



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

MOOSE RIVER PLAINS WILD FOREST

Amendment

to the

2011 Moose River Plains Wild Forest Unit Management Plan

NYS DEC, DIVISION OF LANDS AND FORESTS

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

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MEMORANDUM

TO: The Record

FROM: Basil Seggos

SUBJECT: Moose River Plains Wild Forest

The Amendment to the 2011 Moose River Plains Wild Forest Unit Management Plan has been completed. The Adirondack Park Agency has found the Amendment to be in conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

The Amendment is consistent with Environmental Conservation Law, and Department Rules, Regulations and Policies and is hereby approved and adopted.



Basil Seggos
Commissioner
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Date: March 29, 2017

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SHERMAN CRAIG
Chairman

TERRY MARTINO
Executive Director

**RESOLUTION
ADOPTED BY THE ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY
WITH RESPECT TO
THE MOOSE RIVER PLAINS WILD FOREST
UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT**

March 9, 2017

WHEREAS, Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act (Executive Law, Article 27), directs the Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) to develop, in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency (Agency), individual management plans for units of land classified in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (Master Plan) and requires the unit management plans to conform to the general guidelines and criteria of the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, in addition to such guidelines and criteria, the Master Plan prescribes the contents of unit management plans and provides that the Agency will determine whether a proposed individual unit management plan conforms with such general guidelines and criteria; and

WHEREAS, the Department has adopted a unit management plan for the Moose River Plains Wild Forest Area in January 2011; the unit includes lands in the Towns of Webb and Ohio in Herkimer County and the Towns of Arietta, Inlet, Long Lake, Lake Pleasant and Morehouse in Hamilton County; and

WHEREAS, the Department has prepared a draft unit management plan amendment for the Moose River Plains Wild Forest (the Plan) dated January, 2017 which proposes an overall framework for mountain biking, trail construction and proposes new or expanded parking opportunities and ADA accessible facilities along Route 28; and

WHEREAS, the Plan contained a commitment to work with groups, individuals and communities to develop a comprehensive mountain bike plan; and

WHEREAS, a comprehensive mountain bike plan was completed in December 2013 and certain trail proposals from the comprehensive plan have been included within this amendment; and

WHEREAS, the Department has declared the Plan to be a type II Action under SEQR and published a notice seeking public comment in the Environmental Notice Bulletin on June 8, 2016; and

WHEREAS, the Department is the lead agency, and the Agency is an involved agency whose staff have been consulted in the preparation of the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Agency is requested to determine whether the Plan dated January, 2017, conforms with the standards and guidelines of the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Agency has reviewed the Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan recognizes the need to improve public use and enjoyment of the area, avoid user conflicts and protect the resources of the area by preventing overuse and directing use to specific areas according to the guidelines and criteria of the Master Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Plan's objectives include providing reasonable public access where appropriate in order to provide improved recreational experiences while minimizing resource impacts.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that pursuant to Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, the Adirondack Park Agency finds the Moose River Plains Wild Forest Unit Management Plan Amendment, dated January, 2017, conforms with the general guidelines and criteria of the Master Plan; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED, that the Adirondack Park Agency authorizes its Executive Director to advise the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation of the Agency's determination in this matter.

AYES: Sherm Craig, Chairman, Chad Dawson, John Ernst, Karen Feldman, Art Lussi, Barbara Rice, William Thomas, Dan Wilt, Brad Austin, Sandi Allen, Bob Stegemann

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENT: None

Table of Contents

- I. Introduction..... 1
- II. Management Actions from 2011 UMP 3
- III. Proposed Management Actions..... 5
 - Mountain Biking..... 6
 - Access for Persons with Disabilities 10
- Appendix A - Response to Public Comment 10
- Appendix B - Comprehensive Mountain Bike Plan (IMBA) 10

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I. Introduction

Background

The Moose River Plains Wild Forest (MRPWF) is located in the Towns of Webb and Ohio in Herkimer County and the Towns of Arietta, Inlet, Long lake, Lake Pleasant and Morehouse in Hamilton County. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the area was completed in January 2011. The 2011 UMP continues to guide the Department of Environmental Conservation's (Department's) management of the MRPWF.

During the draft phase of the 2011 MRPWF UMP, it was stated that "the Department is committed to working with mountain bike groups and/or individuals, local communities and other interested parties to develop a comprehensive mountain bike plan for the MRPWF. This plan will identify an overall framework for mountain biking, trail construction and maintenance and will guide the future of mountain biking on the unit. Following development of the mountain bike plan, the Department will propose an amendment to this UMP to implement the proposals of that plan" (page 148).

To address these concerns, the Department worked with the International Mountain Biking Association (IMBA) as well as local interested parties to develop a comprehensive mountain bike trail plan for the MRPWF area (Appendix A).

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) guidelines for wild forest areas allow all terrain bicycles *"on roads legally open to the public and on state truck trails, foot trails, snowmobile trails and horse trails deemed suitable for such use as specified in individual unit management plans."* 6NYCRR §196.7(e) provides that *"[t]he operation of bicycles is permitted on all roads and trails on Adirondack forest preserve wild forest areas except for those roads and trails posted as closed to bicycle operation."*

The Historic Great Camps Special Management Area (HGCSMA) was designated in the 2011 UMP in recognition of the historic resources affiliated with Camp Sagamore and Camp Uncas. Two of the actions proposed in this amendment—a trail reroute and the re-naming of a trail—fall within the HGCSMA. The Department does not anticipate any impacts to historic resources as a result of these proposals or the additional use of the trails within the HGCSMA that may occur as a result of management proposals elsewhere in the unit.

Purpose of the Amendment

There are four goals of this amendment:

- 1) Address previous actions regarding bicycling from the 2011 UMP;
- 2) Incorporate new proposals that are derived from the comprehensive mountain bike trail plan provided to the Department by IMBA;
- 3) Provide additional opportunities for persons with disabilities; and,

- 4) Address parking issues along Route 28 to accommodate new or expanded improvements.

The following objectives guided the Department during the development of this amendment:

- Improve and expand the user experience while still conforming to Wild Forest guidelines;
- Limit the amount of maintenance needed to keep the trails in the best condition possible through proper trail layout and design of new and relocated trails;
- Improve trail connections between the local communities;
- Provide trails for bicycle riders of all abilities;
- Increase recreational opportunities for persons with disabilities; and,
- Relocate segments of existing trails to better protect natural resources.

II. Management Actions from 2011 UMP

Below is a list of Management Actions from the 2011 UMP pertaining to the use of bicycles, and the current status of each proposal.

- *Initiate a working group consisting of mountain bike users, local governments and other interested parties to develop a comprehensive mountain bike plan for the MRPWF.*

Status: Completed

- *Develop a work plan to build the Bear Pond-Benedict Creek Trail.*

Status: Not completed

- *Develop a work plan to build the Squaw Lake-Beaver Lake Trail.*

Status: Not completed

- *Allow the use of mountain bikes on all open motor vehicle roads within the MRPWF.*

Status: Completed

- *Designate the following existing trails for use by mountain bikes (designation effective upon approval of the 2011 UMP):*

Status: See below

Trail Name	Status
Otter Brook Truck Trail	Completed
Wilson Ridge Road	Completed
Mitchell Ponds Trail/Road	Completed
Rock Dam Trail	Completed
FX Matts Trail	Completed
Bear Pond Trail	Completed
Lost Ponds Trail	Completed
Ice House Ponds Trail	Completed
Helldiver Pond Trail	Completed
Cellar Mountain Road to Cellar Pond	Completed
Wakely Mountain Trail to the first bridge	Completed
Gould Rd	Completed
Beaver Lake Trail	Completed
Indian Lake Rd	Completed
Squaw Lake Trail	Completed
Indian Lake Trail	Completed
Bug Lake Trail	Completed
Black Bear Mountain Trail	Completed
Seventh – Eighth Lake Trail (North Section Only)	Completed
Seventh Lake Mountain Trail	Completed
Mike Norris Trail	Completed
West Mountain Trail	Completed
Beaver Flow Trail	Completed
Sucker Bay Brook Trail	Completed
Browns Tract Inlet Carry Trail	Completed

Third Lake Creek Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Traveling Rock Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Limekiln Lake Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Trails adjacent to Fern Park	<i>Completed</i>

- *Designate the following closed public motor vehicle roads for use by All Terrain Bicycles (“ATBs”): Mohegan Lake Road and Bear Pond Road.*

Status: Completed

- *Designate the new community connector snowmobile trail (Seventh Lake Mountain Trail) for use by ATBs.*

Status: Completed

- *Post signs prohibiting the use of ATBs on the following trails;*

Status: See below

Trail Name	Status
Rocky Mountain Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Black Bear Mountain Ski Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Wakely Mountain Trail (beyond the first bridge)	<i>Completed</i>
Cellar Mountain Rd (beyond Cellar Pond)	<i>Completed</i>
Whites Pond Trail	<i>Completed</i>
Cathedral Pines Trail	<i>Completed</i>

- *If additional problem areas are found in the future, relocate those sections if possible. If relocation is impossible and the situation cannot be mitigated, close those trails for all uses until a solution is found.*

Status: Ongoing

- *Assess old logging roads throughout the unit for future opening for mountain bikes. Amend the UMP if new bike trails are to be designated.*

Status: Completed

III. Proposed Management Actions

Parking

Current Situation

Parking areas are located throughout the unit and allow access to several different areas. The existing parking areas currently support the level of use in the MRPWF area. The Department will continue to maintain the existing parking areas.

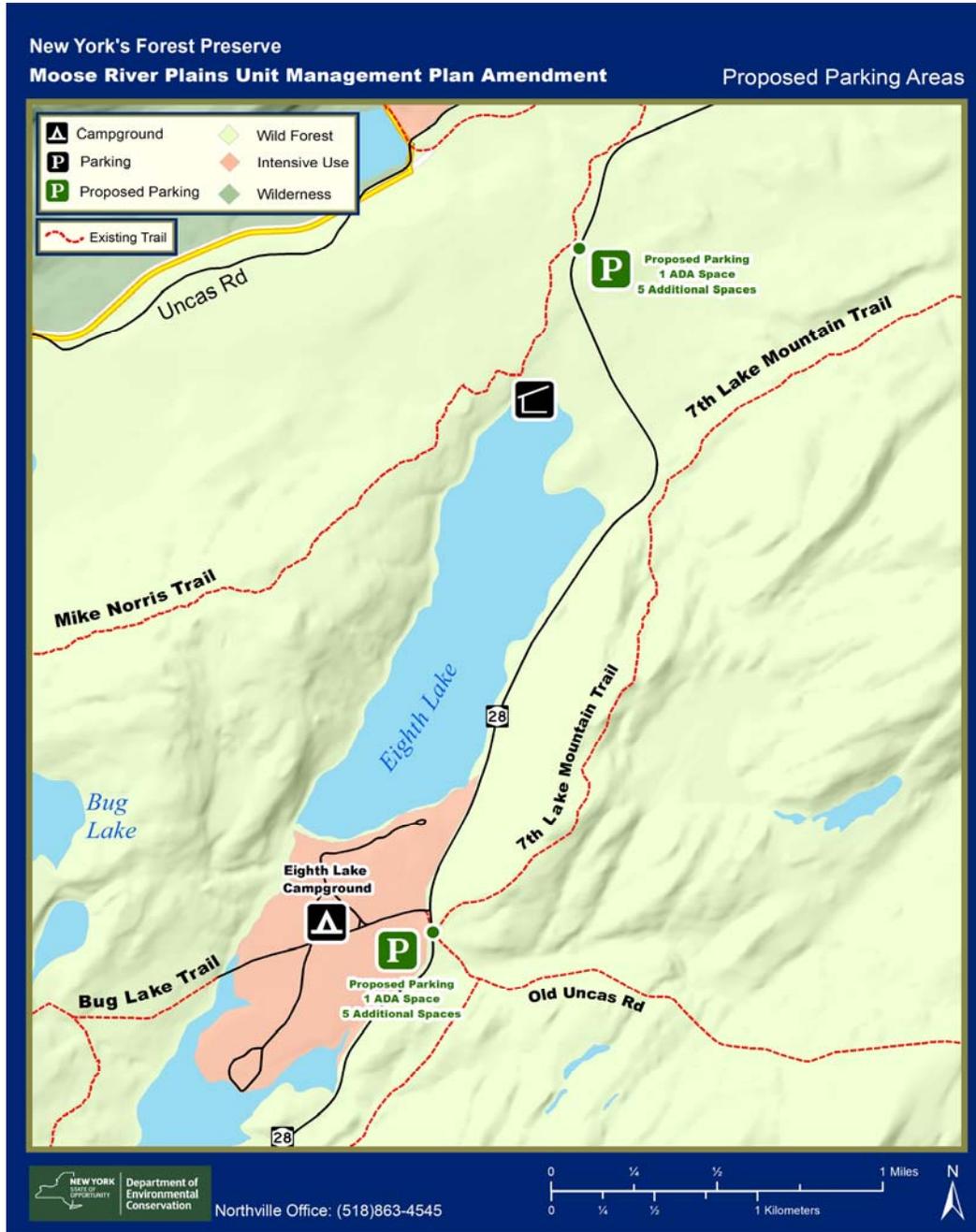


Figure 1: Proposed Parking Areas Route 28

Objective

- Provide sufficient parking to all users and allow for easy access to all trail systems.

Management Actions

- Construct two 5-6 car parking areas (Figure 1). One parking area will be located on the north side of Route 28 at an existing, informal pull off. The second parking area will be located on the south side of Route 28 just south of the entrance to Eighth Lake Campground. Each parking area will include an accessible parking space.
- Install a new trail register / kiosk at each proposed parking area.

Mountain Biking

Current Situation

The MRPWF and the surrounding area currently have an extensive, designated bicycling trail system that uses both motor vehicle roads and other non-motorized “out and back” trails. There are opportunities and challenges with this system, as acknowledged by both local stakeholders and IMBA. The abundance of old and currently maintained motor vehicle roads, such as those in the Moose River Plains Intensive Use Area, provide one type of experience. The Blackfly Challenge is an example of an annual bike event that has been very successful at utilizing these roads. One type of bicycling experience that has not been well developed in the unit is single-track riding. This type of riding occurs on narrower trails that typically wind their way through the forest, often incorporating loop trails. There are currently only a few trails in the unit that offer this type of experience and they have some issues that are addressed in this amendment. The Department has identified an area of interest where additional bicycling opportunities are being proposed, as shown on the map below.

Objectives:

- Expand opportunities for single track riding in the Moose River Plains area.
- Concentrate bicycling to specific areas and monitor the level of use.
- Expand the development of bicycling in the areas adjacent to highly visited areas, such as Eighth Lake Campground and Great Camp Sagamore.
- Connect the trail system to nearby towns and communities (e.g. Inlet & Eagle Bay).

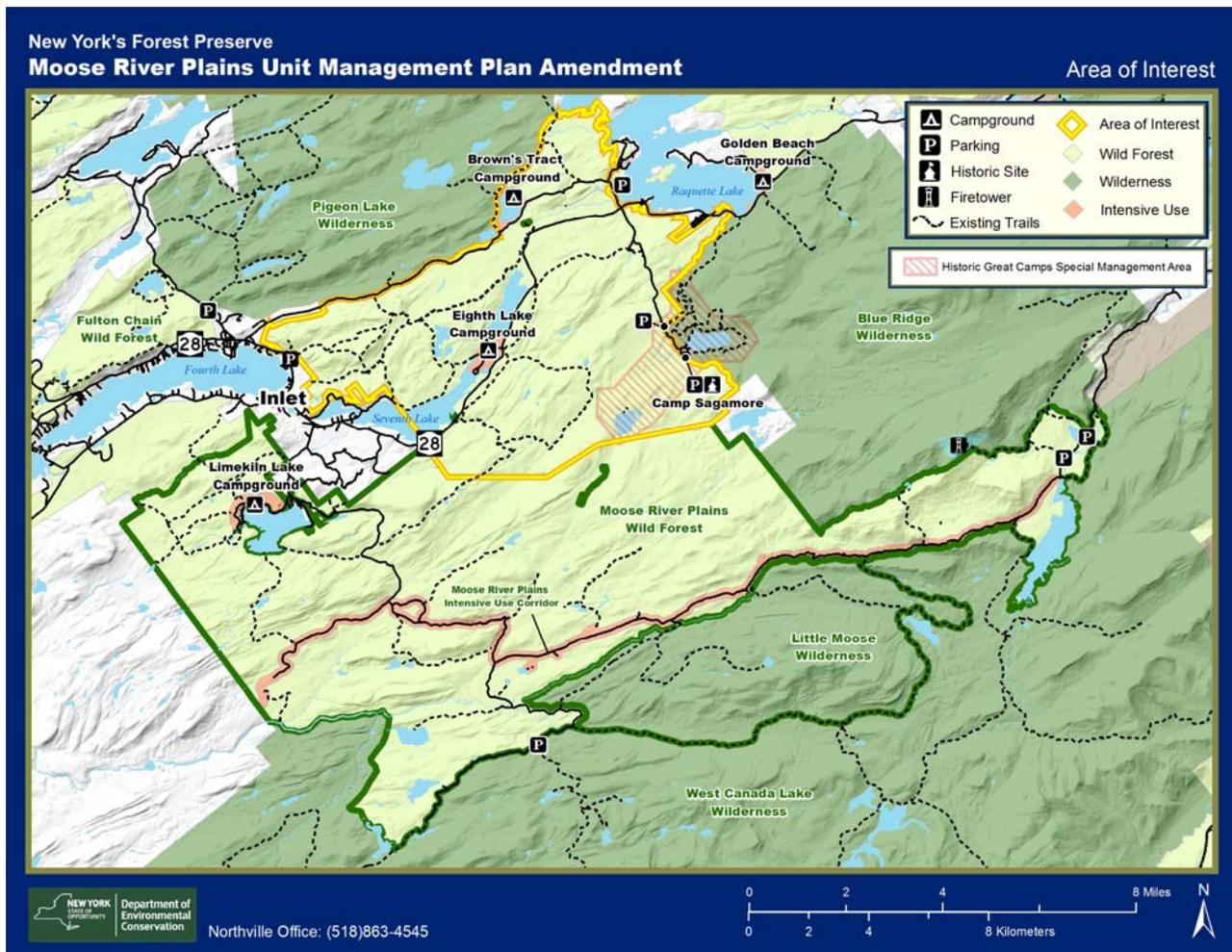


Figure 2: Area of Interest Highlighted in Yellow

Management Actions:

Projects Not Completed or Ongoing in the 2011 UMP

- *Develop a work plan to build the Bear Pond-Benedict Creek Trail*
 - At this time the Department will not pursue development of the Bear Pond-Benedict Creek Trail. The comprehensive mountain bike plan (Appendix A) has identified this trail as suitable for bicycling development, however the Department has decided to focus the development of bicycling trails adjacent to highly visited areas at this time.
- *Develop a work plan to build the Squaw Lake-Beaver Lake Trail*
 - At this time the Department will not pursue development of the Squaw Lake-Beaver Lake Trail. As part of the comprehensive mountain bike plan (Appendix A) that was provided to the Department, IMBA has suggested this trail not be built. Conditions in the area are wet and low with several streams and wetlands present.

Implementation

Phase 1 – Re-Route and address issues on the following existing trails:

- Black Bear Mountain Trail – Re-route and address some low, wet spots
- Bug Lake Trail – Grades too steep in sections
- Old Uncas Trail – Overgrown vegetation and some low, wet spots
- Mohegan Lake Road/Trail - Overgrown vegetation and some low, wet spots
- Beaver Flow Trail – Re-Route the trail out of wet areas and improve bridge over the flow
- West Mountain Trail – Two re-routes
- Sucker Brook Bay Trail – Overgrown vegetation
- Seventh Lake Mountain Trail – Address some low, wet spots and steep sections

Phase 2

- Construct roughly 23 miles of new bicycle trails (trail locations are generally shown on maps)
- Construct 9 miles of trail that will be designed for beginner use
- Construct 14 miles of trail that will be designed for intermediate use

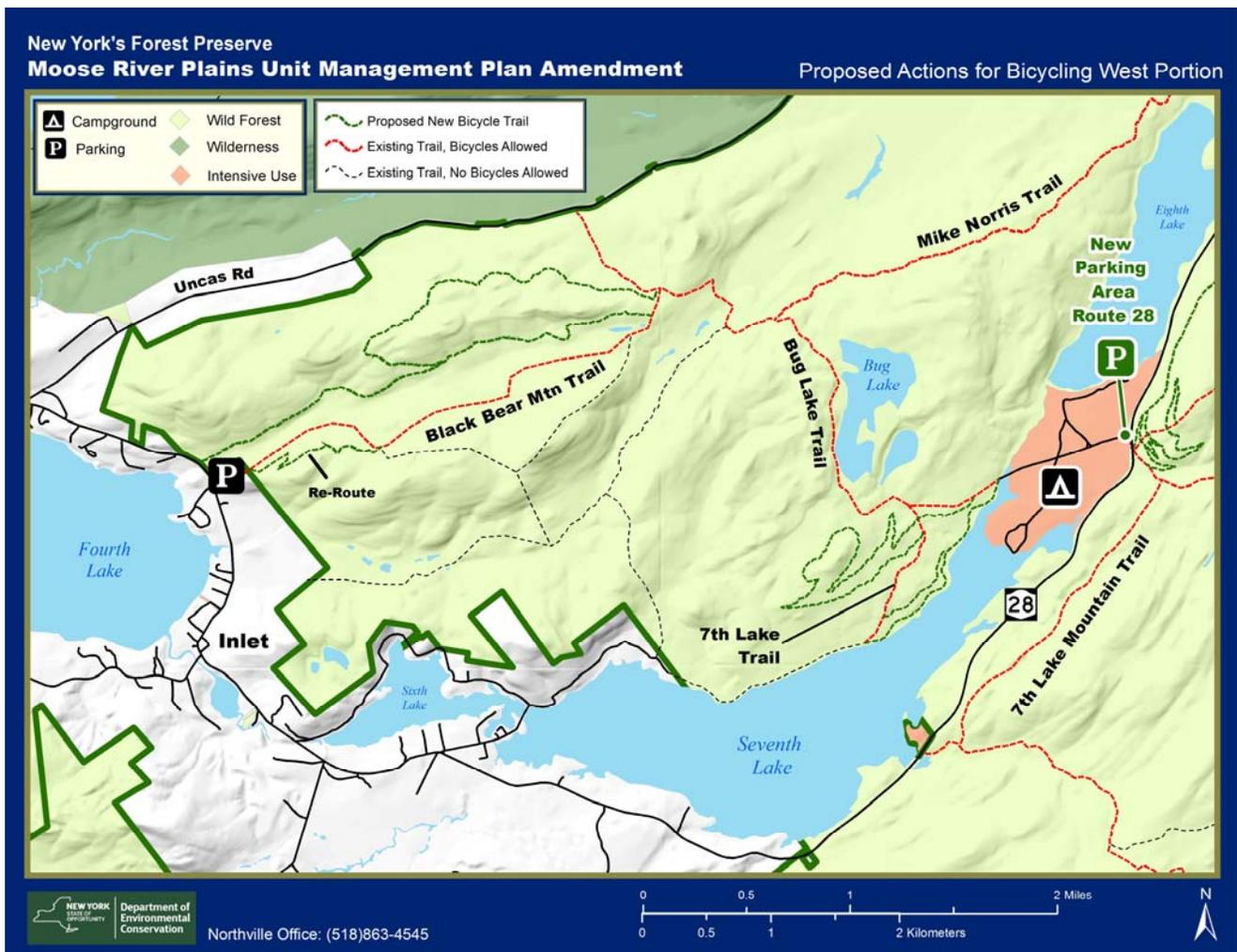


Figure 4: Proposed Bicycle Trails - West Portion

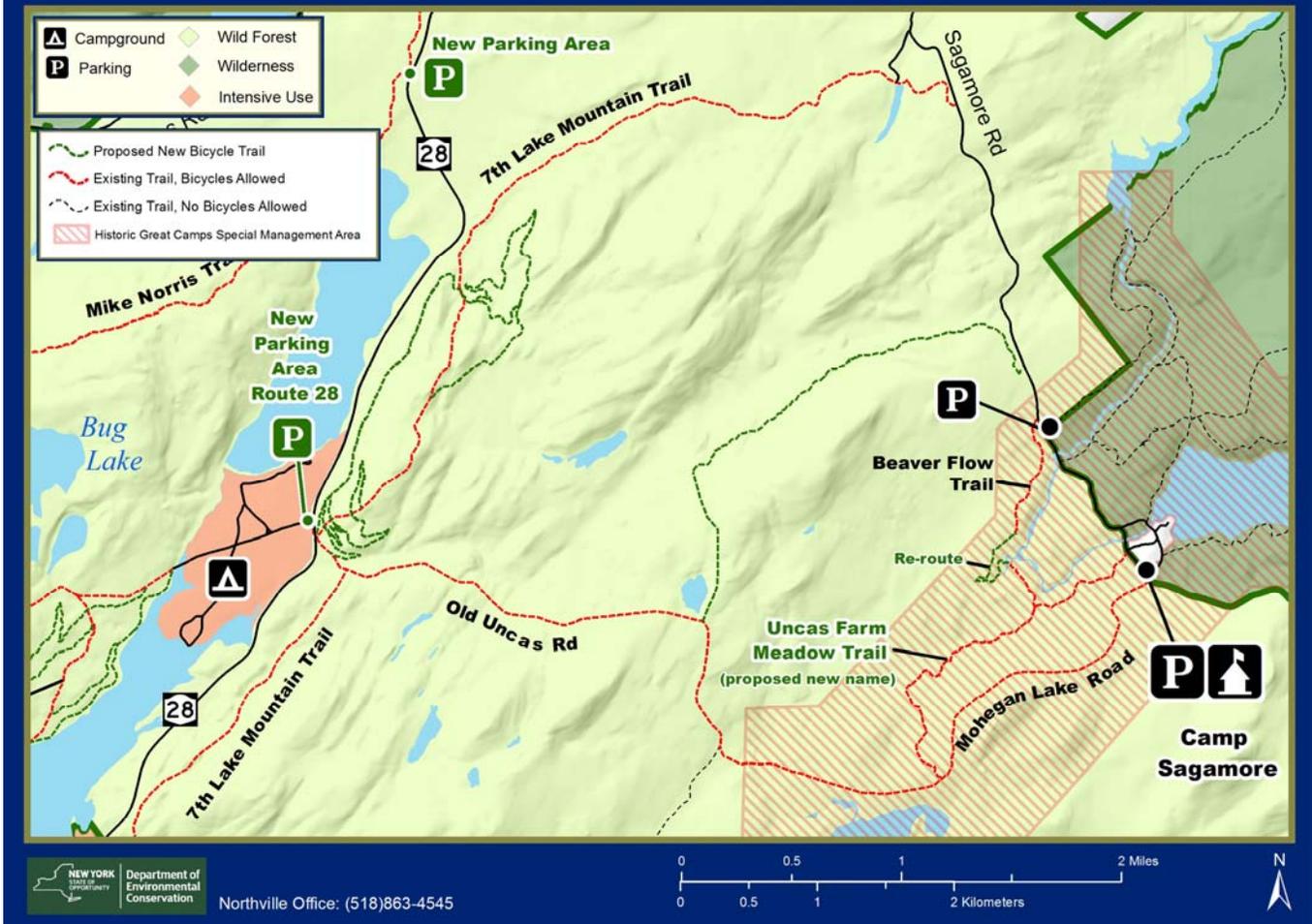


Figure 5: Proposed Bicycle Trails - East Portion

Access to the Proposed Trail Systems through the Eighth Lake Campground

Anyone entering the campground while the facility is open for camping is required to register with the facility supervisor or his/her designated representative, which may include paying any applicable entrance fees.

Access for Persons with Disabilities

Current Situation

In the 2011 UMP there were several areas that were developed for access by persons with disabilities. Most of these are located within the Moose River Plains Intensive Use Area. At this time the Department has identified additional opportunities for access by persons with disabilities that, while not related to bicycling, will be relatively easy to design and implement. As such, the Department would like to move these projects forward at this time rather than waiting for a separate amendment or revision to the UMP.

Objective:

- Expand opportunities for access by persons with disabilities.

Management Actions:

- Modify the Eighth Lake Canoe Carry Trail / Mike Norris Trail and Eighth Lake lean-to and related facilities for persons with disabilities.
- Construct a universal access trail and picnic area east of the new Route 28 parking area.

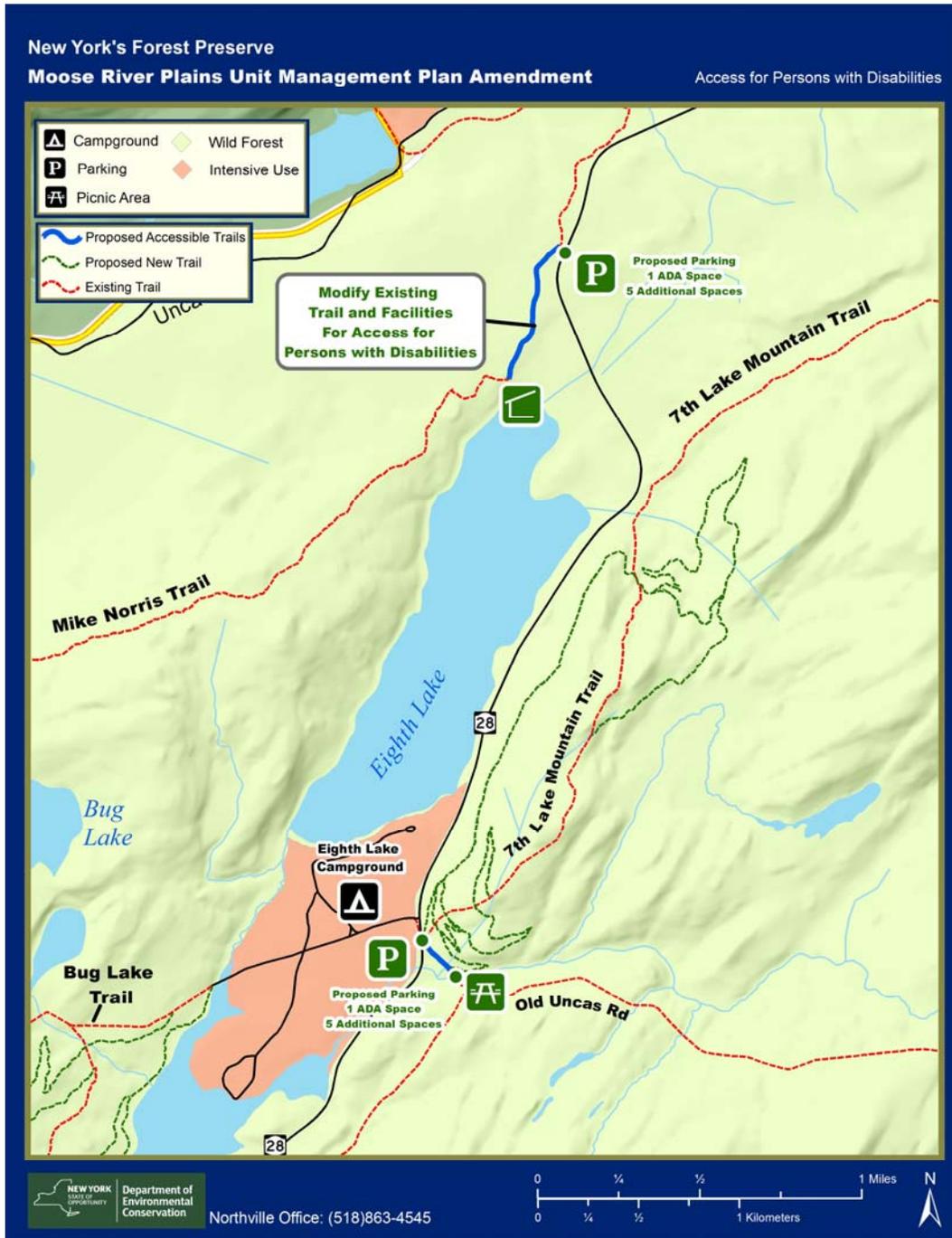


Figure 6: Access for Persons with Disabilities

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Appendix A – Response to Comments

COMMENT: *As far as the MRP area goes, an area that would open up a great opportunity is along the Otter Brook truck trail, particularly if access were allowed on the spur trail that crosses the NP trail and enters the Perkins Clearing easement. Minimal work and improvements are needed to bring the Otter Brook Trail up to the acceptable quality with the rest of the roads in the MRP.*

RESPONSE: As proposed in the 2011 Moose River Plains UMP, a strip of lands classified as wild forest follows the Otter Brook Trail, from the intersection with Indian Lake Road, to Little Moose Lake. The corridor then follows the Wilson Ridge Trail to the Limekiln Lake-Cedar River Road. The sole purpose of the corridor is to maintain an important mountain bike loop that would have been eliminated had the area been reclassified to wilderness. A single-track bike trail will be developed within the 20 foot wide corridor, which follows old roads. Other non-motorized uses on this route may include hiking, skiing and horseback riding.

COMMENT: *Will the plan connect the Squaw to Beaver trail?*

RESPONSE: At this time the Department will not pursue development of the Squaw Lake-Beaver Lake Trail. As part of the comprehensive mountain bike plan (Appendix B) provided to the Department, IMBA has suggested this trail not be built. Conditions in the area are wet and low with several streams and wetlands present.

COMMENT: *The plan should reestablish the Squaw Lake Parking Area/Trail Head back to the original one at the top of the hill, since the parking area was not improved, nor the new trail cut, in as was previously promised.*

RESPONSE: The new parking lot location was proposed to increase the level of remoteness at Squaw Lake. The alternative trail was originally proposed to provide a direct path from the new parking lot to the lake. Subsequent field analysis has shown the area of the proposed trail is too wet to be sustainable, so the old trail will remain open for access to the lake. The parking area will be expanded to accommodate more vehicles. This work will be completed in conjunction with improvements to Indian Lake Road, which are tentatively set for 2018.

COMMENT: *The added trails should be designed so that they accommodate both minimal impact mountain biking and skiing in the winter.*

RESPONSE: The main objective of this Amendment is to build quality mountain bike trails. All new trails will be designed and located using best management practices and to mountain biking standards. Cross-country skiing will also be allowed on the new trails, but that use will be considered secondary.

COMMENT: *Will trails designated for mountain biking be closed to snowmobiles in the winter?*

RESPONSE: No trails proposed in this plan will be opened to snowmobiling, however mountain biking will continue to be allowed on all of the unit's snowmobile trails and public motor vehicle roads.

COMMENT: *Mountain biking accelerates erosion, creates V-shaped ruts, kills small animals and plants on and next to the trail, and drives wildlife and other trail users out of the area.*

RESPONSE: With properly designed and maintained trails, erosion is minimized and impacts to plants and animals are no greater than with other non-motorized, summer recreational uses (such as hiking). Use of proper trail etiquette, as shown on the sign to the right, ensures that mountain biking can occur with minimal impacts to other users.



COMMENT: *Will the new trails include at least one of the expert trail sections proposed by IMBA to satisfy an even larger cross-section of the mountain biker population?*

RESPONSE: No, there will be no designed expert sections. The roughly 23 miles of proposed trails will be made up of 9 miles of trail designed for beginner use, and 14 miles of trail designed for intermediate use.

COMMENT: *I would like to volunteer my services to assist in the development of the Moose River Plains Mountain Bike Trail System.*

RESPONSE: Working through a Volunteer Stewardship Agreement (VSA) obtained through our regional offices, volunteers are able to donate their time and effort working on DEC-maintained trails.

OTHER COMMENTS:

- These trails are an opportunity to promote the area's communities and their economies (e.g. restaurants and bike shops in Inlet and other nearby areas). They provide a large number of riders from Syracuse, Utica, and Albany day trip opportunities close to home.
- Cycling is a 3 season sport in the area, and providing more and better recreational opportunities will help grow the industry by providing more jobs and economic growth.
- "IMBA would like to show our support of the proposed amendment as we believe that the implementation of this plan, as well as working to improve campground and trail accessibility infrastructure, will be a welcome and significant improvement to the mountain biking experiences currently offered within the Moose River Plains Wild Forest."
- "I have been involved in Mountain Biking in the Moose River Plains Wild Forest and Inlet for over 25 years. In that time I have recognized that there has been a large need for trail improvements and additional trails in the area to support and grow Mountain Biking. I have worked throughout the years with State, Town, IMBA, and private individuals to improve, and promote cycling in our area and the Adirondack Park. Cycling is a 3 season sport in our area, and providing more and better recreational opportunities will help grow the industry providing more jobs and economic growth."

Appendix B – Comprehensive Mountain Bike Plan (IMBA)