Three Lakes Tract Conservation Easement
Draft Recreation Management Plan

June 2022
Three Lakes Tract Location

- The 3,350-acre Three Lakes Tract (TLT) Conservation Easement (CE) is located in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County.

- The tract abuts the Independence River Wild Forest to the north, Big Moose Tract Conservation Easement to the east, Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness to the south, and private land to the west.

- The TLT is named for three waterbodies located on the property – Hitchcock, Grass and Moose Ponds.
Three Lakes Tract CE Acquisition

- In 1990, New York State purchased a conservation easement on the TLT.
- The stated purposes of the conservation easement are:
  1) To preserve, develop and improve natural resources on the property, for mutually compatible purposes of forest management and recreation.
  2) To grant public access and recreation on the property where compatible with forest management activities.
  3) To restrict development and use of the property in the interest of perpetuating forest management activity and recreational activity.
Natural Resource Summary

- Most of the TLT can be described as Laurentian-Acadian Northern Hardwood Forest with interspersed Laurentian-Acadian Swamp Systems, Acadian-Appalachian Montane Spruce-Fir Forest, Laurentian-Acadian Shrub-Herbaceous Wetland Systems, and grassy harvested forest areas in early regeneration.

- Approximately 103.8 acres or 3.1% of the property is covered by waterbodies.

- Approximately 658.7 acres or 19.7% of the property is covered by wetlands (excluding open water).

- No Natural Heritage Program elements of occurrence have been identified in the vicinity of the TLT. No threatened, endangered, or species of special concern or sensitive or unique communities have been identified on the TLT.
Fisheries Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Waterbody</th>
<th>Adirondack Lake Survey Corporation Historic Data</th>
<th>DEC Survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Blue Pond</td>
<td>No species caught</td>
<td>No survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hitchcock Pond</td>
<td>Golden Shiner, Northern Redbelly Dace</td>
<td>2003 Survey: Northern Redbelly Dace. Noted that no trout habitat was present and that pond is shallow and warm. 1965 Survey: indicated Brown Bullhead and Creek Chub.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass Pond</td>
<td>Brown Bullhead</td>
<td>2003 Survey: Brown Bullhead, Northern Redbelly Dace, Pumpkinseed. Noted that no trout habitat was present. Pond is shallow and warm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moose Pond</td>
<td>Brown Bullhead, Pumpkinseed, White Sucker</td>
<td>2003 Survey: Brook Trout, Northern Redbelly Dace, Pumpkinseed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- While the fishery on the Three Lakes Tract is generally believed to be unremarkable, there is a lack of recent survey data.

- Surveys do not indicate threatened, endangered, or species of special concern are present.
Wildlife Summary

- Wildlife species found on the TLT generally include common species of the western and central Adirondack region.

- The following bird species are listed in the second NYS Breeding Bird Atlas as protected endangered, threatened, or species of special concern in New York State and have been identified in survey blocks encompassing the TLT: Cerulean Warbler – Special Concern, Common Loon – Special Concern, Osprey – Special Concern, Sharp-shinned Hawk – Special Concern

- No mammals or species identified by the Herp Atlas as present within the survey block encompassing the TLT are identified as endangered, threatened, or species of special concern in New York State.
Natural Features
Landowner Use and Infrastructure

- **Forest Management**: A stated purpose of the encumbering conservation easement is to manage natural resources on the TLT for purposes of continuing forest management. The landowner currently contracts with a land management company to conduct forestry operations on TLT.

- **Lease Camp**: A single private lease camp is located on the TLT.

- **Roads**: Numerous forest management trails in varying condition exist throughout the TLT. Approximately 5.8 miles of hardened, non-winter roads are located on the property.
Current Infrastructure and Recreation Facilities
Draft Recreation Management Plan Development

- The purpose of a Recreation Management Plan (RMP) is to establish a planned, written management strategy to implement the State's rights and protect property rights of the landowner. RMPs condense applicable laws and regulations, DEC policies, easement-specific conditions, and property-specific information into a single management document. RMPs may be periodically updated or amended, following a similar public planning process as occurs during drafting of the initial RMP.

- Before preparing the draft RMP, the DEC consulted with the landowner, and solicited input from DEC management team members, including Lands and Forests staff, Division of Fish and Wildlife biologists, Division of Operations maintenance staff, and Division of Forest Protection Forest Rangers. The public and stakeholders also had the opportunity to provide input between December 2, 2020 and January 13, 2021.
Summary of Public Recreation Proposals

- Two existing snowmobile trails will be maintained on the property, totaling 4.8 miles.
- Hiking trails will be established connecting McCarty Road in the Independence River Wild Forest to Blue, Hitchcock, Grass and Moose Ponds on the TLT (a total of 4.4 miles of trail on the conservation easement (2.9 miles will follow existing snowmobile trails and the remaining 1.5 miles will involve minimal trail construction, mostly following old skid trails or existing trails used by the lease camp located on the TLT. Additionally, a connector trail up to 0.6 miles may be constructed to the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Area, pending proposals in the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Unit Management Plan revision.
- Primitive camping will be permitted throughout the property. Three primitive campsites will be maintained near Hitchcock, Grass and Moose Ponds, and a campsite meeting Accessible Design standards (firm surfaces, Accessible picnic table, fire pit and pit privy) will be established near Blue Pond. Pending public demand, a lean-to may be constructed near Hitchcock Pond.
- Hunting, Fishing, and Trapping will be permitted throughout the property.
- Paddling will be permitted throughout the property.
- New recreation maps and information will be developed and distributed to the public.
**Implementation of Proposed Public Recreation**

### Phase 1

1. The current Cherry Creek and Three Lakes Snowmobile Trails will continue to be maintained by the DEC.
2. The current kiosk will be maintained at the intersection of Cherry Creek Trail and Three Lakes Trail.
3. Document all current recreation facilities with photos.
4. Develop a map of the Three Lakes Tract to be displayed at the Hitchcock Creek trail register (update as appropriate).
5. Revise the DEC website to provide additional information and an updated map of the TLT (continue to update as appropriate).
6. Document any observed environmental impacts associated with public recreation or other causes in regularly completed conservation easement inspection reports.
7. As resources permit, the Division of Fish and Wildlife will inventory water quality and fisheries on the TLT to inform future management.

### Phase 2

1. Clear, sign and improve all proposed foot trails on the TLT:
   - Hitchcock Creek Trail (install a trail register at the McCarthy Road trailhead)
   - Portions of Cherry Creek and Three Lakes Trails which will serve as part of the foot trail network
   - Spur Trails to Blue, Hitchcock, Grass and Moose Ponds
2. Clear and sign campsites at Hitchcock, Grass and Moose Ponds. Pit privies will be installed at the land manager’s discretion, dependent on use level of each campsite.
3. Construct Blue Pond campsite (Accessible design standards).
4. Complete Universal Trail Assessment Process (UTAP) for Hitchcock Creek Trail and the Blue Pond Spur Trail.
5. Document all new facilities with photos.

### Phase 3

1. Pending public use reaching a sustained threshold of approximately 100 annual registered visitors at the McCarthy Road trailhead, a lean-to meeting Accessible design standards will be constructed at the designated campsite near Hitchcock Pond.
2. Pending the revision of the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness Area UMP to provide a connecting trail, a hiking trail may be constructed across the TLT passing either Hitchcock Pond or Moose Pond
3. Document all new facilities with photos.
Proposed Recreation and Facilities
To Provide Comments on the RMP

Send by Mail:
NYSDEC
Attn: Matthew Nowak
7327 State Route 812
Lowville, NY 13367

Email: r6.ump@dec.ny.gov

Comments must be received by July 1, 2022.