

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

Final Environmental Impact Statement

Towns of Watson, Greig and Lyonsdale - Lewis County

Town of Webb - Herkimer County

ANDREW M. CUOMO

Governor

JOE MARTENS

Commissioner

Lead Agency:

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
625 Broadway
Albany, NY 12233

For Further Information Contact:

Keith W. Rivers
New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
7327 State Route 812
Lowville, NY 13367
Phone: (315) 376-3521
Fax: (315) 376-8059
r6ump@gw.dec.state.ny.us

October 2011

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ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12233-1010


JOE MARTENS
COMMISSIONER

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Record
SUBJECT: Independence River Wild Forest
DATE: 10/15/11

The Final Amendment for the Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan has been completed and the Adirondack Park Agency found it to be in conformance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan.

The Final UMP Amendment is consistent with the State Constitution, Environmental Conservation Law, and Department Rules, Regulations and Policies and is hereby approved and adopted.


Joseph J. Martens

Attachment: SEQRA Findings



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

AUGUST 18, 2011

WHEREAS, section 816 of the Adirondack Park Agency Act directs the Department of Environmental Conservation (Department) 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 (Agency) will determine whether a proposed individual unit management plan complies with such general guidelines and criteria; and

WHEREAS, the Department prepared an initial unit management plan for the Independence River Wild Forest in 1986, and has prepared several amendments since then to address various management issues, including improved access for people with disabilities, creation of the Otter Creek horse trail system, and closure of Forest Preserve roads to ATV use; and

WHEREAS, the Department prepared an amendment, dated August, 2011 to reconfigure the snowmobile trail network in the unit and designate trails as Class I secondary trails or Class II community connector trails; and

WHEREAS, the Department issued a Positive Declaration determination for the draft UMP which was published in the Environmental Notice Bulletin (ENB) on June 29, 2011 and a Notice of Acceptance of the Final Environmental Impact Statement for the proposed final unit management plan which was published in the ENB on August 3, 2011; and

WHEREAS, the Agency determined in November, 2009 that "*Management Guidance: Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands In the Adirondack Park*" ("Guidance") was consistent with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and would be jointly implemented by DEC and APA as part of the *Memorandum of Understanding on Implementation of the State Land Master Plan*; and

WHEREAS, the Department has consulted with the Agency staff in the preparation of the Proposed Final Unit Management Plan; and

WHEREAS, the Guidance does not allow road-building equipment to be used to construct or maintain snowmobile trails in the unit and provides that trail work will be performed only under direct Department supervision and oversight using low-impact landscaping equipment in a manner that will protect the wild forest setting; and

WHEREAS, the Department has updated the Adopt a Natural Resource (AANR) Agreements and Temporary Revocable Permits (TRPs) to ensure that the Guidance will be followed for new trail construction and maintenance; and

WHEREAS, the Department will develop and implement Snowmobile Trail Work Plans in direct consultation with Agency staff; and

WHEREAS, the reconfigured trail system in the Unit will provide improved year-round recreational opportunities as well as improvements to the snowmobile trail system; and

WHEREAS, Snowmobile trails in the unit will be reconfigured to reduce impacts to wetlands, reduce the number of stream crossings and remove snowmobile trails from the Scenic River Corridor of the Independence River; and

WHEREAS, the Plan estimates that there will be a net reduction of approximately 9.9 miles of snowmobile trail mileage in the Unit upon implementation of the proposed trail reconfiguration; and

WHEREAS, the Agency is requested to determine whether the proposed final Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan, dated August, 2011, is consistent with the general guidelines and criteria of the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, and the Agency has reviewed the proposed final plan; and

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

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, pursuant to implementing regulations for the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA), the Agency finds that the Independence River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan is consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations and that from among reasonable alternatives available, avoids and/or minimizes any adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable; 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, August 18, 2011.

Ayes: A. Lussi, W. Thomas, L. Ulrich, F. W. Valentino,
 C. Wray, E. Lowe (DEC), D. Scozzafava (DOS)

Nays: None

Abstentions: None

Absences: R. Booth, F. Mezzano, J. Fayle (DED)

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INTRODUCTION

The Independence River Wild Forest is located in the Towns of Greig and Watson, Lewis County and the Town of Webb, Herkimer County. The unit contains approximately 76,574 acres. A unit management plan for the area was completed in 1986. Six amendments have been completed and 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, one for the closure of motor vehicle roads to ATV use and one for a new parking area and relocation of the foot trail to Stillwater Mountain. This proposal is for the classification of all the snowmobile trails in the unit and for the relocation of four existing snowmobile trails or trail segments.

The proposed trail relocations will greatly reduce the number of stream crossings and reduce impacts to wetlands. This amendment will classify all snowmobile trails as either Class I (secondary trails) or Class II (community connector trails) as defined in "Management Guidance: Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack Park", November 2009 (Management Guidance).

IV. PROJECTED USE AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSED

A. Facilities Development and/or Removal

3. Snowmobile Trail Class Designation

The overall network of trails proposed in this amendment is designed to provide community connections between important destinations and communities within and surrounding the Independence River Wild Forest, as well as to maintain a limited number of back country or traditional Adirondack snowmobiling experiences. The trail system is also designed to: a) provide for limited alternatives in the community connection network in anticipation of periodic disruptions in the most commonly used corridors where they may be plowed for winter logging, and b) accommodate the very high volume of snowmobile traffic that typically occurs in this lake effect snowbelt area when other regions of New York are receiving less-than-normal snowfall. The net result of this proposal is a better system of trails for the snowmobiling community, and a system that is more environmentally benign and has fewer miles of snowmobile trails than are currently present.

This UMP Amendment is consistent with the snowmobile trail designation and classification, and best management practices set forth in the Management Guidance, as called for by the "Snowmobile Plan for the Adirondack Park/Final Generic EIS", October 2006 ("2006 Snowmobile Plan or Plan"). The Management Guidance establishes a new class of snowmobile trails (Class II) to provide improved community connections and a class of snowmobile trails (Class I) intended to preserve a more traditional, backcountry type of Adirondack snowmobiling experience. The classification of individual snowmobile trails through this UMP amendment will enhance the Department's ability to manage and monitor snowmobile use while helping to reduce impacts.

Class II (Community Connector) Trails

Snowmobile trails or trail segments that serve to connect communities and provide the main travel routes for snowmobiles within a unit are Community Connector Trails. These trails are located in the periphery of Wild Forest or other Forest Preserve areas. They are always located as close as possible to motorized travel corridors, given safety, terrain and environmental constraints, and only rarely are Class II trail

segments located further than one mile away from the nearest of these motorized corridors. They are not duplicated or paralleled by other snowmobile trails. Some can be short, linking communities to longer Class II trails that connect to other communities.

Class I (Secondary Snowmobile Trails)

All snowmobile trails that are not Community Connector Trails are Secondary Snowmobile Trails. These trails are located in the periphery of Wild Forest and other Forest Preserve areas where snowmobile trails are designated. They may be spur trails leading to population areas and services such as repair shops, service stations, restaurants and lodging. They may also be short loop trails or longer recreational trails. If directly connected to Class II trails, new and rerouted Class I trails are always located as close as possible to—and no farther than one mile from—motorized travel corridors. If not directly connected to Class II trails, they are generally located within one mile of motorized travel corridors, although some – with high recreational value – may be located beyond one mile and may approach a remote interior area.

Snowmobile Use on Roads

Designated snowmobile routes can exist on Forest Preserve roads. DEC management of all such roads for motor vehicle use, including snowmobiles, is guided by “CP-38 Forest Preserve Roads” policy.

Snowmobile Trail Layout and Construction

All Class I and Class II trails (as noted below) will be constructed and maintained in accordance with Management Guidance. These standards consist of best management practices which have been developed to ensure any work on these trails is conducted in a manner that eliminates or minimizes any environmental impacts. The standards will be followed and reflected in the development of Snowmobile Trail Work Plans in order to comply with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan requirement that snowmobile trails have essentially the same character as a foot trail while ensuring they are safe to ride. These Snowmobile Trail Work Plans will be developed by DEC in consultation with APA. As noted in the Management Guidance, only careful use of appropriate low-impact equipment will be approved, as determined by a “minimum requirement” decision making approach (Appendix 1) set forth in the Snowmobile Trail Work Plan. Work on these trails will be conducted during optimal environmental conditions and in a manner that will not contribute to any potential degradation of the wild forest setting. All work will be done with appropriate DEC oversight.

Snowmobile Trail Layout and Construction Best Management Practices

In order to minimize any potential adverse impacts associated with new snowmobile trail construction, the following best management practices will be adhered to:

- Locate trails on old woods roads, trails, and ROW's to the greatest extent possible;
- Avoid grades in excess of 20% unless deemed necessary to minimize environmental impacts;
- Avoid cross slopes greater than 12%;
- Avoid cutting overstory trees to maintain a closed canopy;
- Allow trails to follow the existing contours of the natural forest floor;
- Minimize leveling and grading of trail surface;
- Minimize rock removal, alternatives to rock removal should be considered to minimize ground disturbance;
- Minimize the need for bench cuts through proper trail layout;
- Provide adequate drainage within the trail surface to prevent erosion;
- Utilize bridges to cross areas where natural drainage patterns may be affected;
- Avoid wetlands to the greatest extent possible;

- Locating trails near the periphery of the unit;
- Avoid environmentally sensitive areas, such as; endangered plant or animal populations, remote interior areas, and deer wintering areas.

Community Connection Routes

There are four Community Connection routes proposed for the IRWF. Each will utilize existing motor vehicle roads and Class II trails, some of which, as identified in Section 4 below, are new routes and reroutes. The following tables identify each route by road/trail segments.

Brantingham to Number Four/Old Forge- This combination of roads and trails provides the most direct route between Brantingham and Number Four, Stillwater Reservoir and Old Forge. This route is currently designated as Corridor C7B. One drawback of this route relates to winter timber harvesting on private lands when the 10 Mile Crossing Road is plowed. It may become unusable due to thaws and a lack of snow covering the road late in the season. An alternate, although not direct, route exists utilizing the Brantingham-Glenfield/Chase's Lake-Mt. Tom Community Connection that is the second route described below.

Trail/Road Name	Description	Miles
Catspaw Lake Road	Brantingham to Blueberry Trail	1.9
Blueberry Trail	From Catspaw Lake to Partridgeville Road	2.04
Glenfield Railroad Trail	Partridgeville Road crossing to second crossing, including spur	2.94
10 Mile Crossing Road	Partridgeville Road to McCarthy Road and Three Lakes Trail	2.2 miles on State
McCarthy Road	Lennons Ponds line to North Crossover Trail	3.2
McCarthy Road	From North crossover to Number Four Road	2.0
North Crossover Trail	McCarthy Road to Smith Road Trail	2.78
Smith Road Trail	North Crossover Trail to Smith Road	0.18
Smith Road	Smith Road Trail to Number Four Road	3.8

Brantingham-Glenfield/Chase's Lake-Mt. Tom - This existing route leaves Brantingham as Corridor C8G and connects to Corridor C8A at Chase's Lake. At that intersection snowmobile traffic may head west to Glenfield and the northern Tug Hill region or east to eventually connect to the previously described route.

Trail/Road Name	Description	Miles
Erie Canal Trail	Catspaw Lake Road to Confusion Flats Road	1.5
Confusion Flats Road	Erie Canal Trail to Florence Pond Road	0.94
Florence Pond Road	Confusion Flats to Little Otter Lake Road	0.8
Little Otter Lake Road	Florence Pond Road to Cow Trail	0.4
Cow Trail	Little Otter Lake Road to Hinchings Pond Road	1.3
Hinchings Pond Road	Cow Trail to Hinchings Pond Trail	0.7
Hinchings Pond Trail	Hinchings Pond Road to Stoney Lake Road	1.08
Stoney Lake Road	Hinchings Pond Trail to end Town Road	0.2
Stoney Lake Road	End Town Road to private lands	2.5
Stoney Lake Road	Easement across private	0.5

Mt. Tom West Road	Private lands east to private lands	1.0
Mt. Tom Club	Easement across private	1.7
Mt. Tom East Trail	Private lands to 10 Mile Crossing Road	1.10

Brantingham-Lyons Falls - This route, designated as part of Corridor C8B, utilizes mostly town roads and only crosses a short portion of Forest Preserve. A recent decision by the Town of Lyons Falls to begin plowing part of the Town Line Road necessitates the opening of a short, new route across Forest Preserve(described in Section 4) and State Reforestation lands to avoid conflicts with plowed roads.

Trail Road Name	Description	miles
North-South Road (T)	Brantingham to Town Line Road	3.12
Town Line Road (T)	North-South Road to Town Line Road Cutoff	0.7
Town Line Road Cutoff Trail	Town Line Road to Shibley Road	0.55
Beech Flats trail	Shibley Road to Lyons Falls	(0.3 miles on FP)

(T)- Town Road

Catspaw Lake Road Spur - To maintain continuity in the system of State and private trails within the hamlet of Brantingham, the opening of a short section of old road as a Class II trail is proposed. This route allows access to and from Brantingham Lake itself as well as the Brantingham Community to the larger system for both snowmobiles and for grooming. Without this route, snowmobilers wishing to go north towards the Chase's Lake area are required to travel east then loop around to the north and then west before eventually heading north. This route allows a direct link into the community connector system, avoiding a several mile trip in the opposite direction. Additionally, this route allows snowmobiles and groomers to avoid a portion of the Partridgeville Road, a plowed Town road that also passes several residences. The new route is approximately 600 feet in length and follows an old woods road that was closed to motor vehicle use prior to 1972.

Proposed Snowmobile Trail Class Designation

Snowmobile trails have been classified in accordance with the Management Guidance and based on the ultimate trail configuration proposed for the unit. Decisions about what type of grooming equipment will be allowed on each trail will be made through the AANR agreement with the club responsible for grooming, and based on the Class designation.

Trails within the IRWF to be Classified as Class I Trails

Stillwater Spur - (0.55 miles) This trail connects the East Loop Road to the Big Moose Tract(Lyme) Conservation Easement. Currently there is no trail connection across the Big Moose Tract from this route. A new route connecting to the hamlet of Stillwater at Stillwater Reservoir will be explored as part of the upcoming UMP revision for IRWF. Should this route become part of that new connection the UMP would propose reclassifying this route to a Class II trail.

Sunday Lake Slide - (0.85 miles) this trail connects the McCarthy Road to the Basket Factory Road while avoiding the need to ride a plowed road. A new route connecting to the hamlet of Stillwater at Stillwater Reservoir will be explored as part of the UMP revision for IRWF. Should this route become part of that new connection the UMP would propose reclassifying this route to a Class II trail.

Panther Pond Trail - (0.94 miles) This route provides access to the lean-to at Panther Pond. This location is a popular backcountry destination for riders.

Silvermine Trail - (3.31 miles) This trail connects the Partridgeville Road to the 10 Mile Crossing Road and is part of a Class I trail from Brantingham to the 10 Mile Crossing Road. Maintaining this route as a class I trail will provide a backcountry type experience which many local riders desire. The portion of this trail that is proposed to be closed (see Section 3 Snowmobile Trail Development/Relocation) will be abandoned and not maintained for any uses.

Pine Lake Trail - (4.52 miles) This route runs from the Partridgeville Road to Pine Lake and Big Otter Lake, both popular riding destinations. The route also connects to the Pico Mountain Trail and to the Silvermine Trail.

Pico Mountain Trail - (3.95 miles) This trail connects the Pine Lake Trail to the Steam Mill Road and Brantingham.

O'Hara Trail - (0.16 miles) This short trail connects the Pine Lake Trail to the Partridgeville Road and the Silvermine Trail.

Hiawatha Trail - (0.59 miles) This route connects the Confusion Flats Road to the Erie Canal Road, a town road. Although it doesn't receive a lot of use it will be maintained as a Class I trail to facilitate access.

Cleveland Lake Trail - (0.53 miles) This lightly used route connects two unplowed town roads.

Trails within the IRWF to be classified as Class II Trails

North Crossover Trail- (2.78 miles) Following the proposed reroute described in Section 4, this trail will become the connector between Brantingham and Number Four Road. Once established, the existing connector on the Smith Road Trail/Emmett Hill Road will be abandoned. The abandoned portion of this trail will not be maintained for any uses.

Smith Road Trail- (0.18 miles) This short trail section connects the Smith Road and the North Crossover Trail.

Glenfield Railroad Trail- (2.94 miles) This trail is part of the route connecting the 10 Mile Crossing Road to Brantingham.

Blueberry Trail - (2.04 miles) This trail is part of the route connecting the 10 Mile Crossing Road to Brantingham. A portion of this trail also connects Brantingham to the Erie Canal Trail and points north.

Erie Canal Trail - (1.49 miles) Part of the Brantingham-10 Mile Crossing Road connection, via Stoney Lake. This trail provides the only trail crossing of Otter Creek. It connects the Blueberry Trail to the Confusion Flats Road and is an alternate route to the Glenfield Railroad Trail. It is expected to receive moderate to high use when the 10 Mile Crossing Road is plowed.

Cow Trail - (1.22 miles) Part of the Brantingham-10 Mile Crossing Road connection, via Stoney Lake. This trail connects the Little Otter Lake Road to the Hinchings Pond Road.

Hinchings Pond Trail - (1.08 miles) Part of the Brantingham-10 Mile Crossing Road connection, via Stoney Lake. Connects Hinchings Pond Road to Stoney Lake Road.

Mt. Tom East Trail - (1.10 miles) Part of the Brantingham-10 Mile Crossing Road connection, via Stoney Lake, Connects the Mt. Tom Road to the 10 Mile Crossing Road. The proposed reroute of this trail as described in Section 4 will avoid numerous places along the existing route where water on the trail is a constant issue and the reroute will move the existing trail out of the one-quarter mile scenic river corridor. The abandoned portion of this trail will not be maintained for any uses.

Town Line Road Cutoff- (0.3 miles) This new route as described in Section 4 would avoid plowed sections of two town roads.

Catspaw Lake Spur- (0.1 miles) This new route as described in Section 4 utilizes an old road and provides access to services and will allow users to connect to other Class II trails without having to travel a town road.

4. Snowmobile Trail Development/ Relocation

There are four trails that need work/relocation to remedy environmental problems as well as bring them up to the Class I or Class II Adirondack Forest Preserve snowmobile trail standards. Past illegal ATV use has damaged some trail segments, and although this use has been mostly eliminated, impacts from this illegal use have caused trails to degrade to a point where they are no longer usable or correcting the damage to bring the trail back to a minimum standard is not feasible. Continued education and enforcement on illegal ATV use will prevent this type of trail damage from occurring in the future. Although illegal ATV use has caused some issues, many issues are due to trails being located in poor locations, on old roads supported by corduroy and changes in drainage patterns caused by beavers. Currently there are a total of 78.17 miles of snowmobile trails on the IRWF unit. Implementation of the proposals in this amendment will result in the complete closure of 10.34 miles of existing trails, the re-routing of 4.1 miles of trails, and the creation of 0.4 miles of new snowmobile trails not associated with a re-route. These changes would bring the net total of snowmobile trails in the unit to 68.23 miles, with a net loss of 9.94 miles of trail from the existing snowmobile trail system.

North Crossover Trail

The North Crossover Trail (C7F) currently provides an alternative route between the McCarthy Road (C7B) and the Smith Road (C8A) corridor trails. The trail receives light to moderate use as most snowmobile traffic utilizes the Emmett Hill Road/Smith Road Trail route. In recent years the Smith Road Trail has developed numerous deep waterholes. This route, once a former winter logging road, crosses numerous wetlands and was supported by corduroy, which is now deteriorating. Due to the numerous wetlands, there are no alternatives for rerouting any sections of the Smith Road trail. Bridging the wetlands is not feasible due to the extent and lengths of the wetlands crossings. In order to minimize adverse impacts associated with the existing route, the following alternatives were explored.

No Action Alternative - The “No Action” alternative, in this case, would leave the trail in its current location impacting a large amount of wetlands and would require the construction of five bridges ranging in length from 12 feet to 40 feet to make the trail passable. Allowing the trail to impact wetlands and the amount of bridge construction needed, which would detract from the naturalness of the area, is not consistent with the Management Guidance. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 1- Relocate those portions of the existing trail impacting wetlands- Due to the extensive wetland systems in this area no alternate routes exist that can avoid them. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 2- Relocate the Smith Road Trail between the Smith Road and the Emmett Hill Road- This route was looked at as a possibility but was quickly dismissed due to difficult terrain, numerous small stream and wetlands. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 3- Close the Smith Road Trail and Emmett Hill Road and utilize the North Crossover Trail as the Community Connector- This alternative was the first one explored to resolve the issues with the Smith Road Trail. To utilize the existing North Crossover Trail would require the construction or reconstruction of five bridges and would require building trail through wetlands. To keep the construction of facilities like bridges to a minimum as well as to avoid wetlands, the use of this route will not be supported.

Alternative 4 (Preferred Alternative) - Utilize the eastern portion of the existing North Crossover Trail and reroute the sections impacting wetlands and requiring bridge crossings This alternative would reroute the western 1.1 miles of the existing North Crossover Trail to a new route, approximately 1.0 miles in length. The proposed route follows an old woods road to within 200 feet of intersecting the existing trail. The route requires no stream crossings and does not impact any wetlands. The last 200 feet of this route would be a new trail through the woods but tree cutting would be minimal if needed. From the intersection of the rerouted section the existing trail will be used to reach the McCarthy Road. Following the establishment of this route, the Smith Road Trail, Emmett Hill Road and the western portion of the North Crossover Trails will be closed to snowmobiling. Work plans will be developed for the permanent closure and restoration, to the greatest extent possible, of the old routes. The net result of this action will be the closure of 4.4 miles of currently designated snowmobile trails and removal of snowmobiles from the 2.1 mile long Emmett Hill Road, a private ROW.

Proposed reroute:

The existing North Crossover Trail offers an alternative to the Smith Road Trail to connect the Smith Road and McCarthy Road. The existing route has five stream crossings with only one currently bridged. The trail is also flooded by beaver activity along a section approximately 1000 feet in length. For these reasons, this trail has never been fully utilized as the preferred route. During the fall of 2010 a new route for the western 1.1 miles of the North Crossover Trail was scouted. This route utilizes an old woods road for all but the last several hundred feet. The new route is 1.0 miles in length and requires no stream or wetland crossings. To establish this route as a snowmobile trail would require limited work, primarily brushing and signing. Utilizing the rerouted North Crossover Trail as part of the Community Connector Trail system would allow for the abandonment of the Emmett Hill Road/ Smith Road Trail portions of the system. In addition, the East Bridge Trail, which has not been used in many years due to the bridge over the Independence River being unsafe, would also be abandoned. This reconfiguration would result in the abandonment of 8.94 miles of existing snowmobile trails. Following this reroute the North Crossover Trail will be built and maintained as a Class II trail.

Mount Tom Trail East

The Mount Tom East Trail is part of Corridor C8A, which ultimately connects the Tug Hill/ Lewis County region to Cranberry Lake and points north and east. This trail receives moderate to heavy use depending on the status of Corridor C7B, which follows the Ten Mile Crossing Road. Most years Corridor C7B is plowed for winter timber harvesting, which limits its use, especially during thaws or late in the season. The existing Mount Tom East Trail goes through numerous wetland areas and in many cases there is water

running in the trail bed. In addition, a portion of this route is within the Scenic River corridor of the Independence River. A relocation of this trail outside of the river corridor would help further the goals of the Wild Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act (WSRRA). The following alternatives were considered in finding an appropriate alternate route.

No Action Alternative - The "No Action" alternative would leave the existing trail open in its current location. Doing so would continue to cause impacts to wetlands and would continue a motorized use within a scenic river corridor. The poor condition of the trail, due to numerous wetland crossings, would not facilitate its use as a community connector trail. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 1 - Relocate those sections of trail impacting streams and wetlands- Due to the numerous wetlands and streams located in the vicinity of the existing route this alternative is not feasible. Additionally, existing sections of this route are located within the scenic river corridor for the Independence River and although there is no requirement to move these sections out of the river corridor, doing so would further the purposes of the WSRRA. For these reasons this alternative will not be supported.

The following four alternatives follow several of the same old woods roads in varying degrees.

Alternative 2 - Reroute the entire trail from the Mt. Tom Club boundary to the Ten Mile Crossing Road utilizing several old woods roads and join the Ten Mile Crossing Road farthest to the east- This route would follow old woods roads and trails for its entire 1.5 mile length. The route would require four bridges and several wetland crossings. Due to the number of bridges required and the wetlands impacted, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 3 - Similar to the previous alternative, this route would follow the same old woods roads for the first 1.1 miles. It would then head southerly for .35 miles to the Ten Mile Crossing Road. This route would require at least four bridges and would also require some extensive rock removal to be suitable as a snowmobile trail. For these reason this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 4 (preferred alternative) - This alternative would follow the same woods road as above for the first 0.6 miles. From that point it would follow an old road/trail an additional 0.2 miles to two stream crossings. The crossing would require two bridges located approximately 150 apart. After crossing the southernmost stream the trail heads southerly 0.4 miles through open hardwoods, to the Ten Mile Crossing Road. Some minor rock removal/relocation may be required along a short section of this route. As this route has less wetland impacts, requires less bridge construction and is the most direct route, it will be supported as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 5 - Similar to alternative 4 but would cross the stream further to the west. The stream crossing would consist of one longer bridge, but both approaches would require either extensive wooden approaches or extensive rock removal/relocation. This route passes through more wetland than does alternative 4. For these reasons this alternative will not be supported.

Proposed reroute:

A new trail location is being proposed that would minimize the number of stream/wetland crossings and move the trail outside of the Scenic River corridor. The new route would begin near the boundary with the Mt. Tom Club and proceed south, for approximately 0.6 miles, on an old woods road. After crossing another old woods road, the route would continue southeasterly along an old trail for about 0.2 miles to a stream crossing. Due to the nature of the drainages in the area two bridges will be required. The bridges

will be located approximately 150 feet apart, each crossing a separate branch of the stream. The route would then continue southeasterly for approximately 0.4 miles to the intersection with the 10 Mile Crossing Road. The new route is 0.6 miles shorter than the existing route and is entirely outside of the scenic river corridor. Once this new route is constructed the existing trail will be abandoned and where necessary, water control devices installed to prevent future erosion issues. The new route would be built and maintained as a Class II trail.

Silvermine Trail

The Silvermine Trail is currently maintained as an un-groomed secondary route that connects the Pine Lake Trail (S-78) and the 10 Mile Crossing Road (C7B), providing a backcountry loop through the Independence River Wild Forest. The existing route has numerous stream crossings, some of which are bridged with narrow bridges. Most of these existing bridges are in disrepair and are in need of replacement. There are several steep rocky sections of the existing trail that make safe passage with a snowmobile difficult. To avoid unsafe sections of the trail and the need for most of these bridges and to avoid other trail issues a new route was sought out. The following alternatives were considered.

No Action Alternative - The “No Action” alternative would continue to utilize the existing route as the trail. Doing so would require the construction of numerous bridges to make the route safe for snowmobiling. As extensive bridge construction detracts from the undeveloped character and naturalness of the area, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 1 - Rehabilitate the existing trail- To make the existing route passable and safe would require the construction of at least six bridges and extensive rock removal. For these reasons this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 2 (preferred alternative) - This alternative would use the first 1.5 miles of the existing Silvermine Trail beginning at the Partridgeville Road. A new trail would then follow an old woods road approximately 1.9 miles to the Ten Mile Crossing Road (C7B). There are several locations along the existing trail which require some trail work to help get water off from the trail bed. One bridge replacement will also be required along the existing trail section. No bridges or wetland crossings are required along the new route. As this route utilizes existing trails and old woods roads for its entire length, minimizes stream and wetland crossings and provides a safe snowmobile route it will be supported.

Alternative 3 - This alternative would reroute much of the existing trail between the Partridgeville Road and the old woods road connecting to the Ten Mile Crossing Road. Several attempts were made to find a suitable route to accomplish this, but due to numerous wetlands and stream crossings no potential routes were located. As no suitable route was located this alternative cannot be further considered.

Proposed reroute:

This route would utilize approximately 1.5 miles of the existing trail, and may include some minor trail relocations. The route then utilizes an old woods road heading northwest for approximately 1.9 miles. This route intersects the 10 Mile Crossing Road (C7B) approximately 3.7 miles west of where it currently does. The entire length of this route would be within one mile of either a State land boundary or a motorized route. This route would result in a reduction of 1.8 miles of existing trail mileage. The trail will be maintained as a Class I trail.

Town Line Road Cutoff

Currently trail C8B utilizes portions of the Town Line Road and the Shibley Roads, the latter being a plowed road. Beginning in 2012 the Town of Lyonsdale will also be plowing a portion of the Town Line Road, and Trail C8B is the major connection between the IRWF and the Tug Hill Region. For health and safety reasons, this trail needs to be relocated. The following two alternatives were considered for this route.

No Action Alternative - The “No Action” alternative would require snowmobiles to share a plowed road with motor vehicles, potentially creating an unsafe condition. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 1 (preferred alternative) - The only alternative that can be explored, aside from the no action alternative, is to open the route as a snowmobile trail. As this route follows an old road, is very near the Forest Preserve Boundary and will provide a safer snowmobile route than the current town road, it will be supported as the preferred alternative.

Proposal:

This proposal would utilize an abandoned woods road approximately 0.55 miles in length, to avoid 0.8 miles of plowed town roads. 0.3 miles of the proposed route crosses Forest Preserve, with the remainder being on State Reforestation lands. This route is part of Corridor C8B, the major route between the IRWF and the Tug Hill region. To establish this route primarily only minor brushing and the removal of earthen berms on either end of the route would be required. Gates will be installed on both ends of the route to eliminate any unauthorized motor vehicle use.

Catspaw Lake Spur

Currently this old road, approximately 600 feet in length, is utilized as a “bootleg” trail to access the private land trails, leading to services, in the hamlet of Brantingham Lake. Currently, those snowmobiles trying to go from Brantingham to the Chase’s Lake area must travel several miles in the opposite direction before reaching a trail that would take them north or travel plowed town roads. Opening this route as a designated snowmobile trail will provide a more direct link between Brantingham and the Chase’s Lake area and also help reduce the amount of snowmobile traffic on the town road and away from local residences. The following two alternatives were considered for this route.

No Action Alternative - The “No Action” alternative, in some cases, forgoes the recreational opportunity and economic benefits of snowmobile-based tourism. Taking no action at this point may also allow trails to remain in use that are either not as environmentally sound or as safe as the proposed trails. Therefore, this alternative will not be supported.

Alternative 1 (preferred alternative) - The only alternative that can be explored, aside from the no action alternative, is to open the route as a snowmobile trail. As this route follows an old road, is very near the Forest Preserve Boundary and will provide a more logical connection between private trails and Forest Preserve trails while avoiding town roads, it will be supported as the preferred alternative.

Projected Use and Potential Impacts of Proposed Relocations

The ability to establish and maintain suitable snowmobile trail links between area communities is an important goal. It is possible, but not a given, that overall snowmobile use levels would increase with the relocation of important trails to more suitable locations. The ability to ride greater distances and access

more of the Park-wide trail network may also lead to increased use over current levels. However, it is difficult to predict how large the increases would be. A discussion on potential impacts associated with snowmobile use can be found in Appendix E of the 2006 Snowmobile Plan (<http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/27707.html>)

Any increase in use due to the construction of new routes is offset by the closure of existing trails within the interior of the unit. Not only is the mileage of proposed trail closures much greater than the mileage proposed to be constructed, but with regard to the general effects on wild forest character, the beneficial effects resulting from the removal of interior trails are likely to exceed the negative impacts caused by the construction of more peripheral trails.

Some tree cutting and the removal of other vegetation will be necessary for the construction of proposed trails. Bench cutting may be required in some locations in order to overcome topography. These cuts will be minimized to the greatest extent possible but may be necessary to locate the trail closer to the periphery. Other possible adverse impacts may include temporary disturbance to streams and wetlands, such as increased soil erosion and siltation and stream bottom disturbance. There may be minor noise impacts during construction. Potential environmental impacts will be minimized through the application of best management practices during route selection and trail construction.

Monitoring will be important to ensure that environmental degradation of the trail is minimized. If degradation were to occur, the Department would take appropriate mitigation actions, including increased maintenance activities, education and other management actions. The Department would work with local snowmobile clubs and the towns to monitor use and to coordinate maintenance activities through the use of Temporary Revocable Permits or Adopt-a-Natural-Resource (stewardship) Agreements.

Summary of Designated Snowmobile Trails (not including roads) in IRWF

The following table identifies trail classifications and revised trail mileage for all snowmobile trails within the IRWF.

Snowmobile Trail Name	Miles open in 2011	Snowmobile Trail description	Post UMP Amendment Miles	DEC Trail Class ¹
Stillwater Spur	0.55	East Loop Road east to boundary.	0.55	I
Sunday Lake Slide	0.85	McCarthy Road east to Basket Factory Road	0.85	I
North Crossover Trail	2.93	Smith Road Trail east to McCarthy Road	2.78	II
Panther Pond Trail	0.94	Smith Road Trail to Panther Pond	0.94	I

¹ As defined in the November 2009, *Management Guidance- Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack Park*.

Smith Road Trail	3.39	Pine Creek gate south to Emmett Hill Road	0.18	II
East Bridge Trail	3.77	Emmett Hill Road south across Independence River to Mt. Tom Road East	0	NA
Silvermine Trail	5.19	10 Mile Road to Partridgeville Road	3.31	I
Pine Lake Trail	4.52	Partridgeville Road to Big Otter Lake via Pine Lake	4.52	I
O'Hara Trail	0.16	Pine Lake Trail west to boundary	0.16	I
Pico Mountain Trail	3.95	Pine Lake Trail to Steam Mill Road	3.95	I
Glenfield Railroad Trail	2.94	Partridgeville Road easterly to Partridgeville Road, including spur	2.94	II
Blueberry Trail	2.04	Partridgeville Road westerly to Catspaw Lake Road	2.04	II
Erie Canal Trail	1.49	Confusion Flats Road south to Catspaw Lake Road	1.49	II
Hiawatha Trail	0.59	Confusion Flats Road westerly to boundary	0.59	I
Cow Trail	1.22	Little Otter Creek Road northerly to Hinchings Pond Road	1.22	II
Hinchings Pond Trail	1.08	Hinchings Pond Road north to Stony Lake Road	1.08	II
Cleveland Lake Trail	0.53	Cleveland Lake Road to Beech Mill Road	0.53	I
Mt. Tom East Trail	1.72	Mt. Tom Club east bounds to 10 Mile Road	1.10	II
Catspaw Lake Spur	0	Catspaw Lake Road to private boundary	0.1	II
Town Line Road Cutoff	0	Town Line Road to Shibley Road	0.3	II
Total trail mileage	37.86		28.63	

5. Discussion of “No Material Increase”

The APSLMP requires that there be no *material increase in the mileage of roads and snowmobile trails open to motorized use by the public in wild forest areas that conformed to the master plan at the time of its original adoption in 1972*. Further, the APSLMP states that *“the mileage of snowmobile trails lost in the designation of wilderness, primitive and canoe areas may be replaced in wild forest areas with existing roads or abandoned wood roads as a basis of such new snowmobile trail construction, except in rare circumstances requiring the cutting of new trails;”* and that *“wherever feasible such replacement mileage should be located in the general area as where mileage is lost due to wilderness, primitive or canoe classification.”*

While the material increase provision applies to all wild forest areas on a Park-wide basis, efforts are made during the planning process for each unit to close unsuitable snowmobile trails to help compensate for new snowmobile trail mileage necessary for trail relocations or new community connector links where they may be determined to be possible and desirable. In order to determine what contribution proposals of this UMP amendment would make to a “material increase” or decrease in trail mileage, it was necessary to document existing mileage in the unit and compare that mileage to the total mileage proposed in this plan. Implementation of all the proposed snowmobile trail changes in this UMP amendment will result in the closure of 10.34 miles of existing trails open to snowmobiling, the re-routing of 4.1 miles of trail, and the creation of approximately 0.4 miles of new trails.

In March of 2008 the Adirondack Park Agency adopted a resolution which found that existing DEC policy, which places a cap on the total snowmobile trail mileage on all wild forest units at 848.88 miles, is consistent with the APSLMP. The resolution also outlined the format in which snowmobile trail mileage should be presented in future UMPs and UMP amendments. This table is presented below.

This Unit Management Plan

Base Snowmobile Trail Mileage: 78.17
Proposed Closure Mileage: 14.44 (*4.1 miles of which are trail re-routes, and also shown as new mileage below*)
Proposed New Trail Mileage: 4.5

Park-wide Trail Mileage:

1972 Mileage	Estimated Existing Mileage in All Wild Forest Units	Proposed Net Gain/(Loss) of Mileage in IRWF	New Total Estimated Mileage in All Wild Forest Units	Total Allowable Wild Forest Mileage * *Mileage beyond which would be considered a “material increase”
740	770.71	(9.94)	760.77	848.88

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APPENDIX 1: *Minimum Tool Decision Approach*

Determining the Minimum Tool for Snowmobile Trail Construction

The following analysis will be used in determining the appropriate tool(s) to accomplish the project or proposed activity with the least impact to the wild forest resource. This analysis should be documented and made part of the work plan for snowmobile trail construction or rehabilitation.

At a minimum consider the following three alternative approaches:

- Alternative 1: use of motorized equipment or mechanical transport.
- Alternative 2: use of non-motorized equipment and non-motorized transport.
- Alternative 3: variations of alternatives 1 and 2.

DESCRIBE THE ALTERNATIVES. BE SPECIFIC AND PROVIDE DETAIL.

- What is proposed? New trail construction, trail rehabilitation, trail classification etc.
- Why is it being proposed in this manner? Location?
- Benefits of proposal? Resource protection, enhancement of trail system etc.
- When will the project take place? Season of construction. Can materials be brought on site during winter months to reduce impacts?
- Where will project take place? Specific site location, discuss alternative routes explored.

UTILIZE THE FOLLOWING CRITERIA TO ASSESS EACH ALTERNATIVE:

Biophysical effects

- Describe the environmental resource issues that would be affected by the project. Wetlands, streams, maintenance of over story canopy, remote interior areas, deer wintering areas, rare, threatened or endangered species etc.
- Describe any effects the project will have on protecting natural conditions. Terrain alteration, rock removal or placement, bridging, tree cutting etc. Discuss how these will be accomplished and alternatives considered.
- Include both biological and physical effects.

Social effects

- Describe how the wild forest character may be affected by the project.
- Describe effects on other recreational use and enjoyment of the area by the project. User conflicts etc.

Rules, regulations, policies and laws

- Describe how the project complies with existing Department policies, rules and regulations etc.
- Describe how the project complies with the APSLMP.

Health and safety

- Describe and consider any health and safety concerns associated with the proposed action. Consider types of tools used to ensure a safe work environment. Also consider the effect the proposed action will have on the health and safety of the public.

Economic considerations

- Describe the costs associated with implementing each alternative. Transportation of materials and personnel.

CHOOSE A PREFERRED APPROACH FROM THE ALTERNATIVES DESCRIBED ABOVE.

FURTHER REFINE THE ALTERNATIVE TO MINIMIZE IMPACTS TO THE WILD FOREST.

- What will be specific operating requirements? If motorized equipment is used who will operate it, conditions operation is permitted (dry conditions vs. wet weather etc.)
- Describe any mitigation measures that apply.

REMEMBER the minimum tool determination is not a justification for the use of motorized equipment. It is to assist in determining the appropriate tool(s) to accomplish a project or proposed activity with the least impact to character of the surrounding wild forest.

APPENDIX 2: Public Comment Summary and Responses

The following is a summary of public comments received between June, 2011 and July, 2011 following the release of the Draft amendment to the IRWF UMP. The Department received three comment letters regarding the amendment. In addition, oral comments were received at a public meeting held on July 19, 2011 at the Lowville DEC Office. The meeting was attended by nine people with several making public comments. While the intent is to use actual excerpts where possible, in many cases it was necessary to condense and paraphrase. In some instances comments were too general or not within the scope of this amendment for a specific response. Instances where public input pointed out minor factual mistakes, typos, etc. resulted in corrections or changes made directly to the plan.

1. Several comments questioned the legality of terms and potential management actions identified in the “Management Guidance: Snowmobile Trail Siting, Construction and Maintenance on Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack Park”.

The referenced “Management Guidance” document was found to be compliant with the APSLMP by the APA and has been adopted by the Department to guide snowmobile trail use and maintenance on the Forest Preserve.

2. Class I trails, with grooming only by a drag behind a snowmobile, remain an alternative to Class II trails in this UMP.

Although Class I trails are an alternative, they are not the preferred alternative in many cases. Class II trails serve as the major connections between Adirondack communities. These trails receive the highest amount of use and therefore require a higher level of maintenance, including grooming.

3. It is unclear why DEC would only address the portions of this unit plan that refer to snowmobiling and leave the remainder of the update for some other time.

This amendment is being completed at this time because the APA resolution finding the “Management Guidance” conforming to the APSLMP called for all existing wild forest UMP’s to be amended to meet those standards. Additionally, funding became available to relocate those trail sections that are having impacts on resources. As this funding is not permanent, it is necessary to move forward through the amendment process, rather than a full UMP revision, to complete these projects in a timely manner.

4. Reconsider the Pico Mountain and Pine Lake trail’s status as a snowmobile trail. This trail, which runs along the edge of the Ha-De-Ron-Dah Wilderness, provides direct access into the Wilderness trail system.

Both the Pico Mountain and Pine Lake Trails offer snowmobile access to an area that has high recreational value for snowmobilers’ looking for a more remote backcountry experience. As these trails meet all the requirements of the “Management Guidance” they will be retained as Class I trails. DEC is very aware of potential issues with illegal motor vehicle use into the adjoining wilderness area and will continue to take measures necessary to eliminate that use.

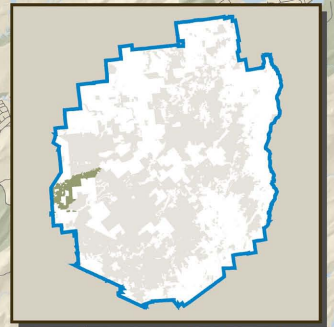
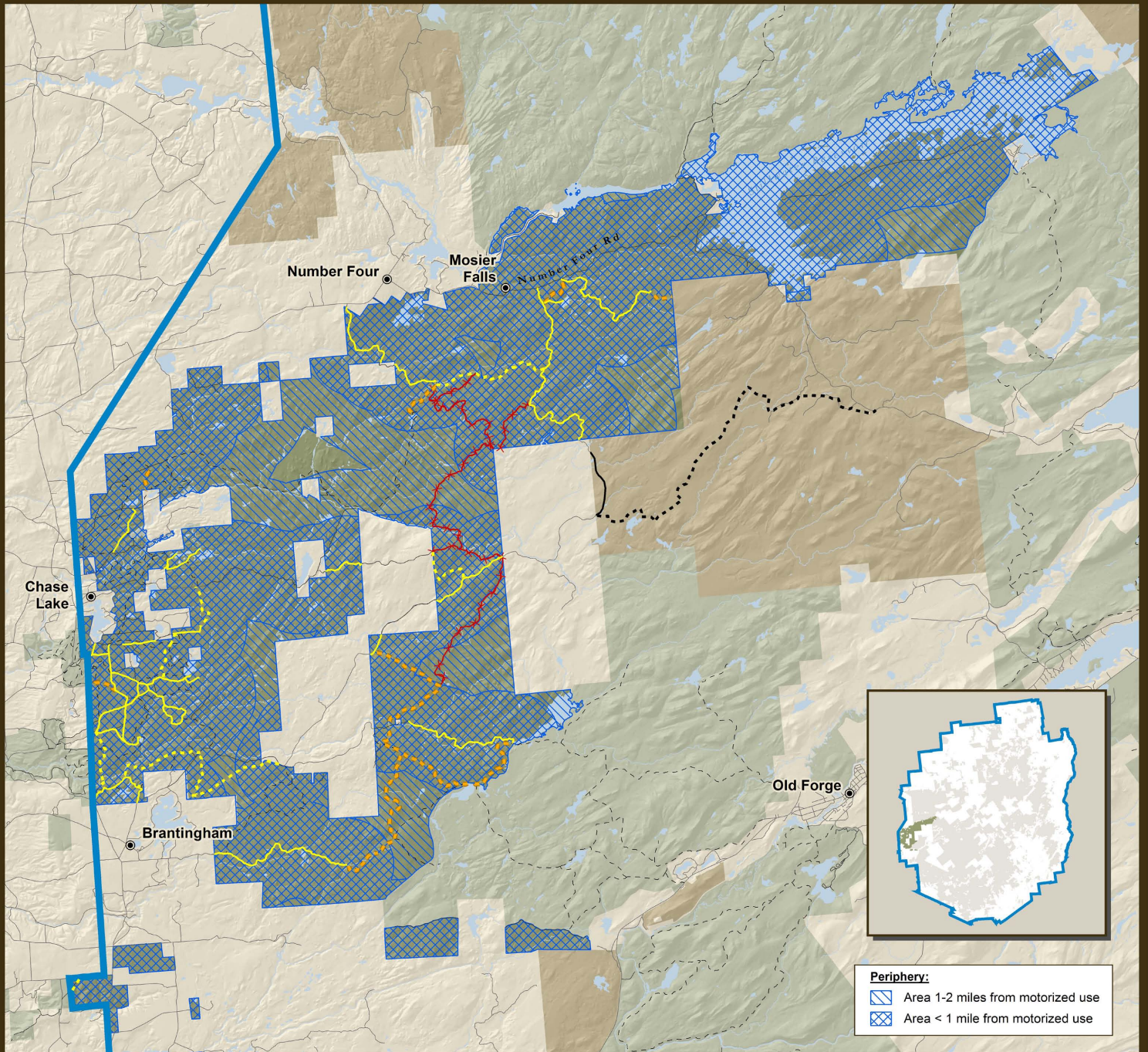
5. Concerned that snowmobiles will utilize ski trails located between the Steam Mill Road and the Partridgeville Road.

The illegal use of the Centennial Ski trails by snowmobiles has never been an issue. DEC will continue to monitor for illegal use and take any necessary management action to prevent it should it become an issue.

6. Concerned about illegal ATV use of snowmobile trails.

The illegal use of snowmobile trails by ATV's has been greatly curtailed over the last several years. Increased enforcement combined with education has reduced this use throughout the unit. Where appropriate management actions, such as gating, has occurred. Monitoring and enforcement of any illegal motor vehicle use will continue.

Proposed Snowmobile Trail System



Periphery:
 [Light Blue Cross-hatch] Area 1-2 miles from motorized use
 [Dark Blue Cross-hatch] Area < 1 mile from motorized use

Forest Preserve Snowmobile Trails

- Class II snowmobile trail
- Class I snowmobile trail
- Snowmobile trail on Forest Preserve road
- Trail or road on which snowmobile use to be discontinued

Conservation Easement Snowmobile Trails

- Community connector snowmobile route on conservation easement road
- Community connector snowmobile route on conservation easement trail

- Independence River Wild Forest
- Other DEC land
- DEC conservation easement
- Adirondack Park boundary
- Other road
- Other trail

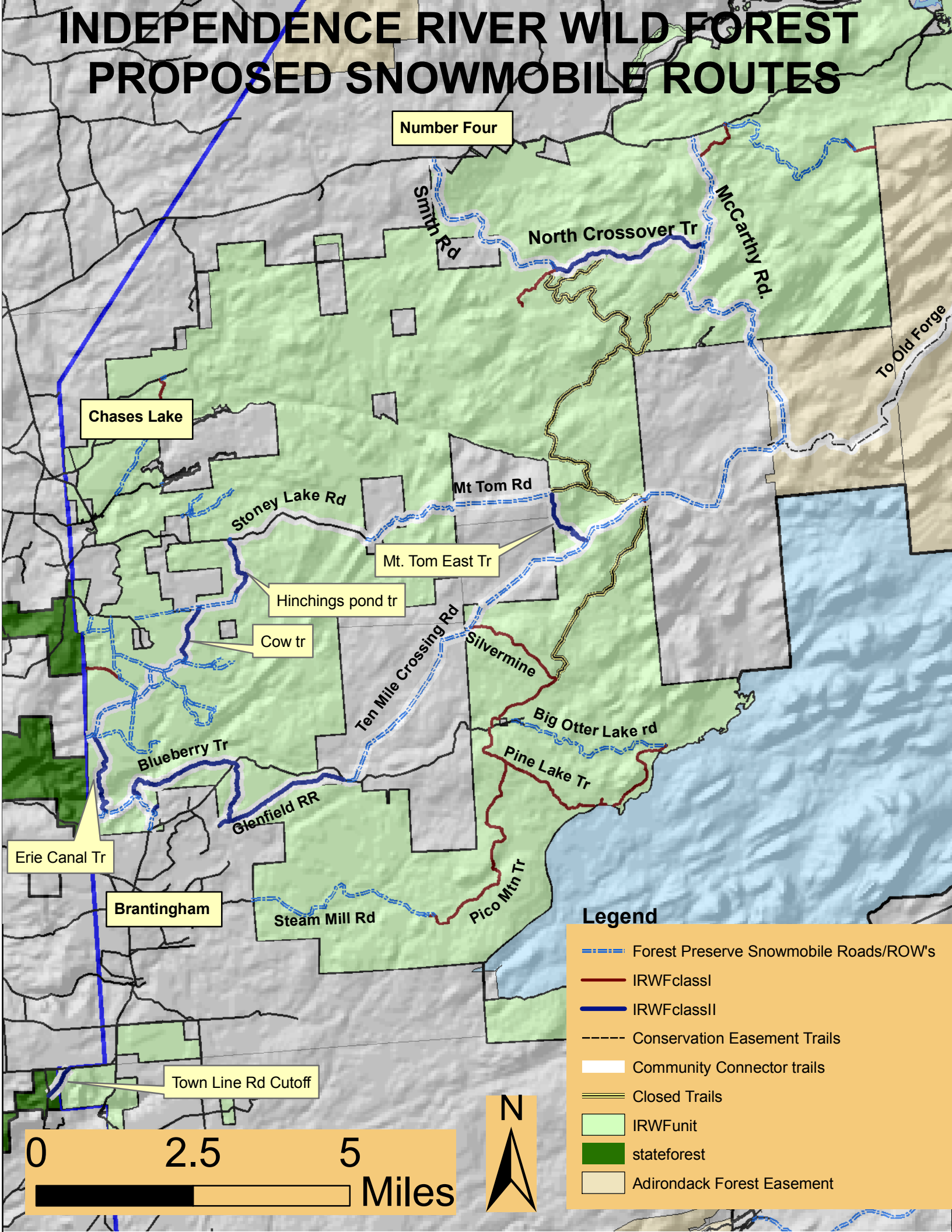


June 2011

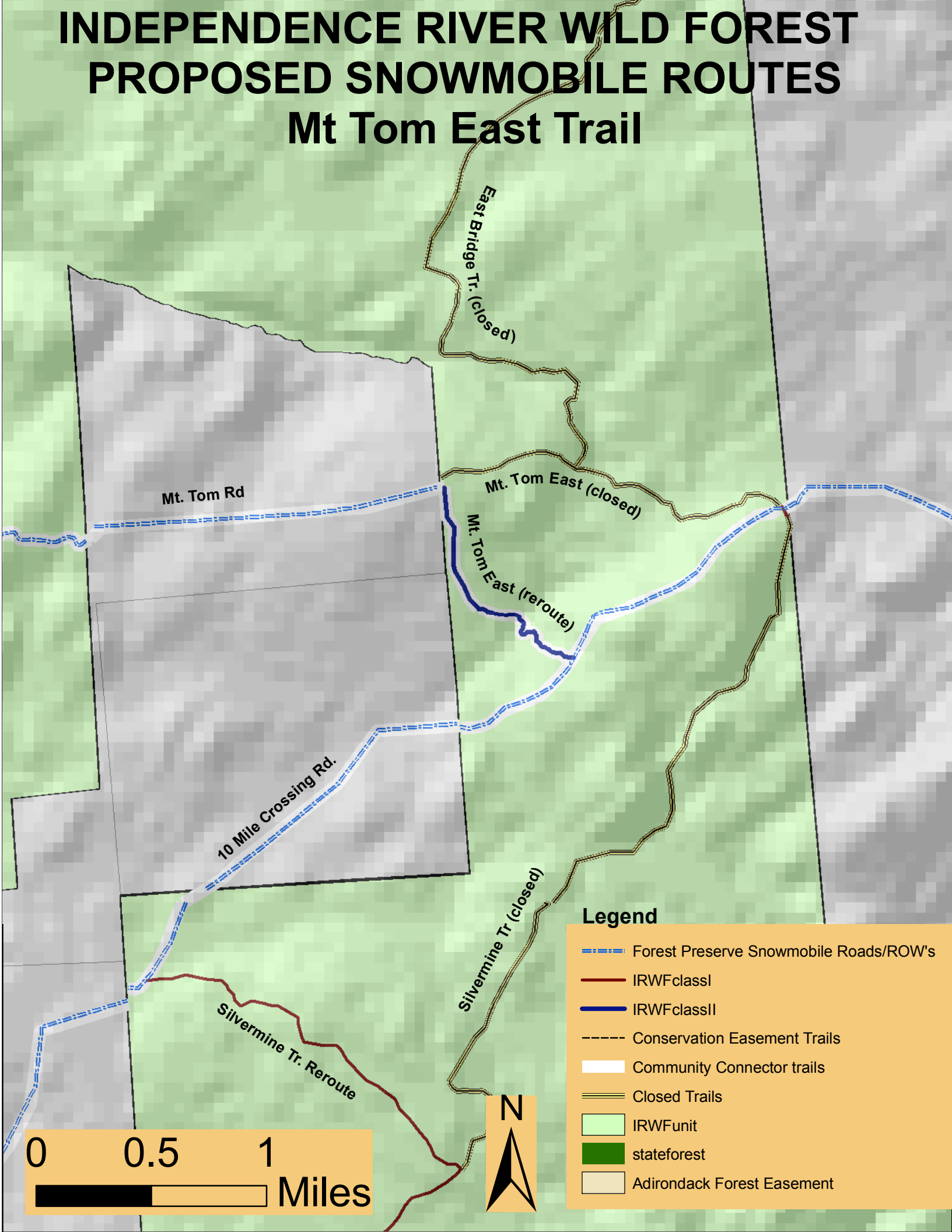


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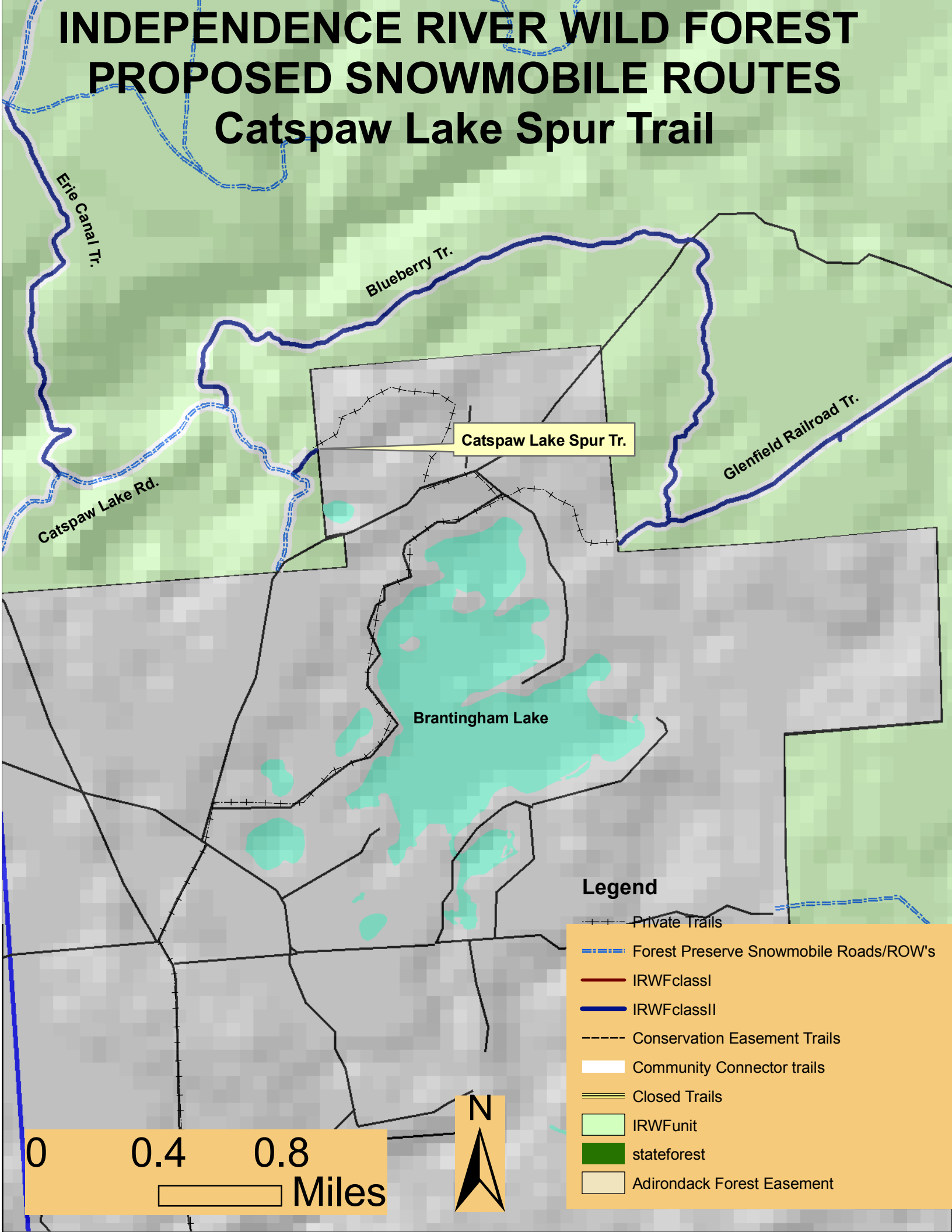
INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES



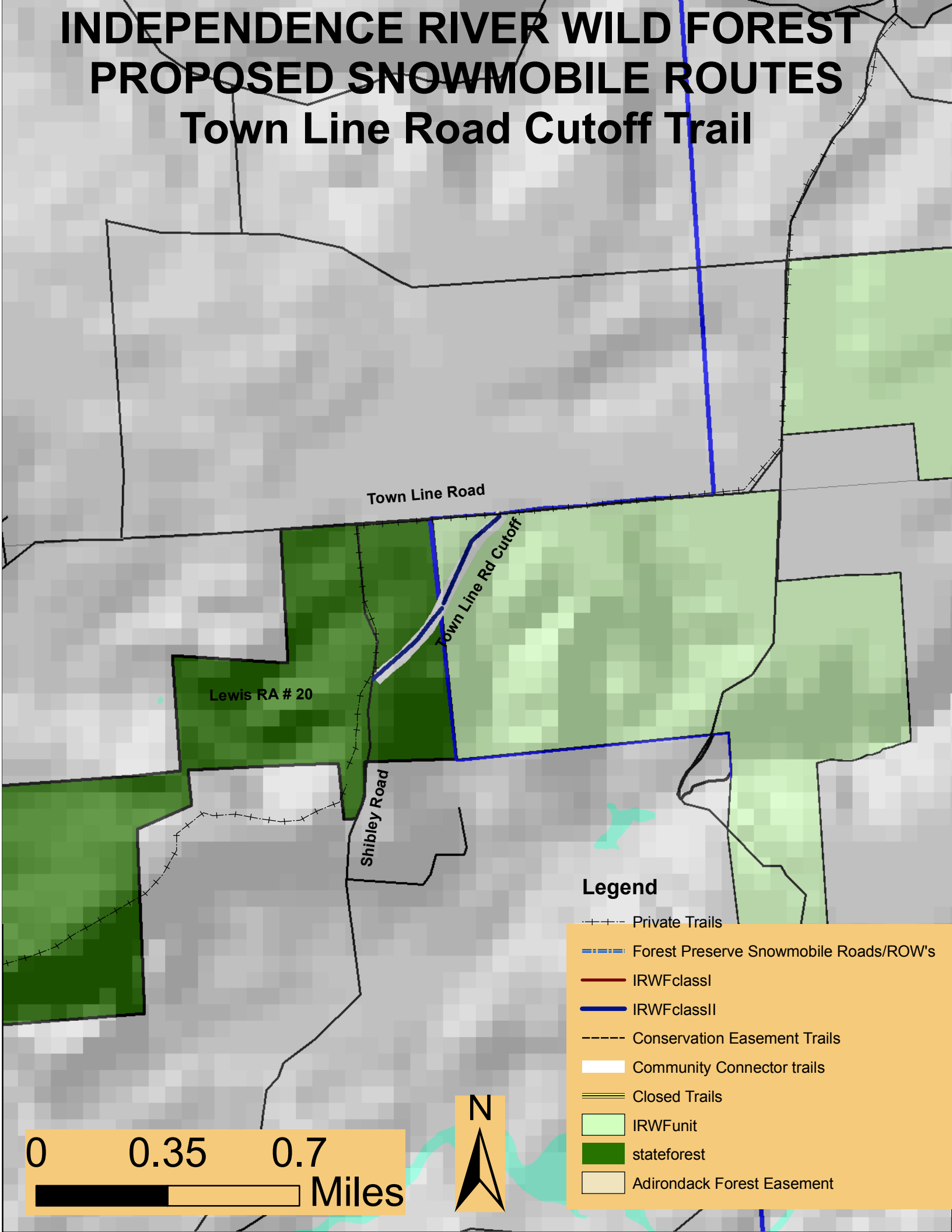
INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES Mt Tom East Trail



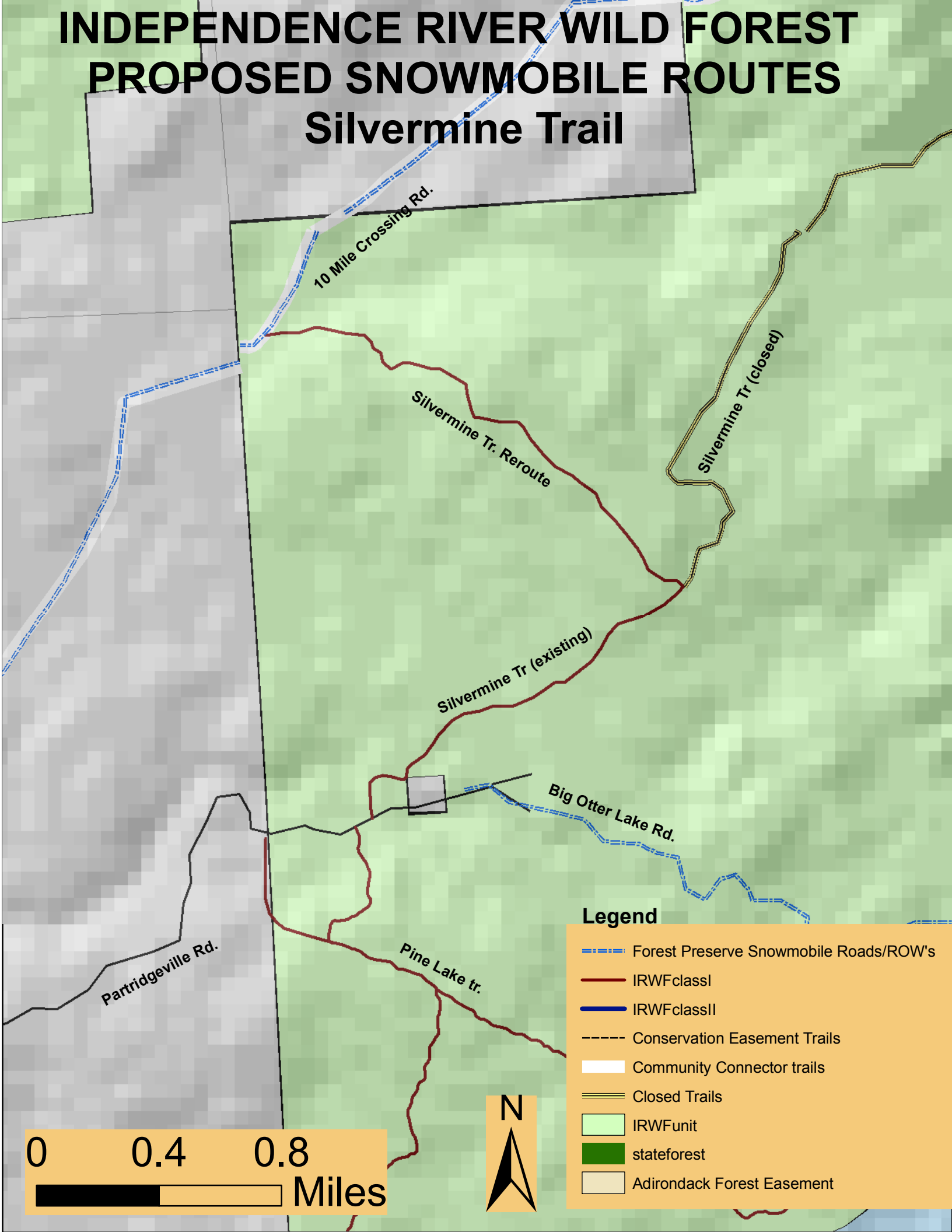
INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES Catspaw Lake Spur Trail



INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES Town Line Road Cutoff Trail



INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES Silvermine Trail



INDEPENDENCE RIVER WILD FOREST PROPOSED SNOWMOBILE ROUTES North Crossover Trail

Number Four

McCarthy Rd.

Basket Factory Rd

Smith Rd

North Crossover Tr

Panther Pond Tr

Legend

- Forest Preserve Snowmobile Roads/ROW's
- IRWFclassI
- IRWFclassII
- Conservation Easement Trails
- Community Connector trails
- Closed Trails
- IRWFunite
- stateforest
- Adirondack Forest Easement

0 1 2 Miles

