



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

# **BIG MOOSE TRACT CONSERVATION EASEMENT**

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## **Draft Recreation Management Plan**

**Town of Webb  
Herkimer County**

A landscape photograph showing a misty lake or river in the foreground, with dense green trees and forested hills in the background under a soft, hazy sky.

**NYS DEC, REGION 6, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS**

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# Plan Summary

The 23,850-acre Big Moose Tract (BMT) is located in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County. In 2007, New York State purchased a conservation easement on the BMT, which protects natural resources, facilitates continued forest management activity, and permits some public recreation activities. The Big Moose Tract Recreation Management Plan (RMP) outlines future NYSDEC management of the property, consistent with terms of the encumbering conservation easement.



*The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower provides views of Stillwater Reservoir and the Adirondack High Peaks to the east and Tug Hill to the west.*

## Summary of Recreation Proposals

- The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower and access trail will remain open to the public except for the period from the second Tuesday in October through December 20<sup>th</sup> each year. Seasonal closure of this trail is a term of the conservation easement.
- Selective clearing of trees around the Stillwater Fire Tower will occur to enhance scenic views.
- A visitor survey will be conducted at Stillwater Mountain to inform NYSDEC about visitor experience on the trail and summit.
- All snowmobile trails currently located on the property will be maintained by DEC and groomed by a combination of Brantingham Snowmobile Club and the Town of Webb (Three Lakes Trail and North Fork of Three Lakes Trail; 8.6 miles). It is noted that the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor also passes through the property and is open to snowmobiles (3.8 miles).
- 8.2 miles of alternative snowmobile trails are proposed to be designated, to be used when trail closures occur due to winter timber harvesting. Alternative trails mostly follow existing roads and trails, except 0.7 miles of new trail which will need to be constructed (Stillwater Spur Trail).
- In addition to the interpretive panel located at the summit of Stillwater Mountain, another panel will be designed focused on forestry on the BMT.

# Preface

## *Use of Conservation Easements in New York State*

The New York State Legislature has declared that the public policy of the State is to conserve, preserve, and protect its environmental assets, natural resources, and man-made resources. In addition to purchasing lands in fee on behalf of the People of the State, the State also protects land and natural resources by purchasing less than fee permanent interests in land, termed conservation easements. Conservation easements are used widely across the United States by government and non-profit land conservation organizations to protect a variety of properties with important natural resources and other landscape values such as water quality, wildlife habitat, sensitive ecosystems, wetlands, riparian areas, scenic areas such as meadows and ridgelines, agricultural land, working forests, and historic sites. The primary function of conservation easements is to limit or eliminate future development and undesirable land uses on a property, while allowing for continued private ownership and traditional management.

New York State acquires conservation easements primarily on properties that buffer existing State lands, provide additional public recreation opportunities, and/or maintain large working forests. There are now hundreds of thousands of acres of land in New York that are protected by conservation easements acquired by the State. Most of that land consists of large tracts of commercial timber land in the Adirondack and Tug Hill regions; however, New York State also holds easements on a variety of other properties across the State.

Some conservation easements allow public access to the protected property, and some do not. On many large working forest conservation easement properties, the State has acquired public recreation rights in addition to development and land use restrictions. In some cases, a wide range of public recreational use is permitted, and in others public access is very limited. The amount of public access depends largely on the goals and objectives of the landowner and the State at the time the easement was negotiated.



This recreation management plan will explain public recreation rights the State acquired through the conservation easement and how these rights are to be implemented compatibly with rights retained by the landowner.

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# **I. Introduction**

In 2007, the State of New York purchased a conservation easement on the Big Moose Tract, in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County. Under the conservation easement, the property remains privately owned, sustainable forestry and private recreational leases continue to be permitted, natural resources have added protection, and specific public recreation activities are allowed. The encumbering conservation easement is recorded in the Herkimer County Clerk's Office - dated March 26, 2007 (Document Number 2007-00134519, Book 1213, Page 1).

The Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement, referred to herein as the "BMT" or "property," grants New York State a legal interest in the property, and defines restrictions and rights of both the landowner and New York State. The landowner is responsible for managing the property in a manner that complies with conservation easement terms, and the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) is responsible for managing the rights purchased by the People of New York and ensuring landowner management is in compliance with the encumbering conservation easement.

## **A. Purpose of the Recreation Management Plan**

Public recreation on New York State conservation easement lands is managed subject to Recreation Management Plans (RMPs). The purpose of an RMP is to establish a planned, written management strategy to implement the State's rights and protect property rights of the landowner. RMPs condense applicable laws and regulations, NYSDEC policies, easement-specific conditions, and property-specific information into a single management document. It is intended that RMPs serve to guide management over time, despite changes to NYSDEC personnel or the landowner. RMPs may be periodically updated or amended, following a similar public planning process as occurs during drafting of the initial RMP. Should discrepancies arise between the RMP and the conservation easement, easement terms take precedence. This RMP applies only to those lands subject to the Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement located in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County.

NYSDEC completed a baseline documentation report for the Big Moose Tract in 2012. While many topics addressed in this Recreation Management Plan are similar to those found in the baseline document, the RMP is meant to guide NYSDEC management, and management of public recreation in particular. The baseline document Table of Contents

is included in Appendix I to serve as a cross-reference of additional property maps and documentation which have been compiled for the property.

## **B.Planning Process and Timeline**

### **1. Interim Recreation Management Plan**

An interim Recreation Management Plan (IRMP) was completed for the Big Moose Tract in 2007. Consistent with rights purchased through the conservation easement, the IRMP permitted the public to hike Stillwater Mountain from May 1st through the second Monday in October and identified existing snowmobile trails on the BMT. The IRMP was revised in 2015 to extend the portion of the year during which the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail is open to the public (only closed from the second Tuesday in October through December 20th).

### **2. Pre-Draft Public Suggestion Period**

NYSDEC released a press release on January 28, 2022, soliciting suggestions for the draft Big Moose Tract RMP through February 28, 2022. Twenty-two (22) written comments were received.

Summary of comments applicable to the development of the RMP:

- Extend a snowmobile trail from the end of Basket Factory Road to the Big Moose Road (through the Big Moose Tract) to provide off-road connection for snowmobiles.
- Improve existing snowmobile trail tread – especially the Three Lakes Trail. This will reduce wear and tear on grooming equipment and be safer for riders.
- Develop a snowmobile trail along Big Moose Road towards Stillwater Reservoir to reduce road-riding by snowmobiles.
- Expand the snowmobile trail system on the BMT.
- Do not widen snowmobile trails.
- Develop a hiking trail system in the area.
- Provide cross-country skiing opportunities on the BMT.
- Where motorized access rights are not owned, obtain them.
- Connect Big Moose Station with Beaver River Station by trail.



- Connect all trails to local businesses where lodging and/or food can be obtained.
- Do not develop any new recreation facilities on the BMT.

Summary of comments relating to rights not owned by NYSDEC under conservation easement encumbering the BMT:

- Restore the tract to wilderness and close existing roads. The tract should be preserved to provide clean air, water, and protect biodiversity.
- Allow horseback riding and camping.
- Provide mountain bike/gravel bike opportunities on existing logging roads.
- Open all snowmobile trails to mountain bicycles and develop additional mountain bicycle trails.
- Provide motorized access, particularly to lakes, ponds, and streams on the property.
- Provide motor vehicle accessed campsites and provide road access to waterways.
- Develop hand launches for paddlers and waterfront campsites on Cranberry Pond, Doe Pond, Big Diamond Pond, Hitchcock Lake, Little Independence Pond, Twitchell Creek, and the Independence River.
- Provide campsites including some Accessible campsites throughout the BMT.
- Do not provide public ATV access to the BMT.
- Expand access for elderly and people with disabilities via passenger vehicle or ATV on the BMT.

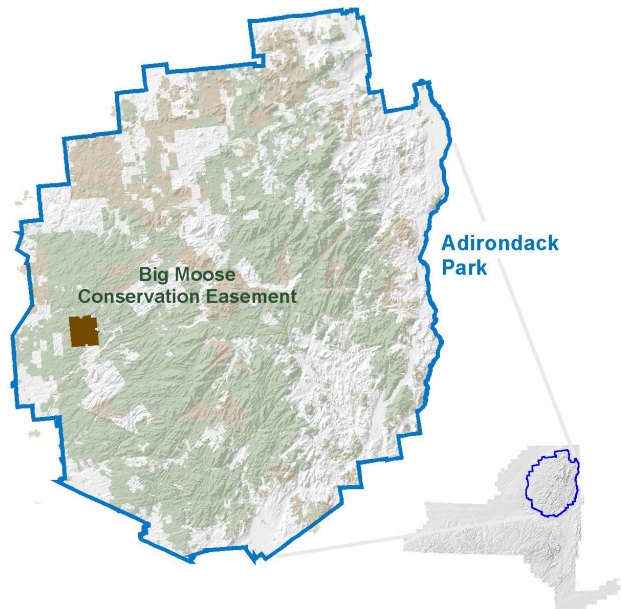
Summary of comments relating to management units outside the Big Moose Tract:

- Expand the parking area for the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail (Independence River Wild Forest)
- Remove the rails from the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor (Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor)
- Provide access and an Accessible launch on Independence Lake (private land)
- Add a sign or kiosk at the old #4 Fire Tower site (Independence River Wild Forest)
- Provide a snowmobile trail to the Perkins Clearing Tract from the Moose River Plains (Moose River Plains Wild Forest)

## II. Setting

### A. Property Description and Access

The 23,850<sup>1</sup> acre Big Moose Tract (BMT) is located in the Town of Webb in Herkimer County. The property shares approximately 18.4 miles of boundary with forest preserve lands (the Ha-De-Ron-Dah and Pigeon Lake Wildernesses, Fulton Chain and Independence River Wild Forests), 2.5 miles with the Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement and 3.8 miles of the Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor pass through the property (more details about these parcels can be found at [www.dec.ny.gov](http://www.dec.ny.gov)). The BMT is managed for commercial forestry products – forestry operations regularly occur, and the landscape contains a patchwork of past harvests. The tract abuts Stillwater Reservoir, contains several small ponds, Twitchell Creek, and the headwaters of the Independence River. Stillwater Mountain is a notable feature in the northwest portion on the property, but other, similar elevation features are located throughout the property.



Primary access to the BMT is provided by Big Moose Road, a public town road that bisects the tract generally leading from the northern boundary to eastern boundary of the property. The Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor also passes through the northeastern portion of the tract.

Current public use on the property is managed under the 2007 Interim Recreation Management Plan, which was amended in 2015. The trail to the fire tower on the summit of Stillwater Mountain is open to the public, excepting the period from the second Tuesday

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<sup>1</sup> Liber 866, Page 658 / Tax Roll Acreage according to Map No. 11945

in October through December 20<sup>th</sup>. Several public snowmobile trails connect the Three Lake Tract to Big Moose Road and the Remsen - Lake Placid Travel Corridor. In addition to public recreation opportunities permitted under the conservation easement and managed by NYSDEC, the Town of Webb also manages public snowmobile and bicycle trails on the BMT, subject to an annual contract with the landowner.

The BMT including real property information is shown on NYSDEC Map 11945.

## **B. History**

Native American hunters, anglers, and trappers likely represent the first human users of this area, followed by European hunters, anglers and trappers. In the late 1800s, hemlock bark cutters and spruce gummers likely operated on these lands and in the late 1890s, softwood logging began in the region (primarily for red spruce, balsam fir, hemlock, and white pine). Softwood harvests around the turn of the century lead to the development of roads to logger camps, while area streams were used to float logs to downstream mills. International Paper Inc. purchased the BMT lands in the early 1900s, and for a period of time, they were the largest private landowner in New York State as well as the United States. International Paper operated a vertically integrated business, both harvesting timber and manufacturing paper products from them.

In 2004, International Paper Company entered into a purchase and sale contract with the State of New York to sell a conservation easement on an approximate 240,000 acres in the Adirondack Park. In the years of 2005 and 2006, International Paper Company sold 275,000 acres - nearly all of their Adirondack timberlands to The Lyme Timber Company LP (now Lyme Adirondack Forest Company, LLC). New York State's acquisition of conservation easements on twenty-two individual tracts from Lyme occurred over several phases – in 2007 (phase III), the encumbering conservation easement on the BMT was purchased.

NYSDEC completed an interim Recreation Management Plan (RMP) in 2007, which was amended in 2015. Since acquiring the conservation easement, NYSDEC has signed existing roads and constructed short trail segments to serve as 8.6 miles of snowmobile trail. In 2016 NYSDEC opened the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower and trail to the public, which was rehabilitated in cooperation with a group of volunteers, the Friends of Stillwater Fire Tower.

The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower was listed on the National and State Historic Registers in 2017. Stillwater Mountain was used as a primary triangulation station by Verplanck Colvin during his New York State Adirondack Survey in 1882. A signal tower built of logs was constructed at the summit during this survey, where surveyors built signal towers at prominent locations, sighting from tower to tower to map elevations and distances between the towers. The survey marker set under the signal tower in 1882 (bore hole still visible) was stolen, but found in New Jersey and returned to NYSDEC in 2014. A replica is set near the tower's base. New York State built a wooden fire observation tower in this location in 1912, replaced in 1919 with the current steel Aeromotor LS-40 fire tower. This tower was staffed through 1988 by fifteen different observers.

## **C. Current Uses of the Property**

### **1. Forest Management**

One purpose of the encumbering conservation easement is to ensure that the forest resource will continue to be available to the current and future landowners for sustainable forest management and the associated long-term production of forest products. The conservation easement cites the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, in pertinent part, that "due to the importance of the forest products industry to the economy of the Adirondack Region... conservation easements permitting the continuation of sound forest management and other land uses compatible with the open space character of the Park should be acquired wherever possible to protect and buffer state lands." It is common to see loggers, and logging equipment on the property - members of the public recreating on the property should expect to encounter this type of activity during a typical visit. At times, individual trails on the property may be closed to public recreation during forest management operations.

### **2. Recreational Leases**

Several private clubs lease camps and surrounding land for hunting purposes from the landowner. There are currently thirty-three (33) camps on the BMT, and up to thirty-five (35) camps may be maintained on the property subject to specific terms in the conservation easement. While lessees are most active during hunting season, they may use their camps for a variety of four-season outdoor-based recreation. Private lessees are permitted to use motorized vehicles and/or ATVs on the Property.

### **3. Public Recreation**

Public recreation permitted on the BMT is limited to use of designated hiking trails and snowmobile trails. The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail leads from the Independence River Wild Forest to a rehabilitated fire tower on the mountain summit and is the only designated hiking trail on the property (0.5 miles on the BMT). Under the interim RMP, this trail is closed each year from the second Tuesday in October through December 20<sup>th</sup>. NYSDEC maintains snowmobile trails leading from the Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement, east to Big Moose Road and the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor (8.6 miles excluding the Travel Corridor).

## **D. Natural Resources**

### **1. Geology, Terrain and Soils**

The BMT is depicted on USGS 7.5 x 15-minute quad maps titled “Stillwater Mountain” (quad ID 215) and “Big Moose” (quad ID 216). The landscape of the tract includes a patchwork of knobs and ridges with drainages, small ponds, and wetlands interspersed. No topographic feature is particularly notable, though Stillwater Mountain is somewhat pronounced in the landscape (it was used as a triangulation point when Verplanck Colvin surveyed the Adirondacks). A topographic map of the BMT is located in Appendix I.

Upland soils are primarily the Turnbridge, Lyman, and Duxbury soil types, while lowland and hydric soils include Loxley and Dawson types. A soil map of the BMT is located in Appendix I. Soil types most commonly found on the BMT are described by the National Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) as follows:

#### **The Colton Series**

The Colton series consists of very deep, excessively drained soils formed in glacio-fluvial deposits. They are on terraces, kames, eskers, and outwash plains. Slope ranges from 0 through 70 percent. Estimated saturated hydraulic conductivity is high or very high in the solum and very high in the substratum. Forested areas support sugar maple, eastern white pine, red pine, and white spruce.

#### **The Dawson Series**

The Dawson series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils, formed in herbaceous organic material 16 to 51 inches thick overlying sandy deposits in depressions on outwash plains, lake plains, ground moraines, end moraines and floodplains. Permeability is moderately slow to moderately rapid in the organic material and rapid in the sandy material. Slopes range from 0 to 2 percent. These soils are extremely acidic, have shallow organic deposits, and high-water tables. Tree vegetation is sparse with black spruce and tamarack comprising the major species. Ground cover is composed of bog rosemary, cranberries, laurel, leatherleaf, sphagnum mosses, and blueberries.

#### *The Loxley Series*

The Loxley series consists of very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in herbaceous organic deposits more than 51 inches thick in depressions on moraines, lake plains and outwash plains. These soils have moderately slow to moderately rapid permeability. Slopes range from 0 to 2 percent. These soils are acidic and have high water tables. Ground cover consists principally of blueberry, leatherleaf, sphagnum moss, and wintergreen. Trees are limited to a few scattered black spruce, jack pine, quaking aspen, and tamarack.

#### *The Lyman Series*

The Lyman series consists of shallow, somewhat excessively drained soils on glaciated uplands. They formed in loamy supraglacial till. Estimated saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high throughout the mineral soil. Slope ranges from 0 to 80 percent. Common trees include American beech, white ash, yellow birch, paper birch, northern red oak, sugar maple, eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, red spruce, white spruce, and balsam fir.

#### *The Tunbridge Series*

The Tunbridge series consists of moderately deep, well drained soils on glaciated uplands. They formed in loamy supraglacial till. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high throughout the mineral soil. Slope ranges from 0 to 80 percent. Common trees include American beech, white ash, yellow birch, paper birch, northern red oak, sugar maple, eastern white pine, eastern hemlock, red spruce, white spruce, and balsam fir. The Tunbridge Series is a primary component of soils near Fish Pond, west of Francis Lake, north and south of Moshier and Stillwater Reservoirs, east of Smith Road, and generally running north to south through the center of the unit.



### The Pillsbury Series

The Pillsbury series consists of poorly drained soils that formed in loamy lodgment till in glaciated uplands and lowlands. They are moderately deep to a dense substratum and very deep to bedrock. Estimated saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high in the solum and moderately low or moderately high in the dense substratum. Slope ranges from 0 to 15 percent. Most areas are wooded. The common trees are red maple, sugar maple, eastern white pine, yellow birch, red spruce, balsam fir, and northern red oak.

## **2. Water Resources**

### ***Waterbodies***

Generally, waterbodies in the northern half of the Big Moose Tract drain into the Beaver River then to the Black River and eventually Lake Ontario. Waterbodies in the southern half of the property drain into the Independence River before reaching the Black River and Lake Ontario. Big Diamond Pond, located in the southeast corner of the property outlets south to the Moose River, Black River, and Lake Ontario.

### Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

The Independence River is designated as a Scenic River where it runs through the Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement. Under Article 15, Title 27 of New York's Environmental Conservation Law, the portion of the river designated as Scenic is approximately 26 miles in length (from the outlet of Little Independence Pond to the point where the Sperryville Bridge crosses), 5.5 miles of which are on the BMT. The Scenic River Area extends  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from each bank on private land. By definition, Scenic Rivers are free of diversions or impoundments except for log jams, with limited road access and with a river area largely primitive and undeveloped, or that is partially or predominantly used for agriculture, forest management, and other dispersed human activities that do not substantially interfere with public use and enjoyment of the river and its shore. In the case of the Independence River, forest management occurs on the Big Moose Tract and the river is crossed twice on the Property by forestry roads.

### Waterbody Inventory/Priority Waterbodies List

The Waterbody Inventory/Priority Waterbodies List (WI/PWL) is a statewide inventory of the waters of New York state that NYSDEC uses to track support (or impairment) of water

uses, overall assessment of water quality, causes and sources of water quality impact/impairment, and the status of restoration, protection and other water quality activities and efforts. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Division of Water uses a Consolidated Assessment and Listing Methodology (CALM) to assess the quality of the state's waters relative to the attainment of NYSDEC water quality standards and to report assessment results to the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). The CALM establishes minimum quality and quantity requirements for water quality monitoring data to assess water quality. It also establishes a process to determine whether waterbodies can support their Best Use(s).

The WI/PWL describes the Independence River and upper tributaries as having no known impacts. Twitchell Creek and tributaries are identified as having a low pH, attributed to acid deposition. Pollutants identified include sulfate, ammonium, and nitrate and the streams have a best use of fishing. The Beaver River tributaries, located in the northwest corner of the BMT have low pH, attributed to acid deposition and have a best use of fishing. Tributaries to the North Branch of the Moose River, including the outlet of Big Diamond Pond have low pH, attributed to acid deposition and have a best use of fishing. Little Diamond Pond is the only assessed pond on the property – it has a low pH, attributed to sulfate pollutant from acid deposition and fishing is listed as the best use.

Updated Water Body Inventory/Priority list information is available at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/36730.html>

### Biomonitoring

Biological monitoring provides information on the health of an ecosystem based on which organisms live in a waterbody. The types and numbers of organisms collected from polluted water differ from those collected in clean water, helping to determine "how clean" (level of water quality) the water is and to detect water quality changes over time. Macroinvertebrates, fish, and algae are all widely used in biomonitoring. Although NYSDEC collects information on all of these aquatic organisms, macroinvertebrates are collected and analyzed the most. Twitchell Creek has a Stream Biomonitoring Site on the BMT, last surveyed in 2017. The site was assessed as slightly impacted. Slightly impacted waters reflect good water quality. The biological community is slightly, but significantly altered from a pristine state. Water quality is usually not limiting to fish, shellfish, and wildlife survival, but may be limiting to fish propagation, especially sensitive cold-water fish species.

## Acid Deposition

Due to its location and geology, the Adirondack Park is one of the most sensitive regions in the United States to acidic deposition. Low levels of base cations such as calcium, magnesium, sodium, and potassium, and bedrock which weathers slowly, limits the area's ability to buffer acidity.<sup>2</sup> Extensive research has been conducted on the negative effects of acid deposition, including many studies focused on the Adirondack Park.

In 1984, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, found that 12% of Adirondack lakes had a pH less than 5.0 (acidic). The same year, the Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation found 24% of lakes greater than 4 hectares in size, had a pH less than 5.0. A 1998 report to Congress identified 70% of target lakes in the Adirondack Park as being susceptible to episodic acidification.<sup>3</sup> The 2008 Western Adirondack Stream Survey<sup>4</sup> collected data for western Adirondack streams from 2003-2005. The study area included 565 streams which were assessed. Important results indicated that acidified soils had led to toxic aluminum in 66% of assessed streams, and that macroinvertebrates had been severely affected in 52% of streams. Diatoms (a type of algae) were moderately to severely affected in 80% of accessed streams. Of streams previously surveyed in the 1980s, recovery from acidification was minimal in 11 of 12 streams. Lastly, a new acidification index developed under the study indicated that less than 1/3 of measured stream acidity was from natural sources.

Recent trends in acid deposition show some signs of improvement. Within the Adirondacks, 90% of study lakes have improving sulfate trends and 32% show

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<sup>2</sup> National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program. 2011. Report to Congress 2011: An Integrated Assessment. Available at:

[http://ny.water.usgs.gov/projects/NAPAP/NAPAP\\_2011\\_Report\\_508\\_Compliant.pdf](http://ny.water.usgs.gov/projects/NAPAP/NAPAP_2011_Report_508_Compliant.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> National Acid Precipitation Assessment Program. 1998. Report to Congress 1998.

<sup>4</sup> Western Adirondack Stream Survey 2003-2005. 2008. New York State Energy Research and Development Authority, U.S. Geological Survey New York Water Science Center, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, University of Texas at Arlington Department of Biology, and Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation. Available at:

<http://www.adirondacklakessurvey.org/pubs/WASSFinalReport.pdf>

improvement in nitrate trends.<sup>5</sup> Additionally, 58% of sites show improving acid-neutralizing capability trends.

NYSDEC management actions to combat acidification of waters are coordinated by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. Liming of state-owned waters to neutralize acid deposition has been implemented in accordance with the *Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement on the NYSDEC Program of Liming Selected Acidified Waters* (1990). Water quality on the BMT (which is private land) has not been assessed but warrants future consideration of NYSDEC resources.

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<sup>5</sup> Roy, K.M., Dukett, J., Houck, N., and Lawrence, G. 2012. A Long-Term Monitoring Program for Evaluating Changes in Water Quality in Selected Adirondack Waters: Program Summary Report 2011. Available at: <http://www.adirondacklakessurvey.org/pubs/12-16-A-Long-Term-Monitoring-Program.pdf>

## Waterbodies on the BMT

Drainage Basin	Pond/Stream Name	Size (on BMT)	Description
Beaver River	Birch Creek	5.3 miles	The creek loops around a small mountain, south, then east, then north to its confluence with Twitchell Creek.
	Cranberry Pond	21.6 acres	This pond is located between Stillwater Reservoir and Woods Lake, near the north boundary of the BMT.
	Hitchcock Creek	0.3 miles	The creek flows west out of Hitchcock Lake before leaving the BMT.
	Hitchcock Lake	33.5 acres	The small lake located in the northwest corner of the BMT is the headwaters of Hitchcock Creek. A camp is located on the north shore.
	Little Rock Pond	10.6 acres	The pond is located near the east boundary of the BMT and outlets south to Twitchell Creek.
	Lost Pond	3.1 acres	This small pond outlets to Twitchell Creek.
	Sunday Creek	1.4 miles	The upper reaches of Sunday Creek begin in the northwest corner of the BMT, and flow west off the property.
	Twitchell Creek	5.8 miles	The creek enters the BMT from the east, then turns north towards Stillwater Reservoir.
	West Branch Beaver River	2.6 miles	The river leads passes through the northeast corner of the BMT.
Independence River	Doe Pond	7.4 acres	Located south of Little Independence Pond, the pond outlets northwest to the Independence River.
	Fourth Creek	1.7 miles	The headwaters of Fourth Creek lead west off of the BMT.
	Independence River	7.6 miles	The river begins near the east boundary of the BMT in Little Diamond Pond, flows west across the property and exits the BMT near the southwest corner of the property.
	Little Diamond Pond	12.3 acres	Located near the west boundary of the BMT, this pond is the headwaters of the Independence River.

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### Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan

	Little Independence Pond	11.6 acres	Located in the southeast portion of the BMT, the pond is part of the Independence River system.
	Lyons Marsh	20.9 acres	Located near the center of the BMT, the marsh outlets south to the Independence River.
	Moose Creek	3.0 miles	This small winding stream leads southwest off of the BMT.
	Shaw Creek	1.8 miles	The creek begins south of Lyons Marsh and flows southwest before conferencing with Independence River.
Moose River	Big Diamond Pond	12.8 acres	The long, narrow pond is oriented east-west and is located in the southeast corner of the property.

## **Wetlands**

In New York State, more than 60% of wetland acreage present in the 1780s has since been lost (US EPA, 2013)<sup>6</sup>. Wetlands provide flood damage and storm water control, help to stabilize water flow, and recharge groundwater aquifers. Wetlands also protect against erosion and protect water quality by filtering natural and manmade pollutants from water. Additionally, wetlands are among the most productive ecosystems, provide fish and wildlife habitat, and provide areas for recreation, education, and research. On the Big Moose Tract, freshwater wetlands are protected under the Adirondack Park Agency Act, NYS Freshwater Wetlands Act, and Section 404 the of the federal Clean Water Act.

The Adirondack Park Agency Cover Type Wetlands Map shows 3,778 acres, or 15.8% of the BMT as wetland, including open water. Approximately 3,502 acres or 14.7% of the BMT is covered by wetlands with a primary vegetation classification other than open water. Most of these wetland systems surround major drainages. A summary of wetland systems, regime, and vegetation information generated from the Adirondack Park Agency Cover Type Wetlands Map follows.

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<sup>6</sup> United States Environmental Protection Agency. Wetlands – Status and Trends. Updated January 24, 2013. Available at: [http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/vital\\_status.cfm](http://water.epa.gov/type/wetlands/vital_status.cfm)



### BMT Wetland Systems, Regimes, and Vegetation

Acres*	% of BMT Total Acreage	% of BMT	System
		Wetlands	
87.2	0.4%	2.3%	Lacustrine Habitat, Limnetic
3688.1	15.5%	97.6%	Palustrine Habitat
2.2	0.0%	0.1%	Riverine, Lower Perennial
			Regime
2427.0	10.2%	64.2%	Saturated
1.6	0.0%	0.0%	Seasonally Flooded - Well Drained
153.9	0.6%	4.1%	Seasonally Flooded - Saturated
869.8	3.6%	23.0%	Semi-Permanent
325.2	1.4%	8.6%	Permanent
			Primary Vegetation Classification
202.8	0.9%	5.4%	Persistent Emergent
99.9	0.4%	2.6%	Forested, Broad-leaved Deciduous
1866.0	7.8%	49.4%	Forested, Needle-leaved Evergreen
12.5	0.1%	0.3%	Forested, Dead
1014.8	4.3%	26.9%	Scrub/Shrub, Broad-leaved Deciduous
10.2	0.0%	0.3%	Scrub/Shrub, Broad-leaved Evergreen
282.1	1.2%	7.5%	Scrub/Shrub, Needle-leaved Evergreen
13.3	0.1%	0.4%	Scrub/Shrub, Dead
275.9	1.2%	7.3%	Open water

\*Acreage does not include linear wetland data included in APA Cover Type Wetlands Map. Linear data has some overlap with polygon data, does not include acreage information, and accounts for a relatively small portion of the planning area.

## 3. Fish and Wildlife

### Aquatic Species

Recent fish survey data for the BMT is lacking. In order to inform potential future management of waterbodies on the property (within constraints of the encumbering conservation easement), NYSDEC will inventory water quality and fisheries on the BMT when resources are available to do so. All current survey data is presented below.

The only NYSDEC fish survey conducted on the property was completed in 2011 on the West Branch of the Beaver River. Based on surveys of nearby streams, NYSDEC biologists believe brook trout are located in most streams on the BMT. One survey was conducted on Sunday Creek downstream from the property, and anecdotal reports of brook trout in Twitchell Creek are numerous. Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation data from the 1980s has also been compiled in this RMP.

Twitchell Creek has a NYSDEC Stream Biomonitoring Site on the BMT, last surveyed in 2017. The site was assessed as slightly impacted (acidic pH). The biological community is slightly, but significantly altered from a pristine state. Water quality is usually not limiting to fish, shellfish, and wildlife survival, but may be limiting to fish propagation, especially sensitive cold-water fish species.

### **Fishery Surveys**

<b>Waterbody</b>	<b>Identified Species</b>	<b>Survey</b>
Cranberry Pond	No data	ALSC*
Hitchcock Lake	Brown Bullhead	ALSC*
Little Rock Pond	Brown Bullhead	ALSC*
Lost Pond	No data	ALSC*
Doe Pond	Brook Trout, Brown Bullhead, White Sucker	ALSC*
Little Diamond Pond	No fish caught	ALSC*
Little Independence Pond	Brook Trout, Brown Bullhead, White Sucker	ALSC*
Lyons Marsh	Brown Bullhead	ALSC*
Big Diamond Pond	Brown Bullhead	ALSC*
West Branch of Beaver River	Brook Trout, Blacknose Dace, Creek Chub, White Sucker	NYSDEC Electroshocking 2011

\*Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation historic data is from 1985 and 1986 and is available at: <http://www.adirondacklakessurvey.org/historic.php>

### **Mammals**

Large mammals present on the Big Moose Tract (BMT) include black bear, coyote, moose, and white-tailed deer. Other notable species likely to be found on the BMT include American marten, beaver, bobcat, fisher, gray fox, long-tailed weasel, mink, muskrat, porcupine, raccoon, red fox, river otter, short-tailed weasel, snowshoe hare,

striped skunk, though small mammal surveys have not been completed on the tract or within Wildlife Management Unit 6J.

Moose are present in the Adirondacks with populations concentrated primarily in the northeastern corner of the park. Smaller concentrations of moose are found scattered throughout the Adirondacks and have been documented on the Big Moose Tract. Active forest management creates conditions favorable to moose - regeneration following timber harvests provides accessible buds, stems, and leaves for forage. NYSDEC has worked with the owners of the BMT to trap and tag moose for research purposes.

## **Birds**

The second New York State Breeding Bird Atlas (2000-2005) documents bird species that have been identified in survey blocks encompassing the BMT. Since survey blocks encompass an area larger than individual tracts addressed in this RMP, not all species identified in encompassing blocks have necessarily been observed on the BMT itself. The Breeding Bird Atlas identifies 114 confirmed, probable and possible breeding bird species in the blocks covering the tract (4984A, 4984B, 4985A, 4985B, 4985C, 4985D, 5084A, 5085A, 5085C). A complete list of species identified in the Breeding Bird Atlas is included in Appendix E.

The following species are listed in the second NYS Breeding Bird Atlas as protected endangered, threatened, or species of special concern in New York State: American Bittern (special concern), Bald Eagle, (threatened), Common Loon (special concern), Cooper's Hawk (special concern), Northern Goshawk (special concern), Osprey (special concern), Red-shouldered Hawk (special concern), Sharp-shinned Hawk (special concern).

## **Herpetofauna**

The New York State Herp Atlas (2000-2005) documents reptile and amphibian species in survey blocks. The Herp Atlas identifies 18 reptile and amphibian species in the survey blocks encompassing the BMT (Big Moose and Stillwater Mountain). A complete list of these species as well as others identified by NYSDEC biologists or suspected to exist in these survey blocks is included in Appendix E. Since the survey blocks encompass an area larger than the BMT, not all listed species have been observed on the BMT itself.

Wood turtles (*Clemmys insculpta*, Species of Special Concern) have been confirmed within survey blocks encompassing the Big Moose Tract. NYSDEC biologists were

consulted and do not prescribe any recreation management restrictions or specific management considerations for the BMT RMP due to the presence of this species.

### **Fish and Wildlife Harvest**

Fish and wildlife have historically been harvested on the Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement and continue to be, as the property is currently leased to several hunting clubs. NYSDEC did not purchase the right to permit public hunting, fishing, or trapping on this property in the encumbering conservation easement, and the property is not open to members of the public for these uses.

Hunting and trapping seasons are established by both statute and regulation and are promulgated by the Division of Fish and Wildlife. The Big Moose Tract is found within Wildlife Management Unit (WMU) 6J, which is one of multiple WMU's making up the Central Adirondacks. Data relating to wildlife harvest specifically on the BMT is not available but is included in WMU 6J assessments.

Deer populations in WMU 6J are primarily influenced by winter weather conditions. Deer survival is increased during mild winters and decreases during severe winters, as is the case throughout the Adirondack region. Currently, WMU 6J does not have buck take or population objectives and Deer Management Permits (DMP) are not issued in the unit to regulate antlerless deer take. There is an annual female take from bow and muzzleloader hunting seasons, but harvest is relatively small, and negligible in terms of population effects. Deer Management Assistance Program tags are issued in the unit where localized populations are abundant and impacting landowners. Black bears are found throughout the unit and annual harvests vary depending on weather and the abundance of natural foods like beechnut and cherry. The long-term trends in bear harvest for the Adirondacks and WMU 6J are stable.

Common game bird species found in the region include the American Black Duck, American Crow, American Woodcock, Canadian Goose, Common Merganser, Hooded Merganser, Mallard, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, and Wood Duck. Furbearer populations are not formally surveyed by NYSDEC in WMU 6J or elsewhere in the Adirondacks. Harvest for fisher, American marten, bobcat, and otter are monitored by annual harvest reporting requirements. Furbearers are widely distributed across the WMA and annual harvest for most species is small. Fisher populations are managed at the state and regional levels with management guided by the 2015 Fisher Management Plan.

NYSDEC does not collect data relating to the harvest of fish. Harvest data for deer, black bear, wild turkey, and various furbearers is reported at the WMU level. It should be noted that WMU 6J has a wide diversity of habitat types within the units from farmland environments along the west edge near the Black River Valley to the larger contiguous forests of the interior. Wildlife abundance varies across that range of habitats and public access to resources also varies across that same landscape.

Harvest data is available as provided below:

Big Game - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/42232.html>

Spring Turkey - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/30420.html>

Fall Turkey - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/30412.html>

Furbearer Trapping - <https://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/93855.html>

#### **4. Habitat Structures**

Under the encumbering conservation easement, with landowner approval, NYSDEC may install, maintain, or remove structures or devices to restore or enhance plant, fish and wildlife habitat on the BMT, or adjacent lands. To date, NYSDEC has not exercised this right.

#### **5. Winter Deer Habitat**

Deer wintering yards are particularly important habitat for deer survival in winter months (especially in the northern portions of their range). Deer yards are usually located in dense conifer cover, often in mapped wetlands. Surveys and corresponding maps of deer yards have been completed by the NYSDEC in the past but have not been recently updated. Since not every location which matches typical wintering habitat is utilized by deer, field survey may be required prior to basing management decisions on previously identified deer yard locations. This RMP has been developed with cognizance of potential wintering deer concentrations that may be impacted by recreation facilities and use. Management proposals are intended to afford protection of core sections of utilized deer wintering areas and avoid fragmenting travel corridors between them.

## 6. Vegetation

The Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement is located within the Central Adirondacks Ecozone. The property represents commercially managed forestland, comprised primarily of a northern hardwood forest, with lowland pockets of spruce-fir forest, mostly near drainages.

Most of the property can be described as Laurentian-Acadian Northern Hardwood Forest with interspersed Laurentian-Acadian Swamp Systems, Acadian-Appalachian Montane Spruce-Fir Forest, Laurentian-Acadian Shrub-Herbaceous Wetland Systems, and grassy harvested forest areas in early regeneration. Tree species most commonly associated with the property include American beech, black cherry, eastern hemlock, red maple, sugar maple, yellow birch, and white pine. The BMT is managed for the production of forest products, and as such, growth of commercially desirable species is facilitated, representing a major influence on vegetation diversity, composition, and age.

While the Natural Heritage Program does not conduct surveys on conservation easements, Torrey's Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus torreyi*, NYS Endangered), Northern Bog Aster (*Symphyotrichum boreale*, NYS Threatened), Cloud Sedge (*Carex haydenii*, NYS Threatened), and Tinged Sedge (*Carex tinctoria*, NYS Endangered) have all been identified on state land within 5-miles of the BMT and could be present on the conservation easement property as well.



## 7. Vectors of Change

### ***Forest Management***

The BMT is managed for commercial forestry products – forestry operations regularly occur, and the landscape contains a patchwork of past harvests. The forest ecosystem is significantly impacted by management of the forest, primarily for the harvest of timber. Forest management dynamics have impacted the BMT for more than two centuries. Changes to forest product, carbon or other commercial markets may impact management of this property and therefore the BMT forest ecosystem in the future.

### ***Invasive Species***

As global trade and travel have increased, so has the introduction of non-native species. Many non-native species do not have adverse effects on the areas in which they are introduced, however, some become invasive in their new ranges, disrupting ecosystem function and reducing biodiversity. Invasive species have been identified as one of the greatest threats to biodiversity, second only to habitat loss, and can damage native habitats by altering hydrology, fire frequency, soil fertility and other ecosystem processes.

The Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP) is a partnership program between the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, Department of Transportation, Adirondack Park Agency, the Adirondack Chapter of the Nature Conservancy, and more than 30 other cooperating organizations. APIPP has identified purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*) in two locations adjacent to the Big Moose Road where it passes through the BMT. Nearby to the BMT, spotted starthistle/spotted knapweed (*Centaurea stoebe* spp. *Micranthos*), unknown species of Knotweed (*Reynoutria* spp.), Japanese knotweed (*Reynoutria japonica* var. *japonica*), wild parsnip (*Pastinaca sativa*), purple loosestrife (*Lythrum salicaria*), and Bishop's Goutweed (*Aegopodium podagraria*) have been identified east of the property in the vicinity of Big Moose, and mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) has been identified to the north along Stillwater Road.

While APIPP has only identified one invasive species on the BMT, that does not mean that others do not exist. Surveys are primarily conducted along major travel corridors. In the case of occurrences documented on and adjacent to the BMT, all occurrences are clustered around Big Moose Road, the only public town road in this area.

Generally, APIPP lists aquatic invasive species in the Adirondack region to include brittle naiad, curly-leaf pondweed, Eurasian watermilfoil, European frog-bit, fanwort, variable-leaf watermilfoil, water chestnut, and yellow floating heart. Terrestrial invasive species in the region include common reed grass, garlic mustard, giant hogweed, hemlock woolly adelgid, Japanese knotweed, oriental bittersweet, purple loosestrife, swallow-worts, wild parsnip, yellow iris, the balsam woolly adelgid, Eurasian boar, and the sirex woodwasp. Several invasive species that have not yet been identified in the Adirondack Park but of concern include hydrilla, kudzu, Asian longhorn beetle, and emerald ash borer.

It is imperative that best management practices (BMPs) for all proposals under this RMP be used to reduce the risk of spreading invasive species.

### ***Climate Change***

In recent years, evidence of climate change has been thoroughly documented. Should current trends continue, temperature, precipitation (including snowfall), extreme weather events, forest composition, wildlife and other ecological functions are likely to be affected.

The fact that climate change is occurring has been considered within the recreation planning process. It is acknowledged that public access to the property for snowmobile recreation releases greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change, but that these emissions are insignificant in the context of other sources. It is also acknowledged that winter recreational activities that require snow may be impacted by climate change in the future, and that investment in and siting of recreation facilities must consider the potential for impacts attributable to climate change.

## **8. Natural Heritage Program Occurrences**

The New York Natural Heritage Program (NHP) is a partnership between NYSDEC and the State University of New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry. NHP surveys and monitors rare animals, plants, and significant ecological communities on state land throughout New York State. While no surveys have been conducted on the Big Moose Tract itself, the following species have been identified within 5-miles of the Big Moose Tract. These species may also exist on the BMT.

Common loons (*Gavia immer*, NYS Species of Special Concern) have been identified just north of the BMT on Stillwater Reservoir, and south on Independence Lake, as well as on other lakes in this region. Round whitefish (*Prosopium cylindraceum*, NYS Endangered) have been identified immediately west of the Big Moose Tract in Buck Pond, and north of Stillwater Reservoir as well as in several other lakes in the region. Bald Eagles (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*, NYS Threatened) have been sighted on Stillwater Reservoir, and Skillet Clubtail (*Gomphurus ventricosus*, NYS unlisted but critically imperiled) have been found south of the property within the Fulton Chain Wild Forest. Torrey's Bulrush (*Schoenoplectus torreyi*, NYS Endangered), Northern Bog Aster (*Symphyotrichum boreale*, NYS Threatened), Cloud Sedge (*Carex haydenii*, NYS Threatened), and Tinged Sedge (*Carex tinctoria*, NYS Endangered) have all also been identified on state land within 5-miles of the BMT.

## **E. Human Resources**

### **1. Existing Infrastructure**

Roads, trails, bridges, gravel pits, and other significant infrastructure are shown on the Existing Infrastructure and Recreation Facilities map on page 74. There are also thirty-three (33) camps on the BMT, and up to thirty-five (35) camps may be maintained on the property subject to specific terms in the conservation easement. Camp locations are not shown on the existing infrastructure map since their location is not pertinent to public recreation management on the BMT.

#### **Roads**

Approximately 44.8 miles of improved roads and 32.2 miles of unimproved roads are located on the Big Moose Tract. Road locations and bridges are shown on the Existing Infrastructure and Recreation Facilities map on page 74.

#### **Trails**

NYSDEC recreation trails on the BMT are listed in the table below. Two bridges are located on existing or proposed NYSDEC recreation trails on the property. One bridge is located at the Three Lakes Trail Twitchell Creek crossing near the intersection with the Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor and the other is located at the Woods Lake Road Twitchell Creek crossing.

<b>Trail Name</b>	<b>Trail Use</b>	<b>Trail Mileage</b>	<b>Trail Description</b>
Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail	Non-Motorized	0.5	The trail crosses onto the BMT from the Independence River Wild Forest to the north, leading south, southeast to the fire tower at the summit of Stillwater Mountain.
Three Lakes Trail	Snowmobile	6.6	The Three Lakes Trail crosses onto the BMT from the west and leading to following a hardened gravel road 2.5 miles east. A 0.4-mile trail then connects south to another hardened gravel road, which continues another 1.5 miles east to Big Moose Road, across the road then proceeding east another 0.6 miles to the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor.
Three Lakes Trail – North Spur	Snowmobile	2.0	Where the Three Lakes Trail crosses south to between gravel roads, a spur leads 0.4 miles further east along the northern road before turning north, parallel to the Big Moose Road for 1.6 miles, and eventually out to the Big Moose Road.
*Remsen - Lake Placid Travel Corridor	Snowmobile	3.8	The Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor is a narrow strip of state-owned forest preserve land classified as Travel Corridor. The corridor passes through the northeast portion of the BMT generally between Big Moose Station and Woods Lake.

### **Gravel Pits**

NYSDEC may use sand and gravel in furtherance of its affirmative rights granted in the conservation easement. Location of sand and gravel extraction is subject to landowner approval. To minimize negative environmental impact and maintain forested areas, the conservation easement specifies that both parties should use existing sand and gravel pits when practical and avoid opening new pits unless necessary. Additionally, operation of pits must minimize adverse environmental and visual impacts and comply with

applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations. New pits cannot be opened within buffers specified within the conservation easement, however existing pits within buffer areas may be used as long as operations minimize adverse environmental and visual impacts.

The conservation easement limits the acreage of sand and gravel pits open on the BMT at any one time to 25 acres.

## **2. Cultural and Archeological**

There are no known cultural or archaeological sites on the Property. Any findings of potential cultural or archaeological significance should be reported to NYSDEC. NYSDEC reached out to the Haudenosaunee Environmental Task Force and Saint Regis Mohawk Tribe during the planning process for this RMP and will continue to consult with Indian Nations should pertinent cultural issues arise.

## **3. Historic**

The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower has been listed on the National and State Historic Registers since 2017. Some history relating to Stillwater Mountain is included in this RMP in Section II(B). In 2018, NYSDEC installed an interpretive panel with this historic information at the base of the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower (included in Appendix G).

The Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor passes through the Big Moose Tract and is also listed on the National and State Historic Registers. This corridor is owned by New York State and is managed under the 2020 Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan (UMP). The UMP proposes rehabilitating rail infrastructure to meet rail service operating requirements between Remsen and Tupper Lake, including 3.8 miles of the corridor that pass through the BMT. Rehabilitation of the corridor as it passes through the BMT is yet to be completed. A Historic Preservation Plan is included in Appendix D of the UMP – the plan describes the steps to be taken to preserve the character and historic fabric of the corridor and efforts to mitigate direct and indirect impacts to the historic resource.

## **4. Scenic**

Scenic locations on the BMT include, numerous streams, small ponds and open wetlands, and a small portion of the Stillwater Reservoir shoreline. The view from the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower represents the most scenic location where members of the public are permitted.

## **5. Communication Equipment**

An antenna, small solar panel, and battery box are located on the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower for emergency communications. This infrastructure provides critical radio communication for law enforcement and first responders in the vicinity of Stillwater Mountain. Prior to installation of this equipment in 2015, there were no communication options (cell phone service or radio) for a large portion of this part of the Adirondack Park.

## **6. Economic Impact**

The conservation easement which encumbers the Big Moose Tract is meant in part to ensure that the property will remain a privately-owned working forest and to provide specific public recreation opportunities. The logging industry is an important component of Adirondack Park communities and economies. By facilitating continued forest management of the BMT, the conservation easement protects historical and significant economic inputs. Additionally, the protection of natural resources and opening of public recreation opportunities draws visitors to the area to enjoy the natural setting and recreate, expanding tourism and general spending in the vicinity of the property. The State of New York currently pays 26% of the BMT's annual property taxes, which reflects the proportional value of property rights purchased by New York State.

# III. Public Use Administration and Management

## A. Management and Policy Considerations

NYSDEC is responsible for managing public access and recreation in a manner consistent with the terms of the encumbering conservation easement, applicable laws and regulations. This RMP has been developed within the constraints set forth by the Environmental Conservation Law; Title 6 NYCRR of the State of New York; established NYSDEC policy and MOUs; and the terms and conditions of the Conservation Easement that encumbers the Property.

### 1. Laws and Regulations

#### ***New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA)***

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/357.html>

SEQRA requires all state and local government agencies to consider environmental impacts equally with social and economic factors during discretionary decision-making. As the lead agency developing this RMP, NYSDEC completed a full Environmental Assessment Form, (see Appendix B). Public comments were accepted, considered, and incorporated into the RMP where appropriate.

#### ***Adirondack Park Agency Administered Laws***

<https://www.apa.ny.gov/Regulations/index.html>

Pursuant to the ***New York Freshwater Wetlands Act***, NYSDEC must consult with the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) concerning all recreation management actions on the property within 100 feet of a freshwater wetland. The ***Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act*** is also administered by APA for private lands within the Adirondack Park. Consultation is addressed in the 2010 Memorandum of Understanding between APA and NYSDEC.

## ***Accessibility Laws***

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), along with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Title V, Section 504, has a profound effect on the manner by which people with disabilities are afforded equality in their recreational pursuits. The ADA is a comprehensive law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in employment practices, use of public transportation, use of telecommunication facilities, and use of public accommodations.

Consistent with ADA requirements, NYSDEC incorporates Accessibility for people with disabilities into siting, planning, construction, and alteration of recreational facilities and assets supporting them. In addition, Title II of the ADA requires, in part, that services, programs, and activities of NYSDEC, when viewed in their entirety, are readily Accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. NYSDEC is not required to take any action which would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the service, program, or activity, or would present an undue financial or administrative burden. When accommodating access to a program, NYSDEC is not necessarily required to make each existing facility and asset Accessible, as long as the program is Accessible by other means or at a different facility.

This plan incorporates an inventory of all the recreational facilities and assets on the unit or area, and an assessment of the programs, services, and facilities provided to determine the level of Accessibility. In conducting this assessment, NYSDEC employs guidelines which ensure that programs are Accessible, including buildings, facilities, and vehicles, in terms of architecture and design, and the transportation of and communication with individuals with disabilities.

In accordance with the US Department of Justice's ADA Title II regulations, all new NYSDEC facilities, or parts of facilities, that are constructed for public use are to be Accessible to people with disabilities. Full compliance is not required where NYSDEC can demonstrate that it is structurally impracticable to meet the requirements [[28 CFR § 35.151 \(a\)](#)]. Compliance is still required for parts of the facility that can be made Accessible to the extent that it is not structurally impracticable, and for people with various types of disabilities. In addition, all alterations to facilities, or part of facilities, that affect or could affect the usability of the facility will be made in a manner that the altered portion



of the facility is readily Accessible to and usable by individuals with disabilities [28 CRF § 35.151 (b:1-4)].

NYSDEC uses the Department of Justice’s 2010 Standards for Accessible Design in designing, constructing, and altering buildings and sites. For outdoor recreational facilities not covered under the current ADA standards, NYSDEC uses the standards provided under the ABA to lend credibility to the assessment results and to offer protection to the natural resource (ABA Standards for Outdoor Developed Areas; Sections F201.4, F216.3, F244 to F248, and 1011 to 1019).

Any new facilities, assets, and Accessibility improvements to existing facilities, or assets proposed in this plan, are identified in the section containing proposed management actions. A record of Accessibility determination is kept with the work planning record.

For further information, please contact Leah Akins, NYSDEC Statewide ADA Accessibility Coordinator, at [accessibility@dec.ny.gov](mailto:accessibility@dec.ny.gov)

*Facilities in this plan that largely meet Accessible design standards (ADA and/or ABA standards) are described in this plan as Accessible with a capital “A”.*

### ***New York Freshwater Wetlands Act***

All activities pursuant to this RMP and future amendments must adhere to permit requirements of the Freshwater Wetlands Act. The Act regulates activities within 100 feet of freshwater wetlands in New York State. The APA administers the Freshwater Wetlands Act inside the Adirondack Park and NYSDEC administers the Act outside the Park.

### ***Section 404 of the Clean Water Act***

<https://www.epa.gov/cwa-404/section-404-permit-program>

The Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE) is charged with reviewing projects that could affect any “waters of the United States” under Section 404 of the Clean Water Act, including wetlands, irrespective of size. All activities, including dredging and filling, in water pursuant to this RMP or future amendments, must adhere to permit requirements of the ACOE.

## **2. Policies and Memoranda**

### ***MOU Concerning State-Owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park. August 13, 2010***

[https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands\\_forests\\_pdf/cedecapamou.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/cedecapamou.pdf)

The 2010 *Memorandum of Understanding between the Adirondack Park Agency and Department of Environmental Conservation: Concerning State-Owned Conservation Easements on Private Land within the Adirondack Park* guides communication between the APA and NYSDEC regarding RMP development, and lists activities requiring Agency consultation, notice and/or review or no Agency review. The APA's role relating to the Freshwater Wetlands Act, and administration of the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act on conservation easements is also outlined. All NYSDEC management of public recreation on the conservation easement property is subject to this MOU.

### ***NYSDEC Directive Documents***

NYSDEC Guidance and policy documents are available at:

<http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/2401.html>

- Temporary Revocable Permits for State Lands and Conservation Easements (ONR-3)
- Volunteer Stewardship Agreements (CP-58; formerly Adopt-A-Natural Resource, ONR-1)
- Motorized Access Program for People With Disabilities (CP-3)
- Standards and Procedures for Boundary Line Maintenance (NR-95-1)

## **3. Guidelines**

### ***NYSDEC Conservation Easement Public Recreation Road and Trail Sign Guidance Manual, 2012***

A manual has been developed to standardize NYSDEC signage posted on conservation easements. The NYSDEC will post signs on the BMT consistent with this guidance.

## ***NYSDEC Standard Accessible Designs for Outdoor Recreational Facilities Guidebook, 2014***

As NYSDEC continues to expand outdoor recreation opportunities, the design process will continue to incorporate Accessible Design standards whenever possible.

### **A. Management Authority, Staff and Responsibility**

The Regional Natural Resources Supervisor is the Manager of regional staff in NYSDEC's Division of Lands and Forests, Division of Fish and Wildlife, and Division of Mineral Resources. The Division of Lands and Forests has primary responsibility for managing public use of the lands subject to this RMP, including the development of this Plan, development of individual work plans and schedules, implementation and coordination of all activities with the landowner, partners, and other NYSDEC Divisions. The Division of Operations, at the direction of the Division of Lands and Forests, will oversee construction and maintenance of facilities approved by this RMP. The Regional Forester has overall responsibility for these matters. Reporting to the Regional Forester is a Supervising Forester who is responsible for forestry and land management programs. Reporting to the Supervising Forester are one or more Foresters or Natural Resource Planners that may be assigned to specific tasks in preparing or implementing this Plan. The Regional Fisheries Manager and Regional Wildlife Manager are responsible for all Division of Fish and Wildlife activities. Forest Rangers have primary responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of most public use of the Protected Property, while Environmental Conservation Officers are responsible for fish and game and environmental quality enforcement.

A land manager has been designated by the Regional Forester as the lead NYSDEC staff person for developing and implementing this and subsequent Recreation Management Plans for the BMT property. The land manager is responsible for:

- Overseeing the coordination and preparation of the RMP, as well as periodic updates, revisions, or amendments.
- Coordinating the implementation of this RMP.
- Overseeing the budget outlined in the RMP.

- Assuring that management activities of all NYSDEC Divisions, as they relate to this RMP, comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and easement terms.
- Monitoring conditions and public use; addressing conflicts; and assessing the effectiveness of the RMP in addressing resource protection and public needs.
- Fostering communication about management activities within the NYSDEC, between the NYSDEC and the landowner, and between the NYSDEC and the public. The land manager will be the primary liaison with the landowner regarding public access and use issues.

The development of this RMP has primarily involved NYSDEC staff and the landowner's land management staff. Communication and coordination of planning efforts between the parties was critical to formulating management objectives and proposals. Consistent communication is extremely important in preparing and implementing this RMP and adhering to the terms of the Easement. NYSDEC staff will regularly communicate with the landowner to review completed activities, address concerns or problems, and coordinate future work.

## **B. Management Goals and Objectives**

Management goals are broad statements of intent, direction, and purpose. Goals may be based upon law, NYSDEC regulations, policies, and/or general philosophy. Management objectives are statements that describe specific conditions to manage towards and serve as criteria for deciding what management actions are needed. Objectives are more specific than goals and may be measured or confirmed as having been accomplished.

Management goals and objectives were developed in consideration of conservation easement terms, NYSDEC policies and philosophy, interests of various stakeholders, and use and ownership of the property by the landowner.

### **Management Goals and Objectives**

**Goal 1:** Avoid or minimize any negative impacts of public recreation on the natural resources and environmental benefits of the property and nearby state lands.

### **Objectives**

- 1.1 Enforce all applicable laws and regulations including the Environmental Conservation Law, hunting, fishing, trapping and recreation related regulations.
- 1.2 When constructing new facilities, infrastructure, or implementing public recreation rights within any area within sensitive habitats or communities as identified by NYSDEC staff, complete an alternatives analysis assessing environmental impacts and including a “no action” alternative.
- 1.3 Follow Best Management Practices (BMPs) during all construction and maintenance activities on the BMT.
- 1.4 Regularly complete inspection reports evaluating public recreation impacts on natural resources of the property.

**Goal 2:** Construct, maintain, and manage facilities/infrastructure to facilitate a variety of outdoor recreational opportunities on the property, consistent with the conservation easement, NYSDEC policies and reserved landowner rights.

### **Objectives**

- 2.1 Maintain snowmobile trails to provide connections through the BMT to the surrounding snowmobile trail system. Maintain or construct alternative routes for periods when landowner forest management activities require closure of a primary trail.
- 2.2 Where demand exists, designate/maintain hiking trails to notable destinations on the BMT.
- 2.3 Provide public information regarding the BMT online, and by posting informational signage.

**Goal 3:** Avoid or minimize conflicts between public recreational use and landowner Reserved Rights

### **Objectives**

- 3.1 Coordinate siting of all public recreation facilities with the landowner.
- 3.2 Maintain an open dialogue with the landowner and landowner representatives.
- 3.3 Maintain signage to direct public visitors on designated trails.

**Goal 4:** Enforce laws and regulations on the property.

**Objective**

- 1.1** Provide support to NYS Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation Officers who will enforce laws and regulations on the property.

**Goal 5:** Periodically assess the impacts of recreational use on forest management activities, lease camps, and natural resources.

**Objectives**

- a. Monitor facility/infrastructure conditions using Guidelines and Standards outlined in this RMP.
- b. Regularly complete inspection reports evaluating public recreation impacts on natural resources of the property
- c. Maintain an open dialogue with the landowner or landowner designated Land Manager.

**Goal 6:** Use the BMT as a conservation education resource.

**Objective**

- 6.1** Place environmental and forest management interpretation signage as appropriate.

## **C. Management Considerations**

### **1. Shared Maintenance**

Neither NYSDEC, nor the Landowner, is responsible for assuming a cost that is not commensurate with the interest they have in a particular facility on the BMT. NYSDEC is solely responsible for incurring costs unique to providing for public access and use, as well as posting and maintaining public recreation signage. Any damage caused by public recreational activities is the responsibility of NYSDEC to repair. Similarly, the landowner is solely responsible for costs related to their reserved rights on the Property. Any damage

caused by the landowner's activities (for example, logging) is solely the landowner's responsibility.

The landowner and NYSDEC coordinate and share costs of mutually beneficial infrastructure such as shared bridges and roads/snowmobile trails. The construction of permanent barriers, gates, and locks is also coordinated between the parties. Cost sharing is discussed each year at an annual meeting with the landowner, or more frequently as needed.

## **2. Logging Closures**

The landowner may temporarily close a portion of the BMT to the public during forest management operations for up to six months at a time. Closures are intended to prevent conflicts and safety issues with logging activities and equipment and are subject to specific terms listed in the encumbering conservation easement. Whenever possible, the landowner and NYSDEC will provide alternative trails or accommodations for public recreation, where permissible under conservation easement terms.

## **3. Recreation Monitoring**

NYSDEC staff regularly inspect the Big Moose Tract for compliance with conservation easement terms. Recreation impacts are observed during conservation easement inspections, and issues are documented in inspection reports. Reports are maintained by the NYSDEC and shared with the landowner.

The exercise of public recreation rights purchased through the conservation easement may be temporarily or permanently closed or altered by NYSDEC for administrative, or environmental reasons.

## **4. Search, Rescue, Fire, Emergency Response, and Law Enforcement**

The NYSDEC and the landowner have the right to undertake emergency actions necessary to preserve and protect private property interests, public recreation amenities, and human health and safety in response to natural disasters, environmental hazards, or other threats. The NYSDEC Environmental Conservation Police, Forest Rangers, State Police, and other emergency response personnel will have full access to the property in

the case of an emergency. Emergency response for search, fire, and rescue on the property will be coordinated by the NYS Forest Rangers, however a response may include other emergency responders. NYSDEC will notify the landowner of all emergency actions and serious violations. The landowner will report public use violations to the NYSDEC by filing complaints through the area manager or the regional dispatch center.

## **D. Recreation Facility Standards**

### **1. Snowmobile Trail Standards**

The snowmobile trails which cross the BMT follow existing roads and skid trails. While NYSDEC will only expend resources to maintain these routes for snowmobile use, it is acknowledged that these trails represent shared infrastructure between NYSDEC and landowner. NYSDEC will work to coordinate and share maintenance costs of these corridors to meet both parties' needs.

Trails on hardened road will be maintained at the current road width and 12-feet high unless otherwise coordinated with the landowner. NYSDEC will maintain portions of snowmobile trails that are not on a hardened motor vehicle road 12-14 feet wide, and 12-feet high.

Snowmobile trails, will be signed as being open only to snowmobiles, consistent with the CE Public Recreation Road & Trail Sign Guidance Manual ([http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands\\_forests\\_pdf/cesigntrailguidance.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/cesigntrailguidance.pdf)).

### **2. Foot Trail Standards**

<b>Indicator</b>	<b>Standard</b>
Maintained Tread Width	24"
Adjacent Vegetation: cleared width & height, presence of ground vegetation	Cleared <6' wide / 12' high; grass, fern, small plants and shrubs present within cleared width.



Length of Water/Mud Occurrences	<100 feet per mile
Tread Erosion: trenching & root exposure	<6" trenching; Occasional root exposure
Presence of Litter	<1 occurrence / mile

\* Where trails use old forest management roads, they may be wider or more substantial than specified standards but will only be maintained to specified levels.

### 3. Recreation Signs

NYSDEC is responsible for installing, constructing, and maintaining all signs relating to public recreation on the BMT. Trails will be signed with markers identifying the allowed use on each individual trail (snowmobile or hiking). Informational and interpretational signage will be developed in consultation with the landowner.

## E. Best Management Practices

All public recreation management activities will incorporate the use of Best Management Practices (BMPs) to the greatest practical extent. BMPs are those methods, procedures, and devices that are designed to prevent or minimize soil erosion, water run-off, damage to natural resources or wildlife habitat, pollution, pathogens, or other negative environmental impacts when conducting various management activities. For more information regarding BMPs, please visit: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/37845.html>.

BMPs related to the implementation of public access and recreational improvements on the property include, but are not limited to:

- Limiting improvements to the minimum number and size necessary to meet intended and anticipated use.
- Locating improvements away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes.
- Locating improvements to minimize necessary cut and fill on flat, stable, well-drained sites.
- Avoiding designation/construction of recreation facilities in areas where sensitive species and communities are known to exist.

- Minimizing tree cutting.
- Using proper drainage devices, such as water bars and broad-based dips, to prevent erosion and damage to improvements.
- Designing, constructing, and maintaining bridges and other improvements on or near streams to avoid disrupting or preventing movement of fish and other aquatic species.
- Minimizing the use of construction equipment in streams.
- Using soil stabilization practices on exposed soil around construction areas, especially bridges, immediately after construction.
- Constructing roads, trails, bridges, and other stream crossings at right angles to the stream.
- Limiting stream crossings and construction on or near streams to periods of low flow.
- Properly cleaning equipment to prevent the spread of invasive species from one site to another.

## **B. Proposed Recreation Management Actions**

### **Motorized Access**

#### **1) Passenger Vehicle Access and Parking**

##### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

NYSDEC does not own the right to provide public passenger vehicle access on private roads located on the BMT. NYSDEC may construct and maintain parking areas adjacent to public roads to provide access to NYSDEC hiking or snowmobile trails on the BMT.

##### ***Discussion***

The Big Moose Road is the only public road that provides access to the Big Moose Tract – it is a Town of Webb road. A The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trailhead currently has a 2-car parking area on the south side of Big Moose Road, and a 10-car parking area on the north side of the road (with two Accessible parking spots), both located in the Independence River Wild Forest. While NYSDEC owns the right to construct parking areas where snowmobile trails intersect Big Moose Road, a large parking area is already available to snowmobilers nearby at the Stillwater Reservoir Boat Launch. As such, no additional public parking is warranted on the Big Moose Tract.

### ***Management Actions***

- No new parking areas will be constructed on the BMT.

## **2) Rail Access**

### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

The conservation easement does not reference public access to the Big Moose Tract by rail (via the Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor).

### ***Discussion***

As discussed in the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan, in the future, rail service offers potential for recreationists to access adjacent lands utilizing station-stops and/or flag-stops. Since the rail corridor is not close to any NYSDEC hiking trails on the BMT, rail access to the property is not addressed in this RMP.

### ***Management Actions***

- None

## **3) Snowmobile Use**

### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

NYSDEC owns the right to establish public snowmobile trails in specific locations and as provided in the Recreation Management Plan. If the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor is closed to snowmobiles for winter rail service, NYSDEC may maintain an alternative snowmobile trail.

### ***Discussion***

NYSDEC snowmobile trails across the BMT have been established and maintained subject to the interim Recreation Management Plan which was completed in 2007. The Three Lakes Trail follows existing hardened roads and a short unhardened road from the western boundary, east across Big Moose Road to the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor. An unhardened fork of the Three Lakes Trail leads north, running parallel to Big Moose Road for approximately 1.9 miles. The Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor also serves as a public snowmobile trail (owned by New York State).

Goals of NYSDEC for snowmobile trails across the BMT are to provide connectivity between surrounding trails, to route trails off-of plowed roads, and to provide alternate trails to be used during winter timber harvest operations. Trails that currently exist on the BMT provide connectivity between the Three Lakes Tract to the west, Big Moose Road, the Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor, and the Town of Webb Snowmobile Trail System to the south (for which a permit is required to ride). Installation of additional gates may be warranted to direct snowmobile traffic when trails are rerouted due to forest management activity. All snowmobile trails on the BMT are groomed by the Town of Webb under a Temporary Revocable Permit (TRP).

#### Birch Creek Alternative Trail – 2.3 miles

During timber harvests, NYSDEC snowmobile trails may be closed by the landowner. However, the parties cooperate to provide alternative trails whenever possible. In the winter of 2021-22, a short corridor was cleared to serve as an alternative snowmobile route while log trucks used the Three Lakes Trail near Big Moose Road (also known as the Pollack Swamp Road). This alternative route – to be called the Birch Creek Alternative Trail warrants official designation as an alternative route, to be used in the future if winter harvesting on Pollack Swamp Road occurs again. A 100-foot spur trail between Big Moose Road and the north fork of Three Lakes Trail should also be designated along with Birch Creek Trail to provide access to Big Moose Road without riding the short segment of Three Lakes Trail near Big Moose Road (Pollack Swamp Road).

#### Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Alternative

The conservation easement specifically allows NYSDEC to establish an alternative snowmobile trail should the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor be used for winter rail service. To date, NYSDEC staff have been unable to identify a viable route for a trail north from Big Moose Road, across the BMT, Independence River Wild Forest and connecting to either the Six Mile Road or Beaver River Station. While the 2020 Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor UMP proposes rail service using this portion of the corridor – winter rail service is not anticipated in the immediate future. Should winter rail service become a reality, the Big Moose Road will continue to serve to connect Big Moose Station with the Three Lakes Trail.

### Stillwater Spur Alternative Trail – 3.0 miles

The Stillwater Spur Trail currently leads from the Basket Factory Road in the Independence River Wild Forest, east to the BMT boundary. This trail could be extended across the BMT (approximately 0.7 miles to the 2.3-mile road south of Stillwater Mountain). The resulting 3.0-mile trail would decrease the amount of snowmobile riding on Stillwater and Big Moose Roads, both of which are plowed and/or serve as an alternative to the Three Lakes Trail during winter timber harvests.

### Three Lakes Trail – 8.6 miles

The Three Lakes Trail serves as the primary snowmobile trail connection between the Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement and the Stillwater/Big Moose region. This existing trail largely follows hardened roads, including “Pollack Swamp Road” near the Big Moose Road intersection, and warrants continued maintenance for snowmobile use.

### Woods Lake Road Alternative Trail – 2.9 miles

The Woods Lake Road has the potential to reduce riding on the Big Moose Road (plowed town road) and could serve as an alternative route during winter timber harvests in the vicinity of the east end of the Three Lakes Trail. For this reason, the Woods Lake Road Trail should be identified as an alternative snowmobile trail to be used during winters when timber harvest by the landowner will occur in the vicinity of the Three Lakes Trail.

### ***Management Actions***

- Continue to maintain the Three Lakes Trail, including the north fork parallel to Big Moose Road (8.6 miles)
- Designate and maintain the Woods Lake Road as an alternative snowmobile trail (2.9 miles of existing road). The Woods Lake Road Alternative Trail will only be opened to public snowmobiles during times when winter harvesting is occurring, at the landowner’s discretion. The purpose of this trail is to separate snowmobiles from log truck traffic.
- Designate the Birch Creek Alternative Trail as an alternative snowmobile trail, (2.3 miles of existing road and trail). The Birch Creek Alternative Trail will only be opened to public snowmobiles during times when winter harvesting is occurring,

at the landowner's discretion. The purpose of this trail is to separate snowmobiles from log truck traffic.

- Extend the Stillwater Spur Trail in the Independence River Wild Forest east through the BMT, following the road south of Stillwater Mountain to Big Moose Road (Stillwater Spur Alternative Trail; 0.7 miles new construction; 3.0 miles total). The Stillwater Spur Alternative Trail will only be opened to public snowmobiles during times when winter harvesting is occurring, at the landowner's discretion. The purpose of this trail is to separate snowmobiles from log truck traffic.
- Continue to issue Temporary Revocable Permits (TRPs) to the Town of Webb to groom all snowmobile trails on the property.
- With landowner approval, install new gates at locations determined to be useful in directing snowmobile traffic.

## **Non-Motorized Use**

### **1) Hiking**

#### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

The portion of the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail across the BMT may be used for non-motorized public access from May 1 through the second Monday in October each year. Additional trails (for hiking only) may be designated in the Recreation Management Plan.

#### ***Discussion***

The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trailhead is located in the Independence River Wild Forest. The trail crosses 0.5 miles through the Independence River Wild Forest, then 0.5 miles through the Big Moose Tract to the fire tower at the mountain summit. NYSDEC currently maintains a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the NYS Chapter of the Forest Fire Tower Lookout Association to maintain the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower and trail. While the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower currently provides scenic views above the tree line in all directions, views are becoming more obscured as adjacent trees grow. Given the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower is located on private property where timber harvests regularly occur, opportunity exists to strategically manage the forest surrounding the fire tower to facilitate scenic views. NYSDEC does not own the right to cut trees for this purpose, so any cutting of trees is subject to landowner permission. The best option to keep views from the tower clear would be to coordinate with the landowner when

harvesting timber in the area. As a secondary option, NYSDEC could obtain permission from the landowner to cut individual trees, however, most trees will be difficult to drop to the ground as they are surrounded by other trees and will likely be propped up even if they are cut.

The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail generally has between 2,000 and 3,000 registered hikers each year. Use has decreased slightly since the trail opened in 2016, however it appears that use has begun to stabilize. This hike is part of the “Adirondack Fire Tower Hiking Challenge” and represents one of the most popular hiking destinations in this region of the Adirondack Park. The trailhead parking areas located in the Independence River Wild Forest adequately accommodate hiker vehicles during weekends, holidays and the busy summer/fall hiking season. NYSDEC has developed a survey to evaluate visitor experience on the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail, and at the summit (page 69). The survey will be administered by seasonal staff, interns or volunteers as resources are available.

NYSDEC amended the 2007 Big Moose Tract interim Recreation Management Plan (RMP) in 2015 to extend the portion of the year during which the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail is open to the public. Under the conservation easement, public access is permitted from May 1 through the second Monday in October each year. However, in consultation with the landowner, the interim RMP extended the hiking season, instead closing the trail from the second Tuesday in October through December 20 each year. The extended hiking season does not interfere with the big game hunting season and allows the public to hike to the fire tower throughout the winter. It is noted that the extended hiking season is permitted with landowner permission and is not a right NYSDEC owns in perpetuity. Since demand continues to exist for winter hiking to Stillwater Mountain, and no problems with this arrangement have been identified by the landowner, the trail should remain open excepting the second Tuesday in October through December 20 each year.

While NYSDEC can designate additional hiking trails on the BMT, there is limited public demand for hiking trails to any destination on the property except Stillwater Mountain. As such, no additional hiking trails are warranted.

### ***Management Actions***

- Allow public hiking on the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail excepting a seasonal closure from the second Tuesday in October through December 20<sup>th</sup> each year.
- Coordinate with the landowner regarding timber harvests and the opportunity to cut individual trees that obscure views from the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower.
- Conduct a visitor survey at the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower.
- Continue to maintain a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the NYS Chapter of the Forest Fire Tower Lookout Association to maintain the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower and trail.

## **Public Uses Not Permitted**

### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

NYSDEC does not own the right to allow public All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) access, bicycle use, paddling, camping, hunting, fishing, or trapping on the BMT.

### ***Discussion***

The listed activities above are not an exhaustive list of activities prohibited on the BMT. The encumbering conservation easement only permits NYSDEC to provide hiking and snowmobile trails on the property – no other public access is permitted. Since the Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement provides more limited public access than many other Adirondack conservation easements, providing clear information to the public about what is and is not permitted on the property is imperative. For example, since the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail is closed the second Tuesday in October through December 20 of each year, all signs, maps, and the NYSDEC webpage should reference this closure.

### ***Management Actions***

- All public information and signage developed relating to the BMT will emphasize public use restrictions on the property.



## **Accessibility**

### ***Accessibility Requirements***

Accessibility requirements are discussed on page 34.

### ***Discussion***

The parking areas at the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trailhead contain two spaces meeting Accessibility requirements and an Accessible pit privy (located in the Independence River Wild Forest).

NYSDEC staff used the Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) to collect data for the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail in 2019, and in 2020, a sign was posted at the trailhead summarizing information that was collected: trail length, total elevation gain, typical grade, maximum grade, typical cross-slope, maximum cross-slope, typical width, minimum cleared width, typical trail surface, and obstructions. Should trail conditions change, this information should be updated in a timely manner to ensure accurate information is provided.

### ***Management Actions***

- Provide Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) signage at the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trailhead as well as on the NYSDEC webpage.

## **Visitor Information**

### ***Conservation Easement Terms***

NYSDEC is responsible for all signage relating to public access and recreation on the property subject to the conservation easement.

### ***Discussion***

NYSDEC maintains a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the Forest Fire Lookout Association. Under the agreement, the group completes trail and fire tower maintenance at Stillwater Mountain along with a summit steward program. The steward has compiled a book of historic information and pictures relating to Stillwater Mountain and the surrounding area, which volunteers share with visitors to the fire tower. Volunteer summit

stewards are stationed at the Stillwater Mountain summit to answer questions and share interpretive materials on busy weekends throughout the summer.

An interpretive panel was installed at the summit of Stillwater Mountain in 2018 (included on page 68). The landowner has also expressed interest in working with NYSDEC to develop an additional interpretive panel focused on forestry to be placed on Stillwater Mountain or along Big Moose Road in the future.

NYSDEC maintains several signs which inform recreationists on the BMT including boundary signs, trail markers, and signs with specific information about the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail. While no maps are located on the property, a kiosk map on the Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement to the west shows NYSDEC and Town of Webb snowmobile trails on the BMT. Signs and webpage information must continually be updated to ensure information is up-to-date and accurate.

### ***Management Actions***

- Continue to maintain a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with the Forest Fire Lookout Association – in part to develop educational materials and conduct a summit steward program at Stillwater Mountain.
- Maintain the interpretive panel relating to the history of Stillwater Mountain at the summit.
- Develop an interpretive panel relating to forest management on the BMT. The panel will be created by the NYSDEC Office of Communication Services in consultation with the Division of Lands and Forests and the landowner.
- Provide Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) signage at the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trailhead (Independence River Wild Forest).
- Keep signage on the BMT and information on the NYSDEC webpage updated.

## **C. RMP Implementation and Annual Maintenance**

Management actions proposed in this RMP are proposed in two phases. Phase 1 projects can be completed in the immediate future. Phase 2 projects are those that will require

NYSDEC resources - implementation of these projects may be delayed. All management actions will be completed at the earliest opportunity.

## **RMP Implementation Actions**

### **Phase 1**

- 1) Develop an interpretive panel focused on forestry in consultation with the landowner and NYSDEC Office of Communication Services.
- 2) Conduct visitor survey at Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower.

### **Phase 2**

- 1) Clear views from the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower by coordinating with a landowner harvest or cutting individual trees with landowner permission.
- 2) Construct Stillwater Spur Trail extension over BMT.

## **Annual Maintenance and Activities**

- 1) Complete inspection of the Big Moose Tract for compliance with conservation easement terms.
- 2) Fire Tower Inspection Checklist to be completed by Lands & Forests staff.
- 3) Fire Tower maintenance - as needed.
- 4) Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail maintenance.
- 5) Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Communication Equipment maintenance – as needed.
- 6) Administer and coordinate Volunteer Stewardship Agreement with Forest Fire Lookout Association.
- 7) Cost Sharing to be discussed at Annual Meeting with Landowner:
  - a. Maintenance of 29.9 miles of BMT boundary lines.
  - b. Maintenance of 16.8 miles of snowmobile trails (only those sections of trail that follow landowner roads will be a shared cost).
  - c. Maintenance of bridges on the Woods Lake Road Trail and Three Lakes Trail over Twitchell Creek.
  - d. Maintenance of all gates that are located on or perpendicular to public snowmobile trails.

## **IV. Appendices**

## **A. Public Comment Summary**

<to be inserted following draft comment period>

## B. SEQRA

Agency Use Only [If Applicable]  
 Project : Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Recor  
 Date : 1/23/2023

### Full Environmental Assessment Form Part 3 - Evaluation of the Magnitude and Importance of Project Impacts and Determination of Significance

Part 3 provides the reasons in support of the determination of significance. The lead agency must complete Part 3 for every question in Part 2 where the impact has been identified as potentially moderate to large or where there is a need to explain why a particular element of the proposed action will not, or may, result in a significant adverse environmental impact.

Based on the analysis in Part 3, the lead agency must decide whether to require an environmental impact statement to further assess the proposed action or whether available information is sufficient for the lead agency to conclude that the proposed action will not have a significant adverse environmental impact. By completing the certification on the next page, the lead agency can complete its determination of significance.

#### Reasons Supporting This Determination:

To complete this section:

- Identify the impact based on the Part 2 responses and describe its magnitude. Magnitude considers factors such as severity, size or extent of an impact.
- Assess the importance of the impact. Importance relates to the geographic scope, duration, probability of the impact occurring, number of people affected by the impact and any additional environmental consequences if the impact were to occur.
- The assessment should take into consideration any design element or project changes.
- Repeat this process for each Part 2 question where the impact has been identified as potentially moderate to large or where there is a need to explain why a particular element of the proposed action will not, or may, result in a significant adverse environmental impact.
- Provide the reason(s) why the impact may, or will not, result in a significant adverse environmental impact
- For Conditional Negative Declarations identify the specific condition(s) imposed that will modify the proposed action so that no significant adverse environmental impacts will result.
- Attach additional sheets, as needed.

#### Question #1 Impact on Land

h. Other impacts:

Proposed management actions in the RMP will have minimal impacts on the landscape, including localized and minimal grading of hiking and snowmobile trails. Water table depth, slope, and bedrock are not issues of concern. The following Best Management Practices will be followed for all projects. Locate trails over flat, stable, well-drained sites to the greatest extent possible; locate improvements to minimize necessary cut and fill; locate improvements away from streams, wetlands, unstable slopes and stream/wetland crossings to the greatest extent possible; avoid channeling public recreation to areas where sensitive species are known to exist; limit the size and number of improvements to the minimum necessary to meet the intended use; minimize tree cutting; use proper drainage devices, such as water bars and broad-based dips, to prevent erosion and damage to improvements and use soil stabilization practices on exposed soil around construction areas immediately after construction. Proposed public use is anticipated to have very few impacts on the landscape, since public use is limited to designated trails.

#### Question #7 Impact on Plants and Animals

j. Other impacts:

While any project in a forest setting may impact flora and fauna, proposed management actions mostly utilize existing property infrastructure and resources (trails mostly use existing forest management roads and trails). Only minimal tree removal and brushing is anticipated. Some trails will require minimal grading. Noise and emissions from public motorized use have potential to impact wildlife, but impacts are anticipated to be small. These impacts are similar to those which occur from forest management equipment which is regularly operated on the property. The NYS Breeding Bird Atlas identifies American bittern (special concern), Bald eagle (threatened), Common loon (special concern), Cooper's hawk (special concern), Northern goshawk (special concern), Osprey (special concern), Red-shouldered Hawk (special concern), Sharp-shinned Hawk (special concern) in survey blocks encompassing the Big Moose Tract. Wood turtles (special concern) have also been confirmed within survey blocks encompassing the Big Moose Tract. Proposed management actions are not anticipated to impact these species. Since most proposed facilities utilize existing forest management roads and trails, public use will have few impacts on plants and animals. Management proposals will afford protections to core sections of utilized deer wintering areas and will avoid fragmenting travel corridors between them.

See Attachment to Part 3 FEAF

#### Determination of Significance - Type 1 and Unlisted Actions

SEQR Status: ☒ Type 1 ☐ Unlisted

Identify portions of EAF completed for this Project: ☒ Part 1 ☒ Part 2 ☒ Part 3

FEAF 2019

## Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan

Upon review of the information recorded on this EAF, as noted, plus this additional support information  
A location map and map depicting infrastructure and proposed public recreation facilities are attached. Public use of the property will be consistent with proposed facilities and existing uses.

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and considering both the magnitude and importance of each identified potential impact, it is the conclusion of the  
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation as lead agency that:

☒ A. This project will result in no significant adverse impacts on the environment, and, therefore, an environmental impact statement need not be prepared. Accordingly, this negative declaration is issued.

☐ B. Although this project could have a significant adverse impact on the environment, that impact will be avoided or substantially mitigated because of the following conditions which will be required by the lead agency:

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There will, therefore, be no significant adverse impacts from the project as conditioned, and, therefore, this conditioned negative declaration is issued. A conditioned negative declaration may be used only for UNLISTED actions (see 6 NYCRR 617.7(d)).

☐ C. This Project may result in one or more significant adverse impacts on the environment, and an environmental impact statement must be prepared to further assess the impact(s) and possible mitigation and to explore alternatives to avoid or reduce those impacts. Accordingly, this positive declaration is issued.

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Name of Action: Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plan

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Name of Lead Agency: New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: Kramer Kwaczala

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Title of Responsible Officer: Forester 1

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Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: *Kramer Kwaczala* Date: 1/23/2023

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Signature of Preparer (if different from Responsible Officer) *Matthew Nowak* Date: 1/23/2023

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**For Further Information:**

Contact Person: Matthew Nowak

Address: 7327 State Route 812 Lowville NY 13367

Telephone Number: (315) 376-3521

E-mail: [matthew.nowak@dec.ny.gov](mailto:matthew.nowak@dec.ny.gov)

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

Chief Executive Officer of the political subdivision in which the action will be principally located (e.g., Town / City / Village of)

Other involved agencies (if any)

Applicant (if any)

Environmental Notice Bulletin: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/enb/enb.html>

**PRINT FULL FORM**

Page 2 of 2

## Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan



Attachment to Part 3 FEAF

Question #9 Impact on Aesthetic Resources

g. Other impacts:

Clearing individual trees near the summit of Stillwater Mountain will improve the view from the fire tower, and will also make the tower slightly more visible from surrounding lands. Cutting individual trees will not meaningfully change aesthetics of this area, as the Big Moose Tract is managed for commercial timber harvesting where tree cutting regularly occurs.

Question #10 Impact on Historic and Archaeological Resources

a. The proposed action may occur wholly or partially within, or substantially contiguous to, any buildings, archaeological site or district which is listed on the National or State Register of Historic Places, or that have been determined by the Commissioner of the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation to be eligible for listing on the State Register of Historic Places.

Stillwater Fire Tower

The tower is listed as a government fire observation station which includes the fire tower and observer's cabin. The fire tower is located on the Big Moose Tract and the observer's cabin is located on Forest Preserve. The tower is one of 34 still standing in the Adirondacks from an original 57 built within the blue line. The original tower built by Ver Planck Colvin in 1882 was replaced by a steel fire tower built in 1919 which is still standing. The hole that once held his copper marker is visible on the summit bedrock.

Remsen Lake Placid Travel Corridor

The Corridor is listed under New York Central Railroad Adirondack Division Historic District with the historic function listed as rail related transportation and contributing resources, which include rail activity related buildings and structures. The railroad was constructed in 1882 by William Seward Webb. The line was operated continuously by the New York Central Railroad, and then the Penn Central Railroad, until freight service ceased in 1972.

Public use of the property, construction of a snowmobile trail, creation of alternative snowmobile routes and maintenance of hiking and snowmobile trails will have only a minimal impact on the property and the surrounding area's resources. No significant adverse environmental impacts will result from the actions proposed in this Recreation Management Plan. Actions in this plan are minor in nature and of short duration. In addition, all projects will follow Best Management Practices as set forth in this Full EAF/Negative Declaration and other cited documents minimizing the potential for any impacts.



## C. NYSDEC and Landowner Review

### Declaration

The New York Department of Environmental Conservation has the responsibility of managing public access and recreation on the Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement, in accordance with the encumbering conservation easement. This Recreation Management Plan is consistent with the purpose, terms and conditions of the conservation easement. RMP management actions are approved for implementing public recreation on the easement property. Notwithstanding the foregoing, should any discrepancies arise between the RMP and the Conservation Easement, the Conservation Easement will prevail.

ACCEPTED BY Lyme Adirondack Forest Company

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
                    [name]  
                    [title]

ACCEPTED BY NYS Department of Environmental Conservation

By: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Fiona Watt, Director  
Division of Lands & Forests

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**Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement  
Draft Recreation Management Plan**

## D. APA Review Letter



New York State  
Adirondack  
Park Agency

KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor

BARBARA RICE  
Executive Director

May 1, 2023

Keith Rivers - [keith.rivers@dec.ny.gov](mailto:keith.rivers@dec.ny.gov)  
NYSDEC Division of Lands & Forests, Region 6  
317 Washington Street  
Watertown, NY 13601

**RE: Agency Review of RMP for Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement**

Dear Keith Rivers:

The following comments are provided on the February 2023 Recreation Management Plan (RMP) for the Big Moose Tract conservation easement, owned by Lyme Adirondack Forest Company. Our review is pursuant to the April 13, 2010 *"Memorandum of Understanding between the Adirondack Park Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Concerning State-Owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park"*.

The property contains a section of the Independence River (Scenic), designated by the New York State Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act. Within 100 feet of the mean high water mark of designated rivers, the establishment of roads and trails for motorized recreation use, and most tree cutting would require Agency review and permitting. See the attached River Corridors flyer for more information.

Shorelines of navigable waterbodies are subject to shoreline restrictions, pursuant to Section 806 of the APA Act. See the attached Shoreline Restrictions flyer for more information.

The activities proposed in the RMP do not require Agency notice and review subject to Section 814 of the APA Act. See the attached review table for identification of proposed minor activities that do not require Agency consultation or review, and those that are subject to Agency consultation.

If any activities may involve or potentially impact wetlands, prior Adirondack Park Agency review and approval is required. If you have reason to believe that any particular proposal or action may involve wetlands, please contact the Agency to arrange a site visit prior to undertaking the project. See attached Freshwater Wetlands flyer for more information.

P.O. Box 99 • 1133 NYS Route 86 • Ray Brook, NY 12977 • Tel: (518) 891-4050 • [www.apa.ny.gov](http://www.apa.ny.gov)

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**Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement  
Draft Recreation Management Plan**

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the Agency.

Sincerely,



David J. Plante, AICP CEP  
Deputy Director – Regulatory Programs

Enclosures: River Corridors Flyer, Shoreline Restrictions Flyer, Freshwater Wetlands Flyer

cc: Jim Sessions, DEC Lands and Forests - [jim.sessions@dec.ny.gov](mailto:jim.sessions@dec.ny.gov)  
Fred Munk, Supervisor of Natural Resources, Region 6 - [fred.munk@dec.ny.gov](mailto:fred.munk@dec.ny.gov)  
Matt Nowak, Natural Resources Planner, Region 6 - [matthew.nowak@dec.ny.gov](mailto:matthew.nowak@dec.ny.gov)

MOU New Land Use and Development Review Potential	Section Number	Proposed Activity
Minor Activities-No Agency Consultation or Review	II (b)(6)	Placement or construction of new kiosks, signs, trail registers and trail markers on any existing or new road, trail, parking area, boat launch, property boundaries, structures and trailheads.
Minor Activities Requiring Inter-agency Consultation Only	II (c)(2)	New public use of snowmobiles on existing roads that do not go to a Forest Preserve boundary for the purpose of providing access to the Forest Preserve. <i>Woods Lake Road Alternative Trail and Birch Creek Alternative Trail.</i>
	II (c)(7)	Construction of any new roads or trails not exceeding one mile in length that connect two existing roads or trails and are intended for public motorized use including snowmobiles. <i>New 0.3-mile segment of Stillwater Spur Alternative Trail.</i>
Activities Which Require Agency Notice and Review	II (d)	None identified.
Freshwater Wetlands Act	III	Improvements to existing roads, trails, or any other activity will require Agency review if involving wetlands including fill in or adjacent to wetlands.
Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act	IV	Within 100 feet of the mean high water mark of the Independence River, the establishment of roads and trails for motorized recreation use, and most cutting and disturbance to trees would require Agency review and permitting.

## E. Wildlife Species Lists

### 4) Breeding Bird Atlas Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Behavior Code(s)	NY Legal Status
Alder Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax alnorum</i>	FY, S2, X1	Protected
American Bittern	<i>Botaurus lentiginosus</i>	S2	Protected-Special Concern
American Black Duck	<i>Anas rubripes</i>	X1	Game Species
American Crow	<i>Corvus brachyrhynchos</i>	P2, FL, X1	Game Species
American Goldfinch	<i>Spinus tristis</i>	P2, S2, T2, X1	Protected
American Redstart	<i>Setophaga ruticilla</i>	DD, FY, S2, X1	Protected
American Robin	<i>Turdus migratorius</i>	FL, FY	Protected
American Three-toed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides dorsalis</i>	FL	Protected
American Woodcock	<i>Scolopax minor</i>	P2, X1	Game Species
Bald Eagle	<i>Haliaeetus leucocephalus</i>	X1	Threatened
Baltimore Oriole	<i>Icterus galbula</i>	X1	Protected
Barn Swallow	<i>Hirundo rustica</i>	NY, ON, X1	Protected
Barred Owl	<i>Strix varia</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Bay-breasted Warbler	<i>Dendroica castanea</i>	X1	Protected
Belted Kingfisher	<i>Megasceryle alcyon</i>	B2, FY, ON, P2, S2, X1	Protected
Black-and-white Warbler	<i>Mniotilta varia</i>	FY, S2, X1	Protected
Black-backed Woodpecker	<i>Picoides arcticus</i>	FY, P2, X1	Protected
Black-billed Cuckoo	<i>Coccyzus erythrophthalmus</i>	S2	Protected
Blackburnian Warbler	<i>Dendroica fusca</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Black-capped Chickadee	<i>Poecile atricapillus</i>	FL, FY, P2, T2	Protected
Black-throated Blue Warbler	<i>Dendroica caerulescens</i>	FY, S2, T2	Protected
Black-throated Green Warbler	<i>Dendroica virens</i>	NY, S2, X1	Protected
Blue Jay	<i>Cyanocitta cristata</i>	FL, FY, D2, P2, X1	Protected
Blue-headed Vireo	<i>Vireo solitarius</i>	DD, FY, S2, X1	Protected
Boreal Chickadee	<i>Poecile hudsonicus</i>	FL, P2, X1	Protected
Broad-winged Hawk	<i>Buteo platypterus</i>	FL, FY, X1	Protected
Brown Creeper	<i>Certhia americana</i>	DD, S2, X1	Protected

Brown-headed Cowbird	<i>Molothrus ater</i>	P2, X1	Protected
Canada Goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>	FL, P2	Game Species
Canada Warbler	<i>Wilsonia canadensis</i>	D2, FY, S2, X1	Protected
Cedar Waxwing	<i>Bombycilla cedrorum</i>	B2, FY, F2, P2, X1	Protected
Chestnut-sided Warbler	<i>Dendroica pensylvanica</i>	DD, FY, S2, T2, X1	Protected
Chimney Swift	<i>Chaetura pelagica</i>	D2, ON, P2	Protected
Chipping Sparrow	<i>Spizella passerina</i>	FY, NY, S2	Protected
Common Goldeneye	<i>Bucephala clangula</i>	FL	Game Species
Common Grackle	<i>Quiscalus quiscula</i>	FL, FY, X1	Protected
Common Loon	<i>Gavia immer</i>	FL, FY, NE, X1	Protected-Special Concern
Common Merganser	<i>Mergus merganser</i>	FL	Game Species
Common Raven	<i>Corvus corax</i>	FL, FY, P2, X1	Protected
Common Yellowthroat	<i>Geothlypis trichas</i>	DD, FY	Protected
Cooper's Hawk	<i>Accipiter cooperii</i>	T2, X1	Protected-Special Concern
Dark-eyed Junco	<i>Junco hyemalis</i>	FL, FY, S2	Protected
Downy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides pubescens</i>	FL, T2, P2, X1	Protected
Eastern Bluebird	<i>Sialia sialis</i>	ON, X1	Protected
Eastern Kingbird	<i>Tyrannus tyrannus</i>	DD, ON, X1	Protected
Eastern Phoebe	<i>Sayornis phoebe</i>	NY, ON, P2, S1, X1	Protected
Eastern Wood-Pewee	<i>Contopus virens</i>	DD, FY, ON, S2, X1	Protected
European Starling	<i>Sturnus vulgaris</i>	FY	Unprotected
Evening Grosbeak	<i>Coccothraustes vespertinus</i>	P2	Protected
Golden-crowned Kinglet	<i>Regulus satrapa</i>	FY, S2, X1	Protected
Gray Catbird	<i>Dumetella carolinensis</i>	DD, FY, X1	Protected
Gray Jay	<i>Perisoreus canadensis</i>	FL, X1	Protected
Great Blue Heron	<i>Ardea herodias</i>	FL, P2, X1	Protected
Great Crested Flycatcher	<i>Myiarchus crinitus</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Hairy Woodpecker	<i>Picoides villosus</i>	FY, FL, N2, P2, S2, T2, X1	Protected
Hermit Thrush	<i>Catharus guttatus</i>	FY, D2, NE, S2, X1	Protected
Herring Gull	<i>Larus argentatus</i>	X1	Protected
Hooded Merganser	<i>Lophodytes cucullatus</i>	FL, P2, X1	Game Species
House Wren	<i>Troglodytes aedon</i>	X1	Protected
Indigo Bunting	<i>Passerina cyanea</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Killdeer	<i>Charadrius vociferus</i>	FL, X1	Protected
Least Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax minimus</i>	FY, S2	Protected

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Lincoln's Sparrow	<i>Melospiza lincolnii</i>	D2, FY, S2	Protected
Magnolia Warbler	<i>Dendroica magnolia</i>	DD, FY, NE, S2, T2	Protected
Mallard	<i>Anas platyrhynchos</i>	FL, P2, X1	Game Species
Merlin	<i>Falco columbarius</i>	NY	Protected
Mourning Dove	<i>Zenaida macroura</i>	P2	Protected
Mourning Warbler	<i>Oporornis philadelphia</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Nashville Warbler	<i>Vermivora ruficapilla</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Northern Flicker	<i>Colaptes auratus</i>	D2, FY, ON, X1, P2	Protected
Northern Goshawk	<i>Accipiter gentilis</i>	X1	Protected-Special Concern
Northern Parula	<i>Parula americana</i>	B2, DD, S2	Protected
Northern Saw-whet Owl	<i>Aegolius acadicus</i>	S2	Protected
Northern Waterthrush	<i>Seiurus noveboracensis</i>	S2, T2, X1	Protected
Olive-sided Flycatcher	<i>Contopus cooperi</i>	B2, D2, S2, X1	Protected
Osprey	<i>Pandion haliaetus</i>	FY, X1	Protected-Special Concern
Ovenbird	<i>Seiurus aurocapilla</i>	DD, S2, X1	Protected
Philadelphia Vireo	<i>Vireo philadelphicus</i>	D2	Protected
Pileated Woodpecker	<i>Dryocopus pileatus</i>	N2, P2, S2, X1	Protected
Pine Siskin	<i>Spinus pinus</i>	P2, T2	Protected
Purple Finch	<i>Carpodacus purpureus</i>	D2, FY, FL, S2, X1	Protected
Red Crossbill	<i>Loxia curvirostra</i>	FL	Protected
Red-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta canadensis</i>	FL, FY, S2, X1	Protected
Red-eyed Vireo	<i>Vireo olivaceus</i>	DD, D2, FY, NY, S2	Protected
Red-shouldered Hawk	<i>Buteo lineatus</i>	D2	Protected-Special Concern
Red-tailed Hawk	<i>Buteo jamaicensis</i>	X1	Protected
Red-winged Blackbird	<i>Agelaius phoeniceus</i>	DD, NE, P2	Protected
Ring-necked Duck	<i>Aythya collaris</i>	FL, X1	Game Species
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	<i>Pheucticus ludovicianus</i>	FY, S2, X1	Protected
Ruby-throated Hummingbird	<i>Archilochus colubris</i>	DD, P2, X1	Protected
Ruffed Grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>	FL	Game Species
Rusty Blackbird	<i>Euphagus carolinus</i>	FL, FY, S2, X1	Protected
Scarlet Tanager	<i>Piranga olivacea</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Sharp-shinned Hawk	<i>Accipiter striatus</i>	FL, FY, X1	Protected-Special Concern
Song Sparrow	<i>Melospiza melodia</i>	FY, D2, S2	Protected
Spotted Sandpiper	<i>Actitis macularius</i>	FL, P2, X1	Protected

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**Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement  
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Swainson's Thrush	<i>Catharus ustulatus</i>	D2, S2, X1	Protected
Swamp Sparrow	<i>Melospiza georgiana</i>	DD, FY, S2, T2, X1	Protected
Tennessee Warbler	<i>Vermivora peregrina</i>	X1	Protected
Tree Swallow	<i>Tachycineta bicolor</i>	NE, ON, X1	Protected
Turkey Vulture	<i>Cathartes aura</i>	P2, X1	Protected
White-breasted Nuthatch	<i>Sitta carolinensis</i>	FL, FY, P2, X1	Protected
White-throated Sparrow	<i>Zonotrichia albicollis</i>	DD, FY	Protected
White-winged Crossbill	<i>Loxia leucoptera</i>	FL, FY, P2, T2	Protected
Wild Turkey	<i>Meleagris gallopavo</i>	FL, X1	Game Species
Willow Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax traillii</i>	X1	Protected
Wilson's Snipe	<i>Gallinago delicata</i>	S2, X1	Game Species
Winter Wren	<i>Troglodytes troglodytes</i>	DD, FL, FY, S2, T2, X1	Protected
Wood Duck	<i>Aix sponsa</i>	D2, FL, P2	Game Species
Wood Thrush	<i>Hylocichla mustelina</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Yellow Warbler	<i>Dendroica petechia</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Yellow-bellied Flycatcher	<i>Empidonax flaviventris</i>	S2, X1	Protected
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	<i>Sphyrapicus varius</i>	FL, NY, ON, P2, T2, X1	Protected
Yellow-rumped Warbler	<i>Dendroica coronata</i>	DD, FY, P2, S2, X1	Protected

\*Codes that end in 1 indicate a possible occurrence, codes that end in 2 indicate a probable occurrence and codes that end in a letter indicate a confirmed sighting

## 2) Herp Species

Common Name	Scientific Name	Source
Spotted Salamander	<i>Ambystoma maculatum</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Red-spotted Newt	<i>Notophthalmus v. viridescens</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Northern Dusky Salamander	<i>Desmognathus fuscus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Allegheny Dusky Salamander	<i>Desmognathus ochrophaeus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Eastern Red-backed Salamander	<i>Plethodon c. cinereus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Northern Spring Salamander	<i>Gyrinophilus p. porphyriticus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Northern Two-lined Salamander	<i>Eurycea bislineata</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Eastern American Toad	<i>Anaxyrus a. americanus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Spring Peeper	<i>Pseudacris c. crucifer</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Bullfrog	<i>Lithobates catesbeianus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas

Green Frog	<i>Lithobates clamitans melanota</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Mink Frog	<i>Lithobates septentrionalis</i>	NYSDEC Biologist - likely present
Wood Frog	<i>Lithobates sylvaticus</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Northern Leopard Frog	<i>Lithobates pipiens</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Pickerel Frog	<i>Lithobates palustris</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Common Snapping Turtle	<i>Chelydra s. serpentina</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Painted Turtle	<i>Chrysemys picta</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Wood Turtle	<i>Clemmys insculpta</i>	NYSDEC Biologist – likely present
Common Garter Snake	<i>Thamnophis sirtalis</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Redbellied Snake	<i>Storeria o. occipitomaculata</i>	NYS Herp Atlas
Smooth Greensnake	<i>Liochlorophis vernalis</i>	NYSDEC Biologist - likely present



## F. Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail Register Data

Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail Register Data - Table

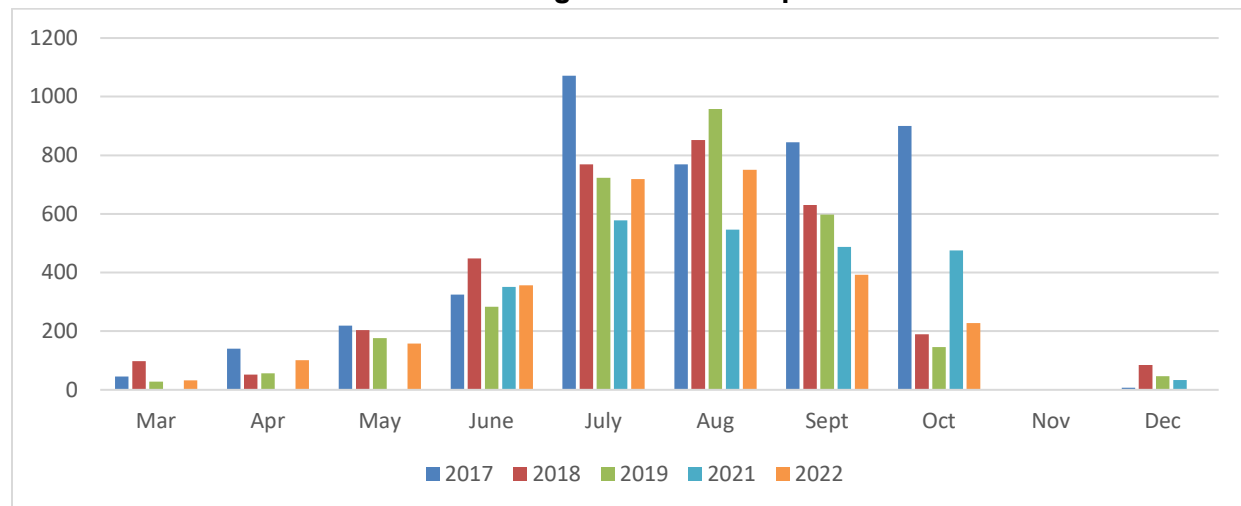
	2016 <sup>1</sup>	2017	2018	2019	2020 <sup>2</sup>	2021 <sup>3</sup>	2022
Jan	ND	49	43	36	119	102	47
Feb	ND	87	78	29	65	ND	49
Mar	ND	45	92	28	276	ND	32
Apr	ND	139	52	56	491	ND	101
May	ND	219	204	176	1154	ND	158
Jun	ND	313	448	262	1209	351	357
Jul	1241	1000	714	683	1831.1	578	719
Aug	1082	769	839	899	ND	534	751
Sep	1088	840	627	588	3266	460	393
Oct	665	900	189	146	1707	463	228
Nov	-	-	-	ND	49	ND	ND
Dec	36	7	73	47	35.7	33	ND
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4112</b>	<b>4368</b>	<b>3359</b>	<b>2950</b>		<b>2521</b>	<b>2835</b>

<sup>1</sup> The Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail opened in July of 2016. No data is available prior to this.

<sup>2</sup> In 2020 the trail register was stolen. Trail counter data is included but appears to be an overcount (can't be confirmed/calibrated due to missing register). The trail counter had an error in August and was later removed from the site as it was also tampered with.

<sup>3</sup> In 2021, the trail register book was taken from the register kiosk in Spring – no user data is available for February through May.

Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail Register Data - Graph



## G. Stillwater Mountain Interpretive Panel

**WELCOME TO**




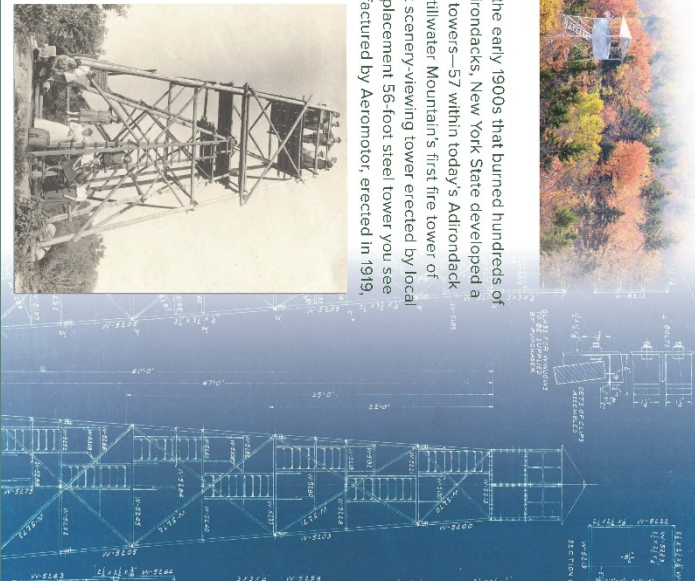
# Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower

**1882 Survey**


The first structure on this site was a signal tower built of logs in 1882 for the New York State Adirondack Survey led by legendary Adirondack surveyor, Verplanck Colvin. Surveyors built signal towers at prominent locations, sighting from tower to tower to map elevations and distances between towers. The survey marker set under the signal tower in 1882 (bore hole still visible) was stolen, but found in New Jersey and returned to DEC in 2014. A replica is set near the tower's base.

**Fire Towers**


In response to forest fires in the early 1900s that burned hundreds of thousands of acres in the Adirondacks, New York State developed a network of 124 fire-detection towers—57 within today's Adirondack Park. In 1912, the state built Stillwater Mountain's first fire tower of wood, over an earlier 25-foot scenery-viewing tower erected by local residents (see photo). The replacement 56-foot steel tower you see here is a model LS-40, manufactured by Aermotor, erected in 1919, and operated through 1988. Fifteen individuals served as fire observers. The state built an observer's cabin near the base of the mountain in 1932, then a replacement cabin in 1966, which still stands near the trailhead on Big Moose Road.

**NOTE:** This tower is on private land. Enjoy your visit while respecting private property. The tower is closed to the public from the second Tuesday in October through December 20.



This tower is part of the Adirondack Park "Fire Tower Chain." Visit [www.dec.state.ny.us/dec/adirondack/parks/chain.htm](http://www.dec.state.ny.us/dec/adirondack/parks/chain.htm) for more information.



NYDEC, Lowville Office  
7327 State Route 812  
Lowville, NY 13357  
Tel: 518/835-1100, Fax: 518/835-1101

## Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan

## H. Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail Visitor Survey

1) How many other groups did you encounter during your hike? (not including time spent at the trailhead or fire tower/summit)

2) Did encounters with other groups negatively impact your on-trail experience?  
*Circle one.*

1-Yes

2- No

3) About how many other individuals were at the summit/fire tower while you were there? *Circle one.*

None

1-2 people

3-6 people

6-10 people

10-20 people

20+ people

4) Did encounters with other groups negatively impact your experience at the summit/fire tower? *Circle one.*

1-Yes

2- No

5) Did you observe litter, human waste, graffiti, tree carvings or other user created damage during your hike. *Circle one.*

1-Yes

2- No

6) The trail is well maintained and its character fits with the surrounding wild forest. *Circle one.*

1 – Strongly Agree

2 – Agree

3- Neutral

4 – Disagree

5 – Strongly Disagree

7) What is your level of satisfaction with your visit to Stillwater Mountain? *Circle one.*

1 – Very Satisfied

2 – Somewhat Satisfied

3- Neutral

4 – Dissatisfied

5 – Very Dissatisfied

8) Do you have any other comments you would like to submit to the land manager relating to the Stillwater Mountain Fire Tower Trail?

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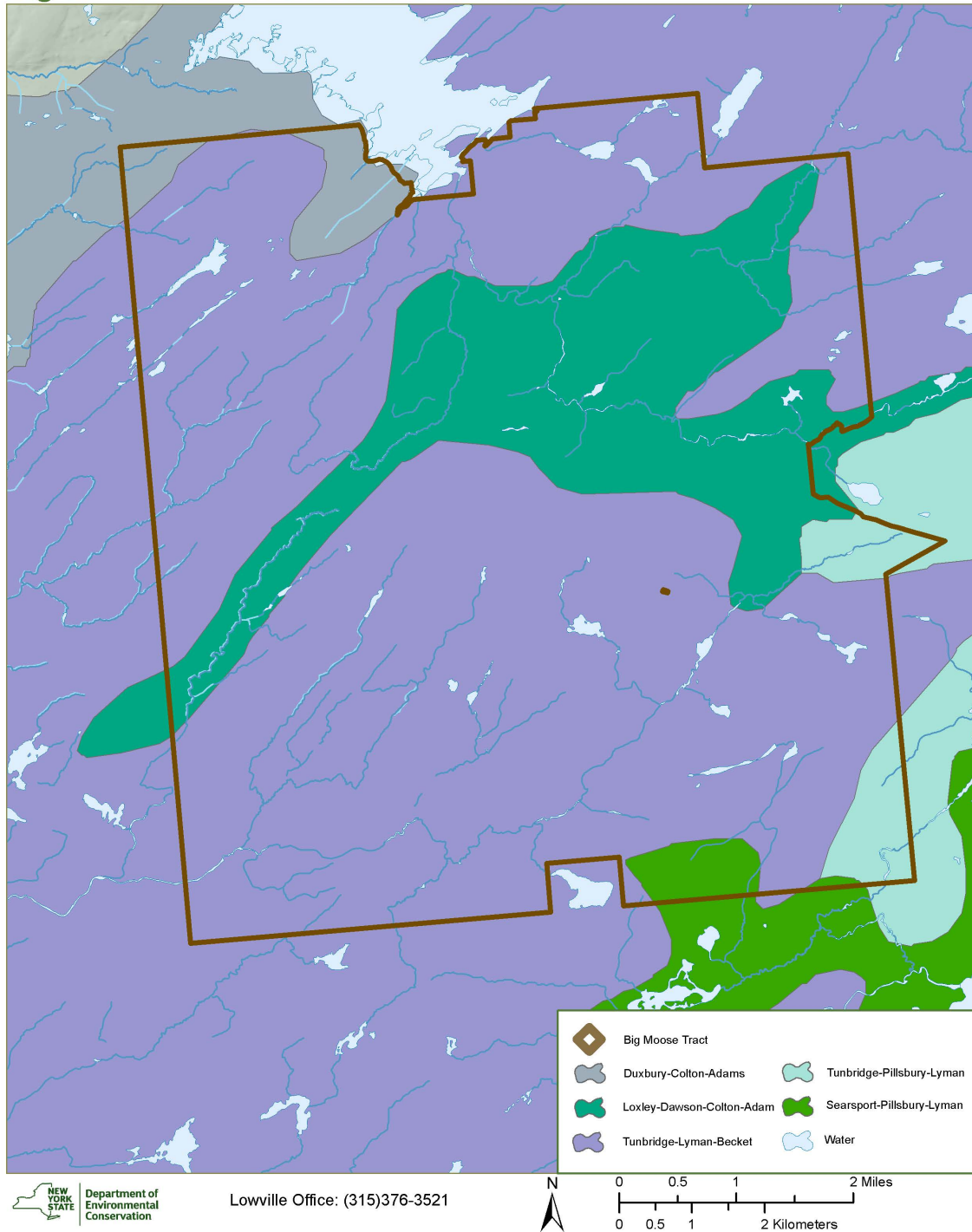
**Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement  
Draft Recreation Management Plan**

## **I. Maps**

## Soils Map

### Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement

*Soils Map*



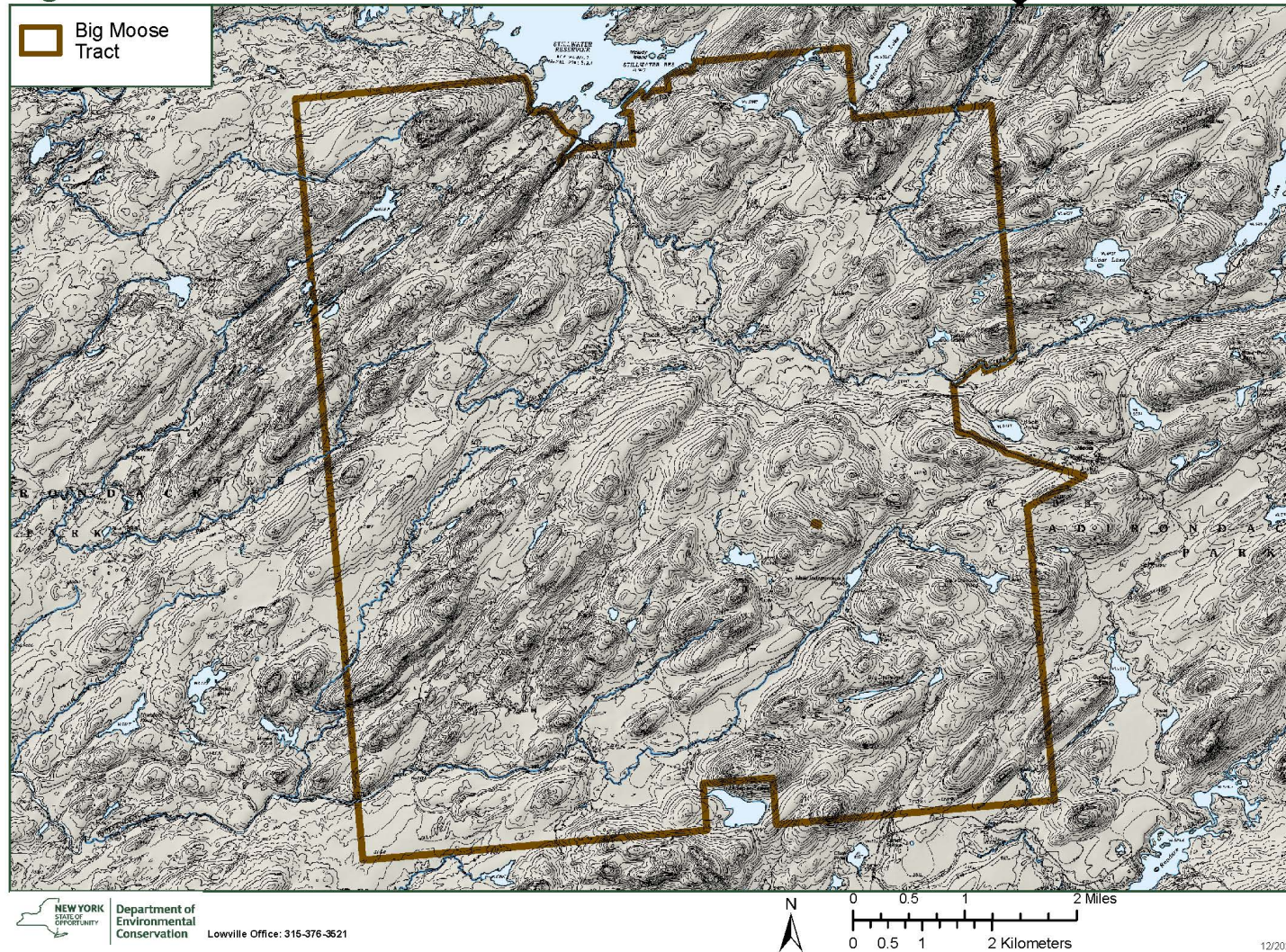
### Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan



# Topography Map

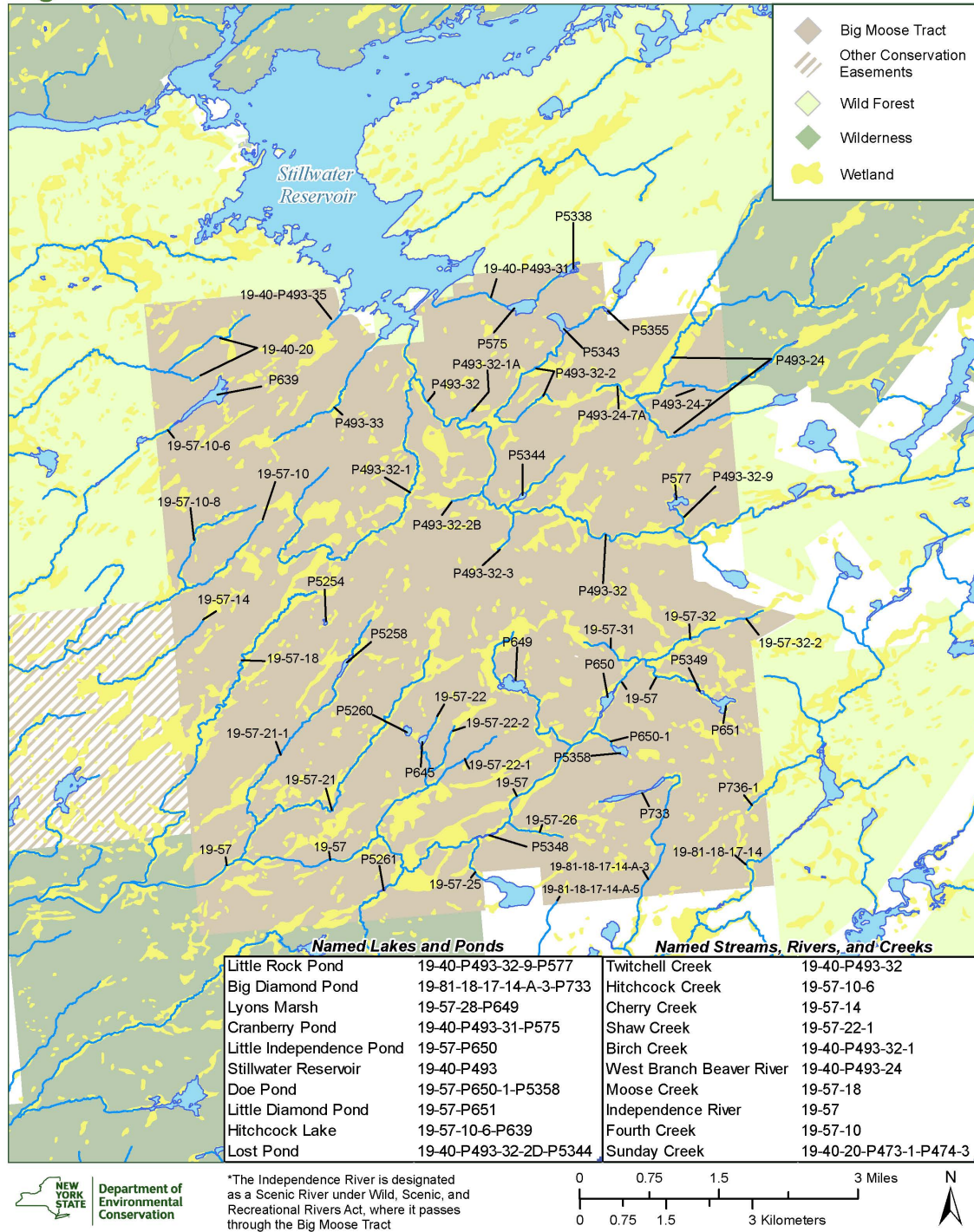
## Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement

*Topographic Map*

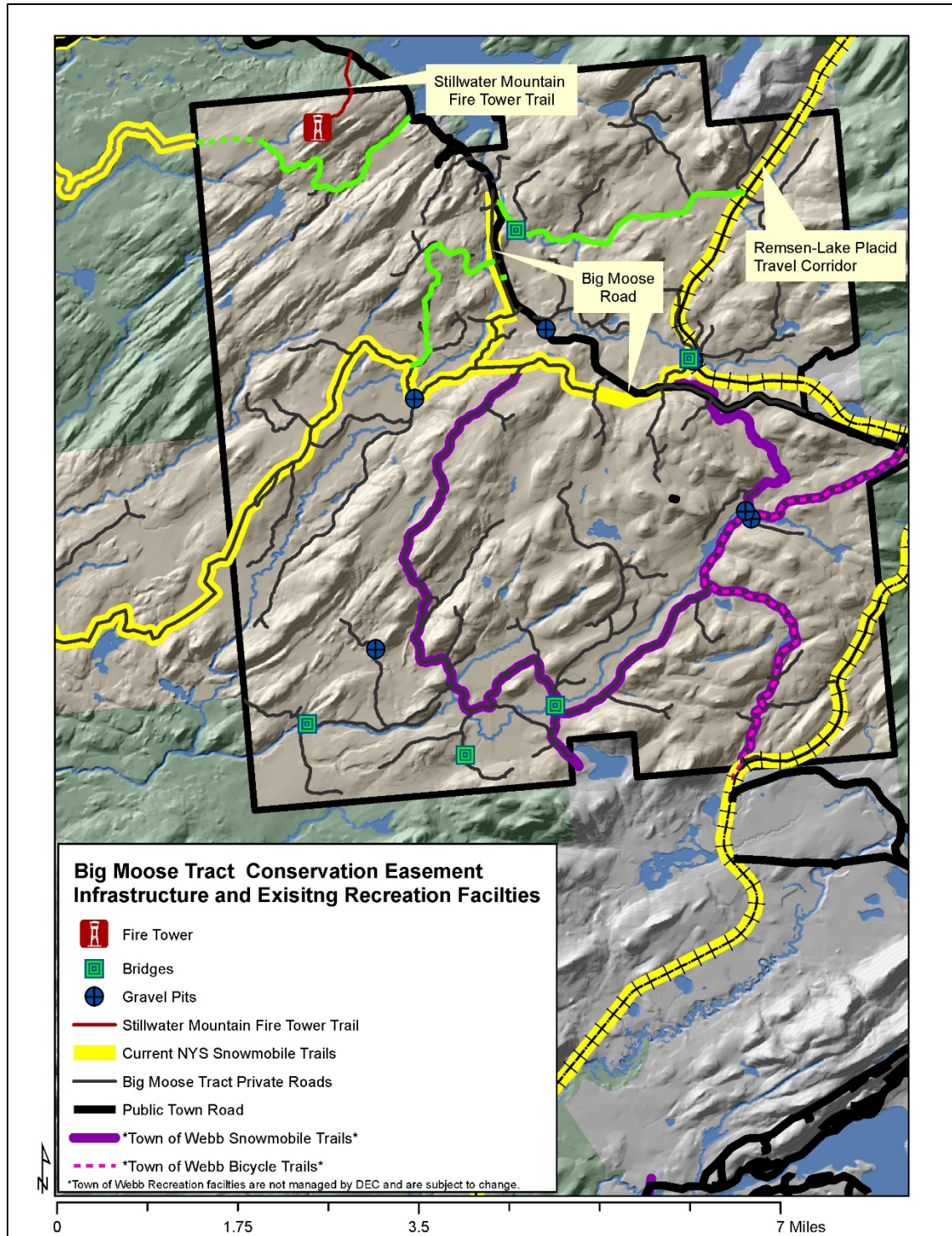




### Hydrology Map



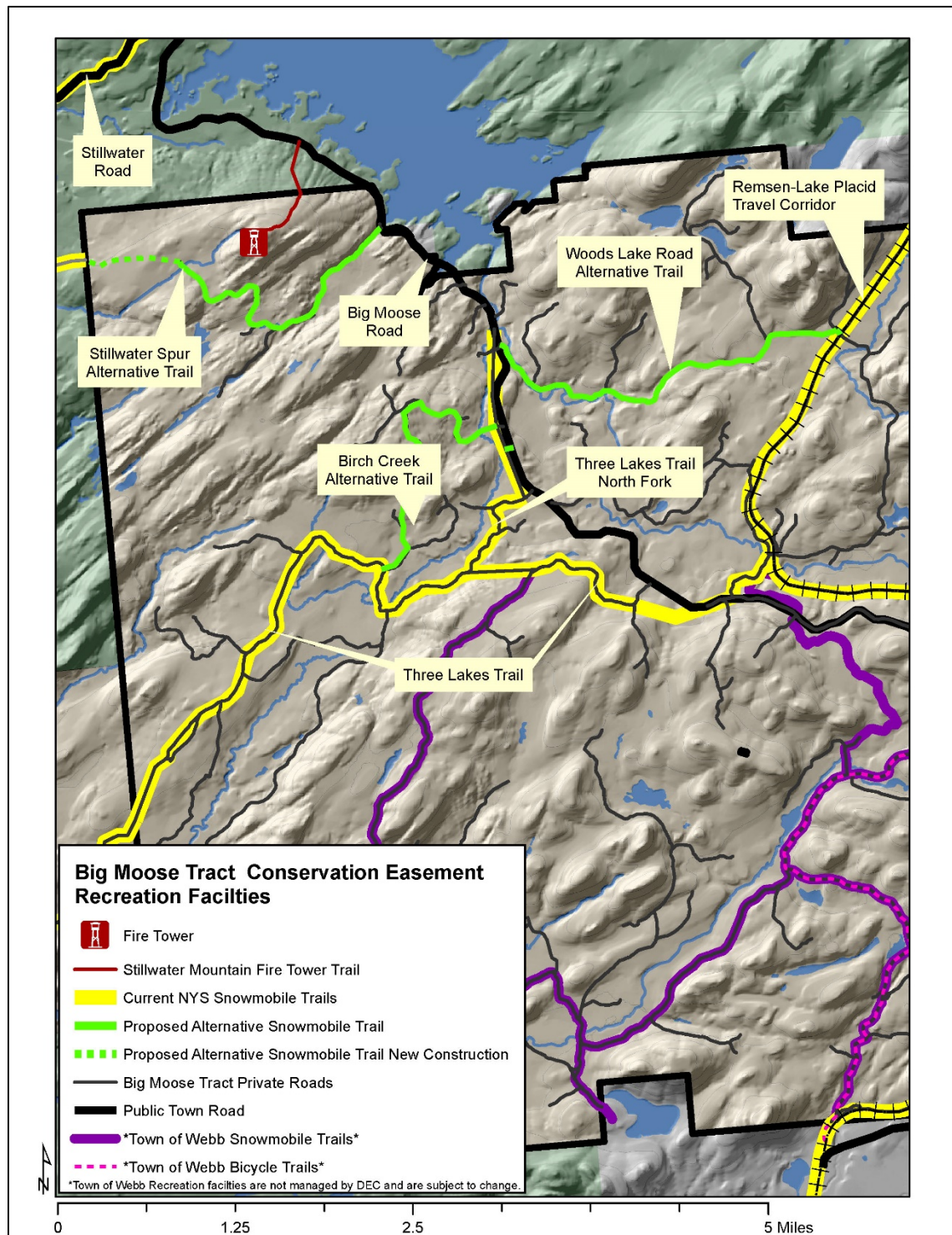
## Existing Infrastructure and Recreation Facilities on the BMT



### Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan



## Proposed Recreation Facilities on the BMT



## Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan