



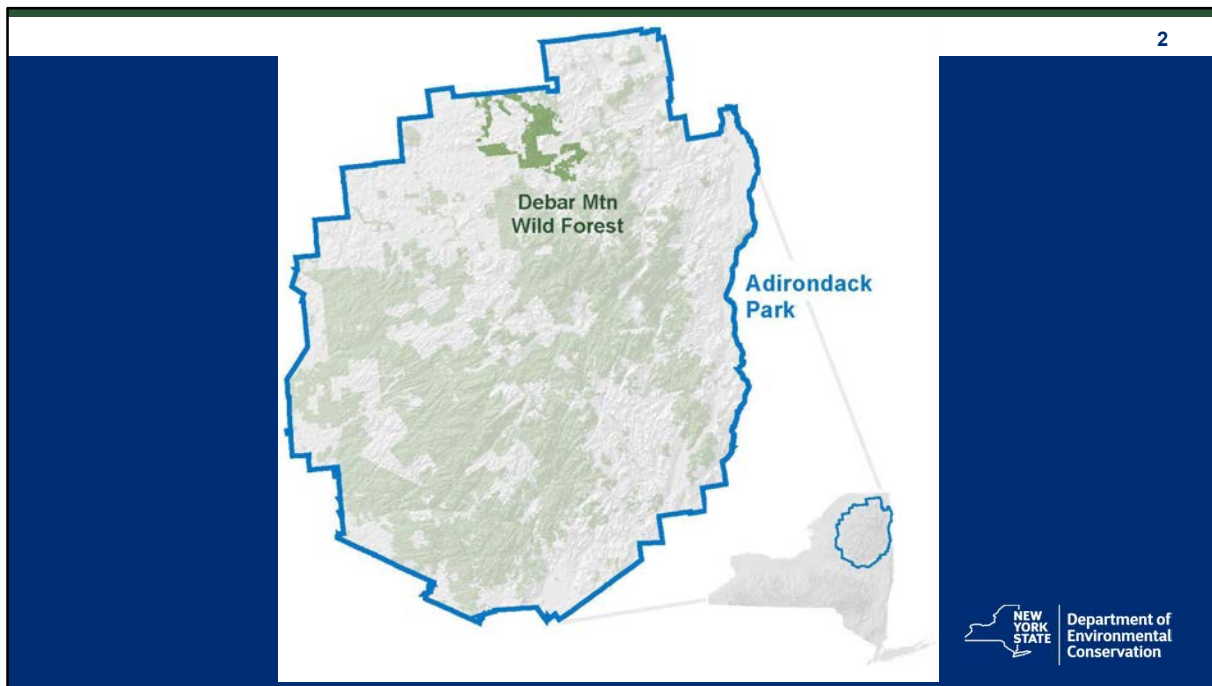
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# Debar Mountain Complex

## Draft Unit Management Plan

December 10, 2020

This plan has been under development for more than 17 years. Over the years several different DEC staff have been involved in writing this Draft Unit Management Plan (UMP). In 2003 the start of the UMP process was announced and that we were looking for public comments. Two public meetings were held at that time. In 2017 public involvement in the UMP was restarted with two additional public meetings. Now this draft UMP is ready to be improved through public review and comment. I look forward to hearing the comments from this board and the public. This presentation provides a brief description of the unit, an overview of some of the actions in the DMC, and then it will get into more detail about a proposal for Debar Lodge. This presentation will not be able to cover all aspects of the UMP, so I encourage people to take the time to review it. There will be a 60-day comment period.

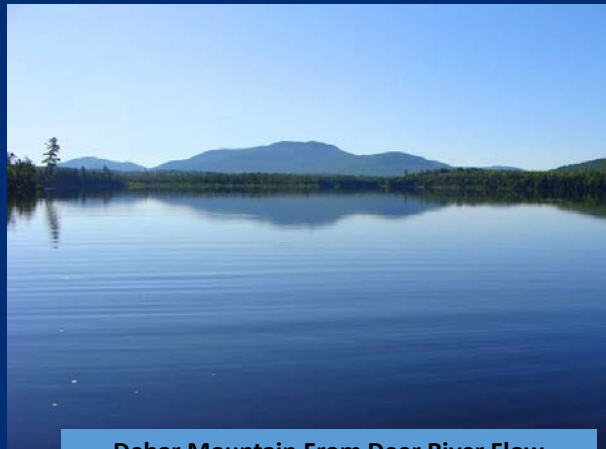


The Debar Management Complex (DMC) is located in northern edge of the Adirondack Park, in Franklin County. It is spread over five towns, Brighton, Duane, Franklin, Santa Clara, and Waverly.



## Natural Features in the Unit

- Key summits are Loon Lake, Debar, and Azure mountains.
- 72 waterbodies that cover 4,570 acres.
- Wetlands cover 17,400 acres.
- More than 200 miles of rivers and streams.



Debar Mountain From Deer River Flow

The DMC contains several significant mountains over 3,000 feet in elevation. Azure Mountain is the most popular destination in the unit. Waterbodies in the unit are generally small, with 70 percent of the standing water acreage is accounted for in five waterbodies. Wetlands are an important feature and cover 20 percent of the unit. Three rivers that flow through the unit that are designated under the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act; these are the Deer (scenic), East Branch Saint Regis (scenic), and Saint Regis (scenic & recreational) rivers.

## UMP Highlights

- Climate change section is included.
- Addresses invasive species threat.
- Focuses on carrying capacity and monitoring of impacts.
- Includes proposals to improve access for persons with disabilities.



- a. This UMP includes a new climate change section that was developed by staff in Albany and several regional offices.
- b. The UMP addresses the threat from invasive species. A particular focus will be on protecting waterbodies.
- c. Continues with the efforts to address carrying capacity and wildlands monitoring. Unfortunately, there is not more detailed water body carrying capacity assessment, but the UMP does propose actions to protect water quality.
- d. Proposals throughout the DMC to improve accessibility for persons with disabilities

# Parking Areas and Roads

## Roads

- Currently:
  - 10.6 miles of DEC roads in wild forest
  - 0.5 miles of DEC roads in primitive.
- Proposal:
  - Close Coal Hill Road (0.1 miles in wild forest and 0.4 miles in primitive).
  - Address impacts and problem locations.



There are many miles of State, town, county roads and private ROWs through the DMC. There are also some roads under DEC jurisdiction that are open to public motor vehicles. The UMP proposes to close the Coal Hill Road. Address problems where vehicles are illegally entering State land.

## Parking

- Currently 21 parking areas.
- Build 8 new parking areas.
- Improve 11 parking areas.
- Acknowledges problems with winter parking.



The UMP proposes to improve parking at areas where the parking is either poorly designed, causing resource impacts, or not sufficient. New parking is needed for new recreational facilities proposed in the UMP and at locations where the public is accessing recreational opportunities by parking along the side of roads.



# Primitive Tent Sites

Camping is a popular recreational activity in the DMC.

## Current Conditions



Jones Pond tent site



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There are 54 primitive tent sites and 5 lean-tos in the unit. Many of the sites are along the shore of a water body. Some of the sites do not meet required separation distances.

## Roadside Primitive Tent sites



Lake Kushaqua tent site



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Twenty-five of the primitive tent sites are considered to be roadside campsites. At some of these sites, vehicles have been driven directly onto the camping area.

## Proposals

- Close 9 primitive tent sites and 1 lean-to
- Create 26 new primitive tent sites and up to 6 lean-tos
- Bring sites into compliance with management guidelines.



The UMP proposes to close sites that do not meet APSLMP guidance, phase in the building of new sites at appropriate locations, and address impacts, particular reduce the size of the area being impacted. At some sites it will mean blocking vehicle access.

## Fishing and Waterway Access Sites and Dams



Water based recreation is an important activity in this unit, but it is also a possible vector for the spread of invasive species or may result in negative impacts to water quality.

## Two Types of Water Access Facilities in APSLMP

### Boat Launch

- Allows the launching of trailered boats.
- **Are allowed in intensive use areas.**

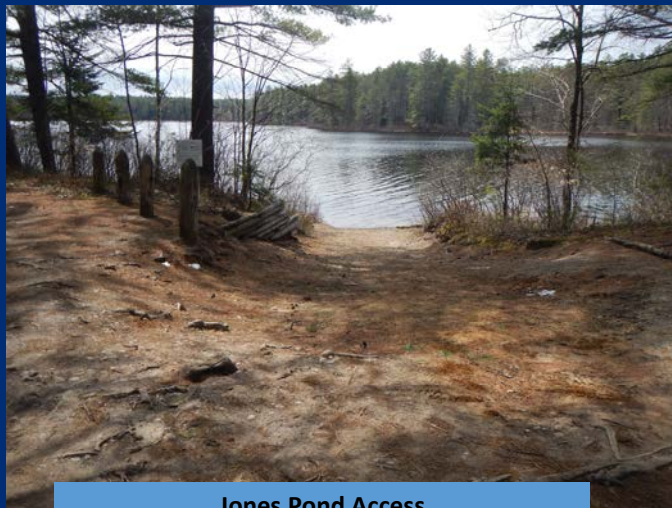
### Fishing and Waterway Access Site

- Does not permit the launching of trailered boats.
- Does not contain a ramp.



There are boat launches at the Meacham Lake and Buck Pond campgrounds that provide access for motorboats to some waters in this unit. Water access sites in the DMC should not allow for trailered boat launching.

## Developed Water Access Sites



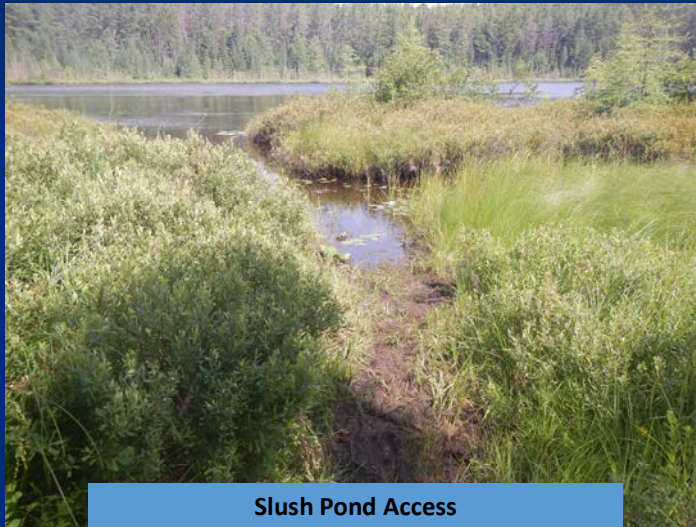
Jones Pond Access



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At current FWAS the UMP proposes to block the launching of trailer boats, increase invasive species awareness, and address impacts from use.

## Informal Water Access



Slush Pond Access

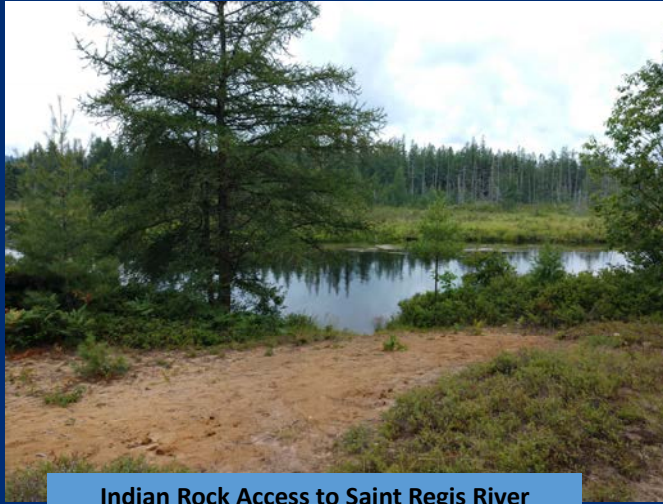


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The UMP proposes to formalize five locations where people are accessing a waterbody at an undeveloped site. This will include invasive species controls and hardening to reduce impacts.



## Canoe Carry Access



Indian Rock Access to Saint Regis River



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Canoe carry access is located further away from a parking area than a fishing and water way access site. The UMP proposes to add canoe carry access to the Osgood River from State Route 30 and to the East Branch Saint Regis River from Red Tavern Road.

## Dams



**Madawaska Pond Dam**



**Santa Clara Dam**

There are 6 DEC owned dams in the DMC. Four of these are proposed to be retained. The DEC is continuing deliberations on what action to take at the dams on Madawaska Pond and Santa Clara Flow. Public comment will be one factor in those deliberations. Options in the UMP are removal of the dams, repair of the dams, or to take not action.

# Trail Usage

## Current Situation

- There are 31 miles of trails.
- Popular trails include:
  - Azure Mountain
  - Debar Mountain
  - Loon Lake Mountain
  - Hays Brook trails
  - D&H Railbed



There are a few trails that go to mountain summits, but many of the trails are on former roads or former railroad beds. The trails near Hays Brook are a very popular area for cross-county skiing

## New Trails

- 53 miles of new trails, including 40 miles of multiple use trails open to mountain bikes. To be built in phases.
- Major proposals:
  - New trail systems near Kate Mountain, Meacham Lake, and Buck Pond.
  - Provide connections between trail systems.
  - Provide a variety of experiences for visitors of all abilities.



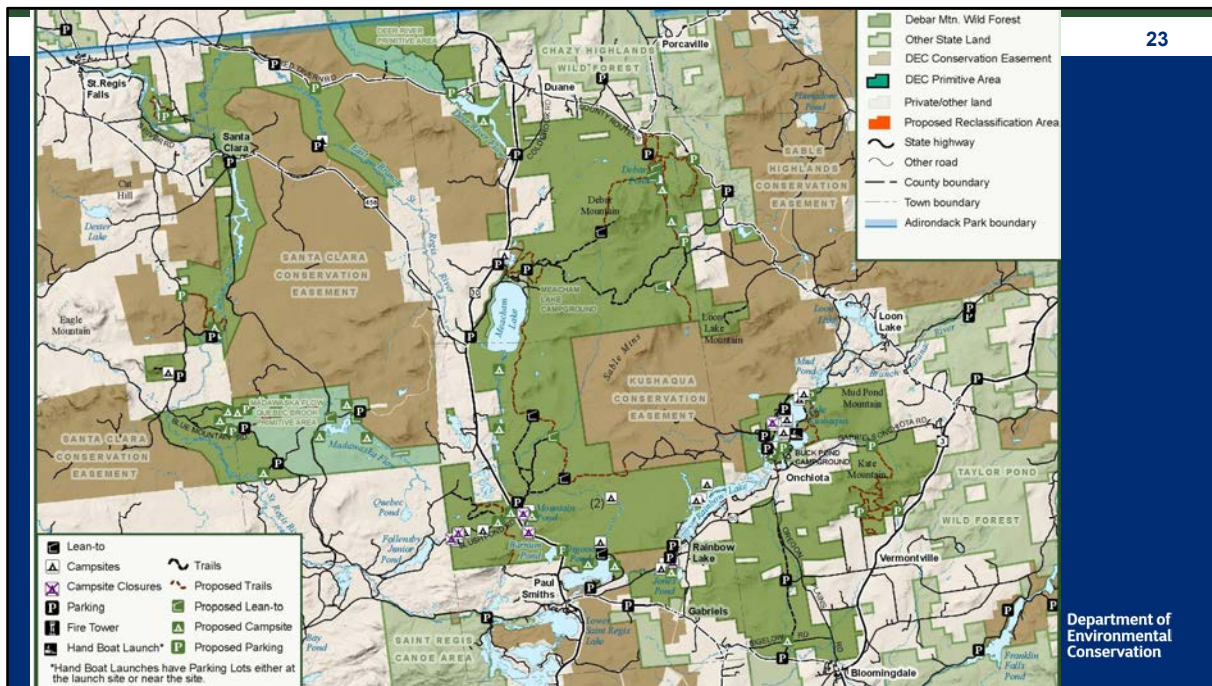
The UMP proposes to build the trail additions in phases. Proposals include a combination of new trail systems, creation of loop trails, and connections to existing trails to form longer distance recreation opportunities.

## Snowmobile trail changes

- Close 9.3 miles of low use trails.
- Build 2.9 miles of new trails.



Snowmobile trails being closed receive little snowmobile use, but are popular ski trails. New trail will provide an important connection from conservation easement lands to existing snowmobile trail route to avoid the use of a county road.



Trail systems will be built at Kate Mountain (providing important community connections), Buck Pond, and Meacham Lake. There will be east/west and north south connector trails.



Debar Pond Area trails will provide opportunities for visitors of all abilities on old carriage roads, a loop around Debar Pond, trail to Baldface Mountain, and connection to Debar Mountain.



## Debar Lodge Day Use Area

**Debar Pond**

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Debar Pond is a scenic 87 acres pond. It is  $\frac{3}{4}$  of a mile long and is  $\frac{1}{3}$  of a mile wide at its widest. The site was developed in the late 1800s with a large estate, which fell into disrepair by the 1930s. The main structures from the estate were removed by 1939 and the current lodge was built in 1940.

**Debar Lodge**

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This was made with log siding, but it is not a full log cabin. In 1979 the State bought 1,300 acres around Debar Pond, including the lodge. As part of the purchase, the lodge complex remained in private use until 2004. In 2014 the lodge was added to the National Register of Historic Places due to its local significance. The National Register of Historic Places lists facilities based on their national, state or local level of significance.

## Alternatives Considered

- Create an intensive use campground.
- Manage Debar Lodge as a historic area.
- Use Debar Lodge for administrative purposes.
- Retain the area as wild forest.



When the private use of Debar Lodge ended in 2004 it was intended that the lodge would be removed. Due to significant public interest in what happens with the property the Department has held off on removing the lodge in order to fully consider all alternatives. The Department has explored many options for reuse of Debar Lodge. DEC examined the condition of the buildings, renovation costs, accessibility standards, the location, and legal considerations in reaching this proposal. The UMP includes 12 alternatives. These alternatives considered the use of the lodge as a historic site, multiple administrative purposes, or to retain as wild forest.

## Description of Proposal



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The proposal presented in detail in the UMP is the best solution and compromise for this situation. It will involve the creation of a day use area to serve as a hub for access to adjacent lands, provide a connection to the history of the site, and be a destination for the community. The proposal will be built in phases to allow for an assessment of the project before proceeding to the second phase. Accessibility for persons with disabilities will be provided throughout the facility. Access is from off of Franklin County Route 26.



**Former air field**



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A former owner of the property was a pilot and had an airfield built on the property. The southern part of this is an open field. The main parking area and other facilities will be built in this area to minimize tree cutting.



The designs show the potential full build out of the proposal. The facility will be built in phases to allow for assessment of conditions before proceeding. The facility will be built to half capacity at first. The management of the site will also be adaptive to the needs. The parking will be located about 700 feet from the picnic area.





Parking for persons with disabilities will be provided near the picnic site. There will be a water access site for handing launching of boats. Motors on the pons will be limited to eclectic motors. Accessible routes for persons with disabilities will be provided. Measures to protect the shoreline will be included.



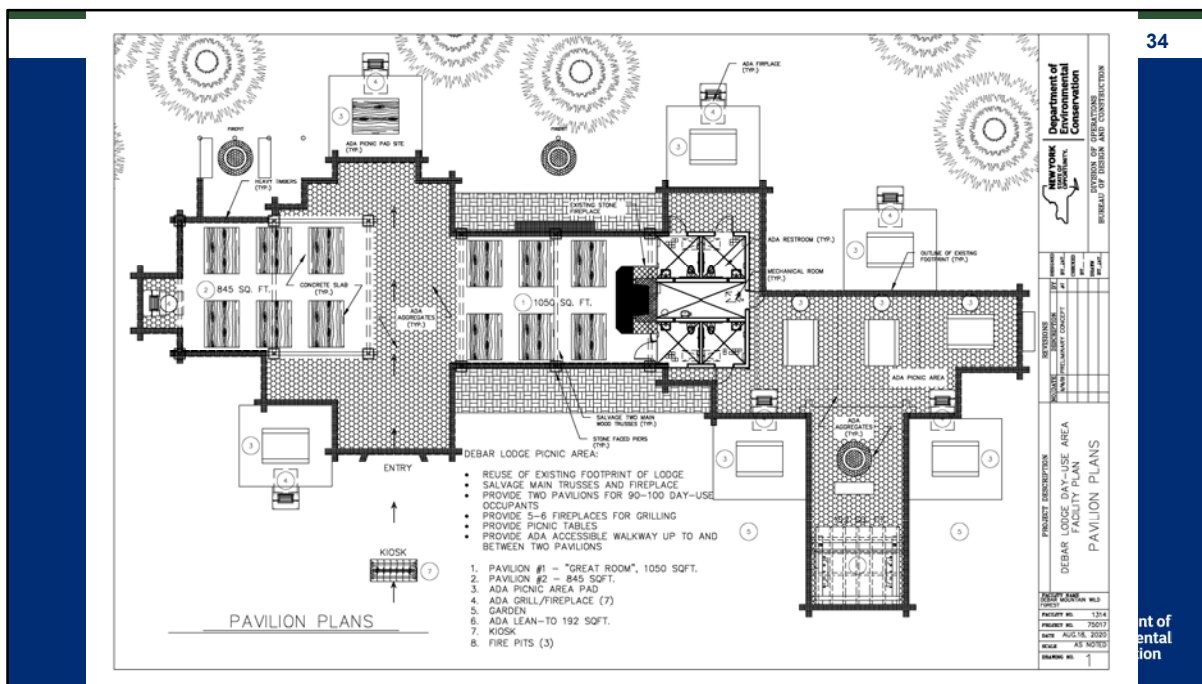


**Debar Lodge Fireplace**

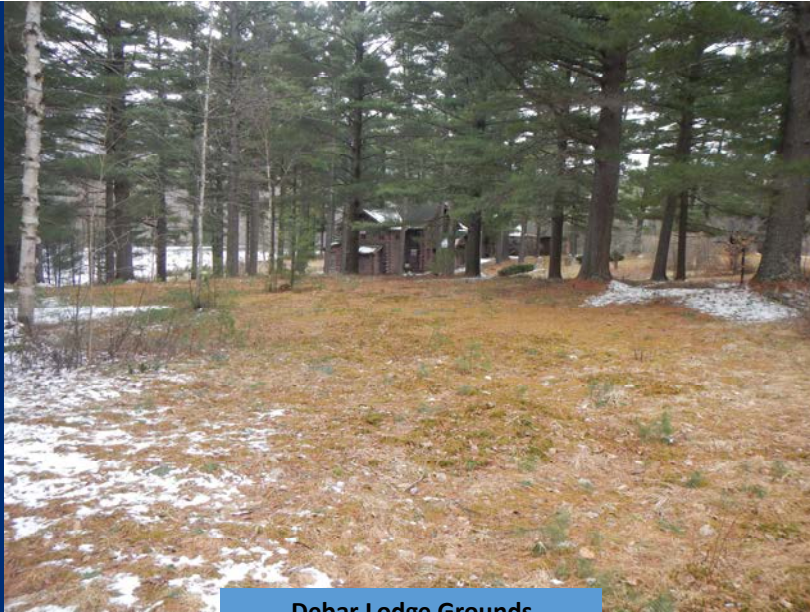


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The day use area will seek to recognize the history of the site through the use of interpretive materials. The plan also seeks to use portions of the lodge into the design of the day use, including the fireplace.



The design places much of the development in the footprint of the lodge. This would reduce the impacts from the project. Accessibility will be provided through the picnic area. Only half the facilities will be built at first to allow of assessments of use to take place before proceeding.

**Debar Lodge Grounds**

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The UMP includes a description of the potential impacts from the proposal. Also included are actions to mitigate these impacts. The proposal seeks to preserve the landscaping at the site, particularly the mature trees and the shoreline vegetation. The retention of these will be critical to mitigating impacts and protecting the character of the area. Building of facilities in phases, monitoring of impacts, and assessing conditions will be used to keep the impacts in check.

## How To Make Written Comments

Written comments may be submitted until February 12, 2021 by email or by mail.

Send written comments by mail to: Steven Guglielmi, NYS DEC, 1115 NYS Route 86, PO Box 296, Ray Brook, NY 12977-0296

Email comments to: [DebarComment@apa.ny.gov](mailto:DebarComment@apa.ny.gov)



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## Public Hearings

Hearings by video and telephone will be held at the following times:

Tuesday, January 19, 2021, from 1:30 pm to 4:00 pm

Tuesday, January 19, 2021, from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm

For further information on attending the remote hearings, visit the APA website: <https://www.apa.ny.gov>



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