



Department of  
Environmental  
Conservation

# Pepperbox Wilderness Area

Draft Amendment

to the

## 1985 Pepperbox Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan

Herkimer and Lewis Counties

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Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

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# UMP AMENDMENT #1

## INTRODUCTION

The Pepperbox Wilderness Area is comprised of approximately 22,560 acres in the Town of Watson in Lewis County and the Town of Webb in Herkimer County. A Unit Management Plan (UMP) was completed for the unit in 1985, and to date, no amendments or revisions have been made to the Plan.

This amendment proposes the construction of a lean-to near Gregg Lake, and the designation of a foot trail for lean-to access. Gregg Lake has historically been and continues to be a destination for anglers. The proposed lean-to site is currently used as a campsite, and has two established but undesignated access trails. Gregg Lake was added to the Pepperbox Wilderness Area following the release of the 1985 UMP, and therefore, management has not been formally addressed.

Lands added to the Pepperbox Wilderness Area after 1985 include the Alder Creek and Tied Lake Primitive Corridors which access inholdings, the Bear Pond Primitive Corridor along the northeastern boundary, Jakes Pond Foot Trail, the Sand Pond Accessible Foot Trail, a parking area off of the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor, and a primitive campsite near Tied Lake. As exemplified by these improvements, the northern portion of this unit differs in character from the portion of the unit described in the 1985 UMP. The proposed foot trail in this amendment has historically and continues to be used for access to Gregg Lake. Likewise, the lean-to location has been and continues to be used as a campsite.

This amendment is not meant to alter the character of the Pepperbox Wilderness Area or the management philosophy outlined in the 1985 UMP. The 1985 Plan identified the Pepperbox Wilderness Area as a “trail-less” Wilderness that is unique to New York State, and identified a long term goal for public use management to “retain the unit as is with no trails or other facilities within it.” The original UMP addressed management of the unit as it existed in 1985, and did not address lands which have since been added. This amendment is meant to specifically address recreation in the Gregg Lake area, consistent with the character of the northern portion of the Pepperbox Wilderness Area, and Wilderness guidelines outlined in the Adirondack State Land Master Plan.

## II. RESOURCE AND PUBLIC USE INVENTORY OVERVIEW

### A. Natural Resources

#### 1. Physical

c) Terrain: The Gregg Lake area is surrounded by rolling slopes, with flats and low areas containing numerous wetlands, beaver flows, and ponds. Boulders are common throughout much of the landscape.

d) Water: Gregg Lake has a surface area of 17.2 acres (7.2 ha), a mean depth of 11.8 feet (3.6 m), and a maximum depth of 32 feet (9.8 m; ALSC, 1986).

#### 2. Biological

a) Vegetation: Softwoods are found in many low and wet portions of the Gregg Lake area, with a spruce-fir mix being most dominant around Gregg Lake itself. Hardwoods including red maple, birch, and beech with occasional white pine are found upslope, and define the forest around the trail proposed in this amendment. In general, the forest has a limited number of large, old-growth trees due to past forest management activities.

c) Fish: The Pepperbox Wilderness Area is located in a region of the Adirondack Park heavily affected by acid precipitation. Many ponds in the unit do not support fish, and fishing opportunities were described as limited in the 1985 UMP. Gregg Lake represents a unique recreation opportunity in the area, in that it supports wild brook trout populations. The inlet to Gregg Lake also supports brook trout, and in the past, trout were identified in the outlets of Loon Hollow and Twin Ponds, both upstream from Gregg Lake (NYSDEC Bureau of Fisheries, 51).

### E. Public Use of the Area

A Forest Preserve Visitor Study for the northwestern Adirondacks (Dawson & Graefe, 2011) identified the majority of visits to the area as occurring in July and August, with more than half of all visitor groups having less than three individuals, and 80% having less than 6 individuals. In 2008, the Pepperbox Wilderness Area had 449 trailhead registrations at the Raven Lake Primitive Corridor Trail Register. This register is located in close proximity to Stillwater, and likely attracts a much higher number of visitors than the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor and Gregg Lake area. Watson's East Triangle Wild Forest provides access to the northern portion of the Pepperbox Wilderness Area. The Bergren's Clearing Trail Register located in this unit recorded 250 visitor registrations in 2008, though this register is located at the end of a Town road and is more easily accessible than Gregg Lake. Overall, public use near Gregg Lake is believed to be much lower than at either of these trail registers.

It is anticipated that public use will continue to be low in the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor and Gregg Lake area. The Tied Lake Parking Area is located more than 10.5 miles from the end

of Long Pond Road (where the Bergren's Clearing Trail Register is located), over the unpaved Bear Pond and Tied Lake Roads. No issues related to overuse are expected from the proposed lean-to and trail, however the Department will carefully monitor visitor use moving forward.

#### **IV. PROJECTED USE AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSED**

##### **A. FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT AND/OR REMOVAL**

##### **2. Other Development**

a) Construction of a lean-to is proposed on the western shore of Gregg Lake just south of the outlet of the lake. Access to the lean-to will be from the parking area just beyond Tied Lake, off of the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor. From this parking area, individuals may travel to the lean-to by foot, snowshoes or cross-country skis.

The lean-to will be sited at an existing clearing which is screened from the Gregg Lake shoreline and meets the 100 foot set-back requirement listed in the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. A fire ring will also be constructed at the lean-to site. No wetlands have been identified in the vicinity of the lean-to site, however NYSDEC will coordinate with the Adirondack Park Agency in determining if there is a need for a wetlands permit, and consult with the Agency concerning the final location of the lean-to.

b) Two old forest management trails are distinguishable that lead to the lean-to site from the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor, both starting south of the Tied Lake parking area. Both trails have boulder barriers at the edge of the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor to prevent illegal motor vehicle use. The northern trail is located 0.3 miles south of the parking area and leads 1.3 miles to the lean-to site. The southern trail is located 1.2 miles south of the parking area and leads approximately 1 mile to the lean-to site. The northern trail has been identified as the preferred alternative, and will be designated, signed, and maintained as a foot trail. Designation of the northern trail will concentrate traffic to Gregg Lake on that trail, facilitating the restoration of natural conditions along the southern route.

Trail conditions are generally very similar between the northern and southern routes, with neither route limited by significant rutting, erosion, or other environmental considerations. The northern trail was selected as the preferred route because it follows a more direct route to Gregg Lake, does not require the crossing of any streams or wetlands, and minimizes hiking along the Tied Lake Road. The southern route is 0.6 miles further from the parking area on the Tied Lake Primitive Corridor, follows 0.9 more miles of the Tied Lake Road, and requires crossing Martin Brook.

No wetland issues are anticipated in designating the northern foot trail, however NYSDEC will coordinate with the Adirondack Park Agency in determining if wetland permits are needed. Any new structures (such as bog bridging) associated with a wetlands permit are authorized by this amendment.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY AND REFERENCES**

Adirondack Lakes Survey Corporation. 1986. ALSC Historic Data for Gregg Lake (040181).

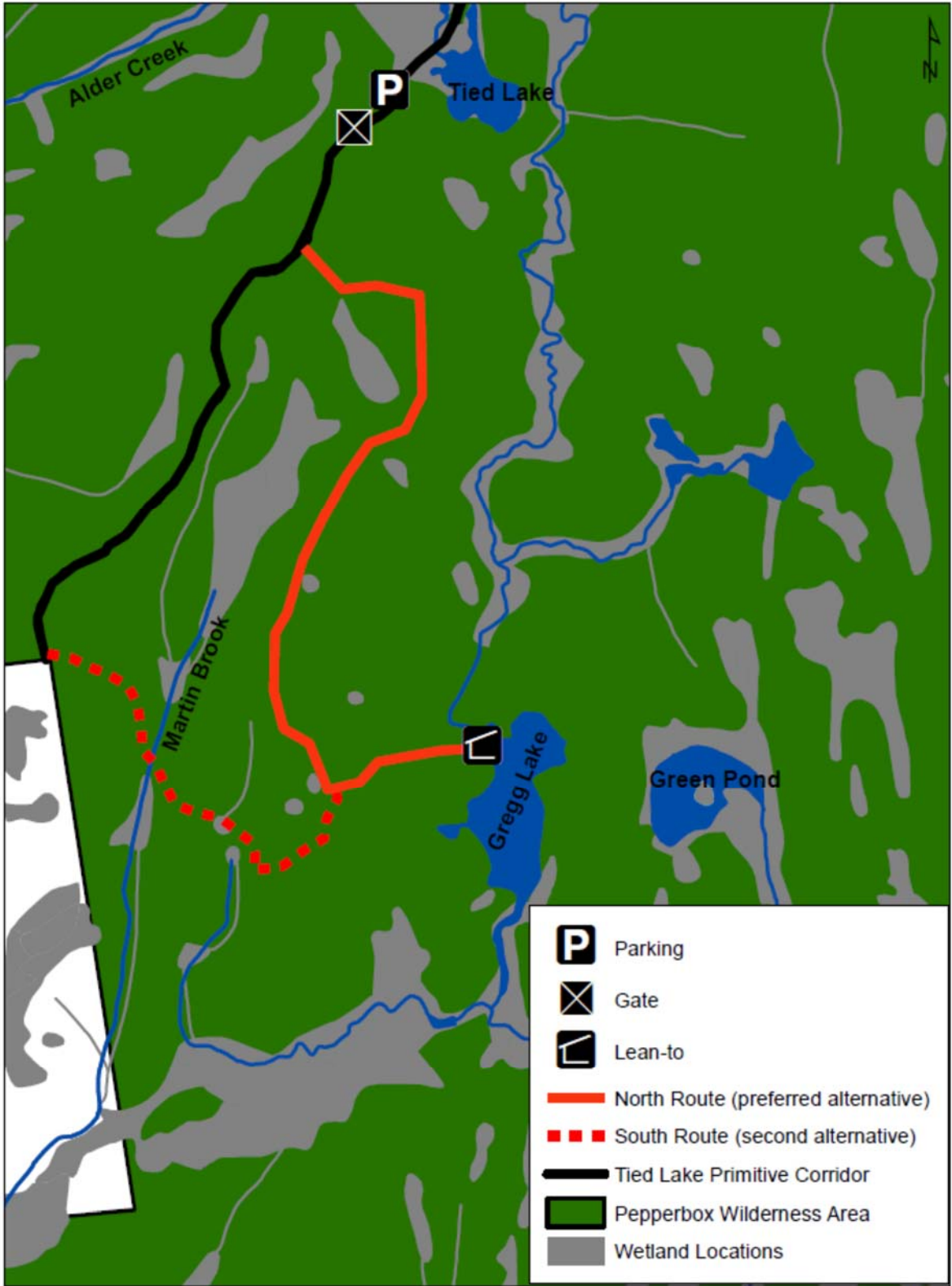
Available at:

<http://www.adirondacklakessurvey.org/alscscript.inc.php?alscpond=040181&pname=REGG%20LAKE>

Dawson C.P., & Graefe, D.A. 2011. Northwestern Adirondack Forest Preserve Visitor Study.

NYSDEC Bureau of Fisheries. Modern Statewide Database. Version 51.

# Gregg Lake Lean-to and Access Trail



0 0.125 0.25 0.5 0.75 1 Miles