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September 15, 2025

Oliver Miller
NYS DEC
Division of Operations
625 Broadway
Albany NY 12233-5253

Megan Phillips
NYS APA
Deputy Director for Planning
PO Box 99
Ray Brook NY 12977

Re: Draft Lincoln Pond Public Campground and Day-Use Area Unit Management Plan

Dear Mr. Miller and Ms. Phillips:

Protect the Adirondacks has reviewed the draft Lincoln Pond Campground and Day-Use Area Unit Management Plan (UMP) amendment, which was noticed in the Environmental Notice Bulletin on August 13, 2025. We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on this draft UMP.

The Lincoln Pond campground was opened in 1971. It currently has 35 camping sites, and, as noted in the draft UMP, the "[c]omprehensive planning and rustic surroundings have combined to make this one of the nicest campgrounds in the Adirondacks". UMP at 3. We encourage DEC to consider planning and rehabilitating other existing DEC campgrounds in the Forest Preserve to have a similar limited number of campsites with rustic characteristics.

As discussed below, the draft UMP fails to bring the Lincoln Pond Campground into full compliance with the requirements of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP).

The Forest Preserve Campgrounds are of Questionable Constitutionality

First, we want to note that the status of campgrounds under Article 14 of the Constitution, the Forever Wild clause, has been a matter of historic controversy. During the 1967 New York Constitutional Convention, one delegate, Charles Froessel, a retired Court of Appeals judge, argued that campgrounds were unconstitutional and that Article 14 needed to be amended to legitimize their existence. He proposed an amendment argued

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to explicitly permit: “the construction, maintenance and operation of recreational campsites [Campgrounds] bordering on or in the vicinity of state or county highways with necessary access, water supply and sanitation facilities, all of which shall be in keeping with the surrounding areas.”¹

Delegate Froessel stated that the Conservation Department (DEC’s predecessor agency) had “stretched the constitution and they have erected not only within the Adirondack Park system, but within the blue line, at least 40 campsites during the last three or four decades. There is no basis in law for their having done that. . . . Now, I am not criticizing the commissioners in the past for doing this But at least there should be a legal foundation for it.”² He also noted that the editor of the Conservation Department’s *Conservationist* magazine admitted that concentrated campsites (now campgrounds) “are certainly of doubtful constitutionality”.³

Several arguments were made in opposition to the proposed constitutional amendment, including that the “forest preserve does not and is not intended to supply every recreational need. The ball fields, the bowling alleys and the developed facilities are elsewhere”.⁴ The proposed amendment was not approved by the delegates. As a result, the campgrounds and associated developed facilities that DEC continues to construct and manage have arguably are not authorized by the Constitution.

The UMP Fails to Bring the Lincoln Pond Campground into Compliance with the SLMP

The SLMP directs that “[t]he primary management guideline for intensive use areas will be to provide the public opportunities for family group camping, developed swimming and boating, downhill skiing, cross country skiing . . . visitor information and similar outdoor recreational pursuits in a setting and on a scale that are in harmony with the relatively wild and undeveloped character of the Adirondack Park.” SLMP at 41.

In addition, the SLMP’s Guidelines for Management and Use of Intensive Use Areas include:

1. Providing opportunities for camping “in a setting and on a scale that are in harmony with the *relatively wild and undeveloped character* of the Adirondack Park”.
2. “All intensive use facilities should be located, designed and managed so as to *blend with the Adirondack environment* and to have the minimum adverse impact possible on surrounding state lands and nearby private holdings”.
3. “Construction and development activities . . . will . . . preserve the scenic, natural and open space resources of the intensive use area”.
4. “All campgrounds will be of a *rustic nature without . . . elaborate facilities . . .* All facilities and appurtenances are to be *constructed of natural materials* to the fullest extent possible so as to blend with the natural environment”.

¹ Proceedings of the Constitutional Convention of the State of New York, April fourth to September twenty-sixth, 1967. 12 vols, consecutively paginated. Available online at the New York State Library: <https://nysl.ptfs.com/#!/s?a=b> (go to Government Collections, New York State Constitutional Conventions, 1967, Proceedings, Volume 2, page 542).

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

⁴ *Id.* at 543; see also *Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks v. MacDonald*, 253 N.Y. 234, 242 (1930) (manmade sporting facilities not permitted on the Forest Preserve).

5. “The maximum size of future campgrounds in the Park will be in the range of 75 to 150 individual camping sites”.
6. “The *older, existing campgrounds* will be rehabilitated and reconstructed . . . to reflect modern site planning principles that will better blend the facilities with the environment and *comply with the provisions of [the SLMP]*”.

SLMP at 42-43 (emphasis added).

The draft UMP contains proposals that do not comply with these key provisions of the SLMP in the following respects:

The Use of the Southern Boat Launch for Trailered Boats Must be Eliminated from the UMP

The SLMP states that boat launches for trailered boats will *only* be provided on *large* lakes that are *1,000 acres or more* in area and that meet additional provisions in the SLMP . SLMP at 43. Existing boat launching sites that do not meet the threshold criteria provided in the SLMP “may be retained but their status will be periodically reviewed”. SLMP at 44. The SLMP states that the “Visitor Use Management Framework (VUM), a tool for adaptive management, provides the means to conduct this review”. UMP at 7.

Lincoln Pond is only 572 acres in size and thus does not meet the threshold in the SLMP for having a boat launch, and should certainly not be allowed the three boat launches that currently exist (Kingdom Dam sites, northern, and southern boat launches). Additionally, the draft UMP states that the northern portion of the pond above the causeway is 1.9 miles long and the southern portion of the pond is 1.1 miles long. Accordingly, the southern portion of the pond is about 190 acres in size, confirming that all parts of the lake are far below the 1,000 acres set forth in the SLMP for a boat launch. Motorboats are not able to pass under the causeway that separates the northern and southern parts of the lake.

The draft UMP also states that “[d]ata on boater visits to Lincoln Pond is limited,” but estimates that during the summer months there are 100 boats entering the campground to use the southern boat launch and about 1,000 boats using the northern boat launch. UMP at 7. The UMP proposes to conduct a survey of the number of trailered motorboats using the Lincoln Pond boat wash booth after it is constructed and staffed with a steward. The UMP also proposes that campground staff will provide a tally of boats coming into the campground.

We support the draft UMP’s proposal to decommission the boat launch in the Kingdom Dam sites to prevent the launching of trailered boats into Lincoln Pond at that location. We also support the UMP’s proposal to add a boat wash station to the northern boat launch.

DEC’s desired condition of a waterbody where visitors can “experience a primarily natural and lightly developed waterbody” is laudable. UMP at 8. The UMP states that “limited public motorboat access does not intrude on the natural character of the pond”. UMP at 9. The UMP puts forth two sets of indicators and thresholds that will be used to dictate when DEC takes management actions to ensure that the desired conditions for Lincoln Pond are maintained: one set related to the number of trailered boats entering the lake, and one set related to invasive species.

We question whether the threshold of a doubling of motorboats is appropriate to ensure that there is only limited public motorboat access and whether that would adequately protect the desired condition of Lincoln Pond. That threshold should be reduced. Moreover, we do not believe that simply monitoring for new aquatic invasives is an appropriate management action if the presence of new aquatic invasive species is detected. An appropriate management action would be to remove the new aquatic invasive species and consider closing the boat launch.

Given that there is little data available to DEC, that there will be no boat wash station at the southern boat launch, and that the size of the southern portion of the lake is far below the SLMP threshold of 1,000 acres, the southern boat launch should be closed to trailed boats coming from outside the campground. DEC and APA cannot at this time demonstrate that the southern boat launching site complies with the SLMP's restrictions on boat launches. There is no proof in the UMP that there is a demonstrated need for this boat launch; that the carrying capacity of this portion of the lake will not be exceeded⁵; that the use of this boat launch by motor boats will be compatible with the state and private land use classifications of the land and this part of the pond; that the location will avoid adverse impacts to state and private lands; that there are motor size limitations appropriate to a small water body such as this part of Lincoln Pond; and that there will be no material adverse impacts on the water body and surrounding land. SLMP at 43.

The southern boat launch could continue to be used for the launching canoes and kayaks, including those rented from the campground.

The Proposed Playground Must be Eliminated from the UMP

Protect the Adirondacks strongly supports introducing children to the natural wonders of the Adirondack Park. However, a manufactured playground is not appropriate or necessary for the public to enjoy the wild forest nature of the Forest Preserve.⁶ There are a multitude of other activities such as hiking, fishing, swimming, and canoeing that allow direct contact with and experience of the Forest Preserve. We believe that over time the playground is likely to receive little to no visitor use and would eventually need to be removed. Private campgrounds offer playgrounds for families that want that amenity.

Moreover, as discussed below, there are serious constitutional and SLMP issues posed by the draft UMP's proposal to retain the playground at the Lincoln Pond Campground.⁷ Consequently, we urge DEC and APA to withdraw the proposal to keep this manufactured amenity on the Forest Preserve.⁸

⁵ Indeed, there is no information in the UMP about the carrying capacity of Lincoln Pond as a whole or of this portion of Lincoln Pond.

⁶ *Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks v. MacDonald*, at 241.

⁷ The UMP's comparison to the Lincoln Pond Campground is inappropriate since there is not an approved UMP authorizing the campground or the playground at that location (indeed the UMP for that area is currently under development). DEC has previously noted (in the Limekiln Lake Campground UMP, in responses to public comments) that the idea of constructing a playground is problematic because "[r]egulations regarding playground design, maintenance and safety requirements are quite rigorous and discourage the construction of small playgrounds in campgrounds".

“Improving recreation and the use and enjoyment of the preserve are laudable aims, but they were insufficient in [*Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks v. MacDonald*] to obviate the need for a constitutional amendment.”⁹ Accordingly, DEC is crossing a legal boundary by constructing more manmade amenities and facilities within State-owned campgrounds, which themselves are of questionable Constitutionality. Therefore, the proposal to retain the playground at this campground should not be approved in the UMP due to constitutional constraints.

Significantly, the SLMP does not list playgrounds as an allowed facility within Intensive Use Areas. In fact, the SLMP states that “more intensive recreational and service facilities” are more appropriately located on private lands, which allow “a broader spectrum of recreational opportunities”. SLMP at 3. The SLMP also specifically states that the “economic viability of these private facilities should be a major concern in the development of pricing and operating policies for state intensive use areas”. *Id.* To avoid competing with private campgrounds, and because playgrounds are not authorized in the SLMP, DEC should not have a playground in a campground on the Forest Preserve.

We also note that many, and perhaps most, of the existing campgrounds on the Forest Preserve do not have developed playgrounds. Playgrounds have little, if any, relationship to “opportunities for family group camping, developed swimming and boating ... and similar outdoor recreational pursuits in a setting and on a scale that are in harmony with the relatively wild and undeveloped character of the Adirondack Park.” *Id.*

The proposal to keep a manufactured playground, however well-intentioned, violates the SLMP’s Guidelines for Management and Use of Intensive Use Areas because it is not consistent with the relatively wild and undeveloped character of the Forest Preserve, it does not blend with the Adirondack environment, it is not of a rustic nature and is more elaborate of a facility than is authorized by the SLMP. Moreover, rubber or artificial grass playground surface, plastic slides, and metal parts of swings and playground equipment are not natural materials. *See* SLMP at 42-43.

Thus, the playground should be removed from the draft UMP and removed from the campground because it will violate the provisions of the SLMP and further exacerbate existing SLMP violations.

The Campground Roads Should be Unpaved

Rather than resurfacing the parking areas and campground roads with pavement as proposed in the UMP, the roads should be resurfaced with dirt or gravel. Asphalt paved roads are impervious surfaces that add pollutants to stormwater runoff, are not in harmony with the undeveloped character of the Adirondack Park and do not blend with the Adirondack environment as required by the SLMP. SLMP at 42-43. DEC staff recently reported at an APA meeting about a new gravel mix being used on the Adirondack Rail Trail that conforms to ADA standards for surfacing.

Food Waste Should be Composted

⁹ *Protect the Adirondacks! Inc. v. New York State Dep't of Env't Conservation*, 37 N.Y.3d 73, 84 (2021).

The recycling and disposal facility should include a means of collecting food waste separate from the rest of the solid waste. DEC could contract for the transportation of food waste to a compost facility. Allowing this campground's visitors to compost food waste will meaningfully reduce the amount of waste being combusted, and will support the Values and Vision in New York State Solid Waste Management Plan.¹⁰

Electric Vehicle Charging Station Should be Included

As part of the process of replacing the overhead power lines with an underground system, the UMP should provide for the addition of one or more electric vehicle charging stations to one of the existing parking areas.

Plant Trees and Shrubs

We support the UMP's proposal to plant native trees and shrubs at sites 1-15. The UMP should provide for the planting of native trees and shrubs throughout the campground on an ongoing basis.

We support DEC's plan for ongoing rehabilitation work and to select sites for relocation or closure for the purpose of rehabilitating them to reflect modern planning and construction and to better blend them into the surrounding environment.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, please accept our gratitude for the opportunity to share our comments on this draft UMP.

Sincerely,



Claudia K. Braymer
Executive Director

cc: Joseph Zalewski, DEC Region 5 Director
Molly Breslin, Esq., DEC Office of General Counsel
John Caffry, Esq., Co-Chair, Protect the Adirondacks Conservation Advocacy Committee

¹⁰ <https://dec.ny.gov/sites/default/files/2024-05/finalsswmpmainplan20232.pdf>

Lincoln Pond Campground Unit Management Plan Public Comment Survey

7 Responses 03:46 Average time to complete Active Status

1. Construction of a 6-Unit Shower Building

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	2
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	1



2. Construction of a Recycling Building

Strongly Agree	1
Agree	3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	2



3. Paving of Main Parking Lot and Campground Roads

Strongly Agree	2
Agree	1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	2



4. Construction of New Restroom

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	1
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0



5. Replacement of Existing Water System

Strongly Agree	2
Agree	3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0



6. Replacement of Existing Sewage System

Strongly Agree	3
Agree	2
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	2
Disagree	0
Strongly disagree	0

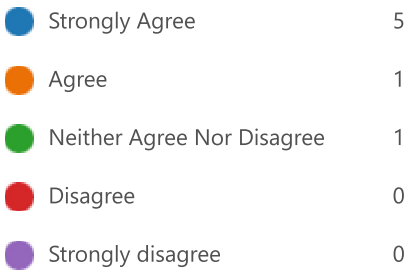


7. Replacement of Trailer Dump Station

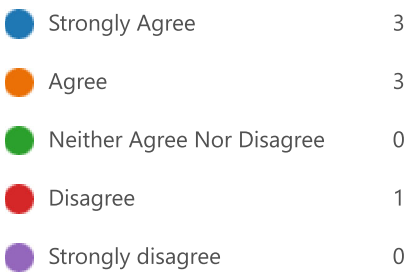
Strongly Agree	2
Agree	3
Neither Agree Nor Disagree	1
Disagree	1
Strongly disagree	0



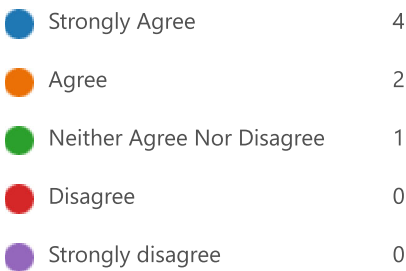
8. Tree and Shrub Plantings



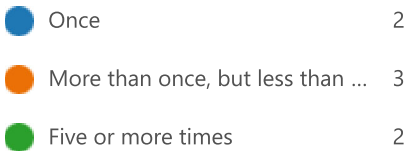
9. Construction of Boat Wash in Northern Boat Launch



10. Campsite Restoration



11. How many times do you visit this facility in a given year?



12. What is your home zip/postal code?

7
Responses

Latest Responses

"24502"
"12932"
"12928"

13. Please provide any additional comments or proposals you would like us to consider:

7
Responses

Latest Responses

"We love to visit to play with young children. We'd be happ...
"Anything to improve a space used by locals and tourists al...
"Having facilities that properly manage runoff, preserve th...

