4. Existing foot and snowmobile trails make the river easily accessible. Acquisition of Lot 60 would eliminate all fords within the unit.

54a.

The only new management activity proposed for this river corridor is a connecting foot trail on the north side between the fish trail and the east bridge trail. Snowmobile trails and bridges, individual campsites and town roads all occur within the corridor which will be defined as 1/4 mile from mean high water mark when on State lands.

F. Fire Management

Fire protection within this unit is the responsibility of the NYS DEC under provisions of Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law. DEC is charged with maintaining an approved fire protection system for the prevention and extinguishment of fires, including fire management personnel, facilities and equipment. This unit contains parts of three different ranger districts, namely:

6709 Towns of Greig, Lyonsdale and Watson	Lewis County
6711 Town of Webb (part)	Herkimer County
6713 Town of Webb (part)	Herkimer County

There are two fire towers directly serving this unit, one stand-by unit at Number Four scheduled for removal in 1985, on the north bounds, and one on International Paper Company lands on Stillwater Mountain, south of the Stillwater Reservoir. In addition, the Gomer Hill Tower, on the Tug Hill Plateau, has an excellent view of the western part of this unit. Two aerial detection flight routes serve as the primary system and cover the unit when the fire danger warrants - Six Hotel contracted through the Lowville Office and Six Kilo handled by the Herkimer Office. Fire wardens supplement the ranger force and are available for larger fires on a volunteer basis. Volunteer fire companies have also provided important assistance work when called upon.

Fire weather data is provided through a forest fire danger rating station monitored and read by a fire weather observer. Weather data is used in decision-making both for flight intensity and in making fire attack or woods closure decisions. The station is maintained from April through November.

Early action needs to be taken to prevent any fire from uncontrolled spreading. The interspersed private holdings contain numerous camps and buildings, often occupied, which will benefit from quick fire response. Portions of this unit are quite accessible but the upgrading of key jeep trails (see IV-B) will facilitate early control and minimal damage to both the resource and property. Forest ranger staff needs to maintain a readiness both in terms of training and appropriate equipment and tools.

The use of mechanized equipment for fire suppression should be conservative during periods of low fire danger. The decision to utilize such equipment during periods of high fire danger should be the prerogative of DEC fire management personnel and the Regional Forester.

Prevention efforts to reduce man-caused fires must be continued by further educating the public and enforcing existing fire laws including top-logging, and brush removal adjacent to both highway and railroad rights-of-way. Smokey Bear programs, which educate youngsters in fire prevention,

need to be reinforced with adequate staffing and promotional materials.

G. Administration

1. Staffing

a. Land Management

It is essential that the existing ranger districts be kept intact and ranger vacancies filled expeditiously as they occur. The permanent ranger force forms the core of land managers needed to control public use, manage fire and monitor environmental impact. There is also a direct relationship in the ability of these rangers to function adequately based on vacant adjacent ranger districts. Adjacent ranger district vacancies sap the man day inputs required by the subject rangers and can cause the entire system to break down.

The Operations staffing required to handle the public use facilities within the unit (see IV-B Maintenance) is now well below minimum. Any expansion of public services as proposed in this plan, land ownership boundaries, should be accompanied by increased Operations staffing. Operations, within their personnel and financial limitations, carries out annual work plans developed by Lands and Forests staff.

The current overhead, including associate foresters and forest ranger III's, is adequate to handle the administration of this unit. However, the total Forest Preserve within the Region may have enough workload to

justify a plan coordinator once the individual unit plans are complete.

It would be desirable to have a park ranger, assigned to adjacent wilderness areas, spend some time in this unit to obtain better use figures.

It is also vital that sufficient survey staff be maintained within the Region to handle boundary and title problems as they occur on this and adjacent units, and particularly to complete existing outstanding survey requests. They are now unable to handle administrative surveys and boundaries are deteriorating.

b. Fisheries

Fish Management activities will be performed by Regional permanent and seasonal personnel. Anticipated activities would not require additions to staff under present workloads and priorities.

c. Wildlife

Wildlife management activities will be performed by Regional permanent and seasonal personnel. Anticipated activities require that all vacancies be filled without delay in order to handle current workloads.

2. Budgeting

Since this unit overlaps the Lowville and Herkimer Region 6 Lands and Forests sub-offices, a coordinated effort is required. Herkimer will continue to budget through the Regional Forester for staff and rehabilitation

of the facilities as required to support Herkimer County. The Lowville sub-office will budget for staff and rehabilitation of facilities in Lewis County. A cooperative effort will be made with the Operations Unit in preparing required rehabilitation projects for the needs of this unit in both Counties.

The Operations Unit will prepare a budget request for maintenance personnel both permanent and seasonal to support the facilities in this unit (see IV-B). Their budgeting efforts also will address the supplies and materials, equipment and charge back costs as needed to carry out the perpetual maintenance effort, and to support any approved rehabilitation or capital projects. Lands and Forests and Fish and Wildlife will need to provide aggressive support in the budgeting process.

Routine management activities related to fish and wildlife are prepared by regional staff assigned to those bureaus. This includes permanent and seasonal personnel, supplies and materials, as well as travel. Rehabilitation projects related to fish and wildlife needs are prepared by the respective bureau staff and in consultation with Operations as required.

New projects will generally be approved at the Division level before funding is submitted in the Department Budget.

3. Education

Continuing educational efforts need to be made in fire prevention (Smokey Bear etc.) fire protection (burning permits) and resource protection. Scheduled Smokey Bear visits in nearby schools have proven very effective for

youngsters in getting the prevention message across. Spring publicity articles remind landowners in the fire towns that burning permits for brush disposal are required. However, additional effort needs to be made to educate the public to reduce littering and carry out what they carry in on recreational excursions. The addition of a part time park ranger would be most helpful in education on an encounter basis.

A facilities map and brochure on this unit is essential to facilitate full public enjoyment of the many features and facilities which are found here. It would also provide a way of presenting some brief readable messages to help protect the Unit's beauty and fragility for future generations to enjoy.

Other educational programs traditionally carried on through bureaus need to be continued and would include legislative and public hearings; meetings with organized groups, publications, brochures, outdoor events, and related activities.

H. Problem Areas

1. Accessibility

Access to most of this unit is exceptionally good and will improve with improved trailhead parking and upgrading of key jeep trails (see IV-B). The accessibility situation is currently limited by Operation's units lack of staffing and funding to meet the work plan needs.

Proper funding of the Operations maintenance effort also will sustain the quality and recreational experience on existing trails.

There are, however, three trails which currently cross private land where the legality of the crossing needs clarification. They are:

- a. From the Cleveland Lake Road on the Cleveland Lake Club property, northerly to the State line.
- b. From the Stoney Lake Road at Upper Chases Lake, northeasterly to the State line.
- c. From the Stoney Lake Road, just east of Stoney Lake, northeasterly on the so-called Fish Trail to the State boundary.

Title investigations should be made on these trails to guarantee continuing public use in the future and provide a basis for decision-making regarding current trails.

2. Trespass

The key to preventing trespass on State lands in this unit lies in adequate ranger staff to patrol and educate, and a combined effort by Lands and Forests and Operations to clearly sign and identify boundary lines. Boundaries should be signed and painted at intervals not exceeding five years. A vigorous boundary program will also minimize

intrusions onto private land by recreational users of the Forest Preserve.

There are increasing incidents of illegal cutting of fuelwood and other products on State land which are not related to boundary identification. The decreasing forest ranger staff will lead to additional and bolder episodes of intentional illegal harvest. The theft of signs is also partially related to a reduced enforcement capability.

The large number of trail bikes, and ATV's, owned by the public residing adjacent to this unit, is related to increasing incidents of illegal trail use, off trail and cross country use. Adequate levels of patrol, signing, and public education can all help to reduce this kind of trespass.

3. Land Titles

There are currently three known land title questions in this unit. The first is in relation to the Francis Lake acquisition where the question of the use of the so-called "Winter Road" and location of a dock on Lot 25 is being litigated. The second also involves the recently acquired Francis Lake property, in the Northwest corner of Township Three where a question regarding the survey has been raised by the adjacent owner, Gadziella. The third involves the question of the title to the original dam site at Stillwater Reservoir and the extension of that 1898 appropriation onto Allds Island (Van Sickle Island).

(Title is not listed as Forest Preserve and the Black River Regulating District is unsure if they should have administration of that parcel as well as the flowed area, or if it should be DEC.) The entire question of jurisdiction between DEC and the Black River Regulating District over lands at Stillwater needs to be settled. All of these questions should be vigorously pursued to achieve early decisions.

There are five surveys required to complete the establishment of boundaries in this unit.

1. Francis Lake - Lynch line.	.25 mile
2. Pipe line lot, south bounds.	3.00 miles
3. 1240' elevation contour at Wilson Bridge.	2.25 miles
4. Yancey exception Watson lots 113, 114.	2.50 miles
5. Allds Island.	<u>.25 mile</u>
Total	8.25 miles

4. Environmental Problems

Light littering in the more popular camping areas is a current problem. This can be controlled with the staffing and financial commitments already outlined. The site compaction problems at the heavily used island and shoreline sites at Stillwater cannot be totally reversed but the potential spread of this problem can be controlled by confining camping to the recently designated resilient sites.

by confining camping to the recently designated resilient sites. Continuing and periodic inspection of campsites, while in use, is essential to identify rehabilitation or closure needs, control illegal tree cutting, tree abuse, and prevent illegal burying of litter. Plans were formulated and implemented in for the summer of 1984 to go to designated sites on the Reservoir. Camping will still be allowed on sites over 150 feet from water and roads. This will require additional funding for enforcement.

Trail bikes and ATV's are now present in sufficient numbers to warrant concern. They often violate gates and signs to use trails developed for snowmobiling and occasionally foot trails. They also utilize any open, sandy areas and hillsides they can find creating occasional erosion problems. An educational and enforcement effort and finalization of ATV laws could help reduce environmental damage.

The many miles of sand jeep trails in the Chases Lake area provide tempting places for garbage and litter dumping. Their extensive nature and poor condition makes routine patrol and enforcement difficult.

Erosion problems also occur on jeep trails which do not have sufficient sub-base to withstand 4 x 4 travel. Where mud holes occur, the common practice is to go around that hole, sometimes creating additional trail mileage, damaging flora causing erosion and leaving new rutting. Much of this can be improved by funding the level of normal maintenance

requested in each year's work plans. The closing of the Big Otter Lake Jeep Trail, at the outlet will allow one of the most seriously abused jeep trail systems to begin to recover.

Heavy mortality is occurring among tree species in this unit. Beech bark disease is rampant. Falling trees are clogging trails rapidly. Heavy losses were experienced with tamarack in recent years and unexplained mortality in red spruce approaches 75%. There are indications that there may be necrobiotic environmental linkages, particularly in the spruce, with acid rain, climatic changes, defoliation, increasing air pollution, and heavy metals accumulation in the forest floor. (10).

From the fish management viewpoint, one major environmental problem is making a serious impact upon this unit - acid rain. This situation is currently under intensive study but no practical solution appears to be forthcoming. "Acidity status of lakes in the Adirondack Region of New York in Relation to Fish Resources," Pfeiffer, M. H. and Festa, P. J. (1980) gives an overview of the problem and covers much of the recent work that has been done in assessing the extent of lake acidification.

Present pH and acidity threat status are included in Appendix F for streams and in I for ponds, where available. Further investigations are required before accurate pH

determination can be obtained for all waters. However, in the case of stream pH's, the smaller tributaries must be assumed to have pH's similar to the mainstreams which are all considered to be critical or threatened during the spring run-off period.

Remedial action at this time is restricted to liming of key ponded waters. Exorbitant costs and limited effective duration for such treatments precludes an intensive liming program throughout the unit.

Two large projects, the "Acid Pond Study" and the "Biological Survey of New York Watersheds" have started. Both are expected to provide valuable additional management data for this and other unit management plans. The former project is being funded by the Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation, and the latter by Return a Gift to Wildlife.

I. Land Acquisition

1. Trailhead Parking

A small acquisition of land for a parking lot adjacent to the Number Four Road, just east of the Smith Road, would be desirable. This would provide off road parking at this point and eliminate dangerous parking conditions now occurring on the road shoulder. The unplowed Smith Road is a prime access route into the northern snowmobile trail complex.

2 acres ±

2. Access

Should title investigations reveal any title problems on

either the Fish Trail or Evies Pond Road (see IV H-3), which impede access, then acquisitions should be made to insure continued public use. The acquisition of remaining Fisher easements should also be completed. An easement is needed through Lot 245 to tie the trail system together between the Bailey Road and the Stoney Lake Road.

3. Recreational Development

a. Renewed efforts should be made to acquire the balance of the shoreline at Francis Lake to enhance the management potential and alternatives for public use. 122 acres

b. An easement and necessary canoe carry trails through Nehasane Park are essential to facilitate canoe travel to and from Lake Lila into Stillwater Reservoir and points west. Chapter 643 of the highway laws of 1853 declared the Beaver River a public highway from Albany Lake (15 miles above the middle 1/3rd line) to the mouth of the Beaver River. However, carry point easements need to be acquired through Nehasane upriver and through Niagara Mohawk Power corporation lands down river to open the River for canoeing.

c. An easement through International Paper Company lands on the Big Moose Road to the Basket Factory Road would result in a snowmobile trail which avoids plowed roads.

4. Consolidation

The consolidation of existing State holdings would be desirable from both an administrative and protection point of view. Funds should be made available to acquire holdings under 500 acres in size, when and if they are offered for sale. The following additions would reduce boundary problems, enhance management decision-making, and provide better protection of existing forest resources:

a. Herkimer County - Town of Webb

1. Range 13, Parts of Lots 7, 8, 9 between the Big Moose Road and the Stillwater Reservoir, including the privately owned portion of Island #2. This would insure total ownership of the shoreline and islands in this vicinity. (Now International Paper Company).

Webb total proposed $\frac{80 \text{ acres} \pm}{80 \text{ acres}}$

2. Acquire the Niagara Mohawk easement to extinguish gravel rights between pipeline lot and the Beaver River.

b. Lewis County - Town of Watson

1. Township 3, Lot 9, Range 13, 14 Trout Pond Club. Surrounded four sides. 320 acres \pm
2. Watsons West Triangle, Lot 60. Surrounded four sides. Includes frontage on the Independence River and elimination of a ford. 105 acres \pm
3. Watsons West Triangle, Lot 37. Surrounded four sides. 113 acres \pm

4. Watsons West Triangle, Lots 113, 114. Surrounded four sides. 232 acres ±
 5. Watsons West Triangle, Lots 263, 264. Surrounded three sides and fourth by Lowville Municipal Watershed. 104 acres ±
 6. Watsons West Triangle, Lots 246, 247. Surrounded three sides. Includes the Independence River on the South and all of Cleveland Lake. 135 acres ±
 7. Watsons West Triangle, Lots 56, 57, 81, 82. Surrounded three sides and includes the Northern two thirds of Stoney Lake. 340 acres ±
 8. Watsons West Triangle, Lot 257. Surrounded three sides and includes balance of the Southwest shoreline of Upper Chases Lake and Calfhead Pond. 92 acres ±
 9. Watsons West Triangle, Lots 225, 240, 241, 256, 270. Surrounded three sides and includes Hinchings Pond, Little Punkey Pond and Parsons Pond. 467 acres ±
- Watsons (total proposed) 1908 acres ±
(includes easement and recreational development)

c. Lewis County - Town of Greig

1. Macombs Purchase, Lot 10, surrounded four sides. Includes the balance of Little Otter Lake. 57 acres ±
2. Macombs Purchase, Lot 9, surrounded three sides. Includes part of the East shore of Sand Pond. 182 acres ±
3. Macombs Purchase, Railroad Bed, fee in Lots 68, 83, 86 and easement in lots 84 and 85. 5 acres ±

4. Macombs Purchase, Lot 102, surrounded three sides.

208 acres†

5. John Browns Tract, Lot 6, Range 13, surrounded four sides, including frontage on Otter Creek. 10 acres†

Greig Total Proposed 462 acres†

Unit Grand Total Proposed 2450 acres†

J. State Land Management Plan Amendments Required

The description of the unit on Page 56 of the plan, dated April 20, 1979, should be revised to read "The Sand Plain depressions North from Brantingham Lake to Crystal Lake offer many unique bird and plant life associations."

There does not appear to be any provision for campgrounds in a Wild Forest Unit. However, Francis Lake has been proposed for study and evaluation for possible campground development. If the preliminary study recommended in this five year period is positive, the study will be submitted to the Adirondack park Agency with a request for a State Land Master Plan amendment reclassifying the desired area to intensive use.

K. State Environmental Quality Review Requirements

Any reconstruction or development within the confines of this unit must take into account environmental factors to insure that such development does not degrade the resource. Each management option will involve the consideration of the State Environmental Quality Review Act and where necessary, proper administrative steps will be taken. The SEQR requirements will be carefully met in the evaluation of

potential campground development at Francis Lake. None of the items listed under Part IV involving proposed management are considered to result in significant environmental impact. A negative declaration may be found in Appendix S.

I. Relationship of Management of Area to Forest Preserve and Adjacent Area

The economic impacts of adjacent area relationships have been covered in Part II-D. Interaction on a management basis with adjacent Wilderness Areas is treated as follows:

1. Pepperbox Wilderness Unit

This unit lies on the north side of the Beaver River. Access into the Pepperbox is totally dependent upon trailhead parking in the Independence Unit. Adequate parking facilities and bridges now exist at the southwest corner of the Pepperbox but not at the southeast near the Stillwater Dam. To cover these needs, a small eight car parking lot should be constructed near the dam. In addition, the bridge below the dam, which represents the only foot crossing available at that point, was built and has been maintained by owners at the "Wilderness Lakes Tract" (now Creative Forest Enterprises). The bridge has recently been repaired and the public is crossing it on foot along with the private owners of the timber rights and the Raven Lake exception who use motorized equipment. Gating of the Raven Lake road requires that the users park in the Independence River unit.

2. Five Ponds Wilderness Unit

The northerly shore of the Stillwater Reservoir, east of

the Wilderness Lakes Tract, is classified as wilderness, with the exception of the peninsula on the south shoreline of the East Branch of the Beaver River. It may be difficult for the public to understand that regulations are different on different parts of the shoreline. It will require a strong effort on the part of the ranger in residence at Stillwater to keep the public informed.

3. Pigeon Lake Wilderness

The same comments are appropriate here as in the Five Ponds Unit. The railroad bed is a very effective boundary here. Snowmobile usage on the north side of the tracks has been under study for several years and alternatives have been related to the viability of the railway itself and the avoidance of the Pigeon Lake Unit.

4. Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness Area

The recommendation to discontinue motor vehicle traffic beyond the outlet of Big Otter Lake is directly related to the protection of this wilderness unit. In addition, the upgrading of the Steam Mill Road within the Independence Unit, has provided much improved access within reasonable walking distance of the Ha-de-ron-dah Wilderness Unit west bounds. The decision to prohibit motorboats but allow float planes on Big Otter Lake, as agreed upon in previous negotiations on the Ha-de-ron-dah boundaries, would also protect this wilderness which bounds on the east shore of the lake. The

elimination of the so-called Pine Creek Snowmobile Trail loop, will help to prevent the intrusion of motor vehicles into the "Mud Hole" area of the Ha-de-ron-dah from that corner. The continuing maintenance of the Pine lake lean-to in the Independence Unit, provides the only permanent shelter in the vicinity of the western edge of the Ha-de-ron-dah.

The evaluation of the possible rehabilitation of the old impoundment on Big Otter Lake could lead to restoration which would improve the fisheries.

M. Proposed Regulations

1. With the exception of Stillwater Reservoir, all lakes and ponds in this Unit are considered too small to justify outboard motors for either recreational or fishing purposes. It is proposed that regulations be promulgated to prohibit outboard motors on all waters which are entirely bounded by Forest Preserve lands.
2. Big Otter Lake is remote and currently served by a very rough jeep trail. In conjunction with the proposed restrictions on outboard motors, Big Otter Lake will not be closed to float plane landings, thus allowing reasonable utilization of a lake within a wild forest but bounding on a wilderness area. This will provide wilderness seekers and the handicapped with a unique opportunity.

4. Regulations need to be promulgated to clearly define where ATVs may operate in conjunction with open jeep trails and jeep roads. Currently proposed changes will require designating, by signing, all routes where motor vehicles will be permitted.

V. Schedule for Implementation

The following schedule will be applied over the five year plan period:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
I	1. Lime Pitcher Pond.	\$300
	2. In-depth analysis to determine fish stocking policy for Francis Lake.	
	3. Maintenance stocking as per Appendix I.	
	4. Gravel parking lot #2 at Stillwater Boat Launch site.	\$2000
	5. Inventory and monitor nesting locations and activity of all rare and endangered species present in the Unit.	Cost Unknown
	6. Evaluate six mile and Grassy Point landing to resolve parking problems and remove abandoned vehicles from State land	\$500
	7. Repair bridge over Fish Creek and Poison Creek on the Steam Mill Road.	\$10,000
	8. Replace cable gate with frame gate on Mt. Tom West line.	\$1000
	9. Establish and identify the end of the jeep trail at Independence River south and north side, Emmett Hill Road at the County line, and Big Otter Lake Road, below the outlet. Upgrade the access path from the Big Otter parking lot to the lake.	\$2000
	10. Survey Francis Lake-Lynch line (.25 mile).	
	11. Develop and publish a map and brochure on this unit to educate users and facilitate public use.	Unknown
	12. Conduct an evaluation of Francis Lake to determine future plans for its shoreline management, and desirability for a public campground.	

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
	13. Rehabilitate the bridge over Sunday Creek or the Basket Factory Road.	\$5000
	14. Initiate negotiations with International paper Company for snowmobile trail easement and acquisition of small parcels between the Big Moose Road and Stillwater Reservoir.	
	15. Initiate negotiations with Nehasane area landowners and Niagara Mohawk Power Corporation for canoe route carry easements on the Beaver River.	
	16. Promulgate rules and regulations to close all lakes and ponds, totally within the unit, to motor boats.	
	17. Remove the cable bridges hazardous to the public over the Independence River down river from the Fish Trail and on the Beaver River upriver from the Moshier Generating Station.	\$500
	18. Plan more intensive coliform bacteria analysis at Stillwater Reservoir in cooperation with DOH.,	
	19. Officially drop snowmobile trails as per Appendix L-3 and revise the snowmobile trail bulletin accordingly.	
	20. Complete resurfacing of the Smith Road to the Pine Creek terminus, gravel 6 car parking lot and identify ten designated campsites.	\$15,500
	21. Add a trail register at Drunkard Creek parking on the Steam Mill Road.	\$100
	22. New Foot trail from proposed parking on Mt. Tom Rd. to connect existing foot trail.	\$2000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
II	1. Lime Evies Pond.	\$900
	2. Maintenance stocking as per Appendix I.	
	3. Construct eight car parking area below the Stillwater Dam.	\$2000
	4. Begin to identify and monitor currently used camping sites other than those at Stillwater by hiring a short term park ranger.	\$3000
	5. Gravel, mud holes on the McCarthy Jeep Trail, add a 6 car parking lot at terminus. Identify ten designated campsites.	\$27,000
	6. Construct a new foot trail from Fourth Creek easterly along the north side of the Independence River to the snowmobile trail and East Bridge. (Includes bridge over Fourth Creek @ \$3000).	\$6000
	7. Construct 12 car parking lot at 10 mile crossing road. Intersection to accommodate snowmobilers and skiers.	\$4000
	8. Stabilize trails from Evies Pond Road parking area to Long and Evies Ponds.	\$1000
	9. Establish and identify the end of the open jeep trail and beginning of the Silvermine Trail at the intersection with the Balsam Flats Road and on the railroad bed east of Brantingham.	\$500
	10. Continue biological and acid pond surveys using specially funded projects.	
	11. Complete boundary line survey of State Boundary on Aalds Island (.25 mile) and complete Miscellaneous Title Investigation of overlapping jurisdictions on Stillwater Reservoir.	
	12. Establish connecting foot trail from proposed Mt. Tom Road parking to the Fish Trail just east of the State line.	\$2500
	13. Close roads listed in appendix L-3 by ditching and planting backslope.	\$1000

		78.
14.	Fill mud holes and grade Evies Pond Rd.	\$3,500
15.	Establish link-up trail from Sunday Lake jeep trail to the Basket Factory Road, to replace the longer existing trail, which requires a bridge over Sunday Creek.	\$2,500
16.	Complete demolition of foundations and remove camp remains at Halfmoon Lake.	\$500

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
III	1. Lime Long Pond.	\$3000
	2. Maintenance stocking as per Appendix I.	
	3. Field evaluation of Beach Mill Pond Foot Trail to determine bridge needs west of Pine Creek at Beaver Pond.	
	4. Rehabilitate Panther Pond and East Bridge snowmobile trails from Pine Creek to Emmett Hill Road to the East Bridge.	\$3500
	5. Gravel major mud holes in Confusion Flats Jeep Trail.	\$8000
	6. Complete boundary line survey on Yancey Exception Lots 113, 114 Watson (2.5 miles)	
	7. Establish and identify the end of the open jeep trail on the Basket Factory Road and Panther Pond trail north crossover at the McCarthy Road intersection.	\$500
	8. Initiate a study to determine if loon and osprey nesting and survival can be enhanced in the unit.	Unknown

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
IV	1. Maintenance fish stocking as per Appendix I.	
	2. Survey the south bounds of the Pipeline Lot - (3.00 miles).	
	3. Re-surface Mt. Tom Road from Stoney Lake to trailhead parking area east of the Fish Trail. (0.5 mi.)	\$6000

<u>Year</u>	<u>Activity</u>	<u>Cost</u>
		79.
	4. Rehabilitate the Pine Lake-Otter lake Snowmobile Trail Loop	\$4800
	5. Construct 12 car trailhead parking area at the intersection of the Stillwater Road and McCarthy Road if a parking area cannot be acquired adjacent to the #4 Rd.	\$4000
	6. Begin conversion of Steam Mill Foot Trail to Nordic Ski System.	\$6000
V	1. Lime Cleveland and Payne Lakes	\$1200
	2. Maintenance stocking as per Appendix I.	
	3. Establish foot trail from Drunkard Creek trailhead parking to the mud hole utilizing the snowmobile trail where feasible.	\$4000
	4. Evaluate big Otter Lake Outlet for possible rehabilitation of the original impoundment	Staff
	5. Fill mudholes on the Halfmoon Rd. and add a 4 car parking lot at road terminus at Burnt Creek	\$5000
	6. Survey 1240' evaluation boundary at Wilson Bridge (2.25 miles).	
	7. Construct six car trailhead parking area on Mt. Tom Road East of Fish Trail. (move this to year I if the fish trail remains blocked).	\$4000
	8. Establish four car parking area at Catspaw Lake.	\$2500
	9. Establish four car parking area (0.1 mile) South of Otter Creek on Shingle Mills Falls Road.	\$2500
	10. Fill mud holes, repair bridge and fill potholes on Florence Pond Road.	\$5000
	11. Initiate an inventory of wildlife which inhabit the unit.	Unknown