



NEW YORK STATE

**Department of Environmental Conservation**

DIVISION OF LANDS & FORESTS

# **Independence River Wild Forest**

## **Amendment**

to the

## **1986 Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan**

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Town of Webb - Herkimer County

Towns of Greig, Lyonsdale and Watson - Lewis County

DAVID A. PATERSON

*Governor*

ALEXANDER B. GRANNIS

*Commissioner*

**For Further Information Contact:**

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**April 2010**

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**RESOLUTION ADOPTED BY  
THE ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY  
WITH RESPECT TO INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST  
UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN AMENDMENT**

**April 15, 2010**

**WHEREAS**, Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act directs the Department of Environmental Conservation to develop, in consultation with the Adirondack Park Agency, individual management plans for units of land classified in the Master Plan for Management of State Lands and requires such management plans to conform to the general guidelines and criteria of the Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, in addition to such guidelines and criteria, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan prescribes the contents of unit management plans and provides that the Adirondack Park Agency will determine whether a proposed individual unit management plan complies with such general guidelines and criteria; and

**WHEREAS**, in 1986 the Department of Environmental Conservation adopted the first unit management plan for the Independence River Wild Forest Area, located in Herkimer and Lewis Counties, and has now prepared an amendment to the plan dated April 2010 which includes proposed management actions for trailhead parking development and foot trail relocation at Stillwater Mountain in the Town of Webb, Herkimer County; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department has filed a SEQOR Negative Declaration and published a notice in the Environmental Notice Bulletin on April 14, 2010; and

**WHEREAS**, the Department of Environmental Conservation is the lead agency, and the Adirondack Park Agency is an involved agency whose staff have been consulted in the preparation of the proposed plan amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Agency is requested to determine whether the final Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan Amendment, dated April 2010, is consistent with the guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan; and

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**WHEREAS**, the Adirondack Park Agency has reviewed the proposed Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan Amendment; and

**WHEREAS**, the Plan recognizes the need to improve public use and enjoyment of the area and prevent overuse of the area according to the guidelines and criteria of the State Land Master Plan; and

**WHEREAS**, the plan recognizes the need to make all road and trailhead systems visible and safe to travel by providing adequate trailhead parking and signing; and

**WHEREAS**, the plan amendment intends to increase opportunities for people with disabilities by providing a new three-car parking area with one accessible parking space in accordance with Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) design guidelines; and

**Whereas**, the plan amendment, by limiting the size of the parking area, is consistent with the land and water's capacity to withstand use; and

**Whereas**, the hikers of Stillwater Mountain currently park at a universally accessible (ADA-compliant) primitive tent site which was built across from the trailhead in 2003; and

**Whereas**, the hiker parking creates a conflict with the parking for the primitive tent site; and

**Whereas**, the plan amendment intends to redirect the current trailhead parking away from the primitive tent site; and

**Whereas**, the plan amendment also details the designation of a new trailhead parking area and trail relocation located in the Independence River Wild Forest Area.

**NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, that pursuant to Section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act, the Adirondack Park Agency finds the Independence River Wild Forest Area Unit Management Plan Amendment, dated April 2010, conforms with the general guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan; and

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**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED**, that the determination of consistency is conditioned on consultation regarding the review of more detailed, to-scale sketch plans for the proposed parking area and on-site consultation for the trail relocation identified in this unit management plan amendment according to the Memorandum of Understanding Between the Adirondack Park Agency and the Department of Environmental Conservation Concerning Implementation of the State Land Master Plan for the Adirondack Park, including the review of the project for potential impacts to freshwater wetlands, minimization of grading and disturbance of vegetation, materials use and signage; and

**BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED**, that the Adirondack Park Agency authorizes its Executive Director to advise the Commissioner of Environmental Conservation of the Agency's determination in this matter.

Resolution adopted on this date, April 15 2010.

AYES: R. Booth, A. Lussi, C. Stiles, W. Thomas,  
J. Townsend, L. Ulrich, C. Wray, E. Lowe (DEC),  
R. Morgiewicz (DOS), P. Wohl (DED)

NAYS: None

ABSTENTIONS: None

ABSENCES: F. Mezzano

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Independence River Wild Forest is located in the Towns of Greig and Watson in Lewis County and the Town of Webb in Herkimer County. The unit contains approximately 76,574 acres. A unit management plan for the unit was completed in 1986. Five amendments have been approved since the original adoption of the UMP; three for the creation and expansion of the Otter Creek Horse Trail System, one for the modification of existing facilities or construction of new facilities as part of the Galusha vs. DEC settlement and one for the closure of motor vehicle roads to ATV use.

The proposal in this amendment is for the construction of a three car parking area, including one accessible space, off the Big Moose Road, and a reroute of the foot trail to the summit of Stillwater Mountain. The need for a new parking area is due to a current conflict between use of the current trailhead and use of a primitive, accessible campsite which is across Big Moose Road from the trailhead. Because the existing trailhead has no official parking, hikers frequently use the parking area for the campsite due to its proximity to the trailhead, thereby inadvertently preventing persons with disabilities from being able to access the primitive campsite. Moving the trailhead and associated parking to another location would improve the likelihood of persons with disabilities gaining access to the campsite.

By moving the trailhead, a short section of the trail to the summit of Stillwater Mountain will also need to be relocated. The existing foot trail and the proposed reroute are on both Forest Preserve and private land. Prior to 2005, the private land section of trail was open at the landowner's discretion. In 2005, however, the State acquired a conservation easement on the private land which, among other things, formalized public use of the trail and the fire tower on Stillwater Mountain, as well as the Department's ability to rehabilitate and maintain them. Public use of the trail on easement lands is permitted from May 1 to, and including, the second Monday of October each year.

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

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

#### **2. Trailhead Parking Development**

The proposed parking area will be constructed in an old borrow pit located along the south side of the Big Moose Road approximately 0.1 miles west of the trail head. Due to terrain and drainages no other suitable alternative sites are present any closer to the existing trail head. In order to provide proper drainage some minor grading of the area will be required. The parking area will be sloped, within ADAAG guidelines, so that water is directed to the south and east ends of the lot. From there it will be carried via a small drainage ditch along the edge of the parking area to the existing ditch line along the road. The existing cut banks of the borrow pit will be back sloped to a minimum slope of 2:1. They will then be seeded and mulched with straw to stabilize the slopes. The existing cut banks are less than four feet in height so back sloping will be limited to within several feet of the parking area. The surface of the parking area will receive a crushed stone/ gravel surface to provide a firm and stable

surface. A new trail register will be installed at the parking area. In order to complete this work the following 16 trees will need to be removed: yellow birch: one - 12", one - 8", one - 6", three - 5" and two - 4"; hard maple: one - 10", two - 6", one - 4" and four - 3".

**5. Foot Trail Development**

**d.** Big Moose Road to Stillwater Mountain Firetower Trail. In order to avoid the need to hike along the Big Moose Road a new class III foot trail will be constructed from the new parking area to the existing trail on easement lands. The new route will be approximately two-tenths of a mile longer than the existing trail. The Universal Trail Assessment Process will be used to evaluate the entire trail and this information will be posted at the trailhead. A small perennial stream will be crossed by constructing a two log wide foot bridge. Additional consultation with APA will be required prior to final siting of the trail location to determine if a wetland permit will be needed.



