

A photograph of a forest stream with large trees and fallen branches. The stream flows through a wooded area with many bare trees, suggesting a late autumn or winter setting. The water is clear and flows over rocks, creating small rapids. The foreground is covered in fallen leaves and branches.

**NEW YORK STATE**

**STRATEGIC PLAN  
FOR  
STATE FOREST MANAGEMENT**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

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**New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**

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## **Program Background**

State Forests are located throughout New York State and include over 807,000 acres of Reforestation Areas, Multiple-Use Areas, Unique Areas and State Nature and Historic Preserves that are administered by BFRM. Wildlife Management Areas, Forest Preserve, Conservation Easements and State Parks are not included in the category of State Forests and are, as such, not included in the SPSFM.

## **Strategic Plan for State Forest Management Update Overview**

The Strategic Plan for State Forest Management (SPSFM) was developed to lead management decisions on Bureau of Forest Resource Management (BFRM) administered State lands. It establishes statewide management guidelines for DEC staff through a process of public involvement and review. The SPSFM provides a foundation for the development of Unit Management Plans (UMPs), which in turn, set forth the specific actions to be undertaken on the individual State Forests within a Unit. As individual UMPs are developed, the plan serves as a management guide and is cited for reference. The SPSFM was originally drafted in 2010 as part of the process for certifying New York State's forests under the Sustainable Forestry Initiative® and Forest Stewardship Council® standards, and is scheduled for update every 10 years. Additionally, the plan serves as the General Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for the work done on State Forests, Multiple Use Areas, and Unique Areas.

Over the last 18 months, an inter-Divisional team of DEC Staff have been working on reviewing and making updates to the SPSFM. The draft 10-year update has gone through a 30-day Division of Lands and Forests review and response period, a DEC-wide review and response period, and Office of General Council review and response period. This document will look to highlight the changes that have happened throughout the plan.

This document will be an abridged version compared to the Executive Summary drafted for the original SPSFM, which contains more information on what is included within each chapter, highlighting just the major changes that the update has included. The previous plan's Executive Summary will still be available on the public website and/or by requesting one from BFRM staff.

## Plan Elements

### **Preface**

The Preface contains mostly administrative and structural items, along with a Note from Robert Davies, the State Forester for NYS. The update of note within this portion of the plan is a section acknowledging the presence of Indigenous people on the landscape prior to European colonization. Also included within the acknowledgment is the Agency's policy to work with the Native Tribes as stewards of the land while respecting their identities as sovereign nations.

### **Chapter 1**

#### *State Forest Overview*

This section lays out the foundational elements of the State Forests program within BFRM. The update to the plan adds a section providing background for involving the Native Tribes in the planning and management process for State lands. Also include is an updated State Forest fact sheet.

#### *Management Planning Overview*

The statewide plan was developed, and has since been updated, to guide present and future management decisions for State Forests. The general management planning steps and elements that are part of the SPSFM and UMP process are outlined here. Minor changes to the text were included to account for administrative variations that have happened since the original plan was drafted. Some examples of the changes are an updated location map and addressing structural changes to the management team who helped with drafting the plan and the 10-year update.

### **Chapter 2 – Ecosystem Management**

#### *Managing at Landscape Level*

Decision making on State Forests will continue to consider the current and future functional roles each forest can play within its greater landscape of NYS. This process can help identify the best opportunities to enhance biodiversity in the landscape by creating and maintaining a wide variety of habitats with varied structural diversity or conversely, to enhance core forest within a matrix forest block by maintaining forest integrity. All of the tables, charts, graphs and Forest Landscape Connectivity map were updated to provide the most accurate management data about our State-owned lands.

#### *Active Forest Management Guidelines*

Some minor updates to text providing more recent examples of salvage harvests that have happened across NYS. Also included were changes to the text addressing the changing regulatory status of herbicides (like Glyphosate) and their usage on state lands, more specifically [ECL § 33-1301](#).

## **Chapter 3 – Resource Protection**

### *Carbon Sequestration*

Relocated from the end of the previous plan to highlight the increased importance of managing our State-owned lands to remain resilient in the face of a changing climate, while providing the benefits of long-term carbon sequestration in the standing timber and in the durable hard wood products that come from our timber. Additional resources were included to assist land managers in making sound management decisions. Additionally, references to the 2019 CLCPA were included.

### *At-Risk Species and Natural Communities*

The NYS Natural Heritage Program (NHP) provided the updated list of at-risk species and communities found on and that could be found on State Forests, and was included to provide staff with the most current data for planning purposes.

## **Chapter 4 - Real Property & Infrastructure**

### *Land Acquisition & Boundary Line Maintenance*

Minor updates were made to made to address new figures and more current references.

### *Infrastructure*

Removed references to the now-rescinded NYS Snowmobile Trail Manual, while including OPRHP's NYS Snowmobile Trail Manual and Snowmobile Trail Signage Handbook.

## **Chapter 5 - Public/Permitted Use**

### *Accessibility*

Modernized the language and removed the term 'universally accessible' for simply accessibility. Updated references to the current standards and principles for design in the ADA and ABA.

### *Recreation*

Language was added to address the categories of e-bikes and where they can be used, as well as addressing 'fat tire' bike usage on State Forests. Included links to information from the NYSDMV on registration and usage and from the International Mountain Bike Association on Best Management practices for both. Language was also included to address the usage of drones on State lands with references to [Commissioner's Policy 71 \(CP-71\)](#).

### *OHV & ATV Use*

This topic was updated to better define the types of vehicles that fall into each of these categories while linking to the proper NYSDMV resources about registration and what public land is available for these types of pursuits.

### *Mineral Resources*

The updates within this section focus on updating references and language. Inclusion of references to NYS's 2020 legislative ban on hydrofracking in [ECL §23-0501](#).

## **Chapter 6 – Forest Management and Health**

### *Forest Products*

Updates to the harvested acre totals and timeframes were included. Language was softened in reference to maple tapping on State lands. References and notes on the updated 2021 Timber Sales Manual and Notice of Sale documents were also included. Staff had considered drafting an update to the 1973 Handbook as most of the information is still accurate, but further research showed that most of the information was already referenced in the 2021 Timber Sales Manual and other areas of the SPSFM.

### *Plantation Management*

The main change in this area focuses on updating language to allow for plantations to be perpetuated (whether through natural regeneration or plantings) on State Forests as a way to fill gaps in the structure of the landscape across the state and as a tool to boost the carbon sequestration ability of our managed lands.

### *Forest Health*

Updates include the structural change the program underwent in 2017 when the Forest Health program and the Invasive Species Coordination section merged to create the Bureau of Invasive Species and Ecosystem Health. Some of the updates include more modern references and resource material, changes to the species of concern listed, methods for control, as well as the implementation of an Incident Command Structure to more effectively manage and coordinate Agency responses.

### *Managing Deer Impacts*

This section was updated to remove the Citizen Task Force process as the program has concluded. It now includes mention of the successfully implemented Deer Management Assistance Program (DMAP) tool. A continued partnership with DFW to roll out and train BFRM staff on new protocols like the Assessing Vegetation Impacts from Deer (AVID) tool is highlighted. Additional development of an online repository of resources for managing deer (eg [The Cornell Slash Wall Resource Center](#)) was listed as a goal.