

Key Issues and Themes from Public Comments

Divided by Classification Considerations in State Land Master Plan

PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS

What the Agency Considers:

- Soil and slope characteristics
- Elevation
- Size of Water Bodies
- Suitability for canoeing/kayaking/motorized use
- Carrying capacity of land and water
- Accessibility to/from public highway
- Condition of roads
- Existing Structures (roads, bridges power lines, gravel pits, buildings)
- Continued lease rights for camps, roads and bridges through 2018

Key Issues Raised During Public Comment Period

- APA private land use classification (mostly Rural and Low Intensity prior to purchase as Forest Preserve) indicate a higher level of use should be allowed
- Polaris bridge provides potential access to east of Hudson River & Vanderwhacker Wild Forest
- Existing structures eligible for listing on Historic Register (Outer Gooley Club/others?)/they should be used for administrative purposes and to interpret the area
- Uses on adjoining private lands & inholding in OK Slip parcel argue for Wild Forest classification
- Past use of the area for logging and hunting camps and the extensive road system argues for Wild Forest classification under SLMP and should not be considered for a wilderness classification due to both past practices & uses and because it has already been demonstrated that a higher level of use can be allowed
- Essex Chain Lakes are not large enough for motor boats
- Location of Essex Chain next to existing Wild Forest areas makes Wild Forest the only logical choice
- Need to be able to use gravel from existing pits to maintain roads
- Small or electric motors should be allowed
- SLMP prohibits material increase in road mileage
- Need to maintain road infrastructure for emergency situations (fire/search and rescue)
- Chain Lake Road is a town road (never abandoned) and its legal status has not been determined
- There is no basis for reclassifying Blue Mt and Vanderwhacker from Wild Forests since nothing has changed since their original classification

- Only land above 2500 feet should be considered for wilderness classification or protected as a special management area

BIOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS

What the Agency Considers:

- Sensitivity of water bodies to recreational use
- Wetland ecosystems
- Boreal impacts
- Wildlife habitats and wildlife values
- Rare, threatened and endangered species
- Fisheries resources
- Potential for Spread of invasive species

Key Issues Raised During Public Comment Period:

- Need to protect the Essex Chain lakes from overuse and invasive species
- Need boat washing stations
- Water bodies are too small and fragile to allow too much use and access
- Wilderness provides most protection to ecosystem
- Wild Forest provides adequate resource protection under Article XIV
- Snowmobile trails allow wildlife, especially deer, to move more easily through the forest to reach food supplies
- Need to protect area from recreational overuse due to potential impacts on wildlife
- The quality of the fishery in the Essex Chain is exaggerated – it is essentially a “put & take” fishery dependent on stocking. Fishing in the Essex Chain is in decline since the Gooley Club ceased stocking activities.

INTANGIBLES

What the Agency Considers:

- Type & density of the forest cover
- Opportunities for solitude &/or primitive and unconfined recreation
- Sense of remoteness/size of area
- Rugged terrain
- Natural views
- Impact of uses of nearby lands
- Historic values - Structures eligible for listing on Historic Register (Outer Gooley Club/others?)

Key Issues Raised During Public Comment Period:

- Should allow as much recreational access as possible (WF classification) and site parking areas closer to the lakes/rivers
- Should only allow motorized access just north of the Essex Chain

- Lakes and rivers should be kept motor free to preserve a backcountry/quiet water experience
- Floatplane use on Third Lake will impact users seeking backcountry experience
- Newer snowmobiles are quieter
- Wilderness provides more solitude
- Wild Forest designation can also allow for a sense of remoteness in the deeper interior locations
- Motorized access should be provided to all lands newly acquired
- Hudson River Gorge Primitive Area should not be reclassified to wilderness
- Oppose APA Wilderness classification along Hudson and Cedar Rivers as it amounts to administrative designation as Wild River in locations where they are designated Scenic by law

PROVIDE OPPORTUNITIES FOR RECREATIONAL USE BASED ON THE CHARACTERISTICS AND CAPACITY OF THE LAND TO WITHSTAND USE

What the Agency Considers:

- Public recreational use of easement lands and adjacent Wild Forest lands
- Accessibility for people with disabilities, elderly, very young and people with limited mobility
- Economic stimulus for local communities
- Types of recreational activities allowed under various classification options:
 - cross country skiing
 - snowmobiling
 - motor boats
 - floatplane use
 - hiking
 - paddling
 - whitewater rafting
 - bird watching
 - camping
 - bicycling
 - ATV Use

Key Issues Raised During Public Comment Period:

- Upper Hudson Recreational Hub wants the area as Wild Forest with Intensive Use Corridors
- Designation of Chain Lakes Road as Wild Forest or a Wild Forest Corridor would allow improved public access to the Cedar River
- Need to connect Minerva to other communities via Iron Bridge at Polaris Club
- Motor boats should be allowed on the Hudson River from the Iron Bridge (Blackwell Stillwater) north to Ord Falls
- Concerned that no details are provided for Special Management Area

- Adequate protection can be provided in Wild Forest setting through UMP's and appropriate regulations (including consideration for Special Management Area)
- A Recreation Plan is needed for easement lands
- More trail connections are needed to other adjacent public lands which connect to communities
- Multi-use trails do not work well . . . motorized and non-motorized use should be separated
- Snowmobile and cross-country ski trails are compatible winter recreational activities
- Wild Forest allows more access & diversity of recreational opportunities which equals more potential for economic stimulus
- Intensive Use designation will provide more economic stimulation
- A connector trail should be built over the Cedar River
- Outfitters need more access to and from the rivers
- Cross-country skiing (Concern – cannot groom trails unless Intensive Use)
- Snowmobiling is a seasonal use with little impact and should be allowed since there is little impact on other uses and it provides winter economic stimulus
- Horse trails should be designated
- Mt. Biking is allowed only on roads in Canoe/Primitive. Backcountry trails should also be developed
- Wilderness does not benefit the economy
- Wilderness benefits the economy
- Wild Forest provides a wider range of recreational experiences and therefore provides greater stimulus to the local economy
- Leased camps should be kept and the State should rent them out to the public
- Towns will need to help maintain the area since DEC does not have enough funding
- Floatplanes – lakes should be open/lakes should be closed/Third Lake should be open during fishing/hunting season
- ATV use should be allowed on existing roads
- Recreation is secondary to resource protection