

North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Final Generic Environmental Impact Statement



Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor
State of New York

Marc S. Gerstman, Acting Commissioner
Department of Environmental Conservation

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Contact Information:

Josh Clague, Natural Resources Planner
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Lead Agency
Bureau of Forest Preserve Management
625 Broadway, 5th Floor
Albany, NY 12233-4254
Fax: (518) 402-9028
adirondackpark@dec.ny.gov



**Department of
Environmental
Conservation**

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OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

625 Broadway, 14th Floor, Albany, New York 12233-1010

P: (518) 402-8545 | F: (518) 402-8541

www.dec.ny.gov

SEP 14 2015

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Record

FROM: Marc S. Gerstman 

SUBJECT: North Country National Scenic Trail

The Adirondack Park Trail Plan for the North Country National Scenic Trail has been completed.

The Trail Plan is consistent with Environmental Conservation Law and Department Rules, Regulations and Policies and is hereby approved and adopted. This approval will take effect ten days following the filing and publication of the Notice of Completion of the FGEIS.

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Acknowledgements

Major Contributors:

DEC Staff: Peter Frank, Josh Clague, Jim Sessions

NCTA Staff: Bruce Matthews, Matthew Rowbotham

APA Staff: Jim Connolly, Walter Linck, Kevin Prickett

NPS Staff: Thomas Gilbert, Fredrick Szarka, Ken Howell

Other Contributors:

Tom Martin, Tom Wolf, Robert Messenger, Kristopher Alberga, Stewart Brown, Michael Curley, Rick Fenton, Thomas Kapelewski, Eric Kasza, Fred Munk, David Smith, Benjamin Thomas, James Baldwin, Robert Corbett, Jennifer Tripp, William Ingersoll, Mary Kunzler-Larmann, Wes Lampman, Thomas McGuire, Barbara McMartin, Marisa Tedesco, Gary Werner, Neil Woodworth, Tom Both, Nat Wells, Kurt Seitz, Bill Menke, Richard Weber, William Menke, Tiffany Stram, Mark Weaver, and Vicky Wagenbaugh.

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Executive Summary

Setting

In March 1980, federal legislation authorized the establishment of the North Country National Scenic Trail (Trail) as a component of the National Trails System (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). To date, Congress has authorized the establishment of eleven National Scenic Trails – long-distance, non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas. National Scenic Trails are patterned after the renowned Appalachian NST.

The Trail’s projected length is approximately 4,600 miles, stretching across the northern tier of the United States with some 2,700 miles completed to date. The legislation that established the Trail requires that it be developed and managed through a federal-state-local-private partnership with the National Park Service providing overall administration and coordination. Only through the cooperation of many agencies, organizations, landowners, and individuals will the Trail become a reality.

As overall administrator of the Trail, the National Park Service (NPS) provides limited financial assistance to public and private partners for trail improvement projects, equipment, trail planning and acquisition. Membership dues paid to the North Country Trail Association (NCTA) help to support the efforts of the hundreds of volunteers who build and maintain the Trail. In addition, many agencies whose lands are traversed by the Trail invest financial and staff resources in managing their segments of the Trail. The continued development and completion of this trail depends on cooperation between municipal officials, private landowners, partner organizations, volunteer chapters of the NCTA and several state and federal agencies.

“The Comprehensive Plan for Management and Use of the North Country Trail – 1982” presented a very general route for the Trail across the Adirondack Park. The route was developed and provided to the NPS by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) as a starting point for future discussions about establishing the Trail. Various discussions and meetings since 1982 have identified some concerns about the initial route. These concerns and the progress on unit management planning have led to this current effort to reassess the Trail’s route across the Park.

The development, maintenance, and use of the Trail in the Adirondack Park are subject to legal guidance from:

- Article XIV, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution
- The Adirondack Park Agency Act
- The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan
- New York State Environmental Conservation Law
- The New York State Historic Preservation Act
- The National Trails System Act

In addition, various policy and guidance documents influence the development and management of the Trail, such as the *North Country National Scenic Trail Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*, (herein referred to as the *Handbook*) revised in 1998 by the NPS.

Trail Plan Content

This Trail Plan describes a proposed route for the Trail across the central region of the Adirondack Park. The Plan is conceptual in nature and offers a comprehensive analysis of the preferred route and alternative options within an overall route corridor. Once approved, the Plan will be integrated into the Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for each respective unit of state land traversed by the trail. This Plan includes the following sections:

- History of the planning process of the Trail in the Adirondack Park
- Explanation of the planning process used in the development of the Plan and an explanation of how the Plan relates to Unit Management Plans
- Common questions that public officials, the general public, and various groups have asked during informational meetings, and answers to those questions
- Visions and goals for the development and management of the Trail in the Park
- Background information about the Trail and the existing Adirondack Park long-distance trail system
- Analysis of the routing options for the Trail and standards and guidelines for design, construction, and maintenance within the Park

Trail Plan Recommendations

This Plan recommends the incorporation of the Trail into the Adirondack Park trail system and recommends that this Trail be developed and managed in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, policies, and guidelines. The Plan outlines a viable route for the Trail across the central region of the Park, crossing mostly state-owned land, and will serve as a starting point for inclusion of the Trail into state-land UMPs. This Plan will be incorporated into affected current and future unit management planning and UMPs where it is practicable and adjusted accordingly to take advantage on new opportunities and to avoid conflicts and adverse impacts that are identified through the UMP process.

It is recommended that the Trail follow approximately 81 miles of existing foot trail and approximately 39 miles of new trail construction within the Park. It is estimated that approximately 27 miles of Temporary Connectors along roads will be initially utilized to make connections between trail segments along this route. It is estimated that the Trail, within the Park, will be approximately 158 total miles in length when complete (147 of those miles have been identified in this Plan). It should be noted that this proposed route requires less new construction than other alternatives. The ultimate goal is a route that is completely off-road, non-motorized, and exceptionally scenic, but this Plan does suggest temporary road-walking connections for use by long-distance hikers until the off-road route can be completed.

Trail Towns

Despite the long-term goal of having the North Country National Scenic Trail be off-road and non-motorized, the National Scenic Trail program recognizes the value of routing Scenic Trails into or within close proximity of local communities. These communities support hikers with services, promote the Trail to its citizens, and embrace the Trail as a resource to be protected and celebrated. In turn, the Trail brings potential economic benefits to the communities as increased awareness of the Trail and outdoor recreation in general boost tourism and the demand for services needed by through-hikers.

The North Country Trail Association has developed a Trail Town program to help enhance this relationship between local communities and the North Country National Scenic Trail. In short, the program helps identify ways that communities and the Trail can work together, plan together, and capitalize on the benefits that the Trail can bring to the area.

This plan proposes to bring the Trail through the communities of Speculator and North Creek, as well as the incorporated areas of thirteen towns and four counties within the Adirondack Park. Upon approval of a final Trail Plan, the Department will encourage these communities to partner with the North Country Trail Association to become “Trail Towns”.

Environmental Review

The North Country NST planning process is subject to the State Environmental Quality Review (SEQR) Act. All reasonable alternatives concerning the various recommendations found herein will be analyzed and the potential environmental impacts assessed. All of the recommendations will be subject to DEC approval and Adirondack Park Agency (APA) review. Implementation will depend on guidance from these agencies. Because the Secretary of the Interior has delegated to the NPS the responsibility of route selection for the Trail under section 7(c) of the National Trails System Act, the selected route will also have to concur with NPS recommendations.

This Plan has been reviewed under SEQR. Because the Plan makes recommendations for management across multiple units, it was determined that a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) should be prepared. This document includes the Plan and the GEIS for this trail project. Pursuant to the criteria and thresholds established in this GEIS, site-specific SEQR review of trail segments will be accomplished within the Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for the areas wherein the segments are located. All environmental reviews concerning this route will be coordinated with NPS staff to ensure that such work also meets NPS compliance responsibilities under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and similar legislation.

Implementation

Final approval of this Plan will be a decision made by the DEC, after consultation with the APA. The Plan has been distributed for public review and comment and public meetings were held to solicit public input. Implementation of the Plan on Forest Preserve land will require UMP authorization or authorization through a UMP amendment. Sections of this Plan may be directly incorporated into UMP planning documents that are slated for revision or are being drafted for the first time.

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Section I: Introduction

Background

National Scenic Trails (NSTs) are long-distance, non-motorized trails that follow major geographic features or pass through scenic areas. The Trail was originally conceived in the mid-1960s as a trail to connect National Forests and other nationally significant resources in eight northern states, from the Lewis and Clark Trail (on the Missouri River in North Dakota) to the Appalachian Trail (in the Green Mountains of Vermont). Congress passed the National Trails System Act in 1968, immediately designating two trails (the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail) as the first NSTs in the system. The Act also named the North Country Trail as one of fourteen other trail routes to be studied as potential later additions to the system.

The responsibility for completing the studies was assigned to the former Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, which was reorganized as the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service in 1978 and consolidated into the National Park Service in 1981. The Bureau of Outdoor Recreation coordinated input from a variety of federal, state, local, and private sector trail representatives, and completed a final conceptual study report in 1975. The study identified a 10-mile wide planning corridor within which an actual North Country NST route could be feasibly located.

In March 1980, Congress passed legislation amending the National Trails System Act to authorize the establishment of the North Country NST (16 U.S.C. 1241 *et seq.*). It is one of only eleven trails authorized by Congress as a National Scenic Trail.

In many ways, the North Country NST is similar in concept to the Appalachian NST. However, it is uniquely different as it takes the visitor through a diverse series of landscapes rather than following a mountain range or other distinct geographic feature. When completed, the Trail will extend from the vicinity of Crown Point, New York, to Lake Sakakawea State Park in North Dakota, where it joins the route of the Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail. Legislation is also pending to extend the North Country Trail from Crown Point to where it would intersect the Appalachian Trail in Vermont.



While it was originally thought that the distance required to span these two extremities was roughly 3,200 miles, as work progresses to complete the Trail, a total length of 4,600 miles is now anticipated. Currently, more than 2,700 miles of the Trail are in place, of which 1,900 are certified to meet the National Park Service standards for a national scenic trail. Another 300 off-road miles of trail are walkable as part of the route, but not certified because local management allows some motorized or other non-compatible use.

The National Park Service is responsible for overall administration of the North Country NST. The North Country Trail Association is the primary non-profit partner of the NPS. The North Country NST is a private-public partnership project where the actual development and management of the trail is intended to be accomplished through many cooperating federal, state, and local agencies, and private trail organizations. When viewed in this manner, the Trail is truly a broad-based cooperative endeavor.

National Park Service Mission Statement for the North Country NST

The mission of the National Park Service is to acquire, develop, operate, maintain, and protect, through public and private partnerships, the North Country NST- a trail that meanders for approximately 4,600 miles across seven northern states, from eastern New York to the Missouri River in North Dakota for the enjoyment of present and future generations.

National Park Service Statement of Purpose for the North Country NST

The purpose of the North Country NST is:

- To establish a trail within scenic areas of the Nation to provide increased outdoor recreation opportunities and promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of, national scenic and historic resources
- To provide for superlative outdoor recreation opportunities and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, and cultural qualities of the areas through which the trail passes
- To provide a premier hiking trail facility and an experience consistent with preserving the landscape in which the trail is established
- To encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management of the trail, wherever appropriate

North Country Trail Association Mission Statement

Mission: The North Country Trail Association develops, maintains, protects, and promotes the North Country National Scenic Trail as the premier hiking path across the northern tier of the United States through a trail-wide coalition of volunteers and partners

The Association achieves this mission through programs of trail construction and enhancement, public and membership services, and resource and corridor protection in keeping with its "Vision for the Trail."

North Country Trail Association Vision for the Trail

Vision: The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) will be the primary organization charged with developing, maintaining, protecting, and promoting the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). The NCTA will coordinate, unite and empower volunteers and partner organizations, land owners and agencies along the length of the trail to fulfill its mission. Our vision for the North Country National Scenic Trail is that of the premier footpath of national significance, offering a superb experience for hikers and backpackers in a permanently protected corridor, traversing and interpreting the richly diverse environmental, cultural, and historic features of the northern United States.

The NCTA will:

- **develop** a corridor of consistently and clearly marked treadways, blending with local character as appropriate
- **maintain** the NCNST through highly successful partnerships among the various entities, providing funding, management and service
- **protect**, permanently whenever possible, the NCNST as a public hiking trail showcasing and interpreting the rich variety of historical, cultural and environmental features in the northern United States
- **promote** the NCNST as a continuous hiking trail of the highest caliber with foot traffic accorded the highest priority to the exclusion of other uses except in short, specifically designated segments

North Country NST Route in New York State

Through western New York, the North Country NST route generally follows segments of the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT), and is maintained by the Finger Lakes Trail Conference as part of its trail system. About 253 miles of the FLT are certified by the NPS as official sections of the North Country NST.

Southeast of Cuyler, the FLT turns southeastward to the Catskills and the Trail departs from the main FLT and continues northeastward along the Onondaga Trail extension of the FLT (built and maintained by the Onondaga Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club). The Central New York Chapter of the NCTA is the local steward for the Trail from the end of the Onondaga Trail to the western edge of Adirondack Park.

The Central New York Chapter is also responsible for the 12.3-mile Link Trail, part of which serves as the North Country NST route. The southward extension of the Link Trail from the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area provides another connection to the main FLT in Chenango County, creating a grand loop trail opportunity. The Link Trail is an integral part of the Genny Green-Link Trail project included in the Open Space Plan for DEC Region 7. This segment may eventually be designated an official side trail of the North Country NST.

Major Trail route points in central New York include the northern edge of the Tioughnioga Wildlife Management Area, Morgan Hill State Forest, DeRuyter State Forest, Cuyler State Forest, Highland Forest County Park, the Nelson Swamp Unique Area, the Stone Quarry Hill Art Park, the Village of Cazenovia, the Gorge Trail (owned by the Cazenovia Preservation Foundation), sections of the long-abandoned Lehigh Valley Railroad (owned by New York State Parks, known as the Lehigh Valley Trail), the Village of Canastota, the Old Erie Canal State Historic Park between Canastota and Rome, and Fort Stanwix National Monument within the city of Rome.

The Trail is being developed northward from Rome to the Village of Boonville on routes now being explored between the city of Rome and Pixley Falls State Park. The Black River Environmental Improvement Association (BREIA) Trail System to the Boonville area, the Boonville area trail system, and the Black River Feeder Canal to the Hamlet of Forestport are also being examined as potential routes to reach Adirondack Park. The projected total distance for this route is 79 miles. Certified trail mileage for the Central New York Chapter section is currently 11.7 miles. 276.8 miles of the Trail have been certified in New York State by the NPS.

The Hamlet of Forestport will be the springboard for the Trail's entrance into the Adirondack Park. By following the North Lake Road, the proposed route will cross the "Blue Line" boundary of Adirondack Park. Once inside the Park, a new off-road route will need to be established to reach the trailhead of the first existing trail proposed to be part of the North Country NST route – the Stone Dam Trail.

Planning History

The Congressionally-authorized route of the North Country NST begins in the vicinity of Crown Point, New York. In 2013 the NPS completed a feasibility study and made a recommendation to Congress to extend the eastern terminus to the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. The use of the new Champlain Bridge at Crown Point to make this connection is part of the recommendation, so the trail terminus within New York would not change. From this point, the Trail heads west and southwest across the 6-million acre Adirondack Park to the Hamlet of Forestport.

The route for the North Country NST through the Park has been a subject of debate since the Trail was first proposed. The Interior Department's 1975 feasibility study, developed with input from public agencies and private interests, recommended a northern route for the Trail, but one that specifically avoided the High Peaks Region because of concern for its fragile resources. After the North Country NST was authorized in 1980, the NPS was directed to prepare a comprehensive management plan for the Trail. The concern over a northern route through the Park led the DEC to specify a general location route through the Adirondack Park as a starting point from which to begin the "unit management planning" process as it affected the North Country NST. In a letter dated April 27, 1982, DEC recommended that the NPS adopt this route for presentation on the maps in its comprehensive plan. These recommendations were incorporated in the NPS "Comprehensive Plan for the Management and Use of the North Country National Scenic Trail – 1982 (available from the National Park Service)."

Although no efforts were undertaken to establish the North Country NST east of Rome during the 1980s and early 1990s, the New York State Trails Council debated trail routing through Adirondack Park on several occasions. In May 1993, the Council issued a resolution opposing a northern routing for the Trail (see Appendix 10). The Council recommended that the NPS abandon the Adirondack route and follow the FLT to the Catskill Forest Preserve, and thence the Long Trail for a connection with the Appalachian NST in Bear Mountain State Park. Such a significant change would have required Congressional approval and the NPS declined to initiate any steps in that direction without an official request from the governor or a state official acting on the governor's behalf. No such request was made.

Timeline of North Country NST Adirondack Route Planning (1992-2014)

December 1992 – A North Country NST summit meeting, held in Albany, is attended by potential partners with an interest in the routing of the Trail in eastern New York. Participants agree on the need to pursue a “study” to resolve the impasse over the proposed northern routing of the Trail.

August 1994 – Irene Szabo, then President of the FLTC, calls a meeting to identify some tentative alternatives for a North Country NST route. This meeting, held in Utica, is attended by representatives of most of the key agencies and organizations involved with the Park routing issue.

1995 – The NPS Madison office provides funding to the NPS Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance program (RTCA) located in Hyde Park, New York to conduct an additional study, *The North Country Trail in New York- Alternative Routes and the Issues that go with them (Karl Beard, 1995)*, to identify alternative route options in eastern New York.

April 1996 – Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) celebrates its 75th anniversary by hosting a trail symposium entitled “Trails for the 21st Century.” Representatives of the NCTA, ADK, FLTC, DEC, NPS, and others gather and discuss ways to cooperate in finding a route for the Trail through the Park.

May 1996 – Bill Menke, then NPS Manager of the North Country NST, travels to the Park to work with planners, collect data, and record routing options for the *National Park Service NCNST Issue Paper: Analysis of Preliminary Alternatives for a Trail Route across the Adirondack Park (1996)*.

March 1998 – NPS, NCTA, DEC, and ADK staff and volunteers convene in Albany to discuss potential route options through the Park.

August 2001 – Barbara McMartin distributes her proposal paper for the routing of the North Country NST through the Park at the NCTA annual conference in Cazenovia.

January 2005 – NPS, NCTA, and DEC staff meet to revitalize the route-planning project.

May 2005 – NPS, NCTA, DEC staff and volunteers meet to discuss potential trail corridors for the Trail in the Park. On-the-ground trail reconnaissance is performed.

June 2005 – Unit maps, displaying potential trail route corridors, are distributed by the NCTA to DEC planners, NPS staff, and volunteers for feedback and input.

July 2005 – NCTA trail management and cartography staff, with NPS funding, create map books for a route analysis of potential central and southern routes through the Park.

July 2005 – A roundtable meeting, attended by DEC, NPS, NCTA staff and volunteers, is held in Warrensburg. The central route is unanimously selected as the most viable route to pursue for the Trail in the Park.

August 2005 – NCTA officially agrees to take the lead on preparing a Trail Plan for the North Country NST in the Park.

Section I: Introduction

November 2005 – Clare Cain, NCTA Director of Trail Management, meets with DEC, APA, ADK staff, interested volunteers, and other associated groups to gather information and consensus on the proposed central route for the Trail. Trail scouting and ground-truthing is performed.

January 2006 – Clare Cain gives a Power Point presentation to the APA State Lands Committee in Ray Brook.

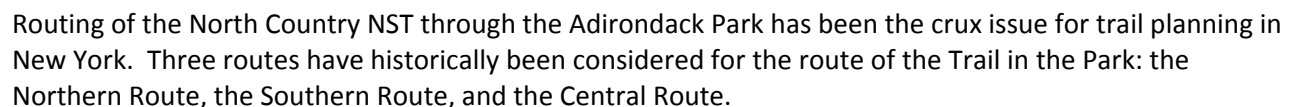
April 2006 – NCTA, NPS, and DEC staff meet in Albany to discuss a draft version of a Trail Plan and discuss potential management concerns.

February 2007 – A draft Plan is circulated to DEC planners, staff and the NPS for feedback.

November 2007 – The *Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/ Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement* is released for public comment.

December 2007 – Three official DEC public meetings are held to solicit feedback on the Plan. Meetings are held in Warrensburg, Boonville, and Albany.

June 2014 – The Revised *Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/ Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement* is released for public comment.



The Northern Route passes primarily across the northern half of the Park traveling westerly from Crown Point to Goodnow Mountain. The route turns north from Goodnow Mountain, briefly crossing into the High Peaks Area and traveling for approximately 20 miles to Long Lake. The route cuts south from Long Lake out of the High Peaks area for approximately 30 miles to the town of Nobleboro. From Nobleboro the route turns northwest toward the Park boundary and Boonville. The Northern route travels through Hammond Pond Wild Forest, Dix Mountain Wilderness, Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, High Peaks Wilderness, Blue Mountain Wild Forest, Blue Ridge Wilderness, West Canada Lake Wilderness, and Black River Wild Forest. The Northern Route was the initial route designated by Congress, with DEC input, for the Trail in the Park.

The Northern Route was met by substantial opposition in the 1980s. The High Peaks area was already being heavily impacted by visitors, and the installment of the North Country NST was feared to increase this use. The APA, the NY Trails Council, the DEC and the ADK all resolved, through either resolutions or official planning documents, to not route the Trail through the High Peaks unit of the Park. After careful

consultation with all partners and area agencies the Northern Route was officially abandoned as a viable route for the Trail in the early 1990s.

The Southern Route

The Southern Route of the North Country NST enters the Park on its western border in the vicinity of the North Lake Road near the Hamlet of Forestport. The route travels in a southeasterly direction toward the Ferris Lake Wild Forest and the Silver Lake Wilderness. The route turns in a northeasterly direction near the Wilcox Lake Wild Forest and Silver Lake Wilderness boundary. The proposed route then travels north through the Siamese Ponds Wilderness and the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area, after which it intersects the proposed Central Route. The route turns easterly in Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest and crosses into the Hoffman Notch Wilderness and Hammond Pond Wild Forest.

The Southern Route dips into the lower half of the Park. A Southern Route was originally proposed by Barbara McMartin and others as a viable route for the Trail. While this route has several major road and river crossings that pose serious obstacles, the route does have the advantage of taking in some of the unique features of southern Wilderness Areas and Wild Forests. This route is considerably longer than both the Northern and Central routes and has the greatest potential to receive pressure from incompatible motorized uses. This route would also require extensive new trail construction to make connections across the Park.

The Central Route

The proposed Central Route of the Trail enters the Park on its western border in the vicinity of North Lake Road near the Hamlet of Forestport. The Central Route travels across the central region of the Park intersecting existing trails in Black River Wild Forest, West Canada Lake Wilderness, Moose River Plains Wild Forest, Little Moose Wilderness, Siamese Ponds Wilderness, Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, Hoffman Notch Wilderness, and Hammond Pond Wild Forest.

The Central Route is the most linear route of the three proposed routes. The Central Route incorporates the most mileage of existing trails in the Park and would require the least amount of new trail construction. The Central Route offers extraordinary scenery, a remote hiking and backpacking opportunity, and has no major barriers to hinder its development. This route was the unanimous preference of the DEC planners, ADK, NCTA and NPS representatives in attendance at a July 2005 meeting in Warrensburg.

Section II: Planning

Vision and Goals

Vision

The vision of the North Country NST Trail Plan is to provide an east-to-west, linear, long-distance trail offering scenic and recreational opportunities befitting a NST and highlighting the outstanding natural resources of Adirondack Park. Additionally, the Plan aims to develop and maintain the Trail in the Park while utilizing existing pedestrian trails wherever possible.

Goals

- Provide a high quality long distance hiking and backpacking experience through the Adirondack Park on a singular, well-maintained, well-located pedestrian trail on public land in keeping with the “Best Management Practices” of the DEC and the NPS *Handbook*.
- Protect natural resources and the Wild Forest character of public lands in the Adirondack Park.
- Partner with local communities to promote the Trail and provide services to hikers.
- Provide a critical connection to the North Country NST’s eastern terminus at Crown Point and to the developing section of the Trail west of the Blue Line in Forestport.
- Suggest marked temporary connecting routes for hikers to use while permanent off-road hiking routes are being identified and developed.
- Provide DEC unit planners with an overarching Park-wide Trail Plan that can be incorporated, by unit, into affected UMPs.

Planning Process

Phase I: Gathering Information (Route Possibilities)

The NCTA trail management and cartography staff prepared large unit maps for DEC unit planners, NPS staff, and volunteers highlighting potential route corridors in the Park. (See Appendix 3 for the NCTA letter that accompanied these maps.) These maps were returned to the NCTA with comments and suggestions penciled in. The NCTA used this map feedback to create a comprehensive map book entitled *North Country NST Potential Trail Concept Plan for the Adirondack Park* for the proposed Southern and Central routes.

Phase II: Route Assessment (Central and Southern Route Analysis)

NCTA, NPS, DEC staff and volunteers gathered at a roundtable meeting in Warrensburg to comprehensively compare the proposed Southern and Central trail routes. Challenges and opportunities were identified for both routes. After extensive consideration, the Central Route was selected as the preferred corridor for further investigation for routing of the Trail.

Phase III: Central Route (Defining the Route)

The NCTA trail management and cartography staff, with NPS and DEC input, began writing and mapping a proposed route corridor for the North Country NST through the Park. Wetlands, sensitive areas, critical

habitats, and private ownership GIS data layers, DEC management policies, existing trails, and terrain scouting were all utilized to identify the best possible route for the Trail.

Phase IV: North Country NST Draft Trail Plan/DGEIS

The NCTA trail management and cartography staff, with extensive support from the NPS, DEC and APA, produced the *North Country NST Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/ Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement*. The Plan was distributed for an official public comment period in November 2007.

Phase V: North Country NST Revised Draft Trail Plan/DGEIS

DEC staff, with input from the NCTA, NPS, and APA, revised the route and updated the plan. The updates reflected public input received during the 2007 public comment period. The plan also includes a response to public comments. Due to the length of time between the release of the Draft Plan and completion of revisions, this second draft was released for public review and comment.

Public Involvement

Public involvement has been critical to developing and refining a viable route for the Trail in the Park. Letters and maps were sent to the DEC, APA and stakeholders in the Park in an effort to solicit feedback on proposed trail routes.

The following community and area groups requested and received maps of the Trail's proposed routes and were invited to comment. (See Appendix 3 for the NCTA letter that accompanied these maps.):

- Adirondack Mountain Club
- New York State Snowmobile Association
- Association for the Protection of the Adirondacks
- Town of Keene
- New York State Conservation Council, Inc.

Two informational meetings prior to the official release of the Draft Trail Plan/ Draft GEIS were held in 2005 and 2006 on trail planning:

- *July 22, 2005, Old Forge, New York*
Forest Preserve Advisory Committee (FPAC)
- *February 9, 2006, Ray Brook, New York*
Adirondack Park Agency Board- Full Agency Board Meeting

The official DEC public comment period and public meetings on the Draft Trail Plan/ Draft GEIS happened between November 2007 and February 2008. This comment period allowed the public to comment on this Plan. Public meetings were held on:

- *December 5, 2007, Warrensburg, New York*
DEC Warrensburg office
- *December 6, 2007, Boonville, New York*
Boonville Town Hall
- *December 7, 2007, Albany, New York*
DEC Albany office

Relationship to DEC Unit Management Plans

Unit Management Plans (UMPs) are developed pursuant to, and consistent with, relevant provisions of the New York State Constitution, the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), the Executive Law, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, Department of Environmental Conservation rules and regulations, policies and procedures and the State Environmental Quality and Review Act (SEQRA).

Public lands referenced in this Plan, and subject to Unit Management Planning, are Forest Preserve lands protected by Article XIV, Section 1 of the New York State Constitution. This Constitutional provision, which became effective on January 1, 1895 provides in relevant part:

The lands of the state, now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the Forest Preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed.

ECL §3-0301(1)(d) and §9-0105(1) provide the DEC with jurisdiction to manage Forest Preserve lands.

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (Master Plan) was initially adopted in 1972 by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA), with advice from and in consultation with the DEC, pursuant to Executive Law §807, now re-codified as Executive Law §816. The Master Plan provides the overall general framework for the development and management of State lands in the Park.

The Master Plan places State land within the Park into the following classifications: Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe, Wild Forest, Intensive Use, Historic, State Administrative, Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers, and Travel Corridors, and sets forth management guidelines for the lands falling within each major classification.

The Master Plan sets forth guidelines and criteria pertaining to a wide variety of management concerns, including: foot and horse trails; trail structures and improvements; ranger stations; the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment and aircraft; roads, jeep trails and state truck trails; flora and fauna; recreation use and overuse; boundary structures and improvements and boundary markings. Executive Law §816 requires the DEC to develop, in consultation with the APA, individual UMPs for each unit of land under the DEC's jurisdiction which is classified in one of the nine classifications set forth in the Master Plan. The UMPs must conform to the guidelines and criteria set forth in the Master Plan. Thus, UMPs implement and apply the Master Plan's general guidelines for particular areas of land within the Park.

Executive Law §816(1) provides in part that until amended, the Master Plan for management of state lands and the individual management plans shall guide the development and management of state lands in the Adirondack Park. Thus, the Master Plan has the force of law in guiding DEC actions.

This Plan proposes a route for the North Country NST that traverses eight units of the Adirondack Park Forest Preserve:

- Black River Wild Forest
- West Canada Lake Wilderness
- Moose River Plains Wild Forest

- Jessup River Wild Forest
- Siamese Ponds Wilderness
- Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest
- Hoffman Notch Wilderness
- Hammond Pond Wild Forest

It is suggested that, as UMPs and UMP amendments are drafted and adopted, the route of the North Country NST will be considered within the UMP process. (See Appendix 5 for current UMP language referring to the Trail.) As site-specific locations of Trail segments are evaluated, analyses of the land's capacity to withstand the projected use will be undertaken and documented as part of each relevant UMP.

This Plan is designed to provide guidance for the routing of the Trail and is designed to be easily folded into or attached as amendments to UMPs. Incorporation and integration of this Plan into the UMPs, future Forest Preserve documents, and future management of the Trail in the Park will be the responsibility of the DEC and the APA.

It is recommended that implementation of the proposed route for the Trail as set forth herein, and to be further field-researched by area managers to avoid any sensitive habitats, management issues, or landowner issues when DEC work plans are prepared for new trail construction or for relocating existing trail to improve its character and design.

The North Country NST is intended to be a premier non-motorized hiking and backpacking trail and should be managed in concert with this designation. In some instances, the proposed trail route overlaps trails of other use designations. This Plan has no intention of displacing any existing use, but to temporarily share use of these trails until the Trail can be viably routed onto newly established trails. If, at any time, conflicts arise between user groups or the resource becomes too heavily impacted, area managers will explore alternative trail locations in the general area to bypass the situation and to improve the quality of all users' experience.

Relationship to Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plans

In addition to the many miles of trail crossing state lands, the proposed NCNST route also crosses several conservation easements held by DEC. Unlike state-owned lands, where allowed uses are primarily dictated by land classifications (wild forest, wilderness, etc.), each conservation easement grants a unique set of rights to DEC, often including some form of public recreation. In most cases, before these rights can be executed, DEC must complete a Recreation Management Plan (RMP) detailing what types of recreational uses will be occurring and where. While preliminary research by DEC staff indicates that most of the conservation easements crossed by the proposed NCNST route allow for this use, further research is necessary to determine if RMPs will need to be developed or amended to allow for the development and maintenance of trail segments as part of the NCNST. Where the proposed route crosses conservation easements where DEC does not currently hold recreation rights, separate trail easements will be pursued in the same manner as they would with any other private landowner.

Four DEC-held conservation easements fall along the proposed route:

- North Lake Tract
- Perkins Clearing
- Speculator Tree Farm
- Lyme (Crown Point)

Relationship to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan

The Master Plan is authorized by the Adirondack Park Agency Act, §816 (originally § 807) of Article 27 of the Executive Law, and was prepared by the APA in consultation with the DEC and approved by the Governor of New York. The Master Plan establishes a classification system for state lands within the Adirondack Park, and “Guidelines for Management and Use” of lands in each classification. The Master Plan has the force of legislative enactment, as determined by the case of *Helms v. Reid* 394 N.Y.S. and 987 (Hamilton County Supreme Court, 1977).

The Master Plan classifies the state lands in the Park according to their “characteristics and capacity to withstand use” (Master Plan, 14). The North Country NST proposed route passes through three different classifications – Wild Forest, Wilderness, and Primitive Area. Foot trails, and their construction and maintenance, are consistent with the “Guidelines for Management and Use” for each of these three classifications. Hiking, backpacking, and other forms of foot travel are considered compatible with Wilderness, Wild Forest, and Primitive Areas as long as the “degree and intensity of such use” (Master Plan, 24) does not endanger the resource.

The Master Plan defines “foot trail” as “a marked and maintained path or way for foot travel located and designed to provide for reasonable access in a manner causing the least effect on the surrounding environment.” (Master Plan, 17)

The recreational use of the Trail, within the Park and along the trail’s entire length, is low impact and has proven to have minimal impact on existing resources. Overuse of the Trail is not anticipated. The Trail is in compliance with the management guidelines for Wilderness, Wild Forest, and Primitive Areas that the proposed trail route passes through. The use of the Trail is not expected to be detrimental to the existing natural resources of the Park.

Note: The Master Plan is not included in this Plan’s Appendix; it is available online at <http://apa.ny.gov/>.

Partners Working Together

Completion of a continuous North Country NST across the Adirondack Park and long-term management of the trail will be a cooperative effort of many partners, primarily the DEC, APA, NCTA, and NPS.

Department of Environmental Conservation Responsibilities

- Provide overall supervision of the effort to establish the Trail, including the final decisions on which existing Trail will be incorporated into the route and where new Trail segments will be located.
- Develop and amend UMPs to incorporate the Trail route.
- Serve as lead agency for SEQRA compliance with any involved agencies such as APA.
- Manage the Trail on DEC lands with assistance from partners.

- Coordinate the work of volunteers, DEC staff, and contractors involved in scouting and constructing new Trail segments, and the work of volunteers involved in maintaining the Trail.
- Work with the APA and other public agencies and jurisdictions to ensure their involvement in decisions relating to the Trail.
- Work with the Lyme Timber Company to secure recreational access across their holdings.
- Work with NPS to define a mutually agreeable set of trail marking standards across the various categories of lands within the Park, taking into account Master Plan guidelines, DEC's trail marking standards, the requirements of the National Trails System Act, the North Country Trail Comprehensive Management Plan, and the standards in the NPS *Handbook*.
- Acquire needed lands or easements from private landowners.

** It is important to note that the route proposed in this Plan would make maximum use of existing publicly-owned lands. Placement of the Trail on any private lands will only be done with the permission of the landowner. No significant amount of land acquisition is anticipated. In the few cases where lands may be needed, it is important to note that it is the policy of the DEC to only negotiate land or easement purchases on a willing-seller, willing-buyer basis. It is also the policy of the National Park Service to acquire from a willing seller.*

North Country Trail Association Responsibilities

- Work with the DEC to organize and provide volunteers to assist with maintenance and any needed rehabilitation of existing trails that are part of the Trail route through the Park.
- As requested and directed by the DEC, scout on-the-ground locations for new Trail segments as opportunities to establish new segments of the route arise.
- Organize and provide volunteers to construct new segments of Trail that have been approved for construction.
- Establish a long-term working relationship with the DEC for maintenance of the Trail.
- Advocate at the state and national level for resources that may be needed to establish and maintain the Trail.
- Develop and print up-to-date maps of the Trail as it evolves.
- Partner with the Adirondack Mountain Club chapters in the Park area to adopt and steward local sections of Trail and to promote the North Country NST in the Park.

National Park Service Responsibilities

- Continue to provide technical and financial assistance to the NCTA to support their activities on behalf of the Trail. Expand such assistance as needs and opportunities to do so arise.
- Accept for consideration project proposals related to the Trail from the DEC, or from the NCTA on behalf of DEC, for funding through the NPS Challenge Cost Share program.
- Work with DEC to define a mutually agreeable set of trail marking standards across the various categories of lands within Adirondack Park, taking into account Master Plan guidelines, DEC's trail marking standards and the standards in the NPS *Handbook*.
- To the extent desired by DEC, provide trail markers and signs to the DEC in fulfillment of NPS' responsibilities under the National Trails System Act to provide trail markers to non-federal partners.
- Provide financial assistance for land acquisition to the DEC, should appropriations for this purpose be made available by Congress.

Section III: Environmental Setting

Long Distance Trails in the Adirondack Park

“Where appropriate, development of long-distance trails that cross management units and DEC regions will be encouraged. Routes of long-distance trails will incorporate existing trails where feasible and appropriate. However, long-distance trails will not be located where anticipated levels of use on new or existing trails or increased access to adjacent areas will have unacceptable impacts on natural resources, the recreational experiences of visitors, or lands outside the Forest Preserve. Because most long-distance trails cross both public and private lands, the Area Manager will coordinate with private landowners, the managers of other involved public lands and trail organizations in the development and management of long-distance trails.”

– DEC Best Management Practices for Trail Development

Currently there is one long-distance hiking trail within the Park – the Northville- Placid Trail (NPT). The 133-mile long NPT travels from south to north through the Park and receives moderate use. The NPT’s southern terminus is in the Village of Northville and the northern terminus is near the Village of Lake Placid. There are also two moderate-distance trails in the Park: the Cranberry Lake 50, which as the name suggests, is an approximately 50-mile loop around Cranberry Lake, and the Jackrabbit Trail, which currently has several segments between Keene and Saranac Lake.

The North Country NST will be the second designated long-distance hiking trail spanning the length of the Forest Preserve from East to West. Routing of the Trail will be accomplished by connecting Crown Point State Historic Site, on the Park’s eastern boundary, to the Hamlet of Forestport on the Park’s western boundary via the most direct and feasible route. The route for the Trail will intersect the NPT on the border of the West Canada Lake Wilderness and Moose River Plains Wild Forest. The development of a second long distance, linear trail will offer the quiet sports’ community a second resource for exploring remote sections of the Park.

Visitor Use

Trail registers provide a means by which managers can monitor recreational use in a particular area by gathering information about group size, length of stay, and trip destinations. Trail register data is a tool for determining visitor use but is not comprehensive. To date, trail register data has been accumulated for a few of the existing trails that the North Country NST would ideally utilize in the Park. Because this data is inconclusive it will not be documented in this Plan. SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry has studied visitor use in the Forest Preserve on specific units, and developed a comprehensive visitor use study of the Adirondack Forest Preserve.

Once the North Country NST is designated and existing foot trails are connected into a continuous, long-distance trail, visitor use should be actively monitored to determine if the use of the trail is having an adverse impact on area resources. DEC managers will be able to use these statistics to determine how best to manage the Trail and protect the Park’s natural resources and Park facilities along its route.

Through the UMP process, the DEC has implemented the Limits of Acceptable Change model to monitor

conditions, minimize resource impacts and maintain the quality of the visitors' experiences.

Trail Maintenance and Construction

Development and maintenance of the Trail will be a shared responsibility between the NPS, the NCTA and its volunteers, the DEC and other partnering groups interested in the stewardship of this Trail.

Maintenance and construction of the Trail will be executed in keeping with the DEC's *Best Management Practices* (outlined below) and the NPS *Handbook* in consultation with APA staff.

DEC Best Management Practices for Trail Development

Trails

Trails to be designated and constructed will increase the access, enjoyment, and understanding of these lands. In locating trails, preference will be given to places where the land through which the trail passes or the destination of the trail has high scenic, ecological, or historical interest. All trail construction and relocation projects will be developed in accordance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, and 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 (DEC/APA MOU) and will incorporate the use of Best Management Practices, including but not limited to such considerations as:

- Locating trails to minimize necessary cut and fill;
- Locating trails away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes wherever possible;
- Use of proper drainage devices such as water bars and broad-based dips;
- Locating trails to minimize grade;
- Using stream crossings with low, stable banks, firm stream bottom and gentle approach slopes;
- Constructing stream crossings at right angles to the stream;
- Limiting stream crossing construction to periods of low or normal flow;
- Using stream bank stabilizing structures made of natural materials such as rock or wooden timbers;
- Using natural materials to blend the structure into the natural surroundings;
- Accessibility to those with disabilities.

Trails will be easily identified from the road/trailhead, clearly marked, and well maintained. Sufficient parking will be provided at the trailhead to accommodate anticipated use and in accordance with that area's resource capacity to withstand use. Where possible, trails will be developed and maintained in partnership with local governments, organizations, and residents.

The Unit will be linked with nearby communities and trail systems through trail connections where feasible, appropriate, and supported by local governments, residents, and landowners. Priority will be given to trail linkages that tie into existing public transportation, reduce the need for new structures and improvements within the unit, support local economic development plans, and foster the development of interpretive and educational programs.

Conflicts between different types of trail use will be minimized, and if necessary, use will be separated. Often, separating use occurs with the changing season (e.g. snowmobiling and mountain bicycling). If demand exists for a type of trail use in an area where it is appropriate but cannot be separated from other

trail uses, the use will be allowed on existing trails where shared use will not lead to unacceptable conflicts between trail users or unacceptable physical impacts. On shared-use trails, the Department will inform visitors about the types of trail uses allowed and will promote the principles of trail-sharing etiquette through trailhead signs and publications. Trail use will be monitored. Should monitoring reveal that the addition of a new type of trail use has caused unacceptable levels of conflict between trail users or unacceptable physical impacts to a trail, appropriate action will be taken to reduce such conflicts or impacts. Action may include elimination of a type of trail use from the trail.

Where appropriate, development of long-distance trails that cross management units and DEC regions will be encouraged. Routes of long-distance trails will incorporate existing trails where feasible and appropriate. However, long-distance trails will not be located where anticipated levels of use on new or existing trails or increased access to adjacent areas will have unacceptable impacts on natural resources, the recreational experiences of visitors, or lands outside the Forest Preserve. Because most long-distance trails cross both public and private lands, the Area Manager will coordinate with private landowners, the managers of other involved public lands and trail organizations in the development and management of long-distance trails. The Area Manager may close trails at any time when necessary to protect natural resources or the safety of the public.

Trailheads and Parking Areas

Points of access throughout the unit provide valuable locations for providing information and orienting visitors. Visitors receive their first impression of the area from the nature and condition of the trailhead/parking facility. For highway travelers, trailheads and/or parking areas are often the only indication that they are passing through public lands. Access points also provide trailhead registration data that can be utilized in quantifying the public's use of a particular area, and for providing crucial information that may assist in search and rescue operations. Accordingly, DEC will consider the design and maintenance of trailheads, fishing access sites and general access parking areas a matter of prime importance.

Trailhead designs will be standardized to allow visitors to identify the many separate parcels of the Forest Preserve as parts of a single entity and provide complete information in a consistent format. A limited number of standard designs will be developed to make necessary information available to visitors, provide a trail register where needed, and eliminate the problems of supplementary signs and informational clutter.

All parking lot construction and relocation projects will incorporate the use of Best Management Practices, including but not limited to such considerations as:

- Locating parking lots to minimize necessary cut and fill;
- Locating parking lots away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes wherever possible;
- Locating parking lots on flat, stable, well-drained sites;
- Using gravel or other appropriate materials to avoid runoff and erosion problems;
- Locating parking lots in areas that require a minimum amount of tree cutting;
- Limiting construction to periods of low or normal rainfall;
- Wherever possible, using wooded buffers to screen parking lots from roads;
- Limiting the size of the parking lot to the minimum necessary to address the intended use.

General Construction

All construction projects will be developed in accordance with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan and the DEC/APA MOU, and will incorporate the use of Best Management Practices, including such considerations as:

- Locating improvements to minimize necessary cut and fill;
- Locating improvements away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes;
- Use of proper drainage devices such as water bars and broad-based dips;
- Locating trails to minimize grade;
- Using stream crossings with low, stable banks, firm stream bottom and gentle approach slopes;
- Constructing stream crossings at right angles to the stream;
- Limiting stream crossing construction to periods of low or normal flow;
- Avoiding areas where habitats of threatened and endangered species are known to exist;
- Using natural materials to blend the structure into the natural surroundings;
- Reducing or eliminating the introduction and spread of invasive species.

Directional and Informational Signs

The Department produces and posts a variety of signs that provide information about regulations, recommendations, directions and distances to destinations, and resource conditions to those who visit the unit. These signs are posted at trailheads as well as interior locations.

To maintain a consistent and recognizable appearance, the dimensions, materials, colors, and wording of DEC signs will be standardized. To ensure the public's ability to locate the unit's lands and facilities easily, the following guidelines will apply to the design and erection of signs:

- All roadside directional signs, trailhead identification signs and interior guide boards will be made of wood and will be brown with yellow lettering.
- Informational "posters" may be made of metal or plastic and generally will be brown with yellow lettering, although other unobtrusive color combinations may be used, such as yellow or white with dark green lettering, or white with black lettering. Posters or signs intended to draw attention to obstacles or hazardous conditions may be red and white.
- Lettering clearly indicating the unit name and classification will be given in all roadside directional signs and trailhead identification signs.
- Standard boundary signs indicating the classification will be posted every one-tenth mile along all highways that pass through or adjacent to the unit and at other strategic locations, such as points on trails where they pass from private onto state lands.
- All signs removed through vandalism or other causes will be promptly replaced.
- Signs will carry a positive message. Rather than simply citing a regulation, a sign should explain the reasons behind the message.
- Managers will use the smallest number of signs necessary to accomplish an informational or regulatory objective.
- Signs will be clustered on a single sign post or bulletin board placed where they are most likely to be seen by visitors.
- The posting of signs by all DEC divisions will be coordinated through the Area Manager.
- As a general rule, informational signs will be posted on the periphery of a management unit rather than in the interior.
- Signs will be constructed of rustic materials and will be limited in number.

- Only signs that conform to Department rules and regulations and policy will be placed within the unit.

Design Standards

It is useful and desirable to have consistent design standards for all Forest Preserve facilities, structures and improvements. This assists users in quickly recognizing state facilities and obtaining information on services, destinations, etc. Forest Preserve design standards will be developed. Since no formal Forest Preserve design standards exist at this time, the Area Manager will refer to existing documents such as the "Interior Use Manual" and the "Adirondack lean-to plan," when designing or rehabilitating structures. If no specific guidance is available for a structure, it will be designed to incorporate the use of natural materials such as round wood, wood shingles and native stone. The appearance of structures within the unit will conform to the natural environment through the use of colors such as subdued greens, browns and other "earthtones."

New Trail Construction

New Trail construction will be scouted by DEC foresters, APA staff, NCTA staff and volunteers. New Trail construction will be a priority of NCTA staff and volunteers and the NPS to initiate the creation of this continuous trail through the Park. It is envisioned that professional DEC, Adirondack Mountain Club, and Student Conservation Association trail crews will be engaged and supplemented with volunteer labor from the NCTA and other national and local volunteer-based organizations. The NCTA will take a lead role in recruiting labor, partnering with other organizations and securing the necessary funding to rehabilitate existing trails that the Trail will overlap and to build new Trail segments to create necessary connections.

In the short-term, the Trail will require approximately 38 miles of new trail construction to connect existing trails. In the long-term, more new trail mileage may be needed take the route off roads, but in most cases the acquisition of land or trail easements will be needed first. New Trail construction mileage was a key factor in determining the route of the Trail in the Park. The proposed Central Route requires the fewest miles of new trail construction of the three proposed routes. Wherever feasible, the route of the Trail follows existing foot trails and utilizes other trails, herdpaths, railroad beds, and roads as temporary connectors to create connections across the Park. It is expected that all temporary connector mileage will be moved off of any conflicting-use trail or road to new Trail segments in the future.

The first priority for new Trail construction will be building new Trail where no temporary connectors exist. The second priority will be to move the Trail off of motorized trail and roads and onto new foot trail.

Within the management units that will require new Trail construction, the NCTA, DEC, APA, and NPS staff will work together to determine the most scenic and sustainable route for the Trail. This will require extensive on-the-ground field reconnaissance and partner consultation. In most areas where new Trail segments have been outlined, ground-truthing has already been accomplished to determine the viability of trail placement and all suggested new trail segment opportunities have sustainable options for Trail placement.

New Trail construction will require a DEC work plan. Within that work plan, the Trail will be routed and constructed to assure it does not disturb sensitive habitats; wetlands and low areas are avoided; natural resources are protected (BMPs for Trail Development Section III, Environmental Setting).

Maps of the Trail route highlight areas where new trail construction is required within a "corridor of

opportunity.” No wetlands are in danger of being adversely affected by new Trail construction.

Table 1. Approximate mileage of new trail construction (per preferred alternative)*

DEC Unit	New Trail Mileage
Black River Wild Forest	4.1
North Lake Tract Conservation Easement	0.4
West Canada Lake Wilderness	2.2
Moose River Plains Wild Forest	0.0
Jessup River Wild Forest	0.0
Perkins Clearing Conservation Easement	0.0
Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement	0.0
Siamese Ponds Wilderness	1.4
Vanderhacker Mountain Wild Forest	6.1
Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area	6.2
Hammond Pond Wild Forest	11.5
Lyme (Crown Point) Conservation Easement	5.6
Private Land	1.3
TOTAL	38.8 miles

** This figure only includes new trail construction identified in this Trail Plan. Additional new trail construction may be needed as the route is moved off of roads and onto trails on public and private lands over time. Where these trails occur on state lands, Unit Management Plans (UMPs) or UMP amendments will be required, which are subject to SEQR.*

Herdpaths

The existence of herdpaths was taken into consideration while defining the Central Route of the Trail. The Central Route utilizes existing foot trails wherever possible. In connecting these foot trails, the proposed route has also utilized existing herdpaths as temporary connectors wherever possible. *Herdpath* is a colloquial term for a user-created trail in the Forest Preserve and is recognized as a Primitive Trail under the DEC Non-motorized Trail Classification System (see Appendix 6). Herdpaths play an important role in this proposed route by providing critical trail connectors. These herdpaths can be, in time, improved to meet quality trail standards. By incorporating these user trails, this Plan aims to reduce new trail construction mileage where appropriate and designate these paths as official part of the Park Trail system.

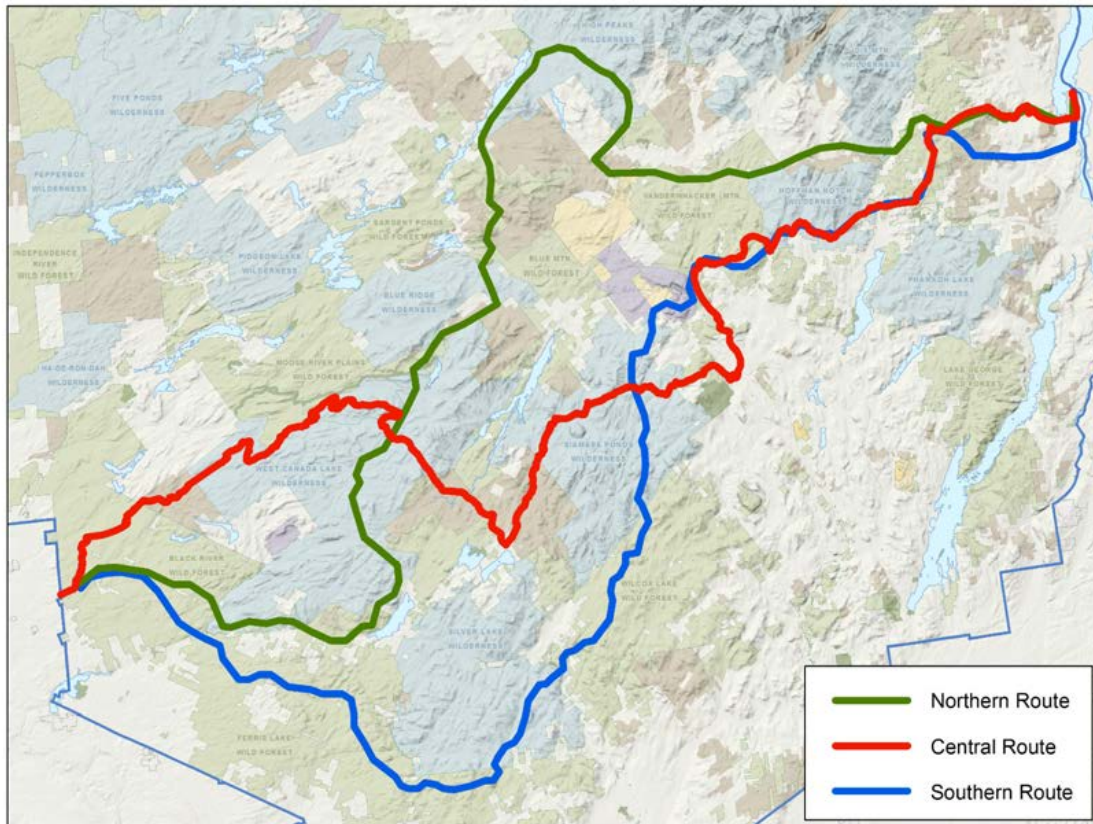
Facilities Infrastructure

This Plan does not comprehensively address existing trail facilities along the proposed Trail route. The DEC is currently involved in a comprehensive Facilities Inventory and Analysis of the entire Park. The Plan does limitedly highlight some existing facilities where they are known, but does not address their current condition. Current facility conditions are or will be addressed in UMPs. Trail facilities such as lean-tos, bridges, trail registers, signs, kiosks, trailheads, etc. undoubtedly enhance the trail users’ experience. The route for the Trail was not wholly determined based on existing trail/ user facilities. It is expected that the Trail will require more facility infrastructure in the future. This will be determined by area managers as need and resources are identified.

Section IV: The Adirondack Trail Plan/ Preferred Alternative

Analysis of Alternatives

Three Alternatives and a “No Action” Alternative have been considered for the route of the Trail in the Park: Alternative 1 (Northern Route), Alternative 2 (Southern Route), and Alternative 3 (Central Route).



Evaluation Process

After the North Country NST was authorized by Congress in 1980, the NPS was directed to prepare a comprehensive management plan for the Trail. Between 1975, when the feasibility study was completed, and 1980 when the NPS was preparing the comprehensive management plan, public concerns began to arise about the routing of the Trail in the Park. Most of the concerns focused on the Trail passing through the heavily used High Peaks Wilderness Area (HPWA) of the Park. Certainly scenic and possibly the highlight region of the entire Park, the HPWA was determined to be suffering from intense visitor use and severely eroded trails. It was decided that a National Scenic Trail traveling through this region would further increase foot traffic and consequently contributes to the already existing damage on the trails in the High Peaks. In light of these legitimate concerns, no significant efforts were made to identify or complete a trail route through the Adirondacks between 1982 and the mid 1990's. In December of 1992 at a stakeholders meeting in Albany, participants agreed on the need to pursue a study to resolve this

impasse and explore other route options.

In 1995, the NPS provided funding to the River, Trails, and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) program in Hyde Park to conduct an additional study to identify route alternatives in the eastern third of New York. The RTCA report, finalized in 1995, identified the pros and cons of the various alternatives and recommended additional study. In 1996, ADK sponsored a trail symposium entitled “Trails for the 21st Century”. At a pre-conference meeting focused on the North Country NST, the participants reached a unilateral consensus that there should be a Trail route through the Park but located outside the HPWA.

Planning for the Adirondack route proceeded slowly while other portions of the North Country NST were being developed in the State.

In 2005, a meeting was held between the NPS, DEC and NCTA to revitalize the route planning process. Subsequently unit maps, displaying potential trail corridors, were developed by the NCTA to generate input for routing discussions. NCTA trail management and cartography staff created map books for an analysis of potential routes south of the High Peaks area of the Park. Map books displaying potential trail routes were distributed to DEC planners, interested groups and individuals to gather information on route alternatives. Through feedback received on the routes, modifications were made to the routes. In July 2005, a meeting (attended by DEC, NPS, NCTA staff and volunteers) was held in Warrensburg to review the route alternatives and to process feedback received from DEC planners and others who had commented on the alternatives.

Based on this feedback, the Central Route was proposed as the most viable route to pursue for the Trail in the Park. The NCTA agreed to take the lead on preparing a Trail Plan and a Generic Environmental Impact Statement for the Trail route through the Park. Through ground-truthing and discussions with DEC planners, the Central Route was further refined and modified to minimize impacts to the resource, ensure public safety, and provide for an interesting and scenic route through the Park.

The following criteria were used to evaluate the three Alternatives that were identified as the most feasible options for the route of the Trail:

- Incorporation of existing foot trails
- Maximize the use of public land
- Minimize road walking and use of motorized trails
- Avoid crossing large lakes & rivers
- Suitability of the terrain
- Identification of any management barriers to a foot trail in various units of the Park
- Avoidance of wetlands
- Identification of existing unit management guidelines that could impact the routing of a National Scenic Trail
- Quality of the hiking/ backpacking experience
- Stakeholder support or opposition to each proposed route
- Minimization of new trail construction required to link existing trails
- Analysis from DEC unit planners and input from APA staff and other partner groups
- Avoidance of trail use conflicts

Alternative 1 – Northern Route

Alternative 1 passes primarily across the northern half of the Park traveling westerly from Crown Point to Goodnow Mountain. The route turns north from Goodnow Mountain briefly crossing into the High Peaks Wilderness Area, traveling for approximately 20 miles to Long Lake. The route cuts south from Long Lake out of the High Peaks area for approximately 30 miles to the town of Nobleboro. From Nobleboro the route turns northwest toward the Park boundary and Boonville. Alternative 1 was the initial route designated by Congress, with DEC input, for the Trail in the Park.

Advantages

- This route would incorporate the incredible scenic qualities of the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park.
- This route was the original proposed route for the North Country NST in eastern New York.

Disadvantages

- The UMP for the HPWA suggests routing the North Country NST to the south of the unit (see Appendix 5).
- The New York State Trails Council passed a resolution opposing this route through the High Peaks, May 1993 (see Appendix 10).
- The Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) passed a resolution opposing a route through the High Peaks area.
- Stakeholders have unanimously supported a route south of the High Peaks region of the Park that would not impact that already heavily subscribed area.
- The High Peaks suffer from intense visitor use and severely eroded trails. It is believed that the NCT will further compound the current resource damage.

Alternative 2 – Southern Route

Alternative 2 enters the Adirondack Park on its western border in the vicinity of the North Lake Road near the Hamlet of Forestport. The route travels in a southeasterly direction toward the Ferris Lake Wild Forest and the Silver Lake Wilderness. The route turns in a northeasterly direction near the Wilcox Lake Wild Forest and Silver Lake Wilderness boundary. Alternative 2 travels north through Siamese Ponds Wilderness and the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area where it intersects Alternative 3, the Central Route. The route turns easterly in Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest and crosses through Hoffman Notch Wilderness and Hammond Pond Wild Forest.

Advantages

- This route would provide more hiking opportunities in the lesser used southern part of the Park.
- This route would provide more trail mileage in Wild Forest.
- This route incorporates a number of existing herdpaths.
- There are a number of scenic overlooks along this route.
- There is potential for a spur trail to Pigeon Mountain, the highest point in Fulton County.
- This proposed route creates new hiking opportunities to take pressure off the HPWA and the Northville- Placid Trail.
- No new parking or access points would be developed.

Disadvantages

- This proposed route creates a new trail in the Silver Lake Wilderness.
- This proposed route would overlap many miles of motorized trail.
- The section of this route in Ferris Lake Wild Forest has the potential to receive heavy pressure from motorized uses.
- This route has several major road and river crossings that present serious obstacles.
- This route would require extensive new trail construction.
- There is a desire for the southwestern section of the West Canada Lake Wilderness to remain trail-less.
- There is a significant amount of non-public land in Black River Wild Forest south of the North Lake Road that this route would intersect.
- There is greater potential for conflict with motorized uses.

Alternative 3 – Central Route (Preferred Alternative)

Alternative 3 enters the Park on its western border in the vicinity of North Lake Road near the Hamlet of Forestport. The route travels across the central region of the Park intersecting existing trails in Moose River Plains Wild Forest, West Canada Lake Wilderness, Siamese Ponds Wilderness and Hoffman Notch Wilderness.

Advantages

- This route is both scenic and remote.
- This route utilizes many existing foot trails, limiting the amount of construction of new trail required.
- This route offers a more direct crossing of the Park when compared to the other routes.
- This route incorporates a number of existing herdpaths and proposes adopting and maintaining them to avoid resource damage.
- This route requires the least amount of new trail construction of the three proposed routes.
- This route has no major management barriers.
- There are many existing trail facilities that this route utilizes.
- This route utilizes private lands where DEC holds recreational rights.

Disadvantages

- This route will require over 27 miles of walking on public roads in the short and medium term until land or easements are acquired to move the trail off-road.

Alternative 4 – No Action

Taking no action at this time would prevent or delay establishment of the Trail in the Forest Preserve. No new trail would be constructed avoiding the impact associated with establishing and maintaining trails. Other routes would have to be sought on private lands, public roads or the route would have to be changed to go around the Park. The route for the Trail, anchored at an eastern terminus in Crown Point, was authorized by Congress in 1980.

Without this Plan, investigation of a route could continue through a unit-by-unit planning process creating a disjointed approach to planning and creating SEQRA segmentation issues. This comprehensive Plan allows assessment of the overall route and determines which DEC management units are most

appropriate for the Trail's location. This Plan will allow the DEC to focus its planning efforts, better mitigate impacts and administer effective development of a National Scenic Trail within the Park boundary.

Selection of Preferred Alternative

From an analysis of all the potential impacts and the pros and cons of each of the four alternatives, it is evident that Alternative 3 (Central Route) has the greatest potential for creating a National Scenic Trail in the Park with minimal impacts. The Central Route enters the Park on its western border in the vicinity of North Lake Road near the Hamlet of Forestport. The route travels across the central region of the Park intersecting existing trails in West Canada Lake Wilderness, Siamese Ponds Wilderness and Hoffman Notch Wilderness. This route has its eastern terminus at Crown Point State Historic Site on Lake Champlain. This is the shortest route through the Park, therefore requiring the least mileage of trail and, consequently, trail construction and maintenance.

Alternative 1 (Northern Route) was eliminated from consideration because it passed through the High Peaks Wilderness Area. Although the High Peaks are arguably the most scenic area in the Park, they are crowded in summer months and have met their social carrying capacity. The UMP for the High Peaks Wilderness Area, approved by both the APA and DEC, suggests that the Trail not be routed through this unit.

Alternative 2 (Southern Route) is similar to the Central Route in many ways, however it is a longer route and would require more trail to be constructed. The Southern Route has many obstacles that would make trail layout problematic, including crossing large water bodies and routing of trail over more private lands. The Southern Route also has the greater potential for conflicts with motorized uses.

Alternative 4 (No Action), while having the least impact on the Park's resources, this Alternative does nothing to help achieve the goal of finding a feasible route for the Trail through the Park. Furthermore, the No Action Alternative does nothing to help create new recreational opportunities in the Park and direct use away from its more heavily used areas.

NCTA, NPS, DEC staff and volunteers gathered at a roundtable meeting in Warrensburg to comprehensively compare Alternative 2 and Alternative 3 (the proposed Southern and Central Routes). Challenges and opportunities were identified for both routes. The Central Route was selected as the preferred corridor for further investigation for routing of the Trail.

Understanding the Route Description

Trail Plan Overview Maps

DEC's planning staff have developed the overview maps of the route which can be found in Appendix 13 of this plan. The overview maps display a "corridor of opportunity" for the Trail represented by a variable width overlay across the maps (at its maximum width representing one mile). This corridor of opportunity is used to visually display a generic route for the Trail. Where the corridor overlaps existing foot trails, it is recommended that these trails be utilized. Placement of the Trail on private lands can only be achieved with the approval of the individual landowner.

In areas where no trail exists, new trail is recommended. The exact location of new trail segments will be determined by DEC planners and managers after the construction of the Trail is approved in the appropriate UMP and a project work plan is approved in consultation with the APA. All new trail opportunities are not limited to the corridor shown on the maps. Opportunities outside the corridor are also viable and should be researched by area managers. However, the final route of the Trail should follow the conceptual route as closely as possible.

Opportunities and Challenges

Within *The Route* section, the Trail route is analyzed by identifying both Opportunities and Challenges within each DEC unit:

Opportunities: These are the currently identified benefits associated with this route.

Challenges: These are the currently identified limiting factors associated with this route.

Mileage Graph Explanation

The graph below is used throughout *The Route* section of the Plan. Below is a definition of each heading used in the Mileage Graph.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
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Unit- DEC land or conservation easement unit the Trail is passing through

Foot Trail- Existing foot trail mileage in the Unit that the route utilizes

New Trail- Approximate mileage of new trail required for this route

Road- Estimate of temporary trail connector mileage along roads, motorized trails, and abandoned railbeds *

Total Miles- Approximate mileage for the proposed route of the Trail route in the unit

* Replacing temporary connectors will result in an increase in **New Trail**, greater than or equal to, the current stated mileage of **Temporary Connector** within this Plan.

The Route

Black River Wild Forest/North Lake Track Conservation Easement

(See Map 1)

The Route of the NCNST enters the Adirondack Park on its western boundary in Herkimer County near the Black River Wild Forest. The North Lake Road will serve as a temporary connector, until an off-road route can be established, for 1.6 miles until reaching the existing trailhead for the **Stone Dam Trail**. The route progresses northerly along the well-maintained Stone Dam Trail and crosses Little Woodhull Creek on an existing bridge.

About 1.6 miles north of Stone Dam Lake, the route leaves the existing trail and continues northeasterly and crosses Little Woodhull Creek near the south end of the long south end of the long south arm of Little Woodhull Lake. The route continues along approximately 3.6 new miles of trail until reaching the **Little**

Woodhull Lake Trail. The route will utilize the Little Woodhull Lake Trail heading northeast for approximately 1.9 miles. At this point the route intersects the Sand Lake Falls Trail. From there, the route leaves the existing trail for 0.9 miles and continues east into the North Lake Tract Conservation Easement and meets up with the **Grindstone Creek Trail** for approximately 2.2 miles. Then the Trail heads east along Loop Road past the Canchagala Trailhead to the **North Branch Trail**. The route splits off near the end of the North Branch Trail and heads northeast into the West Canada Lake Wilderness on the south side of Cave Mountain.

Opportunities:

- Introduces more pedestrian traffic into the BRWF.
- Officially incorporates herdpaths that are being used to access Ice Cave Mountain.
- Utilizes the Stone Dam Trail, which has been recently rehabilitated.
- Provides accessible opportunity at the Stone Dam trailhead.
- Utilizes existing parking at the end of the North Lake Road and allows for access to the Trail.
- Utilizes a section of the Little Woodhull Lake Trail that is currently overgrown and not being used by snowmobilers.

Challenge:

- There are no identified challenges associated with the route in BRWF.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Black River Wild Forest (State Land)	6.9	4.1	0.3	11.3

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
North Lake Tract Conservation Easement	3.6	0.4	1.4	5.4

West Canada Lake Wilderness/Moose River Plains Wild Forest

(See Map 2)

The route enters the West Canada Lake Wilderness on the south side of Ice Cave Mountain via abandoned road and herdpaths. The route follows these trails until intersecting the **Horn Lake Trail** 0.5 miles west of Horn Lake. The route follows the Horn Lake Trail for 7.8 miles until it crosses into the Moose River Plains Wild Forest and becomes the **Indian Lake Trail**. The trail continues for 1.9 miles on the Indian Lake Trail to Squaw Lake, where it passes through a gate and becomes the **Indian Lake Road** for another 2.4 miles. The route then heads south on the Brooktrout Lake Trail and French Louis Trail for another 17.0 miles (including a 1.2-mile overlap with the Northville-Placid Trail) to the boundary of the Jessup River Wild Forest.

Opportunities:

- Utilizes existing foot trails.
- Offers a remote hiking experience.
- Utilizes existing herdpaths west of Horn Lake as temporary connectors to reduce new trail construction.
- Offers views of Indian Lake Mountain.

Challenge:

- Requires use of roads as temporary connectors

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
West Canada Lake Wilderness (State Land)	24.8	2.2	0.0	27.0

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Moose River Plains Wild Forest (State Land)	1.9	0.0	2.4	4.3

Jessup River Wild Forest, Perkins Clearing Conservation Easement, and Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement

(See Map 3)

As the route enters the Jessup River Wild Forest, it passes a gate and enters **Old Military Road** for 0.7 miles until crossing into the Perkins Clearing Conservation Easement. The route continues on Old Military Road for another 2.3 miles until it becomes the **Perkins Clearing Road**. The route follows the Perkins Clearing Road for 4.2 miles, crossing briefly back into the Jessup River Wild Forest before entering the Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement. Upon reaching **State Route 30**, the route heads south for 0.1 miles before heading southeast onto the Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement. From there, the trail follows the border of the conservation easement and Jessup River Wild Forest until reaching lands also used by the Oak Mountain Ski Area in the Village of Speculator. From there, the route heads north on **Elm Lake Road**, which it follows for 6.7 miles until reaching the Siamese Ponds Wilderness boundary.

Opportunities:

- Utilizes recreation rights held by DEC on private lands
- Offers resupply opportunity in community of Speculator.

Challenge:

- Relies on many roads, including a short section of state highway.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Jessup River Wild Forest (State Land)	0.3	0.0	0.7	1.0

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Perkins Clearing Conservation Easement	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement	1.8	0.0	7.7	9.5

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Private Land /Public Roads (not on state land or surrounded by conservation easements)	0.9	0.0	0.9	1.8

Siamese Ponds Wilderness

(See Map 4)

The route enters the Siamese Ponds Wilderness at the parking area for the **Long Pond Trail**. The route follows the Long Pond Trail for 3.6 miles northerly until intersecting the **Kunjamuk-Long Pond Trail**, which it follows for its entire length of 1.4 miles. It then crosses the **Kunjamuk Trail** and would then follow approximately 1.4 miles of new trail until connecting with the **Round Pond Trail**. It follows the trail east for 0.8 miles until reaching the **Kings Flow East Trail**, which it follows north for 3.4 miles until reaching the **Puffer Pond Brook Trail**. The route travels northeast on the Puffer Pond Brook Trail for its entire length of 1.8 miles before intersecting and following the **Puffer Pond Trail** for 4.1 miles. After crossing the Siamese Ponds/11th Mountain Trail, the Puffer Pond Trail becomes the **Botheration Pond Trail**, which the route follows for its entirety of 3.2 miles. The route then intersects the **Halfway Brook Ski Trail**, and follows it eastward for 1.3 miles until reaching Barton Mines Road.

Opportunities:

- Utilizes mostly existing foot trails.
- Offers a remote hiking experience.

Challenge:

- There are no identified challenges associated with the route in SPWA.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Siamese Ponds Wilderness (State Land)	17.3	1.4	0.0	18.7

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

(See Map 5)

After crossing Barton Mines Road, the route enters the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest and begins following the **Raymond Brook Ski Trail** for 3.4 miles. The route enters private land, continues for 1.3 miles on the **Ski Bowl Connector Trail** until reaching **Ski Bowl Road**. The route then continues through North Creek following Ski Bowl Road to the north for 0.5 miles, heads south on **Main Street** for 0.4 miles, then turns northeast on **State Route 28N** for 0.4 miles. Between the Hudson River.

Between the Hudson River and 14th Road, there is a break in the route. There are several parcels of private land in the area that could provide an off-road link to avoid a long stretch of road walking along Route 28N, a state highway. At the time of this Plan, no connections have been secured, but DEC's partner organizations will continue to search for an alternative to walking along Route 28N.

Beginning at 14th Road, the route then heads northward on approximately 3.9 miles of new trail to be developed. After crossing the Northwoods Club Road, the route intersects the Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail. The route then heads north on the **Lost Pond Mountain Snowmobile Trail** for 3.4 miles.

After crossing State Route 28N, the trail becomes the **Stony Pond Snowmobile Trail**, which it follows for 1.7 miles until reaching the **Hewitt Pond Trail**. It then follows the Hewitt Pond Trail for 1.9 miles until it reaches Barnes Pond, at which point it would head east for approximately 2.2 miles of new trail until reaching the **Cheney Pond-Irishtown Trail**. The route then heads south on the Cheney Pond-Irishtown Trail for 0.2 miles.

Opportunities:

- Brings hikers to the historic community of North Creek.
- Utilizes existing motor vehicle bridge to cross Hudson River, a major obstacle.

Challenges:

- A break in the route still exists, and will have to include either a significant amount of road walking or private land to connect either end of the route.
- Requires a short section of major highway.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Vanderwhacker Mtn. Wild Forest (State Land)	10.7	6.1	0.00	16.8*

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Private Land /Public Roads (not on state land)	1.3	0.0	1.3	2.6*

**These figures do not include the connection that will have to be made between the Hudson River and 14th road.*

Hoffman Notch Wilderness

(See Map 6)

Where the Cheney Pond-Irishtown Trail intersects the southwest corner of the Hoffman Notch Wilderness, a new trail would be needed heading northeast into the unit for 2.0 miles. The route then meets up with the **Bailey Pond Trail** and heads southeast on that trail for 0.7 miles. At the trailhead, the route then heads northwest on the **Hoffman Notch Trail** for 1.4 miles until reaching the intersection with the **Big Pond Trail**. The route heads east on the Big Pond Trail for 4.1 miles to a point just north of Big Pond. The route then heads northeast on what would be new trail for 4.2 miles until reaching the unit boundary and Interstate 87.

Opportunities:

- Offers a remote hiking experience.
- Takes advantage of an under-utilized area of the Park.

Challenges:

- Some new trail construction would be required.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Hoffman Notch Wilderness (State Land)	6.1	6.2	0.00	12.3

Hammond Pond Wild Forest/Lyme Conservation Easement

(See Map 7)

Upon reaching edge of the Hoffman Notch Wilderness, 0.4 miles of new trail would be needed to take the route through an existing underpass under Interstate 87 and connect to **Route 9**. Route 9 would be used to cross the Schroon River, after which the route would enter Hammond Pond Wild Forest on the east side of the highway. Upon entering the Hammond Pond Wild Forest, 3.2 miles of new trail would be needed heading easterly until reaching the **Peaked Hill Trail**. The route heads north near the Peaked Hill Trail (which needs to be re-routed in places) for 1.1 miles. At that trail's terminus, a new section of trail approximately 3.7 miles in length, heading north, would be needed to bring the route to the **Moose Mountain Pond Trail**. Following the Moose Mountain Pond Trail northwest for 0.9 miles, the route then intersects the **Berrymill Flow Trail**, which it follows northward for 1.3 miles. Upon reaching the trailhead at Ensign Pond Road, the route then heads southeast on the **Berrymill Flow-Hammond Road Connector Trail** for 0.1 miles, and then on the **Hammond Pond Road** (trail) for 1.1 miles to its terminus just past Hammond Pond. From there, the route would follow approximately 3.8 miles of new trail while heading northeast and into the Lyme Conservation Easement. Upon entering the easement, the route would require another 3.8 miles of new trail until reaching **Breed Hill Road**. The route follows Breed Hill Road for 1.0 mile, heads south on **Moriah Road** for 1.4 miles, and then heads east on **Cold Spring Road** for 0.7 miles until reaching the Lyme Conservation Easement once again. Two miles of new trail would be needed to bring the route through the easement area to its eastern boundary. Another 0.1 mile private-land crossing would bring the route to **Burdick Road**, on which it heads east for 1.3 miles before connecting to **Lake Road** for 1.3 miles and then on to **Bridge Road** for 2.0 miles to the trail's terminus at the Crown Point bridge.

Opportunities:

- Takes advantage of an under-utilized area of the Park.
- Offers a remote hiking experience.

Challenges:

- Requires some road walking, particularly in the vicinity of Crown Point.
- Requires significant new trail construction.

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Hammond Pond Wild Forest (State Land)	3.4	11.5	0.0	14.9

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Lyme Conservation Easement	0.0	5.6	0.0	5.6

Unit	Foot Trail	New Trail	Road	Total Miles
Private Land/Public Roads (not on state land)	0.0	0.4	6.2	6.8

Total Mileage Tables

	Existing Trail Mileage	New Trail Construction*	Road	Total Mileage
Black River Wild Forest	6.9	4.1	0.3	11.3
North Lake Tract Conservation Easement	3.6	0.4	1.4	5.4
West Canada Lake Wilderness	24.8	2.2	0.0	27.0
Moose River Plains Wild Forest	1.9	0.0	2.4	4.3
Jessup River Wild Forest	0.3	0.0	0.7	1.0
Perkins Clearing Conservation Easement	0.0	0.0	5.6	5.6
Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement	1.8	0.0	7.7	9.5
Siamese Ponds Wilderness	17.3	1.4	0.0	18.7
Vanderwhacker Mtn Wild Forest	10.7	6.1	0.0	16.8
Hoffman Notch Wilderness	6.1	6.2	0.0	12.3
Hammond Pond Wild Forest	3.4	11.5	0.0	14.9
Lyme Conservation Easement	0.0	5.6	0.0	5.6
Private Land	3.8	1.3	8.8	13.9
Total	80.6	38.8	26.9	146.3

** This figure only includes new trail construction identified in this Trail Plan. Additional new trail construction may be needed as the route is moved off of roads and onto trails on public and private lands over time. It also does not reflect the connection that will have to be made in the North Creek area.*

Section V: Environmental Review (SEQR)

Introduction

This Trail Plan/FGEIS provides a proposed route and best management practices for establishment and maintenance of the North Country NST in the Park. This Plan/FGEIS incorporates the consideration of environmental factors, and analyzes the significant adverse impacts to the Adirondack Park resulting from the implementation of the plan. Adoption of the Plan is an action that is subject to the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR).

A GEIS is an assessment of the possible impacts of a broad-based action or of a group of related actions and is more general and conceptual in nature than a site-specific EIS. This Section focuses on the proposed actions and their potential impacts, and the process by which site-specific environmental analysis will be conducted during the implementation phase.

The former Bureau of Outdoor Recreation (merged into the National Park Service in 1981) completed the official Final Environmental Impact Statement for the entire North Country NST in 1975. While this EIS, titled *The North Country Trail, A Potential Addition to the National Trails System, Final Environmental Impact Statement, (October 3, 1975)* is generic in nature, it does address various categories of potential impact in a general way. This national-level EIS can be found in Appendix 12.

Summary of Action

This Plan describes a proposed route for the Trail across the central region of the Adirondack Park. The Plan, once approved, will be integrated into the Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for each respective unit traversed by the Trail. This Plan is conceptual in nature and offers a comprehensive analysis of the preferred route and alternative options within an overall route corridor. The Plan describes a foot trail across the Park beginning near Forestport and ending in Crown Point and proposes guidelines and standards for developing and maintaining the trail within the context of current Constitutional requirements, statutes, rules, regulations and policies.

The Plan identifies, analyzes and proposes a preferred route and best management practices that will guide the administration and management of the Trail as it passes through the Park including:

- Introduction and history of the route;
- Vision and Goals for the North Country NST;
- Relationship of this Plan to the DEC's unit management planning process;
- Relationship of this Plan to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan;
- The Environmental Setting;
- Best management practices for the maintenance and construction of the Trail (Section III - Environmental Setting) ;
- An analysis of alternative routes;
- A description of the preferred alternative;
- Maps showing the proposed route;
- Environmental Review.

The preferred alternative (Alternative 3) was chosen after careful analysis of the proposed routes and specific route segments with DEC staff, APA staff, NPS staff, NCTA staff, ADK staff and volunteers familiar with the planning units, trails, local issues, geographic constraints, and legal constraints.

This Plan recommends the incorporation of the North Country NST into the DEC's trail system and recommends that this NST be developed and managed in accordance with applicable federal and state laws, policies, and guidelines. This Plan outlines a viable and sustainable route for the Trail across the central region of the Park and recommends this Plan be incorporated into affected current and future unit management planning and UMPs.

This Plan recommends following approximately 81 miles of existing foot trail within the Park. The Plan recommends approximately 38 miles of new trail construction within the Park. It is estimated that 39 miles of temporary connectors along roads will be initially utilized to make connections along this route. It is estimated that the North Country NST, within the Park, will be approximately 158 total miles in length when complete. (It should be noted that this proposed route requires less new construction than the other alternatives.) The ultimate goal is a trail route that is completely off-road and non-motorized, but this Plan does suggest temporary road-walking connections for use by long-distance hikers until the off-road route can be completed.

This Plan also recommends that the Trail be signed in accordance with the NPS minimum trail signing standards presented in the NPS *North Country National Scenic Trail Handbook for Trail Design, Construction, and Maintenance*. In the Park boundaries the Trail will be marked with blue DEC nail-up trail discs. Official North Country NST trail emblems will be installed at all road crossings. The NPS is responsible for providing signing outside of federal lands. The NPS signing standards have been developed over the past 25 years in order to establish a "thread of continuity" across the many and varying public and private lands crossed by the Trail. The DEC will provide overall management of the Trail within the Forest Preserve and adapt the NPS standards to ensure the wild character of the Forest Preserve is maintained.

Implementation of recommended actions in the Plan on Forest Preserve land will require development of UMPs or UMP amendments for affected units. Implementation of the Plan on lands that are under conservation easements will require development of Recreational Unit Management Plans (RMP). Development of Trail segments approved in UMPs will be carried out under the direction of the DEC.

Impacts of Plan Implementation

Short-Term Impacts

Use of DEC Best Management Practices (Section III Environmental Setting) will reduce short-term impacts. Short-term impacts from Trail construction will be minimal; however there may be some soil and vegetation disturbance. All new construction, relocation and maintenance activities will be carried out to minimize site disturbance, maintain proper drainage and avoid wet areas by locating the Trail to minimize necessary cut and fill; laying out the Trail on existing old roads or clear or partially cleared areas to the extent possible; locating the Trail away from streams, wetlands, and unstable slopes wherever possible; use of proper drainage devices such as water bars and broad-based dips; locating the Trail to minimize grade; using stream crossings with low, stable banks, firm stream bottom and gentle approach slopes; constructing stream crossings at right angles to the stream; using stream bank stabilizing structures made

of natural materials such as rock or wooden timbers; using natural materials to blend the structure into the natural surroundings.

All Trail-related structures will be constructed to blend with the natural surroundings and use natural materials to the extent possible.

Long-Term Impacts

Long-term impacts include an increase in the mileage of foot trails in the Forest Preserve. Initially, an increase in foot traffic can be expected as people looking for a new experience hike the new sections of this Trail. The stature of the Trail as a National Scenic Trail is likely to draw some increase in hikers looking for a long-distance trail experience in the Adirondacks. Other sections of the Trail have not seen a great increase in the number of users after the initial curiosity subsides. Creating a long-distance hiking trail in the Adirondacks should reduce some of the user pressure on the Northville-Placid Trail. The Northville-Placid Trail is currently the only long-distance hiking trail in the Park and is a popular hike for experienced hikers looking for a challenge.

The Trail does not see large numbers of through hikers that a trail such as the Appalachian Trail receives. This is partly due to the Trail's east-west orientation and the substantial length of the Trail which narrows the window of opportunity when the weather is suitable for long-distance hiking. A trail that runs from south to north allows hikers to begin early in the year with spring in the south, while much of the north is still experiencing winter. The North Country NST, when complete, will also be double the length of the 2,175 mile Appalachian Trail.

Cumulative Impacts

Full implementation of the entire Trail Plan will occur over a number of years. Just over half of the Trail is routed over existing foot trails in the Forest Preserve. No increased impacts are anticipated over the existing trails. In fact, interest in the North Country NST will attract many volunteers that will work to improve trail conditions and lessen impacts to existing trails.

A small increase in foot trail use is expected within the Adirondack Park, but not at a level to have significant environmental impacts. Increased education efforts will help minimize impacts from hikers.

Soil impacts will be minimized through the use of Best Management Practices for Trail development. Trail grades and cross slopes will be reduced; wetland crossings will be minimized; best management practices for trail development (Section III Environmental Setting) will reduce soil disturbances during construction and maintenance of the Trail by limiting cut and fills; utilizing existing trails and old roads to the extent possible; and using of proper drainage devices.

No significant impacts to wildlife will result from implementation of the Plan. The UMP process will include SEQRA analysis of individual Trail segments and will provide for public input. The potential environmental impacts of developing new Trail segments will be evaluated through this process. Elements that will be considered within this process will include but not be limited to:

- Soils/Wetlands
- Drainage
- Vegetation

- Fish/Wildlife
- User group conflicts
- Relationships with adjacent private land and other public lands
- Tourism/Economic impacts

The evaluation will consider both short and long-term impacts. Short-term impacts will primarily relate to those associated with the construction of new Trail segments and functions related to the operation and maintenance of the park's overall trail system. These have been discussed within the previous sections of the Plan.

Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

New trail layout and trail designation decisions will be made through the UMP process. It is estimated the route will utilize 79 miles of existing foot trail, 38 miles of new trail construction, and require 41 miles of temporary connectors along roads. It is projected the Trail will be approximately 158 total miles in length when complete. Some examples of unavoidable adverse impacts include tree and vegetation removal; however, as previously explained, the preferred alternative was chosen to reduce new Trail construction, thereby substantially limiting tree cutting and vegetation removal.

The preparation of UMPs for Forest Preserve lands and RMPs for conservation easement areas within the Park may identify additional adverse impacts which cannot be avoided. In such circumstances the impacts will be identified and described within the SEQRA documents prepared for the UMP or RMP.

Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitment of Resources

The planning, development, and implementation of this Plan will involve irreversible and irretrievable commitments of public funds in the form of time, labor and materials. Also, there is a commitment to the long-term maintenance of the Trail in the Park. This commitment has been made by the NPS, NY state agencies, the NCTA, other local trail groups/clubs, and private landowners involved in the administration and maintenance of the Trail. Acquisition of trail corridors through easement, or fee title by the State, NPS, or other partners, will lead to a commitment to expend time, labor and materials to maintain these Trail segments.

Growth Inducement

The Trail will not have an impact on the growth of the Adirondack region. The Trail may attract small numbers of new visitors to the Adirondack region. This will bring positive, economic impacts to the Adirondack communities. Impact will be in the form of increased business in the community and increased tax revenue. It is expected that a second long-distance, linear trail in the Park with a National Scenic Trail designation, will attract a number of new hikers to the region each year.

Supplemental Environmental Review

As part of the State's responsibility under the State Environmental Quality Review Act, DEC will review proposed implementation projects with respect to consistency with this Plan. Projects found to be consistent with the Plan can go forward without any additional review. Other types of proposals may require additional review ranging from completion of an environmental assessment form to a site specific environmental impact statement. For example, site-specific impacts of designating, locating or modifying

specific Trail segments will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis within the UMP of the Forest Preserve unit. Site-specific studies addressing factors such as topography, significant ecological resources, rare, threatened or endangered plant and animal species will be conducted as required by the UMP process. Site-specific impacts will undergo SEQRA review and will be mitigated within the UMP. Other types of proposals that may require additional environmental review include but are not limited to:

- Any new actions not addressed within the Trail Plan that do not meet the Type II or Exempt categories within Part 617, the rules and regulations implementing SEQR;
- Any change from the preferred alternative for Trail system development or management which may result in significant environmental impacts; and,
- Any leases, easements, memoranda of understanding, or other agreements between the State and private entities or other agencies that affect resources in a manner that is not sufficiently addressed in this Plan.

No Action Alternative

Taking no action at this time would prevent or delay establishment of the North Country NST in the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Other routes would have to be sought on private lands, public roads or the route would have to be changed to go around the Adirondack Park. The route, anchored at an eastern terminus in Crown Point, was authorized by Congress in 1980. A substantial change in the route would require congressional action.

Without this Trail Plan, investigation of a route could continue through an independent unit-by-unit planning process, creating a disjointed approach to planning and creating SEQRA segmentation issues. This Plan allows assessment of the overall route and determines which DEC management units are most appropriate for the Trail. This will allow the DEC to focus its planning efforts, better mitigate impacts and administer development of the Trail.

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Appendix 1: Response to Public Comment on the 2007 Draft Trail Plan/DGEIS

I. Introduction

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) issued the Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/ Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement in November 2007. The public comment period extended through February 15, 2008. During that time DEC conducted three public meetings (Warrensburg, Boonville, & Albany) to discuss the Plan and seek input and feedback from the public. The following is a synopsis of the substantive comments received and the responses developed by the Plan team.

II. Summary

Overall Total:

125 written/verbal comments were received during the public comment period

Breakdown of citizen comment:

90.1%- Private Individual

9.9%- Trail/Conservation organization/Other

State residence of commenters:

69%- New York

21%- Other State

10%- Unknown

Citizen reaction:

88%-generally supportive of the Plan

2%-expressed concerns

III. Master Comments and Master Responses

Compatible Uses

Comment: Several comments recommended that the State allow other uses such as mountain biking, horseback riding, and snowmobiling on the Trail in the Park.

Response: The North Country NST is designated by Congress as a long-distance, non-motorized trail. Because the Trail intersects nine units of the Forest Preserve, including three wilderness areas where only foot traffic is permitted, it is not appropriate for this Trail to share use with motorized uses, or horse and bike traffic along its entire length. Where the trail is planned to be colocated on existing trails other users will not be displaced by the NCST designation. Other opportunities exist in the Park for enjoying these other non-hiking pastimes and will be explored through the unit management planning process.

Snowmobile Trail Crossings

Comment: Commenters expressed concerns about managing the Trail and snowmobile trail intersections and potential safety concerns associated with these crossings.

Response: The Trail, over its entire national length, crosses many roads and overlaps miles of motorized trails. Although this is not the preferred placement of the Trail, it is necessary to utilize temporary connectors to make trail connections.

Historically there have not been any incidents between pedestrians (and skiers) where snowmobile trails and hiking trails intersect. To ensure safety signs, hiker and snowmobiler education, and safety measures that inform trail users of an upcoming intersection will be used to reduce user conflicts.

Awareness and common sense are the best preventative measures that trail users can exercise. Signage will notify both motorized and non-motorized trail users that they are approaching a trail intersection and the crossing requires extra attention and slow, safe operating speeds.

New Routing Suggestion I

Comment: Some comments indicated that there is a viable alternative route option for the Trail in Siamese Ponds Wilderness, Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest, and Hudson Gorge Primitive Area. This new suggestion would use existing trails and would reduce previously suggested new trail construction north of Peaked Mountain.

Response: Residents from North River, area recreationists and DEC staff identified an alternative route for the Trail to connect between the Siamese Ponds Wilderness and the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest (see *The Route* section of the Revised Draft Plan). After further research, the route of the Trail has been modified to include this proposed route as an option.

There are many new benefits that this route offers and these are outlined in detail in *The Route* section of this Plan.

Another alternative that is included in the plan takes the route into the Village of North Creek and up the east side of the Hudson River. This route would tie the community to the trail, providing opportunities to visit historic resources and local businesses.

New Routing Suggestion II

Comment: Some comments indicated that there may be some alternative route options for the Trail in Moose River Plains Wild Forest and West Canada Lakes Wilderness to avoid heavily impacted areas in the WCLW.

Response: APA and DEC staff recognized that the original route of the Trail in the West Canada Lakes Wilderness, has been impacted by visitor use. In the Draft Trail Plan it was recommended that the Trail overlap the NPT for approximately 6 miles to connect to the Sucker Brook Trail.

After careful consideration of citizen and agency concerns and route alternatives, the Revised Draft Plan proposes the route to be relocated to the north in the Little Moose Wilderness once a new trail is constructed up Little Moose Mountain and Manbary Mountain. Through hikers who want to avoid the

1400' climb will have the option of taking a side loop through the West Canada Wilderness or use the Otter Brook Trail as a bypass.

New Trail Construction in Wilderness Areas

Comment: Several comments objected to any new trail construction in Wilderness Areas because of the impact on the resource.

Response: Hiking trails are an acceptable use in lands classified as Wilderness that conform to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan. Hiking and backpacking fit the Wilderness definition of "primitive and unconfined type of recreation." Care has been taken to avoid construction of trails in the core of wilderness areas. Trail construction will be done in accordance with best management practices to lessen and prevent impacts to the resource.

Adjacent Private Property Owners

Comment: Several comments expressed concern about the Trail being routed in/near private property and what the associated impacts of a NST on private landowners would be.

Response: The NPS and NCTA work with willing landowners to move sections of Trail off-road and into more scenic areas where no public lands exist. The NCTA holds many non-binding Trail Use Agreements with private landowners in the seven states through which the Trail passes.

We cannot foresee circumstances which would make it desirable for the NPS to be involved in acquiring lands within Adirondack Park. State agencies should always be the acquiring and managing entity for those lands. When the North Country Trail is finally completed and protected through land acquisition and easement agreements with landowners' ownership and management authority will be a patchwork all along the trail.

The standard we use for the "actual functional walking trail" is a 24-inch tread plus an additional foot of vegetation clearing on either side, or about 4 feet total. New accessibility standards MAY push the tread width to 32 or 36 inches, or a total of 5 feet, but this remains to be seen.

On the first point, we have this guidance on page 26 in our Comprehensive Management Plan for the North Country National Scenic Trail:

"The extent of land area that needs to be protected and/or managed for the NCT is a matter to be determined by the local managing authority and should reflect the resource management objectives and the unique environmental characteristics and opportunities associated with each portion of the route as well as the type of experience which the managing authority desires to provide for the trail user. The decision will be influenced by the surrounding land uses, the terrain, the need for sight and sound buffers, and the ease or difficulty of securing or setting aside lands to be managed for the trail. The lands associated with and managed for the trail may therefore vary from a mere 2-foot tread to 1,000 feet or more. It is not the intent of this plan to completely isolate the user from land use practices surrounding the trail, but rather to allow the traveler to enjoy the mosaic of resources and land uses through which the trail passes while taking special advantage of the natural and scenic elements along the way. Thus, resource management activities such as timber cutting, even occasional clearcutting, are not out of harmony with management of the NCT" (Comprehensive Management Plan for the North Country

National Scenic Trail p 26).

Two hundred feet is viewed as an optimal minimum width for the managed corridor. It provides both a minimum natural/scenic buffer for the trail as well as a minimum distance to keep the trail away from residences, agricultural buildings, and other developments on private lands.

The greatest influence on the width of land protected and managed for the trail is really the wishes of the individual landowner. Some landowners wish to minimize the size/width of the corridor that is protected or purchased. We use 50 feet as a guideline for the minimum width on which we and our partners would be willing to spend public funds to acquire. In many cases, especially in the Midwest with its surveyed grid of land descriptions and ownerships, most often a rural landowner prefers to sell an entire 40-acres (~1,320 feet wide), rather than split off a strip or corridor from a "40." In the Midwest we are often looking at a string of "40s" for the trail ownership by the State Department of Natural Resources.

Who ultimately makes the decision as to how much land is devoted to or acquired for the trail?--the public agency doing the negotiating and the private landowner who is negotiating as a willing seller or partner. The guidance in our management plan is just that--guidance.

The Trail is normally viewed as a tremendous asset to communities and landowners who live in the vicinity of the Trail. It offers an immediate hiking and walking resource. Trails are becoming more popular and are considered a tremendous asset to small communities and trails do have a positive economic impact on towns that host sections of a community, regional, or national trail.

Map Accuracy

Comment: Some comments recognized that some of the maps were incorrect in their representation of trails and property lines in the Park, particularly in reference to the recreation easements in Black River Wild Forest (Adirondack League Club Property).

Response: Maps have been updated and corrected to adequately represent private property and state land boundaries.

Trail Maintenance

Comment: Some comments indicated concerns about trail maintenance in the "interior" of the Park and expressed concerns about creating new Trail segments when so many miles of existing trails in the Park suffer from lack of regular, routine maintenance.

Response: DEC staff recognize that existing backcountry trails are in need of maintenance. It is expected that once the Trail is designated and signed and being used by hikers, interior Trail segments will receive more attention and resources for maintenance. The NCTA, ADK, NPS, and DEC will work together to identify priority areas for improvement and obtain the necessary funding to address these priority areas.

The hiker experience on a National Scenic Trail is tremendously important. There is the expectation that the hiker or backpacker will find the Trail open and clear, signed clearly, and both scenic and challenging. Partners and volunteers have identified maintenance as a top priority for the Trail to be a successful and appealing hiking resource in the Park.

Viability of Routing the North Country Trail through the Park at all

Comment: Some comments questioned the idea and any overall benefit to routing the Trail through the Park at all.

Response: The decision to locate the NCST trail through the Adirondack Park began back in the 1980's. Not only has a congressional designation authorized a route for the Trail through the Park, but planners have been working for over 20 years to establish the most sustainable route for the Trail in the Park. The decision to locate the trail in the Park was made after careful analysis of alternatives, impacts and public comments. The benefits of a route for the Trail in the Park far outweigh other routing alternatives outside the Park.

Estimated Visitor/ Trail Use for a National Scenic Trail

Comment: Some comments have indicated that the Draft Plan is deficient in addressing estimated visitor use on the Trail within the Park.

Response: Below is an excerpt from the National Park Service's official Environmental Impact Statement which addresses expected use of and visitation to the North Country NST.

Satisfying Recreation Needs

The North Country Trail would provide a facility for recreation activities which traditionally are low density uses of the resource base. While primarily a foot trail, portions of the trail would also be used for bicycling and horseback riding. In winter, snowshoeing and ski touring could occur where snow cover was sufficient. Snowmobiling may be permitted on trail sections designated as recreational, provided such use does not interfere with snowshoeing, ski touring, and hiking.

Potential visitation of the North Country Trail would be considerable although extremely difficult to estimate. The demand for hiking* and walking for pleasure** within a 100-mile radius of the trail and the trail's capacity for satisfying a portion of that demand have been estimated. Use from within a 100-mile radius of the trail is termed resident use. Hiking demand would come from within the entire 100-mile radius, while demand for walking for pleasure--much of which does not occur on a trail--is believed to originate from within a 50-mile radius. Based on 1970 census and the 1965 participation rates, the annual resident demand for hiking would be 27 million visits and walking for pleasure 232 million visits, for a total of 259 million visits per year. An estimate of the trail's ability to support use was based on the location of segments of the trail in respect to topography, climate, population centers, and type of use.

About 900 miles of the trail would be within 50 miles of cities having a population of 100,000 or more. The use of these segments is expected to be mostly walking for pleasure, and the design capacity of the trail for this activity is estimated to be 150 people per day per mile. The predominant use of the remainder of the trail would be hiking, i.e., day-long trips and backpacking. For the 1,256 more northern and less populous miles of the trail, the capacity is estimated to be 20 people per mile per day. For the remaining 1,090 miles, capacity is estimated to be 40 people per mile per day. Thus, at capacity the entire trail could support 26.6 million visits per year for walking

for pleasure and 5.2 million visits per year for hiking.

On this basis, the North Country Trail could satisfy 11 percent of the 1970 annual resident demand for walking for pleasure and 19 percent of the 1970 demand for hiking. By the year 2000, this would be 8 percent and 14 percent, respectively. (A more detailed explanation of the visitation methodology is found in Appendix B.) Several assumptions are made to put these figures into perspective. First, the use of the trail would not be evenly distributed along its entire length. Those areas close to the population centers and the principal points of interest could equal or exceed the capacity figure, while the more remote areas would not meet capacity for many years after the trail is established. Sections of the trail would also be used for bicycling and horseback riding and possibly for snowmobiling. No estimates can be given for those uses until the actual trail route is located on the ground and the administrators have decided which activities would be compatible.

**Hiking--Walking of a substantial nature in which a pack containing provisions and/or shelter is carried by at least one member of the party.*

***Walking for Pleasure--Any walk where the primary purpose is pleasure which has not been included under hiking or nature walks and which lasts 30 minutes or more. (Nature walks--walking for the specific purpose of observing plants, birds, or animals and often including the collection of specimens.) (1965 Survey of Outdoor Recreation Activities, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, 1967.)*

It is expected that the trail would receive its major use from mid-May through mid-October. Those sections near population centers would undoubtedly experience longer periods of use. Also the southern portions of the trail, particularly in Ohio, would have a longer hiking season.

Indian Lake Water Crossing

Comment: The proposed alternative to cross Indian Lake by boat is not feasible and should be removed from the plan.

Response: The water crossing has been removed as an alternative for the trail.

Trail Accessibility

Comment: Some comments expressed concern over the lack of accommodation for accessibility-challenged trail users on new sections of the Trail.

Response: The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), along with the Architectural Barriers Act of 1968 (ABA) and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Title V, Section 504, have had a profound effect on the manner by which people with disabilities are afforded equality in their recreational pursuits. The ADA is a comprehensive law prohibiting discrimination against people with disabilities in employment practices, use of public transportation, use of telecommunication facilities and the use of public accommodations. Title II of the ADA applies to the DEC and requires, in part, that reasonable modifications must be made to its services and programs, so that when those services and programs are viewed in their entirety, they are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. This must be accomplished unless such

modification would result in a fundamental alternation in the nature of the service, program or activity or an undue financial or administrative burden to the DEC. Since recreation is an acknowledged program of the DEC, and there are services and activities associated with that program, the DEC has the mandated obligation to comply with the ADA, Title II and ADA Accessibility Guidelines, as well as Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. For additional information on the ADA, please reference the ADA homepage on the internet at www.usdoj.gov/crt/ada/adahom1.htm.

There is no restriction on or permit needed by a person with a disability to access public lands by the use of a mechanized aid (wheelchair and related assistive devices). In the Adirondack Park and Catskill Park, all motor vehicle access is restricted to designated and specifically marked roads in Wild Forest and Intensive Use Areas, and is prohibited on all lands classified as Wilderness, Canoe or Primitive Areas. Within Wild Forest and Intensive Use Areas, the use of an ATV is authorized only on roads specifically marked by a sign reading "ATV Access Route by Permit Only". ATV use is prohibited on all lands classified as Wilderness, Canoe or Primitive Areas. A person with a disability who wishes to use an ATV on the designated roads must obtain a permit for that purpose.

The DEC is committed to providing an ever increasing range of access opportunities to programs on New York State public lands. For a list of Accessible Recreation sites, please visit www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/34035.html

Under certain conditions, the North Country Trail is subject to the United States Access Board "Final Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas (36 CFR Part 1191, RIN 3014-AA22) – Architectural Barriers Act Accessibility Guidelines; Outdoor Developed Areas." (effective November 25, 2013). These guidelines provide scoping and technical requirements for camping facilities, picnic facilities, viewing areas, trails, and beach access routes constructed or altered by or on behalf of federal agencies.

The NCTA, NPS, DEC, & APA are committed to making all new trail structures accessible.

Economic Impact and Benefits of a National Scenic Trail in the Park

Comment: Some comments have indicated that the Draft Plan is deficient in addressing the estimated economic impact the Trail will have within adjacent communities in the Park.

Response: Routing the North Country NST through the Park will inevitably bring new visitors to the Adirondack region. It is very common for hikers, backpackers, snowshoers, bird watchers, wildlife viewers, and cross country skiers who hike or recreate on long-distance trails to visit local towns near a trailhead. These visitors have a history of purchasing food, hiking and camping gear, gas, maps, area guidebooks, and other supplies. These trail users also habitually visit local restaurants, stay in motels and bed and breakfasts, and subsequently contribute to the overall economic viability of the region.

A national scenic trail in the Park compliments the region's desire for rural economic vibrancy and is entirely consistent with the locally endorsed "*Blueprint for the Blue Line*".

A Blueprint for the Blue Line has been endorsed by an alliance of leaders representing non-profit organizations, municipal governments, businesses, economic development, and environmental interests that work directly with constituents within the Adirondack Park. The six-million acre park is comprised of both public and private lands and contains

the largest protected area in the continental United States. The park is ecologically significant in that it contains one of the least fragmented temperate forest landscapes remaining anywhere in the world. The Park is also significant in that it contains historic resources, charming hamlets and villages, a rich cultural history, and access to recreational resources.

-excerpt from the Blueprint for the Blue Line

The Trail crosses in an east to west orientation from Crown Point near Lake Champlain to Boonville. The Northville-Placid Trail, with its north to south orientation offers benefit to communities along its corridor. Communities expected to see economic benefits are those that have gateway/trailhead opportunities along the Trail route. The Adirondack Park Overview Map in Appendix 14 shows the towns and communities near the proposed NCNST route.

The Trail offers Adirondack communities significant opportunities to enhance existing recreational amenities, leverage heritage tourism and economic benefits, expand non-motorized transportation networks, preserve natural areas, create educational and interpretive experiences, connect towns and villages, historic sites and parkland, and rebuild community connections.

In working with local communities the Trail would provide a viable medium to:

- Build and enhance positive relationships and establish consistent communication with local municipalities and neighboring communities about the Trail and its resources
- Engage citizens as Trail users and stewards
- Influence local and regional green infrastructure planning efforts to protect the Trail and its surrounding natural areas
- Recognize Trail communities who value the Trail as a community asset and actively work to protect and enhance the Trail corridor for the benefit of residents and visitors

Other benefits would include, but not be limited to:

- National designation and acknowledgement of community efforts
- Recognition and visibility through signage, press releases, and the NCTA website and *NorthStar* membership magazine
- Promotion of cultural and natural heritage
- Partnership and social capital built through new connections within the town
- Contribution to community pride and quality of life
- Increased economic benefits for local businesses

Appendix 2: Response to Public Comment on the 2014 Revised Draft Trail Plan/DGEIS

DEC released the Revised Draft Adirondack Park Trail Plan/ Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement in June 2014. The public comment period ended July 18, 2014. The following is a synopsis of the substantive comments received and the responses developed by the Department.

Trail Location - Regional

Comment: The Trail should be routed through Old Forge.

Response: Routing the trail through state land south of Old Forge presented fewer obstacles than if the trail had been brought through Old Forge.

Comment: As one of the most scenic areas of the Adirondack Park, the High Peaks should be included in the Trail route.

Response: The US Department of the Interior's 1975 feasibility study on the NCNST recommended that the Trail avoid the High Peaks region due to the fragile resource and (at times) overuse. The Department continues to support this position.

Comment: It was the original intent of Congress for the Trail to pass through the High Peaks when the Trail was first designated.

Response: See previous comment.

Comment: The Trail should overlap with the Northville Placid Trail where possible because that trail is so well maintained.

Response: As an already well-used trail, the Northville-Placid trail was avoided as much as possible to take pressure off that route. The NCNST is designed to be a complement to the Northville-Placid Trail.

Comment: The Trail should not overlap with the Northville-Placid Trail any more than necessary.

Response: See previous comment.

Comment: The proposed Trail would complement the north-south running Northville-Placid Trail.

Response: See previous comment.

Comment: Rather than routing the trail through North Creek, it could head north through Indian Lake and cross the Hudson River over the Polaris Bridge after passing through the Essex Chain Lakes Primitive Area.

Response: As stated previously, the NCNST was routed to avoid the Northville-Placid Trail as much as possible. To go through Indian Lake would require overlapping with the Northville-Placid Trail for quite a distance.

Trail Location – Local

Comment: In the Jessup River area, a possible alternate route could utilize a snowmobile trail in the area, then crossing the Jessup River on Route 30, then heading east through the Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easement.

Response: Any footpath through the Speculator Tree Farm conservation easement lands would be subject to regular re-routes due to timber harvesting. The roads in this area are low-use and are suitable for foot traffic.

Comment: There should be a spur trail to the summit of Little Moose Mountain.

Response: Appropriate spur trails will be considered during the Unit Management Planning process.

Comment: Support for segments between Black River Wild Forest and the West Canada Lakes Wilderness.

Response: Noted.

Comment: Support for routing of trail through Hoffman Notch Wilderness and Hammond Pond Wild Forest.

Response: Noted.

Comment: The plan does not explain the gap in the trail between North Creek and Moxham Mountain. The plan should clearly state the reason and list it as a “challenge”.

Response: The gap in the trail is due to private land issues, and is better explained in the Final Plan.

Comment: There is no explanation of the aversion to routing the trail through the Peaked Mountain area of the Siamese Ponds Wilderness, as identified during the previous public comment period.

Response: Routing the Trail through the Peaked Mountain area would require the use of the railroad bridge over the Hudson River. Use of this bridge is not feasible at this time.

Comment: The best solution to the break in the trail north of North Creek is to use Old River Road, then seek permission from the intervening private landowner.

Response: The Final Plan proposed to use Old River Road, and agreements with landowners will be sought.

Comment: The scaling of Bulwagga Mountain near Crown Point may be problematic. A better trail may be constructed utilizing private land rather than relying on the conservation easement.

Response: The Final Plan has been modified to allow more flexibility in the Bulwagga Mountain area.

Comment: Use of the railroad bridge over the Hudson should still be considered, as rail use of that bridge is infrequent at best.

Response: The Department is not in the position to recommend use of the railroad bridge at this time.

Comment: Use of the railroad bridge would bring hikers to particularly scenic areas, such as OK Slip Falls.

Response: See previous comment.

Comment: The Indian River in the West Canada Lakes Wilderness is a formidable crossing and should be avoided by not going into the Moose River Plains Wild Forest.

Response: Footbridges are appropriate on the NCNST and will be constructed where needed. By crossing the Indian River, several miles of new trail will not have to be constructed.

Comment: The dip into Speculator is a bit awkward and could be avoided by going directly from the Jessup River Wild Forest into the Siamese Ponds Wilderness.

Response: Both the Jessup River and Indian Lake are formidable barriers, and the route is limited to using one of the existing bridges in the area. Additionally, many miles of new trail would be needed if Speculator is avoided.

Comment: The King's Flow dam should be used in the Siamese Ponds Wilderness.

Response: The King's Flow dam is on private property, and with so many trails on state land in the area, there was no reason to use private land.

Comment: A route should be secured along Bulwagga Bay and into Crown Point State Historic Site.

Response: The land surrounding Bulwagga Bay is private, so road walking will be utilized in this area until a willing landowner can be identified for an off-road route.

Comment: In the southwest corner of Hoffman Notch, it would be better to move the trail northward towards Hayes Mountain to keep the trail high and dry, and shorten the route.

Response: The Final Plan has been modified to allow for this route should it be the best option.

Comment: Peaked Hill in the Hammond Pond Wild Forest is very steep and not good for backpacking. A more suitable trail would be around Peaked Hill to the west.

Response: The Final Plan has been modified to allow for an alternate trail should it be the best option.

Private Land Connections

Comment: If the gap in the trail between North Creek and Moxham Mountain cannot be eliminated, then the entire route is unacceptable. The route should not be gambled on negotiations with a single landowner.

Response: Private land connections will be required in several places throughout the Park. If they cannot be secured, then road walking will be needed until other options become available.

Comment: To connect the trail in the North Creek area, rely on the fewest number of private landowners as possible.

- Response:** It is the Department's goal to keep private land connections to a minimum.
- Comment:** With so much contiguous state land in the Adirondacks, there is no reason why 25% of the corridor should rely on roads.
- Response:** The proposed NCNST route balances the need for keeping the trail off roads with the goal of minimizing new trail construction.
- Comment:** The Ski Bowl Connector Trail near North Creek is on private land, and a long-term agreement should be obtained from the landowner.
- Response:** Since there is already a trail in this location, it is likely the Department or the Town already has a trail agreement for this location. If neither entity does, then one will be sought.
- Comment:** The Nature Conservancy owns land at the end of Old River Road that could help bridge the gap.
- Response:** The Nature Conservancy will be consulted as a partner in making this connection.
- Comment:** Neither the DEC nor the National Park Service sent out letters to nearby private property owners warning them of the potential negative effects of the trail on their ability to enjoy their private property in peace.
- Response:** The Department did not notify individual landowners, but did publicize the comment period through press releases, and public notices in the Environmental Notice Bulletin. The trail is not expected to have an adverse impact on the ability of private landowners to enjoy their property. Hikers of long distance trail are intent on getting from one point to another in a given day, they are not likely to trespass on to private property near the trail.

Road Walking

- Comment:** The statement "the Proposed Central Route requires the fewest miles of new trail construction of the three proposed routes" is misleading because of the amount of road mileage that will eventually need to be re-routed.
- Response:** This statement has been clarified in the final plan.
- Comment:** The 39 miles of road walking in the plan should be considered temporary and all efforts should be made to move it to more suitable non-motorized locations in the future.
- Response:** Local volunteer organizations will be responsible for scouting for road-walking alternatives, and the Department will be willing to work with them where the alternative involve state land.
- Comment:** The use of Route 28N, even temporarily, would be dangerous for pedestrians.
- Response:** The Department agrees, and is making every effort to avoid using Route 28N.
- Comment:** The use of Bridge Road near Crown Point is dangerous and should be avoided. Burdick Road to the south should be used until private land connections can be made off-road.
- Response:** The Plan has been modified to avoid using Bridge Road.
- Comment:** The extensive road walking in the vicinity of the Speculator Tree Farm and Perkins Clearing

conservation easements could be avoided by using the trail systems to the north or south in the Jessup River Wild Forest, West Canada Lake Wilderness, or Siamese Ponds Wilderness.

Response: Both the Jessup River and Indian Lake are formidable barriers, and the route is limited to using one of the existing bridges in the area. Additionally, any footpath through the Speculator Tree Farm conservation easement lands would be subject to regular re-routes due to timber harvesting. The roads in this area are low-use and are suitable for foot traffic.

General

Comment: The Plan only mentions one long-distance trail in the Adirondacks. There is also the Cranberry Lake 50, and the Jackrabbit Trail.

Response: The other long-distance trails have been added to the final Plan.

Comment: Volunteers will be able to construct and maintain many miles of this trail.

Response: It is the Department's goal to utilize volunteers where practical.

Comment: DEC should repair existing trails before constructing any new ones.

Response: The Department does not postpone new trail construction pending maintenance of existing trails, but volunteer trail maintainers are always welcome.

Policy/Guidance/Regulations

Comment: Implementation of this trail plan will accelerate planning for the extension of the NCNST into Vermont.

Response: The Department is not involved the Trail planning and policy at the federal level.

Comment: Support the Trail Towns program.

Response: Noted.

Comment: Because trapping is not allowed within 1,000 feet of a trail, the creation of new trails will restrict available trapping area. A possible solution is to close some trails during trapping season.

Response: The Department does not close hiking trails on a seasonal basis. The size of trail-less areas on state land will still be immense, even after new trail construction, and the impact to trappers will be negligible.

Comment: The benefit of views from summits in Wilderness should be weighed against the impact on currently remote wilderness. The plan currently states as a goal "to avoid construction of trails in core or wilderness areas."

Response: The final Plan has been modified so that new trails in remote wilderness areas are not preferred.

Comment: "Stop" and "Stop Ahead" signs should be placed on snowmobile trails where they cross

the NCNST.

Response: The signing of snowmobile trails near the NCNST will be consistent with signing practices on other state lands in the Adirondack Park.

Comment: The Plan should incorporate every protection for private property owners and local communities, not just using words like “willing seller” and “willing buyer”. This includes issues such as viewshed protection.

Response: The Department is only interested in pursuing trail agreements with willing sellers where they are needed. No new regulations will be put in place on other private landowners because of the Trail.

Comment: Federal legislation is necessary to supersede DEC’s own policies, which lead to the inability to maintain trails and deliberate promotion of trail erosion and making of former town roads impassable.

Response: Maintenance of the Trail on state land is the responsibility of the state. There are no state policies that promote trail erosion.

Comment: Any funds distributed to an organization responsible for trail stewardship should be used only within the Adirondack Park.

Response: The Trail traverses much of the state, including lands outside the Adirondack Park. Trail construction contracts identify specific locations where work is to occur.

Comment: DEC should measure cumulative impacts of the Trail across the broader landscape to establish a baseline for future management of the Trail.

Response: Like other recreational activities across the Adirondack Park, the unit management planning process serves as the starting point for measurement of impacts. This does not preclude cross-unit management of the trail, but implementation of any significant changes to the trail will be done pursuant to a Unit Management Plan.

Comment: In the case of social conflicts with other users, standards should be established that quantify the conflict rather than relying on a perception of conflict.

Response: Noted.

Comment: Sustainable trail design is a better solution to trail erosion than eliminating a particular user group.

Response: The Department does not discontinue specific recreational uses because of trail conditions. If trail conditions deteriorate and the demand for the use still exists, trail improvements or reroutes are employed.

Comment: The establishment of a trail is the first step towards a National Park designation, and therefore should be avoided.

Response: There is no indication that there is any interest in making the Adirondack Park a National Park.

Trail Certification

Comment: Existing uses other than hiking on existing trail segments should not be eliminated just to make the trail certified.

Response: This is not the way that trail certification will be achieved. The Department will not displace other uses for the sole purpose of achieving trail certification. Where opportunities exist to create new hiking-only trails, those will be pursued.

Comment: The pursuit of certified trails is inconsistent with the latest trend of making trails multiple-use, particularly when snowmobiles are one of those uses.

Response: While the Department does pursue multiple-use trails in many instances, the emphasis of the NCNST as a foot trail has and will continue to lead us to seek hiking-only trails where practical. As mentioned in the last response, other existing uses will not be removed from trail segments to achieve certification, but where opportunities exist to create new hiking-only trails, those will be pursued.

Plan Format

Comment: The maps should identify where road connections will be needed to connect state land trail segments.

Response: The maps already do show where roads will be needed for the route.

Comment: Appendix 10 – “NPS Statement on Bicycle and Horse Use” is out of date and not supported by current studies. It should be removed from the plan. The reference to Appendix 10 found in Appendix 9 should also be removed.

Response: This information has been updated in the Final Plan.

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Appendix 3: Letter from NCTA (June 2005)



Re: *North Country National Scenic Trail* Proposed Routes in **NYS Adirondack Park**
June 3, 2005

Dear DEC Unit Planner,

As you may know, the **North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST)** is a premier footpath that stretches over 4,600 miles linking communities, forests, and prairies across seven northern states. Approximately 2,000 miles have been certified off-road and additional miles follow shared paths, and some roads. When completed the NCNST will be the longest off-road hiking trail in the United States.

The North Country Trail Association (NCTA) is a nationwide nonprofit organization that works in partnership with the National Park Service to build, maintain, and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail. The mission of the NCTA is to develop, maintain, preserve and promote the North Country National Scenic Trail through a national network of volunteers, chapters, partner organizations and government agencies. The NCNST is built and preserved as a hiking and backpacking trail.

The NCTA, the National Park Service (NPS), and the New York Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) have met collectively for the second time in the past year to discuss the proposed route of the NCNST in the Adirondack Park. To date we are considering two routes- the Central route and the Southern route. Neither route is set in stone and we are requesting your input on the route selection in your Unit. These routes were proposed “from a distance” and are general corridor routes. You will notice the Southern route is composed of many “option routes.”

We are hoping that you will pour over these maps with your fellow planners and really assess the viability of these routes. We have sent you one large overview map for reference and enlarged Unit maps that I am sure you are intimately familiar with.

Please draw on these maps. Please take a red pen and mark all over them. Please scribble uncensored comments about the potential routes on the back or in the margins. We are soliciting your input because you are the experts. Your local knowledge of the Park is the most concrete feedback we can receive second to walking these corridors on the ground with a GPS unit (which will happen when the route becomes more finalized). If you have a preferred route in your Unit please feel free to draw it in. We are open to all ideas.

We are particularly interested in any major obstacles- un-fordable river crossings, conflicting trail

use, steep terrain unsuitable to a foot trail, wetlands, and major road crossings. We are also interested in incorporating sites of interest, unusual Park features, and, in keeping with our National Scenic Trail designation, scenic vistas and overlooks.

We are well aware that each of you is very busy and consumed with Unit planning and other concerns. We appreciate you taking the time to study our maps and write down your feedback. We are planning a roundtable meeting for the end of July to all assemble in one large room and collectively share ideas on the routes.

These maps were created by the NCTA GIS department and, although we have incorporated all general layers, you may find discrepancies between these maps and your knowledge. We will correct any mistakes in our second generation of map production and will also incorporate all recommendations you propose.

Please return these maps with all your comments by the end of June/ first week in July. If you have any questions concerning the maps, the mapping process, data collection, or general route history please feel free to contact either Clare Cain or Matt Rowbotham at the NCTA Headquarters in Lowell, Michigan, (616) 897-5987.

Thank you for your time. The NCTA, the DEC and the NPS are very excited about this project and we hope that we can continue to work together and utilize each organization's resources and areas of expertise to bring the NCNST into reality in the Adirondack Park.

Sincerely,

Clare Cain
NCTA Director of Trail Management

Matt Rowbotham
NCTA GIS Assistant

229 E. Main Street Lowell, MI 49331
866-450-3628
www.northcountrytrail.org
clarecain@northcountrytrail.org
mattrowbotham@northcountrytrail.org

Appendix 4: Letter from NCTA (October 2005)



October 10, 2005

Dear _____,

Over the summer you expressed interest in receiving planning maps for the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) in New York's Adirondack Park. The North Country Trail Association (NCTA), National Park Service, various volunteers, and the N.Y. Department of Environmental Conservation have met twice to brainstorm and assess the best potential route for the NCNST in this area.

The NCNST has been congressionally designated as a National Scenic Trail, one of only eight in the country. As a result of this designation, the NCNST favors traveling on acceptable existing foot trails whenever feasible to offer the trail user a premier hiking experience. Trails permitting motorized traffic cannot be certified, but, in some cases are usable as "connector trails" between certifiable trail segments.

Understand that what you see on the map is generally a 10-mile wide planning corridor. We are not wholly committed now to any route. Rather, it is our desire to consider all the relevant factors that affect Route Planning and implementation, i.e. terrain, existing trails, existing facilities, scenery, water crossings, road crossings, private property, and the UMPs for each unit that express the management goals for that unit for the future.

I am interested in collecting as much useful data as I can on this route. I have received very useful information from the DEC and volunteers in the area. If you have any suggestions, or recognize any inaccuracies, please let me know. **I have no interest in planning this trail route in a vacuum.** Trails are, I believe, a valuable medium for collaboration!

Again, I appreciate your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

Clare Cain
NCTA Director of Trail Management

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Appendix 5: Excerpts from DEC Unit Management Plans

Siamese Ponds Wilderness

The following is from the *Draft Siamese Ponds Wilderness Unit Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement*, (page 113) dated March 2005:

North Country National Scenic Trail

“The North Country National Scenic Trail links scenic, natural, historic and cultural areas in seven northern states. The approximately four thousand mile long trail includes a variety of hikes from easy walking to challenging treks. When completed, through the efforts of many people, the trail will become the longest continuous hiking trail in the United States. From the Missouri River in North Dakota to the shores of Lake Champlain in New York, the trail allows hikers to experience a variety of features, from clear-flowing streams, to thick Northern woods, from vast prairies to clean lakes.”

The route for this trail through the Adirondack Park has not been finalized. However, it is likely that the route will pass through the SPW. It is possible to pass east to west through the SPW on the Kunjamuk Trail. It is also possible to pass north to south through the unit on the East Branch Trail. These two trails should be considered as a route is developed for the NCNST.

Any inclusion of trails in the SPW to the NCNST will require an amendment of this UMP.

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

The following is from the *Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest Unit Management Plan/Environmental Impact Statement* (page 223) dated April 2005:

North Country National Scenic Trail

The North Country National Scenic Trail is a national trail administered by the National Park Service, which when complete will wind through several northern states as it leads from North Dakota to New York. The section through the Adirondacks does not currently exist; however, the final route will likely use existing trails and some new trail construction. At the time of development of this UMP, there were several proposed routes through the Park, most of which pass through VMWF. The Department plans to finalize the entire route through the Adirondack Park in the coming years.

The trail will likely enter VMWF along its shared border with either the Hudson Gorge Primitive Area or the Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area. Problem areas include crossing the Hudson River, as there are only 2 existing bridges between the hamlet of North Creek and the Hudson Gorge (State Route 28N and the D&H Railroad Bridge). Once across the river, the trail will generally make its way through the main body of VMWF on its way towards Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area and/or other points east.

It may connect points of interest directly or intersect with trails leading to various points of

interest, such as the old Minerva Iron Company mine on Green Mountain. The NCNST could pass directly by the mine site or a short spur trail could be developed to it, with signage highlighting the history of the mine, the local iron industry and the Town of Minerva. Other points of interest might include Vanderwhacker Mountain, the Boreas River, Stony Pond, Green Mountain, or other areas. It may also intersect with spur trails leading to hamlet centers so that travelers can purchase supplies. Two such spur trails could be the southern end of the Stony Pond snowmobile trail and the so-called "Minerva woods road" (discussed in greater detail on page 182). Each trail leads fairly close to the hamlet of Minerva, which could serve as a refueling stop for trail users.

Other existing routes that could be used in creation of the NCNST in the VMWF area include the Boreas River loop trail, the Linsey Marsh trail, the Hewitt Pond trail, the Irishtown-Cheney Pond trail, the D&H railroad tracks, as well as numerous town roads. New trails proposed in this UMP may also be appropriate for inclusion in the NCNST including, the Raymond Brook ski trail. Of course, the final route through VMWF will be determined through formal revision of, or amendment to, this UMP.

Jessup River Wild Forest

The following is from the *Jessup River Wild Forest Unit Management Plan*, (page 194) dated August 2006:

North Country National Scenic Trail

At the time of development of this UMP, there are several proposed routes through the Park. The final route is not decided at this time. The DEC is currently working with staff from the North Country Trail Association and the National Park Service for a professional assessment of the proposed route alternatives. The criteria for this assessment are based on the National Scenic Trail standards, the APSLMP, DEC policy, and comment from the New York State Trails Council and the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee. The resulting recommendations for the most appropriate route will be the major consideration in deciding the final approved route. If the preferred route passes through the JRWF, a detailed work plan will be prepared and the UMP amended before any construction or designation occurs.

High Peaks Wilderness

The following is from the *High Peaks Wilderness Area Management Plan*, (pages 144 & 146) dated March 1999:

The National Park Service has proposed a 3200 mile North Country National Scenic Trail be built, with individual states' support, connecting the Lewis and Clark Trail (North Dakota) with the Appalachian Trail in Maine. One proposal is to route this trail through the High Peaks Wilderness, across the Adirondacks to connector links in the Finger Lakes. APA and DEC have opposed this trail in the HPWC given the unit's high level of visitor use.

The North Country National Scenic Trail will not be routed through the High Peaks Wilderness. The NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), as lead agency, has suggested it be routed through less congested areas in the southeastern Adirondacks (page 146).

Hoffman Notch Wilderness

The following is from the *Hoffman Notch Wilderness Unit Management Plan*, (page 79) dated April 2012:

North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST)

Present Conditions:

The North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST) was originally conceived in the mid 1960's as a trail to connect through eight northern states, from the Lewis & Clark Trail on the Missouri River in South Dakota to the Appalachian Trail in the Green Mountains of Vermont. In 1980, Federal legislation authorized the establishment of the entire length of the NCNST from South Dakota through New York as a component of the National Trails System. It is one of only eight trails authorized by Congress to be National Scenic Trails.

The portion of the NCNST through western New York has been designated and generally follows the Finger Lakes Trail (FLT). The completion of the trail through eastern New York (the Adirondacks) has been an issue from the start. Several problems were perceived with the original concept for the trail route through the already heavily impacted High Peaks Region. For a variety of reasons, local trail groups opposed this route and have been reluctant to actively adopt the NCNST as a cause, and without the critical elements of local support and advocacy, the trail has literally gone nowhere.

One issue that there is general agreement on is that the trail should pass through the southern Adirondacks, outside the High Peaks Region. With this in mind, several new alternative routes were developed. One of the alternatives recommends that the trail pass through the HNSA. However, it is impractical at this point to consider a specific location until the APA and DEC decide on a general route and how to handle a trail of this nature within the framework of the UMP process. It is believed that the HNSA would be able to support this type of trail system, and is thus a potential candidate for selection. The criteria for this assessment are based on the National Scenic Trail standards, the APSLMP, DEC policy, and comment from the New York State Trails Council and the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee. The resulting recommendations for the most appropriate route will be the major consideration in deciding the final approved route.

The approximate proposed route is included in the location map. The preferred route through the HNSA has the proposed trail entering the unit at its southwestern boundary. The proposed trail will follow an abandoned road north to Bailey Pond for approximately 2.6 miles. At Bailey Pond, the trail follows the Bailey Pond Trail to the intersection of the Hoffman Notch Trail. The proposed trail then follows the Hoffman Notch Trail north for about 1 mile and turns east onto the Big Pond Trail, then heads eastward for approximately 4 miles. In the vicinity of North Pond, approximately 4 miles of new trail will be required to reach SH 9 to the east and eventually to a culvert underneath I-87.

Management Action:

Should the upcoming assessment of proposed routes for the NCNST determine that the most environmentally sound route for the trail is to pass through the HNSA, and the DEC and APA approve the resulting recommendations from the assessment, construct the trail using the route prescribed in the assessment. If the DEC or APA disapprove of the specific trail layout described in the assessment, DEC and APA will work together to identify an acceptable route for the trail to cross through the unit.

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Appendix 6: DEC Non-Motorized Trail Classification System

DEC Non-motorized Trail Classification System					
Trail Classification	Marking	Tread	Barriers	Use Level	Acceptable Maintenance
I- Unmarked Route	None	Intermittently apparent; relatively undisturbed organic soil horizon	Natural obstructions present, logs and water courses	Occasional	None
II- Path	Intermittent	Intermittently apparent compaction of duff, mineral soils occasionally exposed	Same as Unmarked trail	Low, varies by location	Intermittent marking with consideration given to appropriate layout based on drainage, occasional barrier removal only to define appropriate route.
III- Primitive	Trail markers, sign at junction with secondary or other upper level trail	Apparent, soil compaction evident	Limited natural obstructions (logs and river fords)	Low	Drainage (native materials) where necessary to minimize erosion, blowdown removed 2-3 years, brushing as necessary to define trail (every 5-10 years). Bridges only to protect resource (max- 2 log width). Ladders only to protect exceptionally steep sections. Tread 14" to 18", clear: 3' wide, 3' high.
IV- Secondary	Markers, signs with basic information	Likely worn and possibly quite eroded. Rocks exposed, little or no duff remaining.	Up to one year's accumulated blowdown, small streams.	Moderate	Drainage where needed to halt erosion and limit potential erosion (using native materials), tread hardening with native materials where drainage proves to be insufficient to control erosion. Remove blowdown annually. Brush to maintain trail corridor. Higher use may warrant greater use of bridges (2-3 logs wide) for resource protection. Ladders on exceptionally steep rock faces. Tread 18"- 24", Clear 4' wide, 3' High.
V- Trunk or Primary Trail	Markers, signed with more information and warnings	Wider tread, worn and very evident. Rock exposed, possibly very eroded.	Obstructions only rarely, small streams.	High	Same as above; Plus: regular blowdown removal on designated ski trails, non-native materials as last resort. Extensive tread hardening when needed, bridge streams (2-4 logs wide) difficult to cross during high water, priority given to stream crossings below concentrations of designated camping. Tread 18"-26", clear 6' wide, 8' high, actual turnpiking limited to 2% of trail length.
VI- Front Country Trail	Heavily marked, detailed interpretive signing	Groomed	None	Very high	Extensive grooming, some paving, bark chips, handicapped accessible. This is to be implemented within 500' of wilderness boundary.
VII- Horse Trail	Marked as Trunk or Secondary Trail	Wide tread, must be rather smooth.	Same as Trunk Trail	Moderate to high	Same as Trunk Trail, except use techniques appropriate to horses. Bridges: 6' minimum width with kick rails, non-native dimensional materials preferred. Tread: 2'-4' wide, clear 8' wide, 10' high.
VIII- Cross Country Ski Trail	Marked High. Special markers, sign at all junctions with hiking trails	Duff remains. Discourage summer use.	Practically none due to hazards.	High	Focus on removal of obstructions, maintenance should be low profile, tread determined by clearing 6' (should be slightly wider at turns and steep sections). Provide drainage using native materials to protect resource.
IX- Mountain Bike Trail	Marked frequently and No Biking signs posted on adjoining trails not specified for bike use.	New trails to maximum of 4 feet. Tread width less than 18 inches on a rolling grade.	None	Moderate	Remove vegetation at root level. Texture the tread. Keep trails below 2000 feet. Use existing roads or trails that do not exceed 10%. Blowdown removal (annual). Trail brushing.

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Appendix 7: Important Acronyms

“A” easement- DEC easement for recreation and development use

ADK- Adirondack Mountain Club

APA- Adirondack Park Agency

APSLMP- Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan

“B” easement- DEC easement for recreation use

BMP- Best Management Practices

BRWF- Black River Wild Forest

D&H Railroad- Delaware and Hudson Railroad

DEC- Department of Environmental Conservation

FLT- Finger Lakes Trail

FLTC- Finger Lakes Trail Conference

FPAC- Forest Preserve Advisory Committee

GIS- Geographic Imaging Systems

HGPA- Hudson Gorge Primitive Area

HNWA- Hoffman Notch Wilderness Area

HPWF- Hammond Pond Wild Forest

JRWF- Jessup River Wild Forest

MRPWF- Moose River Plains Wild Forest

NCTA- North Country Trail Association

NEPA- National Environmental Protection Act

NPS- National Park Service

NCT- North Country Trail

NPT- Northville-Placid Trail

NST- National Scenic Trail

OPRHP- Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

RTCA- Rivers, Trails, and Conservation Assistance Program

RMP- Recreational Unit Management Plan

SCA- Student Conservation Association

SEQRA- State Environmental Quality Review Act

SPWA- Siamese Ponds Wilderness Area

UMP- Unit Management Plan

VMWF- Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

WCLW- West Canada Lake Wilderness

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Appendix 8: Excerpt from the National Trails System Act

THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM ACT (P.L. 90-543, as amended through P.L. 108-342, October 18, 2004) (also found in *United States Code*, Volume 16, Sections 1241-1251)

AN ACT

To establish a national trails system, and for other purposes.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SHORT TITLE

SECTION 1. This Act may be cited as the "National Trails System Act".

STATEMENT OF POLICY

SEC. 2. [16USC1241]

(a) In order to provide for the ever-increasing outdoor recreation needs of an expanding population and in order to promote the preservation of, public access to, travel within, and enjoyment and appreciation of the open-air, outdoor areas and historic resources of the Nation, trails should be established (i) primarily, near the urban areas of the Nation, and (ii) secondarily, within scenic areas and along historic travel routes of the Nation which are often more remotely located.

(b) The purpose of this Act is to provide the means for attaining these objectives by instituting a national system of recreation, scenic and historic trails, by designating the Appalachian Trail and the Pacific Crest Trail as the initial components of that system, and by prescribing the methods by which, and standards according to which, additional components may be added to the system.

(c) The Congress recognizes the valuable contributions that volunteers and private, nonprofit trail groups have made to the development and maintenance of the Nation's trails.

In recognition of these contributions, it is further the purpose of this Act to encourage and assist volunteer citizen involvement in the planning, development, maintenance, and management, where appropriate, of trails.

NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM

SEC. 3. [16USC1242] (a) The national system of trails shall be composed of the following:

- (1) National recreation trails, established as provided in section 4 of this Act, which will provide a variety of outdoor recreation uses in or reasonably accessible to urban areas.
- (2) National scenic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails so located as to provide for maximum outdoor recreation potential and for the conservation and enjoyment of the nationally significant scenic, historic, natural, or cultural qualities of the areas through which such trails may pass. National scenic trails may be located so as to represent desert, marsh, grassland, mountain, canyon, river, forest, and other areas, as well as landforms which exhibit significant characteristics of the physiographic regions of the Nation.
- (3) National historic trails, established as provided in section 5 of this Act, which will be extended trails which follow as closely as possible and practicable the original trails or routes of travel of national historic significance. Designation of such trails or routes shall be continuous, but the established or developed trail, and the acquisition thereof, need not be continuous onsite. National historic trails shall have as their purpose the identification and protection of the historic route and its historic remnants and artifacts for public use and enjoyment. Only those selected land and water based components of a historic trail which are on federally owned lands and which meet the national historic trail criteria established in this Act are included as Federal protection components of a national historic trail. The appropriate Secretary may certify other lands as protected segments of an historic trail upon application from State or local governmental agencies or private interests involved if such segments meet the national historic trail criteria established in this Act and such criteria supplementary thereto as the appropriate Secretary may prescribe, and are administered by such agencies or interests without expense to the United States.
- (4) Connecting or side trails, established as provided in section 6 of this Act, which will provide additional points of public access to national recreation, national scenic or national historic trails or which will provide connections between such trails.

The Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, in consultation with appropriate governmental agencies and public and private organizations, shall establish a uniform marker for the national trails system.

(b) For purposes of this section, the term 'extended trails' means trails or trail segments which total at least one hundred miles in length, except that historic trails of less than one hundred miles may be designated as extended trails. While it is desirable that extended trails be continuous, studies of such trails may conclude that it is feasible to propose one or more trail segments which, in the aggregate, constitute at least one hundred miles in length.

NATIONAL SCENIC AND NATIONAL HISTORIC TRAILS

SEC. 5. [16USC1244] (a) National scenic and national historic trails shall be authorized and designated only by Act of Congress. There are hereby established the following National Scenic and National Historic Trails:

*(8) The **North Country National Scenic Trail**, a trail of approximately thirty-two hundred miles, extending from eastern New York State to the vicinity of Lake Sakakawea in North Dakota, following the approximate route depicted on the map identified as 'Proposed North Country Trail-Vicinity Map' in the Department of the Interior 'North Country Trail Report', dated June 1975. The map shall be on file and available for public inspection in the office of the Director, National Park Service, Washington, District of Columbia. The trail shall be administered by the Secretary of the Interior. No land or interest in land outside the exterior boundaries of any federally administered area may be acquired by the Federal Government for the trail except with the consent of the owner of the land or interest in land.

Appendix 9: NPS Trail Certification Standards

OFFICIAL CORRESPONDENCE SENT VIA ELECTRONIC MAIL
North Country National Scenic Trail
PO Box 288
Lowell, MI 49331

NO HARD COPY TO FOLLOW

March 26 2015

NOCO Management Statement #3

To: All Employees, NOCO

From: Superintendent

Subject: CERTIFICATION

The Certification Form has been revised and reformatted as an agreement between property owner(s), lease or permit holders, trail maintainers and NPS. As an agreement rather than an application, it becomes a collaborative effort and not a one way “you fill it out, and we review and get back with you” effort which we at NPS realize was very frustrating for applicants.

WHAT DO THE LAW AND THE CMP SAY ABOUT CERTIFICATION?

The National Trails System Act (NTSA) says nothing about Certification of National Scenic Trails. It DOES identify permitted and prohibited uses on National Scenic Trails which have an impact upon a decision regarding certification:

“The use of motorized vehicles by the general public along any national scenic trail shall be prohibited...”(Section 7(c))

“Potential trail uses allowed on designated components of the national trails system may include, but are not limited to, the following: bicycling, cross-country skiing, day hiking, equestrian activities, jogging or similar fitness activities, trail biking, overnight and long-distance backpacking, snowmobiling, and surface water and underwater activities.”(Section 7(j), amended 1983)

The Comprehensive Management Plan (CMP, 1982) for the North Country Trail identifies certification as the process to designate “official” North Country Trail. It further explains required and potential uses on the trail, who determines the uses, the difference between certified and connector trail, and how certified trail is recognized:

“All segments of the NCT shall [must] be open to travel by foot, i.e., hiking and backpacking.” (p 28, CMP)

and

“Other nonmotorized uses, including bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing and jogging, may be permitted on a given segment according to the desires and policies of the managing authority responsible for the segment” (p 28, CMP)

and

“Because it will be many years before certifiable trails are established for some portions of the NCT route, and because it is desirable in the interim to identify other routes which link together certified NCT segments, the National Park Service will recognize as “North Country Trail Connectors” other marked routes and trails which do not qualify for certification as the official NCT route due to current motorized multiple recreational use or location on roads. “Connectors” should be marked but may not be signed with the official NCT marker.....Recognition will be in the form of including them on maps of the NCT and referring to them in written descriptions of the NCT route.” (p 27, CMP)

and

“...certification of trails as segments of the NCT is highly encouraged but completely voluntary...” (p 35, CMP)

Three points about the above:

- There are only two trail types mentioned- certified and connector. We recognize that there are a wide range of terms that have come to pass over the years to best describe the condition or status of trail segments. This will be addressed in other documents.
- The term “Managing Authority” has caused confusion over the years. The form now acknowledges everyone’s roles.
- No broadbrush retroactive action will be taken regarding this Management Statement.

CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

Certified, “Official” North Country Trail segments must comply with the Law and the CMP:

Required for Certification:

- Non-motorized.
- Open to travel on foot.

Permitted:

- Other nonmotorized uses per the desires of the Managing Authority.

Other criteria will be considered, that when weighed together, represent the best that can be reasonably achieved in a particular area for the long term. They include:

- The trail generally follows the route in the CMP or any subsequent approved planning documents, such as Regional Plans or Optimum Location Reviews (OLRs).
- The trail maximizes physical or visual connections to the best scenic, natural, historic and cultural qualities an area has to offer.
- The trail is designed to support the approved uses, complies with the Trail Handbook and is environmentally sustainable.
- The trail is fully constructed.
- The trail is secured for the long term – ideally, in perpetuity.

Finally, does certification bestow any kind of authority upon the land, the trail or the parties involved? Former Superintendent Tom Gilbert sums it up in a 2001 article in the North Star:

Public officials and private landowners frequently ask what the implications are of having trail on their land certified. It has almost none. While it formalizes a mutual agreement between the NPS and the applicant on the location and management of a segment of the trail, it does NOT convey to the federal government any property rights or management authority over the lands on which the trail lies.

We cannot tell a public landowner how to manage their lands beyond what they are willing to do voluntarily. Certification is not binding on either the NPS or the applicant (or the landowner/manager, if the applicant is a third party such as a trail organization). Agencies, organizations, and individuals that establish segments of the North Country NST are not required to apply for certification, but such segments cannot be marked with the official trail marker until they are certified. Likewise, the NPS is not required to approve an application if it deems there are significant deficiencies in the way the trail is constructed or managed.

Certification can be terminated if one of the parties views it as no longer mutually beneficial. The NPS could terminate certification if the owner/manager of the trail has opened it to a prohibited use, such as all-terrain vehicles, or the trail is not being monitored and

maintained and no longer provides a safe and quality experience....

Certification, in the final analysis, is a benign but important procedure that provides a common way to count and keep track of the segments of the trail that are completed and (hopefully) up to standard, as well as a way to demonstrate a magnitude of need to those who allocate resources.

Follows are the Certification Instructions.

Digitally signed by Mark Weaver

CERTIFICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Certification is an important procedure providing a common way to track segments of the trail that are completed, designed and constructed to federal standards and are reasonably expected to remain for the long term in the condition documented on the date of certification. In exchange, the North Country Trail emblem is approved for posting at selected locations along its route, the trail segment is recognized as an official segment of the North Country Trail and federal trail support (within the confines of legally approved action) will receive high priority.

Certification does not convey to the federal government any property rights or management authority over the lands on which the trail lies. Certification is a completely voluntary action on the part of all who sign the Certification Agreement.

Preparation and completion of the Certification Agreement form is a **collaborative effort** on the part of the maintaining organization, the easement, lease or permit holder, and the property owner. **Therefore, it is important to establish communication early with the NPS Trail Manager to ensure that any issues are addressed and resolved before submitting a Request for Certification. The Trail Manager will assist with filling out the Agreement Form. Submitting a Request without prior communication or collaboration with NPS staff may result in a denial of request or an undesirable delay.**

CERTIFICATION CRITERIA

Certified Trail must comply with the Law and the CMP. Segments proposed for certification:

- MUST be non-motorized and be open to travel on foot its entire length.
- MAY include other nonmotorized uses (including bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and jogging) per the desires of the Managing Authority.

Other criteria will be applied to requests for certification. Ideally, the trail segment:

- follows the route in the CMP or any subsequent approved planning documents, such as Regional Plans or Optimum Location Reviews (OLRs).
- maximizes physical or visual connections to the scenic, natural, historic and cultural qualities an area has to offer.
- is designed to support the approved uses, complies with the Trail Handbook and is environmentally sustainable.
- is fully constructed.
- is secured for the long term – ideally, in perpetuity.
- is at least one mile long unless connecting previously certified sections.
- has no restrictions to trail use (i.e. seasonal closures, etc).

Of course no trail segment will satisfactorily comply with all of the “Other Criteria” noted above. It will be the responsibility of the NPS staff to thoughtfully consider the collective degree of fulfillment to the “Other Criteria” in order to determine that the segment is the best that can be reasonably achieved for that particular location over the long term. For example, a segment of trail may be 95% constructed, 100% secured via easement and have hunting closures. Collectively, the criteria may be the best that can be reasonably achieved in the long term for that area and would be certified. Each request is different and prior certification decisions, no matter

how similar, should not influence any other certification decision.

DELIVERY:

Once the Applicant and NPS Trail Manager are in agreement that all information is gathered and all signatures are obtained, applications for Certification of Completed Segments should be sent to:

Superintendent, North Country National Scenic Trail
National Park Service
PO Box 288
Lowell Michigan 49331
Or via email: mark_weaver@nps.gov

Questions about preparing and submitting this application should be directed to the NCT NPS Trail Manager at 616-340-2004.

Applications will be evaluated according to the responses given. In most cases, if the NPS North Country Trail Manager is not personally familiar with the segment, an application will not be approved until there has been an opportunity to inspect the segment.

The North Country National Scenic Trail Comprehensive Management Plan and other planning and management documents referenced here can be found at:
<http://www.nps.gov/noco/parkmgmt/planning.htm>

UPON CERTIFICATION:

If approved, NPS will notify NCTA of certification and copy the applicant to verify communication.

If not approved, NPS will prepare a response explaining its decision to the applicant and copy NCTA.

Appendix 10: New York State Trails Council Resolution



Jun. 12. 2007 2:19PM

No. 3707 P. 2

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
The Governor Nelson A. Rockefeller Empire State Plaza
Agency Building 1, Albany, New York 12238

518-474-0456

RECEIVED

JUL 19 1993

July 13, 1993

AIR

Mr. Bill Menke
NCNST Program Manager
National Park Service/USDI
700 Rayovac Drive
Suite 100
Madison, WI 53711

Dear Bill:

Re: Re-Routing of North
Country National Scenic
Trail (NCNST)

With reference to the enclosed "Minutes" of the May 22, 1993 meeting of the New York State Trails Council (NYSTC), please note item 8 -- "Resolution for Re-Routing the NCNST in Eastern New York". *Tom - Also item 12.*

I believe that this resolution, unanimously adopted by the NYSTC, is consistent with NPS's previous understanding of the issue of identifying a preferred option for a more southerly route for the NCNST.

Also enclosed is a copy of a technical paper -- "A Case Study on Visitor Management Issues and Recreation Carrying Capacity in the High Peaks Region of New York State's Adirondack Park." This paper may help NPS and others to substantiate the rationale for re-routing the NCNST out of this part of the Adirondack Park. This includes a specific recommendation (Appendix A, page 9) of the Citizens Advisory Committee for the High Peaks Wilderness Area Unit Management Plan to consider a southern New York route.

Please contact me and/or Mr. W. Garry Ives if you have any questions or comments on any of this material. Mr. Ives is Chief of the Bureau of Preserve Protection and Management of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and also represents DEC on the NYSTC.

An Equal Opportunity/Affirmative Action Agency

Jun.12. 2007 2:19PM

No.3707 P. 3

The next meeting of the NYSTC is October 2, 1993, and it would be useful to report on progress or possible follow-up action at this time.

Sincerely,



Thomas L. Cobb
NYS Trails Coordinator

/cx

cc: Albert Field, NYSTC Chairman
Jack Orlinski, NYSTC Vice-Chairman
James Koehler, NYSTC
Howard Dash, NYSTC
Howard Beye, NYSTC
S. Elkinton, NPS
K. Beard, NPS
C. Breuel, OPRHP
W. G. Ives, DEC
R. Bendick, DEC

Jun.12. 2007 2:19PM

No.3707 P. 4

8. Resolution for Re-Routing the North Country National Scenic Trail (NCNST). The following resolution, drafted by NYSTC subcommittee members, was unanimously adopted, and will be directed to the National Park Service per copy of these "Minutes". That is:

Resolution

New York State Trails Council Position on the North Country National Scenic Trail route in eastern New York:

Whereas, the specific Adirondack route proposed is unacceptable and better options exist in eastern New York and,

Whereas, several New York hiking and conservation organizations and state agencies have a significant interest in participating in the selection of an appropriate route for the trail and should be an integral part of the route selection process and,

Whereas, the National Park Services has indicated its desire to look at an open study of all alternative routes.

Therefore, be it hereby resolved that the New York State Trails Council encourages the National Park Service, possibly through its Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program, to convene a public conference of interested parties in order to develop a realistic proposal for a new route through eastern New York, and be it further resolved that this resolution supplant the New York State Trails Council Resolution of 1986.

9. Proposed Canal Recreationway. Bob Breuer gave a fine report on the scope and status of the Canalway Trail being planned under the auspices of the NYS Thruway Authority. the Canal was transferred from NYS DOT to the Thruway in July 1992.

A plan for development and use of canal land is due in 1994. Recreation opportunities will be expanded, including improvements for boating. A Canal Recreationway Commission is providing guidance. Elinor Brown of Niskayuna represents trail interests on this Commission. A Canalway trial is part of this plan, and will encompass the extensive system that exists. About 35-40% of the corridor between Niagara Falls and the Hudson River is trailed now, but is discontinuous in various locations. Other projects under ISTEA and NRTFA include the Glens Falls Feeder Canal and the Champlain Canal. About 100 miles are being examined to see what can be done

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Appendix 11: Invasive Plants

Invasive Plants

Nonnative, invasive species directly threaten biological diversity and the high quality natural areas in the Adirondack Park. Invasive plant species can alter native plant assemblages, often forming monospecific stands of very low quality forage for native wildlife, and drastically impacting the ecological functions and services of natural systems. Not yet predominant across the Park, invasive plants have the potential to spread, undermining the ecological, recreational and economic value of the Park's natural resources.

Because of the Adirondack Park's continuous forested nature and isolation from the normal commerce found in other parts of the State, its systems are largely functionally intact. In fact, there is no better opportunity in the global temperate forested ecosystem to forestall the alteration of natural habitats by invasive plant species.

Prevention of nonnative plant invasions, Early Detection/Rapid Response (ED/RR) of existing infestations, and monitoring are primary objectives in a national strategy for invasive plant management, whose success depends upon a well-coordinated, area-wide approach. A unique opportunity exists in the Adirondacks to work proactively and collaboratively to detect, contain or eradicate infestations of invasive plants before they become well established, and to prevent further importation and distribution of invasive species, thus maintaining a high quality natural landscape. The DEC shares with other agencies and organizations an interest in minimizing existing threats in order to prevent widespread and costly infestations.

The DEC has entered into a partnership agreement with the Adirondack Park Invasive Plant Program (APIPP). The mission of APIPP is to document invasive plant distributions and to advance measures to protect and restore native ecosystems in the Park through partnerships with Adirondack residents and institutions. Partner organizations operating under a Memorandum of Understanding are the Adirondack Nature Conservancy, DEC, APA, Department of Transportation, and Invasive Plant Council of New York State. The APIPP summarizes known distributions of invasive plants in the Adirondack Park and provides this information to residents and professionals alike. Specific products include a geographic database for invasive plant species distribution, a central internet website for invasive plant species information and distribution maps, a list-serve discussion group to promote community organization and communication regarding invasive species issues, and a compendium of educational materials and best management practices for management.

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Appendix 12: Excerpt from the Federal Bureau of Recreation EIS for the NCNST

SUMMARY

() Draft (X) Final Environmental Statement

Department of the Interior, Bureau of Outdoor Recreation, Lake Central Region

1. Type of Action: () Administrative (X) Legislative

2. Brief description of action:

It is recommended that Congress authorize the concept of the North Country Trail within a corridor recommended in the Secretary of the Interior's report. Such authorization would permit the eventual designation of a hiking trail, approximately 3,246 miles in length, originating at the Appalachian Trail in Vermont, traversing New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota, and terminating at the proposed Lewis and Clark Trail in North Dakota. The Secretary of the Interior would have the authority to designate some sections of the trail "scenic" and recognize others as "recreational."

3. Summary of environmental impact and adverse environmental effects:

Creation of the North Country Trail would preserve a green strip approximately 3,246 miles long by 200 feet wide. Development of the trail and support facilities, while providing a recreational facility, would cause some disturbance of soil, vegetation, and wildlife. Forty-six percent of the trail would be located on public land. Right-of-way for the remainder would have to be obtained by fee, easement, or agreement. The project would cause some local reduction in the tax base and provide some jobs and capital investment. Recreational use of the trail would cause continued disturbance of vegetation and wildlife, and soil compaction along the trail itself. Use creates the possibility of vandalism and littering.

4. Alternatives Considered:

(a) No Action, (b) Different Corridor Locations, (c) Shorter Trail, (d) Segmented Trail, (e) North Country National Scenic Trail, and (f) Alternate Administration.

5. Comments have been requested from the following:

*Advisory Council on Historic Preservation
*Department of Agriculture
*Department of Defense
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Department of the Interior
*Bureau of Indian Affairs
*Bureau of Land Management
*Bureau of Reclamation
*Fish and Wildlife Service
*National Park Service
*Department of Housing & Urban Development

*Department of Transportation
*Environmental Protection Agency
*Federal Power Commission
Water Resources Council
State Clearinghouses:
**Vermont
**New York
*Pennsylvania
**Ohio
*Michigan
*Wisconsin
*Minnesota
**North Dakota

*Comments received and attached

**Includes comments from more than one agency or group.

Adirondack Mountain Club, Inc.	Izaak Walton League
American Conservation Association	*Keystone Trails Association
American Forestry Association	National Trails Council
*American Motorcycle Association	New York-New Jersey Trail
American Youth Hostels	Conference
*Appalachian Trail Conference	North American Trail Riders
Bicycle Institute of America	Council
*Buckeye Trail Association	North Dakota Wildlife Federation
*Finger Lakes Trail Conference	Inc.
*Green Mountain Club	Northern Environmental Council
*International Snowmobile Industry	Sierra Club
Association	*Ski Touring Council
	Wilderness Society

Comments were also received from the following:

Audubon Society, Mississippi	National Campers & Hikers Association
Headwaters Chapter	
Scott M. Bailey	Ralph E. Ramey, Director,
John P. Bay	Glen Helen
Mr. & Mrs. Alan Hausrath	Carl R. Seelhoff
Timothy B. Knopp	Tennessee Gas Pipeline Co.
	Harry E. Wilson

6. Date made available to CEQ and the public: Draft: 8/30/74 Final:

Appendix 13: Maps

North Country National Scenic Trail

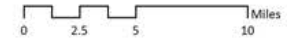
Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Trail Communities

- Proposed NCNST Route
- State/US Highway
- Adirondack Park Boundary
- County Boundary
- Town Boundary

- State Land - Wild Forest
- State Land - Wilderness
- State Land - Primitive
- State Land - Intensive Use
- State Land - Unclassified
- Conservation Easement held by State

February 2015



Department of Environmental Conservation



North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Overview Map

- Proposed NCNST Route
- State/US Highway
- Adirondack Park Boundary

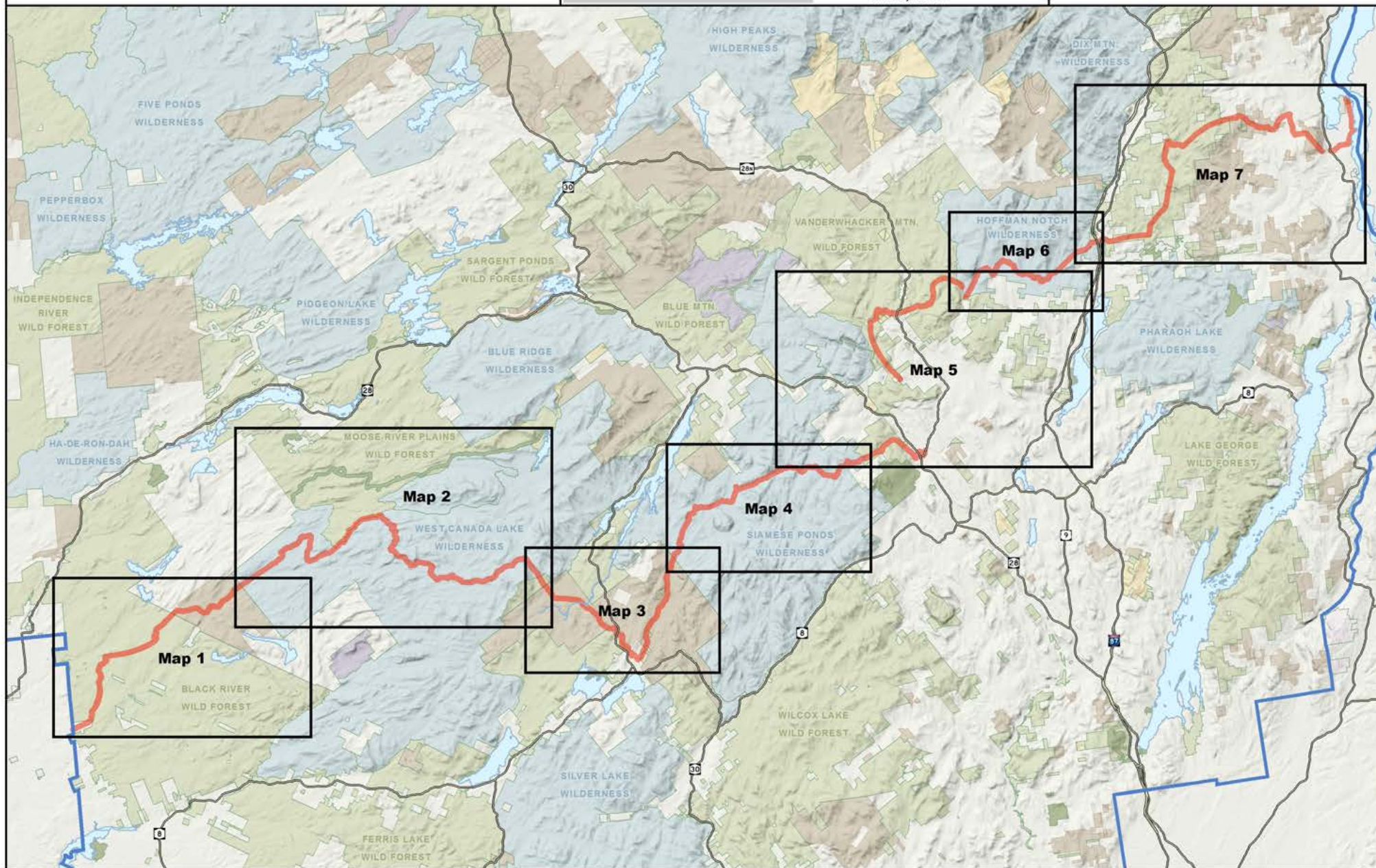
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- State Land - Wilderness
- State Land - Primitive
- State Land - Intensive Use
- State Land - Unclassified
- Conservation Easement held by State

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0 2.5 5 10 Miles



Department of Environmental Conservation



North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 1

Black River Wild Forest
North Lake Tract Conservation Easement

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road

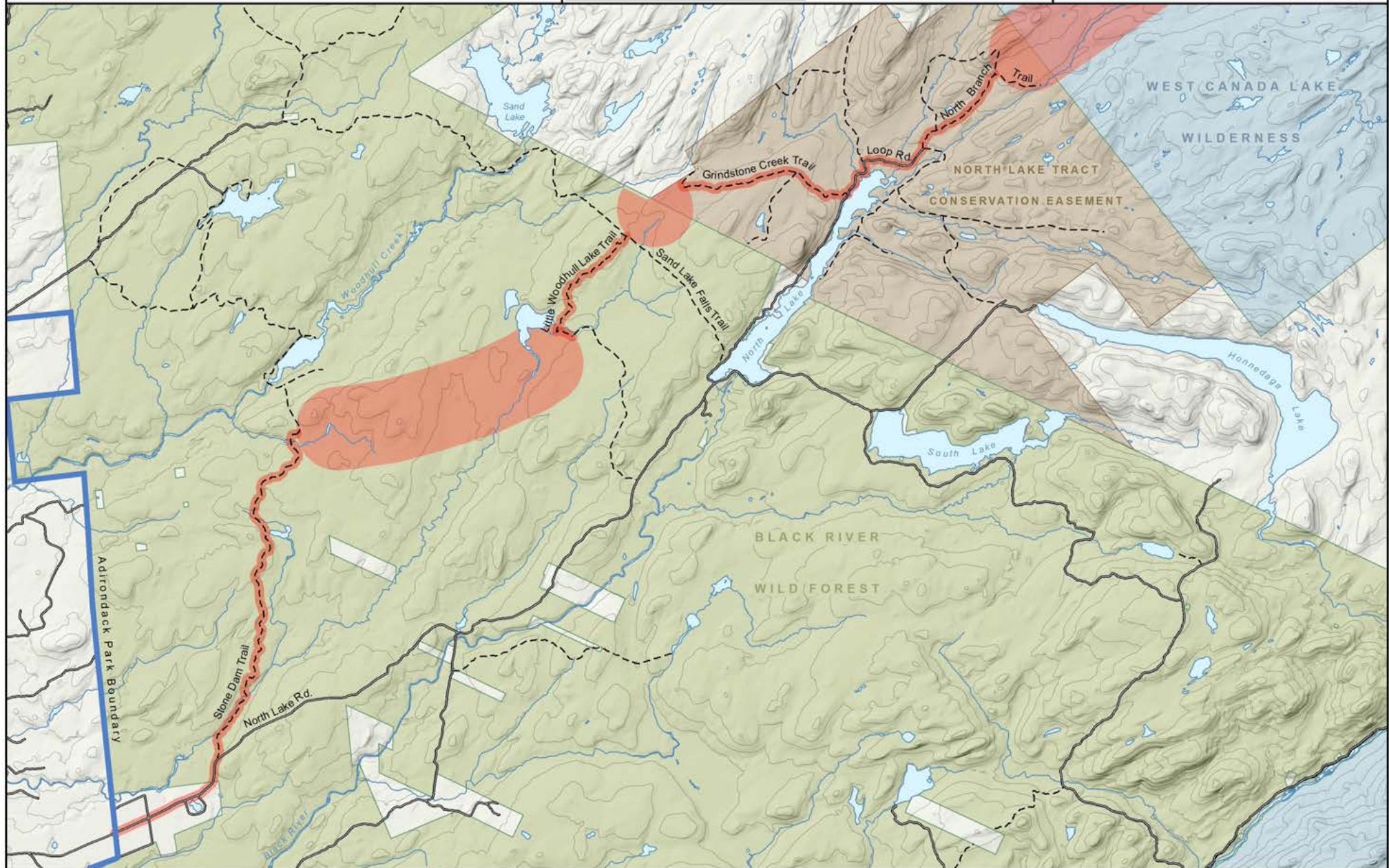
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- State Land - Wilderness
- Conservation Easement held by State

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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 2

West Canada Lake Wilderness - Little Moose Wilderness
Moose River Plains Wild Forest

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Alternate Route
- Alt. Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road

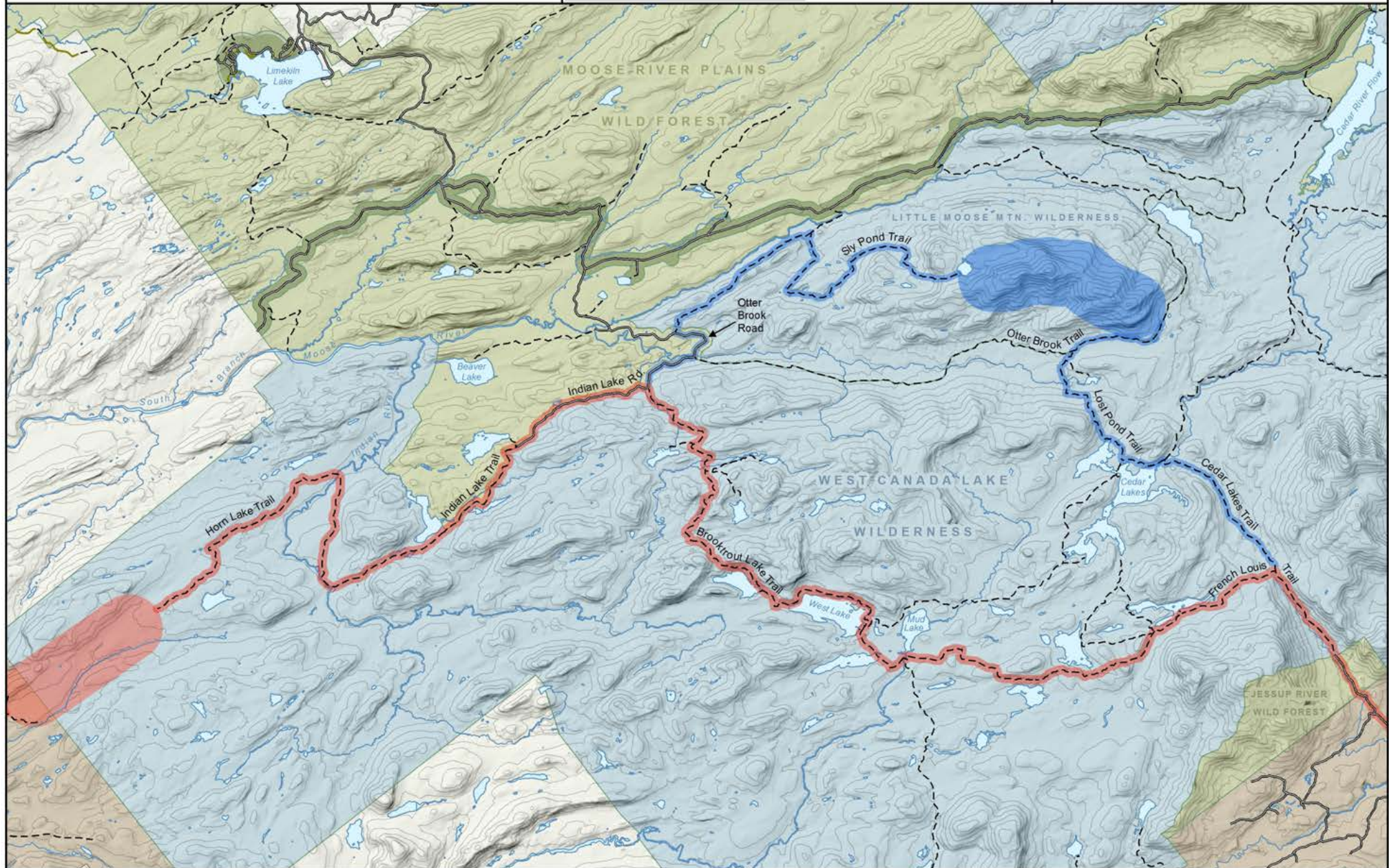
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- State Land - Wilderness
- State Land - Intensive Use
- Conservation Easement held by State

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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 3

Perkins Clearing and Speculator Tree Farm Conservation Easements
Jessup River Wild Forest

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road
- State/US Highway

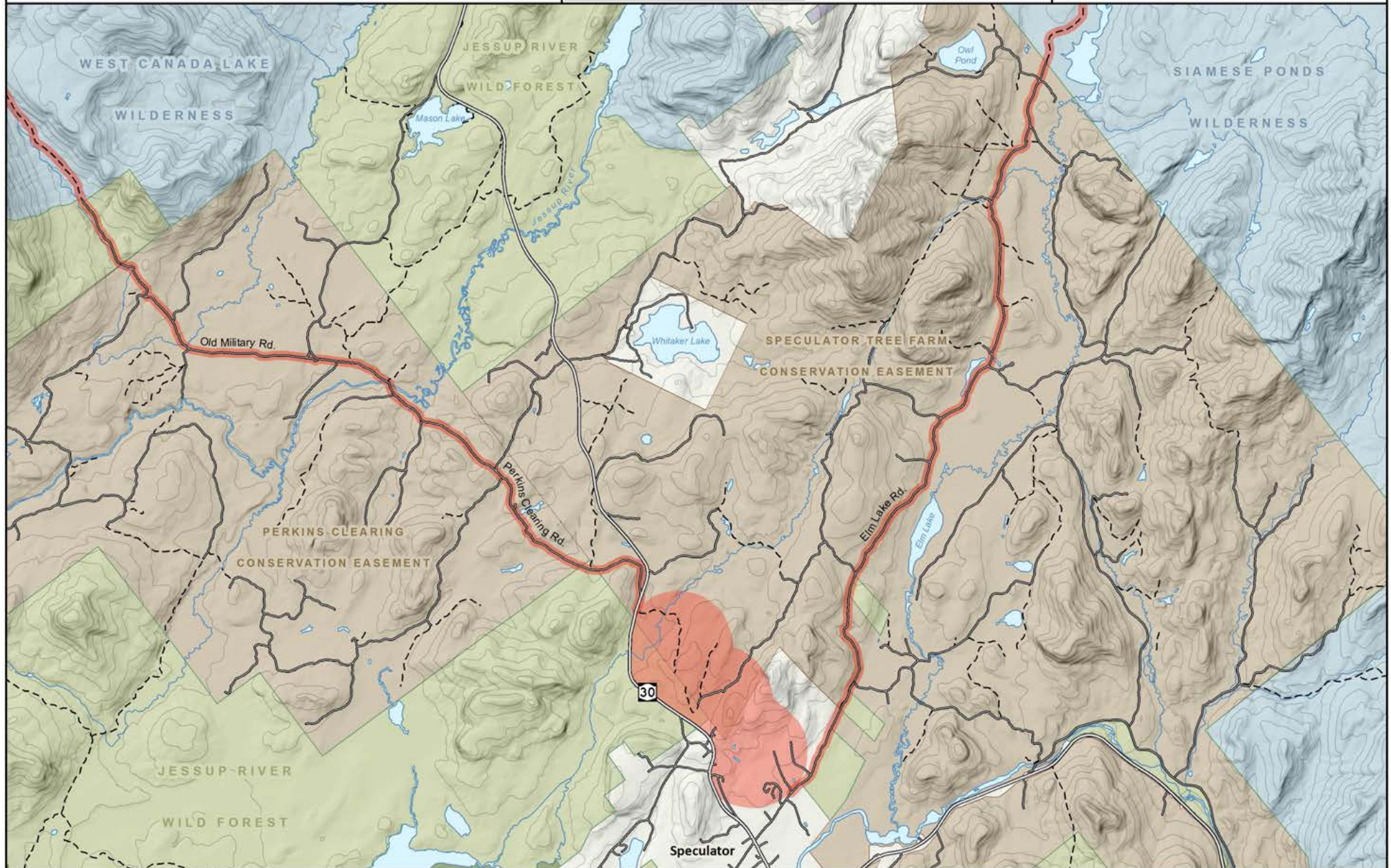
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- State Land - Primitive
- State Land - Intensive Use
- Conservation Easement held by State

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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

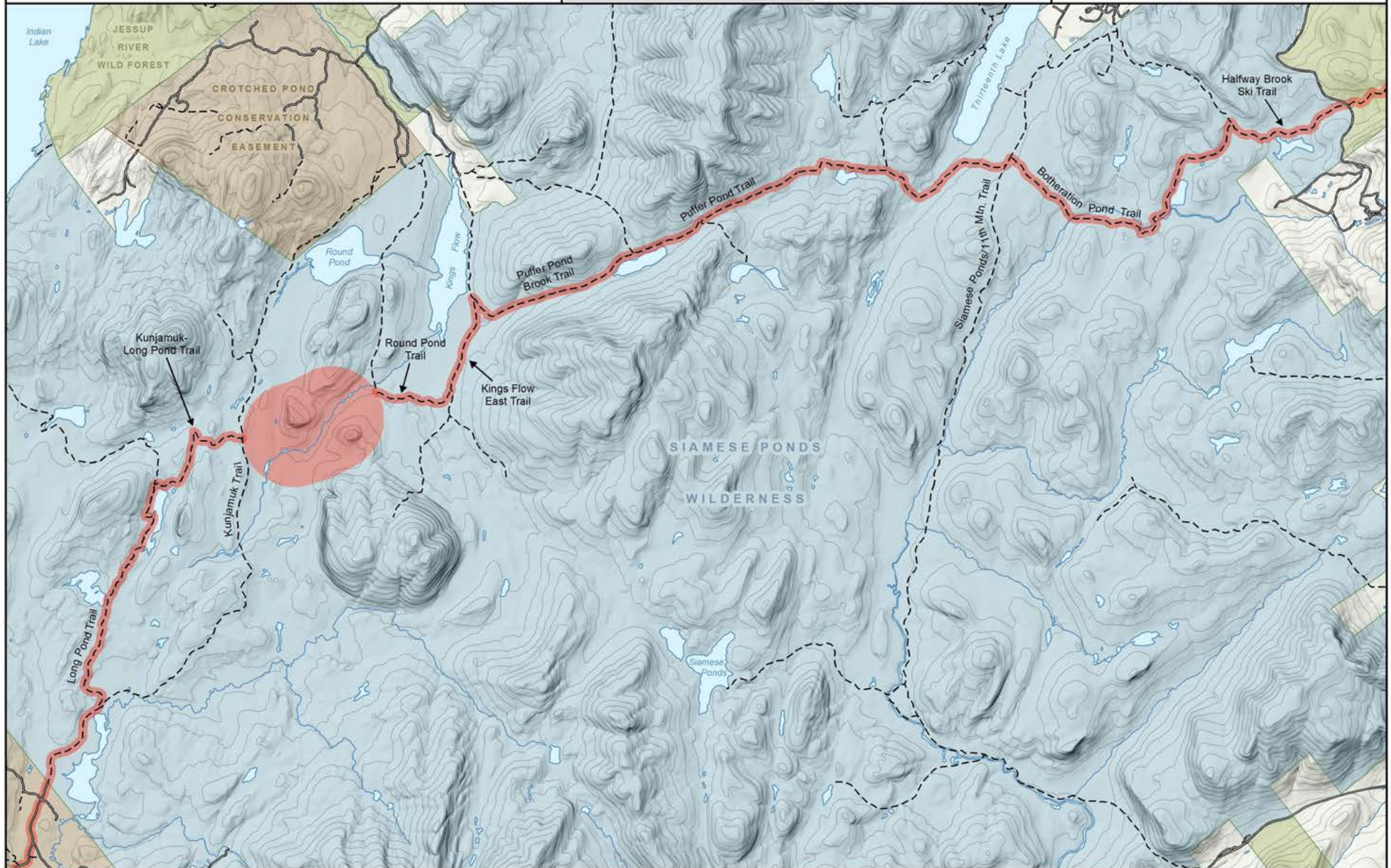
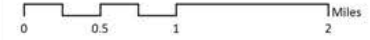
Map 4

Siamese Ponds Wilderness

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road

- State Land - Wild Forest
- State Land - Wilderness
- Conservation Easement held by State

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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 5

Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road
- State/US Highway
- Railroad

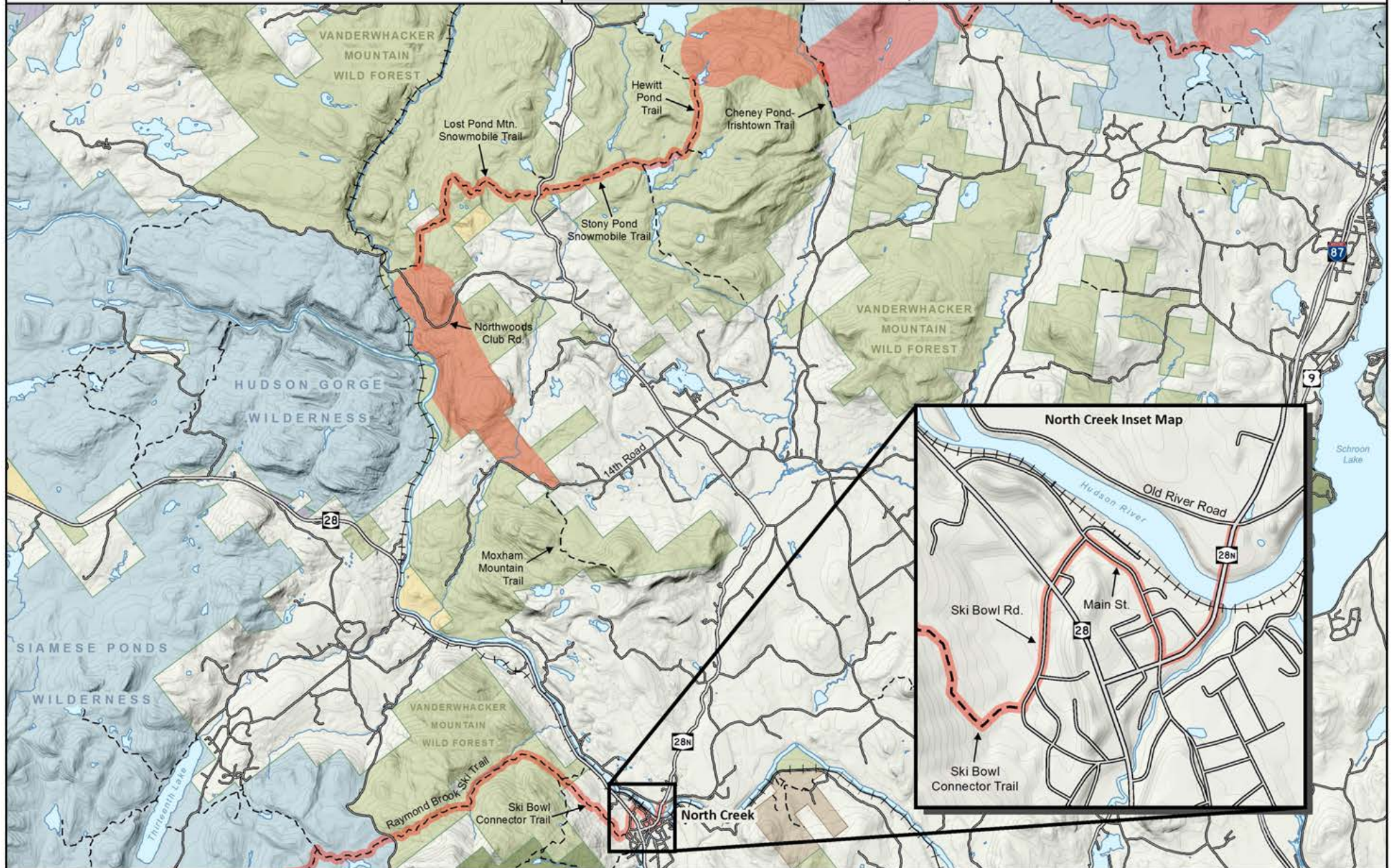
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- State Land - Intensive Use
- State Land - Unclassified
- Conservation Easement held by State

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0 0.5 1 2 Miles



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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 6

Hoffman Notch Wilderness

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road
- State/US Highway

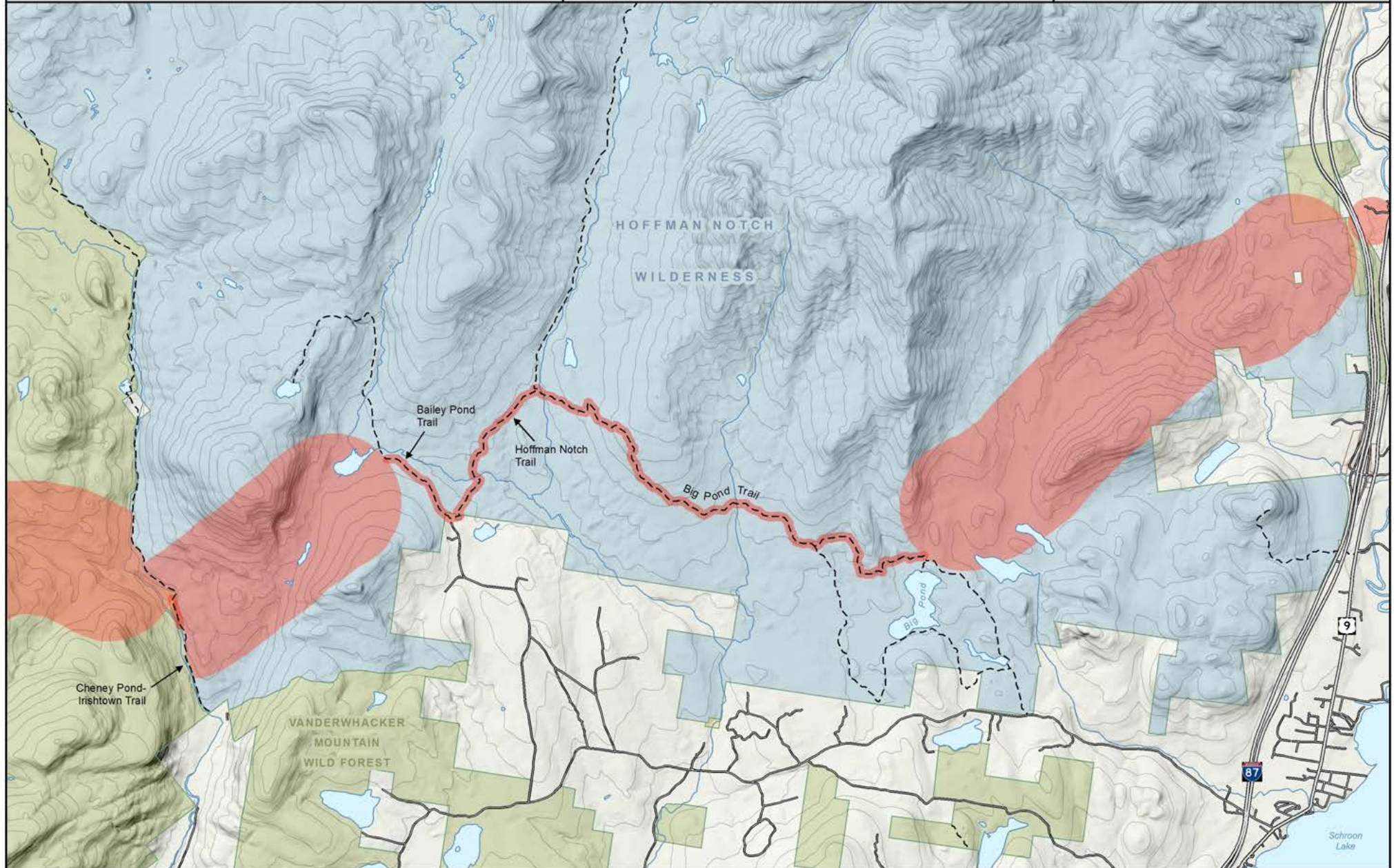
- State Land - Wild Forest
- State Land - Wilderness

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0 0.25 0.5 1 Miles



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North Country National Scenic Trail

Adirondack Park Trail Plan

Map 7

Hammond Pond Wild Forest
Lyme Conservation Easement

- Proposed NCNST Route
- Corridor of Opportunity
- Trail
- Town/County/DEC Road
- State/US Highway

- State Land - Wild Forest
- State Land - Wilderness
- State Land - Intensive Use
- State Land - Unclassified
- Conservation Easement held by State

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0 0.5 1 2 Miles

