

Attachment D
Revisions to Section III
Area Descriptions
Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan

Staff Recommendations – September 10, 2009

EASTERN FIVE PONDS ACCESS (Proposed new area description in Master Plan)

This area is located in the Towns of Clifton, Colton and Piercefield, St. Lawrence County and in the Town of Long Lake, Hamilton County. It consists of six detached tracts on the eastern margin of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. Included are two dams essential to preserving the Bog River-Lows Lake-Osewagatchie River wilderness canoe route and important wetland complexes associated with the Bog River Flow. The bed and waters of Lows Lake and Bog River east of the western end of Frying Pan Island are also included.

The first tract lies in the Towns of Piercefield and Colton, St. Lawrence County. It includes the Lows upper dam and the related access road to the upper dam. The lands are bounded by the north by the Otter Brook Road. In addition, the northern boundary includes the 2.4 mile existing road from the Otter Brook Road to the Lows upper dam and the 2.2 mile road from the road to the upper dam providing deeded access to a large in-holding on the north shore of Lows Lake owned by the Boy Scouts. This 4.6 mile corridor is included in the primitive area. The area is bounded on the south by the northern shores of Bog River and the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and the west by the private lands.

The second tract lies in the Town of Piercefield, St. Lawrence County. It includes the Lows lower dam. The lands are bounded by Horseshoe Lake Wild Forest on the north and east, south and west by the Round Lake Wilderness.

The two areas described above are classified as primitive because of non-conforming uses and structures.

The two large dams, referred to as Lows upper dam and Lows lower dam, are essential to preserving the canoe route and important wetland habitat and should be maintained for that purpose indefinitely. Maintenance of the dams will require periodic use of motor vehicles and heavy equipment, such as bulldozers and cranes, which means that the existing road to the upper dam must also be maintained for administrative purposes related to dam inspection and repair.

The road to the upper dam will be gated at the eastern edge of the primitive area. The private owners of the inholding on the northern shore of Lows Lake will exercise their deeded motorized access rights until such time as that inholding is acquired by the State or access rights are extinguished. Should the inholding be acquired by the State it will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. The private owners of the inholding on the southern shore of Lows Lake will exercise their deeded motorized access rights until such time as that inholding is acquired by the State or access rights are extinguished. Should the inholding be acquired by the State it will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. Administrative access by motor vehicles by the State will be permitted as may be necessary for appropriate administration of the State lands in the area. After such private rights of access are extinguished, administrative access by motor vehicles will be limited to dam inspection and repair.

The third tract is a corridor 1.6 miles in length located in the Town of Clifton, St. Lawrence County providing access, (the legal nature of which is unclear) to a five-acre inholding to an area

known on the north shore of Lows Lake in the vicinity of the area know as "Parker Island". This primitive corridor and the inholding are surrounded by the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. Should the inholding be acquired (which should be given the highest priority) or the access rights extinguished, the area will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

The fourth tract is located in the Town of Long Lake, Hamilton County and consists of a private right-of-way following a road passing between Bog Lake and Clear Pond across lands added to the Five Ponds Wilderness Area in 2006. The road provides access to two large in-holdings within the Five Ponds Wilderness. One parcel is owned in fee by the State with a term-use easement in place to expire in 2029 and the second is a privately-owned, working-forest tract. Should this second parcel become acquired by the State, the road should be terminated at the northeastern end of the primitive corridor and the primitive area, together with both in-holdings, will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

The fifth tract is a corridor 1.7 miles in length providing deeded access to a large private inholding surrounding Lake Marian located in the Town of Colton, St. Lawrence County. Should the inholding be acquired or the access rights extinguished, the area will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

The sixth tract includes Frying Pan, Gooseneck and Pole Islands located in the Town of Colton, St. Lawrence County. Exclusive use rights to these islands during the months of June, July and August are retained by the private owners of the inholding on the northern shore of Lows Lake. Should the inholding be acquired by the State, the islands will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

Eastern Five Ponds Access area statistics:

State Lands	to be determined - Acres
Bodies of Water	to be determined - Acres
Non-conforming Uses:	
Private Roads*	9.7 Miles
Dams*	2

FIVE PONDS (Proposed edits to area description)

This wilderness is located in the towns of Fine, Clifton, Colton and Piercefield in St. Lawrence County, the town of Webb in Herkimer County and the town of Long Lake in Hamilton County. The lands of this unit are bounded on the north by Cranberry Lake, a portion of the Oswegatchie River, the road leading to Inlet and private lands; on the northeast by the Cranberry Lake Wild Forest and by the southern edge of Otter Brook Road; on the southeast by the 2.4 mile road from the Otter Brook Road to the Lows upper dam and the 2.2 mile road from the road to the upper dam providing deeded access to a large in-holding on the north shore of Lows Lake owned by the Boy Scouts and private lands, on the south by private lands in the vicinity of Gull Lake, and the Stillwater Reservoir; on the southwest by the Pepperbox Wilderness and on the west by private lands and the Aldrich Pond Wild Forest. In the vicinity of Young's Road the wild forest and wilderness boundary is the Streeter Lake snowmobile trail.

Land south and east of this boundary will be classified wilderness upon acquisition of inholdings. The lake bed and waters of Lows Lake west of Frying Pan Island are also included.

In 1975 the Oswegatchie River was classified as a wild river by the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act, and in 1977 was closed to motorboat use. The fire truck trail that once served High Falls from Wanakena was closed in 1976. Within the former Oswegatchie Primitive Area, approximately 7.2 miles of snowmobile trails were closed and two tent platforms were removed. This action made possible the reclassification of the Oswegatchie Primitive Area, 16,920 acres in size, to wilderness, an addition to the Five Ponds Area.

The Broadhead Gore was acquired by the state in 1976. This parcel was considered state land from about 1890 to 1947 when the state lost it in a lawsuit brought by the late Augustus Low. The gore, which contained original growth timber, was logged soon after the lawsuit and was then sold to the Onondaga Council of the Boy Scouts of America. Although the gore was only about 300 acres in size, it extended from Mud Lake westward a distance of about eight miles, coming to a dagger-like point in the heart of the wilderness. This acquisition offers significant additional protection to the Five Ponds Wilderness.

In 1979 the state purchased 15,850 acres in the towns of Webb and Long Lake, 8,635 acres of which became part of this wilderness upon acquisition. The remainder of this tract lies on the opposite side of the railroad and road leading to Partlow Lake and became the Lake Lila Primitive Area. In 2000, approximately 1,340 acres of the Lake Lila Primitive Area lying westerly of the railroad were added to the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. The state also accepted the gift of a conservation easement over 6,646 acres of land surrounding Nehasane Lake as well as fee interest subject to a 50-year estate over 3,664 acres in the vicinity of Gull Lake. This latter parcel will eventually become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness.

In 2000, approximately 13,220 acres of lands acquired in Watson's East Triangle and lands classified Wild Forest as part of the Aldrich Pond Wild Forest were classified Wilderness and added to the Five Ponds Wilderness. This area contains the Middle Branch of the Oswegatchie River, Brindle Pond, Grassy Pond and Upper South Pond. The area also contains an inholding on the north shore of Bear Pond, which, if acquired, should be added to this unit.

In 2005 1,100 acres of land acquired in the vicinity of Bog Lake and Clear Pond were classified wilderness and added to the Five Ponds Wilderness providing a more direct wilderness canoe route connection to Lows Lake from the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor and the waters of Lake Lila in the William C. Whitney Wilderness.

The terrain is low, rolling and interspersed with many small ponds. Swamp areas and small brooks are numerous. The forest cover varies from pole-size hardwoods in the sections that were heavily logged and burned more than forty years ago to virgin pine and spruce stands.

This is one of the few locations in the northeastern United States where stands of virgin timber can be found. When early logging was in progress and the Oswegatchie River carried the softwood logs downstream to the sawmills, it was found to be impractical to haul the huge logs by horse and oxen from the Five Ponds area out to the landing on Wolf Creek, so that section

was not logged. The old growth pine and red spruce stand on the esker between Big Five, Little Five and Big Shallow, Little Shallow and Washbowl ponds is an example of this virgin timber. The pure pine stand at Pine Ridge along the Oswegatchie is another well known spot where examples of original growth timber may be seen. However, portions of the Pine Ridge stand were completely blown down in the 1950 hurricane and the timber was salvaged by a logging contractor.

In addition to these spots, other points of interest to the hiker, camper and fisherman are: High Falls on the Oswegatchie River; Alder Bed Flow on the Middle Branch of the Oswegatchie River; Cat Mountain; "The Plains," which are very similar in soil and cover type to that of the Moose River Plains; and the numerous, clear, spring-fed ponds, most of which support brook trout. The Oswegatchie River was long considered the top brook trout stream in the state, with catches of three to four pound brook trout common during the summer months. This distinction was lost when perch were apparently introduced accidentally or otherwise into Cranberry Lake several years ago, with adverse impacts to the brook trout population. At the present time, the area is popular with hunters and fishermen who frequent the interior ponds.

The Oswegatchie is a fine canoeing stream and is used as such to reach interior wilderness points of interest. The river has received increasing use in recent years and care must be taken that such use does not result in resource degradation. The existing lean-tos on the river will be phased out and ultimately replaced by primitive tent sites.

The Five Ponds area is accessible to the public from the north and also from the south if one has a boat or canoe. The area can also be reached from the southwest via the Raven Lake primitive corridor, and from the east, by boat or canoe, via the newly acquired Bog River/ Low's Lake tract. The western boundary in Herkimer County is accessible from the Bear Pond Road in the Aldrich Pond Wild Forest.

The Mt. Electra observation tower was removed in September 1989, and this wilderness area now complies with wilderness standards.

In 2009, portions of the lands and waters of the former Lows Lake Primitive Area were reclassified to wilderness and added to the expanded Five Ponds Wilderness. The lake bed and waters of Lows Lake, an estimated 2,571 acres, were also classified as wilderness in order to achieve the primary management goal for the area by more effectively preserving the wild character of the canoe route without motorboat or airplane usage and with only limited access by motor vehicles as noted in the description of the Eastern Five Ponds Primitive Area. In light of the wilderness and primitive classification of lands surrounding Lows Lake and the Bog River, DEC will manage the waters as wilderness, precluding both public and administrative use of motor vehicles, motorboats and aircraft to the extent prohibited by the wilderness classification. Public float plane use will be eliminated December 31, 2011.

Five Ponds area statistics: (Note: all of these statistics are in the process of being updated)

State Lands	to be determined - Acres
Private Inholdings	to be determined - Acres

Bodies of Water (99)	to be determined - Acres
Elevation	
(minimum)	1,486 Feet
(maximum)	2,489 Feet
Foot Trails	to be determined - Miles
Lean-tos	14
Non-conforming Uses:	
Roads	1.5 Miles
Gravel Pit	1

LOWS LAKE (Proposed to be deleted from the Master Plan)

This area is located in the Town of Colton, St. Lawrence County. It is bounded on the east by the road to Lows upper dam and the upstream edge of the dam, on the south by Bog River Flow, and the west and north by private land.

This area is an integral part of the Lows Lake - Bog River - Oswegatchie wilderness canoe route, and continues the water access to the western portion of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area which begins in the Hitchins Pond Primitive Area immediately downstream. The area shares numerous important wildlife habitats with the Five Ponds to the west and the Hitchins Pond Primitive Area to the east. Preservation of the wild character of this canoe route without motorboat or airplane usage (and with only limited access by motor vehicles as noted below) is the primary management goal for this primitive area.

The area is classified as primitive in part because of its relatively small size but especially due to the impact of a large inholding of private land on the north shore, which separates the area from the Five Ponds Wilderness. A road providing deeded access to this inholding also runs through this primitive area. If this inholding should be acquired by the State (which should be given highest priority), the road will be closed, and the intervening area classified as wilderness, and this primitive area will then become part of the expanded Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

In addition there are two detached areas located in the Town of Colton, St. Lawrence County and the Town of Long Lake, Hamilton County consisting of private rights-of-way. The first is 1.6 miles in length and provides access (the legal nature of which is unclear) to a five-acre inholding on the north shore of Lows Lake. This primitive corridor and the inholding are surrounded by the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. Should the inholding be acquired (which should be given the highest priority) or the access rights extinguished, the area will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

The second detached area is 1.3 miles in length and is a retained deeded right of access across lots 12 and 13, Township 37, Totten and Crossfield's Purchase to private lands north of Bog Lake. Should the private land served by this access be acquired or the deeded rights otherwise extinguished, the area will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area.

Lows Lake area statistics:

State Lands	1,042 Acres
Water	61 Acres
Non-conforming Uses:	
Roads*	5.5 Miles

HITCHINS POND (Proposed to be deleted from the Master Plan)

This area lies in the Towns of Piercefield and Colton, St. Lawrence County. It includes Lows upper and lower dams and the intervening waters, and adjacent state lands to the southern edge of Otter Brook Road on the north, the western edge of the extension of NYS Route 421 to the Otter Brook Road on the east, the western edge of the road to Lows lower dam on the southeast, and to a depth of 1,000 feet from the Bog River and the railroad tracks, whichever is greater, to the south.

This area begins the access to a wilderness canoe route leading from the Bog River at Lows lower dam into Lows Lake above Lows upper dam and across Lows Lake to its western shore in the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. The route is connected by a carry to the upper reaches of the Oswegatchie River. The primitive area contains extensive wetlands adjacent to the Bog River and Hitchins Pond and important wildlife habitat, including nesting loons, and eagle and osprey habitat. Preservation of the wild character of this canoe route without motorboat or airplane usage (and with only limited access by motor vehicles as noted below) is the primary management goal for this primitive area.

The area is classified as primitive because of the essentially permanent nature of certain major non-conforming uses which preclude wilderness classification, including two large dams and the Remsen to Lake Placid Railroad line.

The two large dams, referred to as Lows upper dam and Lows lower dam, are of a scale and character incompatible with a wilderness designation. The dams are essential to preserving the canoe route and important wetland habitat and should be maintained for that purpose indefinitely. Maintenance of the dams will require periodic use of motor vehicles and heavy equipment, such as bulldozers and cranes, which means that the existing road to the upper dam must also be maintained for administrative purposes related to dam inspection and repair.

The road to the upper dam will be gated at the eastern edge of the primitive area. The owners of the large inholding lying between the Lows Lake Primitive Area and the Five Ponds Wilderness will be allowed to exercise their deeded access rights until such time as that inholding is acquired (see Lows Lake Primitive Area). While such private motor vehicle access continues, administrative access by motor vehicles by the State will be permitted as may be necessary for appropriate administration of the State lands in the area. After such private rights of access are extinguished, administrative access by motor vehicles will be limited to dam inspection and repair.

In addition to the dams and the road, the area is bisected by the Remsen to Lake Placid Railroad line which is currently not in use. This rail travel corridor, until permanently abandoned and the rails removed, would also preclude wilderness classification for this area even if dams were not there.

The area is, therefore, considered to be an essentially permanent primitive area unlikely to be reclassified as wilderness.

Hitchins Pond area statistics:

State Lands	2,022 Acres
Bodies of Water	182 Acres
Non-conforming Uses:	
Private Roads*	1.9 Miles
Railroad*	1.5 Miles
Dams*	2