



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

GRASS RIVER CONSERVATION EASEMENT RECREATION MANAGEMENT PLAN

County of St. Lawrence
Towns of Clare, Clifton and Colton

**NEW YORK STATE
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS – REGION 6**

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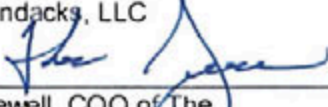
REVIEW DECLARATION

New York Department of Environmental Conservation has the responsibility of managing public access and recreation on the Grass River property, in accordance with the content of the conservation easement (CE). This Recreation Management Plan (RMP) is consistent with the terms, conditions and purposes of the conservation easement. RMP 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 LANDOWNER:

MWF Adirondacks, LLC

By: _____


Ken Sewell, COO of The
Molpus Woodlands Group,
LLC, its authorized agent and
property manager

12-10-18
Date

ACCEPTED BY:

Department of Environmental Conservation, New York

By: _____


Robert K. Davies, State Forester
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Lands & Forests

1/2/19
Date

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PREFACE

Use of Conservation Easements

The Legislature of the State of New York has declared the public policy of the State to be the conservation, preservation, and protection of its environmental assets and natural and man-made resources. In addition to purchasing conservation lands on behalf of the People of the State, the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (Department or DEC) also protects land and natural resources by acquiring less than full interests in land, using a permanent legal agreement called a conservation easement. 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 and sensitive ecosystems, wetlands and riparian areas, scenic areas such as meadows and ridgelines, agricultural land, working forests, and historic sites. The primary function of easements is to limit or eliminate future development and undesirable land uses on a property, while allowing for continued private ownership and traditional management. Some conservation easements allow public access to the protected property and some do not.

New York State acquires conservation easements primarily on properties that buffer existing State lands, provide additional public recreational 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, DEC also holds easements on a variety of other properties across the State.

On most large working forest conservation easement properties, the State has acquired some level of 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. These lands are actively managed for forest products, and many of the companies who own the land also rely on income from private hunting and fishing club leases.

This Recreation Management Plan will explain the combination of public recreational rights the State acquired through the conservation easement and how these rights are to be implemented on the property in a compatible way with the rights (forest management, private recreation activities) which were retained by the landowner.

I. INTRODUCTION

This Recreation Management Plan applies to those lands subject to a conservation easement held by DEC within St. Lawrence County, in the Town(s) of Clare, Clifton, and Colton, referred to herein as the Grass River Conservation Easement (also referred to in this RMP as the “protected property”, “property”, “GRCE”, or “easement property”). This was Acquisition Project #45-268.

A. Purpose of the Recreation Management Plan (RMP)

The Grass River Conservation Easement grants the State of New York specific legal interests in the easement property, including a guaranteed right to permit public access (with certain limitations) to some of the lands for participation in certain natural resource-based outdoor recreation activities.

Public recreation access to privately-owned conservation easement lands is guided by a Recreation Management Plan (RMP) that is developed for each easement property. Preparation of this RMP is required in accordance with some conservation easements. It is the position of the Department to develop an RMP for each conservation easement property and provide a copy to the property owner (“the landowner”) for review even if the Easement may not require the DEC to do such. This RMP addresses the State’s role in planning, implementing, and managing for public access and recreation rights on the Grass River Easement property. It also describes DEC’s planning process and provides opportunities for stakeholders to participate in that process.

This RMP has been developed pursuant to, and is consistent with, relevant provisions of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), Executive Law, NYSDEC rules and regulations, NYSDEC policies and procedures, the NY State Environmental Quality and Review Act (SEQRA), *DEC/APA MOU Concerning State-owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park* (if applicable) and the terms and conditions of the recorded conservation easement document that apply specifically to this Property. The Landowner has been consulted during the public recreation planning process and has had an opportunity to review and comment on this RMP. A Full Environmental Assessment Form (FEAF) has been prepared for this RMP in accordance with SEQRA.

The purpose of a RMP is to establish a planned and written management scenario, to implement the State's rights and protect the property rights of the private fee owner, as specified in the conservation easement. It is intended that such management document remain consistent and in effect over time, despite changes in agency personnel or private land ownership. The RMP integrates consideration of pertinent legislation, legal codes, rules and regulations, policies, easement-specific requirements and conditions, and property-specific information into a single document. Provided in the RMP will be a description of the property and past and present uses; relevant public recreation opportunities and limitations; how public access and recreation will be implemented and managed; who will have responsibility for various management tasks; identification of public recreation facilities that may already exist on the property; new public recreation facilities and improvements proposed to be constructed and maintained; and how public access is anticipated to interact with other uses of the property such as active forest management and private leasing programs. The RMP preparation process and resulting document provides a means for discussing and clarifying pertinent issues, clearly stating management goals and mechanisms, review of the proposed public recreation activities

and actions, and implementing public recreation on the easement property. Periodically RMPs may be revised, updated, or amended.

II. Property Overview

A. Geographic Information

1. Property Description and Access

The Grass River Conservation Easement (GRCE), centered at 74059'W, 44023'N, lies within the greater-Grass River Management Unit (GRMU). The area occupies a geologic/ecologic transition zone between the Adirondack Mountains to the southeast and the St. Lawrence River Valley to the north. Most of the lands within the boundary of the Unit are part of the Grass River watershed, thus yielding the name for the overall unit and easement. The two hundred and eighty-eight (288) square miles GRMU is located completely within the Adirondack Park (Park). All watercourses within the area flow into the St. Lawrence River via the Grass and Raquette Rivers.

The property lies within the townships of Clare, Clifton and Colton. The easement acreage by township is shown below:

Approximate acres by Town (based upon mapped acres within current DEC GIS System)

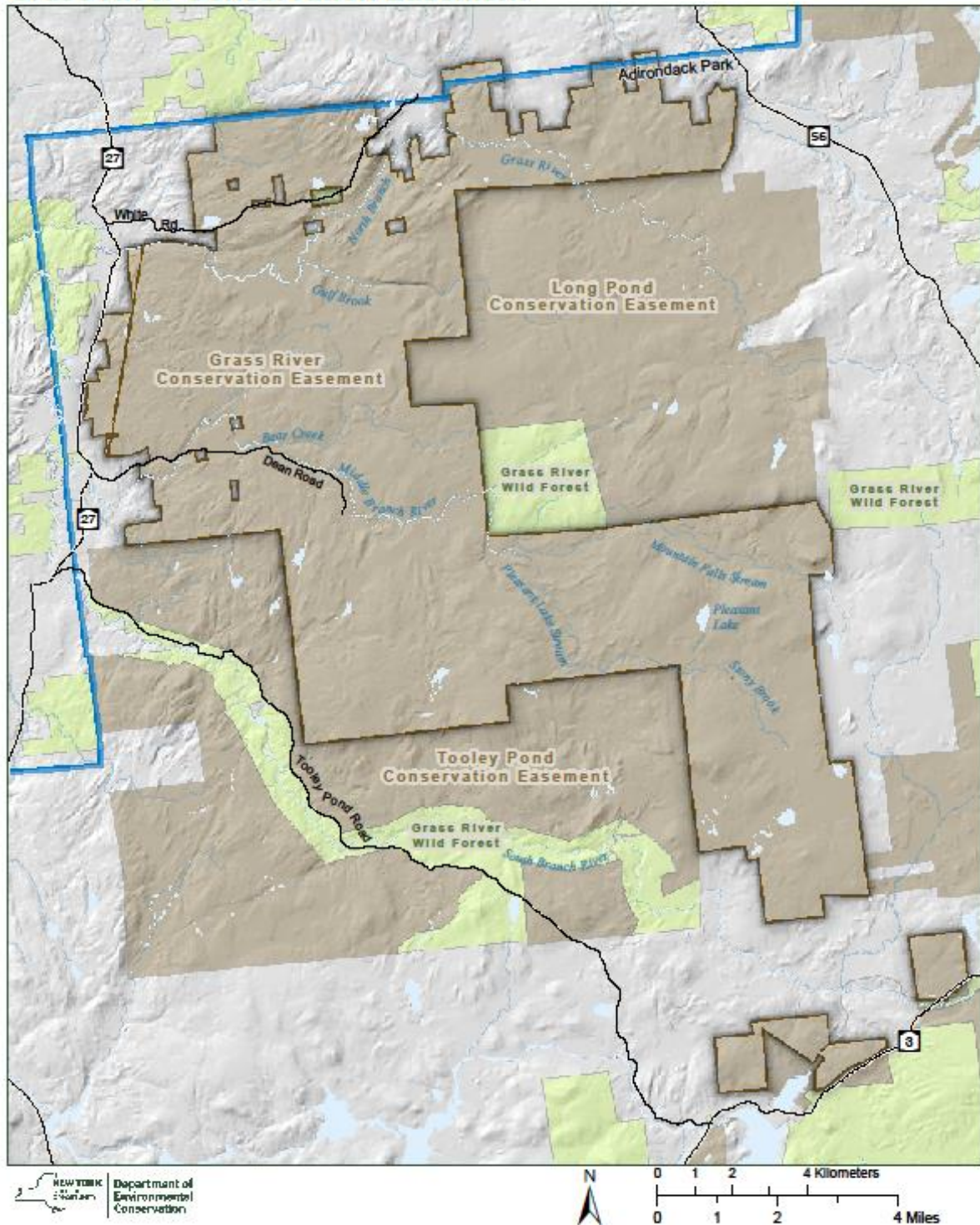
County	Town	Acres
St Lawrence	Clare	30,510
	Clifton	13,816
	Colton	7,624
Total		51,950

Access to the easement is available from Tooley Pond Road in Degrasse, from Dean and White Roads off County Highway 27, at entrances along State Route 3 on the south, and along State Routes 68 and 56 via Orbed, Little John, and Cayey Roads in the north. Interior access is provided by more than fifty (50) miles of improved or partially improved gravel roads.

2. Tract, Parcel or Compartment Descriptions

Within the larger land unit, the Grass River Easement comprises a large contiguous parcel of 50,262 acres and two smaller parcels south of the main section, 1,122 and 566 acres in size. The property is managed as one unit and is not divided into tracts.

Grass River Conservation Easement



B. DEC Grass River Management Unit

The Grass River Management Unit encompasses Forest Preserve parcels and easement lands bounded on the east by State Highway 56, on the south by State Highway 3 and the Oswegatchie River, and the west and north by the Adirondack Park boundary. The unit, located in the northwestern corner of the Adirondack Park, includes approximately 13,000 acres of Forest Preserve and about 106,000 acres of conservation easements located in the Towns of Clare, Clifton, Colton and Fine in St. Lawrence County.

There are five separate Forest Preserve parcels ranging from about 1,300 acres to a little over 6,000 acres. Seven isolated Forest Preserve parcels ranging from about five (5) acres to approximately one hundred (100) acres are also included in the unit.

There are four large easements on corporate owned lands in the unit; Tooley Pond, Long Pond, Seveys, and Grass River. There is one small family easement, the Silver Lake Easement north of Cranberry Lake. There is also an easement for a trail across the Roaring Brook Tract, a private property formerly owned by Lassiter Inc. and now owned by The MWF Group, which allows for a foot trail connecting the Church Pond and Leonard Pond Forest Preserve parcels. A small portion of the Emporium Easement north of State Highway 3, though technically in the GRMU, is managed as part of the Cranberry Lake Unit since the bulk of the ownership is in that unit.

1. Landscape Relationships to other Management Units

Within the boundaries of the GRMU, the GRCE has natural resource based relationships with other eased properties, parcels of Forest Preserve, and privately-owned lands. The units' namesake, the Grass River, flows in two branches (North and Middle) through the easement property. The North Branch of the Grass River originates from Church Pond and the more than 300 acres associated with Fox Marsh located to the east of GRCE. It connects the GRCE to the Middle Branch section of Forest Preserve located outside the northwest corner of the protected property. The Middle Branch of the Grass River emanates from a confluence of smaller tributaries within the GRCE, and flows through the Stone Dam parcel of the Forest Preserve which lies immediately adjacent to the GRCE boundary.

Lying directly adjacent to the Long Pond CE and the northern tract of the Tooley Pond CE, the GRCE shares similar land cover types and wetland complexes with these other properties. Deciduous, evergreen, and mixed forest lands occur in common on all connected lands. The GRCE shares the Brother Ponds, Tooley Pond, Degrasse, and Albert Marsh wetlands with its neighboring tracts too. The Church Pond parcel of the Forest Preserve connects with the GRCE in the east via the Brother Ponds wetland complex as well. These various natural resource commonalities suggest wildlife habitat and natural processes relationships between the easement property and the adjoining lands.

Externally, the GRMU directly borders, from west to east, the Aldrich Pond, Cranberry Lake, Raquette Boreal, and Whitehill Management Units, sharing geologic, hydrologic/riparian, upland community, and habitat connectivity with each as well as with the non-contiguous Bog River Unit to its southeast.

2. Relationship of Public Recreation between Management Units

Due to its size and central location, the GRCE plays a vital role in the connectivity of recreational opportunities within the Grass River Management Unit. Snowmobiling constitutes the primary public recreational use of GRMU lands. Major internal and connector routes make the GRCE and surrounding tracts an important nexus for the regional snowmobile trail system.

Non-motorized recreation within the Unit utilizes the variety of existing trails and roads. The foot trail on Church Pond parcel has not been used enough to maintain, because of the wetlands it crosses. An alternative route will be sought on CE lands so that the public can use the area in an environmentally sound manner.

The GRMU is also a central component of the proposed St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trails System. This proposal would incorporate existing snowmobile trails, easement haul roads, routes currently open only to lessee ATV traffic, and connectors within the GRMU to provide public recreational use for ATVs, snowmobiling, biking, skiing, hiking, dog sledding, and other permitted uses. As proposed, the trail system would involve the Grass River and other conservation easement lands.

Public use of the watercourses and designated roads and trails within the GRCE will be from December 16th through September 30th annually, except for public ATV use on the Multi-Use Trail. The Multi-Use trail will be open for ATV use from approximately May 15th through September 15th, dependent on the weather. During the period from October 1st to December 15th, the landowner has reserved recreation rights to the land with two exceptions: access to Little Blue Mountain continues through October 10th annually, and there is year-round use of a road into the Stone Dam Forest Preserve parcel adjacent to this property.

III. NATURAL and CULTURAL RESOURCES

The Natural and Cultural resources within the GRCE and surrounding GRMU are discussed in detail in the Grass River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan, the Grass River Conservation Easement Baseline Report, and the RMPs for other CEs in the GRMU. For purposes of this Recreation Management Plan, an overview of the properties resources as they pertain to public recreation will be given.

A. Physical Resources

1. Terrain/Topography

The GRCE lies in the northwestern fringe of the Adirondack Mountains of northern New York State. The Adirondack Mountain Region, which covers nearly 20% of the State, is a rugged mountain system composed of metamorphic and igneous rock. Glaciers have removed most of the mineral soil from the mountain region and deposited it in low-lying areas such as the St. Lawrence River Valley and associated foothill regions. The resulting areas of gravel and sandy loam enabled the forest growth and agricultural activities which have shaped the human and natural histories of the Grass River Easement and surrounding region.

Detailed information on area topography can be found on the following USGS topographic maps: Brother Pond, Tooley Pond, Albert Marsh, Stark, West

Pierrepont, Cranberry Lake, Newton Falls, South Edwards, Oswegatchie, Fine, Childwold and Degrasse.

Elevations within the GRCE range from over 1860' on Little Blue Mountain to just under 1000' along sections of the Grass River.

All watercourses within the area flow into the St. Lawrence River via the Grass and Raquette Rivers.

2. Geology and Soils

As the predominant public recreational uses on the tract (i.e. hiking, biking, snowmobiling, etc.) occur on established roads and trails designed for forest management activities, geology and soil data required for recreational planning are minimal. The information becomes more tangible when considerations are being made for the proposed St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trails System as it entails the use of ATV's on sections of the property not currently seeing the types of impacts associated with high levels of motorized use.

The major geologic formation in the Grass River Management Unit is called the fall zone. This zone is a transition from the St. Lawrence River valley, known as the Grenville or Northwest lowlands, and the terraces of the Adirondack foothills. The fall zone is a belt, about 8-10 miles wide, parallel to and southeast of the Grenville lowlands. In St. Lawrence County, this belt lies between the Grenville lowlands and the Childwold terrace, but to the north and south the terrace is absent and the fall zone merges directly into the Adirondack mountain section. The predominant rock underlying the belt is granite gneiss. Meta-sedimentary rocks of the Grenville series are below that.

Soil types inform, to some extent, the types of management and recreation types an area can sustain. Current and proposed recreational activities on the GRCE should be designed and managed consistent with the natural resources unique to the area. Soil types found within the GRCE include:

The Tunbridge Series:

The Tunbridge series consists of moderately deep well drained soils on glaciated uplands. They formed in loamy till. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high or high throughout the mineral soil. Slope ranges from 0 through 75 percent. Mean annual precipitation is about 40 inches, and mean annual temperature is about 44 degrees F. Tunbridge soils are on nearly level through very steep glaciated uplands. They are on mountain side slopes, mountain tops, mountain ridges, hill tops, and hill slopes. Slope ranges from 0 through 75 percent. The soils formed in loamy till of Wisconsin age derived mainly from micaceous schist, gneiss, and phyllite. Mean annual precipitation ranges from about 30 through 50 inches, and the mean annual temperature ranges from 38 through 46 degrees F. The frost-free season ranges from 60 through 160 days. Elevations range from 5 through 2,500 feet above mean sea level. Most areas are wooded. The common trees are 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. A few areas have been cleared and are primarily used for hay and pasture. Some cleared areas are used for cultivated crops. Areas are well drained. Potential runoff is very low to high.

The Potsdam Series:

The Potsdam series consists of very deep, well drained soils on till plains. They are nearly level to steep soils formed in an eolian or water deposited mantle that overlies dense till. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is moderately high through high in the layers above the substratum and moderately low through moderately high in the substratum. Slope ranges from 3 through 60 percent. Mean annual temperature is 44 degrees F, and mean annual precipitation is 40 inches. Potsdam soils occupy undulating to steep, typically convex landforms of till plains and glaciated mountain sides. Slope ranges from 3 through 60 percent. The regolith is fine sandy loam through loamy sand till from sandstone, schist, or granite gneiss overlain by a 16 to 40 inch eolian or lacustrine mantle containing 50 to 80 percent silt plus very fine sand. Mean annual temperature ranges from 40 through 45 degrees F, mean annual precipitation ranges from 35 through 55 inches, and mean frost-free days ranges from 90 through 145 days. Elevation ranges from 500 through 2,000 feet above sea level. Many areas have been cleared and used for growing hay, oats, and limited acreage of corn for silage; however, most cleared areas have reverted to brush or woodland. Woodlots contain sugar maple, American beech, black ash, white ash, hop hornbeam, eastern hemlock, red oak, and eastern white pine. Areas are well drained. The potential for surface runoff is low to very high.

The Adams Series:

The Adams series consists of very deep, excessively and somewhat excessively drained soils formed in glacial-fluvial or glacio-lacustrine sand. Slope ranges from 0 through 70 percent. Mean annual temperature is 6 degrees C. and mean annual precipitation is 970 millimeters. Adams soils are on nearly level to very steep sand plains, kames, moraines, benches, eskers, deltas, and terraces. These soils formed in sandy glaciofluvial or glaciolacustrine deposits from predominantly crystalline rock or meta-sandstone. Mean annual temperature ranges from 3 to 8 degrees C., mean annual precipitation ranges from 760 to 1270 millimeters, and mean annual frost-free period ranges from 70 to 160 days. Elevation ranges from 91 to 915 meters above sea level. Extensive areas are idle and support aspen, birch, and pine seedlings or sweet fern, spirea, and brambles. Uncleared areas support maple, beech, spruce, and pine. Farmed areas are used mainly for hay or pasture with limited acreages of corn and small grain. Areas are somewhat excessively drained. Runoff is very slow to medium. Saturated hydraulic conductivity is high or very high in the mineral surface layer and upper part of the subsoil and very high in the lower part of the subsoil and substratum.

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. Mean annual temperature is 42 degrees F. and mean annual precipitation is 40 inches. The soils formed in water-sorted sand, gravel, cobbles, and stones of predominantly granite rocks with lesser amounts of sandstone. Mean annual temperature ranges from 38 through 46 degrees F., mean annual precipitation ranges from 30 through 50 inches, and mean annual frost-free days ranges from 90 through 160 days. Elevation ranges from 5 feet through 3,000 feet above sea level. Large areas are idle and support seedling birch and pine, bracken fern, and blueberries. Farmed areas are used mainly for

grass hay or pasture with some corn and oats. Forests include sugar maple, eastern white pine, red pine, and white spruce. Areas are excessively drained. The potential for surface runoff is very low to medium. Estimated saturated hydraulic conductivity is high or very high in the solum and very high in the substratum.

The Searsport Series:

The Searsport series consists of nearly level very deep, very poorly drained soils formed in thick sandy deposits in pockets and depressions on outwash plains, deltas, and terraces. Slope ranges from 0 to 3 percent. Mean annual precipitation is about 41 inches, and mean annual temperature is about 45 degrees F. at type location. These soils formed in thick sandy deposits. Mean annual air temperature ranges from 38 to 46 degrees F., and mean annual precipitation ranges from 34 to 50 inches. The frost-free season ranges from 80 to 160 days. Elevation ranges from 5 to 3,000 feet above sea level. Lands are typically Idle or forested. Common wetland shrubs are alders, spirea (hardhack), leatherleaf, Labrador-tea, mountain holly, highbush blueberry, lowbush blueberry, bog cranberry, huckleberry, and sheep laurel. Woodland trees are red maple, elm, black spruce, northern white cedar, balsam fir, tamarack, eastern white pine, and gray birch. Areas are very poorly drained. Potential for runoff is very high or negligible. Estimated saturated hydraulic conductivity is high or very high in the mineral horizons. The water table is at or above the surface from 6 to 12 months of the year, usually dropping below the surface for a short period of time in late summer.

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. Mean annual precipitation is about 29 inches, and mean annual temperature is about 43 degrees F. Dawson soils are in depressions within outwash plains and lake plains, ground moraines and end moraines. In some places, Dawson soils are on flood plains. Slope gradients range from 0 to 2 percent. The uplands surrounding these soils are commonly acid sands. The mean annual precipitation ranges from about 22 to 35 inches, and the mean annual temperature ranges from about 40 to 45 degrees F. Very little commercial use is made of these soils, because of the extreme acidity, shallowness of the organic deposit, and the high-water table. 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. Areas are very poorly drained. The representative depth to wet soil moisture status is at the surface to 1 foot below the surface at some time throughout the year. The representative depth of ponding is from 0 to 1.0 foot at some time throughout the year. Surface runoff is very low or negligible. Permeability is moderately slow to moderately rapid in the organic material and rapid in the sandy mineral portion.

3. Water

The protected property contains eleven ponds and lakes: Clear Lake, Pleasant Lake, Cranberry Pond, Long Pond, Mile Pond, Horseshoe Pond, Parmater Pond, Mile Pond, Tracy Pond, Slouch Pond, Wolf Pond, and Brothers Ponds. There are also

numerous streams and brooks including: Alder Brook, Gulf Brook, Bear Creek, Pleasant Lake Stream, Stoney Brook, and Blue Mountain Stream. The tract's predominant watercourses, the Middle and North Branches of the Grass River, are designated Scenic Rivers. All watercourses within the Grass River Management Unit area flow into the St. Lawrence River via the Grass and Raquette Rivers.

One of the central public recreation features of the GRCE are the fishing corridors along the Grass River and its tributaries. The North Branch of the Grass River has its headwaters at the outlet of Church Pond and runs ~25 miles to the Adirondack Park/GRCE boundary along the town line between Clare and Russell, NY. The Middle Branch of the Grass River begins at the confluence of Blue Mountain Stream and Pleasant Lake Stream. It runs ~15 miles from its headwaters to the property boundary. A comprehensive list of fisheries activities and species types can be found in the Grass River Wild Forest UMP, but anglers can expect to find native and non-native trout as well as other desirable game fish in these classified waters.

The Grass River, as it runs through the protected property, is navigable but challenging due to its variable depth and fluctuating water levels. The "Stillwater" is a flatwater section of the North Branch that will be accessed via a trail from the White Road. A car top boat launch will facilitate paddling opportunities on Pleasant Lake.

4. Wetlands

The wetlands within the GRCE possess great ecological, aesthetic, recreational and educational value. Wetlands have the capacity to receive, store and slowly release rainwater and meltwater, and protect water resources by stabilizing water flow and minimizing erosion and sedimentation. Many natural and man-made pollutants are removed from water entering wetland areas. Also, because they constitute one of the most productive habitats for fish and wildlife, a greater diversity of plant and animal species are found in association with most wetlands. For the visitor, expanses of open space provide a visual contrast to the heavily forested setting.

There are seven significant Wetland Complexes within the GRCE. One of them, Albert Marsh, is classified as a mega wetland by Adirondack Park Agency (APA). It is a 430-acre area characterized as being located in a large bowl-shaped depression associated with the North Branch of the Grass River and bisected by an abandoned railroad grade. It is a complex of deciduous shrub swamp and coniferous forested swamp. The presence of the railroad grade is significant from a planning perspective as the sensitivities of wetlands must be accounted for when managing for recreational activities within the property. Other wetlands within the GRCE include the: Brother Ponds, Cranberry Lake, Degrasse, Stark, Tooley Pond, and West Pierrepont complexes. All wetlands within the GRCE are Palustrine, Riverine, or Lacustrine and dominated by trees, shrubs, persistent emergents, emergent mosses or lichens. Wetlands within the GRCE are either saturated, seasonally flooded, or permanently flooded and often subject to the works of beavers.

B. Biological Resources

1. Fish and Wildlife

Wildlife present within the area are typical of those found in the western Adirondack foothills eco-zone. Common large mammals include white-tailed deer and black bear, and although uncommon, moose are increasingly present. Typical fur-bearing species represented in Department harvest data for the area include beaver, coyote,

fisher, otter, pine marten and bobcat. Recent growth in birding (Cordell, Herbert, and Pandolfi, 1999) suggests that the established populations found within the GRCE provide opportunities for recreation managers and public alike. Avian diversity in the area is representative of northern hardwood and spruce/fir forested habitats. Breeding Bird Atlas data for the GRMU from the 2000-2005 censuses identified 115 confirmed, probable and possible breeding bird species in the blocks covering the unit. Although no systematic survey of the area has been conducted for reptiles and amphibians, a volunteer based "Herp Atlas" sponsored by the Department through the decade of the 1990s, identified 24 species occurring on or adjacent to the GRCE. Nuisance wildlife issues within the GRCE are largely limited to beaver induced flooding.

Fish communities in these watersheds were historically characterized primarily as Adirondack brook trout communities. These communities included brown bullhead, white suckers, native minnows, as well as brook trout. The north and middle branches of the Grass River, along with their feeder and tributary streams, also contain: brown trout; rock, large, and smallmouth bass; pumpkinseed; shiners; chub and dace. Pleasant Lake and some of the smaller ponds hold brown bullhead, creek chub, pumpkinseed and white sucker.

Within the GRMU there are 15 winter deer yards identified by the Department. One major yard is located just outside the boundary but has two finger-like extensions that reach into the area. A deer yard or deer wintering area is any location where deer tend to concentrate during the winter months. Deer yards typically have features which provide thermal benefits and/or mobility advantages during periods of cold and deep snow. In the Adirondacks, deer yards are often associated with dense conifer cover which helps to reduce rapid snow accumulation, provides shelter from winds, and limits radiational cooling during the evening. South-facing slopes are also used by wintering deer; lesser snow accumulation and favorable sun exposure provide similar benefits. Better quality deer yards also have adjacent regenerating hardwood components which provide available woody browse during milder conditions. In the Adirondacks, deer use the same yarding areas annually, although the boundaries change over time with succession. Deer use within yarding areas will also change annually in response to winter severity. The maintenance and protection of winter deer yards remains a concern of wildlife managers, particularly in the Adirondacks, as they fulfill a critical component of the seasonal habitat requirements of white-tailed deer.

Habitat suitable for spruce grouse is found in two locations within the GRCE. No confirmed sightings of the bird have been recorded since 2002. Within the boundary of the GRMU, there are four historical sites, two of which have not been surveyed extensively enough to confirm the species' absence. Moreover, the core of the spruce grouse's remaining population center is within 4 miles of the GRMU boundary and is located within the spruce grouse conservation focus area as defined by the Draft Spruce Grouse Recovery Plan (Ross and Johnson 2011). As an important location relative to remaining healthier populations, the GRCE may represent an area where significant conservation efforts may take place to aid in the species' recovery in New York State.

2. Vegetation

The easement lies within two ecozones found in the northern parts of New York State (Reschke, 1990). The majority of the property is in the western Adirondack

Foothills, while the two smaller non-contiguous parcels south of the main section lie in the central Adirondack zone. The DEC database suggests that there are five land cover types present on the property: evergreen forestland, deciduous forestland, mixed forestland, forested wetland, and non-forested wetlands. These cover types are represented by four forest-type groups which compose much of the timberland on the property: hemlock – northern hardwoods, white and red pines, white ash, red maples, and aspens - birches. Also, a wide variety of small trees (i.e., American hornbeam, striped maple, alternate leaved dogwood, etc.) and ground cover species (i.e., star flower, common wood-sorrel, painted trillium, intermediate wood fern, etc.) are common to the area.

3. Natural Heritage Program Elements of Occurrence

The Natural Heritage Program of New York State lists one significant plant species and one significant animal species as present on the property: The fir clubmoss, an endangered vascular plant; and the spruce grouse, an endangered vertebrate. Another endangered plant species, drummond's rock - cress can be found in an area bordering the easement. Research/observation by State biologists suggests that spruce grouse habitat is also critical for several other bird species of great conservation need: The cape may warbler, the Tennessee warbler, the American three - toed woodpecker, olive - sided flycatcher, and the rusty blackbird.

4. Invasive Species

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

Terrestrial invasive plant species documented in, or within proximity to, the GRCE include the following: purple loosestrife, common reed, and garlic mustard. Japanese knotweed is also known to exist within the GRMU. In general, Japanese knotweed reproduces vegetatively and is common to disturbed areas throughout the state. It is not shade tolerant, and consequently, is unable to invade forests (Van Driesche, 2002) but there may be other small populations of this and other invasive-exotic plants along roadsides and other disturbed areas (camps, log landings, etc.) within the easement area.

Invasive insects currently threatening or predicted to impact areas within the GRMU include: emerald ash borer, pine false webworm, Sirex wood wasp, and white pine weevil.

Diseases known to affect forest health in the region containing the GRCE include: beech bark disease, butternut canker, chestnut blight, Dutch elm disease, hemlock woolly adelgid and white pine blister rust.

Through the endangered species task force, DEC will investigate use of appropriate educational signage at points of entry, camping, parking, fishing and waterway access sites within GRCE to mitigate or prevent the spread of harmful non-native species and invasive plants.

C. Cultural Resources

1. Cultural and Archaeological

The nineteenth and twentieth centuries saw unprecedented impacts on the forested landscape of the Adirondack foothills. The timber harvesting practices of the time showed little regard for what was believed to be an unlimited resource. Today, the lands in and around the GRCE still show evidence of the past exploitation, but modern practices and a more conservation-based philosophy suggest a sustainable future. Nonetheless, the GRCE area changed substantially through the activities of people in the past. Logging and mining were primary local industries, and their impact is extensive and evident today. Logging in particular changed the character of the forest dramatically, which in turn influenced the human and animal communities associated with it.

Timber for charcoal, mine timbers, railroad ties, lumber, fuel wood and many other necessary items were harvested locally. Roads and railroads were pushed into area forests to extract timber for supplies as well as ore and to distribute the finished products. The Emporium Forestry Company, owned by the Sykes family, extended the Mohawk and Malone Railway 17 miles from Conifer Junction to Cranberry Lake Village in 1911. The GRCE lies at the heart of this network. Spur lines of the Grass River Railroad stretched almost to Clare on the North Branch of the Grass River. The tracks and spurs of this tram line totaled forty miles in length. Many of these former lines remain today in the forms of roads and trails open to public recreation. Rivers and streams were also used to transport timber. A so called “splash dam” was constructed on the Middle Branch of the Grass River. The impounded water was released in the spring to float logs downstream to a sawmill at Lampson Falls, down river from the GRCE boundary. All this activity has combined to shape the property as it is today and the property’s status as a working forest under the current easement continues this process.

There are no substantial archaeological sites reported for the Unit.

2. Visual/Scenic Resources

The view southerly from the summit of Little Blue Mountain (1860’) is considered extraordinary for this part of the Adirondacks, with an unobstructed view of greater than 180 degrees. The primary other scenic areas are along the streams, rivers and ponds on the property.

3. Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

Both the North Branch and Middle Branch of the Grass River are designated as Scenic where they run through the protected property.

IV. LANDOWNER MANAGEMENT AND USE

A. Property History

The natural history of the western and central Adirondack regions can be traced back to the recession of the last glaciers from the northeast. Typical milestones along this lineage mark the devastation and loss of the area’s great forests through lumbering, pulp production, harvesting for charcoal makers, dam construction, and agriculture throughout the nineteenth and twentieth century’s. Concern over these losses led to the creation of the Forest Preserve in 1885 and the Adirondack Park in 1892 (McMartin, 1994). The Grass River Easement, which lies within the Adirondack Park, shares in this

history. Beginning in the mid to late 1800's, demand for timber prompted large-scale operations in the region and attracted a series of timber-based businesses to the area. During the time of ownership by the Emporium Lumber Company a system of railroads and trams was built to facilitate operations and connect the tract with company facilities (i.e., mills, drying kilns, etc.), in Cranberry Lake, Conifer, and Childwold. A rail system known as the North Tram ran from Cranberry Lake to areas along the North Branch of the Grass River, beyond the current property line. The bed for this tramline serves as the main haul road through the property today. The Cranberry Mill operated until 1927 and cut 200 million board feet during its tenure.

Despite fluctuations in timber markets through the years, logging and forest management operations have continued in the region. Today, Molpus Woodlands Group (MWG) continues that tradition. MWG also provides for the historical use of hunting camps and leases. The easement agreement permits the continuation of these uses and allows for public recreational access as well. Public use of the watercourses, designated roads, and trails is permissible from December 16th through September 30th annually. During the period of October 1st to December 15th, the landowner has reserved recreation rights to the land, with two exceptions: access to Little Blue Mountain will continue through October 10th annually, and there will be year-round use of a road into the Stone Dam Forest Preserve parcel adjacent to this property. Several gates and control points exist throughout the property with keys only in the possession of State personnel, the landowner and land manager, and authorized lessees. Public motorized recreation (e.g., snowmobiles, ATVs) is confined to specific linear recreation corridors. Snowmobile access to the easement connects existing trails and networks. ATV use is managed in a manner designed to prevent damage to the natural resources and biological diversity of the tract. Non-motorized use of the property can include hiking, biking, horseback riding, and camping in designated sites. The public has the right to fish and trap along designated river corridors, but public hunting on these easement lands is not allowed.

B. Current Forestry Uses

1. Forest Management Activities

A major purpose of the conservation easement on this property is to ensure that the forest resource will continue to be available to the current and future landowners for viable, sustainable forest management and the associated long-term production of forest products. The landowner actively manages specific forest stands according to a forestry certification program approved by DEC. It is common to see foresters, loggers, and logging equipment on the property. Members of the public who plan to utilize the property for recreation can expect to encounter this type of activity during a typical visit. Those driving, snowmobiling, or cycling on the roads, parking in designated sites, wading along streams and fishing corridors, or exercising any other designated right should use all due caution and conform to posted warnings and closures.

2. Logging Closure Zones

Easement language makes allowances for logging operation closure zones and recreation corridor relocations. Such closures shall not exceed eighteen (18) months in duration and not occupy in the aggregate more than ten percent (10%) of the protected property at any one time unless otherwise mutually agreed upon by the parties. The landowner and DEC will, whenever practicable, provide for alternative routes and accommodations for public recreation. It is always advisable to inquire

ahead of time with the local DEC field office regarding potential closures and alternatives.

C. Current Non-Forestry Uses of the Property

1. Recreational Leases

There are currently 57 camps and associated outbuildings on the property. These outdoor recreation structures correspond to 17 leases (called “licenses” by MWF) held by members or lessees. There are also three leased areas containing no camps or structures located on the easement.

Public recreation on the tract shall accommodate the private recreation leases and shall not interfere with the enjoyment of the lessees. Public recreational use shall be prohibited within 300' of the principle structure(s) of any leased recreation camp. The only exceptions will be where there is a linear recreation corridor, river corridor or public fishing rights corridor within 300' of the principle structure(s), in which case the top of the nearest stream or river bank or the closest edge of a linear recreational corridor or town road will define the boundary of public use.

The easement document details the rights retained by the landowner and how these Reserved Rights relate and differ from those afforded the public by the State's Affirmative Rights. This relationship and its details are addressed in Section D below, titled “Property Infrastructure” as the rights primarily relate to public access, road use, motor vehicle and ATV use.

There are no public hunting rights on the Grass River Conservation Easement.

D. Property Infrastructure

1. Existing Infrastructure

There are four public highways associated with the property. County Route 27 borders a portion of the property on the west. State Route 3 borders two of the southern detached parcels. White Road and Dean Road, both town roads, penetrate the property from the west.

The easement's internal infrastructure consists of roads, trails, bridges, culverts, and gates or control points. There are 98 miles of private forest roads and 10 bridges associated with both the public and private roads. There are 28 gates in place controlling access to forest roads and trails on the property. The condition of each road, trail, and corridor was established in the January 2011 Baseline Report prepared for this property.

2. Forestry Structures and Other Infrastructure

A right of way, one hundred fifty (150) feet in width, for an electric transmission line, was originally conveyed to Northern New York Utilities Inc. and recorded in St. Lawrence County, July 15, 1927. The power line now owned by National Grid, Inc. is still in use and goes through the protected property from south to north on the west side.

3. Gravel Pits

There are twenty-seven (27) existing gravel pits which were developed in the construction of logging and recreation roads on the protected property. The area of active gravel mining is estimated at 10 acres based on digitizing gravel pit locations from 2003 ortho - imagery. Gravel pit acreage is far below the two hundred and fifty (250) acres allowed by the terms of the easement.

Sand and gravel may be used on the protected property only for the maintenance and construction of roads allowed by the easement. Neither party shall allow the total area affected by gravel pits to exceed two hundred and fifty (250) acres in size without first abandoning and reclaiming areas already mined.

Parties shall not open or construct any new sand and gravel pits within any of the following buffer areas or any other special treatment areas:

- Lake and Pond Buffers
- Perennial Stream Buffers
- Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Buffer
- Visual Buffers along Paved Public Highways

V. RELATIONSHIP OF PROPERTY TO ADJACENT LANDS

See Section II. B. DEC Grass River Management Unit

VI. CONSERVATION EASEMENT AFFIRMATIVE RIGHTS

The conservation easement that pertains to the property covered by this RMP grants the State of New York a legal interest in the protected property, sets forth terms, restrictions, and rights with respect to the property, and establishes a framework for administering the public recreation access rights acquired by the State. The specific terms of the easement were developed through negotiations between the State and the landowner and have resulted in a guaranteed right for the State to permit limited or, in some cases, full public access to the property and participation in certain outdoor recreation activities. This public access, it should be noted, stems from a suite of rights that were acquired under the conservation easement. This does not mean that every right acquired will automatically be made available for use of the public. Road rights, in particular, may not be exercised immediately, as roads must meet certain standards before use by the public, including signage. Roads open to the public then must be at least partly maintained by the Department, and the cost of that additional maintenance must be considered since our resources to maintain facilities are limited. To understand what rights are, or are proposed to be, open to the public, please refer to section VII.D.

A. Recreation Access and Use Rights (See: Overall Recreation Maps, Appendix I)

The conservation easement grants the People of the State of New York a permanent right of access to the property for outdoor recreational use, subject to the specific terms in the recorded conservation easement document agreed to by the State and the landowner. All management actions on the property, as implemented through this Recreation Management Plan, will be conducted in accordance with those specific easement terms and will consider and strive to be consistent and compatible with, the reserved rights of the landowner. Permitted public recreational activities, as proposed in this RMP, are designed to have limited impacts on the natural resources of the property,

on the landowner's management of the property for forest products, and on private lessees, if any.

The following affirmative rights, subject to specific terms, conditions, requirements, limitations, and restrictions stated in the easement and described in Section VI.B below, have been granted to the State of New York and apply directly to the development and implementation of this Recreation Management Plan for public use:

1. Non-motorized Public Access - Use and Activities

DEC has the right to provide public access to limited portions of the property for a variety of dispersed, non-motorized outdoor recreational activities, such as: hiking, bicycling, snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, photography, bird watching, wildlife observation, picnicking, boating (with car-top watercraft such as canoes, kayaks, or rowboats), swimming, camping at designated campsites, horseback riding, dog-sledding, fishing, hunting, and trapping.

The following use rights are year-round:

- Non-motorized use of the trail located along the northern boundary of the tract north of Little Blue Mountain to connect the Church Pond Forest Preserve Parcel with the Long Pond Easement.

The following are permitted Dec. 16th through Sept. 30th:

- Non-motorized use by the public on linear recreational corridors and designated river corridors;
- Camping at designated campsites;
- Fishing on designated river corridors and designated public fishing rights corridors;
- Trapping on designated river corridors.

The following are permitted Dec. 16th through Oct. 10th:

- Non-motorized use of the road and trail to Little Blue Mtn.

All non-motorized activities must be conducted in accordance with applicable State laws and regulations.

2. Motorized Public Access - Use and Activities

DEC has the right to allow public motor vehicle access to the property via certain designated routes. These routes will be signed accordingly as being open to only certain types of motor vehicles, such as passenger vehicles, snowmobiles, motor boats, or all-terrain vehicles. Speed limits and other restrictions or safety information may also be posted.

The DEC has the right to allow year-round:

- Motor vehicle access to the Stone Dam Parcel via the Stone Dam Road from the end of town maintenance on the Dean Road.

The DEC has the right to allow the following between Dec. 16th through Sept. 30th:

- ATV use only on designated ATV corridors;
- Snowmobile use on designated linear recreational corridors;
- Motor vehicle access on seasonal access roads.

The DEC has the right to allow the following between Dec. 16th through Oct. 10th:

- Motor vehicle access on the road to the trail head for Little Blue Mountain.

Public motorized use is contingent on weather conditions (mud season) and Logging Operation Closure Zones. In the case of ATV use, the allowable use period is normally to be the period of the year the St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trail will be open for ATVs, which is approximately May 15th through Sept. 15th. All motorized activities must be conducted in accordance with applicable State laws and regulations

B. Public Use of Existing Infrastructure

DEC acquired, along with the rights discussed above for public recreational use, rights to use and provide infrastructure to facilitate use of the public recreation rights. These rights include the ability to designate, and in some cases construct, roads and trails on the property for public access and use, including universally accessible trails for people with disabilities, along specific routes agreed to by the landowner (if agreement is required in the CE). The easement specifies, as Affirmative Rights, that DEC (the Grantee) can provide public access to the properties existing infrastructure in a variety of ways. The easement document contains language and appendices (Exhibits 1 through 8) which delineate this access as follows:

- The right to establish motor vehicle parking areas as shown on Exhibits 3 and 4, or at alternate locations as established with the agreement of the landowner;
- The right to use a certain linear recreational corridor for public recreational use of All terrain vehicles as shown on Exhibit 6 or on alternate routes as established in this Recreation Management Plan;
- The right to use certain linear recreational corridors for public recreational use of snowmobiles as shown on Exhibit 5, or on alternate routes as established with the agreement of the landowner;
- The right to permit the public seasonal access by motor vehicle on the seasonal access roads identified on Exhibit 3 or on alternate roads as established with the agreement of the landowner;
- The right to permit the public seasonal access by motor vehicle along the portion of the Stone Dam Road as it runs easterly from the intersection of the Stone Dam Forest Preserve parcel and the protected property to the overlook on the Little Blue Mountain, as shown on Exhibit 3 from October 1st to October 10th of each year;
- The Department may permit the public access by motor vehicle throughout the year via the improved road that leads to the Stone Dam Forest Preserve parcel;
- The Department may permit the public motorized access over the portion of the southerly extension of the Little John Road located within the protected property leading to the lands subject to the DEC's Long Pond Conservation Easement or on alternate roads.

Exhibit 6 depicts allowable access for ATVs on the property. Exhibit 6 is a key element for the planning of a proposed St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Recreational Trails System. The proposed system incorporates existing town and county roadways, logging roads, and off-road trails on county and GRCE parcels of land, to form a network of trails covering a large expanse of the county.

In addition to access, the DEC has secured public recreation rights dependent upon roads/infrastructure as follows:

- **Public Camping Facilities:** The Department may permit the public to use designated campsites within the river corridors on the protected property as shown in Exhibit 1;
- **Public Fishing and Trapping:** The Department may permit the public access for fishing and trapping in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and subject to the landowner's Reserved Rights herein within the designated river corridors.

The MWF Group, pursuant to easement language, has reserved certain recreational rights for itself and its lessees as follows:

- The landowner may enjoy all recreation rights that the Department may permit to the public pursuant to easement language;
- The landowner reserves the right to additional recreational uses provided that no reduction in amenities or opportunities for public recreation result and that dangerous conditions not arise;
- Any recreational use of the protected property shall not interfere with the DEC's rights to provide for public recreational use;
- Any recreational use shall be consistent with the purposes of this conservation easement;
- Any recreational use shall not diminish or damage the recreational amenities established by the DEC;
- Any use of a motorized recreational vehicle shall be on roads and trails suitable for such use;
- Additionally, care shall be taken while engaging in any motorized activities to avoid creating a dangerous condition for the public.

The use of roads and infrastructure by both the landowner and public necessitates a system of shared accountability for the monitoring, maintenance, and supervision of travel corridors within the protected property. The easement document addresses this issue as follows:

Public Recreational Amenities and Improvements:

- The Department may construct, use, repair, maintain, improve, relocate or abandon recreational amenities appurtenant or accessory to the public recreational uses permitted;
- The Department shall determine if any recreational amenities installed by the DEC for public recreational use, including parking areas, campsites or similar recreational amenities, may also be used by the landowner for the landowner's forest management activities.;
- Any roads determined to be suitable for use by the landowner for the landowner's forest management activities shall be identified;
- The Department shall install / construct and maintain all necessary signage to indicate uses allowed for the public on the protected property.

Management of Public Recreational Rights and Associated Costs:

- The location and condition of trails, parking areas, campsites, linear recreation corridors and other recreational amenities shall be reviewed at least annually;
- All - terrain vehicle use: Annually, the landowner and the Department may evaluate the condition of the protected property affected by public all - terrain vehicle use and determine if all - terrain vehicle use of a particular linear recreational corridor merits suspension;

- Landowner's recreation leases: public recreation use on the protected property shall accommodate the landowner's private recreation leases. Public recreational use shall be prohibited within three hundred (300') feet of the perimeter of the principle structure of any leased recreation camp or the top of the nearest stream bank or the closest edge of a linear recreational corridor or town road, whichever is smaller.

C. Recreation Signs

For purposes of public recreation, the landowner and the Department shall mutually agree to the content and location of signs installed or constructed on the protected property by the DEC.

Notwithstanding the above, the Department is responsible for installing, constructing and maintaining all necessary signage to indicate the allowed public parking areas, various forms of public access, and appropriate roads, trails or linear recreational corridors open for public motorized and non - motorized recreational activities.

D. Construction of New Infrastructure

DEC may construct new improvements, amenities, or limited facilities necessary to support permitted and approved public access and use of the property.

As such: The Department may construct, use, repair, maintain, improve, relocate or abandon recreational amenities which facilitate or support allowable public recreational uses. Such recreational amenities shall include roads, trails, public parking areas, linear recreational corridors, boat launches, campsites, lean-tos or other similar small recreational structures that are intended for shelter from weather conditions, along with associated outhouses and similar structures. Also included are signs, barriers, fences and gates used in connection with or to facilitate the management of the public recreational uses of the protected property.

Because much of the infrastructure within the property is shared by DEC and the landowner, the parties shall identify shared roads, trails, bridges, culverts and other such improvements and establish appropriate standards and guidelines for their maintenance; and develop a method of equitably sharing the cost and responsibility for routine maintenance of such improvements.

-See Appendix E: Roads and Trails Standards and Specifications-

E. Other CE Provisions Affecting Public Use

1. Barriers, Gates, and Locks

DEC, in concurrence with the landowner, has the right to install barriers and gates to control public motor vehicle access. The installation and maintenance of control points within the GRCE will be a key component to the proposed St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Recreational Trails System. It is essential that ATV access be limited to routes specified in Exhibit 6, or as otherwise agreed upon with the landowner. Gates, locks, and barriers will facilitate public recreation as permitted by the easement and protect the rights of the landowner and its lessees.

2. Boundary Line Marking

Conservation easement language usually allows the Department to identify, mark, and maintain boundary lines. Signs may be installed as appropriate but only if in compliance with CE language.

3. Search, Rescue, Fire, Emergency Response, and Law Enforcement

DEC 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 DEC, Environmental Conservation Police, Forest Rangers, State Police, and other emergency response personnel will have full access to the property. Emergency response for search, fire, and rescue on the property, as on State lands, will be coordinated by the NYS Forest Rangers at (518) 408-5850, though a response may include other emergency responders.

4. Infrastructure Maintenance and Specifications

- Appendix D - Shared Road and Infrastructure Maintenance.
- Appendix E - Road and Trail Standards and Specifications.

F. Current Public Recreation Use (See Appendix B – Public Use Access and Appendix I - Overall Recreation Map)

1. The public currently has recreational access to the property in the form of seasonal motorized use of recreational corridors. This allows for snowmobile use in winter and motor vehicle access to designated river corridors for fishing and trapping.
 - Snowmobile use of the property is extensive and well documented by the St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association;
 - Use of the property by anglers is harder to quantify. Anecdotal evidence suggests that anglers do access the property and that use levels recommend actions to expand the use of roads within the property as proposed by this plan in sections VII and VIII. The establishment of a parking area and campsite at Pleasant Lake is viewed as a highly desired opportunity;
 - Use of the road into the Stone Dam Forest Preserve parcel by public motor vehicles has been one of the more common uses of the property. Previous to this CE the public route into this parcel was very poor and legally questionable, so the CE has made motor vehicle access to this parcel much easier;
 - There is also anecdotal evidence to suggest that non-motorized recreation such as camping, mountain biking, and horse riding would expand if appropriate opportunities existed.

VII. PUBLIC USE ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT

A. Administration

The Department has the responsibility for managing public access and recreation in a manner consistent with the terms and provisions of the conservation easement. DEC will retain this underlying authority and responsibility even in situations in which it may approve another organization to serve as a partner in recreation management.

Successful implementation of this RMP will require frequent communication among all parties involved in the management of public recreation and access on the property, including DEC, the landowner, and partners.

See Appendix I - Overall Recreation Maps for details.

1. Laws, Policies, and Memoranda

This RMP has been developed within the constraints and guidelines set forth by Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law; Parts 190 -199 of Title 6 NYCRR of the State of New York; established DEC policy; and the terms and conditions of the conservation easement(s) that encumber the property

a. DEC Policies

1. Motor Vehicle Access to State Lands Under the Jurisdiction of DEC for People with Disabilities (CP-3);
2. Adopt-A-Natural Resource (ONR-1);
3. Temporary Revocable Permits for State Lands and Conservation Easements (ONR-3).

b. State-Administered Land Use Controls

1. Freshwater Wetlands Act;
2. Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act;
3. Regulations of the Adirondack Park Agency.

c. DEC/APA MOU

August 13, 2010; ***MOU Concerning State-Owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park.*** See Section X. E.

2. Management Authority, Staff and Responsibility

The Regional Natural Resources Supervisor is the Manager of regional staff in the Division of Lands and Forest, the Division of Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources, and the Division of Mineral Resources. The DEC Division of Lands and Forests has primary responsibility for managing public use of the lands subject to this RMP, including development of this plan, development of individual work plans and schedules, and coordination of all activities with the landowner, partners, and other DEC 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 Recreation Plan. The Regional Forester in the DEC office in Watertown, NY has overall responsibility for these matters. Reporting to the Regional Forester is a Supervising Forester in the Potsdam, NY DEC office responsible for forestry and land management programs. Reporting to the Supervising Forester are a Conservation Easement Specialist and Conservation Easement Technician that have primary responsibility for preparing and/or implementing this plan. The Regional Fisheries Manager and Regional Wildlife Manager are responsible for all Division of Fish and Wildlife activities. An Aquatic Biologist and a Wildlife Biologist have been assigned planning responsibilities for fisheries and wildlife concerns related to this Property. The Office of Public Protection will be responsible for enforcement of laws and DEC rules and regulations. Forest Rangers have primary responsibility for monitoring and enforcement of public use of the easement Property. Environmental Conservation Officers may also help with this responsibility, as well as general

enforcement of the Environmental Conservation Law and rules & regulations on the protected property. A land manager will be designated by the Regional Forester as the lead DEC staff person for developing and implementing this and subsequent plans for the easement property.

The land manager will be responsible for:

- a. Overseeing the coordination and preparation of the RMP, as well as periodic updates, revisions, or amendments;
- b. Coordinating the implementation of this and subsequent RMPs;
- c. Overseeing the budget outlined in the RMP;
- d. Assuring that management activities of all DEC Divisions, as they relate to this RMP, comply with applicable laws, regulations, policies, and easement terms;
- e. Monitoring resource conditions and public use; addressing conflicts; and assessing the effectiveness of the RMP in addressing resource protection and public needs;
- f. Fostering communication about management activities within DEC, between DEC and the landowner, and between DEC 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 DEC, Molpus Woodlands Group, and the landowner's land management staffs. Communication and coordination of planning efforts between the parties have been critical to formulating management objectives and proposals. Consistent administration and communication is extremely important in preparing and implementing this RMP and adhering to the terms of the conservation easement. DEC staff will regularly communicate with the landowner to review completed activities, address concerns or problems, and coordinate future work.

3. Regulatory Requirements, Approvals and Procedures

Some of the guiding laws, policies, and legal documents outlined above specify certain requirements and approvals that must be met in the management of land and public recreation, and is pertinent to the formulation and implementation of this RMP.

a. Americans with Disabilities Act and Americans with Disabilities Accessibility Guidelines

Application of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) for Conservation Easements

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

modification would result in a fundamental alteration in the nature of the service, program or activity or an undue financial or administrative burden.

Title II also requires that new facilities, and parts of facilities that are newly constructed for public use, are to be accessible to people with disabilities. In rare circumstances where accessibility is determined to be structurally impracticable due to terrain, the facility, or part of facility is to be accessible to the greatest extent possible and to people with various types of disabilities.

Consistent with ADA requirements, the Department incorporates accessibility for people with disabilities into the planning, construction and alteration of recreational facilities and assets supporting them. This recreation management plan (RMP) incorporates an inventory of all the recreational facilities or assets supporting the programs and services that were negotiated with the landowner to be available on the easement. The level of accessibility that exists or may be developed to the programs, services and facilities on the easement is also assessed. In conducting this assessment, DEC employs guidelines which ensure that programs are accessible, including buildings, facilities, and vehicles, in terms of architecture and design, transportation and communication to individuals with disabilities.

Any new facilities, assets and accessibility improvements to existing facilities or assets proposed in this RMP are identified in the section containing proposed management actions.

The Department is not required to make each of its existing facilities and assets accessible as long as the Department's programs, taken as a whole, are accessible.

For copies of any of the above-mentioned laws or guidelines relating to accessibility, contact the DEC Universal Access Program Coordinator at 518-402-9428 or UniversalAccessProgram@dec.ny.gov

b. CP-3 Permits

In 1997, DEC adopted "Commissioners Policy – 3 (CP-3) Motor Vehicle Access to State Lands under the Jurisdiction of the Department of Environmental Conservation for People with Disabilities". This policy establishes guidelines for issuing temporary revocable permits allowing qualified people with disabilities to use motor vehicles to gain access to designated routes on certain state lands. DEC is not required to make each and every of its existing facilities and assets universally accessible. The facilities or assets proposed to be universally accessible in this RMP are identified in the "Proposed Management Actions" section.

c. Adirondack Park Agency (APA)

Land managers will need to consult with the Adirondack Park Agency where recreation management actions on land within the Adirondack Park involve activities such as: improvements or actions within or adjacent to

freshwater wetlands; improvements or actions along or adjacent to the shorelines of waterbodies; and improvements or actions along or adjacent to wild, scenic, or recreational rivers. The draft RMP will be submitted to APA for review and comment consistent with the procedures outlined in the DEC/APA MOU on Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plans. Certain proposed recreation projects and activities, as covered in the MOU, may require further APA review under Section 814 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act.

B. Public Recreation Management Principals, Goals and Objectives

1. Management Principles

The following principles, consistent with the public recreation rights acquired, will be used to manage public use of the easement property:

- Manage public recreational use and access to the property as a composite resource;
- Assess the property's capacity to withstand use;
- Protect and conserve natural resources;
- Make public use compatible with active forest management;
- Provide a variety of outdoor recreational uses;
- Protect public safety and private property.

2. Management Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives for managing public recreational use of the easement property must consider a variety of stakeholder interests, public expectations, and the use and ownership of the property by the landowner. The goals presented below are general statements about desired outcomes, while the objectives are more specific and are intended to provide guidance on how to achieve the goals.

Goals:

- Provide reasonable public access to the property for the purpose of allowing the public to enjoy the permitted range of outdoor recreational opportunities;
- Avoid or minimize any negative impacts of public recreational use on the natural resources and environmental benefits of the property;
- Avoid or minimize conflicts between public recreational use and forest management activities conducted by the landowner;
- Avoid or minimize conflicts between public recreational use and private lessee use of the property, if any;
- Develop a better understanding of the natural resources, environmental benefits, and public recreation opportunities and limitations on the property.

Objectives:

- Maintain opportunities for dispersed public outdoor recreation by providing suitable marked trail opportunities and general access to areas of property open for hunting, fishing, trapping and bushwhacking;
- Maintain the quality of the public's recreational experience by separating or minimizing conflicting uses where possible;
- Provide safe and sanitary conditions for public recreation;
- Provide for multiple motorized and non-motorized recreational uses on roads and trails, except where the potential for resource impacts, risk to public safety, conflicts with forest management activities, or other conditions make such shared use unacceptable;

- Maintain and improve opportunities for motor vehicle access on designated roads, trails and other suitable areas of the property;
- Periodically assess the impacts of recreational uses on other recreational uses, forest management activities, and natural resources;
- Actively manage the type, level, and location of recreational uses to minimize significant conflicts between recreational activities and commercial forest management activities, and to minimize adverse impacts to fish, wildlife, important habitats, water quality, and other natural resources and environmental values on the property;
- Promote partnerships with the landowner and/or recreational constituencies and secure assistance as necessary to complete management actions;
- Assess the potential for integrating new or expanded public outdoor recreational uses on the property in a manner that is consistent with the terms of the easement and the goals and objectives outlined above.

3. 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/or 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. BMPs related to the implementation of public access and recreational improvements on the easement property may include, but need not be limited to, such considerations as:

- Locating improvements away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes;
- Locating improvements to minimize necessary cut and fill;
- Locating camping sites or other structures on flat, stable, well-drained sites;
- Locating trails on existing old roads or cleared, or partially cleared areas;
- Locating trails to minimize grade and avoid streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes;
- Avoiding areas where threatened and endangered species are known to exist;
- Limiting the size of parking lots and other improvements to the minimum necessary to meet the intended use;
- Minimizing tree cutting;
- Using proper drainage devices, such as water bars and broad-based dips, to prevent erosion and damage to improvements;
- Using stream crossings with low, stable banks, firm stream bottom, and gentle approach slopes;
- 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;
- 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 equipment in streams;
- Using soil stabilization practices on exposed soil around construction areas, especially bridges, immediately after construction.

4. Guidelines and Standards

Development of the recreation management plan and implementation of public recreational uses on the protected property shall be consistent with the following specific guidelines:

Standards for Public Recreational Roads and Trails. This RMP establish minimum standards and specifications for roads and trails designated for public use. Based on the standards and specifications, the Department shall decide whether portions of trails and roads shall be repaired, improved, relocated, or if public use shall be temporarily suspended.

Snowmobile Use. Public snowmobile use of the property will focus on two types of opportunities; 1.) Connection to a larger public snowmobile trail network where logistically possible and legally appropriate and 2.) Ungroomed riding opportunities on designated routes for the purpose of facilitating public access for other outdoor recreation activities such as hunting, fishing, trapping, etc. Trail design and maintenance standards shall conform to such manuals and guidelines produced by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, or an equivalent State agency, and in general use by the agency at the time in question, except for snowmobile routes designed for public access to hunting, fishing and trapping on the property.

All-Terrain Vehicle Use. Public All-Terrain Vehicle (ATV) use on the GRCE shall be restricted to the period of time imposed by easement document and to the linear recreational corridors delineated in Exhibit 6 of the easement, or shorter time periods. These routes will inform all proposed ATV use plans such as the St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trails System. The dates of public ATV use on the Multi-Use Trail system shall normally be May 15th through September 15th, depending on the weather. ATV use shall be managed in a manner that prevents damage to the natural resource values and biological diversity of the tract.

Private Leases. Public recreation on the tract shall accommodate the private recreation leases and shall not interfere with the enjoyment of the lessees. Public recreational use shall be prohibited within 300' of the principle structure(s) of any leased recreation camp. The only exceptions will be where there is a linear recreation corridor, river corridor or public fishing rights corridor within 300' of the principle structure(s), in which case the top of the nearest stream or river bank or the closest edge of a linear recreational corridor or town road will define the boundary of public use.

C. Public Input

In order to make optimal use of recreational resources on the property, it is important to understand the availability of, and demand for, recreation on both the easement property and in the surrounding region, as well as public sentiment regarding various related issues. The public has offered opinions and information regarding issues of concern by mail, e-mail, and personal conversations. The following list summarizes the primary topics identified in comments received from the public:

- Involvement of the public in the planning process;

- Specifics of public access and use (including vehicle/snowmobile/ATV access);
- Potential for resource degradation;
- Impacts to private lease clubs or individuals;
- Access for people with disabilities;
- Public information.

D. Recreation Use Opportunities and Constraints

1. Potential Activities and Opportunities

The public has, in accordance with the conservation easement, the right to: hike, mountain bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, ride horseback, bird watch, rock climb, study nature, and engage in other forms of non-motorized recreation within identified public recreation corridors. The public may also paddle and fish on interior waterways within designated river corridors and fish within designated public fishing rights corridors. Public camping can be permitted within designated river corridors and along the shore of Pleasant Lake at designated campsites. Public trapping is also permitted along designated river corridors. Individuals with mobility impairments may use mechanized means to access areas open to the public for non-motorized use and use motor vehicles on roads or trails open to the public for non-motorized use that have been designated as open to mobility impaired individuals upon issuance of a CP3 permit from the DEC. Excluding the period from October 1st to December 15th of each year, public motorized use is allowed on designated public motor vehicle access corridors.

Public suggestions received regarding recreation opportunities include: greater access to fishing opportunities, improved access to the North Branch of the Grass River and Pleasant Lake, and seasonal motorized access to Little Blue Mountain. Public desires to include the property in a county wide multi-use trail system are also common.

The Department may not be able to provide, in the immediate future, public use of all the rights acquired in the easement. Road rights, in particular public motor vehicle rights, may not be exercised immediately, as roads must meet certain standards before use by public motor vehicles, including signage. Roads, once opened to the public, must be at least partly maintained by the Department, so the cost of that additional maintenance must be considered since our resources to maintain facilities are limited.

An additional constraint is that public use must not significantly impact the private landowner's use of the property for forest management. Some roads and areas may have to be closed periodically when timber harvesting operations are underway. Alternative routes will be considered in such situations to minimize the inconvenience to the recreating public, but there will be times when parts of the property will not be as accessible as normal in order to protect the safety of the public and allow forest management activities to take place.

2. Specific Recreational Activities

The Grass River Conservation Easement utilizes eight specific maps (Exhibits 1-8) to describe and delineate potential public recreation opportunities on the protected property. See these Exhibits in Appendix G.

- a. **Public Recreation Use Areas:** See Exhibit 1 - Map of Identified River Corridors, Public Fishing Rights Corridors and Campsites; Exhibit 2 – Map of Year-Round Public Access Roads; Exhibit 3 – Map of Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Roads, Public Parking and Control Points; Exhibit 4 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Non-Motorized Public Access and Public Parking Areas; Exhibit 5 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public Snowmobile Use; Exhibit 6 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public All-Terrain Vehicle Use;
- b. **Linear Recreation Corridors:** See Exhibit 4 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Non-Motorized Public Access and Public Parking Areas; Exhibit 5 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public Snowmobile Use; Exhibit 6 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public All-Terrain Vehicle Use;
- c. **Motor Vehicle Access to Recreational Activities:** See Exhibit 1 - Map of Identified River Corridors, Public Fishing Rights Corridors and Campsites; Exhibit 2 – Map of Year-Round Public Access Roads; Exhibit 3 – Map of Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Roads, Public Parking and Control Points;
- d. **Snowmobiles, ATVs and Boats:** See Exhibit 5 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public Snowmobile Use; Exhibit 6 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Permissible Public All-Terrain Vehicle Use;
- e. **Fishing and Trapping:** See Exhibit 1 - Map of Identified River Corridors, Public Fishing Rights Corridors and Campsites;
- f. **Hiking, Biking, X-C Skiing:** See Exhibit 4 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Non-Motorized Public Access and Public Parking Areas;
- g. **Horseback Riding and Dog Sledding:** See Exhibit 4 – Map of Linear Recreational Corridors for Non-Motorized Public Access and Public Parking Areas;
- h. **Camping:** See Exhibit 1 - Map of Identified River Corridors, Public Fishing Rights Corridors and Campsites.

3. Management and Natural Resource Constraints

The Department may not be able to provide, in the immediate future, public use of all the rights acquired in the easement. Road rights, in particular public motor vehicle rights, may not be exercised immediately, as roads must meet certain standards before use by public motor vehicles, including signage. Roads, once opened to the public, must be at least partly maintained by the Department, so the cost of that additional maintenance must be considered since our resources to maintain facilities are limited.

An additional constraint is that public use must not significantly impact the private landowner's use of the property for forest management. Some roads and areas may have to be closed periodically when timber harvesting operations are underway. Alternative routes will be considered in such situations to minimize the inconvenience

to the recreating public, but there will be times when parts of the property will not be as accessible as normal in order to protect the safety of the public and allow forest management activities to take place.

Central to recreation management planning for the Grass River Management Unit, as noted above, is the St. Lawrence County proposal for a Multi-Use Recreational Trails System. As proposed, the trail will incorporate existing town and county roadways, logging roads, and off-road trails on county, state, and private parcels of land. The 120-mile project, part of a cross county trail from Lewis to Franklin County, would provide public recreational use for ATVs, snowmobiling, biking, skiing, hiking, dog sledding and other permitted uses. The multi-use trail would include ATV use from approximately May 15th to September 15th and be managed consistent with state, department, agency, and municipal rules and regulations. Segments of the trail are proposed to cross NYS fee and easement land including the Grass River, Long Pond, and Tooley Pond easements. Each of the CE segments will need to be incorporated into the appropriate RMP or unit management plan to obtain final approval.

VIII. PROPOSED RECREATION MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

A. General Recreation Management Actions

1. **Boundary Identification:** Easement language permits the landowner and the DEC to post boundaries within and along the protected property. The DEC will post and sign all aspects of public recreation (i.e., Fishing Access Corridors, Motorized Access Corridors, etc.) within the property and maintain an informational kiosk on the Dean Road.
2. **Recreation Enforcement:** DEC's Office of Public Protection will work with the landowner and DEC Lands and Forests to provide recreation enforcement on the protected property.
3. **Recreation Monitoring:** DEC will monitor the protected property in a manner specified by a monitoring plan developed and based upon easement language.

B. Specific Public Use Management

(See Appendix B – Public Use Access and Appendix I - Overall Recreation Maps)

1. **Roads:** The public currently has motorized access to approximately 10 miles of seasonal access roads. This plan proposes to open approximately 18 miles more. As with any historic Adirondack parcel, roads within the GRCE are known by a variety of different names. This plan refers to them, when possible, by their common name and tries to correlate with road names used in the GRCE Baseline Report. As such: access to the northern portions of the tract begins at the White Road in the town of Clare. The North Branch of the Grass River is accessed via the North Branch Road as a continuation of the White Road. Access to the properties interior will be via the Dean Road and the improved Stone Dam Road. In order to provide access to the Little Blue Mountain and Middle Branch river corridors and other public fishing rights corridors, the Rainbow and Packard roads, along with portions of the Buckhorn and Stillwater roads, will be opened seasonally. When finalized, the St. Lawrence County

Multi-Use Trail will utilize the main east-west haul road (known as Rt. 8D on the snowmobile maps) through the property and proceed north via the Packard Road and a newly constructed connector with the Long Pond CE. A comprehensive list of Public Use and Access can be found in Appendix B of this plan (pps. 48-50);

2. The Old Stone Dam Access Road

The Stone Dam parcel of Forest Preserve has traditionally been accessed by the public and DEC staff via an old road in poor condition off the end of the Town of Clare maintained Dean Road. The old road extends about 2 miles to the Stone Dam parcel thru the GRCE. Forest Preserve roads, which are generally low maintenance seasonal roads, are a means of providing the public with access to recreational programs on Forest Preserve lands. Roads on or adjacent to Forest Preserve generally provide adequate public access to the unit; most of the access is from town roads, or Forest Preserve roads maintained by the Department. There are some roads with questions about their legal use by the public as well as roads being used that are not designated for public motor vehicle use. The status of the Stone Dam Road has been in question for a long time. It has not been regularly maintained, as the Town of Clare does not claim it as a town road, and the underlying landowner prior to Molpus Woodlands Group ownership stopped its maintenance after building a separate road to access their own land. Since the acquisition by DEC of an easement on the surrounding land has opened this new road as an alternative route, there is no need to maintain the old road to provide access. While some members of the public continue to prefer it for traditional access, it should not, in its current condition, remain open for public motor vehicle use. The old road will now be signed as a foot trail for access into the Stone Dam parcel. Skiing, snowshoeing, and other non-motorized uses will be permitted. A 2017 study conducted by members of the St. Lawrence University Recreation Lab (VSA 17-06-po-31) is included as Appendix H of this plan. The study's recommendations provide empirical support for this management decision.

3. **Hiking:** The public currently has access to approximately 55 miles of non-motorized public recreation corridors and 35 miles of fishing and river corridors, both of which are open to hiking between December 15th and October 1st each year. This plan proposes additional access to the summit of Little Blue Mountain, the North Branch of the Grass River, and a trail of approximately 3 miles to Church Pond on the neighboring Forest Preserve parcel of the same name. All new and existing trails will be signed and marked.
4. **Boating:** Between December 15th and October 1st each year, paddlers and other non-motorized users have access to approximately 55 miles of river and public fishing rights corridors, as well as Pleasant Lake. This plan will establish a car-top boat launch at Pleasant Lake. Motorized access to rivers and streams will be provided with parking areas along Gulf Brook, Bear Brook, Alder Brook, and Blue Mountain Stream. The Middle Branch of the Grass River will be accessible at several signed locations and the North Branch can be reached with the completion of a new trail leaving the White Road near Cranberry Pond and a parking area located on the northern border of the Long Pond easement.
5. **Mountain Biking:** Between December 15th and October 1st each year, cyclists can use the existing non-motorized public recreation corridors and will have access to the proposed St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trail route. Specifically, this plan will designate and sign two loops: One will run approximately 9 miles from the Stone Dam parking area crossing the Middle Branch of the Grass River twice. The other

emanates from the proposed parking area at Pleasant Lake, tracing a figure-8 of approximately 14 miles, offering the option of two smaller loops of approximately 7 miles each.

6. **Cross Country Skiing & Snowshoeing:** After December 15th of each year, winter recreationists have access to approximately 55 miles of non-motorized public recreation corridors and use of the proposed St. Lawrence County multi-use Trail system. Access can come from the Dean and Tooley Pond roads which are town maintained. Campsites at Pleasant Lake, Gulf Brook, Bear Creek, Blue Mountain Stream, and the North and Middle branches of the Grass River will be available for winter use.
7. **Fishing:** Between December 15th and October 1st each year, anglers have access to approximately 25 miles of River and 10 miles of Public Fishing Rights Corridors, as well as Pleasant Lake. Access will be provided with parking areas along Gulf Brook, Bear Brook, Alder Brook, and Blue Mountain Stream. The Middle Branch of the Grass River will be accessible at several signed locations and the North Branch can be reached with the completion of a new trail leaving the White Road near Cranberry Pond.
8. **Camping:** This plan will designate up to 11 campsites on the protected property. Additional seasonal motorized access will be designated to access eastern portions of the North Branch of the Grass River to accommodate campers. All other sites occur along year-round or seasonal motorized recreational corridors. Where practical, campsites will meet ADA standards and design.
9. **Snowmobiling:** Approximately 60 miles of established trails afford snowmobilers extensive access to the property. Trails are groomed and maintained in accordance with a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement (VSA) with the St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association. A comprehensive representation of snowmobile trails on the easement can be found on the Existing Facilities Map on page 103 of this plan as well as Exhibit 5 of the Easement Document (appendix G). The newly constructed connector with the Long Pond CE is mapped on the Proposed Facilities Map on page 104.

This plan proposes two additional trails (see Proposed Facilities map page 104) on the Grass River CE. These trails may be designated and/or constructed, in cooperation with the landowner, in the future. One connects the Cranberry Lake Fire Station to the existing trail system near Silver Lake. The second would provide access to the Hamlet of Cranberry Lake from current trails on the Cranberry Lake Wild Forest. The trails will not be used, designated or constructed before the DEC consults with the landowner and acquires written approval.

10. **ATV use:** St. Lawrence County has proposed a 120-mile multi-use trail system that would involve approximately 16 miles of roads and trails on the GRCE. The multi-use trail would include ATV use from approximately May 15th to September 15th and be managed consistent with State, department, agency, and municipal rules and regulations. The designated route would need to be signed for the public and a number of gates erected on roads leading off the route to restrict access to areas not open to public ATV use. DEC worked extensively with St. Lawrence County to finalize the proposed Multi-Use Trail route as it traverses the Tooley Pond, Grass River and Long Pond CEs. In agreement with St. Lawrence County, A Volunteer

Stewardship Agreement, will be developed to formalize management of the multi-use trail.

C. Recreational Support Facilities

1. **Trailheads:** A year-round trail will be constructed to provide access to the Church Pond Forest Preserve parcel. The trail will be located along the boundary of the Grass River CE and the adjacent Long Pond easement.
2. **Boat Launches:** A car top boat launch will be developed at Pleasant Lake.
3. **Roads:** Interior access to the property is provided by more than 50 miles of improved or partially improved gravel roads. Roads designated as recreational corridors by the easement document may be opened to the public for motorized and non-motorized use. This plan specifies, in section VIII B, which roads the DEC proposes to designate for public access. Based upon standards and specifications established by this plan, the landowner and DEC shall decide whether portions of trails and roads shall be repaired, improved, relocated or if public use upon them shall be temporarily suspended. A comprehensive list of public use and access can be found in Appendix B of this plan (pps. 46-48).

4. **Parking Areas:** Parking shall be restricted to those locations designated for such use.

Existing: There are currently no designated public parking areas within the tract.

Proposed: Up to nine (9) parking areas will be provided by DEC at the following general locations; Bear Creek, Alder Brook, Stony Brook, Little Blue Mountain, Gulf Brook, Middle Branch Grass River and Pleasant Lake.

Parking on the shoulder of the Dean and White Roads will be at the discretion of the Town of Clare.

Parking areas will generally be built to accommodate four or five cars and include one universally accessible space.

5. **Camp Sites:** Camping is restricted to designated campsites.

Existing: There are no designated public campsites within the tract.

Proposed: Up to 11 campsites are proposed to be constructed. These sites will be established as needed based upon observed use, need, and this plan's implementation schedule. It is possible that the recreational needs for the property can be met with fewer sites. The campsites will be generally located as follows: One along Gulf Brook, three along the North Branch Grass River, three along the Middle Branch Grass River and one at Pleasant Lake.

6. **Bridges:** There are ten bridges on the protected property, several of which facilitate public recreation.
7. **Information Kiosks and Entrance Signs:** An information kiosk has been installed along the Dean Road near the bridge over the Middle Branch Grass River.

This plan proposes that kiosks also be located at the intersection known as the “Troopers Shed” and at Pleasant Lake.

8. **ADA Accessible Structures:** As it constitutes a central location for a variety of activities on the protected property and adjacent Stone Dam parcel of Forest Preserve, an ADA compliant parking area will be constructed east of the Rainbow Clubs main lodge on the improved Stone Dam / Dean Road. ADA accessible facilities will be sited at Pleasant Lake, along the North Branch of the Grass River, and along the Middle Branch of the Grass River.
9. **Signage:** Boundary signs will be placed along all public motorized recreation corridors, all river corridors open to public use and along all streams with public fishing rights.

See Conservation Easement Public Recreation Road & Trail Sign Guidance Manual at: <http://www.dec.ny.gov/regulations/2401.html>

IX. IMPLEMENTATION SCHEDULE AND ESTIMATED BUDGET

The following tables outline a schedule for implementation of the proposed management actions and their estimated costs. The estimated costs of implementing these projects are based on historical costs incurred by the Department for similar projects. Values for some projects are based on costs for service contracting. These cost estimates do not include capital expenditures for items such as equipment, nor do they include the value of program staff salaries or actual staff time required to complete that task.

Annual		
	Project	Est. Cost or Staff Days
1	Routine maintenance of roads, boundaries, and public recreation facilities	\$5,000
Total Annual Cost		\$5,000
Phase One		
	Project	Est. Cost or Staff Days
1	Construct three parking areas, one at Little Blue Mountain, one at Pleasant Lake, and one adjacent to the old route to the FP Stone Dam parcel	\$8,500
2	Placement of eleven gates to facilitate public use of roads to Pleasant Lake and Little Blue Mountain	\$16,500
3	Install signs on gates, parking areas, and roads	\$3,000
4	Establish ADA access at Pleasant Lake	\$4,000
5	Establish public boat launch at Pleasant Lake	\$1,200
6	Preparation of public information on use of the property in the form of brochures, website pages and similar	\$1,000
7	Construct information kiosk at Pleasant Lake	\$2,500
Total Phase One Cost		\$36,700

Phase Two		
1	Placement of 18 gates to facilitate proposed Multi-Use Trail and protect landowner interests	\$27,000
2	Construct the Long Pond Easement Multi-Use trail connection	\$30,000
3	Establish parking area along Gulf Brook	\$2,500
4	Establish campsite at Gulf Brook	\$4,000
5	Install signs on gates, parking areas, and roads	\$4,400
6	Develop and post the year-round trail to the Church Pond Forest Preserve parcel along the MWF easement boundary from the adjacent Long Pond easement	\$9,000
Total Phase Two Cost		\$76,900
Phase Three		
1	Establish three Primitive Campsites along the North Branch of the Grass River as determined appropriate by observed use	\$12,000
2	Establish three Primitive Campsites along the Middle Branch of the Grass River as determined appropriate by observed use	\$12,000
3	Develop and post a trail from existing parking area near Cranberry Pond (FP) southerly to access the North Branch of the Grass River	\$29,000
Total Phase Three Cost		\$53,000
Phase Four		
1	Establish Parking areas along Bear Creek and Blue Mountain Stream	\$5,000
2	Establish Primitive Campsites at Bear Creek and Blue Mountain Stream as determined appropriate by observed use	\$5,000
Total Phase Four Cost		\$10,000
Total Cost		\$181,600

X. COMPLIANCE: This Recreation Management Plan is compliant with the following policies, regulations, and laws

- A. October 2017 - Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plan Guidance
- B. State Environmental Quality Review Act
- C. Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act on Private Land
- D. Freshwater Wetlands Act
- E. APA/DEC MOU Concerning State Owned Conservation Easements on Private Lands within the Adirondack Park

XI. APPENDICES

A. SEQR

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) requires the consideration of environmental factors early in the planning stages of any proposed action(s) that are undertaken, funded or approved by a local, regional or state agency. A Full Environmental Assessment Form is used to identify and analyze relevant areas of environmental concern based upon the management actions in the draft unit management plan. For this plan, SEQRA review has been initiated with the preparation of both the EAF and Negative Declaration. Upon review of the information contained in the EAF, there will not be a significant impact on the environment. Any changes that are made to this draft plan, based upon public comments, will be considered in the EAF and determination of significance prior to completing the final plan.

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.

Part 2

1. Impact on the land: During the construction of foot trails (2), parking lots (9), the car top boat launch, primitive (7) and accessible campsites (4), Best Management Practices (BMPs) and standard erosion control methods for trail maintenance and construction will be followed. Proper layout techniques will minimize opportunities for erosion. The terrain selected for trails will traverse generally moderate and rolling topography conducive to trail maintenance and construction. Water bars will be installed, as needed, to protect these trails from erosion. Any stream crossings will be made at right angles to the stream and construction will be limited to periods of low or normal flow.

3. Impact on surface water: Impacts involve the rehabilitation of existing roads that pass through wetland areas. Best Management Practices (BMPs) and standard erosion control methods for trail maintenance and construction will be followed. Extra precautions will be taken should the need arise to replace culverts and/or bridges in sensitive areas.

5. Impact on flooding: The rehabilitation and maintenance of roads that pass through wetland area will involve the use of water control structures (culverts) to properly control drainage. Best Management Practices (BMPs) and standard erosion control methods for trail maintenance and construction will be followed.

6. Impact on Air: The hauling of gravel and maintenance of roads might produce minor increases in airborne dust. These effects will be temporary and can be mitigated by use of Best Management Practices (BMPs).

11. Impact on open space and recreation: There might be an increase in recreational activity on the property due to increased opportunity, accessibility, and facilities.

15. Impact on noise, odor, and light: There is the potential for minor noise impacts associated with road maintenance.

The majority of the projects proposed in this RMP are minor. Construction is proposed, generally, in areas already cleared or previously disturbed. Where new construction is necessary, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be followed, minimal numbers of trees and shrubs will be removed, and (where possible) improvements will be kept away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes. On-site gravel will be used according to terms of the easement, whenever possible, when working on roads and parking areas. All facilities will be periodically inspected to ensure there is no degradation of natural resources.

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

Upon review of the information recorded on this EAF, as noted, plus this additional support information

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:

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.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.

Name of Action: Grass River Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plan

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

Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: Kramer Kwaczala

Title of Responsible Officer: Forester 1

Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency: Kramer Kwaczala

Digitally signed by Kramer Kwaczala
DN: cn=Kramer Kwaczala, o=NYSED, ou=Lands and Forests,
email=kramer.kwaczala@dec.ny.gov, c=US

Date: 1/28/19

Signature of Preparer (if different from Responsible Officer)

Digitally signed by Peter D. Luhsch
DN: cn=Peter D. Luhsch, o=NYSED, ou=Lands and Forests,
email=peter.dluhsch@dec.ny.gov, c=US
Date: 2019.01.10 09:58:41 -05'00'

Date: 01/10/2019

For Further Information:

Contact Person: David Smith

Address: State Office Building, 317 Washington St, Watertown, NY 13601

Telephone Number: (315) 785-2263

E-mail: david.smith@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

B. Public Use Access

Table 1: A Summary of Access Rights

Current Facilities Open for Public Use

Facility	Mileage / number	Activity Type	Reference
Roads: Seasonal Motorized Access;	10 Miles	Access to: Snowmobile, fish, trap, hike, mountain bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, ride horseback, bird watch, rock climb, study nature, and engage in other forms of non-motorized recreation	Appendix G & Page 39
Non-Motorized Public Recreation Corridors;	55 Miles		
Snowmobile	60 Miles		
Trails	0	Mountain biking / Hiking / Access	Pages 39 & 40
Boat Launch	0	Fishing / Access	Page 41
Campsites	0	Camping	Page 42
Parking Areas	0	Parking / Access	Page 41

Additional Facilities Proposed to Be Open for Public Use in this Plan

Facility	Mileage / number	Activity Type	Reference
Roads: Seasonal Motorized Access;	18 Miles (28 total)	Access to: Snowmobile, fish, trap, hike, mountain bike, cross country ski, snowshoe, ride horseback, bird watch, rock climb, study nature, and engage in other forms of non-motorized recreation	Appendix G & Page 39
Non-Motorized Public Recreation Corridors;	0 Miles (55 total)		
Snowmobile	0 Miles (60 total)		
Trails	25 Miles	Mountain biking / Hiking / Access	Pages 39 & 40
Boat Launch	1	Fishing / Access	Page 41
Campsites	Up to 11	Camping	Page 42
Parking Areas	Up to 9	Parking / Access	Page 41

Table 2: Public Use Rights for Specific Roads and Trails

Road	Mileage	Access	Associated Exhibit (App. G)
Power Line Road	4.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5

White Road - Town Road	3.9	Public Year-Round Motor Vehicle Access Corridor, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	2, 4, 5
Gleason Road	2.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	3, 4, 5
Rock Pond Road	12.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	3, 4, 5
Featherbed Road	1.5	Public Year-Round Motor Vehicle Access Corridor, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	2, 4, 5, 6
Featherbed Connector Road	0.75	Public Year-Round Motor Vehicle Access Corridor, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	2, 4, 5
Gulf Brook Road	2.0	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Middle Branch Road	5.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	3, 4, 5
Bridge Road	3.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Dean Road - Town Road	4.5	Public Year-Round Motor Vehicle Access Corridor, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	2, 4, 5
Fyfe Road	3.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Stone Dam Road	3.25	Public Year-Round Motor Vehicle Access Corridor, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	2, 4, 5
Rainbow Road	4.5	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	3, 4, 5
Outpost Road	5.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	3, 4, 5, 6
Outpost Road Ext.	0.6	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	
Little Blue Road	4.0	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Little Blue Road Ext.	0.6	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Little Blue Mtn. Trail	0.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Buckhorn Road	6.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	3, 4, 5
Buckhorn Road Connector	0.5	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	3, 4, 5, 6
Lem Pond Connector Road	0.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Brother Ponds Road	2.5	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5

Packard Road	2.0	Seasonal Public Motor Vehicle Access Road, Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	3, 4, 5, 6
Tracy Pond Road	4.0	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile, ATV Corridor	4, 5, 6
Slouch Pond Loop	3.25	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Carpenter Brook Loop	4.0	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5
Mile Pond Road	2.0	Non-motorized Public Linear Recreation Corridor, Snowmobile	4, 5

C. Inventory and Condition of Shared Roads, Trails, and Facilities: (see Baseline Report – Available for view in Potsdam DEC Office)

D. Shared Road and Infrastructure Maintenance

The conservation easement provides general guidance on how the costs for maintaining improvements are to be shared. The Department and the landowner will share the expense of any maintenance or replacement of improvements in public use based on the proportionate amount of use and benefit that each party derives from the open and accessible improvement (except for shared bridges which the parties will share equally in the cost of replacement). An annual maintenance plan that represents each parties share of the maintenance cost will be developed by both parties individually with due consideration to their respective annual budgets and work-plans, and shall be agreed to each year at the annual meeting.

When considering cost-sharing arrangements, it is important to mention that neither the Department, nor the landowner, is responsible for assuming a cost that is not commensurate with the interest they have in a particular shared improvement. With that in mind, the Department is solely responsible for incurring costs unique to providing for public access and use; likewise, the landowner is solely responsible for incurring costs unique to providing for their reserved rights in the property. Any damage caused by public recreational activities shall be the responsibility of the Department to repair. Any damage caused by the landowner's activities (for example logging operations or the lease holders) shall be the responsibility of the landowner to repair.

When roads and trails are constructed by the Department, they will be generally built to the standards the Department uses on State forest lands (DEC Unpaved Forest Road Handbook, August 2008). In addition, roads and trails will be constructed and maintained with deference to the conservation easement road standards that have been mutually agreed to by the landowner and the Department. During construction and maintenance, Best Management Practices (BMPs) will be utilized to protect the natural resources (see BMP Field Guide at DEC website):
http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/dlfbmpguide.pdf.

The public's use of roads, trails, recreational amenities or any improvement may be subject to temporary or permanent closure, removal or relocation if the Department determines that the use is having a negative impact on natural resources, the landowner's forest management, Department administration of the property, or is contributing to substantial conflicts with other users or lease holders.

E. Road and Trail Standards and Specifications

ROAD/TRAIL SPECIFICATION FACTOR	MOTOR VEHICLE ROAD VOLUME CLASS ¹			ATV TRAIL VOLUME CLASS ₁			SNOWMOBILE TRAIL VOLUME CLASS ₁		
	LOW	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED	HIGH	LOW	MED	HIGH
# of TRAFFIC LANES	1	1	1+	1	1	2	1	1	2
MINIMUM CURVE RADIUS w/o signage(feet)	50	50	50	n/a	35	50	n/a	40	50
MAXIMUM GRADE % (sustained/ short stretch)	10/15	10/15	10/15	n/a	10/15	10/15	n/a	20/20+	20/20+
MINIMUM SHOULDER WIDTH, EACH SIDE (feet)	n/a	3to4	4 to 5	n/a	1to 2	2 to 3	n/a	n/a	n/a
TRAVELED SURFACE WIDTH(feet)	8	10	12/14	4	6	10	6	10	12
MINIMUM TURNOUT SPACING	n/a	½ mi	1/4 mi	n/a	n/a	1/2mi	n/a	n/a	1/2mi
SURFACE SPECIFICATIONS	BMP's ₂	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's
DITCHING	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's
CULVERT INSTALLATION SPECIFICATIONS ³	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's	BMP's
MIN. SIGHTING DISTANCE w/o SIGNAGE(feet)	100	150	250	n/a	100	150	n/a	50	150
VEGETATION CONTROL	cut/remove surface only	cut/remove shoulder/ surface	cut/remove shoulder/ surface	cut/remove surface only	cut/remove shoulder/ surface	cut/remove shoulder/ surface	cut/remove surface only	cut/remove surface only	Cut//remove surface only
PITCH(maximum)	<10%	4" crown	4" crown	N/A	20%	15%	n/a	20%	15%
STREAM AND WETLAND X-ING SPECS	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S
SENSITIVE AREA SET BACKS	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S	BMP'S
SIGNAGE STANDARDS ⁴	Minimal	Basic	Moderate	Minimal	Basic	Moderate	Minimal	Basic	Moderate
GATE LOCATIONS	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed	as agreed
SEASONAL USE SPECIFICATIONS ⁵	surface	surface	surface	surface	surface	surface	Winter/snow	Winter/snow	Winter/snow

MAINTENANCE STANDARDS & SURFACE CONDITIONS	Minimal/ cleared	as needed/ graded	Regular/ graded	Minimal/ cleared	as needed/ cleared	Regular/ graded	minimal/ cleared	as needed/ cleared	Regul ar/ cleare d groom ed
ENVIRONMENTAL STANDARDS ⁶	APA/DE C	APA/DE C	APA/DEC	APA/DE C	APA/DE C	APA/DE C	APA/DE C	APA/DE C	APA/D EC
INSURANCE STANDARDS ⁷	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NYS REG	NSY REG
ENFORCEMENT ⁸	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC	DEC

- 1 VEHICLE VOLUME SPECS:
 LOW: <50 ROUND TRIPS/MONTH
 MEDIUM: <300 ROUND TRIPS/MONTH
 HIGH: >300 ROUND TRIPS/MONTH
 HIGH VOLUME ATV & SNOWMOBILE TRAILS ARE USUALLY DESIGNATED ON EXISTING ROADS.
- 2 BMPS ARE PER THE NYS FORESTRY BEST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR WATER QUALITY: BMP FIELD GUIDE
- 3 ALL CULVERTS SHALL BE PROPERLY HEADED WITH STONE, WOOD, OR STEEL/PLASTIC COLLARS
- 4 SIGNAGE STANDARDS:
 MINIMAL - SIGNS FOR IDENTIFYING ROAD NAME WHERE BEGINS AND FOR HAZARDOUS SITUATIONS SUCH AS BARRIERS/KNOWN HAZARD PREVENTING PASSAGE AHEAD, STOP SIGN INDICATING INTERSECTION WITH A MODERATE OR HIGHER VOLUME ROAD
 BASIC - SAME AS MINIMAL PLUS BRIDGE APPROACH SIGNAGE, SHARP CURVE SIGNS, OR ADDITIONAL AS OTHERWISE NEEDED AND AGREED UPON BY DEC AND LANDOWNER (EG. SUCH AS SUGGESTED SPEED LIMIT IF IT IS THE FIRST ROAD INTO A PROPERTY)
 MODERATE - SAME AS BASIC PLUS SUGGESTED SPEED LIMIT (UNTIL IT BECOMES A REGULATION), TURNOUT DISTANCES, OR ADDITIONAL AS OTHERWISE NEEDED AND AGREED UPON BY DEC AND LANDOWNER
- 5 "SURFACE" MEANS THE CONDITION AND TYPE OF THE SURFACE WILL SET STANDARDS FOR SEASONAL USE. GENERALLY CLOSED DURING MUD SEASON (AS POSTED) TO PUBLIC MOTOR VEHICLE AND LOG TRUCK USE, BY AGREEMENT OF DEC AND LANDOWNER; "WINTER" MEANS WINTER USE ONLY
 MAINTENANCE STANDARDS:
 MINIMAL - CONDITION CHECKED ANNUALLY, ROUTINE MAINTENANCE SUCH AS GRADING, DITCH CLEANING POTHOLE/WASHOUT REPAIR GENERALLY NEEDED ONLY EVERY THREE OR FOUR YEARS
 AS NEEDED- SAME AS MINIMAL BUT DUE TO HIGHER USE LEVELS WILL LIKELY NEED SOME ROUTINE MAINTENANCE ANNUALLY OR EVERY OTHER YEAR
 REGULAR - ANNUAL ROUTINE MAINTENANCE LIKELY NEEDED
- 6 APA/DEC REGULATIONS ON WETLANDS, STREAM CROSSING, ETC.
- 7 NYS REGULATIONS ON INSURANCE REQUIREMENTS FOR VEHICLES
- 8 LANDOWNER IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMING LESSEE'S OF RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR USE OF TRAILS AND RELATED RETAINED RECREATION RIGHTS; DEC HAS LEGAL AUTHORITY FOR ENFORCEMENT OF DEC REG'S WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC, INCLUDING LANDOWNER LESSEES WHEN THEY ARE RECREATING AS MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC.
9. UPON MUTUAL AGREEMENT OF THE PARTIES, THE ABOVE TRAIL AND ROAD SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE ALTERED FOR SPECIFIC ROADS AND TRAILS IN SITUATIONS, WHERE IMPLEMENTING THOSE SPECIFICATIONS WOULD CAUSE ENVIRONMENTAL (OR OTHER) DAMAGE AND WHERE ADEQUATE SAFETY PRECAUTIONS ARE MAINTAINED, SIGN STANDARDS MAY BE ADJUSTED FOR ROADS AND TRAILS WITH ALTERED SPECIFICATIONS.
10. MINIMUM STANDARDS CAN BE EXCEEDED BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT, INCLUDING AGREED UPON MITIGATION STANDARDS.
11. MAXIMUM SPEED UNLESS OTHERWISE POSTED – 25 MILES/HOUR.

F. Public Comments and Response Summary to Draft Plan (Reserved)

The following is a summary of the public comments that were received during the creation of the Grass River Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plan. A public draft meeting was held October 3, 2016 at the Colton-Pierrepont High School. 74 people signed an attendance sheet that night. Verbal comments were received at the public meeting as well as through letters, phone calls, emails and face to face meetings with contributors. **Comments** are in bold text, with DEC *responses* in italics.

General Comments

1. **Replace the dam in Massena, a sorry state of affairs.**

RESPONSE: This facility is not within the Grass River Conservation Easements and is outside the scope of this Recreation Management Plan.

2. **The DEC is obligated to provide a plan that preserves and enhances natural resource values of the protected property.**

RESPONSE: The Recreation Management Plan is guided by the Conservation Easement Document (deed). Provisions of that document specify that the property be managed as a "working forest." As such, sustainable forestry criteria are in place to preserve and enhance the resource values of the protected property. Recreation rights acquired with the easement are planned and managed according to established conservation methods and practices to preserve and enhance the natural resource values.

3. **Both RMP's need an enforcement plan.**

RESPONSE: Recreation Enforcement is identified as a General Recreational Management Action on page 36. Recreation Management Plans are produced by the Division of Lands & Forests and typically do not include detailed enforcement procedures unless there is a particular enforcement issue already occurring on the property. Since that is not the case, enforcement of our rules and regulations is a routine activity of DEC Forest Rangers and Environmental Conservation officers, in consultation with L&F staff.

4. **The RMP need's clarification detailing the Departments mandatory monitoring and enforcement obligations and acknowledge the fact that access and other specific uses may be revoked.**

RESPONSE: Each Conservation Easement is monitored according to a plan derived from specifics within the Easement Document (deed). A comprehensive description of "obligations" can be found in the Public Use Administration and Management section of the RMP – page 29 for the Grass River Conservation Easement (GRCE)

5. **The plan needs to include the specific obligation and terms that the DEC is responsible for on the easements.**

RESPONSE: The Conservation Easement Documents (Deeds) which establish the provisions of a Recreation Management Plan are easily obtainable public

documents. A comprehensive description of “obligations” can be found in the Public Use Administration and Management section of the RMP(s) – page 29 for the GRCE.

- 6. A full economic analysis of the proposed impact to sportsman’s clubs and the real property tax system within the area of the plans is not being presented.**

RESPONSE: A Real Property economic analysis is outside the intended scope of a Recreation Management Plan. In addition, the CE and the RMP do not affect real property taxation, since the private landowner and NY State each pay their proportional share of the taxes so that 100% of the taxes levied by the local taxing districts are paid.

- 7. Draft RMP’s should balance environmental, social and economic impacts, positive and negative as required by SEQR.**

RESPONSE: It is the goal of the Plan to provide this balance. Each RMP is based upon specific requirements of the Conservation Easement Document (deed) attached to the property in question. A comprehensive description of “obligations” can be found in the Public Use Administration and Management section of the RMP(s) – page 29 for the GRCE

- 8. St. Lawrence County (officials) should have been included in more outreach during the development of the plan and listed as a partner with the NYDEC in the final development of the plans.**

RESPONSE: The DEC in general and the Potsdam office, in particular, met with and discussed particular aspects of these RMPs with SLC officials and representatives on numerous occasions during the drafting of these plans. Conversations regarding the Multiuse Trail Proposal have been ongoing since its inception.

- 9. Current fragmented maps do not provide a comprehensive view that is easily interpretable for analysis. The County Legislature is requesting the NYSDEC to provide a comprehensive map that would cover multiple plans on one document for clarification to the public and the county.**

RESPONSE: An effort to keep maps consistent and, therefore, familiar to individuals reading them led to the current format. The maps were presented in the public meeting and available online with the RMP. Each map is specific to the CE it addresses. A comprehensive-view map of the proposed multiuse trail was generated by DEC and approved by the SLC County Legislature.

- 10. Various parts of the plan(s) do not fully address the social, historical, and economic drivers of the management area, including the sportsman’s camps and the recreational use of snowmobiles.**

RESPONSE: Recreation Management Plans are intended to elaborate on and plan for the public uses provided for in the Conservation Easement Document. They may briefly cover economic impacts of some recreational activities and some history where it is relevant to the plan, but are not intended to provide detailed economic or historical analysis of the area.

- 11. The maps utilized in the Tooley Pond RMP and the Grass River UMP are insufficient and a hindrance to... providing feedback on the draft plan.**

RESPONSE: DEC staff met with a wide spectrum of interested parties during and after the public comment period for these plans. Feedback acquired during those meetings led to improvements and updates to the maps.

- 12. Several requests were made for the transfer of data from the maps used in the plan to topographical maps to allow for a more meaningful review and such maps were never provided. Maps should be in a topo format and show existing and proposed infrastructure.**

RESPONSE: Map making is a complex process. The RMP maps are required to depict considerable amounts of information. Balancing content and avoiding the confusion potential of an overly “busy” map requires compromise. For maps of this scale (20,000+ acres) it is impossible to include all available information. Small format maps with numerous layers of data on top of a topo background are very difficult to interpret. Additional reference maps can be found on the NYSDEC website. GRCE <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/92053.html> TPCE <http://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/8084.html> The State Land Interactive Mapper is also helpful <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45478.html>

- 13. The format of the recreation plans themselves is too wordy, too confusing and not a document the general public is going to read or be able to comprehend.**

RESPONSE: Refinement of RMPs is an ongoing effort. Feedback from the public comment period about the format of RMPs will be incorporated in future plans.

- 14. Forest management practices seem questionable. The Department should further assess this situation.**

RESPONSE: The landowner is currently enrolled in a recognized Third-Party Certification Program. This satisfies the conditions established for Sustainable Forestry as agreed upon in the Conservation Easement Document

- 15. Lease camp owners are concerned on how the public will be kept out of lease camp areas**

RESPONSE: Roads and trails will be opened only when DEC staff are confident that control points (there are 28 gates proposed for the GRCE) and signs are sufficient to protect the rights of all parties involved. On the Tooley Pond CE, leaseholders will be able to post a one-acre area around the camp against public use. On the Grass River CE only corridors and limited additional areas are open to the public, so the rest of the property can be posted to keep the public out.

- 16. Camp lease owners have noticed an increase in trash in areas the public now has access to.**

RESPONSE: DEC encourages all parties involved to establish communication when issues/conflicts arise, such as problems with trash being left where the public recreates. Prompt attention to such matters is essential if action is to be taken. The public is encouraged to report illegal activities to DEC: The NYSDEC Forest Ranger Dispatch number is 518-408-5850 and the Rangers TIPP line is 1-800-TIPP-DEC. DEC takes responsibility for cleaning up sites where trash has been left by the public.

- 17. There was a comment addressing lease camps and the value they have for the local economy. The member of the public asked that no camps be removed from the easements.**

RESPONSE: Neither the Grass River CE or the Tooley Pond CE has any provision that requires the removal of existing camps.

- 18. A comment was made that local businesses benefit from more access on state lands.**

RESPONSE: Recreation Management Plans provide access as it is permitted by the Easement Document (deed) and the easement properties in this plan do provide for more users in addition to the existing lessees, potentially providing additional benefit to local business.

Snowmobiling Comments:

- 19. Replace the George Washington Bridge on Trail S-86 where it crosses Middle Branch of Grass River, at GPS Coordinates 18T 505171mE 4912886mN. This bridge connects SLC intersection 50 to 60 and avoids having to ride along the Dean Rd.**

RESPONSE: NYSDEC has stated that it will not be replacing the “George Washington” bridge as there is a relatively new snowmobile bridge 2 miles downriver of it. NYSDEC has stated that it would support SLCSA efforts to replace the bridge by guiding and advising the planning and permitting process.

- 20. Snowmobile access to the scenic, 40' waterfall at Lampson Falls from the south gate on the Lampson Falls Trail, crossing County Rte. 27 then entering the Grass River Conservation Easement on the Access Road just to the south and onward to Trail S-80E. These falls are a local favorite!**

RESPONSE: Lampson Falls and its trail system exist on Forest Preserve Lands and are, therefore, outside the scope of Conservation Easement RMPs.

- 21. Alternate snowmobile trail routes when current dedicated and established snowmobile trails are closed for winter logging operations. There needs to be alternative trails developed along the same route.**

RESPONSE: NYSDEC works with landowners, local snowmobile clubs, and the St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association to provide alternate trails when/where forest management activities impact the established trail system. Logistics, topography, and provisions of the Easement itself have an effect upon this process, but every effort is made to ensure congruity from one season to the next.

- 22. I do not support reducing speed limits on snowmobile trails to equal that of motor vehicles on the same road/trail.**

RESPONSE: Speed limits on roads for motor vehicles do not generally apply to snowmobiles, though speed must be limited to the statewide limit of 55mph for designated snowmobile routes and less where conditions require it.

23. **Motor vehicle access corridors should be designated as "seasonal", and those roads that are used for snowmobile traffic be CLOSED to vehicles during the winter months.**

RESPONSE: *Conservation Easements are private lands. Landowner rights and rights-of-way cannot be regulated beyond what is negotiated in the Easement Document, though most routes open to snowmobiles on easements are not open for vehicles during snowmobile season, and vice-versa.*

24. **Develop a new snowmobile trail on Silver Lake Conservation Easement from Lot 38 and 47 to Lots 3 and 35, just east of Lots 38 and 47 as prescribed in the document.**

RESPONSE: *While outside the scope of the Grass River RMP, a connector already exists on the Silver Lake CE. It is difficult to interpret the above route and unclear which "document" it references, but it could be referencing the route along the rail road bed which would require a new bridge over the Grass River.*

25. **Trail signage on State Land snowmobile trails should be better defined and allowed, possibly utilizing the NYS OPRHP Snowmobile Trail Signing Handbook as the guideline.**

RESPONSE: *Trail signage used on trails approved by the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation does follow the referenced handbook. Changes to guidelines in that handbook are beyond the scope of this RMP*

26. **The plan should outline and map the proposed helipad evacuation locations nearest the snowmobile routes.**

RESPONSE: *There are no helipad evacuation locations proposed for these properties.*

27. **At the state level, it is time to eliminate the reference to snowmobile trails having "essentially the character of a footpath."**

RESPONSE: *That phrase is in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and pertains to snowmobile trails on Forest Preserve lands, not conservation easement lands, so is beyond the scope of this RMP.*

28. **NYS should allow all trails to be a minimum of 10-12' wide. This will accommodate a Class I groomer.**

RESPONSE: *The majority of snowmobile trails on Conservation Easements utilize active haul roads more than capable of accommodating the groomers allowed for by the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement governing snowmobile trail work in St. Lawrence County, and most main trails off of roads but on conservations easements are 10' to 14', wide, following the recommendations of OPRHP trail construction guidelines.*

29. **Maintain the current level of snowmobile trails. No current trails should be closed and there should be language that insures interconnection of the trails in this area to other neighboring areas.**

RESPONSE: *The snowmobile trail system, as depicted on the draft maps, was incomplete. Corrections have been made in the final drafts – no snowmobile trails were closed or eliminated by this plan.*

30. Acknowledge existing trails including local trails that may not be on the map

RESPONSE: *See response to question #29 above*

31. Confirm the existence of snowmobile trails from Long Pond Easement to near Little Blue Mountain.

RESPONSE: *These trails were added to and correctly depicted on the final drafts of the plan.*

32. NYSDEC should always seek St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association input in the planning stages of Management Plans.

RESPONSE: *A public meeting was held for the draft of this RMP. This meeting, the extended comment period, and day-to-day implementation of the Volunteer Stewardship Agreement allowed for extensive communication between the planner and the SLCSA in the formation of the RMP.*

33. Snowmobile trail 84 A (on private land) property owner wants this trail to remain snowmobile use only, no ATVs.

RESPONSE: *This RMP does not propose to manage private lands that are not subject to a State conservation easement. DEC will always require proof of permission from private landowners if a route proposed on a conservation easement connects to private lands off the easement.*

34. The snowmobile community should have been involved with the planning process from the beginning.

RESPONSE: *A public process exists for RMP development. The snowmobile community was well represented at the public meeting on 10/3/16 and in discussions since then. The SLCSA has been an active partner with NYS DEC in the management of snowmobile trails on CEs for decades, and has been consulted regularly over that time on changes or concerns regarding public snowmobile trails.*

35. In the plan, there is a lack of distinction between snowmobiles and other types of motorized vehicles.

RESPONSE: *Recreation, be it motorized, non-motorized, or snowmobile is clearly defined in several sections of text, on the maps, and particularly in the referenced Exhibits referenced in Appendix G.*

36. Alternative trails are not always provided on the snowmobile system.

RESPONSE: *The Easement Document stipulates that the landowner and DEC work together to ameliorate the effects of forest management on snowmobile trail closure. Each fall there is a meeting of landowners, DEC, and the SLCSA designed to find*

alternative trails where available when winter logging uses roads that are part of the regional trail network.

Wildlife Comments:

- 37. Manage portions of the forest as early successional forest to promote ruffed grouse, golden winged warbler, and other bird populations that require that type of habitat.**

RESPONSE: The Conservation Easement Document requires the landowner to practice sustainable forestry on the property, but the Landowner, not DEC, makes the decisions about how to manage the property with regards to timber and wildlife.

- 38. Due to restrictions on setting body-gripping traps within 100' of trails, these new trails create 200' wide swaths of restricted trapping zones. Each 210 linear feet of trail affect an acre and each mile of trail restricts around 24 acres. D.E.C. wildlife staff are losing the ability to manage wildlife due to access problems for hunters and trappers. A DEC biologist who traps should be involved in the routing of any new trails to avoid this.**

RESPONSE: While Title 6 of the Official Compilation of the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York (NYCRR), Section 6.3 (a) (13) does restrict the placement of body-grip traps within 100 feet of trails, we feel that any impact of new trails constructed as a result of this plan will be minimal. Furthermore, any loss of opportunity may be offset by the ease of access trappers will enjoy as a result of these new trails. Finally, 6NYCRR 6.3(a) (13) is very specific to body-grip traps placed on land and does not regulate the use of foothold traps or any type of traps placed within water bodies, even within 100 feet of a trail.

- 39. The RMP's fail to address protections for Albert Marsh Mega wetland and six other wetlands and Spruce Grouse habitat.**

RESPONSE: The RMPs do not propose any facilities or activities that would impact wetlands on the properties as nearly all trails proposed are on existing roads. In addition, Spruce Grouse, while present historically, have not been confirmed on either CE since 2002.

- 40. Biological and ecological data from the easement baselines should be included in the RMP appendixes or made available online.**

RESPONSE: This information can be viewed via the Environmental Resource mapper on the NYSDEC Public Website <http://www.dec.ny.gov/gis/erm/>.

- 41. Easements contain deer yards, moose, raptor trees. Timber harvesting enhances the snowshoe hare population.**

RESPONSE: We acknowledge that these assertions could be true.

Recreation – General Comments:

- 42. New York State should look into acquiring the Rustic Lodge/land or at least public access for paddlers and recreationists.**

RESPONSE: *This property and access to the adjacent South Branch of the Grass River are beyond the scope of this RMP, but your suggestion is acknowledged and will be considered when acquisition opportunities arise.*

- 43. Every parcel of state/DEC land should be open for all types of recreation, hiking, horseback riding, ATV/UTV use, skiing and snowmobiling.**

RESPONSE: *A Conservation Easement is not “State/DEC land”, it is private property on which the state has acquired certain rights. The RMP is bound by the terms of Conservation Easement Document (deed), which may limit the kinds and location of public recreation allowed.*

- 44. The Adirondack Council does not support the emphasis on motorized recreation (amount of road miles open to ATV’s) without subsequent acknowledgement or analysis of the land’s capacity to withstand such intensive use.**

RESPONSE: *The only public ATV use allowed for in the plan is the proposed St. Lawrence County multiuse trail, which includes a small percentage of the mileage of existing roads on the property.*

- 45. The state should enact comprehensive reforms for ATV riding before expanding ATV use.**

RESPONSE: *Lessees are already permitted to ride ATVs on the Grass River Easement. Public use of the very specific routes mentioned in the plan will not represent a significant expansion of this use. Enacting comprehensive reforms on ATV use is beyond the scope of these RMPs.*

- 46. The Grass River and Tooley Pond RMP’s represent a significant shift in ATV use and signals an expansion of motorized use using a piecemeal approach that lacks regional cohesiveness.**

RESPONSE: *The ATV use proposed for these conservation easements is not a piecemeal approach as it is based on a regional approach for creating a cross county multi-use trail in cooperation with St. Lawrence County. The routes proposed for these CEs minimizes the mileage on these CEs by identifying as direct a route as possible across these CEs.*

- 47. Expanded opportunities for ATV use will result in the illegal trespass onto sensitive Forest Preserve lands.**

RESPONSE: *Gates, signage, informational kiosks, and the Division of Forest Protection mandates represent management tools and techniques to control illegal use on the CE. No method or suite of methods is foolproof, but reasonable effort has been made to limit illegal activity on the CE itself and on adjacent lands, be they State owned or private. Also, the current route proposed for ATV use on the GRCE is not adjacent to Forest Preserve lands, which further reduces the likelihood of illegal use.*

- 48. Motorized access is critical to participation by the aging, physically challenged, elderly and the disabled including veterans.**

RESPONSE: *Many miles of motorized access was considered and provided for by the planning process.*

49. Equitable access for all recreational stakeholder groups is critical.

RESPONSE: *Every RMP is written to provide a balance of uses.*

50. The need for trail maintenance in the unit is greater than the NYSDEC has the manpower and financial resources can provide.

RESPONSE: *DEC Division of Operations staff will work with Lands and Forest personnel, St. Lawrence County staff and volunteers such as the St. Lawrence County Snowmobile Association members, as guided by the VSA program, to keep trails in good shape for public use.*

51. If various trail uses cause negative impacts along the connector roads or DEC Staff inspects roads and finds abuse, or negative impacts occur, remediation of issues should be completed utilizing standard available technologies, or by relocating sections of the trail or road. Trails should simply not be closed, as the Plan(s) suggest would be the course of action.

RESPONSE: *Normally trail problems caused by public use will be fixed or resolved by the cooperation of DEC with the landowner, but the Easement Documents (deed) do provide for closures should these problems not be fixed, and the RMP cannot take away that option for the landowner.*

52. Add historic information to kiosks.

RESPONSE: *Where possible/practical, historic maps, text, and photographs will be incorporated into informational kiosks on the CE.*

53. There was a comment supporting the construction of an access trail to Church Pond through the Grass River Conservation Easement.

RESPONSE: *The Easement Document provides for the construction of a trail to Church Pond. The RMP makes provisions for its completion.*

54. A comment was made that more motorized vehicle access is needed in general.

RESPONSE: *The RMP proposes significant additional motor vehicle access beyond what is currently available on the CE, in accordance with the negotiated terms of the Easement Document.*

55. There was a comment requesting the importance of sled dogs as a recreational and economic attraction to the area being mentioned in the plan.

RESPONSE: *Dog sleds and dog sledding are allowable non-motorized activities. Non-motorized activities are allowed on all roads and trails depicted by Exhibit 4 in appendix G of this plan.*

56. Can campsites, parking areas, etc. be located on leased lands?

RESPONSE: *Public recreation facilities can exist on land that may also be leased for hunting, depending on the terms of the CE. On the Tooley Pond CE, the entire property is now open to the public except for an acre around the existing camps on the property, so camping, for example, can occur at designated sites or at locations at least 150' from trails, roads or water bodies, per our standard DEC regulations. On the Grass River CE, large areas are leased to private parties for hunting and outdoor recreation; camping can only occur at designated sites, and public use can only occur in designated corridors.*

Multiuse Trail Proposal Comments:

- 57. Both RMP's state a goal of facilitating the creation of the St. Lawrence County Multi-Use Trail. Creating a public ATV route using public roads with possible access to Forest Preserve lands may be illegal.**

RESPONSE: *The RMPs do not address nor do they govern the use of public roads and/or highways for ATV use.*

- 58. The St. Lawrence County Board of Legislature requests to be identified as an "Affected Party" for the SEQR process by the NYDEC in the development of the final plans due to the extensive number of discrepancies between the Multi-Use Trail System GEIS and the Plans as presented.**

RESPONSE: *The route proposed on the Conservation Easement is consistent with the route proposed in the St. Lawrence County Environmental Impact Statement.*

- 59. St. Lawrence County would like the DEC to grant ATV access to the base of Little Blue Mountain as part of the multi-use Trail.**

RESPONSE: *Exhibit 6 of the Grass River Conservation Easement Document (see Appendix G of the RMP) depicts the routes available for public ATV use on the Grass River CE. This is a narrowly defined route which has been consistently depicted and referenced throughout the planning process. NYSDEC did, on June 21, 2017, request that the landowner MWF Adirondacks allow an exception to Exhibit 6 in order to facilitate access to the base of Little Blue Mountain for users of the trail. MWF Adirondacks declined the request in a letter received on August 31, 2017.*

- 60. The Multi-use trail system plan under construction jointly with the NYDEC and St. Lawrence County representatives (and others) since at least 2006 is significantly different that the parts of the fragmented plans referenced.**

RESPONSE: *Exhibit 6 of the Grass River Conservation Easement Document (see Appendix G of the RMP) depicts the routes available for public ATV use on the Grass River CE. This is a narrowly defined route which has been consistently depicted and referenced throughout the planning process.*

- 61. All routes (primary and alternative) covered under the said GEIS should be addressed in the Plan(s), so the County would have alternative routes to maintain open a multi-use trail system during trail work, permitting issues, logging, or other issues arising during the operation and maintenance of the trail system.**

RESPONSE: *Exhibit 6 of the Grass River Conservation Easement Document (see Appendix G of the RMP) depicts the routes available for public ATV use on the Grass River CE. This negotiated and legally binding provision of the Easement Document is relatively narrow in its scope and provides limited accommodation for alternative routes where feasible.*

- 62. St. Lawrence County has committed to the assistance in physically maintaining a Multi-Use Trail System, including acquisition of permission from landowners, purchases of materials such as culverts, gravel, and galvanized gates, aligning volunteers for labor, assembling trail maintenance plans. St. Lawrence County requests acknowledgement of these capital investments by working with our staff to implement improvements in a time sensitive manner.**

RESPONSE: *When the plans are approved and the conditions met to move ahead with establishing the Multi-Use Trail route, the DEC is committed to working with the County to establish the trail on lands under our control. NYSDEC has consistently worked with SLC regarding the proposed multiuse trail.*

- 63. Protect the Adirondacks supports multiuse trails on conservation easements, but has concerns over the lack of an ATV plan on Forest Preserve.**

RESPONSE: *ATV use on Forest Preserve land is beyond the scope of this RMP.*

Roads and Motor Vehicles Comments:

- 64. NYSDEC has listed a portion of the White Road in the Town of Clare closed to motorized traffic in direct contradiction to the New York State Department of Transportation's (NYSDOT) Consolidated Highway Improvement Program (CHPSs) funding for the Town of Clare.**

- 65. County representatives met with the Town of Clare Attorney, Town and Highway Supervisors and understand they are going to submit their position to improve maintenance on the White Road partially within the limits of what the NYSDEC is attempting to close on this roadway leading from Buck Brook Road into the Town Pierrepont to Orebed Road, therefore needing to be corrected in the Plans(s) and Map 3.**

RESPONSE: *The White Road is a town road so is not controlled by DEC. The RMP does not propose closing a town road. RMP maps have been updated to reflect current public rights for the entirety of the White Road.*

- 66. The Plan(s) do not clearly indicate the selected route to enter easement areas, such as thru Little John Rd or Orbed Rd and the Little John Road connecting from Fish and Game and Jacot properties thru Rayonier easement to Little John Road. Plans need to be modified to show where the public has the ability to enter these public access areas.**

RESPONSE: *With the exception of the proposed multi-use trail, which is correctly depicted in the plan, there is no public access via these routes*

- 67. The motor vehicle access to the property for sporting purposes, fishing and trapping as allowed in the easement agreement appears well thought out and reflects knowledgeable, thoughtful planning.**

RESPONSE: *We appreciate your comment.*

- 68. Motor vehicle access on the parcel (GRCE) should be extended to the North Branch of the Grass River.**

RESPONSE: *The RMP proposes three separate access points for the North Branch of the Grass River.*

- 69. Confirm that all roads on the GRCE are open to public for foot and bicycle access.**

RESPONSE: *Exhibits 1 - 8, located in Appendix G of the RMP, depict roads that are open to the public. All roads that are open to the public are open for foot and bicycle use, as well as other non- motorized uses. Some of the roads are also open for motor vehicle use.*

- 70. Consider making detailed map of roads and trails (GRCE) that can be updated as road construction takes place.**

RESPONSE: *Maps found in the information kiosks on the property are updated to reflect current conditions as warranted. Updated maps can also be found on the NYSDEC Public Website.*

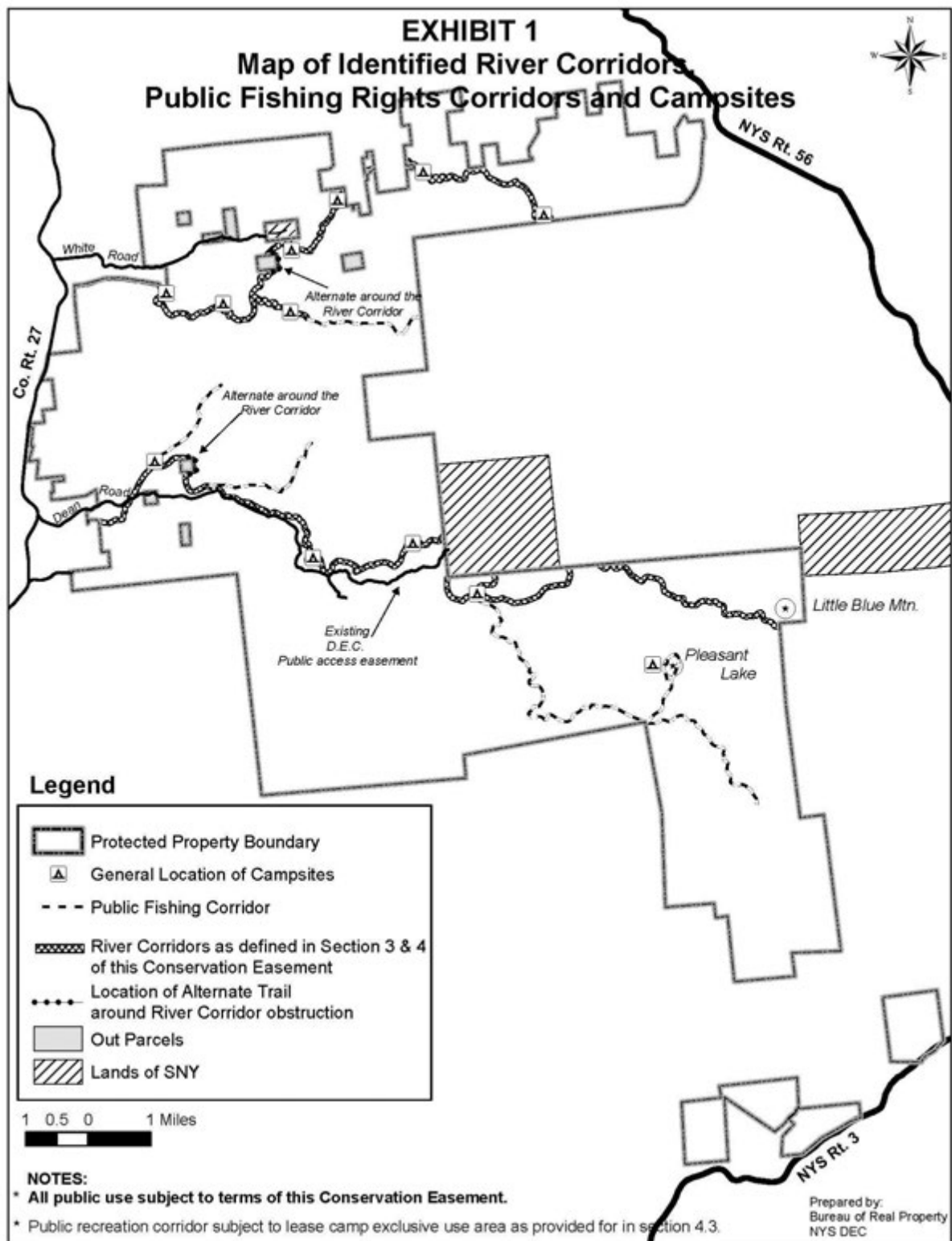
- 71. Stillwater Club is concerned with location of gates on side roads and want input into placement.**

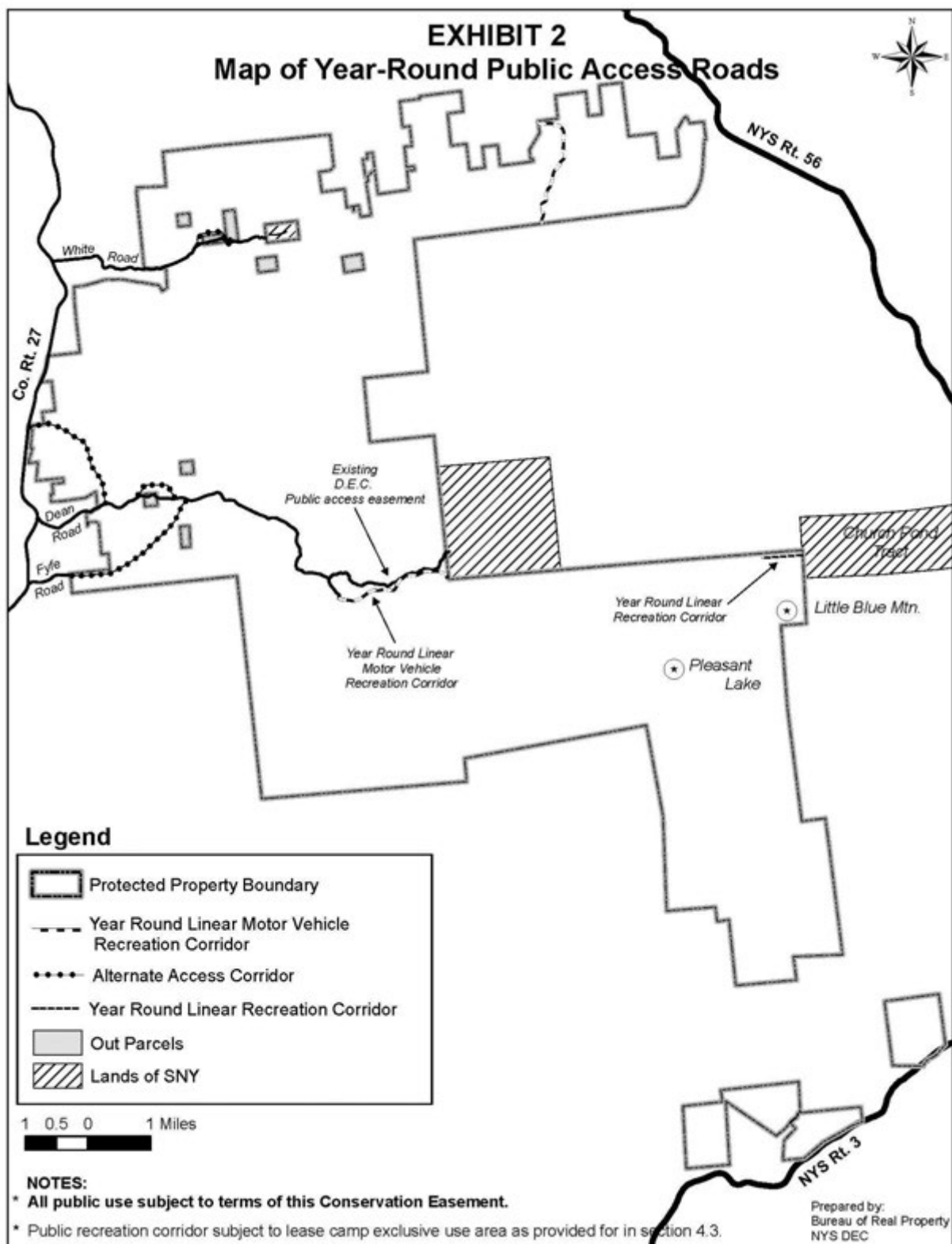
RESPONSE: *Potsdam DEC staff have agreed to tour the area of concern with representatives of the Stillwater Club. Appropriate decisions can then be made regarding the placement of gates and/or signs to manage public recreation within the area leased by the Stillwater Club.*

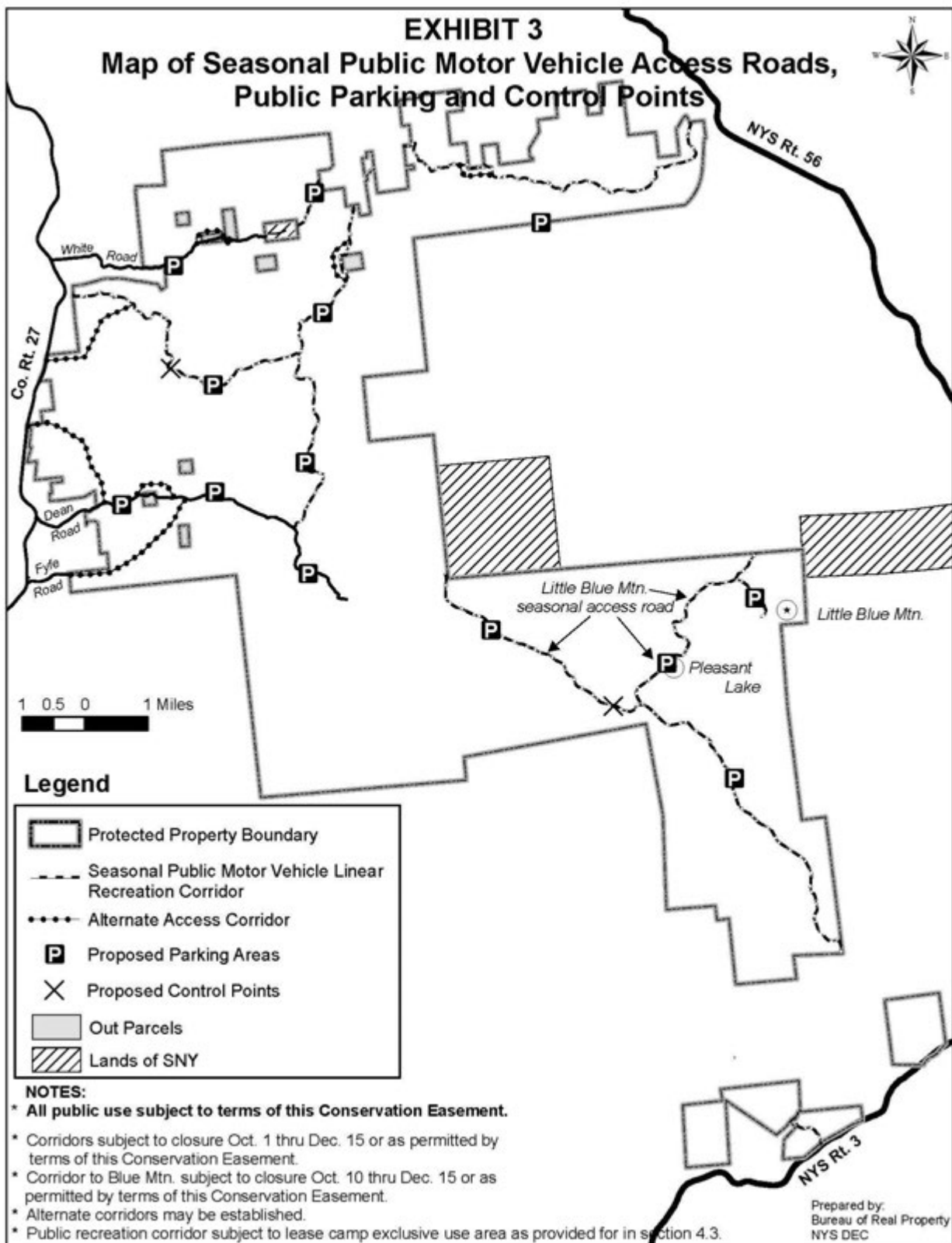
- 72. Stillwater would like to re-open the jeep trail/old Stone Dam Road to vehicle access.**

RESPONSE: *The status of the Stone Dam Road has been in question for a long time. It has not been regularly maintained, as the Town of Clare does not claim it as a town road, and the underlying landowner prior to Molpus ownership stopped its maintenance after building a separate road to access their own land. Since the acquisition by DEC of an easement on the surrounding land has opened a new road as an alternative route, there is no need to maintain the old road to provide access. While some members of the public continue to prefer it for traditional access, it should not, in its current condition, remain open for public motor vehicle use. The old road will now be signed as a foot trail for access into the Stone Dam parcel. Skiing, snowshoeing, and other non-motorized uses will be permitted.*

G. References: Exhibits 1 – 8 as presented in the Grass River Conservation Easement Document







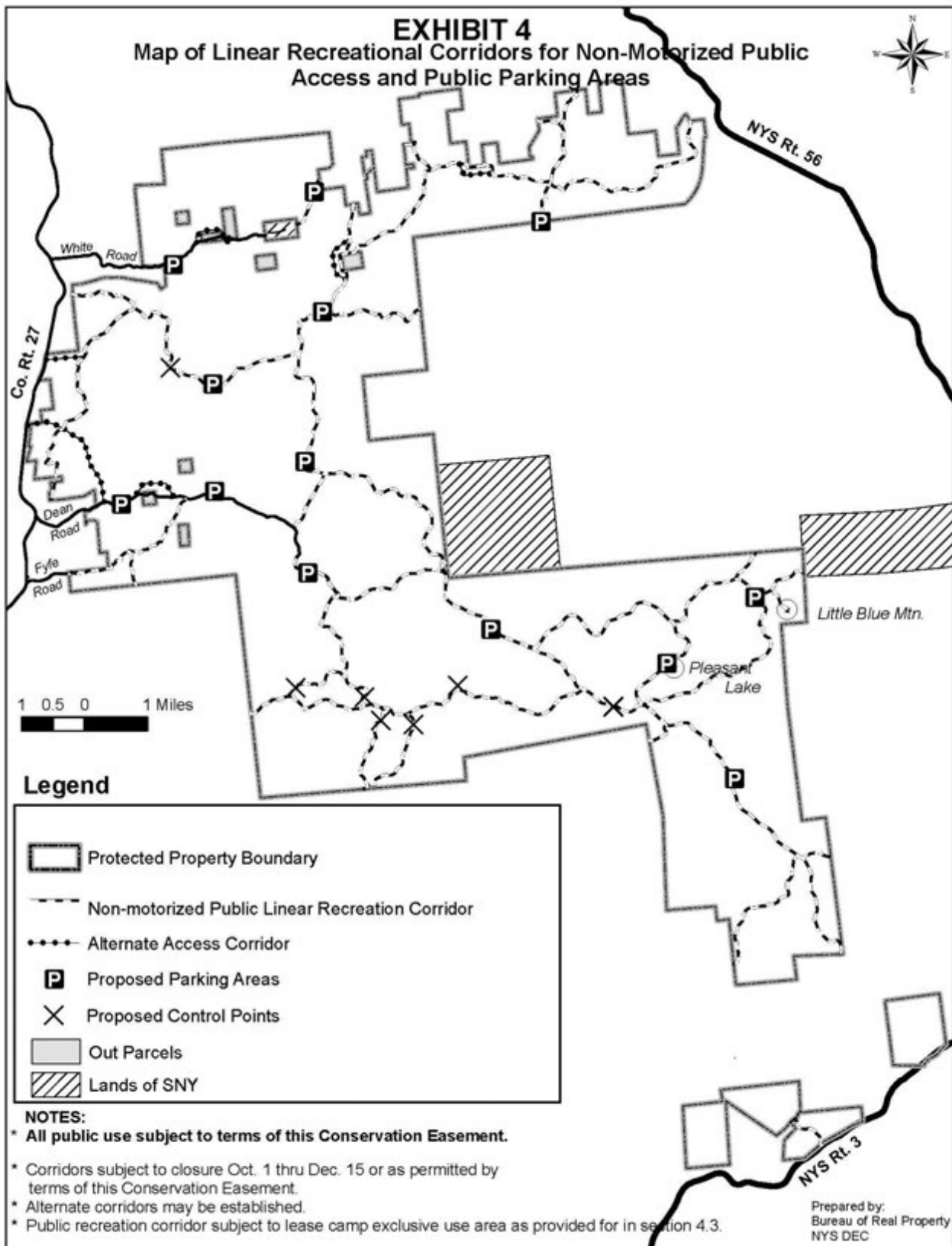
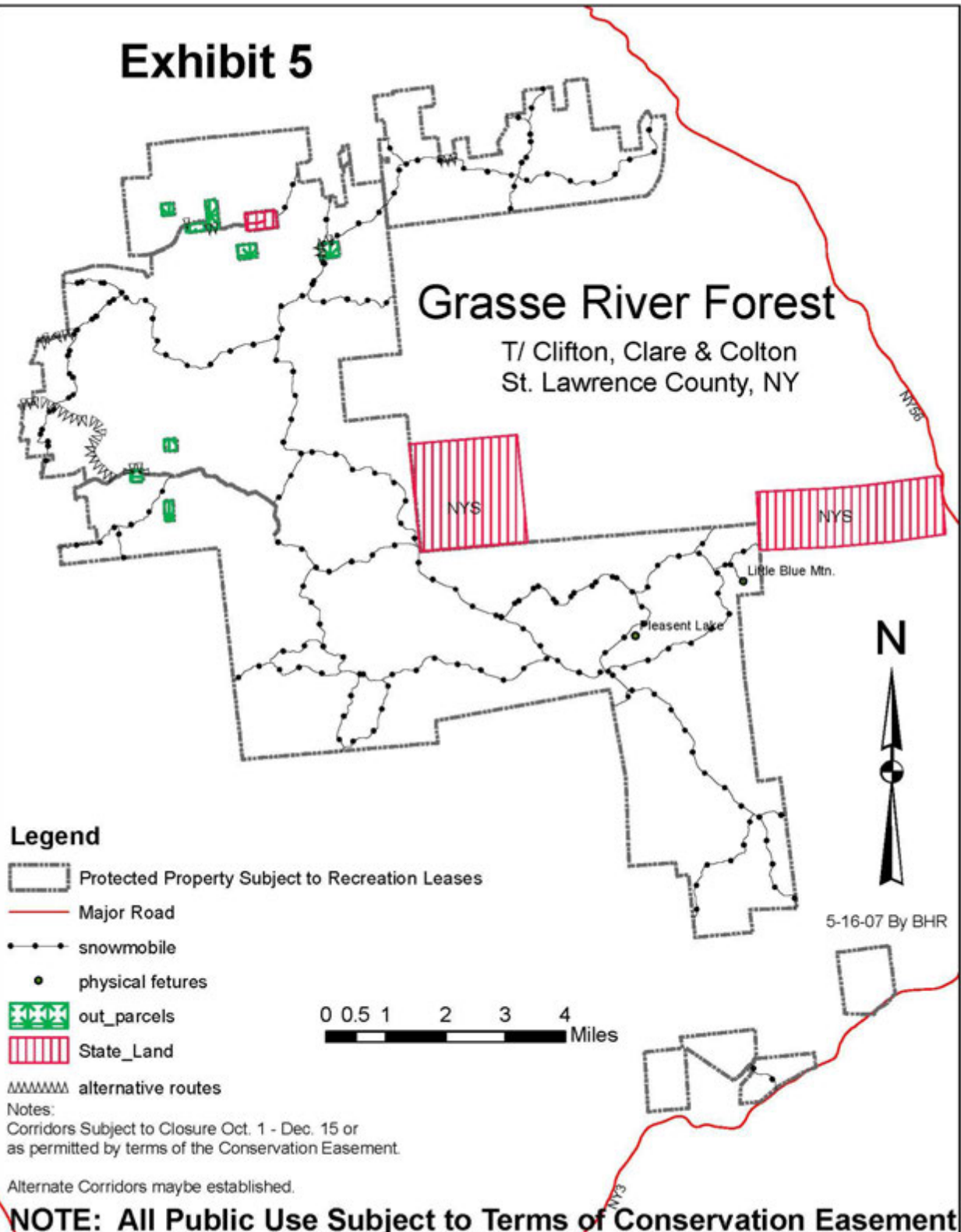
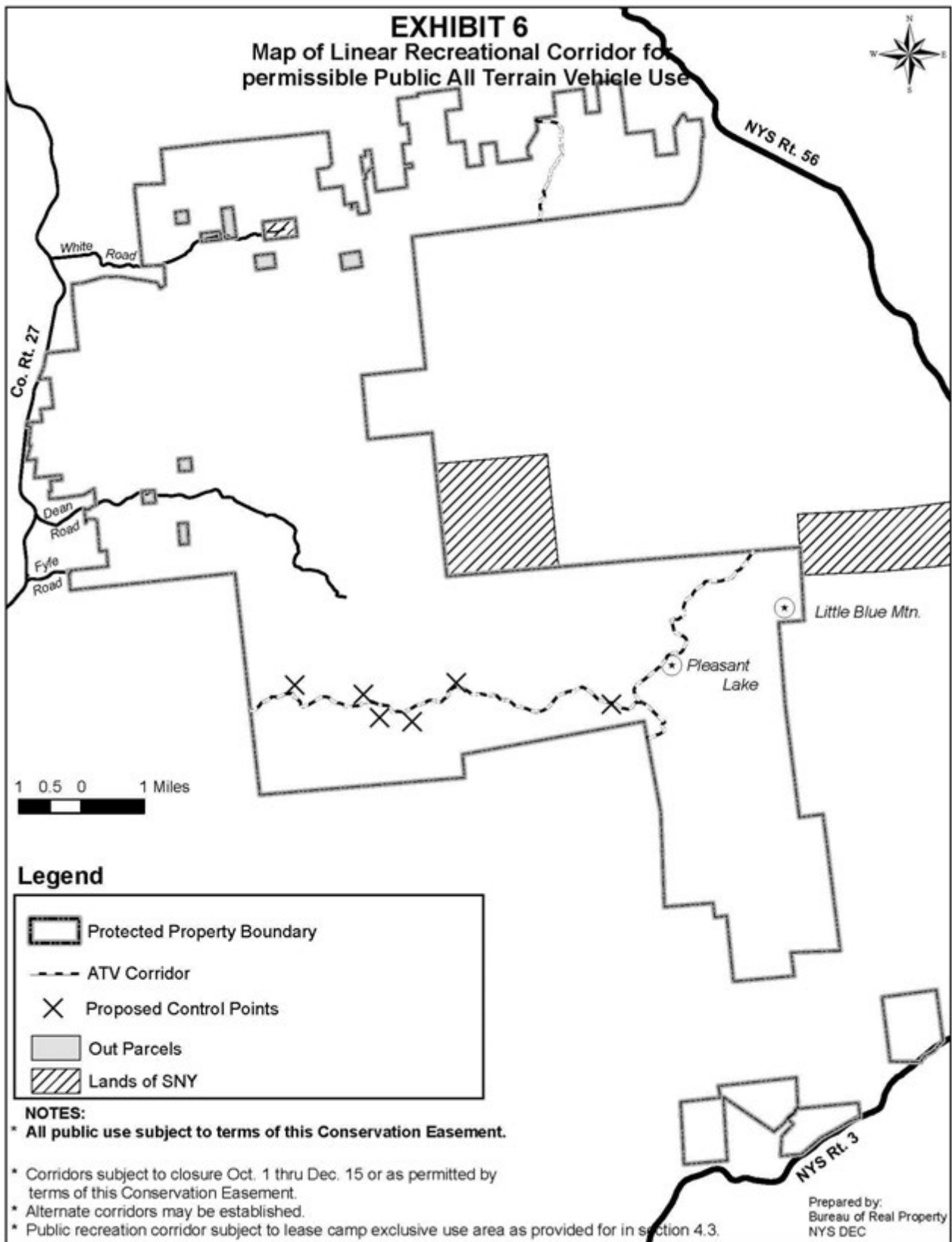


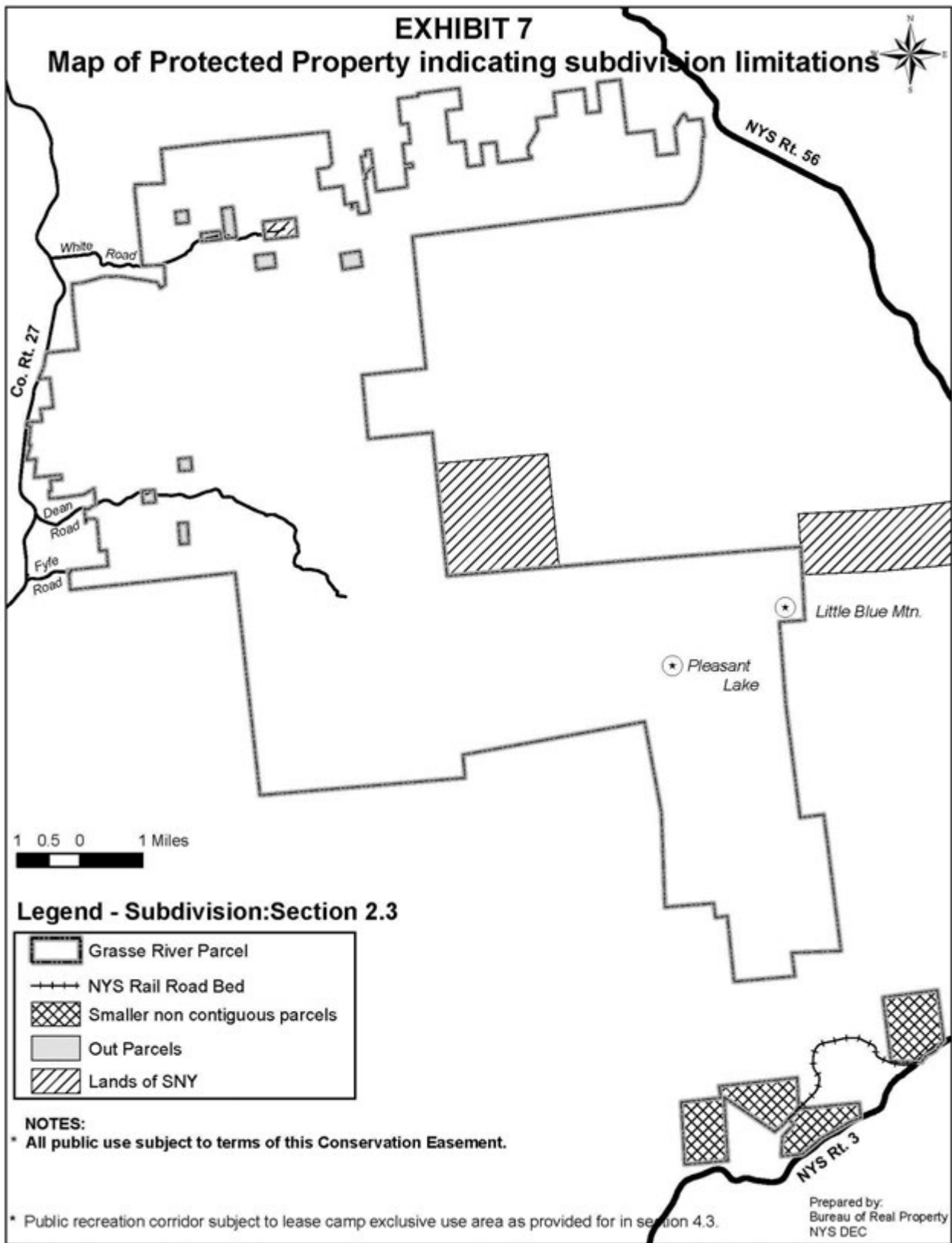
Exhibit 5

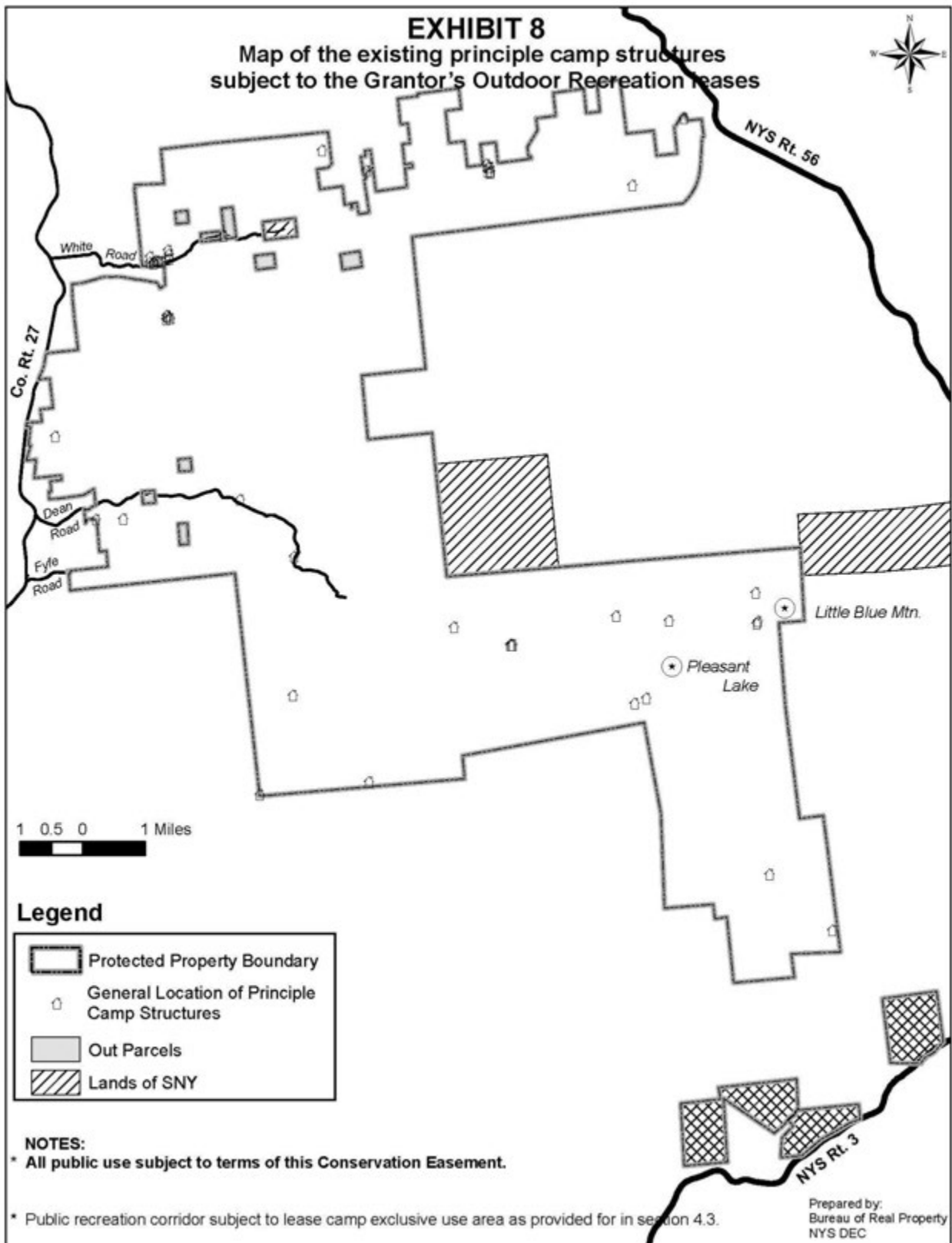
Grasse River Forest

T/ Clifton, Clare & Colton
St. Lawrence County, NY









H. Old Stone Dam Trail Report

Recreation Research Lab
Department of Environmental Studies

St. Lawrence University

Stone Dam Trail

A Rapid Assessment of Recreation Conditions



ON THE COVER

Stone Dam trailhead

Photograph by: Peter Pettengill, St. Lawrence University

Stone Dam Trail

A Rapid Assessment of Recreation Conditions

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August 2017

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Background and Purpose of Study

The Stone Dam Trail runs approximately 2.3 miles through the Grass River Conservation Easement and provides access to the Stone Dam parcel of the Forest Preserve. In the past, the trail provided motorized access to the Forest Preserve, but the Town of Clare does not declare ownership of the old road nor has it been maintained as a road by the Town of Clare or Department of Environmental Conservation. The Grass River Conservation Easement Draft Recreation Management Plan acknowledges that some members of the public may favor motorized access along the trail, but suggests the old road would be better suited as a foot trail where skiing, snowshoeing, and other non-motorized activities would be permitted. The Draft Recreation Management Plan cites the current condition of the old road, as well as an alternative route to the Stone Dam parcel of the Forest Preserve, as a rationale for this potential action. The purpose of this study was to assess recreation conditions along the old road/Stone Dam Trail using the threefold framework of outdoor recreation.

Literature Review

The Threefold Framework of Outdoor Recreation

The threefold framework of outdoor recreation (see Fig. 1) was initially explored in the 1960s as a means to understand recreational carrying capacity (Wagar, 1964 & 1968). Since then, it has been refined (Manning and Lime, 1996) and expanded to the field of outdoor recreation management as a whole (Manning, Anderson, and Pettengill, 2017). The central components of the threefold framework include resources, experiences, and management.

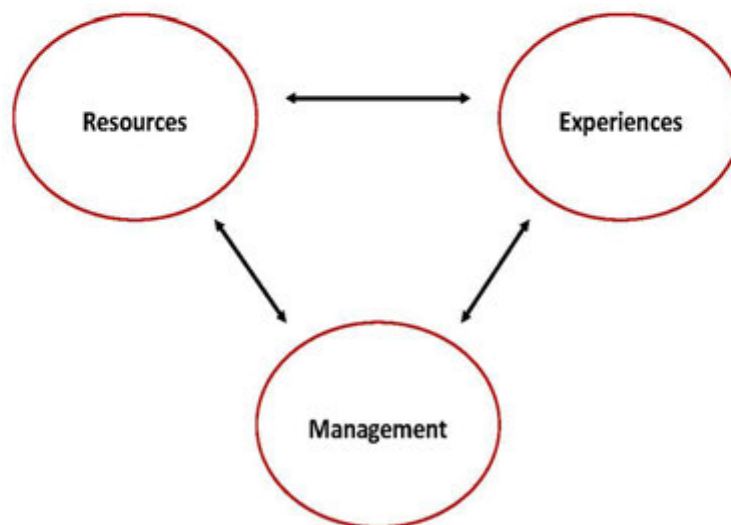


Figure 1. Threefold framework of outdoor recreation

Resources that may be impacted by outdoor recreation include soil, vegetation, water, wildlife, air, natural quiet, natural darkness, and historical/cultural resources. Visitor experiences may be influenced by factors such as crowding, conflict, and depreciative behavior, and the management component of outdoor recreation includes facilities such as trails and roads. Equally important to each individual component of the threefold framework, are the relationships among them. For instance, impacts to resources can, and often do, influence the quality of the visitor experience. The intensity and type of management may also affect visitor experience as well as impacts to park resources. An understanding of all three components, and the possible tradeoffs among them, are needed for sound recreation management (Manning *et al.*, 2017).

Resources – Impacts to Soil

Impacts to soil from outdoor recreation are a well-studied subject (Hammitt, Cole, and Monz, 2015). Specifically, soil erosion caused by outdoor recreation has received much attention. Recreational factors that exacerbate soil erosion include the amount of recreation use, the type of recreation use, and the behavior of recreational users. While the amount of recreation use has not proven to be as strong a contributor to soil erosion (Olive and Marion, 2009), the type of use has been documented as a more prominent factor. For example, the heavier weights and forces of motorized uses generally displace more soils than non-motorized uses, and this is especially true on steep grades or amidst wet soils (Liddle, 1997; Meyer, 2002). Behaviors by motorized users such as spinning tires and using high speeds have also been found to be particularly impactful (Meadows, Foltz, and Geehan, 2008).

Experiences – Conflict among User Groups

Conflict among recreation user groups can be detrimental to visitor experience, and it is also a well-studied subject (Manning, 2011). In particular, asymmetric, or one-way conflict, has been thoroughly researched. One-way conflict occurs when users participating in one recreation activity oppose the behavior or presence of users participating in a different recreation activity. However, the converse is not true, at least not to an equal extent. Asymmetric conflict where non-motorized users oppose motorized use frequently occurs and this has been well-documented (Lucas, 1964; Stankey, 1973; Shelby, 1980; Ivy, Stewart, and Lue, 1992; Vaske, Needham, and Cline, 2007). Two early studies specifically noted recreation conflict between off road vehicle users and all other users (Noe, Wellman, and Buhyoff, 1981; Noe, Hull, and Wellman, 1982).

Management – Facility and Trail Conditions

Because visitation to recreation areas is frequently concentrated along trails, these facilities often suffer the same impacts as resources and experiences (Manning *et al.*, 2017). For example, use along trails may create muddiness, establishment of ruts and grooves, trail widening, trail deepening, creation of unofficial trails, soil compaction, and erosion (Anderson *et al.*, 1998; Leung and Marion, 2000). Furthermore, as noted above, shared use of trails may lead to conflict among various user groups (Lucas, 1964; Stankey, 1973; Shelby, 1980; Noe *et al.*, 1981; Noe *et al.*, 1982; Ivy *et al.*, 1992; Vaske *et al.*, 2007).

While the threefold framework of outdoor recreation spans numerous elements of resources, experiences, and management, this brief examination of scientific literature focused primarily on soil erosion, user conflict, and their general concentration along trails. These elements were also the primary focus of the rapid assessment of recreation conditions along the Stone Dam Trail.

Methods

Study Area

This study focused on the Stone Dam Trail that runs approximately 2.3 miles through the Grass River Conservation Easement (see Figure 2). Specifically, it considered muddiness of the trail, soil erosion and loss, potential for user conflict, as well documenting other issues of concern including depreciative behavior and visitor safety.



Figure 2. Map of study area

Rapid Assessment of Recreation Conditions

Rapid assessments of recreation conditions are commonly used by recreation managers and researchers (Denny and Fish, 2006; Cole, Foti, and Brown, 2008). Assessments are conducted by subject matter experts, and may be organized within the threefold framework of outdoor recreation. This assessment considered resource, experiential, and managerial conditions along the Stone Dam Trail.

On June 1st, 2017 a rapid assessment of recreation conditions along the Stone Dam Trail was conducted. Photopoints, were taken to document points of potential concern along the trail. Photopoints and photography can be used to support the assessment of recreation conditions and also help validate judgments made in the field (Hammitt *et al.*, 2015). Geographic waypoints associated with each photopoint were also documented using a Global Positioning System unit.

In cases of significant soil erosion, an estimation of maximum trail incision was also measured. Fixed points were established along each edge of the trail, an ocular estimation of the lowest point in the trail was made, and a tape measure was used to calculate maximum trail incision. This methodology is in keeping with soil erosion measurements taken along trails (Cole, 1983; Bacon, Elliot, Putnam, Brown, Canapary, Leung, 2006; Wimpey, 2011).

Results

Photopoints of Recreation Conditions

Eighteen photopoints and their associated latitude and longitude are documented in Table 1. A brief description of each photopoint is included to help explain the purpose for recording a photopoint. Photos associated with each photopoint are included in the Appendix of this report.

Table 1. Photopoints of Recreation Conditions

Photopoint #	Latitude	Longitude	Description
1	44.35729	-75.10016	Stone Dam trailhead
2	44.362339	-74.966549	Standing water on trail
3	44.362771	-74.965809	Large pool of water covering trail
4	44.362817	-74.965751	Tadpoles observed
5	44.363208	-74.964174	38" maximum trail incision measured
6	44.363199	-74.964158	Root exposure
7	44.363419	-74.962243	Steep slope
8	44.363426	-74.961889	78" maximum trail incision measured
9	44.361499	-74.959237	43" maximum trail incision measured
10	44.360737	-74.948429	Bridge crossing
11	44.360397	-74.947268	Litter
12	44.361909	-74.943721	Easy access from Stone Dam Road to trail
13	44.362093	-74.943303	Easy access from Stone Dam Road to trail
14	44.362139	-74.943106	Easy access from Stone Dam Road to trail
15	44.362323	-74.942729	Easy access from Stone Dam Road to trail
16	44.3633	-74.940697	Flowing water crossing trail
17	44.364451	-74.93591	Flowing water crossing trail
18	44.367202	-74.930145	End of assessment

Discussion

Resource Conditions of Concern

As documented in photopoints five, eight, and nine soil loss and erosion are a clear consequence of human activity along the old road. The old road periodically coincides with steep slopes (photopoint 7) and is occasionally crossed by ephemeral water flows (photopoints 16 and 17). In other cases (photopoints 2-4), significant pools of standing water were observed. As noted in this report's literature review, all of these conditions may contribute to muddiness, soil loss, and erosion and may be exacerbated by motorized use. It is worth noting that maximum trail incisions documented ranged from 38 to 78 inches, and demonstrate the significant impact of human activity on soils over time.

Experiential Conditions of Concern

While little could be assessed regarding the types or levels of recreational use along the Stone Dam Trail during a single rapid assessment, it is well documented that conflict occurs between motorized and non-motorized users along shared trails. It is likely that conflict would be experienced by visitors should the trail be managed for both user types. It is also worth noting that signs of depreciate behavior, in the form of litter, were observed along the trail (photopoint 11).

Managerial Conditions of Concern

As documented by the condition of soils along the trail, it is clear that inadequate facilities exist for motorized recreation along the trail. Furthermore, the condition of an existing bridge crossing (photopoint 10) appears uncertain for motorized use. It is also clear that the Stone Dam Trail is easily accessible by motorized vehicles from the Stone Dam Road in multiple locations (photopoints 12-15). As inadequate facilities exist for motorized recreation along the trail, this may be a potential concern for easement managers.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This report provides an assessment of recreation conditions along the Stone Dam Trail. It should be used to help explain and further discuss recreation conditions and management of the Stone Dam Trail, in particular whether or not motorized use is necessary or appropriate on the trail. Based on the results of this study, it is clear that motorized use on the Stone Dam Trail is neither necessary nor appropriate. Impacts from motorized use to soils are evident, potential for visitor conflict exists, and facilities along the trail are inadequate for motorized recreation. Fortunately, an alternative for managing these issues exists.

The Stone Dam Road parallels the Stone Dam Trail and provides an adequate alternative for motorized recreation. The road has recently been hardened with stone material, avoids steep grades, and delivers visitors to desirable locations such as Pleasant Lake and the Stone Dam Parcel of the Grass River Wild Forest. Concentrating motorized use on the Stone Dam Road would also separate conflicting uses; allowing both non-motorized and motorized users to experience and enjoy easement resources. Lastly, to insure recreation resources along the Stone Dam Trail are protected, further site hardening techniques may be employed along the Stone Dam Road. For example, large boulders may be placed at the multiple locations documented where the trail is easily accessed by the road (photopoints 12-15).

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Appendix

Photopoint 1



Photopoint 2



Photopoint 3



Photopoint 4



Photopoint 5



Photopoint 6



Photopoint 7



Photopoint 8



Photopoint 9



Photopoint 10



Photopoint 11



Photopoint 12



Photopoint 13



Photopoint 14



Photopoint 15



Photopoint 16



Photopoint 17

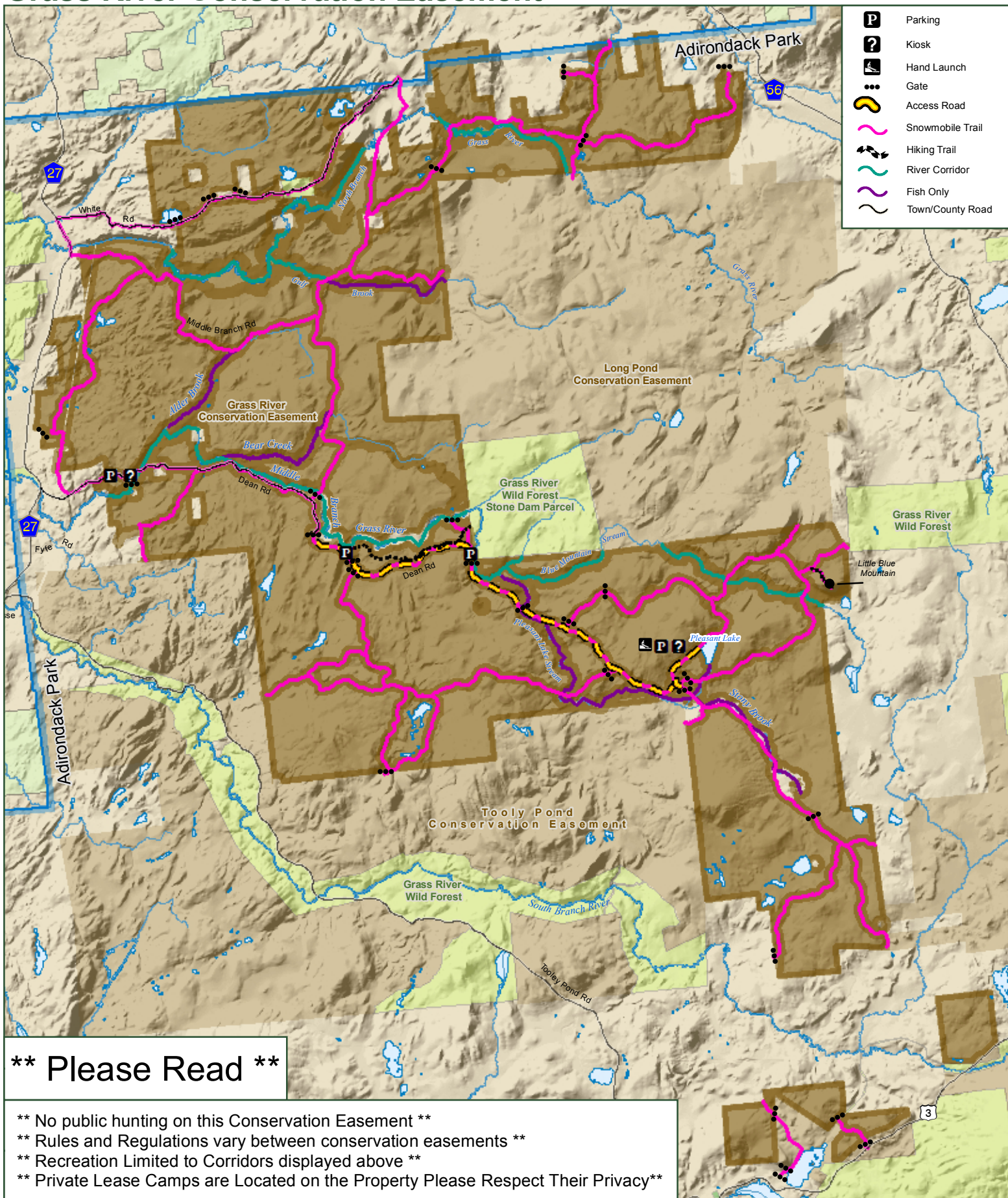


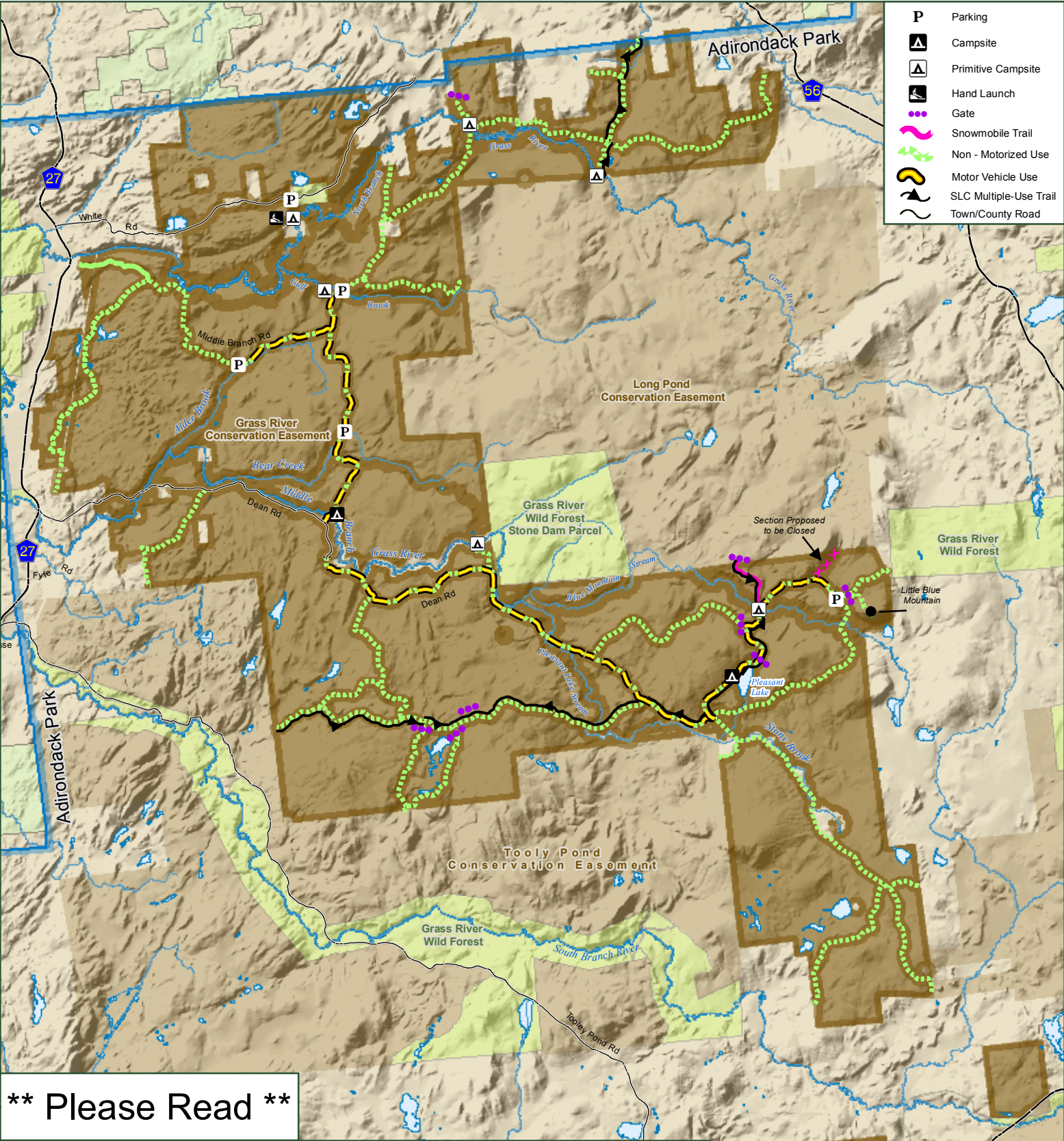
Photopoint 18



Grass River Conservation Easement

Existing Facilities





**** Please Read ****

- ** No public hunting on this Conservation Easement **
- ** For full snowmobile access refer to Existing Facilities map**
- ** Rules and Regulations vary between conservation easements **
- ** Recreation Limited to Corridors displayed above **
- ** Private Lease Camps are Located on the Property Please Respect Their Privacy**