

## APPENDIX XXI

### Tioughnioga Landscape Analysis

Township: Georgetown  
Area: 25,536 acres  
Open: 6,281 acres (25%)  
Forest: 19,255 acres (75%)

Township: DeRuyter  
Area: 19,776 acres  
Open: 7,692 acres (39%)  
Forest: 11,628 acres (59%)  
Water: 456 acres (2%)

Township: Nelson  
Area: 27,968 acres  
Open: 7,271 acres (26%)  
Forest: 20,137 acres (72%)  
Water: 560 acres (2%)

Township: Cazenovia  
Area: 17,280 acres (south of Rt. 20)  
Open: 8,812 acres (51%)  
Forest: 8,468 acres (49%)

Townships: Georgetown, DeRuyter,  
Nelson, Cazenovia  
Area: 90,560 acres  
Open: 30,056 acres (33%)  
Forest: 59,488 acres (66%)  
Water: 1,106 acres (1%)

Orthoimagery analysis done using mid-  
1990's photography.

**APPENDIX XXII**  
**Public Comments and Responses**

Comments were received during the public meeting held January 25, 2006 or during the 30-day comment period.

**Topic: Access and Roads**

**Comment:** Is Corkinsville Road a public access road?

**Response:** Corkinsville Road is a town road (public access) owned and maintained by three different town highway departments - Cazenovia, Nelson and Georgetown. The majority of the road is a seasonally maintained road. The road condition is the responsibility of the town(s).

**Topic: Acquisition of Parcels to WMA**

**Comment:** Supports budgeting and planning for acquisition of inholdings.

**Comment:** Questions whether wording of the draft Plan means that the Department would be selling portions of the WMA.

**Response:** It will be the goal of the Department to add to the WMA inholdings from willing sellers. The reason these properties are listed is that they are either current private inholdings or are contiguous with WMA boundaries and would result in either a larger and/or less fragmented WMA. It is not Department policy to sell lands already in State ownership.

**Topic: Discussion of multiple recreational uses on the Wildlife Management Area**

**A. Support traditional uses only:**

**Comment:** Multiple-use of a wildlife management area does not work. Opposes facilities for hikers and horseback riders.

**Comment:** WMAs should not be opened for activities unrelated to wildlife management until all parks in the state are open to hunting.

**Comment:** WMAs should be used for hunting, fishing, and trapping first and foremost.

**Comment:** WMAs were set up for wildlife and the management of that wildlife; they should not have activities on them that would infringe on wildlife habitat.

**Comment:** Would rather see the Department managing the WMA for game animals, wildlife, wildlife habitat and wildlife management than for non-wildlife related recreation.

**Comment:** Opposes building trails of any kind in a Wildlife Management Area.

**Comment:** Opposes development of new trails in the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area.

**Comment:** Hikers can go off trail just as anyone else can so no additional hiking facilities are needed.

**Comment:** Hikers have plenty of options for solitary experiences in the State but other groups are under-represented.

**Comment:** The roads and trails that are already present are enough for recreational uses that are consistent with a Wildlife Management Area's mission.

**Comment:** Opposes the building of dedicated horse or hiking trails in the Tioughnioga WMA.

**Comment:** Opposes horse trails on the Tioughnioga WMA due to costs, incompatibility with funding source, and too many users.

**Comment:** Opposes horse trails on the Tioughnioga WMA due to perceived conflicts during hunting season.

**Comment:** Opposes horse trails on the Tioughnioga WMA due to erosion.

**Comment:** Opposes horse trails on the Tioughnioga WMA due to safety issues or fear of hunting being pushed out or hunting access being split up.

**Comment:** Opposes horse trails on the Tioughnioga WMA as an intrusion.

**Comment:** Opposes anything that encourages horseback riding, hiking, and especially snowmobiling on the WMA because all inflict unnecessary stress on many different wildlife species and create possible liability and legal concerns and loss of support from hunters.

## **B. Support non-traditional uses:**

**Comment:** Foot trails do not contribute to ecological fragmentation.

**Comment:** The North Country Scenic Trail is only 2' wide and causes minimal disruption.

**Comment:** Un-managed paths are the most invasive and a way to minimize the problem is to provide planned and managed trails, which do not proliferate.

**Comment:** Evidence shows that confining hikers to a designated path is less disruptive to habitat than allowing them to create herd paths.

**Comment:** Hiking trails can be used for recreation and nature observation, photography, hiking, and skiing.

**Comment:** Hiking trails are also used by sportsmen and wildlife.

**Comment:** Recreational uses in addition to hunting do not negatively affect the overall management of WMAs.

**Response:** The Final Plan endeavors to support the current level of opportunity for traditional uses, to enhance wildlife habitat, and to accommodate both snowmobile and non-vehicular pass-through travel in a way that is environmentally sound and consistent with the primary purposes of the area. Secondary uses, including non-wildlife-associated recreation, are accommodated in the Final Plan only to the extent that they do not interfere with the primary purposes of the area.

The horse trail and hiking trail routes have been substantially modified in the Final Plan to reduce the likelihood of impacting on intact habitats and traditional uses while still providing pass-through connections. These changes from the draft Plan follow from the recognition that supporting intact wildlife habitat and providing wildlife-related use are the primary purposes of the area, and that wildlife-related use occurs throughout the entire WMA without special facilities. The adjusted trail routes continue to provide opportunities for pass-through travel by foot and horseback, and provide connections through the WMA in support of region-wide trail efforts. Wherever feasible, the adjusted trail routes use existing road and trail corridors to reduce additional fragmentation of hunting and trapping opportunities on the area. The revised routes are summarized in the Final Plan and in this response document under the topic headed "Specific Trail Routes."

On WMAs the use of snowmobiles is prohibited by regulation unless otherwise authorized. A route for a pass-through snowmobile trail on the WMA is provided in the Final Plan. Area speed limits for snowmobiles will be posted, and, in the event of significant problems or inability to enforce such limits, the trail will be closed. DEC may, at its discretion allow a volunteer group to undertake trail grooming and authorize the participating group to seek non-DEC funding to offset its grooming costs.

**Topic: Barriers/vehicular use**

**Comment:** Supports the present policies of gates and barriers on the WMA to prevent illegal activities and to conduct habitat management activities.

**Comment:** Opposes ATV use and/or other wheeled vehicles on WMAs.

**Comment:** There should be an effort to decrease illegal use of ATVs.

**Response:** The Final Plan calls for adherence to present policies on placement of barriers, gates, and restrictions on use of motor vehicles. Department enforcement of area regulations will continue and increase as staffing levels allow.

## **Topic: Funding/administration**

**Comment:** People are willing to “adopt-a-trail.”

**Comment:** Foot trails are constructed and maintained by volunteers with no use of sporting license dollars.

**Comment:** Hunting and fishing license revenue should be used to improve hunting access, not for building trails that essentially reduce public hunting access.

**Response:** The Department will continue to utilize the services of volunteers through agreements including Temporary Revocable Permits (TRPs) and Adopt-a-Natural-Resource (AANR). These types of programs can reduce, but not eliminate, the costs associated with supervising, establishing and maintaining trails and other facilities on State land. When implementing the Final Plan, the Department will utilize funding and donations of time from both DEC and non-DEC sources. Consistent with State law specifying legal uses for revenues from the sale of sporting licenses, those funds are to be used for activities benefitting either fish and wildlife and their habitats or wildlife-related human uses.

## **Topic: Habitat Management**

**Comment:** Would like to see continued management of these lands for a diversity of wildlife.

**Comment:** Approves of habitat work like mowing and clearcuts.

**Comment:** Include small game in the master Plan.

**Comment:** The Unit would benefit from increased management for early to mid-stage successional habitat, including apple tree releases and cutting for aspen or shrub habitat to benefit many species in decline; logging to increase early successional habitat should be encouraged.

**Response:** On the WMA, the Department’s goal is to fulfill the purpose for which the WMA was acquired, including to provide for habitat diversity and to provide maximum and sustained hunting opportunities for upland game, as described in the Land Management Goal and Objectives in this plan. The Department will also continue to pursue a variety of mechanisms to fund and implement habitat improvement projects, including timber sales, local firewood sales, and arrangements with private conservation organizations such as the National Wild Turkey Federation, as has been done over the past 15 years. Early successional habitat management will be accomplished through treatments detailed in: A. Ecosystem Objectives for Early Successional Stages of the Plan. Treatments to establish and maintain early successional habitats have been accelerated during the first five years of the plan.

## **Topic: Horse Trails/Use of Horses**

**Comment:** Supports proposed equestrian trail on the TWMA .

**Comment:** Horseback riders enjoy nature, and horses provide a means of access for people who cannot hike.

**Comment:** Supports the less than a mile of new horse trail proposed for TWMA, which seems to conform fairly well to the requests for "no new trails on TWMA."

**Comment:** Supports a horse carriage road including a stretch from Damon Road to Tinsley Road. Also would like occasional winter use for horse-drawn sleighs.

**Comment:** Restriction of equines to designated trails should not be imposed on TWMA.

**Comment:** Objects to restrictions on off-trail use by horseback.

**Comment:** The plan as a whole provides significant facilities for equine related experiences.

**Response:** Comments were received both in support of and in opposition to designating equestrian trails on the WMA. Many stated that designation of horse trails was incompatible with the primary uses of the area. The Department considered the overall services provided by the Unit and the legal mandate and policy affecting use of Wildlife Management Areas, as well as public comments on the draft plan. The Department recognizes that designation of specific horse trails would be a significant departure from the past practice of not designating trails but allowing use of horses throughout the area. The draft Plan included an extensive horse trail loop through the WMA. The Department has decided to eliminate portions of that loop but to retain a short horse trail passage through the northwest corner of the WMA. This corridor links public roads capable of supporting a pass through horse trail along the western periphery of the area.

In providing a designated pass-through corridor for horses, the following factors were considered. First, the remaining corridor is situated entirely on existing roads or lanes. It includes a half-mile segment of an existing State lane used for farm-machine access. Second, horse-trailer parking or other facilities are not provided on the area. The Department recognizes that providing loop trails and other equestrian facilities could attract equestrian use to a degree that would be incompatible with the primary uses of the WMA. Pass-through use, almost entirely on peripheral roads, was judged to provide minimal disruption to other users and to be less likely to attract excessive use or to result in interference with primary uses for the area. Because there are no parking or other facilities, use is anticipated to remain light for both the short and long term. Third, for the State-owned portion of the corridor, there will be seasonal limitations on use. These dates will initially conform to the dates for other state lands, with the horse trail open from May 1 through November 31. This arrangement will be monitored and re-evaluated as needed. In the event of conflicts with primary uses including hunting, changes will be made.

Except for very specific limitations on hiking trails, the Department is not restricting horses

from off-trail use on WMA at this time.

Horse carriage roads are not provided on the WMA. A carriage trail is proposed on DeRuyter State Forest. Equestrian trails are also provided on Stoney Pond and DeRuyter State Forests.

### **Topic: Seasonal restrictions**

**Comment:** Supports horse trail seasonal restrictions (no use outside of the May 1 to October 31 window) but would also like a provision for special winter use for horse-drawn sleighs.

**Comment:** Objects to seasonal use restrictions on horse trails.

**Comment:** Winter restrictions on horse trail use are reasonable; (commenter) would work to keep the trails up; questions why horses should not be allowed on hiking trails.

**Comment:** Many recreational users other than hunters (voluntarily) avoid group use of State lands during hunting seasons.

**Response:** Seasonal use restrictions will be maintained and reevaluated periodically. It is important to note that most of the horse trail will be on public roads where the Department does not have the ability to impose seasonal restrictions. Hiking trails will not be restricted seasonally unless, in the Department's judgement, there are conflicts arising with the primary uses of the area. At this time, there is no restriction to use horse-drawn sleighs on the carriage trail.

### **Topic: Signage/brochures/enforcement**

**Comment:** Plans call for signage telling hikers to stay on the trail.

**Comment:** Trail use instructions, signage, and maps should be available on horse trail areas.

**Comment:** Make it clear through signage that hunters, fishermen, and trappers have the right to be on the WMA.

**Comment:** Suggests the inclusion of trail language to allow hikers, runners, snowshoers, cross country skiers, hunters on foot and wildlife and exclude wheeled or motorized vehicles or horses on the same trails due to damage and extra work to correct them.

**Comment:** Need signage prohibiting motorized vehicles from hiking trails to reduce trail damage.

**Response:** The Plan calls for adherence to present policies regarding signage and barriers. Signs are posted at entry points to the WMA stating permissible activities as well as more specific signs distributed throughout the area at access lanes, trail heads, and similar points.

Regulation signs clearly indicate that hunting, fishing and trapping are permitted during the appropriate seasons and with possession of appropriate licenses and permits. The Department position on the use of ATVs has not changed and is shown on page 60 of the draft Plan. Signage regarding ATVs will be enhanced if needed. Law enforcement issues continue to be the responsibility of the Department, and members of the public are strongly encouraged to report any violations of law or regulation as soon as possible. Informational kiosks will be erected on all State lands.

**Comment:** Supports developing signage for hiking trail heads on the TWMA limiting the use of horses or mules on same (except when trapping or in active pursuit of legal game).

**Comment:** Concerned that the wording of trail signage language on page 54 might remove responsibilities from hunters to know when they are on a trail or that it allows hunters or trappers to routinely use horses or mules on foot trails without regard to damage.

**Response:** The language proposed on page 55 would enable single-use portions of the hiking trail corridor to remain primarily single use while not excluding those trail segments from use by pack or riding equines being used for hunting or trapping. The final Plan retains the provision for this signage. The Department does not believe that the use of equines for hunting or trapping will be excessive or will cause significant damage to trails, but we will monitor the situation and adjust this use if necessary. The Department recognizes that hunters and other cross-country recreationists may not always know when they are close to a designated footpath, regardless of the type of signage deployed. In any case, hunters need to be sure of their target and beyond. Hikers afield during hunting season can help ensure that they can be easily spotted by wearing blaze orange or other fluorescent colors. Seasonal closures of trails during hunting seasons can be applied in the future, if warranted.

### **Topic: Single-Use Hiking Trails**

**Comment:** Current trails on the WMA are sufficient and they should be offered as multi-use.

**Comment:** Supports hiking-only footpaths because hiking on multi-use trails is unpleasant.

**Comment:** Supports single-use trails with good separation to reduce noise and erosion.

**Comment:** Supports multi-use trails (including horses) on TWMA.

**Comment:** Objects to requirement for multi-use horse trails while restricting the use of horses on hiking trails.

**Response:** The final Plan provides two foot trail corridors. For most of their length these corridors will be restricted to foot travel only. The Link Trail route north of Dugway Road has been adjusted to remain on or immediately adjacent to its present route. This is a change from the route proposed in the draft Plan. The portion of this route through the Holmes Road corridor will be rehabilitated on its State-owned portions to address severe erosion problems and reduce siltation to Limestone Creek. Where rehabilitation cannot be accomplished to a degree suitable for foot traffic, the trail will be adjusted slightly off the old route but will remain in the same corridor and close to its present location. Most of the Holmes Road corridor will

be designated for foot travel only.

The Onondaga Trail corridor, on the northwestern edge of the WMA, has been adjusted in the final Plan to follow the property line, thus allowing this portion to be a single-use corridor separate from the previously proposed alignment along the farm access lane.

For detailed information on trail route changes in the Final plan, please refer to the next topic.

### **Topic: Specific trail routes**

**Comment:** Supports inclusion of Link Trail and North Country Scenic Trail (NCST).

**Comment:** Appreciates the support for Link and NCST and other trails providing ways for all people to enjoy State lands.

**Comment:** Appreciates efforts to move sections of the Onondaga/NCST and Link/NCST that are currently road walks to be moved off-road.

**Comment:** Draft Plan would allow the closing of Holmes Road trail location in the middle of the WMA leaving habitats there less disturbed.

**Comment:** Supports reroutes or upgrades to wet spots on Link trail.

**Response:** Both The Link Trail and the Onondaga Trail are included on the Tioughnioga WMA in the final Plan. North of Dugway Road the Link Trail will be located on or immediately adjacent to its present route. The Holmes Road portion of this route will be rehabilitated on State-owned portions to address severe erosion problems and reduce siltation to Limestone Creek. Where rehabilitation cannot be accomplished to a degree suitable for foot traffic, the trail will be adjusted slightly out of the old corridor but will remain very close to its present location. The corridor for the Link Trail was selected from two alternatives which would have avoided damage to slopes, stream corridors, and biodiversity on the erodible slopes and gullies north of Damon Road. Terrain, potential for spread of invasive species, impacts to other types of public use, and the need to rehabilitate the Holmes Road corridor have been considered in reaching the decision to enhance the current trail corridor rather than the opening a new corridor as was proposed in the Draft Plan.

**Comment:** Hiking trails - The NCST route follows the WMA boundary.

**Comment:** The NCST detours onto private land to avoid disrupting trout habitat on the East Branch of Limestone Creek on the WMA.

**Comment:** Trail maps do not correspond to what was discussed and walked.

**Response:** The Onondaga Trail, on the northwestern edge of the WMA, will follow the property line instead of cutting a diagonal along an existing farm-machine-access lane, thus allowing a single-use corridor which is separated from the short stretch of horse trail aligned along that farm lane. The Onondaga Trail will leave the WMA just north of Limestone Creek. The Department appreciates the comment pointing out inconsistencies and notes

that the route description and map as shown in the Draft Plan depicted slightly different routes. The description indicated that the trail route followed the WMA property line across Limestone Creek and all the way on to Damon Road, while the map showed the trail route moving off the WMA and onto private land well north of Limestone Creek. Trail supporters desired to follow the WMA property line except at the Limestone Creek crossing where they would veer briefly onto private land to avoid disrupting the streambed on the WMA.

The final Plan most closely matches the route shown on the Draft Plan map. The trail would exit the WMA just north of Limestone Creek and remain on private land after that point on. Department staff evaluated the physical features relative to a trail access point at the intersection of the WMA property line and Damon Road and identified several significant issues. By its proximity to Limestone Creek, this property line is vulnerable to illegal or inappropriate uses. The Department believes that a signed access point on Damon Road substantially increases attractiveness and vulnerability to misuse at this location. In addition, a trail route along the property line between Limestone Creek and Damon Road would be immediately adjacent to a recent apple tree release site that is expected to provide excellent opportunities for wildlife photography, trapping, and hunting for both small game and deer. Each of these wildlife-related activities is extremely sensitive to disruption by casual or pass-through hikers and their companion animals. The location near a major road, especially with nearby parking along the road shoulder or Corkinsville Road, would be expected to attract not just committed and knowledgeable trail hikers but additional casual recreationists unaware of other activities at this location. To reduce the likelihood of degradation and infringement on primary purposes of the area, the Department will not support a trail corridor at this location on the WMA.

**Comment:** The proposed equestrian trails on the TWMA are around the perimeter on existing trails and seasonal roads; only 1.3 miles of new trails from Damon Road to Tinsley Road would be needed.

**Comment:** Supports designation of horse trails in a loop with restrictions on their use including limiting to designated corridors and not on hiking trails.

**Response:** The horse trail route in the final Plan follows the proposed route from Irish Hill Road, across the northwest corner of the WMA to private land and eventually onto Corkinsville Road, instead of the entire loop proposed in the draft plan. The portion which would have connected Corkinsville Road to Tinsley Hill Road has been eliminated in the Final Plan. The remaining route makes use of a short connector approximately one-half mile in length along an access lane running across the northwest corner of the WMA.

The Tioughnioga WMA Public Access map in this document has been revised consistent with these changes.

### **Topic: Specific Wording Comments**

**Comment:** WMA surface disturbance map and public access map do not agree; some trails do not have a protecting corridor shown on the map.

**Response:** While some of the trails have been rerouted, the comment remains valid. The

surface disturbance maps have been updated to reflect the proposed trails. Well pads will be prohibited within trail corridors.

**Comment:** A wording change is needed regarding use of horses on a shared segment of trail in the northwest corner of the WMA.

**Response:** Change to the wording is no longer needed because the trails are separated for single use in this location.

**Comment:** Change "North Country Scenic Trail Association (NCTA)" to "North Country Trail Association."

**Response:** The change has been made in the Final Plan

**Comment:** The trail routes do not correspond to what was discussed and walked.

**Response:** The routes have been modified and are shown correctly in the Final Plan.

**Comment:** The existing Link Trail segment for Irish Hill Road to Holmes Road is well established and is fully certified by the National Park Service as a North Country National scenic trail. The Onondaga Trail connection will be at the Holmes Road junction with the Link Trail. The text should be revised to read, "From its junction with the Link Trail at Holmes Road, the Onondaga Trail will proceed southwest and parallel..."

**Response:** This suggestion has been incorporated with other changes to this sentence in the final Plan.

**Comment:** Suggests a wording change on Department signs which will provide for the legal use of horses or mules on hiking trails for hunting and trapping, and a specific prohibition against organized fox hunting on horseback to enable use of horses or mules for trapping.

**Response:** Department staff have reconsidered the proposed wording and believe it is both clear and sufficient. Specific provisions relating to fox hunts are not warranted at this time.

### **Other Comments**

**Comment:** Complement Department staff on their planning efforts and the overall draft Plan.

**Response:** Appreciation is extended to citizens, forest workers, sportsmen and recreation organizations that provided important input during the planning process. Special thanks is extended to the Citizens Working Group, Morrisville State College and Madison County Planning Department for invaluable assistance in plan development.

**Comment:** Do not support single use but multiple use on the proposed trails in the draft Plan. The Unit Management Plan supports single use trails on the TWMA and on DeRuyter and Morrow Mountain State Forests with few exceptions. On the TWMA designated horse, foot and snowmobile use are on separate trails except for a short distance of overlap between equestrians and hikers on Holmes Road. On the TWMA, horses are not permitted

on hiking trails unless owner is legally licensed for hunting or trapping and is in the pursuit of legal game. On DeRuyter State Forest, horses, foot and snowmobile trails are separate. There is a designated snowmobile and persons with disabilities trail on Morrow Mountain State Forest, and these uses occur separately.

Multi-use trails are designated on segments of the Stoney Pond trail system. Horses will share segments of the designated nordic ski trail with mountain bikers. Green Road is designated for horse, nordic skiing and snowmobile use.

**Comment:** Firmly against any future oil or gas exploration and possible leasing on the Unit.

**Response:** Natural gas exploration, development and production is undertaken to recover non-renewable energy resources and to advance environmentally sound economic development. The Department has a responsibility to prevent natural gas production and development activities that result in environmental damage. New York Codes, Rules and Regulations require well drilling, casing, and other production activities to be designed to prevent pollution, waste, escape, migration and commingling of oil, gas, brine and fresh water.

Currently there are no active or pending natural gas leases on the Tioughnioga Unit. Proposals to nominate State lands for natural gas leasing will be considered after public notice in the Environmental Notice Bulletin, local newspapers and a public meeting to provide information about natural gas leasing on the unit. A 30 day public comment period will follow and all comments will be considered prior to a decision to pursue leasing.

If leasing is pursued, surface disturbance associated with natural gas development and production will be permitted on sites identified in the Unit Management Plan as compatible with these activities. The Department awards competitive lease sales based on the highest responsible cash bonus bid. Leases have a primary term of five years. Following the award of a natural gas lease, a drilling permit is issued. Location of the drill site, access roads and required mitigation measures to protect people and the environment are incorporated into a drilling permit. Department staff conduct site monitoring to ensure lessee compliance with all terms and conditions defined in the permit.

Upon completion of natural gas production, the lessee is required to plug and properly abandon all wells defined in the drilling permit. All lessees operating on State land are bonded with a financial security that guarantees well plugging and reclamation of well sites.

**Comment:** The annual maintenance needs as budgeted are inadequate.

**Response:** The annual maintenance budget has been updated. Trail maintenance costs upon completion of 13 miles Stoney Pond mountain bike trail are \$2,500 per year. Local mountain bike clubs are encouraged to participate in annual trail maintenance through the Department's Adopt-A-Natural Resource program. Annual cost for Stoney Pond campground maintenance is \$3,000.

The budget for development and construction projects has been updated. The cost to rehabilitate Stoney Pond Dam is \$95,000. This figure is based on recent cost estimates for a similar project in Chenango County. The cost to construct a CP-3 accessible trail off

Firetower Road on Morrow Mountain State Forest is \$6,500. The cost to construct a mountain bike trail on the existing Stoney Pond State Forest ski trail is \$16,000. Two latrines will not be constructed at Stoney Pond Campground but instead portable sanitary units will be leased and maintained by a private firm at a cost of \$1,500 per season. A new lean-to will be constructed on the site of an existing structure on DeRuyter State Forest at a cost of \$4,000. Projects will begin in 2008 with construction contingent upon available funding.

**Comment:** Forest management, particularly tree harvesting needs to be increased.

**Response:** Trees are cut to sustain growth and reproduction of the residual forest or to achieve some other desirable ecological condition. Timber harvests and other silvicultural treatments are planned on 60% of the Unit over the next 20 years. The annual allowable cut is approximately 150 acres. No timber harvests are planned on 40% of the Unit where management objectives are to protect wet, steep and riparian areas, establish natural areas or to avoid conflicts with recreational activity.

**Comment:** Cultural resources need further recognition and protection.

**Response:** Cultural resources are important features on State lands. They offer clues about local ecology and landscape history and provide opportunities for public education and community-based preservation.

With assistance from Colgate University's Upstate Institute, the Department is currently developing guidelines to identify, inventory and evaluate State forest cultural resources. Foundations, stone walls, gardens and other cultural artifacts constructed during the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries will be inventoried and mapped to delineate locations in relation to a larger home, farm or mill site. Guidelines will be developed for site preservation. Volunteers from Georgetown, Nelson and New Woodstock Historical Societies are encouraged to participate in site preservation through the Department's Adopt-a-Natural Resource program.

**Comment:** Provide access for ATVs on the Unit, specifically corridor trails through State land.

**Response:** Public ATV riding is not a designated use on State lands. Public use of ATVs is not permitted outside of the proposed CP-3 accessible trail. This ATV use is only to provide access for recognized recreational activities such as hunting, fishing, camping, trapping or wildlife observation. Public ATV riding is not compatible with the goal of protecting the Units' natural and cultural resources. The network of wetlands, creeks and tributary streams that occupy the Unit would be adversely impacted by ATV use. The predominant soil types on the Unit are poorly drained and ATV trail development would be costly to establish and maintain. Current illegal ATV use on the Unit has resulted in soil erosion, stream sedimentation, damage to trees and other vegetation and impacts to cultural resources.

**Comment:** Trail buffers for proposed or existing trails are inadequate; need larger buffers for trails (specifically regarding oil and gas development).

**Response:** Buffers to restrict natural gas development have been increased from 250' to 500' around proposed and existing recreational trails.

**Comment:** Current law enforcement is inadequate to support further developments.

**Response:** Department Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers patrol the Tioughnioga unit on a regular basis. The Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area was recently targeted by the Department's Marine Off-Road Enforcement (MORE) unit to address illegal use of all terrain vehicles on the property. Conditions will be monitored as new recreational facilities are developed and patrols will be adjusted accordingly.

**Comment:** Additional need for parking on the Unit, specifically away from State land property boundaries.

**Response:** In addition to the 11 existing parking areas, 8 new parking areas will be developed. The majority of these areas are located away from State land boundaries. Nineteen parking areas is an appropriate number given the amount of existing and projected public use on these properties.

**Comment:** Concern for water drainage from State lands onto adjacent private property.

**Response:** All four properties on the Unit occupy upland or hilltop locations with water inevitably draining down and onto adjacent private land. Best management practices (BMPs) are followed during timber harvesting operations and all other land management activities to stabilize soils and maintain water quality. Approximately 12 miles of stream corridor are protected and an additional 374 acres of riparian protection zones have been established to maintain water quality.

**Comment:** Support mountain bike trails.

**Response:** Many Nordic ski trails on Stoney Pond State Forest will be designated for mountain bike use. Improvements will be made to trails east of Jones Road to minimize environmental impact from trail use. Surface conditions will be upgraded where trails pass over poorly drained soils. Mountain bike use will not be permitted after October 31 and before May 1.

**State Environmental Quality Review**  
**NEGATIVE DECLARATION**  
**Notice of Determination of Non-Significance**

**Identifying #** 2007-SLM-7-223

**Date** August 22, 2007

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the Environmental Conservation Law.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation as lead agency, has determined that the proposed action described below will not have a significant environmental impact and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

**Name of Action:** Adoption of the Tioughnioga Unit Management Plan

**SEQR Status:**     **Type 1**

**Unlisted**

**Conditioned Negative Declaration:**     **Yes**

**No**

**Description of Action:**

The Tioughnioga Unit Management Plan provides a framework for sustaining biological diversity while accommodating compatible public uses on 7,406 acres of State land in southwestern Madison County. The unit consists of three State Forests and one Wildlife Management Area within the Townships of Cazenovia, DeRuyter, Nelson and Georgetown. DeRuyter, Morrow Mountain and Stoney Pond State Forests were acquired in 1933, 1935 and 1938 respectively using funds from the State Reforestation Act of 1929. The Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area (TWMA) was acquired in 1937 via a 99 year lease from the Federal Resettlement Agency. In 1964 the lease was cancelled and full title was transferred to the State Conservation Department. An additional 612 acres of public lands adjoin the unit and representatives from Morrisville State College and Madison County collaborated with DEC in plan development.

The Tioughnioga Unit Management Plan sets forth the proposed goals, objectives, management actions and associated costs for the three State forests and one Wildlife Management Area. The plan details all proposed activities for a 20 year period, dating from the time of approval and adoption. A review and update will take place at the end of the tenth year. Recognizing that the Tioughnioga Unit provides important environmental values within a changing rural landscape, the plan defines specific goals and objectives for sustaining biodiversity, enhancing recreational opportunities and fostering cooperative forest management. It emerges following a series of public programs intended to promote dialogue and citizen participation, including scoping, public presentations, forest walks and three facilitated focus group sessions. These programs helped foster the exchange of ideas, raise public awareness and expectations about State land management.

Full consideration of public input has been given to the completion of this final plan.

To sustain biodiversity, the plan defines a series of objectives to support a full range of ecological conditions from open grasslands to late successional old growth forest. Management actions such as mowing, burning, clearcutting and selection harvests are intended to create and ultimately maintain ecological conditions suitable for a diversity of plant and animal species. Timber harvesting, mineral extraction and the development of recreational facilities will be controlled

to either maintain habitat conditions or to ensure that the impact of these activities does not diminish biodiversity. Wetlands, riparian zones, steep slopes and designated natural areas are protected from timber harvesting, mineral extraction and recreational developments.

To enhance recreational opportunities on the unit, new and improvements to existing facilities are proposed. Upgrades to the public campground, day use area and boating access site at Stoney Pond are proposed to improve safety, protect environmental quality and provide accessibility for people with disabilities. Sections of the 13 mile Nordic ski trail system at Stoney Pond will be upgraded and designated for mountain bike and horse use. New foot trails are proposed for the TWMA and DeRuyter State Forest including additions to the Madison County Link Trail, the Onondaga Trail and the larger North Country Scenic Trail. In addition to Stoney Pond, new horse trails are proposed for the TWMA and DeRuyter State Forest. Existing snowmobile trails on Stoney Pond, Morrow Mountain and DeRuyter State Forests will be officially designated and added to the New York State Corridor and Secondary Trail System. A new trail for people with disabilities using motorized vehicles is proposed for Morrow Mountain State Forest. Local recreational groups, including the Central New York Chapter of the North Country Scenic Trail Association, the Onondaga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, Snow Valley Riders, Moonlight Riders and the Cazenovia Area Equine Association have played key roles in the planning process.

Additional management activities planned for the unit include: boundary line surveys and maintenance, forest inventory, rehabilitation and maintenance of public forest access roads, site preparation and reforestation, maintenance of grass and brush land, enhanced wildlife habitat practices, law enforcement and fire detection and suppression programs, installation of motor vehicle barriers, acquisition through fee simple title or easement connecting properties or inholdings to enhance public access and land management goals and developing a public use brochure.

**Location: (Include street address and the name of the municipality/county.**

**A location map of appropriate scale is also recommended.)**

The Tioughnioga Unit consists of three State Forests and one Wildlife Management Area in the townships of Cazenovia, DeRuyter, Georgetown and Nelson in Madison County.

**Reasons Supporting This Determination:**

**(See 617.7(a)-(c) for requirements of this determination; see 617.7(d) for Conditioned Negative Declaration)**

Activities planned for the unit will be covered by the following Generic Environmental Impact Statements: State Forest Commercial Product Sales Program, Wildlife Management Program, Oil, Gas and Solution Mining Regulatory Program, Red Pine Plantation Clearcut Program, Plan and Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement for Conserving Open Space in New York State, and the State Forest Recreation Management Program.

Activities which would require site specific environmental review under the State Environmental Quality Review Act include: site preparation with herbicide and clearcuts larger than 40 acres. If, after final approval of the plan, activities are added to the plan to provide improved management of the unit and are not covered by this Negative Declaration or cited under the Generic Environmental Impact Statements, the Department will undertake a site specific environmental review for such activities. Natural gas well pad development will require additional impact studies.

Activities in the plan will be performed in accordance with the standards and policies set forth in the following DEC documents: Continuous Forest Inventory Handbook, State Forest Multiple Use Management Handbook, Unpaved Forest Roads Handbook, and the Timber Management Handbook. In addition, activities in the plan will be guided by the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), Best Management Practices (BMPs), the expertise of Department foresters and biologists and the views expressed by the participating public.

**Forest Products Harvesting:**

Forest products harvesting is covered under the Generic Environmental Impact Statement on the State Forest commercial Product Sales Program. Trees are harvested to sustain forest growth and regeneration and to advance ecological conditions that support biodiversity. Trees are also harvested to support local economic development and to establish demonstration sites to raise public awareness about silviculture and sustainable forestry practices. Noise and visual impacts from harvesting activities are temporary and individual forest stands are harvested on a twenty year rotation. Impacts to water quality are mitigated through the implementation of Best Management Practices. To ensure public safety, signage will be posted at access points adjacent to harvest areas to alert forest users to logging operations.

**Construct 6 Campsites:**

Six new campsites will be constructed along the west side of Stoney Pond; four sites will have parking pads and two sites will be accessed by foot or boat. New sites are being established in response to increased demand for camping at this location and to compensate for the elimination of two camping sites due to incompatibilities with habitat conservation, public safety and protection of water quality. To avoid impacts to water and other natural resources, new camping sites will be located on well drained channery silt loam soils approximately 250' from Stoney Pond. Impacts will also be mitigated through a no fee permit system that restricts the number of campers at individual sites.

**Drill a Water Well:**

A well will be drilled at Stoney Pond campground to provide visitors with potable water. Currently, there is no potable water available at this site. A well will improve the overall camping experience at Stoney Pond. To minimize impact to public use, the drilling will be conducted in the off-season, after Labor Day and before Memorial Day. The well will be a low volume pitcher pump with no significant impact to ground water supplies.

**Construct a Fishing Platform:**

A fishing platform will be constructed at Stoney Pond to provide access for people with disabilities and to reduce trampling impacts to shoreline vegetation and water quality. The platform will measure 15'x15' and will comply with guidelines established in the Americans with Disabilities Act. To avoid sedimentation and other water quality impacts during construction, the water level in Stoney Pond will be drawn down by adjusting a control device at the dam outflow. To maintain public safety, the site will be temporarily closed during construction activities.

**Designate, Construct and Maintain Horse Trails:**

To meet the growing demand for horse riding and carriage driving, 7.6 miles of horse trails will be designated, constructed and maintained on the unit. Trails located on State land are intended to be segments of a larger horse trail systems proposed by local equestrian organizations. To avoid public use conflicts, riding will not be permitted on designated hiking trails such as the Madison County Link and Onondaga Trails. Trails will be located on Town roads, Public Forest Access Roads, a segment of cross country ski trail on Stoney Pond State Forest and on skid lanes previously established for timber harvesting operations, thereby avoiding the need to establish new corridors for riding and driving. Trails will be designed to avoid impacts to vegetation, water and other natural

resources by restricting horse riding and driving to the trail corridor. To avoid soil and water impacts, horse trails will be closed between October 31 and May 1.

**Designate, Construct and Maintain Hiking Trails:**

Hiking is an established recreational use on the unit with both the Central New York Chapter of the North Country Trail Association and the Onondaga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club maintaining segments of hiking trail through DEC's Adopt-A-Natural-Resource-Agreement. Existing trails together with new corridors will provide 7.5 miles of hiking trails. As with the aforementioned horse trails, state land hiking trails will be part of a larger regional (Madison County Link Trail) and national (North Country Scenic Trail) trail system. Proposed trails will use abandoned Town roads, previously established lanes along state land boundaries and other established corridors and therefore, no significant tree cutting or clearing will be required. To minimize soil erosion and impacts to water quality, trails will be designed to avoid poorly drained soils and steep slopes.

### **Designate and Maintain Snowmobile Trail:**

The 6.2 mile snowmobile trail is located on seasonal Town roads, an abandoned Town road, a natural gas utility ROW, Public Forest Access Road, an established logging trail and a 0.3 mile off-road segment. This is an existing trail with no tree cutting or clearing necessary for designation. It is part of a larger state-wide snowmobile trail corridor maintained by a local club through DEC's Adopt-A-Natural-Resource-Agreement. Soil and water impacts are negligible due to snowmobile activity occurring during snow covered ground conditions. The snowmobile corridor is a single use trail, therefore, conflict with other recreational users is negligible.

### **Designate and Maintain CP-3 Trail:**

To ensure that people with disabilities have the opportunity to enjoy the benefits of State lands, a 1.4 mile access trail for those with mobility impairments (CP-3 Trail) has been designated on Morrow Mountain State Forest. The CP-3 corridor will use existing logging trails. The proposed parking area will utilize an existing log landing, therefore, no significant tree cutting or clearing is necessary. To ensure public safety and environmental protection, this site will require trail surface improvements such as ditching and the installation of at least 3 culvert pipes.

### **Designate, Upgrade and Maintain Mountain Bike Trail:**

Increased mountain bike use in the last ten years on Stoney Pond State Forest necessitates improving facilities to mitigate impacts to soils and water resources and to prevent trail use conflicts. The mountain bike trail will use segments of the existing cross county ski trail with no need to establish a new trail corridor.

Ditching and installation of culvert pipes will be required to mitigate impacts to poorly drained soils at some locations along the trail. To further limit potential impacts to soil and water resources and to avoid conflicts with other trail users, mountain bike use will not be permitted between October 31 and May 1.

### **Dismantle and Reconstruct a Lean-to:**

A lean-to on DeRuyter State Forest is in extremely poor condition and continued deterioration poses a potential hazard to recreational users. The structure will be dismantled and all non biodegradable materials will be hauled to the Madison County Landfill. The remote location of this site and the absence of any vehicle access corridor will require that all material be removed by hand, thereby, minimizing the potential environmental impact of demolition and disposal. A new lean-to with similar dimensions will be rebuilt on the same site. Lumber and other building materials will be carried into the site, thus avoiding the potential environmental impacts of introducing a new vehicle access corridor.

### **Designate, Construct and Maintain Parking Areas:**

Seven new parking areas will be constructed: 1 on Morrow Mountain State Forest, 3 on Stoney Pond State Forest and 3 on the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area. New parking areas are necessary to service proposed recreational facilities including camp sites and recreational trails. All sites are currently in an open condition and informally used for parking, therefore, no tree removal or clearing will be necessary to establish new parking. Each new site will accommodate 2-4 vehicles. The surface will be hardened with stone material (i.e. shale, gravel ) and underlain with filter fabric to allow for safe access.

### **Maintain Public Forest Access Roads:**

To ensure both public safety and efficiency in conducting forest management activities, 3.5 miles of Public Forest Access Roads (PFAR) will require annual roadside mowing, culvert clearing and bi-annual surface grading. All work will be conducted using best management practices (BMPs) to prevent impacts to water resources. Roadsides will be mowed after July 15 to prevent impacts to nesting birds and other wildlife species.

Approximately 1.1 mile of these PFARs, all on the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area, will require rehabilitation to maintain public safety and efficient access. In addition to grading and culvert clearing, rehabilitation involves installation of additional stone material and replacement of deteriorating culvert pipes. All work will be conducted using BMPs to avoid impacts to water and other natural resources.

### **Natural Gas Exploration Production and Development**

Soils where the depth to the water table is less than 3 feet will be avoided wherever possible. In rare cases when this is not possible, potential impacts can be minimized by seasonal restrictions. These include restricting development and production activities from June 1 to November 1 and from January 1 to March 1 when soil conditions are most resilient to disturbance.

**If Conditioned Negative Declaration, provide on attachment the specific mitigation measures imposed, and identify comment period (not less than 30 days from date of publication in the ENB)**

For Further Information:

Contact Person: Greg Owens, Senior Forester

Address: NYS DEC, 2715 State Hwy. 80 Sherburne, NY 13460

Telephone Number: (607) 674-4017

For Type 1 Actions and Conditioned Negative Declarations, a Copy of this Notice is sent to:

Commissioner, Department of Environmental Conservation, 625 Broadway, Albany, NY 12233

Appropriate Regional Office of the Department of Environmental Conservation

Chief Executive Officer, Town/City/Village of

Other involved agencies (if any)

Applicant (if any)

Environmental Notice Bulletin - NYS DEC - 625 Broadway - Albany, NY 12233-1750

(Type One Actions Only)