

BROOKFIELD AUTO TOUR GUIDE



Charles E. Baker State Forest

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation



Welcome to the Charles E. Baker State Forest, also known as Madison Reforestation Areas numbers 1 and 4. This continuous unit of state land encompasses 9,414 acres and is one of the largest solid blocks of public lands outside the Catskill and Adirondack forest preserves.

Brookfield Auto Tour Guide

These lands originally were acquired during the early 1930s through the 1929 State Reforestation Law and the 1931 Hewitt Amendment, which provided legislation authorizing the (then) New York State Conservation Department to purchase land for reforestation purposes.

This particular tract is named after one of the five original district foresters, Charles E. Baker, who supervised the land acquisition and planting of millions of trees in the district. The New York State Department of Conservation (DEC), Division of Lands and Forests in Sherburne manages these lands for timber, wildlife and multiple other uses. The purpose of this auto tour is to give the public a better understanding of the natural resources and different management activities found throughout this state reforestation area.

Using the Guide

The tour guide is designed for those who are starting from the Moscow Hill Camping and Assembly Area. The tour will take you along a series of truck trails on a 12-mile section of state lands. Follow the map and look for the numbered stops, each of which is indicated by a sign.

Tour guides also are available at the main entrance to the Charles E. Baker State Forest on Shawler Brook Road, located at the southernmost point on Truck Trail #1. If starting the tour from here, begin at Stop #8 and refer to the map for additional directions.

It is recommended that you drive carefully and be alert for horseback riders, mountain bikers, hikers, logging trucks and wildlife. The majority of the roads on this tour are seasonal truck trails developed and maintained by DEC. They are narrow and generally not plowed during winter months. Please note that there are no services on these roads except for restrooms at the Moscow Hill Camping and Assembly Area.

STOP 1 - Moscow Hill Camping and Assembly Area

The surrounding area is the main staging area for horse and snowmobile riders who use the Brookfield Trail System. This highly acclaimed system offers nearly 130 miles of riding trails throughout state forest land in the Brookfield Management Unit. The Assembly Area was established in the late 1970s to accommodate day and overnight use for both riders and horses. Currently there are 46 sheltered tie stalls, two sheltered stallion pens, a mounting platform for people with disabilities, restrooms, a pavilion, a hand pump and camping sites designed for larger vehicles and trailers.



Directly east of the Assembly Area is the Moscow Hill Camping Area, which is on the original grounds of Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) Camp S-131, established in 1935. The CCC was instrumental in the development of public lands throughout the United States and especially here in Brookfield, where it was partly responsible for creating truck trails, digging water holes, planting trees and making improvements in the hardwood forests.

Today, this area offers 21 sites designed for horse camping in a more private setting than the campsites in the Assembly Area provide. Access to both camping areas is available year-round, but they are used most often during the popular horseback riding season from May 1 through October 31.

Directions to Stop 2: From the Assembly Area, turn to the right and go 0.3 of a mile to Quaker Hill Road. Turn right again and go 1 mile to the intersection of Truck Trail #12. Bear right and look for Stop #2.

STOP 2 - Quaker Hill Cemetery

This area of Brookfield was settled by Quaker families in the early 1800s. It originally was named Moscow and later Delancy after some of the original settlers. The Quakers had a large and active membership known as the "Society of Friends." This society was affiliated with a similar group in Madison, another Quaker settlement northwest of here.

Their meeting house once stood next to the entrance to Truck Trail #12, just behind the cemetery. The cemetery, which is situated on private land, is the final resting place for some of those early settlers. Please be respectful of the property when visiting this stop.



Directions to Stop 3: Bear right from the cemetery along Truck Trail #12 for several hundred feet. Turn right onto Truck Trail #13 and go 0.7 of a mile until you reach Stop #3.

STOP 3 - Brookfield Trail System

On each side of the road you will see a designated horse/snowmobile trail. The one on the north side is a secondary trail connecting to the Carriage Trail, the main trail leading out of the Assembly Area. The trail on the south side leads to the heart of the Brookfield Trail System. Increased trail use has created a need to protect certain sections of trail from erosion or chronic wet conditions. Therefore, many trails have a gravel base that helps to stabilize them. A more detailed map showing all of the numbered horse trails throughout the Brookfield unit is available at the trail register located at the Assembly Area.

Forest Rangers and other DEC staff from Operations and Forestry, all from the Sherburne Office, designed and laid out the Brookfield Trail System in 1966, with construction beginning in 1967. The original plan was for 99 miles of both on-road and off-road trails. Today the system

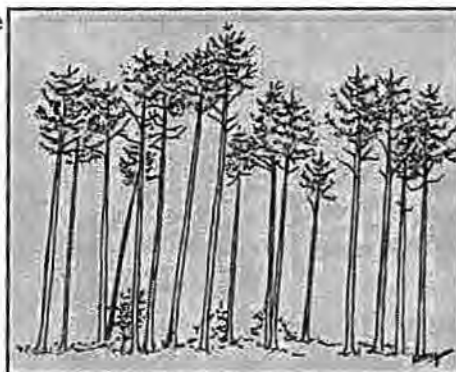


includes approximately 130 miles throughout all five state forests within the Brookfield Management Unit, of which 59 miles are off-road trails. A snowmobile corridor trail also passes through the forest. Each year, the Brookfield Trail System hosts numerous day users and many equestrian events as well.

Directions to Stop 4: Continue west on Truck Trail #13 for 2 miles and look for Stop #4.

STOP 4 - Red Pine Plantations

On each side of the road there is a red pine plantation, both stands of which were planted in 1934 on old pasture land or agricultural fields. These trees grew undisturbed until the 1960s, at which time it was determined that they were overcrowded and needed to be thinned.



A proven method for thinning young plantations was to selectively kill the more undesirable trees--primarily by poisoning or ax girdling them--without removing the trees from the site. In ax girdling, an ax or sharp saw is used to remove a band of bark from a tree, thereby preventing nutrients from passing between the needles and roots, ultimately killing the tree. Reducing competition within a plantation creates better growing conditions for the trees that remain.

Both of the tree stands at this stop were commercially harvested for the first time in the late 1970s, again leaving the majority of bigger, healthier trees to grow. During this harvest, red pine pulpwood and small logs were removed.

The stand behind the sign for Stop #4 was commercially thinned a second time in 1997 using a technique that accommodated larger equipment. Here rows or lanes of pine representing about a third of the growing stock were harvested, and utility poles and saw logs were removed at that time.

The stand across the road received similar treatment in 1999. Log-cabin stock, along with saw-log material, was removed. The long-term goal for these two stands is to convert them to a hardwood forest.

With each thinning, hardwood seedlings are established in new growing spaces. Because red pine does not germinate very well under these conditions, the conversion process will likely take one or two more harvests and two to four decades unless natural disturbances such as wind or ice storms accelerate the process.

**Directions to Stop 5:**

Continue south on Truck Trail #13 to Brown Road. Turn left and then turn right onto Truck Trail #6. Go south to the first bend in the road for Stop #5.

STOP 5 - Early Forest Succession

The process of changing plant communities--when

one group of associated species eventually replaces another--is called "succession." Forest succession can take decades, but plenty of sunlight, nutrients and growing space allow tree species to develop relatively rapidly. Although succession can occur without human intervention, various forest management techniques make it possible to alter the pace of succession by slowing, accelerating or even reversing it to benefit people or wildlife.

The area directly behind the sign for Stop #5 is a young forest that began developing soon after complete removal of the previous red pine stand. In 1977, all mature red pines were harvested, leaving behind some large hardwood trees and a multitude of small seedlings. After all of the overstory trees were removed, full sunlight flooded the forest floor for the first time in many years, triggering new plant and tree growth.

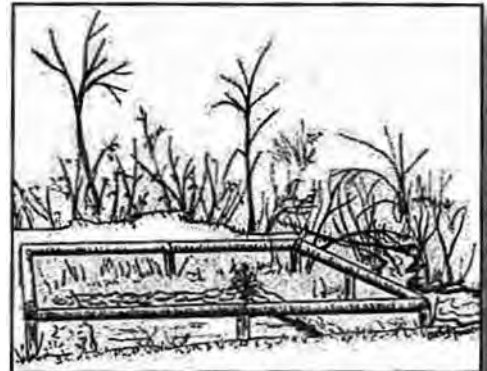
This young forest will experience many changes as it matures. Several common northern hardwoods are growing here, including sugar maple, red maple, American beech, black cherry, white ash and aspen. You also will notice a few red pine and Norway spruce trees that have germinated from the original plantation. These softwood trees add to forest diversity.

Directions to Stop 6: Continue on Truck Trail #6 for 0.7 of a mile to the intersection with Truck Trail #4. Turn right and go 0.2 of a mile to Truck Trail #2 and then turn left. Continue south (downhill) on Truck Trail #2 until you see Stop #6 at the first stream crossing.

STOP 6 - Water Hole

In front of you is a stone water hole developed by the CCC during the 1930s as storage for easily accessible water in the event of a forest fire. These water holes were dug throughout the state's forests and

maintained for fire readiness. The majority of them can be found near stands of pine and spruce, which were thought to be more of a fire hazard during dry conditions due to the accumulation of dead needles and small branches in the understory. To date, though, no large forest fires have been recorded in this management unit.



Immediately to the right of the water hole is a small stream that eventually flows to the Chenango River, several miles from this spot. Further downstream, these waters are noted for supporting both brown trout and native brook trout. Productive trout streams can thrive only with clean, cool waters which usually flow from forested hillsides. The headwaters for several trout streams in the area begin in the Brookfield Management Unit. This water flows through a network of roots and organic matter on the forest floor, where it is absorbed and filtered, helping to keep clean the streams into which it runs.

Directions to Stop 7: Continue on the Truck Trail for another 0.7 of a mile and go past Truck Trail #5. Stop #7 is at the bottom of a hill.

STOP 7 - Aspen Regeneration

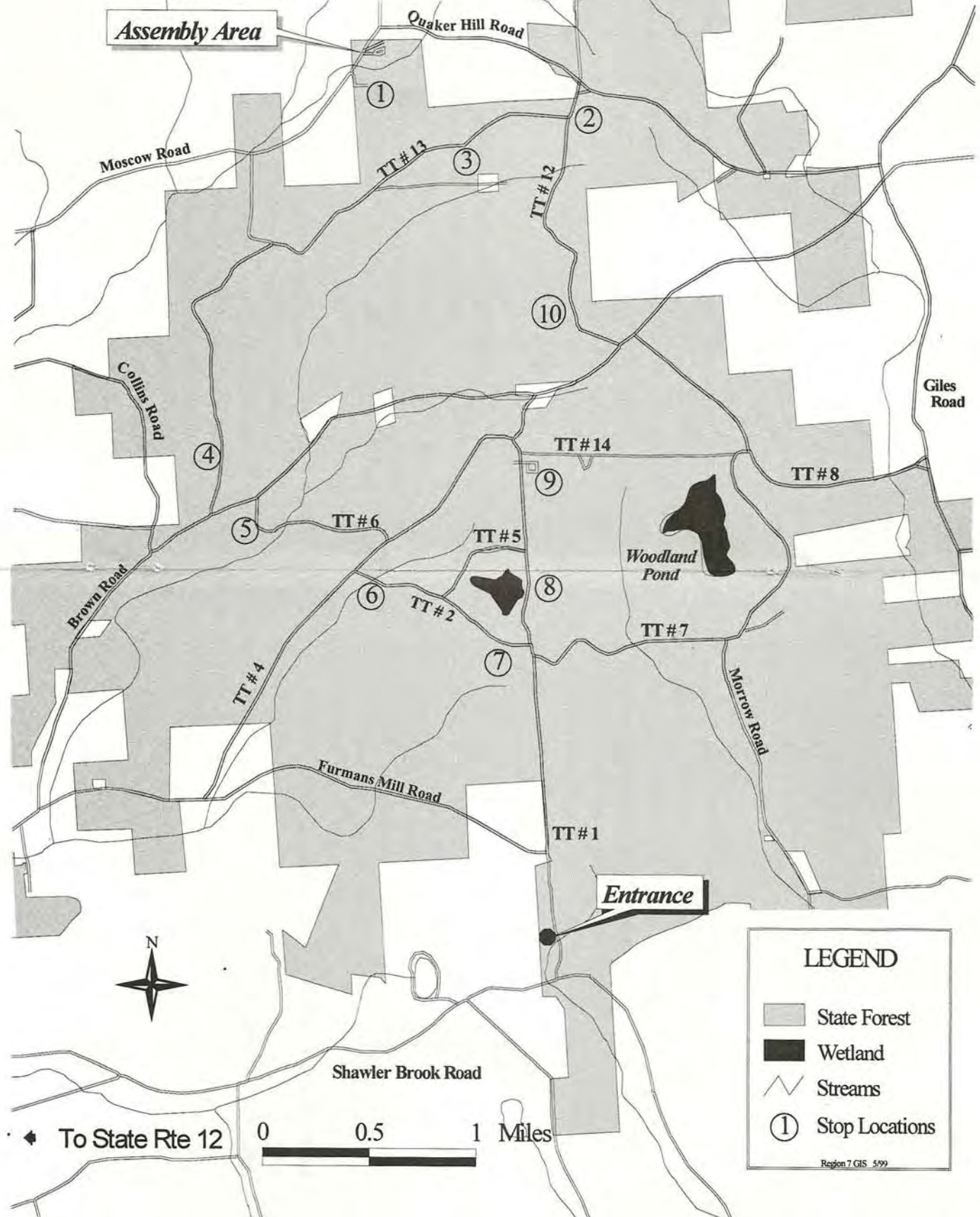
The two-acre open area behind the sign for Stop #7 is one of several aspen regeneration cuts done in 1993 with a grant from the Ruffed Grouse Society. Ruffed grouse broods prefer habitat like the heavy sapling growth you see now, which provides good cover for young birds as they feed on insects in the spring and summer.

By cutting down groves of larger aspen trees during the late fall or winter, the stumps and root systems that remain encourage new growth the following season. Dozens of new trees can grow from a single cut stem. The '93 cut included all trees within a designated zone that then were left on site. As the larger logs rotted, they became drumming sites for male grouse during the spring courtship season. They also became home to a variety of insects that live in or near decaying wood.

BROOKFIELD AUTO TOUR

Charles E. Baker
State Forest

Assembly Area





This forest site is evolving into a mix of mature aspen and other hardwood trees, providing habitat for different wildlife species. When succession again changes the composition of the forest, another cut will be done.

Directions to Stop 8:

Continue on Truck Trail #2

to the junction of Truck Trail #1. Turn left and go approximately 0.3 miles from the intersection to Stop #8.

STOP 8 - Lost Pond

One of the historical landmarks associated with this area is Lost Pond. Although not visible from the road, this small body of water is located only several hundred yards from it, but it is concealed by a tangle of brush and trees. The area is actually in the later stages of wetland succession and is similar to a fresh water bog.

This wetland is a floating "mat" of vegetation made up of moss and acid-loving plants and shrubs, including blueberry, whose root systems are slowly encroaching on the edges of the open water. As organic matter accumulates on this mat, trees sometimes become established, although conditions are not favorable for their development and survival. As the trees' root systems expand, the high water table and lack of mineral soil take a toll. This creates many dead trees or "snags" over time, providing a unique habitat that attracts a variety of wildlife, especially birds.

To obtain a better view of the Lost Pond area, go north for 0.1 miles, turn left onto Truck Trail #5, and go west for 0.3 miles. Look for a small driveway on your left with a path that leads down to the day-use area. Here you will get a better view of the pond and find a picnic table as well.

Directions to Stop 9: Continue north on Truck Trail #1 for 0.6 of a mile and turn right onto Truck Trail #14. This trail is a short cul-de-sac with Stop #9 at the end, approximately 0.3 of a mile in.

STOP 9 - Spruce Plantation/Old Fire Tower Site

Behind the sign for Stop #9 is the site of the old Brookfield Fire Tower, which stood here from 1948 until 1983. Originally the fire tower was on the hilltop east of Chenango Lake but was moved to Brookfield 12 years later. Initially used for wildfire observation, this fire tower became a popular tourist destination, complete with picnic tables, grills, restrooms and a drilled well. At the peak of its popularity, the fire tower received more than 4,000 visitors annually. Along with the fire tower stood a cabin used by wildfire observers, but it was removed in 1977.

With the change to wildfire detection by air, and because of liability concerns about public use of the fire tower, it was auctioned off and dismantled in the mid-1980s. The area now provides facilities for day use during the trail-riding season, but increased vandalism has made maintenance and improvements difficult.

Surrounding most of the old fire tower site are Norway spruce trees planted in 1930. This was one of the first plantings done by the former Conservation Department on state forest lands in the area, even before the start of the CCC. Europe was the original source of Norway spruce seeds, but this species has readily adapted to the climate of central New York. Norway spruce grow well in a variety of soil types and develop a dense canopy which allows little sunlight to reach the forest floor until a harvest or disturbance occurs.

These trees provide clean, white fiber--commonly referred to as pulpwood--that is ideal for all kinds of paper products. This particular stand has been thinned several times to promote better growth, along with the removal of some trees for commercial use as pulpwood. The plan for this spruce plantation is to periodically harvest the trees at 15-year intervals until a natural forest develops in its place. Barring any natural disturbances, the process will take decades to fulfill. The long-range goal is for the area



surrounding Lost and Woodland ponds, including this plantation, to become part of a biological reserve covering 650 acres in the core of



this state land. With minimal human interference, old-growth conditions should prevail, helping to preserve the area's biological diversity.

Directions to Stop 10: Return to Truck Trail #1, turn right and go north to Brown Road. Turn right at the intersection and then turn left onto Truck Trail #12. Go north on Truck Trail #12 for 0.4 of a mile to reach the last stop, #10.

STOP 10 - Northern Hardwoods

Directly behind the sign for Stop #10 is a 17-acre stand of northern hardwoods typical of central New York State. This stand has developed from both natural and human disturbances, resulting in trees representing a wide range of ages.

Tree species such as black cherry and white ash got a jump start on other species because of full sun during the early years of the forest's development. These trees can grow to be larger in diameter and height compared to other slower growing and more shade-tolerant species such as sugar maple or American beech.

This particular stand has a high percentage of sugar or "hard" maple trees, along with a mix of black cherry, red maple, white ash and American beech. Many of these northern hardwood species are unique to the eastern United States, and products made from them are popular worldwide because of the wood's quality and beauty.

Forest management of these hardwood stands usually focuses on removing diseased and stunted trees, leaving healthier, more vigorous trees to grow. As the stand matures, commercial cuts are planned for removing a larger volume of wood, thereby creating openings where young seedlings can develop. Thus the stage is set for the next generation of trees. This stand was thinned for firewood back in 1982, and it was thinned again in 2004 for both firewood and saw timber.

Stop 10 was the last stop on the Brookfield Auto Tour. We hope this tour has given you a better understanding of the dynamic world of forestry and the multiple-use approach to natural resource management. Thank you for visiting.

Directions back to the Moscow Hill Camping and Assembly Area (beginning of Auto Tour): Go north on Truck Trail #12 to Quaker Hill Road. Turn left onto Quaker Hill Road and turn left again at Moscow Road. Go 0.3 of a mile on Moscow Road to the Assembly Area.

Using State Forest Lands

Forests and mountains offer opportunities for recreation, appreciation of nature and an escape from our hectic world. Ensure your continued enjoyment and the enjoyment of others by helping to care for these wild places by using them responsibly:

- Let someone know where you are going and when you expect to return.
- Build fires with care and be sure to extinguish them thoroughly.
- Enjoy the forest, but take home only memories, not mementos.
- Carry out what you carry in.
- Leave the forest as clean or cleaner than you found it.

State Forest Regulations

- If you camp for more than three nights, or in a group of ten or more people, you must have a permit. All organized events must have a permit.
- Quiet hours are observed from 10 PM until 7 AM.
- Keep your campsite(s) neat, clean and sanitary at all times.
- Use only wood from dead and downed trees for fuel; do not cut or injure any standing tree.
- Never leave a fire unattended.
- All motorized vehicles are restricted to access roads posted as motor vehicle trails.
- All-terrain vehicles are prohibited except when used by people with disabilities who have special permits.
- Laws pertaining to registration and insurance will be enforced.

Important Notice

Horse owners may be required to produce a current Coggins certificate in accordance with Agriculture and Markets Rules and Regulations, Part 64.

Emergency Contacts

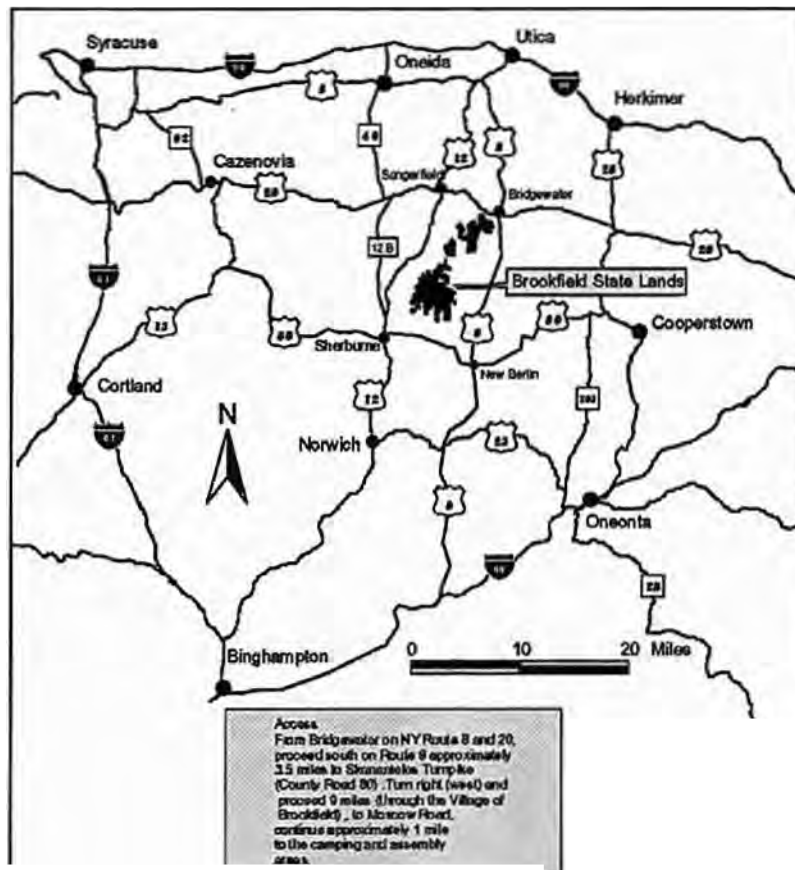
In case of emergency, call 9-1-1

Forest Ranger Dispatch: 833-NYSRANGER (833-697-7264)

Additional Information

For more information about trail conditions, trail maintenance, camping permits or organized ride permits, please contact:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Division of Lands and Forests
2715 State Hwy 80 Sherburne, NY 13460
607-674-4017 Weekdays 8 AM until 4 PM



Drawings by Peter Jensen
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