



# Draft Western Lassiter Tracts Conservation Easement Recreation Management Plan

*Photo by Peter D'Luhosch, NYSDEC*

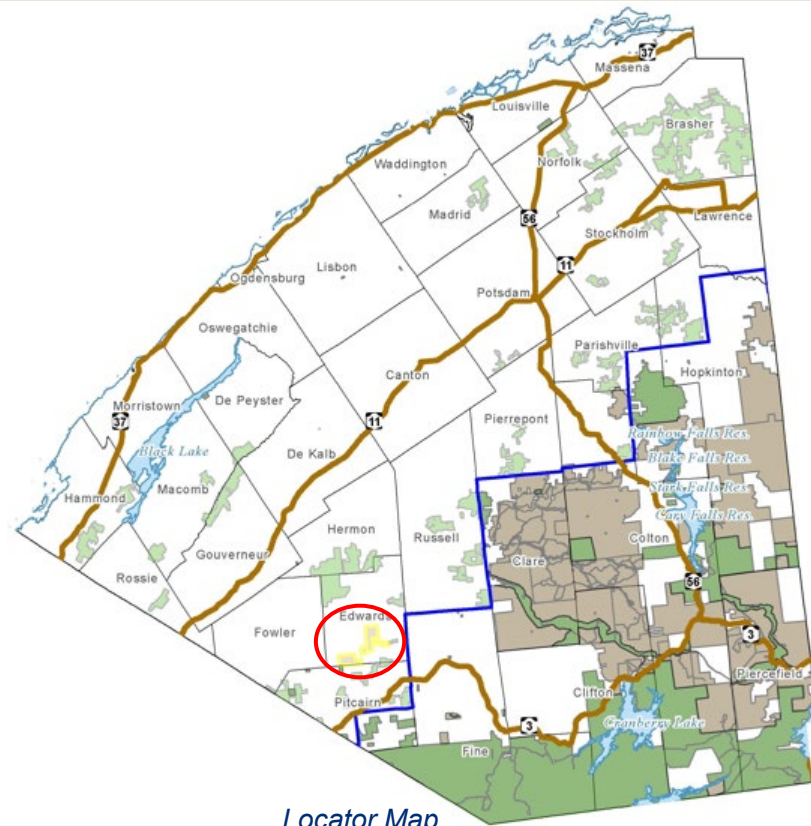
## Beers Lot Tract and Pine Hill Tract Conservation Easements

**October 26, 2022**

# Introduction: The Two Properties

The Beers Lot Tract is ~1,100 acres and the Pine Hill Tract is ~830 acres of working forest, currently owned and managed by Molpus Woodlands Group (MWF Adirondacks, LLC). There are six (6) private lease camps on the Beers Lot Tract.

Per the terms of the 1989 Conservation Easement, the landowners exclusive rights period expired in 2019. The right to hunt, trap, fish and use ATVs on the properties became public rights. This plan will establish rights to benefit all while recognizing the ongoing right of the landowner to lease hunting camps on the Beers Lot Tract.



Locator Map



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# Land Designations

**Conservation Easements** are voluntary, legal agreements that protect the natural resources of a parcel of land by restricting future land use and/or development on the property "in perpetuity" (permanently). This is an agreement between a landowner and a government agency or land trust, with the landowner maintaining ownership.

**State Forests** are lands managed under public ownership by professional foresters; to allow for the sustainable use of natural resources; are open to recreational use; provide watershed protection; and cover large land areas throughout the state. From the beginning, State Forests were set aside to offset widespread trends of agricultural abandonment and deforestation and restore the land's ability to support vegetation.

**Detached Forest Preserve** are lands acquired in Forest Preserve Counties but not within the Adirondack Park and were purchased prior to the 1929 State Reforestation Act and the 1931 Hewitt Amendment which allowed for the creation of a State Forest classification. Detached Forest Preserve lands have the same Constitutional protections as Forest Preserve lands within the Adirondack Park.



## Basic Facts

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Currently, only landowners adjacent to the forest preserve parcel south of the Pine Hill Tract or to the Pine Hill Tract itself may continue onto the tract by foot for recreational purposes. There are no known deeded rights of access to the Pine Hill Tract.

This draft plan proposes several recreation opportunities on the Beers Lot Tract. This will provide public motor vehicle access for the first time to hundreds of acres of previously inaccessible easement lands on which public recreation rights already exist and enhance non-motorized access to the parcel as well.



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- **1989:** The Lassiter CE was signed. This included five tracts: the Kildare Tract, the Preston Lot Tract, the Aldrich Tract, the Beers Lot Tract, and the Pine Hill Tract.
- **2008:** Rayonier acquired the Lassiter Properties.
- **2010:** MWF Adirondacks, LLC acquired the Lassiter Properties.
- **2019:** End of the lessee exclusive rights period – public recreation management planning suggested for the properties.
- **May 2021:** 45-day public online scoping session for comments regarding a proposed Western Lassiter RMP (to include the Beers Lot and Pine Hill Tracts).
- **2022:** The draft Western Lassiter RMP is released to the public for comment.



*Photo by Peter  
D'Luhosch, NYSDEC*







*Photo by Ashleigh  
Grosso, NYSDEC*

## Historic Uses

Prior to the settlement of the area in the mid to late 19<sup>th</sup> century, cultural influences in the area were probably limited to that of Native Americans, trappers and fur traders. This bucolic standard changed with the arrival of settlers and later, large timber companies who ushered in an era of relative economic prosperity for the area.

Many of the region's landowners sought additional income by leasing their land to individuals and groups for use as traditional hunting camps. There are, today, several such leases on the Beers Lot Tract. These lessees enjoy motor vehicle access to their camps and on the property under the terms of the conservation easement document.



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*Photos by Ashleigh Grosso, NYSDEC*



## Historic Uses (cont.)

The history of logging/timber management in the Adirondack park is extensive. Since 1989 the lands comprising the Beers Lot and Pine Hill Tracts have been sold by the Lassiter Corporation, with whom the easement with NYS was signed, to Rayonier Forest Resources, then to the current owner, MWF Adirondack LLC. The terms of the original easement document (1988) reserved to the landowner the right for the management and harvesting of timber in accordance with governmental rules, regulations and laws, but did not otherwise provide restrictions or requirements on timber management practices. MWF Adirondack LLC is a third-party green certified entity subject to audits and mandates that promote sustainable forestry on the property, so their timber management practices go above and beyond the requirements of the easement.





# RMP Process / Development

- Gather input and opinions from the public on recreational opportunities desired on a property.
- Incorporate that input into a draft RMP.
- Landowner / DEC review draft RMP proposals to make sure they align with the terms of the easement.
- Release the draft RMP and conduct surveys and a comment period for the public to review the proposed recreational opportunities.
- Address issues, concerns, and further suggestions. Revise the draft RMP.
- Final RMP is adopted with approval from the Director of Lands and Forests.



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# Elements of a good plan

Planning for an area requires a multifaceted understanding of the property in question; its current and past uses as well as its topography and natural resource specifics. The Lassiter easement was signed in 1989. The negotiations between NYSDEC and the Lassiter Corporation were extensive and involved multiple site visits and field days of staff time. Region 6 DEC forestry staff have gained much essential knowledge about the property since that time. Current conservation easement staff have been monitoring the property since 2008. Previous and institutional knowledge combines with contemporary work to create this plan.



*Photo by Ashleigh Grosso, NYSDEC*



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# SEQRA

The State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) requires the consideration of environmental factors early in the planning stages of any proposed action(s) that are undertaken, funded or approved by a local, regional or state agency. A Full Environmental Assessment Form (EAF) is used to identify and analyze relevant areas of environmental concern based upon the management actions in the draft unit management plan. For this plan, SEQRA review has been initiated with the preparation of both the EAF and Negative Declaration.

Upon review of the information contained in the EAF, there will not be a significant impact on the environment. If any changes are made to this draft plan, based upon public comments, they will be considered in the EAF and in the determination of significance prior to completing the final plan.







Photo by Peter D'Luhosch, NYSDEC

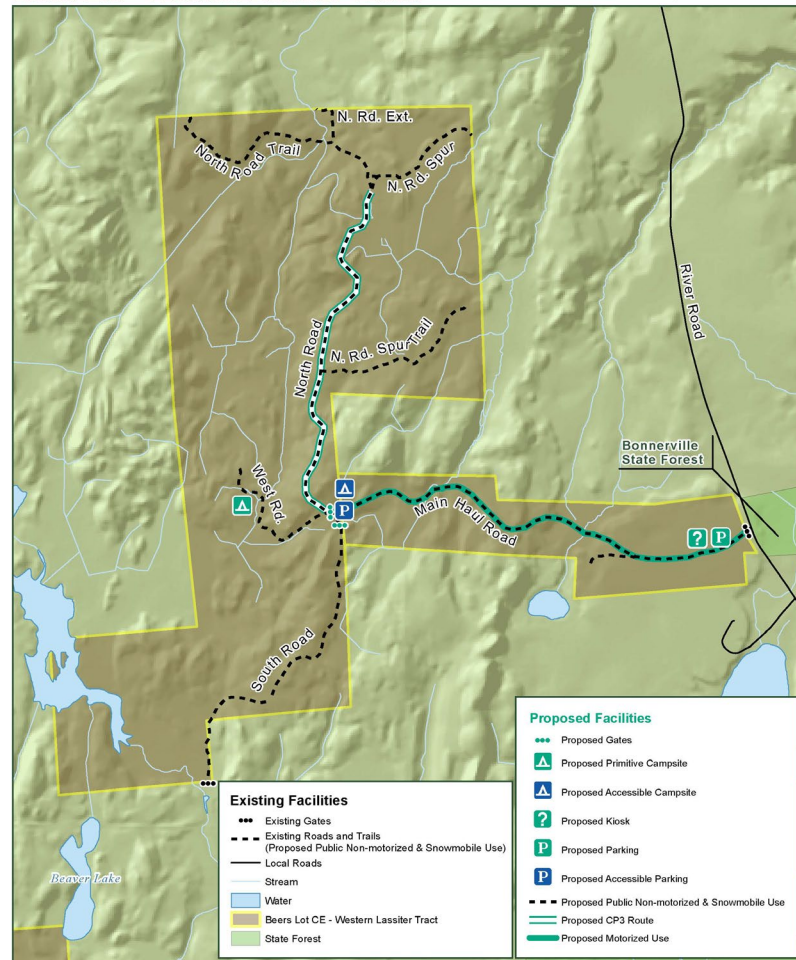
## Primary Proposals – Beers Lot CE

This draft Recreation Management Plan will:

- provide for public motor vehicle access to the Beers Lot Tract for the first time since it was acquired in 1989.
- involve the establishment of a route designated for Mobility Access Permit for People with Disabilities (MAPPWD) holders, as well as an accessible parking area and primitive campsite.
- allow for non-motorized access along all roads and trails and overland.
- formally open the Beers Lot Tract to public hunting, fishing, and trapping in accordance with established seasons and applicable rules and regulations.



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# Proposed Public Access and Facilities on the Beers Lot CE

- Public Motor Vehicle Use
- Public Camping
- Public Hunting, Fishing and Trapping
- Public Non-motorized Use
- Public MAPPWD Route and Accessible Camping
- Public Snowmobile Access



## Motor Vehicle Use

The Main Haul Road will be open to public motor vehicle use (4x4 high clearance vehicles) from the eastern start of the road to the interior of the property. This will provide for 1.5 miles of public motorized access. A parking area designed for use by persons with disabilities will be constructed at the interior intersection of the Main Haul Road and the North and South Roads.

## Snowmobile Use

Snowmobile access will be allowed along existing roads and trails when there is adequate snow cover. Winter snowmobile access will be allowed for the sole purpose of facilitating hunting/trapping during the appropriate seasons. No trails will be formally designated, and no new trails are proposed to be built on the property; however, existing roads and trails may be considered for alternatives or future snowmobile trails to be established or created.

## Information Kiosk

An information kiosk is proposed to be located at the main landing just west of the entrance gate to the property. This kiosk will assist recreationists with approved-use maps, regulatory information, and natural resource information for the property and surrounding area. Additional kiosks may be constructed as deemed appropriate.



# Proposed Public Access and Facilities on the Beers Lot CE

## Gates/Barriers

Natural resource protection, the rights of neighboring landowners, and ecological integrity combine with a limited increase in public use to necessitate the placement of barriers and control points designed to restrict and guide access to the Beers Lot CE. Given that vandalism of remote facilities is possible and that the plan proposes motorized access to the area – metal gates, rather than native wooden materials, and informational signs are appropriate tools for this tract (USFS, 2006), as well as large boulders where regular access is not needed.



*Photo by Peter Dempf, NYSDEC*

*Gate at main entrance to the Beers Lot CE.*



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# Proposed Public Access and Facilities on the Beers Lot CE

## Camping

Two campsites are proposed in this draft RMP: a primitive campsite at a location along the West Road, and a primitive campsite meeting all standards for use by persons with disabilities at the Main Haul Road parking area.

## Non-motorized Use

All roads and trails on the property will be open to public non-motorized uses, including by foot, horseback, dogsled, bike, skis, snowshoes, etc. This will provide for approximately 7 miles of non-motorized use on the Beers Lot CE.



*Photo by Ashleigh Grosso, NYSDEC*



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## ATV Access & MAPPWD Route

The terms of the Lassiter CE include the right for public ATV use, but NYSDEC has not opened any easement roads, on the Beers Lot or Pine Hill Tracts, to ATVs to date.

This plan does not propose opening any roads to public ATV use, aside from the proposed Mobility Access Permit for People with Disabilities (MAPPWD) Route along the North Road.

Lands and Forests and law enforcement staff will continue to monitor the property for unauthorized ATV use – especially as it relates to incursions onto adjacent lands.

There is a proposed route to be designated for use by MAPPWD permit holders, which will run from the proposed parking area on the Main Haul Road to a location approximately 1.3-miles north along the North Road. This will provide permit holders access for persons with disabilities for the purposes of hunting, bird watching, nature observation, etc.



# Good plans should accommodate everyone

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 how 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 use of public accommodations. Title II of the ADA requires, in part, that reasonable modifications must be made to the services and programs of public entities, so that when those services and programs are viewed in their entirety, they are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities.

Consistent with ADA requirements, the Department incorporates accessibility for people with disabilities into the planning, construction and alteration of recreational facilities and assets supporting them. This Recreation Management Plan (RMP) incorporates an inventory of all the recreational facilities or assets supporting the programs and services that were negotiated with the landowner to be available on the easement.

The Department is not required to make each of its existing facilities and assets accessible as long as the Department's programs, taken as a whole, are accessible.





# Project Implementation Table

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The draft plan includes a Project Implementation Table which schedules development of its proposals. Work plans for each of the projects listed will be developed by the Potsdam DEC staff. The work plans will address best management practices, road improvements, and facilities development such as the placement and construction of: parking areas, road and trail signs, campsites, information kiosks, and any gates necessary to permit access while providing mandated protections to the landowner and neighboring private property owners.



*Photo by Ashleigh Grosso, NYSDEC*



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## Annual Maintenance

- 1 Routine maintenance of roads, boundaries, and public recreation facilities.

## Proposed Projects

- 1 Re-sign all property boundaries, roads, and trails with up-to-date signage.
- 2 Construct an accessible parking area designed for use by persons with disabilities 1.5 miles west on the Main Haul Road.
- 3 Establish a MAPPWD Route for persons with disabilities along a 1.3-mile stretch of the North Road.
- 4 Install appropriate gates at the parking area.
- 5 Install a kiosk at the main landing.
- 6 Construct one primitive campsite.
- 7 Construct one accessible campsite designed for use by persons with disabilities.





Photo by Ashleigh Grosso, NYSDEC

## Next Steps

- Collect comments on draft RMP by **November 30, 2022**.
- Evaluate comments/issues and make final revisions if necessary.
- Submit final RMP to Region 6 and Central Office for review.
- Adopt Final RMP with approval from the landowner and Director of DEC's Division of Lands and Forests.
- Implement proposed projects and actions.



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*Photo by Ashleigh Grosse, NYSDEC*

# Thank you!

For additional questions, please contact:  
Potsdam DEC Sub-Office at 315-265-3090 or  
Peter D'Luhosch at [peter.dluhosch@dec.ny.gov](mailto:peter.dluhosch@dec.ny.gov)

Please provide comments to the plan, in writing, to Potsdam DEC Sub-Office, 190 Outer Main Street, Suite 103, Potsdam, NY 13676;

by email to [R6.UMP@dec.ny.gov](mailto:R6.UMP@dec.ny.gov);

Or via this online survey: <https://forms.office.com/g/CzSyXAj8Xj>

We would like to thank our various partners, including the landowner of the properties, Molpus, the property neighbors, the recreational stakeholders, those who provided comments to the plans, and everyone else who contributed to this planning process.

Thank you to our readers and viewers for their time and interest in this proposed draft plan.

For more information and to read the draft plan in its entirety, please go to:

<https://www.dec.ny.gov/lands/96093.html>



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