

Department of Environmental Conservation

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Office of Natural Resources - Region 5

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# **FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

Wilderness Management  
for the High Peaks  
of the Adirondack Park

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May 1999

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation  
George E. Pataki, *Governor*                      John P. Cahill, *Commissioner*



# FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT (FEIS)

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**Required by:** State Environmental Quality Review Act of 1975

**Location:** The 192,685 acre High Peaks Wilderness Complex located in the Towns of Keene, Newcomb, North Elba, and North Hudson in Essex County; Town of Harrietstown in Franklin County; and the Town of Long Lake in Hamilton County.

**Responsible Agency:** New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, 50 Wolf Road, Albany, NY 12233

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**Date:** May 5, 1999

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# Final Environmental Impact Statement

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# PART I

## INTRODUCTION

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### PURPOSE OF THE FINAL PLAN AND FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

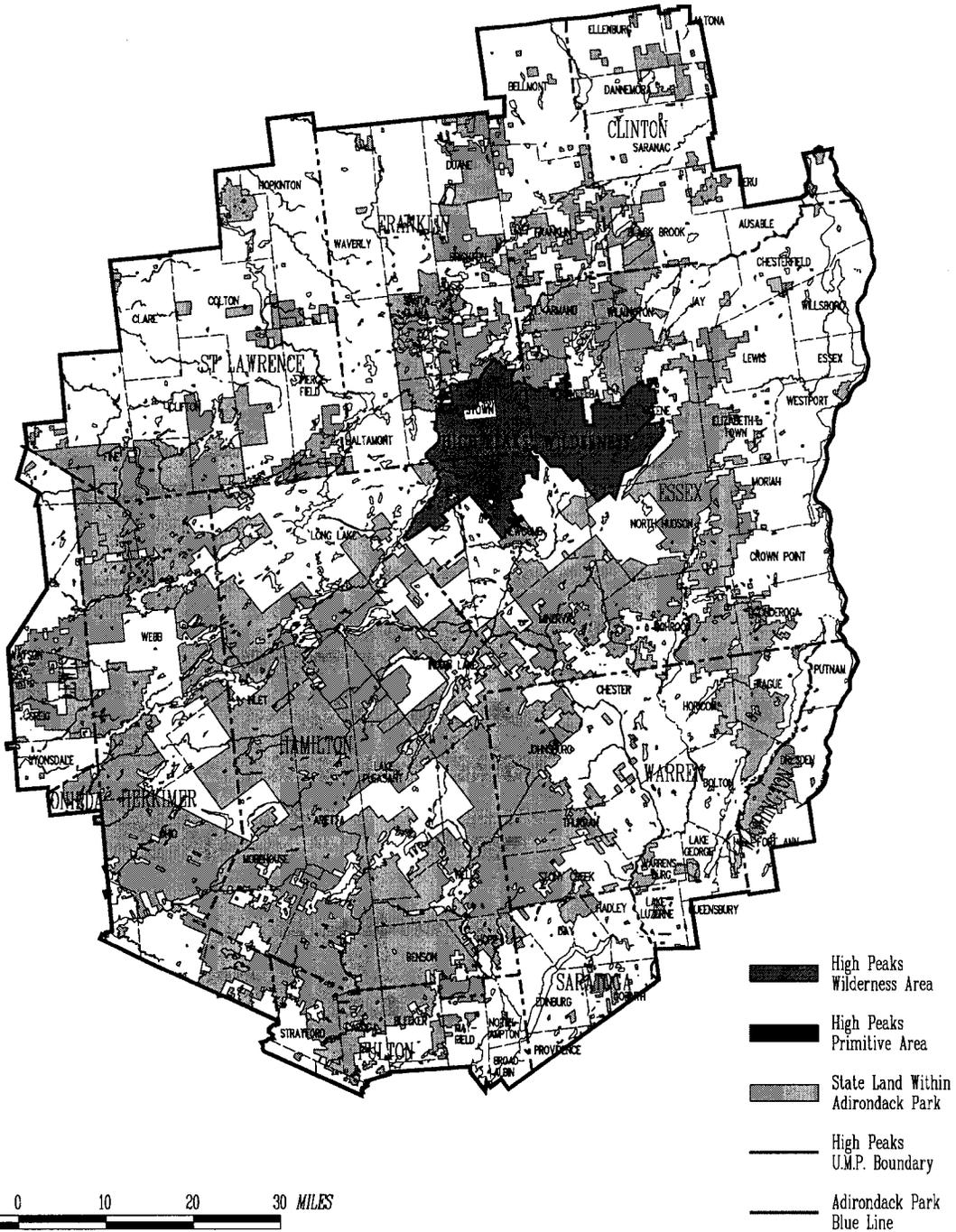
Unit Management Plans are required by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLM) for each designated Wilderness, Canoe, Primitive, Wild Forest, and Intensive Use area in the Adirondack Park. The legislative mandate regarding the master plan for state lands is contained in the Adirondack Park Agency Act of 1972 (Article 27 of the Executive Law). Section 816 of the Act directs DEC to develop, in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency, unit management plans that conform to the guidelines and criteria set forth in the master plan appropriate to each designation. Unit management plans integrate related legislation, legal rules and regulations, policies, and area specific resource and visitor information into a single, useful document for each area.

Planning allows for the exchange of information and ideas before any management action is undertaken. Written plans stabilize management objectives despite changes in personnel or the disparate influences of multiple administrative units having jurisdiction over a particular area.

The Department of Environmental Conservation publicly released a final unit management plan for the High Peaks Wilderness Complex (HPWC) on April 22, 1999 and forwarded it to the Adirondack Park Agency to determine its conformance with the APSLMP, 1987.

In conjunction with the final plan, this final environmental impact statement (FEIS) has been prepared following procedures established by the State Environmental Quality Review Act of 1975, commonly known as SEQRA. SEQRA establishes a process that requires the consideration of environmental factors early in the planning stages of a proposed action (in this case, a management plan) that are undertaken, funded or approved by local, regional, and state agencies. Elements of an FEIS are used to impartially analyze the significance of environmental effects of a proposed action and how those effects can be avoided or minimized. The environmental impact statement (FEIS) also provides a written record of Department responses to suggestions and issues identified by the public during the review process.

# ADIRONDACK PARK HIGH PEAKS WILDERNESS AREA



## **WILDERNESS DEFINED**

The APSLMP (1987) defines wilderness as an area where ". . . the earth and its community are untrammelled by man-where man himself is a visitor who does not remain." Wilderness is further meant to mean an area of State land or water having a primeval character, without significant improvements or human habitation, which is protected and managed to preserve its natural conditions. The degree of isolation is the most important distinguishing characteristic of wilderness as compared to other state lands.

## **PLAN GOALS**

The intent of the final plan is to preserve, enhance, and restore wilderness conditions in the High Peaks Wilderness Complex (HPWC). With regard to human use and enjoyment, these activities will be permitted, so long as the wilderness resources in their ecological or sociological context are not degraded. The theme is drawn not only from the APSLMP, 1987, but from over a century of legislative history and attitudes toward New York state's publicly owned Adirondack Forest Preserve. The final plan lists five goals:

- ! To provide for the long-term protection of the area's wilderness character under the principle of "no net loss or degradation" which calls for the maintenance of existing environmental conditions if they equal or exceed minimum wilderness standards, and for the restoration of conditions which are below minimum levels." (Hendee, 1990). The area's natural condition, opportunities for solitude, opportunities for primitive and unconfined types of recreation, and any ecological, geological, or other features of scientific, educational, scenic, or historical values present will be managed so that they will remain unimpaired.
- ! To manage human use in a manner that encourages an appreciation and an advocacy of wilderness.
- ! To manage the wilderness area for the use and enjoyment of its visitors in a manner that will leave the area unimpaired for future use and enjoyment as wilderness. The wilderness resource will be a primary consideration in all management decisions where a choice must be made between preserving wilderness character and visitor use.
- ! To manage the wilderness using the minimum tool, equipment, action, or structure necessary to successfully, safely, and economically accomplish the objective. The chosen tool, equipment, or structure shall be the one that least degrades wilderness values, temporarily or permanently. The plan will seek to preserve spontaneity of use and as much freedom from regulation as possible.
- ! To manage and/or remove non-conforming uses so as to prevent unnecessary or undue degradation of wilderness character. Non-conforming uses are the exception rather than the rule: therefore emphasis will be placed on maintaining wilderness character.

The goals presented here are broad based that not only serve present needs, but will also aid in future generations. The plan is intended to be the first phase of a transition plan to bring this area into compliance with the APSLMP of 1987. It initially covers a period of five years.

## **LOCATION**

The HPWC is located within the Towns of Keene, North Elba, and North Hudson of Essex County; the Town of Harrietstown in Franklin County; and the Town of Long Lake in Hamilton County. It occupies the high mountain country of the north-central Adirondacks. Access to its periphery is easily gained via Interstate 87, NYS Routes 3, 8, 30, and 73, and by numerous town and county roads. Nearby communities include Keene-Keene Valley, Lake Placid, Long Lake, Newcomb, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake. The entire unit lies within one day's drive of more than 70 million people in the northeast states and Canada. Nearby population centers include: Albany, New York (140 miles), New York City (300 miles), and Montreal, Quebec (120 miles).

## **AREA OVERVIEW AND ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING**

The High Peaks Wilderness Complex is composed of three distinct, but interrelated Forest Preserve units: the Ampersand Primitive Area, the High Peaks Wilderness Area, and the Johns Brook Primitive Corridor. Although not identified by the APSLMP, 1987 as a separate unit, the Adirondack Canoe Route (Old Forge to Saranac Lake) coincides, in part with the western boundary of the High Peaks Wilderness between Long Lake and Stony Creek Ponds. Collectively these units comprise 192,685 acres (301 sq. miles). The complex is one of the largest wilderness areas (state or federal) east of the Mississippi River. The geography represents diverse elevations, climate, soils, vegetation, and aquatic conditions. There is a unique convergence of northern and southern plant and animal species. The unit contains many of the representative ecosystems in the Adirondacks and watershed of three major rivers: the Hudson, the Champlain, and Raquette.

The area preserved includes most of New York's highest mountains, including its highest peak, Mt. Marcy, at an elevation of 5,344 feet. Although there is considerable variation in terrain, it is typically high mountain country. The landscape also includes alpine lakes and meadows, scenic vistas, dense forests, cold water streams, and wetlands. A diversity of vegetation, fish and wildlife including endangered, threatened, and rare species find homes in this large undeveloped roadless area.

## **BIOPHYSICAL RESOURCES**

As required by the APSLMP, 1987, the final plan provides an inventory of the area's biophysical, scenic, cultural, fish and wildlife (including game and non-game species) resources and an analysis of the area's ecosystems.

Reference is made to the final plan (pages 10-35) for detailed background information on the following:

Geology	Soils
Terrain	Water
Wetlands	Climate

Air Quality  
Vegetation

Open Space  
Fish and Wildlife

## **VISITOR USE**

The HPWC is the most heavily visited wilderness area in New York State. Its location near d population centers, coupled with a national reputation as an easily accessible, natural area offering ur scenery found nowhere else in New York State, invites heavy visitor use. Over the past ten years vis increased from 84,000 visitors in 1988 to more than 140,000 visitors in 1998.

Even though the unit has 20 developed trailheads, more than 72% of all visitors enter through primary trailheads: Adirondak Loj, Johns Brook, Cascades, South Meadows, the Ausable Club, and A Mt. Resultant visitor distribution across the wilderness is very uneven. Much of the use is concentrat eastern portions of the HPWC. This area has easy access, numerous facilities such as trails and lean- greatest concentration of natural features which appeal to the public, especially the highest mountains of the eastern High Peaks have sustained the effects of long-term use where impacts on soil, air, water vegetation, and fauna have caused unnatural change. Visitor satisfaction also erodes as the resource : degradation.

Visitors arrive in all size groups: 75% in groups of 2-6 persons, 10% in groups of 7-9, and 15 groups greater than 10 persons. Day use groups with 300 or more persons in a single group have been encountered. Bus loads of day users in groups of 50-60 are common. The latter, even though they re a small proportion of total use, have a disproportionate impact on natural resources and the wildernes experiences of other visitors.

All HPWC visitor use is extremely weather dependent and is heaviest May through October. trends show increasing winter use. Use is heaviest on weekends and holidays, but is increasing mid- "Weekend-weekday peaking" is a term used to describe periods of intense visitation when all parkin; camping locations, main trail corridors, and summits are crowded. This occurred during 17 weekend mid- week days in 1998.

The majority of visitors are New York State residents (53%). Canadian visitors represent 18% almost 28% of visitors coming from out of state. A small minority (less than 1%) comes from foreign other than Canada. Recent trends show nonresident use increasing.

Traditional uses such as hiking, camping, cross country skiing, rock climbing, horseback ride and fishing, nature study, etc. continue to increase and new uses are beginning to be developed. Tecl climbing is the fastest growing activity in the unit. To prevent environmental and experience deterio significant number of actions have been taken by DEC that relate to illegal roadside parking, littering trampling, water pollution, and incompatible uses such as a ban on mountain bikes and motor vehicle Despite these measures, conflict and damage continue, and in some cases have increased because of i use.

## **CAPABILITY TO SUSTAIN RECREATION USE**

The capability of the HPWC to sustain recreation use is governed by a complex matrix of governmental, historical, sociological and ecological constraints. The unit cannot sustain unlimited increases in visitor use without impairing its wilderness character. Most visitor use is concentrated on the summits of the highest mountains, on trails, and on the shorelines of lakes, ponds, and streams. The wilderness area's high elevation ecosystems, steep mountain slopes, rock outcrops, riparian areas including wetlands, and poorly drained soils are limiting factors in the development of new campsites and trails to accommodate increased visitor use. Entry points, travel routes and locations of campsites are also determinant factors for providing the opportunity to enjoy solitude and the type of primitive recreational use that is prescribed by the APSLMP, 1987.

Section VII of the final plan addresses this issue by predicating future management direction based on the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC), adopted by the U.S. Forest Service and the Visitor Experience Resource Protection (VERP) module used by the National Park Service. Both techniques employ zoning and carrying capacity concepts, not so much as a prescription of the numbers of people that can enter an area at one time, but rather on the desired resultant condition of the land and the social experiences of visitors following use.

## **FACILITIES**

When the HPWC was designated in 1972, its wilderness component contained a huge infrastructure of man-made facilities, many oriented toward user convenience rather than resource protection. The APSLMP, 1987 in 1972 acknowledged the extent of facility development and established strict guidelines to remove non-conforming facilities and to mitigate the effects of permitted structures and uses. The present inventory includes the following:

### HPWC Facilities Summary

<u>Facility</u>	<u>Number</u>
Trails (miles)	303
Remote Campsites (tent sites)	318
Signs	300
Pit privies	107
Lean-tos	72
Trailheads	20
Bridges	49
Dams	4
Road Barriers and Gates	11
Interior Outposts	4

The final plan provides a complete listing of facilities by location.

## **NON-CONFORMING FACILITIES**

The APSLMP, 1987 describes certain facilities and activities not allowed in wilderness nor es wilderness preservation and protection. Except as specifically provided by the APSLMP, 1987, the I mandated to permanently remove all listed "non-conformances" as soon as possible. Since wildernes designation in 1972, a substantial number of these have been removed. Remaining non-conforming t include the following:

**AMPERSAND PRIMITIVE AREA**

Roads	3.5 miles
Snowmobile trails	3.5 miles
Overhead telephone lines	3.5 miles

The Ampersand Road (legal right-of-way across Forest Preserve) is a gravel surfaced road, 3.5 miles long, to access private property enclosed by the HPWC on four sides. The right-of-way contains a private telephone line and is also used by snowmobilers. These are non-conforming uses whose removal cannot be scheduled by a fixed deadline due to outstanding legal property rights.

**HIGH PEAKS WILDERNESS**

Interior Outposts	2 facilities
Overhead Telephone Line	3.5 miles
Wild River Structures	9 lean-tos
Roads (public)	1.0 miles

The two non-conforming interior outposts (formerly ranger cabins) are Marcy Dam and Lake Colden. Both are administrative facilities located in the most heavily used portions of the HPWC. The APSLMP, 1987 requires the removal of the Marcy Dam interior outpost once peripheral control is established and use is reduced to acceptable limits in the Marcy Dam Basin. Because of heavy use, particularly in winter, the APSLMP, 1987 authorizes the Lake Colden interior outpost to be retained indefinitely due to its strategic location for search and rescue activities. The overhead telephone line leading from South Meadows Road to Marcy Dam interior outpost is scheduled to be replaced by an on-ground telephone cable as has been done from Marcy Dam to Lake Colden. This is intended to reduce the visual intrusion caused by the overhead wires and telephone poles in a wilderness setting.

The Lake Colden Interior Outpost was destroyed by fire in March of 1998. In July, APA and DEC amended their 1985 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), for major projects in areas without an approved unit management plan, to address replacement of the outpost in a manner consistent with APSLMP, 1987 wilderness guidelines. The amended MOU also requires DEC to conduct periodic reviews every three years of the status of all interior and the associated on-ground telephone lines that lead to them in the HPWC if their eventual removal is feasible. The outpost was replaced in the fall of 1998. The amended MOU will expire when a unit management plan is approved for this area.

The 1987 edition of the APSLMP, 1987 also listed 2 lean-to clusters (closely spaced lean-tos) at each end of Marcy Dam Pond. The APSLMP, 1987 required the removal of at least one lean-to from each location to reduce the adverse impacts of camping too close to water and to improve visual esthetics. The lean-to clusters were removed in 1996.

Under the Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers Act (ECL §15-2707) and reaffirmed by the APSLMP, 1987, no lean-tos or other man-made structures are permitted except for those associated with forest management and foot bridges in designated Wild River Corridors. The Cold River, a Wild River designated in ECL §15-

2713(1)b and wholly enclosed by the HPWC, has 9 lean-tos in its riparian zone. In accordance with these must be phased out (removed) at the end of their useful life and not replaced.

The South Meadows Road is a Town of North Elba highway leading 1.0 miles into the High Peaks Wilderness. This gravel-surfaced road is totally enclosed by the wilderness and does not access private land. This is the last remaining road in the HPWC yet to be closed to motorized use. The APSLMP, 1987 requires the road to be closed to motor vehicles. Although the road remains under the jurisdiction of the Town of North Elba, DEC has the legal authority to close the road under Section 212 of the Highway Law, Chapter 161. This section of the Highway Law empowers state agencies, including DEC, to close public highways that pass over or terminate on lands owned by the state.

### **JOHNS BROOK PRIMITIVE CORRIDOR**

Road (private)	1.3 miles
Interior Outpost	1 facility

The above mentioned road, referred to as the South Side Trail, is a private right-of-way across Preserve lands leading to several small parcels of private land in the wilderness enclosed by the High Peaks Wilderness. The trail includes the Johns Brook Lodge Complex owned and operated by the Adirondack Mountain Club. DEC acknowledges historical rights of access including entrance and exit by means customarily used. The road is closed to public motor vehicle and snowmobile use. Outstanding private property rights prevent its closure at this time.

The Johns Brook Interior Outpost (formerly a ranger cabin) is a non-conforming facility at the wilderness boundary in the upper Johns Brook Valley.

Regarding the above, the APSLMP (1979) states "should these holdings and/or the right-of-way be acquired by the state, this area should be made part of the High Peaks Wilderness, the lodge and cabin be closed, and the ranger cabin phased out". Such acquisitions have yet to occur. It should be noted that the above landowners have legal parking rights to The Garden, a popular public trailhead leading into the Johns Brook Valley. The latter facility is open to everyone on a first come-first served basis.

### **ADJACENT LAND USES**

The HPWC does not exist or function in a vacuum - what goes on adjacent to its boundaries can have a profound impact inside the boundary. Conversely, DEC management programs in the HPWC can significantly affect nearby state and private lands. This interrelationship is illustrated by examining state and private lands adjacent to the HPWC.

#### **State Lands**

***Part I: Introduction to the High Peaks Wilderness Complex***

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Six Forest Preserve Units adjoin the HPWC. They are mix of Wilderness, Wild Forest, and Intensive Use Areas. Each provides a different range of natural conditions, recreational opportunities, and experiences. These areas include the following:

Dix Wilderness	50,190 acres
Giant Mt. Wilderness	22,104 acres
Sentinel Range Wilderness	23,137 acres
Blue Mountain Wild Forest	36,000 acres
Saranac Lakes Wild Forest	68,000 acres
Vanderwhacker Mt. Wild Forest	70,000 acres
Mt. Van Hoevenberg Olympic Sports Complex (managed by ORDA)	1,593 acres

**PRIVATE LANDS**

Large private landowners\* adjoining the HPWC include the following:

NL Industries	11,000 acres
Adirondack Mt. Reserve-Ausable Club	7,000 acres
Ampersand Lake Park	3,000 acres
Finch, Pruyn and Co.	46,000 acres
Huntington Wildlife Forest	15,000 acres
Adirondack Mt. Club (ADK Loj)	640 acres

\*listed acreages are approximate

## **SUBDIVISIONS AND URBAN AREAS**

The HPWC also shares its boundaries with many small landowners including urban-like subdivisions near Averyville (Lake Placid), Keene, and Keene Valley. Visitors hike and jog at the outer edge of the wilderness as if it were a private park or playground. Uncontrolled pets chase wildlife. Bicycles, snowmobiles, and vehicles (ATV's) frequently illegally cross the wilderness boundary. There is no buffer zone between wilderness and private land.

## **FUTURE MANAGEMENT DIRECTION**

The APSLMP, 1987 directs the DEC, through the unit management planning process, to develop specific management practices necessary to attain APSLMP, 1987 goals and objectives for the HPWC. A 26 member High Peaks' Citizens' Advisory Committee (HPCAC) was formed to assist in this effort in 1990. The committee, composed of special interest groups, representatives of local governments, scientists, and individual users met over a two-year period and submitted a final report listing 186 management recommendations in 1992. The DEC also held five public meetings across New York State in 1995 to solicit public comment on the draft plan. Many of the HPCAC's recommendations, combined with oral and written comments received during public review of the draft plan, have been incorporated in the final plan. Section XI provides a response to substantive public comments on the preliminary draft presented in 1995.

## **PLANNING FRAMEWORK**

The basic planning framework used in the final plan is the goal-achievement framework. It features straightforward statements that articulate the wilderness goals and objectives of the APSLMP, 1987. Assessments of the current situation and assumptions about future trends are used to develop specific management policies, programs, and actions through which objectives can be achieved. Plan goals are the basic building blocks that set the criteria for determining what management policies and actions are necessary, and are used later as the targets against which the plan's effectiveness is measured through monitoring.

The final plan also uses two other related approaches to wilderness management: the Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC) used by the U.S. Forest Service and the Visitor Experience and Resource Protection (VERP) module employed by the National Park Service. Both methods use carrying capacity concepts, not so much as a prescription for how many people can use an area, but as a description of the desired ecological and social conditions appropriate to a particular wilderness. Standards are set and management actions are taken only when measurable indicators reveal unsatisfactory conditions.

All three methods incorporate monitoring, evaluation, and revision procedures as crucial elements to planning. Management actions are not fixed but can be revised if monitoring and evaluation show the wilderness management program is not effective.

## **ZONING**

To facilitate on-the-ground management, the HPWC was divided into three use zones: Zone A - the Adirondack Canoe Route, Zone B - the western High Peaks, and Zone C - the eastern High Peaks. The height of land immediately west of the Indian Pass Trail was used as the division line between Zones B and C. These zones (not to be confused with ecological zones) acknowledge the fact that the HPWC is not a uniform wilderness in terms of ecological conditions and visitor use. The final plan recognizes this internal variability and lists resource, social, and intensity of management guidelines for each zone.

# PART II

## **PROPOSED ACTIONS**

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All proposed management actions in the final plan were developed by a DEC interdisciplinary planning team. This team reviewed legal constraints, resource and visitor use information, impacts to adjoining state and private lands, recommendations of the High Peaks Citizen's Advisory Committee (CAC), and public comments. Rising visitor use levels, the minimum number of facilities necessary for administration and visitor safety, and the cumulative effects of visitor overuse, misuse, and abuse on the wilderness resource strongly influenced development of the final plan.

Review under SEQR was started as early as possible in the planning process to identify the principal features of a proposed action in order to determine if it poses a significant environmental impact or not.

The Adirondack Park Agency Act (Article 27 Executive Law §816) directs the DEC to develop, in consultation with APA, unit management plans for each unit of land under its jurisdiction as classified in the APSLMP, 1987. In accordance with this statutory mandate, all plans must conform to the guidelines and criteria set forth in the APSLMP, 1987 and cannot amend the master plan itself. Regarding the removal of non-conforming uses and structures as specified in the APSLMP, 1987, no alternatives were considered by DEC since they would be contrary to the legal mandates of the APSLMP. The removal of non-conforming uses and structures from the wilderness is discussed in detail, Section VI of the final plan and further reference is made to the APSLMP. Those actions necessary to comply with the APSLMP, 1987 are defined as "non-discretionary" under SEQR. A non-discretionary act is performed upon a given set of facts, as prescribed by law or regulation without the use of judgement or discretion (SEQR, 1992). Other actions not subject to SEQR are listed as Type II or Unlisted Actions. These are more in the nature of administration and routine maintenance activities.

Aside from the legal requirements of the APSLMP, issues identified by DEC staff, the High Peaks CAC, and the public are summarized in this document as Type I - Unlisted Actions. Alternative management strategies were considered for each issue including a "No Action" approach. The latter approach assumes management policies will remain unchanged despite continued increases in visitation. This format was chosen to better identify the impacts of the unit management plan in its entirety. This document reflects those changes made to the final plan as per public comment and consensus reached on implementation of HPCAC recommendations. The FEIS also supersedes all previous versions of the DEIS.

The following is a synopsis of the plan's management proposals that incorporate legal requirements, consensus of HPCAC recommendations, and public comment. Readers are advised to consult the final plan for detailed descriptions and further explanation of each topic. Key topics are referenced to page numbers in the final plan.

## NON-DISCRETIONARY ACTIONS

Non-discretionary actions are performed upon a given set of facts, as prescribed by law or regulation without the use of judgement or discretion (SEQRA, Section 617.2).

1. **Unit Management Plan Development** ( page 1, final plan)
  - ! Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop, in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency, individual unit management plans for each unit of land under its jurisdiction classified in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP 1987).
2. **Land Acquisition** (page 115, final plan)
  - ! Complete a land acquisition needs assessment for the HPWC in accordance with the Open Space Plan of 1998.
  - ! Acquire permanent rights-of ways or easements to private trails and trailheads that serve the HPWC for which no recorded easements exist.
3. **Air Quality** (page 118, final plan)
  - ! Achieve Federal Class I air standards.
4. **Water Quality** (page 118, final plan).
  - ! Relocate lean-tos, pit privies, and non-designated campsites away from water. Lean-tos must be set back at least 100 feet, minimum setbacks for non-designated campsites and pit privies are 150 feet (APSLMP, 1987).
  - ! As required by the Rivers Act (section 666.13), all leant-tos in the Cold River Wild River Corridor will be phased out (removed) when their useful life has ceased and they will not be replaced.
5. **Protection of Vegetation** (page 120, final plan)
  - ! Camping above 4,000 feet will be prohibited all times. This action, required by the APSLMP, 1987, is necessary to protect sensitive upper elevation spruce-fir ecosystems, subalpine and rare summit vegetation.. This will require a regulation change in section (d) Part 190.3 of Title 6 New York Code of Rules and Regulations governing the use of state lands. This also eliminates camping on exposed ridges above 4,000 feet prone to thunderstorms and severe winds.
  - ! Restrict camping between 3,500 and 4,500 feet elevation to designated campsites as required by the APSLMP, 1987. This is intended to reduce impacts in upper spruce-fir ecosystems and to eliminate camping on high, exposed ridges prone to high winds and thunderstorms.
  - ! As an additional protective measure for summit vegetation, no person shall ignite or maintain a fire at elevations of 4,000 feet or higher, at any time §190.3 (e).
6. **Protection of Endangered, Threatened, and Species of Concern** (pages 123,128)
  - ! Monitor and afford protection, where warranted, to species which are endangered, threatened, or of special concern that are currently using the HPWC.

7. **Cultural and Historical Resources** (page 137, final plan)
  - ! Locate, inventory, and preserve known cultural and historical resources per the Historical P Act of 1980.
8. **Removal of Adirondack 46'ers Registration Canisters from State Land** (pg 149)
  - ! Remove summit canisters to comply with ECL and the APSLMP, 1987, as trails are upgrad II standard trails.
9. **Wilderness Access for Persons with Disabilities** (page 166, final plan)
  - ! Study potential areas for providing access for the disabled that provide a range of experienc challenges consistent with wilderness.
  - ! Provide "universal access information" to potential users that describes the types of obstacle challenges that a disabled person may encounter so that disabled wilderness users can make decisions in accordance with their physical limitations.
  - ! Inventory and assess existing facilities to determine their degree of accessibility for the disa
  - ! Monitor use, gather feedback from user groups, assess effectiveness and make changes as n
10. **Overnight Party Size Limitations** (page 162, final plan)
  - ! Adopt a rule and regulation to limit the maximum number of persons per campsite to eight : the APSLMP, 1987. This will be implemented over a three year period. The first step is to public of the impending change through an intense information and education effort comme YEAR ONE. In YEAR TWO, the issuance of group camping permits as per section(e) Part will be discontinued in the eastern and western High Peaks management zones. The numb campsite will thereby be reduced to nine eliminating the need for a group camping permit. specific regulation in YEAR THREE to conform with the APSLMP, 1987 will reduce the n number of persons per campsite to eight. The actions for YEARS ONE and TWO, listed ab consistent with established policy as prescribed by the following adopted wilderness unit m plans: Ha-De-Ron-Dah (1992), Pharaoh Lake (1992), Pigeon Lake (1992), and Five Ponds
  - ! Pending a use assessment of the entire 90 mile Adirondack Canoe Route, which passes thro forest areas, two wilderness areas, and DEC regions 5 and 6, an interim number of no more persons per campsite will remain in effect for that portion passing through the High Peaks V (Regions 5 and 6). Group size limits in this zone may be subject to further adjustment. All camping along the canoe route are subject to permitting requirements under section(e) Part
  - ! A camping permit is required if any person or group desires to camp in one location exceed consecutive nights pursuant to section (a) Part 190.4 NYCRR in the western and Adirondac zones of the HPWC.
11. **Campsite Sound and Sight Separation Distances** ( page 152, final plan)
  - ! Comply with the APSLMP, 1987 campsite standards to disperse use by locating campsites c and sound from each other and generally not less than 500 feet from any other campsite.
12. **Camping Above 4,000 Feet in Elevation** ( page 152, final plan)

- ! Eliminate all camping above 4,000 feet at all times to comply with the APSLMP, 1987.
- 13. **Camping at Designated Sites between 3,500 and 4,000 feet in Elevation** (page 153, final plan)
  - ! Restrict camping between 3,500 and 4,500 feet elevation to designated campsites as required by the APSLMP, 1987. This is intended to reduce impacts in upper spruce-fir ecosystems and to eliminate camping on high, exposed ridges prone to high winds and thunderstorms.
- 14. **Camping within 150 feet, of a Road, Trail, Spring, or other Body of Water** (page 153, final plan)
  - ! Camping regulations require camping to be at designated sites or locations that are at least 150 feet or more from a road, trail or water. The latter is referred as the "150 foot rule" which permits "at-large" camping subject to those requirements as per NYCRR section (b) Part 190.3.
- 15. **Required Lean-to and Pit Privy Setbacks from Water** (pages 155 and 156, final plan)
  - ! Relocated lean-tos will be set back a minimum distance of 100 feet or more from the water as required by the APSLMP, 1987. This same minimum setback will also apply to trails where feasible in order to protect water quality.
  - ! All pit privies will be set back a minimum distance of 150' from water in order to protect water quality as required by the APSLMP, 1987.
- 16. **Trail Management Activities in and/or adjacent to Wetlands** (page 147)
  - ! Trail management activities in wetlands and in areas adjacent to wetlands, will require consultation with APA to determine if an agency wetlands permit is required (Title 8 section 24-0801, Regulation of Freshwater Wetlands in the Adirondack Park).
- 17. **Removal of Lean-tos from Wild River Corridors** (page 155, final plan)
  - ! Schedule the phased removal of all lean-tos mandated to be removed by the APSLMP, 1987 and the Rivers Act.
- 18. **Removal of Overhead Telephone Wires and Poles** (page 201, final plan)
  - ! Overhead telephone wires and poles leading from South Meadows to Marcy Dam Interior Outpost will be replaced by an on-ground telephone line. This will reduce the visual impact of the line as required by the APSLMP, 1987.
- 19. **Retention of the Lake Colden Interior Outpost** (page 201, final plan)
  - ! The APSLMP acknowledges the unique and necessary features of this facility; particularly its strategic location in a high use/high risk area for search and rescue needs. The latter has been demonstrated numerous times and has saved lives. The interior outpost (cabin) burned in March of 1998. In July, APA and DEC amended their 1985 MOU for major projects in areas without an approved unit management

plan to address replacement of the outpost in a manner consistent with APSLMP wilderness guidelines. The amended MOU also requires DEC to conduct periodic reviews of the status, of all interior outposts in the High Peaks Wilderness and the associated on-ground telephone lines that serve them, every three years, to determine if their removal is feasible. The outpost was replaced in the fall of 1998 and the amended MOU will expire when a unit management plan is adopted for the area.

20. **Closure of the South Meadows Road** (page 205, final plan)

The South Meadows Road is totally enclosed by the HPWC. Thirty primitive campsites are located on both sides of the road and many are clustered at its terminus on a small height of land above the Ausable River. The road also provides trailhead access to the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Trail, the Klondike Trail, and the South Meadows- former Marcy Dam truck trail.

The APSLMP, 1987 lists South Meadows Road as a non-conforming use constituting an intrusion into the HPWC and mandates DEC, under its legal authority, to close the road to motor vehicle use at its intersection with the Adirondack Loj Road which forms the wilderness boundary. Closure of the road is to be accomplished in concert with measures to control or limit use in the most heavily used northern portions of the HPWC (APSLMP, 1987). South Meadows Road is a Town of North Elba maintained highway and does not provide access to private property. Although DEC has the legal authority, under section 212 of the NYS Highway Law, to close the road atop lands under its administrative authority, DEC prefers to close the road in cooperation with the Town of North Elba.

- ! In coordination with a planned reduction and redistribution of interior campsites for the entire eastern High Peaks zone, a campsite designation plan will be developed for the South Meadows -Marcy Dam - Lake Colden - Flowed Lands corridor. This plan will address closure of heavily impacted and illegal campsites, restoration of closed sites, disbursement of campsites to comply with APSLMP guidelines. The Designated Campsite Plan will also identify potential new campsites that meet APSLMP criteria; particularly to that area north of South Meadows road and those areas along the entire length of the former Marcy Dam Truck Trail. This action must be completed by YEAR THREE.
- ! Concurrently, DEC will construct a new 100 vehicles South Meadows parking facility near the intersection of Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads within 500 feet of the wilderness boundary as permitted by the APSLMP, making this the main point of entry into the HPWC. In conjunction, DEC will request the Adirondack Mountain Club voluntarily hold their parking lots to a maximum capacity of 200 vehicles. A coordinated effort is required and reference is made to ADK's Heart Lake Property Master Plan (1992) for the Club's position. The South Meadows parking lot will be constructed by YEAR TWO.
- ! A visitor service facility (VSF) will be constructed at the above location to establish an on-site administrative presence in the high use eastern High Peaks zone. Conceptually, the VSF will include the following: an administration building with restrooms, handicap access, potable water, offices, a lobby-information area, and be

supported by "1-800/888" toll free or "1-900" self-sustaining telephone service. The VSF's function would, in part, ameliorate the removal of the Marcy Dam interior outpost.

- ! Identify and evaluate specific sites to improve access for the disabled consistent with the APSLMP and ADA.
- ! DEC and the Town of North Elba will post and enforce a "No Parking" zone along the entire length of the South Meadows Road with the present end-of-road turn around left as an interim "drop off - pick up" point.
- ! In addition, DEC will continue to work with the Town of North Elba to address illegal parking issues and enforcement along the Adirondack Loj Road in order to maintain safe traffic flow and insure the safety of pedestrians.
- ! Following construction of the parking lot and visitor service facility, posting of the South Meadows Road against parking, and development of a designated campsite plan, camping along the South Meadows Road will be managed by assignment of campsites. Campers will be required to register at the VSF.
- ! Further discussions will be held with the Town of North Elba to address the future status of South Meadows Road. Within the five year life of this Unit Management Plan, said discussions will result in actions which bring the status of South Meadows Road into conformance with the State Land Master Plan.
- ! All actions will be in accordance with the APSLMP, New York State Highway Law, and the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA).
- ! All actions will be fully communicated to all users, user groups, and local government officials of impending changes. The legal requirements and intent of these actions to improve wilderness quality will be explained through multi-media approaches to request public support and understanding.

21. **Promulgation of Rules and Regulations that conform to the APSLMP, 1987** (page 178, final plan)

- ! Many of the management proposals outlined in the final plan require the promulgation of new rules and regulations in accordance with DEC policies and procedures, the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), and the APSLMP, 1987. Statutory authority for regulatory change is found in the Environmental Conservation Law and in section 816.1-3 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act. Section 816.3 of the act directs DEC to develop rules and regulations necessary to implement the APSLMP. In summary, these include the minimum necessary to assure APSLMP compliance and directly influence visitor behavior to protect resources and the experiences of visitors:

## **TYPE II ACTIONS**

Type II Actions are not subject to SEQR , §617.5 review if they apply to administrative and routine maintenance activities. These actions have been determined not to have a significant

impact on the environment or are otherwise precluded from environmental review under the ECL, article 8.

1. **Unit Manager** ( page 177 final plan)
  - ! Appoint a unit manager with the responsibility for both public contact and the coordination activities in the unit, including volunteer programs.
  - ! The unit manager will serve as review person to post a "red flag" if proposed activities are in conflict with the department policy and/or the APSLMP, and the goals and objectives of this plan.
  - ! Increase communication between various units in DEC, APA, the public, and other interested parties and agencies.
  - ! Conduct semi-annual meetings with staff (before and after heavy use seasons) to assess and report on accomplishments, problems, planning needs, proposed projects, progress in plan implementation, cooperative programs, and volunteerism.
  - ! The unit manager shall prepare an annual report on DEC's management of the unit and its progress in implementing the unit management plan. Submit same to the Commissioner, the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee, and the APA.
  - ! Develop wilderness management budgets in order to meet unit management plan goals and objectives.
2. **Soils** ( page 117, final plan)
  - ! Inventory, map, and monitor soil conditions affected by recreation use.
  - ! Correct undesirable conditions by rehabilitating the area and/or relocating use to more durable areas.
  - ! Relocate trails, designated campsites, and lean-tos that are less than 100 feet from water to reduce sedimentation and/or contamination of water resources.
  - ! Continue to target trail maintenance to heavily eroded trails; develop a priority list based on need rather than on user convenience. Include trailless peaks as well.
  - ! Request voluntary compliance in seasonal closures of high elevation trails and certain low elevation trails during period of wet weather; usually from November 1- December 15 and April 1- May 15 at appropriate times set by the area manager.
  - ! Any future recreation site developments should include a site specific soil survey which will provide information on soil capability to withstand recreation use, characteristic plant communities, and wildlife habitat.
3. **Water Quality** ( page 118, final plan)
  - ! Aquatic and riparian habitats will be maintained and/or improved. Any use which could prove damaging to the pristine character of riparian vegetation will not be allowed to occur.
  - ! Close and rehabilitate lake shore and stream side areas that have been impacted by bank erosion caused by recreation use.
  - ! ALSC and biological survey work will be incorporated in all water related planning activities.
4. **Vegetation** (page 120, final plan)
  - ! All vegetation protection and restoration programs will emphasize information and education as primary means to reduce impacts and slow unnatural change.
  - ! Maintain a new designation system for areas meeting criteria based upon the rarity and ecological significance of species and natural communities that warrant special management attention.

- ! Conduct botanical examinations to produce a more complete inventory of rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- ! The current citizen-sponsored alpine education and information, summit steward stewardship, and vegetation restoration efforts will continue and be enhanced as funds permit.
- ! All proposed scientific research projects in special ecological zones must be covered by a standard revocable permit issued by DEC.
- ! Ecological inventories and maps will be correlated with recreation, and fish and wildlife project plans to prevent unintended and undesirable impacts to sensitive, rare, threatened, and endangered species.
- ! A marker or unobtrusive sign may be developed and placed on the approaches and outer bounds of sensitive areas to inform the public of such significance and advise them of special precautions. For example, the public needs to know where the 3,500 feet in elevation contour is encountered because camping above that elevation is only permitted in designated sites up to 4,000 feet as per APSLMP guidelines.
- ! Seasonal voluntary trail closures, to protect vegetation and reduce erosion, may be employed on all trails, when the ground is wet; usually November 1- December 15 (frost-in) and April 1- May 15 (frost-out). Time frames may be altered at the discretion of the area manager. A list of alternative trails on drier sites will be provided. If voluntary seasonal trail closures are ineffective in reducing damage to soils and vegetation during these seasons, mandatory restrictions may be required.
- ! Minimum impact techniques will be used to revegetate sites where structures or concentrated use has destroyed natural vegetation. Native seedlings, trees, shrubs, and grasses will be planted to accelerate return to natural conditions when necessary.
- ! Visitors will be encouraged to use portable cook stoves and refrain from building campfires. Such messages will be prescribed in LEAVE-NO-TRACE wilderness education and information programs. Seasonal or year-round campfire prohibitions will be considered in specified areas where fuel wood use has outstripped natural accumulations of dead and down material.
- ! Vegetation will be monitored annually or more frequently as required so that changes can be detected before unacceptable conditions arise.

5. **Wildlife** (page 123, final plan)

- ! Study the feasibility of reintroducing spruce grouse into historical range and if habitat conditions are favorable and a suitable source for birds is found, commence with a reintroduction and monitoring program.
- ! Monitor peregrine falcons and bald eagles for nesting activity. Produce informational materials and signs to educate rock climbers that falcon nesting is occurring in certain sites and that climbing will be prohibited at these sites during nesting.
- ! Monitor osprey nesting to assess success and production.
- ! Monitor moose that enter the area through visual observation, reports from the public and by radio collaring moose whenever the opportunity presents itself.
- ! Continue pelt sealing of species to determine level of harvest, guarding against over harvest for species especially vulnerable to trapping (marten and fisher).
- ! Stress the wilderness aspect of hunting in the HPWC by refraining from developing programs that would attract additional hunters to high use areas.
- ! Promote education efforts according to High Peaks CAC recommendation stressing multiple use and hunting seasons that are concurrent with other anticipated uses of the area. Advise non-hunters of the

fact that there is hunting in the wilderness area so that they may dress and act accordingly during the hunting season.

- ! Advise visitors to the HPWC that the potential for conflict with wildlife exists and suggest ways to avoid conflicts.
  - P Distribute information regarding avoidance of wildlife conflicts.
  - P Train interior staff of nuisance avoidance procedures so that they may inform HPWC visitors.
  - P Provide assistance to operations unit regarding water control structures used to address beaver flooded trails.
  - P Require wilderness users to store their food and toiletries properly in order to minimize attracting wildlife, ensure a high quality wilderness experience for visitors, and prevent personal injury and property damage.
- ! Develop a plan and protocol for addressing nuisance bear problems in the unit.

6. **Fire Management** (page 134, final plan)

- ! Aerial detection patrols will be flown on days of very high and extreme fire danger.
- ! During period of very high or extreme fire danger, the Governor or his designee may close portions of the wilderness to public use (ECL §9-1101).
- ! Suppression strategy and tactics employed for all fires shall contain strong consideration for the impact on wilderness.
- ! Helicopter and fixed wing aircraft, chain saws, portable pumps, and other necessary equipment appropriate for fire suppression by the authority and approval of the Commissioner or his designee.
- ! Fire suppression and mop-up tactics will be commensurate with the fire's potential or existing behavior, yet leaves minimal environmental impact after application.
- ! Fires will be suppressed using natural control features (ridges, rivers, vegetation changes) where possible.
- ! After-fire measures should include rehabilitation of fire lines with native species, water bars, slopes, removal of flagging, equipment, litter, and obliteration of fire camps and staging areas.
- ! Continue to emphasize fire prevention in education and information programs and explain the value of natural fire as it relates to past fires and present day HPWC ecosystems.

7. **Search and Rescue** (page 136, final plan)

- ! Pursuant to the APSLMP (1987) present policy on wilderness intrusion during search and rescue operations will remain in effect.
- ! Prepare a detailed search and rescue preplan for the HPWC as an appendix to the final plan.
- ! Maintain and improve level of preparedness for search and rescue.
- ! After-search efforts will include removal of plastic flagging, string, or other evidence from areas following termination of the search in order to reduce visual and physical impacts. Use biodegradable string and flagging.
- ! Safety precautions will be included in all DEC information and educational materials. All I will communicate back country safety practices to visitors in order to prevent the need for rescue. Place emphasis on prevention; greater visitor preparedness and awareness, and user responsibility.

8. **Special Events in Wilderness** ( page 138, final plan)

- ! No permits will be issued for organized or large group contests, training programs, or events in the wilderness.
  - ! Suggest and provide information about suitable wild forest alternatives for organized activities and address same through applicable Revocable Permit procedures.
  - ! Continue prohibition on military exercises in wilderness.
9. **Law Enforcement** (page 138, final plan)
- ! Promote greater education and information to reduce violations and improve visitor behavior and understanding.
  - ! If indirect educational management techniques do not achieve desired results, use more direct restrictive measures at the lowest level of enforcement to achieve compliance.
10. **Wilderness Education and Information** (page 139, final plan)
- ! Develop a strategic education and information plan for the HPWC in coordination with the pending draft Adirondack Forest Preserve Public Use and Information Plan.
  - ! Fully inform the public of pending rule and regulation changes relative to High Peaks use at least one year in advance of enactment through DEC's Office of Public Affairs.
  - ! Create information systems that allow visitors to easily receive information needed prior to a planned trip. As part of this system, establish a central DEC clearinghouse for HPWC information connected by a "1-800" or self-sustaining "1-900" telephone system and expand DEC's Internet Connection.
  - ! In the pending draft Adirondack Forest Preserve Information and Public Use Plan, provide information on lesser used portions of the HPWC, lesser used wilderness areas, and wild forest areas.
  - ! Train front desk personnel, assistant forest rangers, interior caretakers, summit stewards, and trail crews to provide accurate and consistent information responsive to public needs. In conjunction with this, develop a basic wilderness education/information sheet and individual supplemental sheets which address LEAVE-NO-TRACE principles. This will include information to be used with specific user groups, such as day hikers, campers, rock climbers, etc..
  - ! Meet with and coordinate delivery of education and information materials through partnerships with cooperating state agencies; especially the Adirondack Park Visitor Interpretive Centers, the Adirondack Regional Tourism Council (ARTC), chambers of commerce, organizations, and the private sector.
11. **Trailhead Management** ( page 143, final plan)
- ! Obtain deeded easements to all private trailheads; include provisions for adequate and safe parking.
  - ! Revisit, analyze, and update existing easements to determine improvement needs.
  - ! Develop individual special parking plans for Elk Lake, South Meadows, The Garden, Adirondak Loj, and the Ausable Club that incorporate the issues and concerns of all affected parties. Foster cooperation between same. Access roads to these facilities need to be carefully managed if analysis shows overuse and restricted traffic flow.
  - ! Establish a DEC presence at all popular entry points during peak use periods.
12. **Trail Management Activities** (page 145, final plan)
- ! Formally adopt, as a matter of regional policy, the trails classification and standards system proposed in the Appendices for all trail management activities. Under this system, all developed trails will be

maintained, relocated, or reconstructed to specified standards. Wilderness trail maintenance emphasize resource protection and visitor safety rather than user convenience or comfort.

- ! Trail construction, relocation, or reconstruction activities will not be undertaken in the absence of an approved trail project plan.
- ! Trail maintenance will include removal of downed trees, ditching, clearing of brush, water line construction and cleaning, bridge repairs and reconstruction in accordance with annual work plans and availability of funds. Bridge repair and construction will occur only in cases where public safety and/or resource protection is jeopardized.
- ! Ladders may be used to assist users over trails on certain slopes in order to protect soils and water if no alternatives exist. Devices such as cable and ropes are non-conforming improvements (APSLMP, 1987) and will not be added to the HPWC. However the existing cable on Gotthardt Mountain may remain in place for resource protection, to prevent trail widening, and provide visitor safety until an alternative route is located and developed.

13. **Trailless Peaks - so called Peaks without maintained Trails** (page 148, final plan)

- ! Maintain the cooperative effort with the Adirondack 46'ers to designate the most environmentally durable route up each peak and close all others to public use.
- ! Designated routes will be assigned Class II status, a marked foot path, with intermittent maintenance. Due consideration given to appropriate layout based on drainage, and occasional blowdown to define the route. Remedial maintenance will be employed as required to stem erosion and prevent vegetation loss.
- ! Closed routes will be barred with brush to obliterate unwanted paths and erosion control devices will be put in place where necessary.
- ! Collect better use data and monitor site conditions on so-called "trailless peaks".

14. **Campsites** (page 151, final plan)

- ! Inventory, map, and evaluate all existing and potential campsite capacity for the HPWC. This will include an inventory of all existing lean-to sites.
- ! Where appropriate, a designated campsite is one identified by a permissive DEC sign or disk. Campers may not camp in excess of fifteen feet from such signs or disk. Campsites are designated in these locations to direct campers to previously used sites, to define proper camp locations, to disperse use, or limit adverse impacts to resources and other campers.
- ! Severely impacted campsites will be closed and rehabilitated by natural processes, and some aided by management treatment, to restore ground cover. Fire rings, tree stumps, and other signs of past use will be removed.

15. **Lean-to Management** (page 155, final plan)

- ! Inventory and evaluate all other lean-tos on a case by case basis as to whether they should be maintained in place, relocated, or eliminated. These decisions will be based on prescribed management criteria and will include consideration of the following: distance from water, soils and drainage, topography, existing use patterns - especially in relation to sight and sound, separation distances from other campsites and/or lean-tos, distance from roads and/or trails.

strategic locations for safety protection based on past histories of search and rescue efforts in a particular geographic location. If a lean-to cannot be relocated to a legally acceptable site within 1/4 mile of its present location, it will be removed and not replaced.

- ! Communicate facility changes to the public through the media, the unit's information and education programs, trailhead messages, and personal contact.

16. **Highway Perimeter De-Icing** (page 173, final plan)

- ! Participate in discussions with the Adirondack Park Agency and the Department of Transportation to reduce, mitigate, or eliminate the problem of serious adverse effect of de-icing road salt and sand on roadside plant and animal life and on ground water and surface water bodies outside the highway right-of-way.
- ! Monitor roadside vegetation and stream sides for sodium overload and streambeds for sediment accumulation.
- ! Coordinate highway perimeter de-icing concerns with the Draft Route 73 Scenic Highway Corridor Plan (1998).

17. **Scientific Research and Study** (page 174, final plan)

- ! Permit valid forms of research and scientific study provided such projects comply with the APSLMP and DEC policies and procedures, and contribute to the existing knowledge of the HPWC's resource base. They must have practical application to wilderness management problems or use the wilderness as a reference where no viable alternative exists. The wilderness will not serve as a general laboratory for all types of scientific research.

18. **Partnerships and Volunteers** (page 175, final plan)

- ! Appoint a partnership/volunteer coordinator at the regional level to supervise projects in the HPWC by outside interests.
- ! Formalize the relationship (partnership or volunteer program) with written agreements, contracts, or memorandums of understanding. This is necessary to define goals, objectives, contributions, responsibilities, and term of service.
- ! The DEC partner or volunteer must clearly understand DEC wilderness objectives. Yet at the same time, the DEC partner must be given reasonable assurance of security and opportunity to satisfy their own particular objectives.
- ! Regardless of the relative share of investment by the partners and/or volunteers as compared to DEC's contribution, each party must be viewed on equal terms.
- ! Each partner or volunteer must be flexible and be prepared to make adjustments.
- ! Partners and volunteers should not expect to share preferential treatment in future management decisions by becoming a partner or volunteer.
- ! Partners and volunteers are not to exceed nor act beyond their stated agreements and assume no legal authority.
- ! Partners and volunteers will not monopolize a particular management activity.

## **TYPE ONE AND UNLISTED ACTIONS**

Type I Actions refer to the adoption of changed in allowable uses within the HPWC and/or the construction of new facilities. These are separate actions aside from non-discretionary and Type II actions listed previously. DEC's interdisciplinary planning team for the HPWC used the issues and concerns identified by the HPCAC and from public comments on the draft plan and DEIS, and concerns of DEC managers to formulate the alternatives.

3. **Designated Campsite Program** (page 151, final plan)

Despite the huge size of the HPWC, the actual land area suitable for recreational development such as primitive campsites is quite small. The area's high elevation ecosystems, steep mountains, rock outcrops, wetlands, and poorly drained soils severely restrict camping to low elevations and valley floors and narrow areas near lake shores and streams. DEC has designated campsites in high use areas to direct campers to environmentally suitable sites and disperse use. This technique has helped protect soils, vegetation, water quality and reduced congestion. Severely impacted campsites, in some cases have been closed to improve conditions and let the area return to a natural appearance. At the same DEC has permitted so-called "at-large" camping in which users choose and create their own campsites provided such campsites are a minimum distance of 150 feet away from a road, trail, spring, stream, pond, or other body of water except at camping areas designated by the department (NYCRR section (b) part 190.3).

Demand for campsites is extremely high in the eastern High Peaks zone; especially in the South Meadows-Marcy Dam-Lake Colden-Flowed Lands travel corridor. In this core area, large impacted camping areas have been created where designated campsites have coalesced with de-facto "at-large" user created campsites. This has resulted in significant soil compaction, vegetation loss, visitor crowding, and decline in water quality near streams and lake shores. Aside from APSLMP sight and separation requirements for campsites, DEC needs to address these serious adverse environmental and social impacts.

**Preferred Alternative** - Limit camping to only designated campsites in the South Meadows-Marcy Dam-Lake Colden-Flowed Lands travel corridor. No "at-large" camping will be permitted in this area in order to improve conditions and keep impacts confined. In other areas of the wilderness, a combination of designated campsites and permitted (legal) "at-large" camping activities will be permitted.

**Alternative A.** Restrict camping to designated sites across the entire unit and prohibit all "at-large" camping. This option was dismissed because it would severely restrict freedom of choice and narrow opportunities for camping in areas that are currently not sustaining serious adverse impacts.

**Alternative B.** Assumes that a "No Action" approach will be taken aside from the legal requirements of the APSLMP. Given the fact, the visitor use numbers are increasing in the eastern High Peaks, proliferation of campsites and adverse

environmental and social impacts can be expected to continue and result in unacceptable change.

4. **Campfire Use** (page 157, final plan)

Even though the number of visitors using gas stoves is increasing, there are hundreds of fire rings in the HPWC. These are accompanied by a proliferation of fire blackened rocks, charcoal, partially burned garbage, melted plastic and broken glass, hacked and cut trees, and associated litter located primarily at campsites. A more damaging activity involves firewood gathering which creates large areas devoid of vegetation. Campfire use in high visitor use areas consumes large quantities of wood which would otherwise decompose and replenish soil nutrients. Campfire burning has eliminated wood supplies faster than it can be replaced by new growth. In these areas, firewood has become depleted and wide-ranging firewood gathering has resulted in trampling of ground cover vegetation. The removal of dead and down fuels has fostered the cutting of live and dead standing trees. The latter are important habitats for many cavity nesting birds and animals. Areas greatly impacted occur primarily in high use areas such as in the Johns Brook Valley, Marcy Dam, Lake Colden, and Flowed Lands.

**Preferred Alternative** - Prohibit all open campfires in the eastern High Peaks zone to reduce physical and visual impacts, to rejuvenate soils, and improve wildlife habitat. Retain open campfire use in the western High Peaks zone and along the Adirondack Canoe Route since the frequency and duration of campfires is less severe. Coordination with LEAVE-NO-TRACE messages and cost to management and visitors alike was considered in choosing this option.

**Alternative A.** Consider campfire prohibitions in only the heavily impacted areas of the eastern High Peaks zone. Since the aforementioned areas compose the main camping area in the eastern High Peaks zone, DEC managers dismissed this technique as being difficult to manage and enforce since these impacted areas lie in a mosaic-like pattern across the zone. This would result in negligible improvement to the overall resources of the zone. Also, this approach would require a complex information and education program as to educate the public where campfires could be built or not.

**Alternative B.** A "No Action" approach was considered ensuring the status quo. In view of continued fire use in the eastern High Peaks zone, deterioration of campsites and general disturbance of natural conditions can be expected to exceed limits of acceptable change.

5. **Self-Issuing Registration Permits** (page 168, final plan)

DEC primarily bases use estimates on voluntary registration at trail registers. The problem with this system is that not everyone registers. Use estimates are frequently understated and have the potential for large, but unknown margins of error. Given the fact that visitor use has risen by an estimated 40,000 visitors in just five years. DEC managers

need more reliable data to adequately assess the limits of acceptable change on natural resources and the experiences of visitors. This is necessary to develop future management issues. Registrations are also used as an important tool for search and rescue operations.

**Preferred Alternative** - Require a free self-issuing travel permit for all users whenever a visitor (or group leader) passes or is in close proximity, to a DEC registration facility in the eastern High Peaks zone. This action is not intended as a rationing nor reservation type permit system. A secondary component is to have the permits convey in-hand information on rules and regulations, safety, and LEAVE-No-TRACE messages. The intent here is to increase visitor registration, gain more reliable data, and increase visitor awareness through education via the permits.

**Alternative A.** Require free self-issuing permits across the entire wilderness in all three management zones. This was felt unnecessary given relatively low use of the western High Peaks zone and the transitory nature of travel along the Adirondack Canoe Route. In the latter zones, traditional voluntary registration systems will continue.

**Alternative B.** Continue present voluntary registration program and use education and information messages to encourage more visitors to register in all three management zones. This recommendation, by itself, was not considered to be effective to meet objectives; especially in the eastern High Peaks zone where better data is needed to assess the fragility of resource and visitor crowding.

#### 4. Length of Stay Requirements ( page 165, final plan)

This issue applies primarily to the heavily visited eastern High Peaks. The demand for campsites and lean-tos greatly outweighs the availability of these facilities. Under current regulations §190.4 (a), a person or a group of persons may occupy any site or lean-to up to a maximum of 14 consecutive nights at that location. This often results in "homesteading", a term used to describe locations where one person or a group of people may dominate favored sites for extended stays. It is not a significant problem in the western High Peaks zone where use and demand is lower. Also, canoeists along the Adirondack Canoe Route, tend to be more transitory and not stay for extended period.

**Preferred Alternative** - Establish a maximum length of stay of three consecutive nights per campsite or lean-to in the eastern High Peaks zone, except during the big game hunting season when a permit is required for extended stays per §190.4 Rules and Regulations. This limitation will not apply to the Adirondack Canoe Route or the western High Peaks zone. This action will allow more visitors to access a limited number of facilities and encourage visitors to use other areas of the HPWC.

**Alternative A.** Establish a maximum length of stay of three consecutive nights per campsite or lean-to across all three zones of the HPWC. This action was not chosen for all three management zones because it would eliminate opportunities for visitors who

wish to experience an extended trip in the more remote western section of the HPWC where use levels are more moderate.

**Alternative B.** Managers considered a "No Action" alternative for this issue, but later rejected this approach because current practices encourage congestion and campsite proliferation in areas adjacent to popular campsites or lean-tos.

#### 6. **Day Use Group Size Limitations** ( page 162, final plan)

Many of the issues and concerns identified in plan scoping sessions and from public comments centered on the appropriateness of large day use groups in wilderness. Large groups, defined as more than 8 persons per group, have been documented to cause greater impacts to wilderness environmental and social resources than smaller groups (refer to final plan for cited references). Also, there are issues relating to APSLMP solitude requirements.

DEC has no restrictions limiting the size of day use groups. Groups of any size may enter the wilderness. Day use groups of 60-80 persons can be encountered; on the extreme side, groups of 300 persons in a single party have hiked popular trails, such as Ampersand and Cascade. These groups, because of their sheer size, create noise and congestion in parking areas, on the trail, and on mountain summits at the expense of other visitors. They are especially worrisome on the alpine summits where trampling is a major cause of vegetation loss.

**Preferred Alternative** - Establish a maximum day use group size limit of 15 persons per party to modify this type of use and visitor behavior in the HPWC. This limitation would apply only to the eastern and western High Peaks zone. No day use size limits will be placed on the Adirondack canoe Route pending an assessment of the route which passes through several wilderness and wild forest areas. This restriction was placed on the eastern and western High Peaks zone to minimize resource damage and social impacts where they are most likely to occur. This number was arbitrarily chosen after consulting with the HPCAC, wilderness managers elsewhere, literature reviews and studies, and educators. The latter viewed the number analogous to a desired classroom size in an outdoor setting. Considerations were also given the range of opportunities available in adjoining wild forest areas which can better accommodate large groups.

**Alternative A.** Establish higher limits - greater than 15 per party. This alternative was dismissed because it would do little to improve ecological conditions, visitor dissatisfaction with larger groups and reduce crowding.

**Alternative B.** Establish more restrictive limits - less than 15 per party. This option was declined because of higher costs to those visitors who prefer or must travel in large parties such as organized groups.

#### 6. **Pet Restrictions** (page 170. final plan)

Visitors are increasingly bringing more pets, primarily dogs, into the HPWC. This is causing problems with pet excrement in trails, in campsites, in and adjacent to water sources, disturbing wildlife, and trampling and rooting of summit vegetation. DEC personnel are also dealing with frequent complaints about dog fights, dog bites, injured and abandoned pets. There are occasions when pets are left unattended, tied, or left in camping and trailhead parking areas. DEC personnel are frequently diverted from their customary duties to deal with these incidents.

**Preferred Alternative** - All pets, except hunting dogs in appropriate hunting season under the control of a licensed hunter, must be leashed on designated trail, in campsites and lean-to locations, and at elevations above 4,000 feet, or at areas where the public has congregated. No dog(s) may be left unattended at any time and must be under the complete control of the owner or handler at times.

**Alternative A.** Prohibit all pets from the HPWC. Using the "minimum tool" approach ( page 109, final plan), DEC managers declined this recommendation in favor of education and information and putting more responsibility on the pet owners before taking more restrictive measures .

**Alternative B.** Solely rely on education and information messages asking pet owners to be more conscientious when traveling and hiking with their pets and/or asking people not to bring pets into the HPWC. This recommendation, by itself, was not considered effective enough to alleviate the situation. However, it was recommended to be use in combination with the preferred alternative listed above.

#### 7. **Prohibit Glass Containers in the Wilderness** (page 171, final plan)

DEC staff and volunteers routinely remove quantities of broken glass from the HPWC from past and present use. It is an environmental problem (litter) as well as a serious safety issue. Glass fragments are found on trails, in fire rings, at lean-tos and on shorelines, in area waters, and on mountain summits. Clean-up is time consuming, costly, and sometimes injurious. This approach has been successfully applied in the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness of northern Minnesota (USFS, 1988) and in Ontario's Algonquin Provincial Park (MNR, 1987).

**Preferred Alternative** - Prohibit all glass containers in the HPWC to reduce ecological impacts and improve visitor safety. Given the availability of light weight food and beverage containers, glass products should not be brought and left in the interior. This requires effective communication of regulations and adequate law enforcement

**Alternative A.** Assume a "No Action" approach by continuing current education and information messages such as "pack it in - pack it out" as indirect means to reduce litter including glass. Despite a 20 year message campaign, this has ben ineffective in reducing this particularly damaging practice.

**8. Fisheries Management in Wilderness** (page 125, final plan)

Fisheries management activities in the HPWC are directed to the preservation, enhancement, and restoration of native fish communities as discussed in the final plan. Activities having significant environmental impact, such as pond reclamation and liming of candidate waters, and management of fishless waters are covered by generic environmental impact statements and specific policy guidelines for fishery management in wilderness, primitive and canoe areas. These activities are not addressed by this FEIS since they are covered by separate SEQR documentation.

Individual fisheries actions proposed in the final plan are to be carried out in conformance with these adopted generic impact statements, APSLMP guidelines, DEC policies, and regulations. Thresholds or conditions for action(s) are identified in these documents and require no further SEQR review as per Title 6 NYCRR § 617.10 (b) (c) and (d).

Reference is made to the following:

- § NYSDEC. Final programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Fish Species Management Activities of the Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Fish and Wildlife. 1980
- § NYSDEC. Final Programmatic Environmental Impact Statement on Undesirable Fish Removal by the Use of Pesticides under Permit issued by the Department of Environmental Conservation, Division of Lands and Forests - Bureau of Pesticides. 1981.
- § NYSDEC. Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Program on the Liming of Selected Acidified Waters. Division of Fish and Wildlife. 1990.
- § NYSDEC. Organizational and Delegation Memorandum #91-31. Policy: Fishery Management in Wilderness, Primitive, and Canoe Areas. 1991 and amended 1993. This document is found in the final plan, page 281.

**9. South Meadows Parking Facility** (page 206, final plan)

In conjunction with measures to establish a peripheral control system for the Adirondack Loj/South Meadows corridor and closure of the South Meadows Road, the APSLMP (1987) directs DEC to provide appropriate parking facilities within 500 feet of the wilderness boundary. The HPCAC in 1992 recommended the construction of a new 40-50 vehicle parking facility near the intersection of the Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads. This recommendation was based on the current capacity of two off-road parking lots found near the end of the road. DEC closed one of these parking lots in 1997 to relocate a road barrier for the former Marcy Dam Truck Trail as required by the APSLMP. This action resulted in increased parking along the shoulders of South Meadows Road.

DEC managers reviewed the HPCAC proposal in 1993 and recommended a parking capacity of 100 vehicles. This number was derived from the total 50 car capacity of the two aforementioned off-road parking lots plus an additional 50 cars that routinely park on the shoulders of the road on weekends and holiday. The larger capacity was presented in the draft plan and public comments were received and analyzed.

Any action to establish a parking facility at this location will require a supplemental EIS to address significant environmental impacts resulting from clearing and removal of trees and vegetation from forest preserve lands, grading and graveling, and traffic flow from adjoining roads.

**Preferred Alternative.** Construct a 100 vehicle parking facility at the location described above to accommodate maximum parking needs in order to reduce parking along South Meadows Road and curtail illegal parking on the Adirondack Loj Road, especially near the downhill approaches to the bridge across the West Branch of the Ausable River.

**Alternative A.** Construct a 50 car parking facility as proposed by the HPCAC and retain the option to increase capacity, under SEQR review, if future management actions to control interior use show significant improvement in wilderness resource and social conditions. This option was not selected because it would not adequately discourage or prohibit illegal parking on the South Meadows and Adirondack Loj Roads unless complemented by a major law enforcement effort.

**Alternative B.** Take "No Action" at the location mentioned above and direct all parking to facilities owned by the Adirondack Mountain Club or to the Olympic Winter Sports Facility at Mount Van Hoevenberg. The latter has ample parking, but would require visitors to hike an additional 3.5 miles to South Meadows trailheads or use a shuttle-type bus service, if available, to area trailheads on peak weekends and holidays. For these reasons, this alternative was not chosen.

#### 10. High Peaks Visitor Service Facility-VSF (page 206, final plan)

Comments received from the HPCAC, the public review period, and DEC managers indicated a need to establish a greater DEC presence by providing an on-site visitor service facility near the main gateway to the High Peaks. The suggested location is at the junction of the South Meadows and Adirondack Loj Roads described in the previous section. More than 60,000 visitors pass by this location annually.

The lack of an on-site DEC permanent presence has become more noticeable with increased visitor use and increased difficulty for visitors to communicate directly with DEC for information. Much of this communication void to date has been assumed by the private sector to disperse High Peaks visitor information. The HPCAC and others urged DEC to take a greater lead in this endeavor by providing on-site information before visitors enter the

wilderness. Studies, cited in the final plan, show that the presence of DEC personnel at entrances, on duty, and visibly managing resources has a positive impact on visitors.

DEC managers have also requested an administrative facility to support interior management and maintenance programs, and serve as a base for search and rescue to shorten response to emergencies. Currently, search and rescue equipment is stored on adjoining private property.

The APSLMP permits construction of administrative facilities within 500 feet of the wilderness boundary for peripheral control of public use. Any facility construction requires SEQR review under a supplemental environmental impact statement.

**Preferred Alternative.** Design and construct a visitor service facility as described above, compatible with APSLMP guidelines in a wilderness setting.

**Alternative A.** Take "No Action" on this issue and continue present administrative and public communication activities remotely separate from the wilderness. This action was dismissed in favor of HPCAC recommendations and response to public comments.

#### 11. **Duck Hole Dams** (page 202, final plan)

The final plan lists no direct management actions regarding the Duck Hole Dams. They are listed here only for purposes of discussion.

Duck Hole Pond is remotely located in the western High Peaks zone, 6.9 miles from the nearest road. Two small rock and wood crib dams impound 61 acres of water, both have sustained extensive deterioration and ice damage. These dams were originally used for logging purposes prior to forest preserve acquisition and were extensively rebuilt in the 1930's and 1960's with motorized equipment and. On-site gravel and timbers were used for reconstruction. Motorized equipment has not been used to maintain the dams since wilderness designation in 1972.

No consensus was achieved during the planning process. To this end, DEC has taken a "No Action" approach to this issue, but will to conduct an overall environmental assessment of the dams in their wilderness setting and a cost-benefit study as to whether replace the dams in-kind or de-water the dams. This will provide a range of alternatives to adequately address this issue. Any final decision will require SEQR review and a supplemental environmental impact statement will be prepared. Any actions taken following SEQR proceedings will be addressed as an amendment to the final plan.

## **NEW RULES AND REGULATIONS**

Many of the management proposals outlined in this section require the promulgation of new rules and regulations in accordance with DEC policies and procedures, SEQRA requirements for regulatory change found in the ECL § 8-0113, and in section 816.1-3 of the

Adirondack Park Agency Act. The latter section of law directs DEC to develop rules and regulations necessary to implement the APSLMP, 1987. In summary, these regulatory actions are the minimum necessary to assure APSLMP, 1987 compliance and directly influence visitor behavior to protect wilderness resources and the experience of visitors.

- ! Prohibit camping above 4,000 feet in elevation all times of the year to protect upper spruce-fir ecosystems, alpine, and rare summit vegetation. This action is required by the APSLMP, 1987.
- ! Limit all camping to designated campsites between 3,500 and 4,000 feet in elevation because of the environmentally sensitive nature of high elevation environments. This action is required by the APSLMP, 1987.
- ! Require all winter visitors to possess and use skis or snowshoes when the terrain is snow-covered with 8 or more inches of snow. This is required for visitor safety in case of sudden snow-related emergencies and necessary to maintain safe trail conditions for all users.
- ! Limit the number of persons per campsite to 8 for overnight camping in the eastern and western High peaks zones, and to 12 persons per campsite along the Adirondack Canoe Route in order to reduce environmental impacts and visitor crowding. This action is required by the APSLMP, 1987.
- ! Limit the size of day use parties to a maximum of 15 persons per party in the eastern and western High Peaks zones to reduce environmental impacts and crowding. This proposed regulation will not apply to day use activities along the Adirondack Canoe Route.
- ! Require a minimum separation distance of mile between affiliated camping and day use groups so that group size requirements are not exceeded at interior locations. .
- ! Subject overnight camping to only designated sites in areas of relatively high user concentrations as specified and identified by the department. No at-large camping will be permitted in these areas.
- ! Restrict camping structures to only tents, tarps, lean-tos, or those composed of snow in the wilderness. This is required by the APSLMP, 1987. This is necessary to eliminate travel trailers, "pop-up" style campers, tent trailers, or structures of similar fashion brought into the interior by horses or other means.
- ! Restrict campfire use, outside of closed or designated areas, to safe locations at least 150 feet from any road (including parking facilities), trail, or water.
- ! Prohibit all campfires in the eastern High Peaks zone and at all locations above 4,000 feet in elevation in the western High Peaks zone. The latter is necessary to protect sensitive high elevation environments as required by APSLMP, 1987.
- ! Ensure audio devices are not audible outside of the immediate area of a campsite. Necessary to reduce noise and improve campsite solitude.
- ! Establish quiet hours between the hours of 10 p.m. and 7 am.
- ! Prohibit glass containers throughout the entire High Peaks Wilderness.
- ! Leash all pets while on DEC marked trails, designated camp and lean-to sites, in congregated areas, and at elevations above 4,000 feet. This will not apply to hunting dogs under the control of a licensed hunter during appropriate hunting seasons. Pets are

not to be left unattended and must be under the control of the owner or handler at all times.

- ! Prohibit the use all motorized craft any "Wild River" passing through state forest preserve, with specific reference to the Cold River located in this unit. Required by the Rivers Act and the APSLMP, 1987.
- ! Require mandatory trailhead registrations applicable only to the heavily used eastern High Peaks zone. Required to gain better user information and to help educate visitors. Good information is needed so that proper recreation management decisions can be made.
- ! Prohibit the use of all motorized equipment (i.e. chainsaws, generators, etc.) by the public anywhere in the wilderness except by Department permit. This is required to reduce illegal tree cutting, preserve natural quiet, and in keeping with wilderness objectives.
- ! Establish a regulation that defines and describes a "Lawful Order" in which no person shall fail to comply with a lawful instruction or order by a uniformed employee of the department.
- ! Amend NYCRR §190.5, section (e) to prohibit all tent platforms in designated wilderness areas. Tent platforms, permanent or temporary, are non-conforming structures in wilderness (APSLMP, 1987).

## **SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

Budget constraints notwithstanding, the wilderness management program detailed in Sections VIII and IX of the final plan will be implemented through a five year time frame (tables follow). The target date(s) for implementing each management action will be arrived at by considering priorities for long-term protection and preservation of the HPWC's wilderness character, Region 5's manpower/workday capabilities, and time frames which govern DEC's budget process. The fact that some actions are prerequisites for others was also a primary consideration in deriving this schedule. Priority will be given to actions required to initiate and continue resource protection programs necessary to mitigate adverse impacts. Actions delayed for budgetary reasons will be undertaken as soon as funding is available.

All estimates are based on 1998 labor, materials, and equipment costs. The plan specifically does not identify existing funding sources or potential ones. These processes are internal to DEC's overall budgeting process beyond the scope of the unit management planning process.

## SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION YEAR ONE

ACTIVITY	COST
1. Appoint Unit Manager from existing staff.	\$ -0-
2. Inventory all campsites and lean-tos. Develop campsite designation plan for whole unit.	12,000
3. Develop comprehensive HPWC information and education program in coordination with Adirondack Forest Preserve Public Use and Information Plan.	5,000
4. Promulgate new rules and regulations.	-0-
5. Prepare, print, and distribute HPWC brochure; general location map; new guidelines, etc.	5,000
6. Redesign and update trailhead bulletin boards (all locations) and trail registers.	8,000
7. Develop LAC guidelines and standards to monitor environmental and sociological conditions.	-0-
8. Request voluntary trail closures during wet weather.	-0-
9. Conduct safety inspections of the Duck Hole and Marcy Dams.	-0-
10. Develop wilderness search and rescue preplan.	-0-
11. Implement trails classification system and maintenance schedules.	-0-
12. Rehabilitate 5 miles of Cold River Horse Trail System.	15,000

13. Fund contractual trail rehabilitation projects:	
a. Indian Falls - Lake Arnold	2,000
b. Mt. Colden	2,000
c. Ampersand Mountain	6,000
d. Big Slide Mountain	2,000
e. Feldspar Brook Bridge Rehab	3,000
f. Northville-Lake Placid/Moose Pond Trail	2,000
14. Fund volunteer Project: Wright Peak, Ampersand, Avalanche Pass, Northville-Lake Placid Trail/Long Lake, and Duck Hole.	6,000
15. Fund ATIS projects.	4,000
16. Support summit steward program and co-sponsor alpine vegetation restoration project with outside partners.	6,000
17. Fund annual routine maintenance of facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, privies, litter removal, bridges, signs, etc.	125,000
18. Maintain 20 miles of boundary lines.	10,000
19. Reclaim Rock Pond (R-P196).	6,300
20. Survey six potential reclamation/liming candidate ponds.	3,000
21. Sign Cascade Lakes, Newcomb Lake, and Moose Pond prohibiting the use of baitfish.	-0-

(Year One)

## SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION YEAR TWO

ACTIVITY	COST
1. Construct 100 vehicle parking facility at junction of Adirondack Loj Road and South Meadows Road.	\$125,000
2. Request Town of North Elba parking ban - entire length of South Meadows Road (1.0 mile) and establish additional "No Parking" zones along the Adirondack Loj Road where warranted.	-0-
3. Construct High Peaks Visitor Service Facility.	100,000
4. Remove 3.5 miles of overhead telephone line and poles from South Meadows Road to Marcy Dam; replace with on-ground cable as prescribed by APSLMP, 1987.	24,000
5. Reconstruct Ouluska Brook footbridge.	12,000
6. Rehabilitate 5 miles of Cold River Horse Trail system.	15,000
7. Fund contractual trail rehabilitation projects:	
a. Ampersand Mountain	6,000
b. Mt. Colden	3,000
c. Avalanche Pass	2,000
d. Panther Gorge	2,000
e. Shorey Cut-off	2,000
8. Fund ATIS projects.	6,000
9. Fund volunteer assisted projects.	8,000
10. Support summit steward program and co-sponsor alpine vegetation restoration projects with outside partners.	6,000
11. Support information and education programs.	6,000
12. Request voluntary trail closures during wet weather.	-0-

13.	Maintain 20 miles of boundary lines.	10,000
14.	Annual routine maintenance of facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, privies, litter removal, bridges, signs, etc.	130,000
15.	Lime Owl Pond if meets criteria.	3,000
16.	Lime Little Ampersand Pond.	2,700
17.	Lime Upper Wallface Pond - if meets criteria.	3,000
18.	Reclaim Palmer Pond - if warranted.	5,000
19.	Assess mandatory registration program in eastern zone.	-0-

**(Year Two)**

## SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION YEAR THREE

ACTIVITY	COST
1. Support information and education programs.	\$ 8,000
2. Support summit steward program and co-sponsor alpine vegetation restoration projects with outside partners.	-0-
3. Fund contractual trail rehabilitation projects:	
a. Ampersand Mountain	6,000
b. Shorey Cut-Off	3,000
c. Range Trail (Wolf Jaws)	3,000
d. Maintain past work	3,000
4. Fund volunteer assisted projects.	6,000
5. Fund ATIS projects.	6,000
6. Rehabilitate 5 miles of Cold River Horse Trail system.	15,000
7. Annual routine maintenance of facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, signs, bridges, pit privies, litter removal, etc.	135,000
8. Maintain 20 miles of boundary lines.	10,000
9. Reclaim Corner Pond - if barrier dam site present on ESF property.	10,000
10. Reclaim Brueyer Ponds.	3,000
11. Complete designated campsite program for South Meadows to Flowed Lands Corridor; sign conforming sites, construct new campsites, close and rehabilitate worn and/or illegal campsites.	10,000
12. Monitor and assess campsite conditions across the entire unit - all zones; select samples in each zone.	5,000
13. Evaluate plan effectiveness to date - comprehensive review.	-0-

## SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION

### YEAR FOUR

ACTIVITY	COST
1. Support information and education programs.	\$ 8,000
2. Support summit steward program and co-sponsor alpine vegetation restoration projects with outside partners.	7,000
3. Fund contractual trail rehabilitation projects: a. Range Trail (Wolf Jaws) b. Range Trail (Haystack) c. Indian Pass Trail d. Maintain past work	2,000 3,000 2,000 3,000
4. Fund volunteer assisted projects.	8,000
5. Fund ATIS projects.	6,000
6. Rehabilitate 5 miles of Cold River Horse Trail system.	15,000
7. Annual routine maintenance of facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, signs, bridges, pit privies, litter removal, etc.	140,000
8. Maintain 20 miles of boundary lines.	10,000
9. Reclaim Latham Pond - if surveys warrant	2,500
10. Reclaim Little Pine Pond - if barrier possible.	1,000

## SCHEDULE OF IMPLEMENTATION YEAR FIVE

ACTIVITY	COST
1. Support information and education programs.	\$ 8,000
2. Evaluate need for camping permits based on assessments of campsites conditions and visitor crowding.	-0-
3. Fund contractual trail rehabilitation projects:	
a. Range Trail (Haystack)	6,000
b. Indian Pass Trail	3,000
c. Northville-Placid Trail	4,000
d. Maintain past work	3,000
4. Fund volunteer assisted projects.	8,000
5. Fund ATIS projects.	6,000
6. Support summit steward program and co-sponsor alpine vegetation restoration projects with outside partners.	7,000
7. Annual routine maintenance of interior facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, signs, bridges, pit privies, litter removal etc.	145,000
8. Maintain 20 miles of boundary lines.	10,000
9. Reclaim Upper Cascade Lake - if surveys warrant.	20,000
10. Evaluate plan effectiveness to date - comprehensive review, begin preparation for 5 year revisions of UMP.	-0-

## **PLAN REVIEW AND EVALUATION**

The final plan provides a review mechanism to evaluate the effectiveness of current wilderness management programs and to improve future ones. Unit management plans must be sensitive to change and kept current and relevant. DEC's Region 5 inter-disciplinary task force will conduct annual reviews of the plan to:

1. Document completed management actions and adjust work schedules for the following year(s) if necessary.
2. Monitor resource and sociological conditions to determine if plan objectives are consistent with the APSLMP, 1987.
3. Recommend new or modified management actions if needed.
4. Determine if the plan needs to be revised.
5. If revisions are warranted, specific proposals will be available for public review and comment, and APSLMP, 1987 scrutiny before implementation.
6. Make annual reports to the Adirondack Park Agency and DEC's Forest Preserve Advisory Committee on the status and implementation progress of this unit management plan.

Ordinarily unit management plans are revised every five years after their initial approval (APSLMP, 1972). However as noted above, a plan may be revised sooner when the management actions prescribed no longer meet wilderness management objectives or when a change in the existing situation warrants a new approach. For example, if alpine conditions continue to show deterioration, the effectiveness of the management actions to preserve and/or enhance them will require re-evaluation and corrective action. Other key indicators, such as trail conditions, camping locations, encounters with other users and/or conflicts with wildlife will be monitored annually.

Continued minor impacts may be managed by slight variations in public information and education programs and/or law enforcement or may require an amendment to the plan. Any material modification in the unit management plan must be in accordance with the same procedures called for in the APSLMP as if a new unit management plan was being prepared (APSLMP, 1987).

## **PART III**

### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSEQUENCES AND MITIGATION**

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The environmental consequences of each proposed action and its accompanying range of alternatives are described below. Reference is made to the final plan for detailed analysis.

#### **GEOLOGY**

Selection of one alternative over another will have little or no effect on HPWC geology.

#### **SOILS**

All proposals are intended to protect soils regardless of location. Trampling is having a major impact on fragile alpine soils and is expected to continue without use controls and greater emphasis on information and education. Once the soil crust is broken, wind and water erosion take place and vegetation is lost. Biotic species are adversely impacted as soil is lost. Programs such as reducing group size (less concentrated trampling), closure and rehabilitation of impacted campsites, improved trail maintenance, better drainage control, restoration of alpine summits, moving campsites away from riparian areas, prohibiting or restricting campfire use, and greater emphasis on minimum impact use are expected to lessen impacts on soils.

#### **VEGETATION**

With no management actions, rising visitation will continue to result in loss of native vegetation. The final plan proposes to protect vegetation by greater emphasis on soil protection, limiting size of groups (especially day use groups) to reduce trampling, and reduce damage due to firewood collecting and burning of vegetation for kindling and fuel. The latter issue is important because dead and down wood provide habitat for smaller animal species, stabilizes soil, and returns nutrients to the soil as it decays.

## **RARE, THREATENED, AND ENDANGERED PLANTS AND ANIMALS**

While species in this category are protected by law, uncontrolled growth in wilderness users may cause major impacts; especially through loss of habitat. Preferred actions to keep disturbances to the minimum include limiting the number of campers, leashing domestic pets, and relocation of campsites and trails away from sensitive areas. If visitor use interferes with any of these species, certain areas or activities may be closed to public use to avoid endangering these populations.

## **WILDLIFE AND FISH**

Under the No Action Alternative, wildlife will continue to be impacted by loss of habitat; especially in the eastern High Peaks. Wildlife will continue to be displaced from critical habitats such as riparian areas due to rising numbers of humans. Conflicts with bears are expected rise as humans bring more food into the wilderness. The final plan proposes to reduce impacts by designating campsites in areas away from critical wildlife habitats. Pets are a major impacting agent of wildlife and the draft plan requires that they be leashed at all times. Information and education programs will emphasize greater sensitivity to wildlife and a concerted effort is planned to reduce conflicts with bears.

Fish management proposals include liming of ponds impacted by acid rain and reclamation efforts to restore native species in area waters. Both of these activities are addressed by separate EIS: liming (1990) and reclamation (1980). All plan proposals adhere to Policy Guidelines for Fishery Management in Wilderness, Primitive, and Canoe Areas as approved by Commissioner Thomas C. Jorling, 1991.

## **WATER AND RIPARIAN RESOURCES**

The importance of High Peaks waters makes the No Action Alternative unacceptable. Unless there is a change in policy people will continue to camp too close to water and human wastes will cause increasing levels of fecal coliform in water. In addition, dish detergents, shampoos, insect repellents, suntan lotions, etc. will pollute aquatic ecosystems. The final plan proposes to mitigate these impacts and improve water quality by relocating trails, campsites, lean-tos, pit privies to proper setbacks as required by the APSLMP, 1987, improved trail maintenance to

reduce soil runoff into local streams, and greater information and education and LEAVE-NO-TRACE messages directed to proper human waste disposal.

## **AIR QUALITY AND VISUAL QUALITY**

Under any alternative, threats to air quality will remain the same since most area impacts are caused by external sources far removed from the Adirondacks. Heavy smoke from campfires in the Lake Colden basin coupled with temperature inversions, can be eliminated by banning all open fires in narrow valleys and confined camping areas.

Visual quality can be improved by limiting or removing the extent of man-made facilities in the wilderness. Signs will be reduced in size and number to the minimum necessary to protect resources and human safety. Scenic vistas will not be cut nor improved so that natural processes may operate as prescribed by wilderness policy.

## **SOCIOECONOMIC RESOURCES**

Tourism to the High Peaks, as with most Forest Preserve lands contributes significantly to local and regional economies. Emphasis is placed on providing a high quality wilderness visitor experience. Under the list of proposed actions, zoning and limiting the number of campers in the eastern High Peaks will affect the number of wilderness users during peak seasons (spring, summer, and fall). Grocery expenditures might slightly decrease, while lodging and restaurant expenditures might increase since visitors are encouraged to shift from overnight camping in the wilderness to more day use activities and are exposed to opportunities on adjoining state lands. Any negative economic effect is anticipated to be negligible since the final plan provides for sustained use, not unrestrained future growth and recommends visitors use lesser visited wilderness areas and wild forest areas in the region. The final plan's information and education proposals suggest providing information to potential visitors on these alternative areas in conjunction with local businesses, chambers of commerce, and the Adirondack Tourism Council.

## **VISITOR EXPERIENCE AND USE**

Limited studies suggest visitors to the High Peaks highly value scenic views, clean air and water. However; greater numbers of visitors are now favoring more opportunities for solitude and less crowding. Our visitors tolerate crowds well near trailheads, but expect to encounter less people as they move to the interior. Under the No Action Alternative, visitation will increase and the visitor's experience in the wilderness will continue to degrade due to crowding, noise, trampling, loss of vegetation and soils, and increasing human waste.

The final plan addresses these issues by zoning, designating and spacing campsites, and limiting group size. Visitor freedom of movement will be somewhat constrained, but plan goals to protect natural resources and ensure visitor's have a quality wilderness experience will be sustained. In the case of camping permits, an advanced reservation system will ensure access to an area if a reservation is obtained. Other people may be frustrated if they do not plan in advance, or the area they wish to visit is full after they arrive. The draft plan recommends camping permits be required 12 months of the year, but other options to consider include: permits only during the snow-free season May through October, and/or a weekend permit during peak use seasons.

Regarding facilities, there are recommendations to reduce man-made facilities to the minimum number necessary to protect resources and safeguard visitors. All designated trails will be maintained and some will have minor relocations. Some visitors have objected to intense levels of maintenance on some trails. The final plan establishes a trail classification system with varying levels of maintenance appropriate to use.

Sections of the final plan are devoted to management of the so-called "trailless peaks" - peaks without maintained trails. In these un-trailed zones, where resources continue to degrade, designated trails may be established on these routes. This will limit visitor freedom, but will afford greater resource protection.

Certain areas of the eastern High Peaks and along Long Lake and the Raquette River have been impacted by campfires. In some of these areas, open campfires will be banned to reduce impact and improve air quality. Those preferring the atmosphere created by burning wood will be impacted. Zoning will address this issue by identifying where fires can be used and cannot. Visitors will be encouraged to use camp stoves in lieu of campfires for cooking to reduce impact. These alternatives will reduce impacts to natural resources, but may be less appealing to many visitors.

## **SOLITUDE**

The APSLMP, 1987 requires that DEC provide opportunities to experience wilderness solitude. Increases in visitation are seen to be contrary to this mandate. The final plan identifies numerous actions to enhance opportunities for solitude through zoning, reducing party size, spacing and designating campsites, creating advance reservation systems and distributing permits. Visitors who prefer unlimited access may be impacted. However, since the final plan does not limit day use it is predicted there will be significantly reduced opportunities to experience solitude unless visitors change zones to the more remote parts of the wilderness, such as the western High Peaks.

## **VISITOR SERVICE FACILITY (VSF)**

Based on recommendations of the High Peaks CAC (1992) the final plan outlines the purpose and need of a High Peaks Visitor Service Facility to establish a greater on-site presence to administer the HPWC near its main gateway(s) to the High Peaks. As visitation rises, the lack of an on-DEC permanent presence has become more noticeable in terms of DEC's ability to communicate with the public it serves. Much of this communication void has been assumed by the private sector to disperse High Peaks information to which DEC has little or no control on its quality and content.

Conceptually the VSF, as noted in previous sections, will include the following: a modest information center with restrooms, handicap access, potable water, ranger office, search and rescue equipment storage, telephone service, and seasonal staffing to assist visitors.

The final plan calls for this facility to be built near intersection of the Adirondak Loj and South Meadows Roads. This site, located within 500 of the wilderness boundary, coupled with a proposed 100 car parking lot, will require the clearing of approximately 2 acres of land and the removal of several hundred trees, minor excavating and filling, and the installation of a sewage disposal system. A separate EIS will be prepared for this facility that is more site specific to the project before any construction is contemplated.

## **DUCK HOLE DAMS**

Duck Hole Pond (61 acres) is maintained by two small rock and wood crib dams, both have sustained extensive ice damage and require replacement if the pond

is to maintained at its present water level. The dams are remotely located 6.9 miles inside the wilderness boundary and accessible only by foot trails. Under the No Action Alternative, these dams would be allowed to deteriorate naturally and let the water set its own level. No decision has been reached to replace the dams pending an environmental assessment and engineering cost-benefit study as required by SEQR . The final plan requests a safety inspection of the dams and a study be conducted in YEAR ONE . The APSLMP, 1987 permits the retention and replacement of existing dams in wilderness.

## **MITIGATION MEASURES**

To "mitigate" means to make something less severe or to alleviate a harsh or hostile condition. The overall goal of the final plan is to ensure that environmental and social impacts will be reduced to the maximum extent practicable as required by the APSLMP, 1987 to preserve and maintain wilderness resources. Sections VIII and XI of the final plan describe specific management objectives, policies, practices to mitigate adverse impact and improve the overall quality of visitor experience.

Primary mitigation measures listed in the final plan include the following: improved trail maintenance to protect soils and vegetation, rehabilitation of severely impacted leanto sites and campsites, designation of campsites, restoration and protection of native plants and animals, reduction of man-made facilities to the minimum number necessary for resource protection and visitor safety, protection of waters, limiting group size to reduce physical impacts, noise, and crowding. There is also greater emphasis on information and education to foster minimum impact use and monitoring to detect unacceptable changes in the wilderness resource before they become significant.

## **PART IV**

### **IRREVERSIBLE AND IRRETRIEVABLE COMMITMENTS OF RESOURCES**

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With the exception of the proposed visitor service facility, and a proposed 100 car parking lot, at the intersection of the Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads, there are no known irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources resulting from activities as proposed in the final plan.

Construction of a visitor service facility and attendant parking areas could cause significant environmental impact. This proposal will require tree cutting, removal of vegetation, exposure of mineral soil, the addition of fill materials, and the installation of a sewage disposal system on approximately 2 acres of land less than 500 feet from the wilderness boundary. These actions will permanently alter the site. The APSLMP, 1987 allows for the development of new facilities to control use, such as parking lots within 500 feet of wilderness boundaries.

## **PART V**

### **GROWTH INDUCING ASPECTS**

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It is anticipated that implementation of the proposals presented in the draft plan will not significantly affect the growth of towns in the planning area nor the Adirondack region. The draft plan acknowledges current and sustained levels of public use, but will limit unrestrained future growth in visitation in order to preserve natural resources and afford a high quality wilderness experience for visitors. A primary goal of the final plan is to make this area last unimpaired for future generations.

## **PART VI**

### **EFFECTS OF THE USE AND CONSERVATION OF ENERGY SOURCES**

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This SEQR consideration is not applicable to the final plan. It is anticipated that the implementation of any proposed action will not affect the use and conservation of energy resources.

## **PART VII**

### **COORDINATION WITH THE PLANS AND POLICIES OF OTHERS**

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The unit management planning process, where applicable, incorporates, complements, and responds to local, county, state, and other planning efforts. This is a necessary requirement to minimize conflicts between plans.

Preparation of the final plan has been coordinated with the Adirondack Park Agency, Olympic Regional Development Authority, recommendations provided by the High Peaks Citizens' Advisory Committee of 1992, the draft Route 73 Scenic Corridor Plan (1998) under the auspices of the NYS Department of Transportation, the final unit management plan for the Olympic Sports Complex at Mount Van Hoevenberg (1999), DEC's pending draft Adirondack Forest Preserve Use and Information Plan, and local towns adjoining the High Peaks Wilderness Complex.

DEC also reviewed the Heart Lake Property Master Plan (1992) of the Adirondack Mountain Club. This property adjoins and is surrounded by the High Peaks Wilderness on three sides. It contains the largest and most visited trailhead leading into the wilderness. DEC records indicate more than 46,000 visitors passed through the Loj trailhead on to the adjoining wilderness in 1998.

## **PART VIII**

## **RESPONSE TO PUBLIC COMMENTS**

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The APSLMP, 1987 and SEQR require DEC to provide opportunities for review and comment on draft unit management plans by the public and other interested parties and that public meeting or public hearing will be convened as appropriate for that purpose. DEC held five public meetings and established a 30-day public comment window following the release of the draft plan in December of 1994. Meetings were held in November of 1995 at Avon (greater Rochester area), Lake Placid, Long Island City, New York, and Schenectady. In addition to oral comments received at the public meetings, more than 500 pages of written comments were received. All audio tapes and documents received during the public comment period are available for public inspection and review at DEC's Region 5 Headquarters, P.O. Box 296 - Route 296, Brook, NY 12977, telephone (518) 897-1276.

A summary of the major questions raised by the public and the DEC response to each is provided below.

**! *Please explain the relationship between the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and the DEC regarding management of the High Peaks Wilderness.***

The state legislature in 1972, with the passage of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, established a two-tiered structure regarding management of state lands in the Adirondack Park. The APA is responsible for long-range planning and the establishment of basic policy for state lands in the Park, in consultation with DEC. Via the APSLMP, 1987, APA has the legal authority to establish general guidelines and criteria for the management of state lands, subject to the approval of the Governor. On the other hand, DEC has the responsibility for the administration and management of state lands under its jurisdiction in the Park to be in compliance with the guidelines and criteria laid down in the APSLMP, 1987.

**! *The draft plan makes no recommendations to change the APSLMP, 1987 regarding the removal of non-conforming use and structures and/or a change in classification.***

In accordance with administrative and management responsibilities, DEC is charged with the responsibility to prepare, in consultation with APA, individual unit management plans for the units of land classified in the APSLMP, 1987. The unit management plans must conform to the guidelines and criteria set forth in the APSLMP, 1987 and cannot amend the APSLMP, 1987 itself.

Any change in guidelines, criteria, and classification in the APSLMP, 1987 must be effectuated in the same manner as the APSLMP, 1987 was initially adopted independent of the unit management plan process. Major reviews of the APSLMP, 1987 are periodically conducted by APA, in consultation with DEC and other interested state agencies, as required by statute. Opportunities for public input are afforded and final approval must be made by the Governor.

- ! ***Why does the draft plan propose a ban on camping above 4,000 feet and further requires camping be at only designated sites between 3,500 and 4,000 feet in elevation?***

Camping above 4,000 feet will be prohibited at all times. This action is required by the APSLMP, 1987 to protect sensitive alpine environments, especially when the summits are wind blown free of snow. The APSLMP, 1987 also requires DEC to designate all campsites between 3,500 and 4,000 feet and prohibit any at-large camping outside of the designated sites. Both measures acknowledge the fact that sensitivity to recreational impacts increases with elevation.

- ! ***Why are there no provisions in the draft plan to cut summit vegetation to improve scenic vistas?***

In keeping with the APSLMP, 1987's definition of wilderness and in keeping with wilderness policy which allows natural process of succession to operate freely in wilderness, there will be no cutting of summit vegetation on HPWC summits for this purpose.

- ! ***Several persons advocated DEC construct bear-proof food storage lockers and/or erect permanent cables across trees to hang food in designated camping areas.***

These do not conform to APSLMP, 1987 wilderness criteria and guidelines. DEC will continue to provide education and information and LEAVE-NO-TRACE messages to reduce bear/people conflicts, especially regarding feeding of bears, storage of food and toiletries, and campsite cleanliness.

- ! ***Many comments addressed the high cost of search and rescue operations and recommended DEC charge for such activities.***

Charging for rescues is matter of state-wide policy and cannot be resolved by an individual management plan. The final plan does acknowledge the high cost of search and rescue and recommends safety precautions be added to all education and information materials and messages. DEC personnel will communicate backcountry safety practices to visitors to prevent rescues.

Greater emphasis will be placed on rescue prevention, greater visitor preparedness and awareness and user responsibility.

! ***Why are special events and contests not permitted in the High Peaks Wilderness?***

Such events and contests, often involving large groups, are not compatible with APSLMP direction to preserve natural conditions and solitude. Requests for special events and contests are not wilderness dependent and are referred to the Park's one million acres of designated wilderness areas that are capable of sustaining a higher degree of recreation use.

! ***Several comments were received regarding the level of law enforcement in the High Peaks wilderness. Some persons advocated a high level of law enforcement, others requested a lower presence.***

DEC's preferred actions are to promote greater visitor education and information to reduce violations and improve visitor behavior and understanding of department of rules and regulations. If indirect management techniques do achieve desired results to reduce violations, the final plan calls for more restrictive measures to be at the lowest level of law enforcement necessary to achieve compliance with wilderness objectives.

! ***Numerous persons asked DEC to assume a greater role in wilderness education and information.***

DEC agrees. The final plan recommends DEC develop a wilderness education and information strategy that uses a combination of techniques to provide good visitor information, at the right time, to the right audience, by reputable sources. This includes measures to educate the public through pre-trip planning, emphasis to reduce environmental and social impacts through LEAVE-NO-TRACE messages, and greater coordination and partnerships with outside groups, organizations, private business, regional tourism councils, chambers of commerce, and other interested parties.

! ***Greater commitment is needed to adequately maintain all HPWC trails, including the western High Peaks horse trails.***

DEC concurs with this statement. The final plan outlines a strategy to provide a trail system that offers a range of wilderness recreation opportunities in a manner that keeps physical and visual trail impacts to a minimum.

A trails classification and standards system is proposed for all trail maintenance activities. Under this system, all developed trails will be maintained, relocated, or reconstructed to specific standards.

The final plan also advocates greater use of contractors, partnerships, and volunteers to help maintain trails.

- ! Several issues were raised regarding the use of the so-called trailless peaks. The latter do not have DEC designated and maintained trails to their summits.**

Due to increasing use and impact to these summits, DEC is working cooperatively with the Adirondack 46'ers to designate the most environmentally suitable routes to these summits and close and rehabilitate less desirable routes. Designated routes will be assigned Class II status, a marked foot path under the trails classification system. When this is achieved on each mountain, Adirondack 46'ers summit registration canisters will be removed to comply with the APSLMP, 1987 and the ECL. The APSLMP, 1987 views the canisters as non-conforming and the ECL prohibits the retention of private permanent structures on state land.

- ! Campsite spacing standards specified in the draft plan are too severe and will reduce overall camping.**

Campsite spacing standards are prescribed by the APSLMP, 1987 to improve natural conditions, protect water and visual qualities, and foster solitude. The final plan proposes that all High Peaks campsites and lean-tos, and potential camping areas be inventoried and evaluated. This study will be used to identify and designate campsites that comply with APSLMP, 1987 requirements. Campsites and potential campsites will be selected on both the physical criteria and sight and sound criteria of the APSLMP, 1987.

- ! Does the final plan require the removal of all lean-tos?**

The APSLMP, 1987 allows lean-tos in wilderness with exception of a few specified locations. The final plan schedules the removal of only those lean-tos specifically required by the APSLMP, 1987, the Rivers Act, and those that cannot be relocated to required 100 foot setbacks from water, or ¼ mile from their present location to meet standards. All lean-tos will be inventoried and evaluated on a case by case basis as to whether they should be maintained in replaced, relocated, or eliminated. These decisions will include APSLMP, 1987 criteria (same as for campsites), distance from water, roads/or trailheads, and other criteria as listed in the final plan.

***! The draft plan called for a prohibition on the use of cellular telephones in the wilderness. Will this be retained in the final plan?***

No. This proposal was eliminated from the draft plan. The majority of public comments requested DEC to use information and education to foster responsible cellular telephone use rather than use direct means to control use of these devices. This recommendation was accepted and incorporated in the final plan.

***! Why is DEC reducing the maximum overnight group size to eight persons per party and why is there a maximum of day use limit set at 15 persons per party?***

These recommendations are retained in the final plan. The APSLMP, 1987 requires that all campsites have no more than eight persons per site in wilderness. The DEC will comply with this requirement by reducing overnight group sizes from the current level of 12 persons per site to eight persons per site over a three year period commencing in YEAR ONE of the plan. This change in policy will apply only to the eastern and western High Peaks zones. Along the Adirondack Canoe Route zone, that portion along Long Lake and Raquette River, the current overnight maximum group size will remain at 12 persons (DEC policy, 1995) since the entire 90 mile canoe route passes between several wilderness and wild forest areas.

A maximum day use limit of 15 persons per party is prescribed for the eastern and western High Peaks to reduce environmental and social impacts. No maximum day use was set for the Adirondack Canoe Route pending an assessment of the entire 90 mile route.

***! A majority of comments were directed at a draft plan proposal to require a camping permit in the eastern High Peaks zone at all times of the year.***

This proposal was deleted from the final plan in response to public comment requesting alternative means to manage camping. Instead DEC will collect better visitor camping information and develop a designated campsite plan for the South Meadows - Flowed Lands Corridor and elevations between 3,500 feet and 4,000 feet.. This will include an inventory and evaluation of campsites and potential campsites in these areas. Campsites and potential campsites meeting APSLMP, 1987 criteria will be designated by sign. Visitors will be required to camp at or near designated sites and no at-large camping will be permitted inside the corridor.

If monitoring and evaluation shows this program ineffective in YEAR THREE, DEC may take appropriate actions through education, rehabilitation, site closures, limitations on overnight parking, and may ultimately convene a public working group to develop the structure and implementation process for a permit system. The latter would be applied as a last resort, when and if, less direct means failed to meet objectives.

- ! *The draft plan recommended the construction of a 100 vehicle parking facility to be built at the intersection of the Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads. Many comments centered on the appropriateness of this facility and its proposed 100 vehicle capacity.***

The APSLMP, 1987 of 1987 recommends appropriate parking facilities be provided within 500 feet of the wilderness boundary at the above location in anticipation of closure of the South Meadows Road to motor vehicles, but does not specify a parking lot capacity.

The HP CAC in 1992 reviewed this proposal and recommended the parking lot size be consistent with the 50 vehicle capacity of two off-road parking lots found near the end of the road. DEC reviewed this proposal in 1993 and in 1996, and following the public comment period, recommended parking capacity be increased to 100 vehicles. This number was derived from the total capacity of two aforementioned parking lots plus an additional 50 vehicles that routinely park along the sides of South Meadows Road.

- ! *The topic that received the most comments is the proposed closure of the South Meadows Road as required by the APSLMP, 1987.***

The South Meadows Road is a Town of North Elba gravel surfaced road that penetrates and ends at a small cul-de-sac 1.0 miles inside the wilderness boundary. It provides no access to private property; it begins and ends on state land. The APSLMP, 1987 lists the road as a non-conforming use and requires DEC, by its authority under section 212 of the NYS Highway law, to close the road to motorized use. The APSLMP, 1987 also requires DEC to establish a peripheral control system for the Adirondack Loj/South Meadows corridor promptly since this area is the heaviest used gateway to the High Peaks.

The final plan acknowledges these tasks and recommends they be completed in a cooperative effort with full concurrence of all affected parties: the DEC, Adirondack Mountain Club, and the Town of North Elba. All preferred actions must be planned in advance and done sequentially, working from interior wilderness locations outward to the wilderness boundary, in order to bring this area into compliance with the APSLMP, 1987.

In order of occurrence, these steps include:

- (1) Development of a comprehensive campsite designation plan for the South Meadows to Flowed Lands Corridor. This is necessary to determine an overnight campsite capacity for this important travel corridor.
- (2) Construction of a new 100 vehicles parking facility near the intersection of Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads.
- (3) Erection of a DEC Visitor Service Facility at the above location.
- (4) A voluntary commitment by the Adirondack Mountain Club to hold their parking capacity to 200 vehicles.
- (5) Creation and enforcement of Town of North Elba "No Parking" zones along Adirondack Loj and South Meadows Roads to ensure safe traffic flow.
- (6) Closure of the South Meadows Road to motor vehicles after all the above actions have been implemented and further discussions are completed with Town of North Elba.

## **PART IX**

### **SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS AND REFERENCES**

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**Adirondack Mountain Club. Heart Lake Property Master Plan. Lake George, NY., 1992.**

**Adirondack Park Agency. Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), Ray Brook, NY. editions of 1972, 1979, and 1987.**

**Hendee, John C.; Stankey, George H. and Lucas, Robert C. Wilderness Management - 2nd edition. International Wilderness Leadership Foundation. Golden, CO., 1990.**

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**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Organizational and Delegation Memorandum #91-31: Fishery Management in Wilderness, Primitive, and Canoe Areas, signed by Commission Thomas C. Jorling. Albany, NY., 1991.**

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Division of Regulatory Affairs. The SEQR Handbook. Albany, NY., 1992.**

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation. Region 5 - Office of Natural Resources. Draft High Peaks Wilderness Complex Unit Management Plan. Ray Brook, NY. , 1994.**

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation, Region 5 - Office of Natural Resources. Final High Peaks Wilderness Complex Unit Management Plan. Ray Brook, NY., 1999.**

**Olympic Regional Development Authority, Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the Olympic Sports complex at Mount Van Hoevenberg. ORDA, Lake Placid, NY., 1999.**

**Route 73 Steering Committee ( Towns of Elizabethtown, Keene, North Elba, and North Hudson with NYS - APA, DEC, DOT, and ORDA). Route 73 Scenic Corridor Plan. Ray Brook, NY., 1998.**

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**Van Valkenburg, Norman J. Unit Planning for Wilderness Management. The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks. Schenectady, NY., 1987.**

# APPENDICES

HIGH PEAKS VISITATION 1983 - 1998\*

<u>YEAR</u>	<u>NUMBER OF VISITORS</u>
1998	139,663
1997	136,393
1996	132,421
1995	131,110
1994	123,092
1993	114,067
1992	109,412
1991	100,751
1990	93,233
1989	89,647
1988	83,983
1987	84,774
1986	78,779
1985	67,354
1984	63,405
1983	57,016

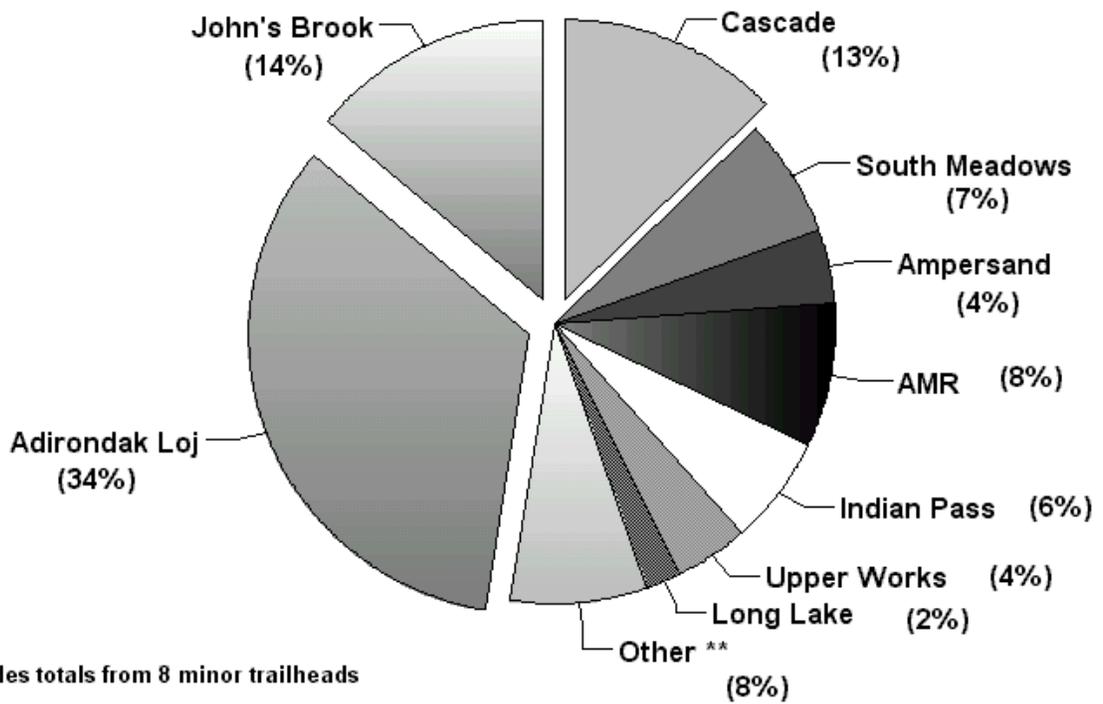
\* Source - trailhead registrations

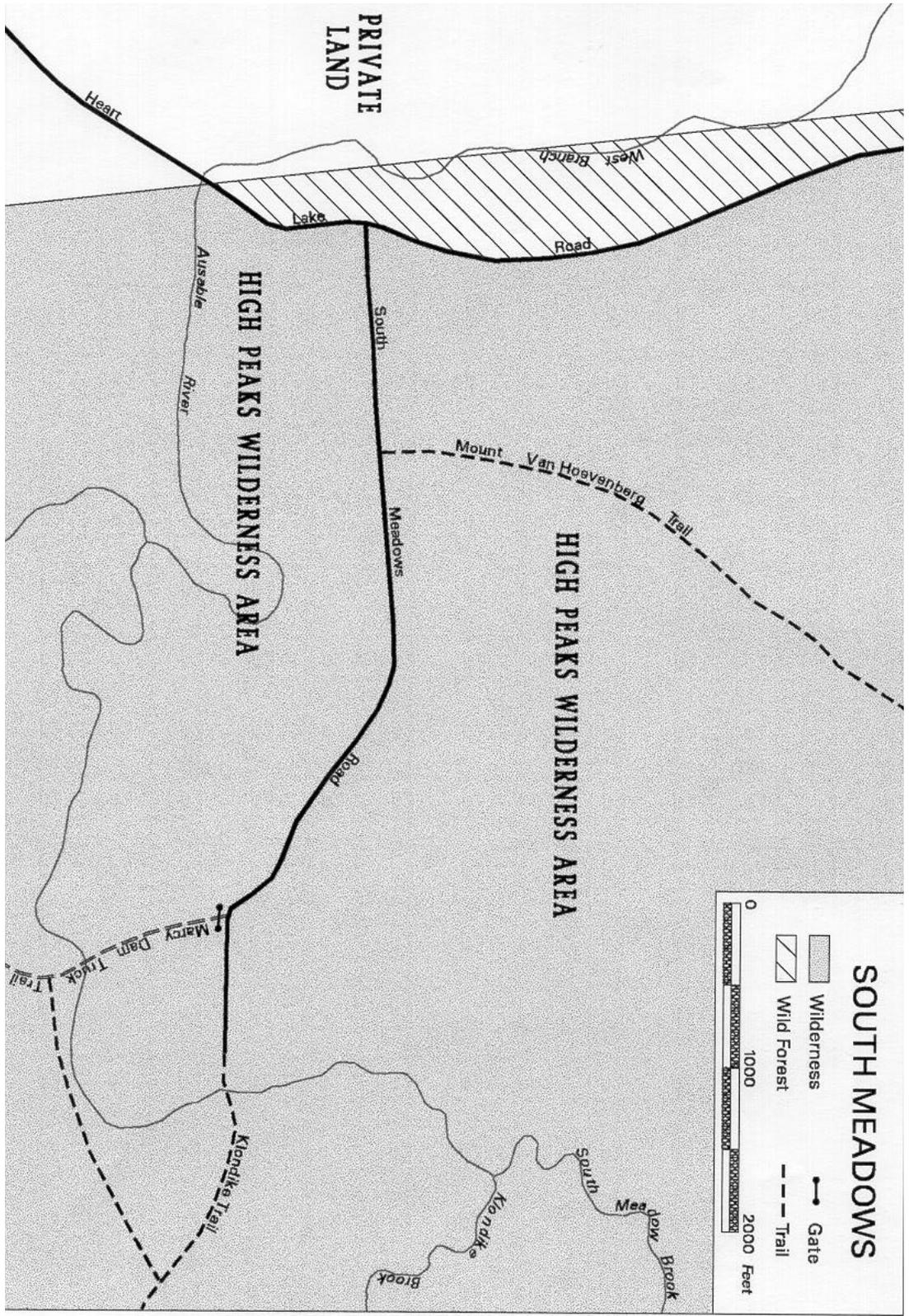
### Visitor Use By Trailhead

TRAILHEAD	NUMBER OF VISITORS REGISTERED	
	1988	1998
Adirondak Loj (#1)	30,289	44,327
Adirondak Loj (#2)	1,533	2,222
Indian Pass	4,713	8,884
South Meadows & Klondike	4,492	9,745
Johns Brook	11,101	19,680
Cascade	6,045	17,893
AMR - High Peaks	***804	11,755
Long Lake Boat Launch	2,414	1,973
Northville-Placid Trail - Long Lake	1,002	1,096
Northville-Placid Trail - Averyville	1,462	1,018
Santanoni Preserve (Moose Pond)	632	1,134
Elk Lake - High Peaks	135	1,285
Upper Works	3,635	6,050
East River	797	1,207
Bradley Pond	867	1,046
Ampersand	5,135	6,084
Stony Creek	1,537	1,923
Seward (Blueberry)	1,072	2,341
TOTAL	77,665	139,663

\*\*\*Data Incomplete

## 1998 VISITOR USE BY TRAILHEAD High Peaks Wilderness Area





## ACRONYMS

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<b>ADA</b>	American with Disabilities Act
<b>ADK</b>	Adirondack Mountain Club
<b>AFR</b>	Assistant Forest Ranger
<b>ALSC</b>	Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation
<b>AMR</b>	Adirondack Mountain Reserve, the Ausable Club
<b>ANC</b>	Acid neutralizing capacity
<b>APA</b>	Adirondack Park Agency
<b>APLUDP</b>	Adirondack Park Land Use Development Plan
<b>APSLMP</b>	Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan
<b>ARTC</b>	Adirondack Regional Tourism Council
<b>ATV</b>	All terrain vehicle
<b>ATIS</b>	Adirondack Trail Improvement Society
<b>BP</b>	Before Present
<b>CAC</b>	Citizens' Advisory Committee
<b>DEC</b>	Department of Environmental Conservation
<b>DMU</b>	Deer Management Unit
<b>DOC</b>	Department of Corrections
<b>DOT</b>	Department of Transportation
<b>ECL</b>	Environmental Conservation Law
<b>EIS</b>	Environmental Impact Statement
<b>EPA</b>	Environmental Protection Act of 1993
<b>EQBA</b>	Environmental Quality Bond Act
<b>ESF</b>	College of Environmental Science and Forestry
<b>FAA</b>	Federal Aviation Administration
<b>FEIS</b>	Final Environmental Impact Statement
<b>FR</b>	Forest Ranger
<b>HPW</b>	High Peaks Wilderness
<b>HPWC</b>	High Peaks Wilderness Complex
<b>JBL</b>	Johns Brook Lodge
<b>LAC</b>	Limits of Acceptable Change
<b>MNR</b>	Ministry of Natural Resources
<b>NBWI</b>	Native-But-Widely-Introduced
<b>NHPC</b>	Natural Heritage Plant Community
<b>NOAA</b>	National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
<b>NPS</b>	National Park Service
<b>NYCRR</b>	New York Code of Rules and Regulations
<b>NYS</b>	New York State

<b>ONT</b>	Ontario
<b>ORDA</b>	Olympic Regional Development Authority
<b>OSP</b>	Open Space Plan
<b>PPM</b>	Bureau of Forest Preserve, Protection, and Management
<b>SEQRA</b>	State Environmental Quality Review Act
<b>SUNY</b>	State University of New York
<b>TNC</b>	The Nature Conservancy
<b>UFAS</b>	Uniform Accessibility Standards
<b>USGS</b>	United States Geological Survey
<b>UMP</b>	Unit Management Plan
<b>USFS</b>	United States Forest Service
<b>VERP</b>	Visitor Experience and Resource Protection
<b>VSF</b>	Visitor Service Facility
<b>WMU</b>	Wildlife Management Unit

# PLAN PARTICIPANTS

## PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

Opportunities for the public to document concerns and identify planning issues were presented in the spring of 1990, through a mailing requested by DEC Commissioner Thomas Jorling for participation in developing a unit management plan for the HPWC. Ultimately, a public 25 member public Task Force was selected by the commissioner from the interested public. The Task Force, later renamed the High Peaks Citizens' Advisory Committee represented various organizations, local governments, and individuals in monitoring the planning process, identifying and assessing issues, making recommendations, and reviewing preliminary draft material.

In addition to attending committee meetings, individual members participated on various occasions in conducting inventories and with monitoring wilderness conditions. The time, effort, and patience contributed by the members has been greatly appreciated. Members of the CAC and the interests they represented are listed below:

### **High Peaks Citizens Advisory Committee, 1990-1992**

James C. Dawson,	Chair, Professor of Environmental Science, State University of New York Plattsburgh, New York
Jules Comeau	Adirondack 46'ers
Charlotte Demerutis	the Wildlife Society - NY Chapter
Mark Dollard	Association of Adirondack Scout Camps
William Endicott	Adirondack Conservation Council
John Fontana	Cold River Ranch
David Gibson	The Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
Tony Goodwin	Adirondack Trail Improvement Society and guidebook author
Roger Gray	Sierra Club - Atlantic Chapter
Harold Heald	Town of Keene

Richard Hunkiff	Town of North Elba
Don Jones	Jones Outfitters
E. H. Ketchledge	Educator, Forest Ecologist
Jack LeNoble	Saranac Lake Fish and Game Club (resigned November, 1991)
Raymond Masters	Town of Newcomb
Barbara McMartin	Interested citizen and guidebook author
David Nettles	American Fisheries Society - NY Chapter
Dan Plumley	(1990-91) The Adirondack Council
Michael DiNunzio	(1991-92) The Adirondack Council
Kathy Regan	Adirondack Nature Conservancy
Robert J. Ringler	Adirondack Mountain Club
James D. Rogers	Trout Unlimited
Gail Rogers-Rice	(1990) Town of Harrietstown
Roy Rosenbarker	(1991-92) Town of Harrietstown
John Siau	Interested Citizen
Wesley Suhr	Society of American Foresters, NY Chapter
George Turk	Essex County Federation of Fish and Game Clubs

## STATE INVOLVEMENT

### Adirondack Park Agency

Charles Scrafford  
Planning

Supervisor of Regional

### NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation

#### James Papero - Project Leader

\* Member of the Region 5 Task Force

Kurt Armstrong*	Senior Wildlife Biologist; Ray Brook
Bruce Barnard	Senior Forester; Ray Brook
Clyde Black	Forest Ranger I; Tupper Lake
John Chambers	Forest Ranger I; Minerva
Bruce Coon	Forest Ranger I; Long Lake
Brian Dubay	Interior Caretaker; Lake Colden
John English	Associate Forester; Northville
Richard Fenton	Associate Forester; Albany
Brian Finlayson*	Cartographic Technician III
Peter Fish*	Forest Ranger I; Keene
James Giglinto	Forest Ranger I; Rainbow Lake
Lt. John Gillen	Forest Ranger II; Zone A
Dave Gray	Senior Forester; Herkimer
Gary Hodgson	Forest Ranger I; Lake Placid
Keith Hollenbeck	Assist. Forest Ranger; High Peaks
Dale Huyck	Bureau of Real Property, retired
Philip Johnstone*	Conservation Operations Supervisor, Interior Maintenance Program
Ken Kogut	Senior Wildlife Biologist
John Kramer	Associate Forester; Canton
Fred LaRow	Forest Ranger I; Keene
Elizabeth Lowe	Citizens' Participation Specialist
Lt. Robert Marone	Forest Ranger II; Zone A
Richard Merritt	Former Interior Caretaker; Lake Colden

Wendy O'Neil	Consultant; Adirondack Forest Preserve Public Use and Information Plan
James Papero*	Senior Forester; Forest Preserve
Richard Preall*	Senior Aquatic Biologist
Michael Sheridan	Interior Caretaker; John's Brook
Michael Vilegi	Interior Caretaker; Marcy Dam
Thomas Wahl*	Regional Forester
Ben Woodward	Interior Caretaker; Raquette Falls

### **SUPPORT SERVICES**

Mary Buckley	Natural Resources; Ray Book
Diana Fortune	Natural Resources; Ray Book
Louise Johnson	Natural Resources; Northville
Gail Stiffy	Natural Resources; Northville
Cindy Trummer	Natural Resources; Ray Brook

## **ZONE DESCRIPTIONS, GUIDELINES AND POLICY**

Acceptable uses of the HPWC can be determined not only by the APSLMP and DEC policies, but also by the specific conditions that are found across the unit. Because of its typical diversity, uses, and resource and social conditions, it would be cumbersome to manage the HPWC under a uniform management prescription. Although some management actions and standards may be applied in an umbrella-like fashion for the entire wilderness, not all sections of the HPWC need to be managed in the same way or intensity so long as the minimum wilderness requirements of the APSLMP are met. The final plan proposes that the HPWC be divided into three management zones to provide a spectrum of resource conditions and recreational opportunist with each zone having different degrees of management.

The three zones are (1) the Adirondack Canoe Route - High Peaks portion which is a 500 foot wide strip of land east of Long Lake and the Raquette River, (2) the eastern High Peaks zone, and (3) the western high Peaks zone. The latter two zones are separated by the height of land immediately west of the Indian Pass Trail.

The resource, social, and managerial conditions defined for each zone were developed from DEC staff input, HPCAC recommendations, examples from other areas, inventory data collected within the HPWC, and input wilderness literature reviews.

### **ADIRONDACK CANOE ROUTE (High Peaks Portion)**

#### **RESOURCE SETTING**

Characterized by a predominantly unmodified natural environment where ecological and natural processes in many locations are substantially affected by users. Environmental impacts are generally quite high near lakeshore and riparian areas. Impacts often persist from year to year and there may be moderate loss of vegetation and soil at some sites. Impacts are readily apparent to most visitors. However, impacts can be substantially reduced through user controls and greater emphasis on education.

## SOCIAL SETTING

Moderate to low opportunities for exploring and experiencing isolation from the sights and sounds of man with the probability of encountering other area users is moderate to high. The user has the opportunity for a high degree of interaction with the natural environment, often with low or moderate challenge and risk. Some parties will camp out of sight and sound of other parties, but this will not be common during July and August.

## MANAGERIAL SETTING

Management will be oriented to sustaining and enhancing the natural environment. There will be frequent opportunity for visitor contact with management personnel. In addition to on-site contacts with DEC personnel, necessary rules and regulations will be communicated to visitors outside of the area. Information concerning wilderness management objectives, avoidance of user conflicts, fire use, and other pertinent subjects will be presented. Formal and informal user education programs will be initiated to inform users about what to expect and how to use the area with minimal impact on the environment. Additional rules and regulations may be necessary to achieve management objectives and permits may be considered only when light-handed, less restrictive measures have failed to achieve desired goals and objectives. Facilities will be kept to the minimum necessary for resource protection and user safety. Facilities, when constructed, will emphasize the use of natural materials. All facilities should harmonize with the natural environment.

## **EASTERN HIGH PEAKS**

### RESOURCE SETTING

Generally characterized by a predominantly unmodified natural environment; however, ecological and natural processes in many locations are substantially affected by the actions of users. Environmental impacts are generally quite high in areas near major entry points, on main trunk trails, at campsites, along stream sides and lakeshore, and on mountain summits. Impacts often persist year to year and there may be moderate to heavy loss of vegetation and soil at some sites. Impacts are readily apparent to most visitors. However, on most

sites impacts can be substantially reduced through user controls and greater emphasis on education.

## SOCIAL SETTING

Moderate to low opportunities for exploring and experiencing isolation from the signs and sounds of man with the probability of encountering other area users moderate to very high. The user has the opportunity for a high degree of interaction with the natural environment, often with low to moderate challenge and risk. Some parties will camp out of sight and sound of each other, but this will not be common during the main-use season, May through October.

## MANAGERIAL SETTING

Management will be oriented to sustaining and enhancing the natural environment. There will be frequent opportunity for visitor contact with management personnel. Necessary rules and regulations will be communicated to visitors before they enter the area as much as possible. Emphasis will be on pre-trip planning and minimum impact hiking and camping once in the wilderness. Formal and informal education programs will be initiated to inform visitors about what to expect and how to use the area safely with minimal impact on the environment and themselves. Additional rules and regulations maybe necessary to achieve wilderness management objectives may be considered only when less restrictive measures have failed to achieve desired goals and objectives. Signs in the interior will be minimally placed to aid in dispersing use and for resource protection purposes. Trails will normally be constructed, maintained and managed to accommodate heavy traffic for the majority of the use season. Some heavily used trails may be closed during wet weather. Trails will be designed and maintained to blend in with the natural features of the area. Facilities and improvements will be limited to those necessary for resource protection, and user safety.

## WESTERN HIGH PEAKS

### RESOURCE SETTING

Characterized as an essentially remote unmodified natural environment where ecological and natural processes only in a few areas are affected by the actions of users. Environmental impacts are low to moderate with many areas along trails, stream crossings, and at campsites showing moderate loss of vegetation and soil. Impacts in some areas often persist from year to year and are apparent to most visitors.

### SOCIAL SETTING

Moderate opportunities for exploring and experiencing isolation from the signs and sounds of man, with low probability of encountering other visitors once in the interior. The user has moderate to high opportunities for experiencing independence, closeness to nature, solitude, and self-reliance through the application of primitive recreational skills. These opportunities occur in a remote natural environment that normally offers a moderate to high degree of challenge and risk. Contact with other visitors both on the trail and at campsites will be low to moderate.

### MANAGERIAL SETTING:

Management will emphasize sustaining the natural environment and preserving a sense of remoteness and solitude. On-site contact with management personnel will be minimal. Necessary rules and regulations will generally be communicated outside the area at trailheads and through written materials. Information concerning protection of site-specific wilderness resources will be presented. Formal and informal user education programs will be initiated to inform users about what to expect and how to use the area safely with minimum impact. Greater education and information efforts need to be directed towards visitors using horses in this zone. Additional rules and regulations may be necessary if monitoring shows that desired goals and objectives are not met. Permits may be considered in the future only when light-handed, less restrictive measures have failed to improve wilderness conditions. A large portion of the area will be set aside as a permanent "trail-less" area to preserve a sense of remoteness and solitude. Existing trails will be maintained to accommodate moderate use for the majority of the snow-free use season. Facilities will be limited to those necessary for the protection of the wilderness resource and the user.