

Chapter 8 - The State Outdoor Recreation System

Evolution of New York State Parks, Conservation, and Recreation

In the mid-nineteenth century, most New Yorkers lived in rural areas and nature was seen as a struggle, not as a place to relax and enjoy. The only state agency managing natural resources was the New York State Land Commission, which was established to dispose of excess property. In the 1870s, old-growth timber lands owned by New York State were being sold to loggers and the state paid a bounty to hunters of wolves and mountain lions. But old attitudes gradually began to change and people thought about how they could nurture and preserve nature instead of conquer it. Industrial expansion altered the living patterns of the people as well as the face of the land. As preservationists began to organize, so did social reformers. Their common goal was healthy people prospering among natural beauty. The result was a conservation and recreation ethic.

Throughout the nineteenth century, artists and tourists had sought inspiration from the grandeur of Niagara Falls and were distressed by the commercialism growing around the falls. Efforts to preserve the scenery culminated in the creation of the State Reservation at Niagara by the New York State

Legislature in 1883. Following the success at Niagara was the establishment by the State Legislature, in 1885, of the Forest Preserve in the Adirondack and Catskill Mountain regions due to uncontrolled timbering and mining, a decline in public open space, and the growing need for fresh water. The legislation stated that the Preserve "shall be forever kept as wild forest lands". Within a couple years, New York had become the first State to not just preserve the environment but also to begin to restore it.

The Adirondack Park was created in 1892, identified by a blue line on a map within which State acquisition of private in-holdings was to be concentrated. At the 1894 Constitutional Convention, a new amendment to achieve meaningful protection of the Forest Preserve was included, stating "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." The State constitution now prohibited logging on the Forest Preserve lands. A number of amendments have been added to Article 14 since its adoption in 1894; however, none of them changed or diminished the original wording that was approved by the citizens of the State in 1894. The Catskill Park was created in 1904 in the same manner as the Adirondack Park.

Across New York, wealthy and influential residents had been observing the effects of industrialization with concern and moved to secure some of the state's most scenic areas. For example, from 1859 to 1906 William Pryor Letchworth acquired about 1,000 acres in the area of the Genesee River gorge and decided to give his land to the

State for a public park. As was customary at the time, Letchworth gave control of the park to the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society, which was originally incorporated by act of the State legislature as the "Trustees of Scenic and Historic Places and Objects" in 1895. The purpose of the Society was to acquire, preserve, and improve places of natural beauty or historical significance for public use and benefit, demonstrating the alliance between the movements for both natural and cultural preservation in turn-of-the-century America.

The residents of Manhattan were accustomed to the sight of the majestic columns of rock, known as the Palisades, along the west bank of the Hudson River. As concern for the destruction of the cliffs from quarrying grew toward the end of the nineteenth century, plans were advanced to protect the Palisades from further defacement. The result was the appointment in 1900 of the Commissioners of the Palisades Interstate Park by New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt and New Jersey Governor Foster Voorhees. The Commissioners had jurisdiction in both states with power to acquire whatever territory was deemed necessary along the Palisades for preservation, education, and recreation, authorization later being extended to the north and west. Subsequently, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) was federally chartered by Congress in 1937. PIPC, comprised of five commissioners each from New York and New Jersey appointed by their respective state's governor, now has jurisdiction over 24 state parks and 8 historic sites of more than 100,000 acres.

By the 1920's, New York State had more than 40 areas of scenic, recreational, and historical interest, but there

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was no coordination and no single body responsible for directing park, conservation, or recreation policies statewide. A similar lack of direction was evident in state government as a whole with 187 separate agencies. Reorganization of state government in the 1920's resulted in the first unified state park system in the country with the creation of the State Council of Parks in 1924.

The State Council of Parks had under its jurisdiction state parks and historic sites outside of the Forest Preserve and was charged with establishing uniform park policy, developing its parks, and acting as a clearinghouse and advisory body. It charted a course of carrying out a comprehensive outdoor recreation program, including providing recreational motor routes, or parkways, to reach parks by increasing numbers of automobile tourists, especially in the years following World War II. After being the major architect of the formation of the State Council of Parks, Robert Moses served as its first Chairman, a position he kept for nearly 40 years.

The Conservation Department was established in 1927. The Conservation Department was a consolidation of several commissions, some of which had previously been consolidated into a Conservation Commission in 1911. The State Council of Parks continued, but was placed under the jurisdiction of the Conservation Commissioner and jurisdiction of all the parks, reservations and historic sites was given to the Conservation Department's Division of Parks.

Reforestation of New York State has occurred as a result of abandonment of farmland through much of the 20th century, as well as conscious efforts to return once-cleared land to forest. The State Reforestation Law of 1929 and the Hewitt Amendment of 1931 authorized the Conservation Department to acquire land for reforestation areas, consisting of not less than 500 acres of contiguous land, to be forever devoted

to "reforestation and the establishment and maintenance thereon of forests for watershed protection, the production of timber, and for recreation and kindred purposes". These Reforestation Areas became the nucleus of our present day State Forests. Reforestation in the state has resulted in a profound increase from 20- 25% forest cover in 1890 to about 62% today.

During the 1960's, changing public attitudes and the availability of environmental science led to the realization that government had a strong role to play in preserving resources and keeping the environment healthy. In 1970, this expanded sense of awareness and responsibility led to the creation of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), signed into being on the first Earth Day by Governor Nelson Rockefeller. The DEC was formed from the Conservation Department with additional responsibility for several environmental programs and commissions formerly within other agencies, as well as entirely new disciplines created within the agency. At the same time, the Division of Parks and Outdoor Recreation was removed from the Conservation Department and elevated to full agency status as the new Office of Parks and Recreation (OPR).

Primary responsibility for the state parks remained with the State Council of Parks, which was under the chairmanship of Laurance Rockefeller since the departure of Robert Moses in 1963, until 1972 when responsibility shifted to the Commissioner of OPR. The Council of Parks and Recreation evolved as an advisory body representing the interest of citizens and making recommendations to the Commissioner on various aspects of parks and recreation. The New York State Historic Trust was created in 1966 to take responsibility for historic preservation, which had been under the Education Department since 1944. Those responsibilities also shifted to the Commissioner of OPR, and the Trust was replaced with a State Board

for Historic Preservation to advise the Commissioner.

The Office of Parks and Recreation was assigned the responsibility for maintaining state parks and historic sites, as well as providing recreational opportunities for the people of the State and being steward of the State's archeological and historical resources. Eleven State Park Regions were assigned to the OPR while the twelfth region, consisting of the Adirondack and Catskill Parks, was retained by the DEC. The official title of the OPR was changed to the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) in 1981.

The State of the State Outdoor Recreation System

The “heart and soul” of the State’s outdoor recreation system is not the facilities or activities but its natural and cultural resources. Care and stewardship of these resources must be maintained and fostered. If these resources are lost so is the quality of the recreational experience which is the system’s primary attribute. The public will not come to swim at our lakes and ocean, or hike the trails if the environmental quality of the resources is impaired.

The Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Department of Environmental Conservation are the two primary state agencies that manage land resources and provide recreational opportunities. The Canal Corporation, Department of Transportation and Office of General Services are also land managers.

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources. Within this capacity OPRHP manages the State Park System that includes state parks and historic sites. The Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law also provides for a State Council of Parks and Recreation as an advisory body and the creation of the State Board for Historic Preservation. The board provides advisory services and acts as the federally mandated review body in the nomination of sites for listing on federal and

state registers of historic places. In addition, the law divides New York State into 12 park regions, 11 under the jurisdiction of OPRHP and 1 administered by DEC. The 11 OPRHP park regions are located outside the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves.

The mission of the Department of Environmental Conservation is to protect the quality of New York State’s land, water and air, the character of its scenery, and the health and diversity of its fish and wildlife populations and habitats. Within this capacity DEC has dual focus of land management and environmental regulation. As a land manager DEC manages the Forest Preserve in the Adirondacks and Catskills, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, State Nature and Historical Preserve areas and facilities and land areas that support fish and wildlife programs.

State Park System

OPRHP administers about 330,000 acres of land, 178 state parks, 35 historic sites, 67 marine facilities and

boat launch sites, 20 parkways, over 5,000 structures, 77 developed beaches, 53 swimming pools, 29 golf courses, over 800 cabins, cottages and rental houses, 8,566 campsites, and over 1,350 miles of trail, as well as several outdoor education centers, museums, and nature centers and the Empire State Games. Nearly 80% of the park system is in natural areas with a wide range of geological features, ecological habitats and species of plants and animals. This includes the water fall at Niagara Falls, the Genesee River gorge called the “Grand Canyon of the East” at Letchworth, extensive forested areas of Allegany and Sterling Forest State Parks, the gorges of the Finger Lakes parks, islands in the St. Lawrence and Hudson Rivers, cliffs at Minnewaska, and the beaches of Long Island.

The Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) manages 53 day use and campsite facilities within the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserves. Unlike a state park, these facilities are within a larger unit management area.

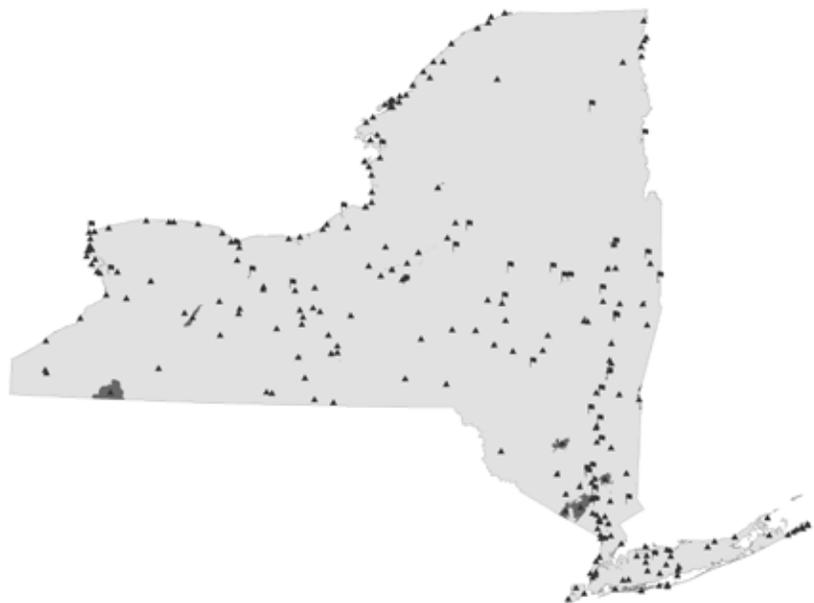


Figure 8.1 - New York State Parks and Historic Sites

State Lands and Forests

DEC manages over 4 million acres. This includes 3 million acres in the Adirondack and Catskill Forest Preserve, 776,000 acres of reforestation and multiple use areas, 190,000 areas in wildlife management areas and 662,000 acres in conservation easements.

Forest Preserve

The statute creating the Forest Preserve incorporated all state-owned lands within three Catskill counties (later amended to incorporate four Catskill counties) and all state-owned lands within 11 Adirondack counties (later amended to 12) into the Forest Preserve. One of the things that make the Forest Preserve unique among public land holdings, in addition to its size of nearly 3 million acres, is the fact that the people of the State have chosen to make decisions regarding changes that would diminish the preserve through a public referendum following approval of two sessions of the State Legislature. These areas provide extensive camping, trail, hunting, fishing and other passive recreational opportunities.

The Adirondack Park, established by statute in 1892, is unique among parks within the nation in that it encompasses both state and private lands. Originally established at 2,800,000 acres the park is now just under 6 million acres. Approximately 2.7 million acres are in state ownership most all of which is classified as Forest Preserve.

Unique to the Adirondack Park is the Adirondack Park Agency that controls land use on state and private lands. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is an independent, bipartisan state agency responsible for developing long-range park policy in a forum that balances statewide concerns and the interests of local governments in the Adirondack

Park. It was created by New York State law in 1971. The legislation defined the makeup and functions of the APA and authorized the Agency to develop two plans for lands within the Adirondack Park. The Adirondack Park Land Use and Development Plan regulates land use and development activities on the approximately 3.2 million acres of privately owned lands in the Park. The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) sets forth guidelines and criteria for the DEC's management of the remaining 2.8 million acres of public lands.

The policy framework provided by the APSLMP is resource-capacity driven, rather than user-demand driven, with protection of the Park's outstanding natural resources the underlying mandate governing New York State's provision of recreational opportunities on the State-owned lands and waters in the Adirondacks. This is reflective not only of the statewide importance of these resources, but also of their national and international significance.

For the previous five years, APA has worked with DEC in a concerted effort to undertake planning critical to improving recreational opportunities throughout the Park. Numerous, first-ever unit management plans (UMPs) have been drafted and approved for specific areas that span the range of diversity from popular public campgrounds to the region's more remote, less-used wilderness areas. In the upcoming five years as this inter-Agency planning process continues, a primary objective of APA is to work with DEC to facilitate implementation of workable, state-of-the-art practices such as a "Limits of Acceptable Change" management approach to protecting natural resources, and a "Recreational Opportunity Spectrum" method of inventorying the Park's available recreational resources.

APA also administers the State's Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System Act for private lands adjacent to

designated rivers in the Park, and the State's Freshwater Wetlands Act within the Park.

APA operates two Visitor Interpretive Centers (VICs) at Paul Smiths, Franklin County and at Newcomb, Essex County. These Centers are the Agency's environmental education and traveler orientation centers.

The Catskill Park was similarly established, by statute in 1904 with 576,126 acres. Like the Adirondack Park, it includes both public and private lands. The size of this park has been enlarged to 705,500 acres. Approximately 300,000 acres is in state ownership and is classified as Forest Preserve.

State Nature and Historical Preserve

Like the Forest Preserve the State Nature and Historical Preserve also has constitutional protection that is authorized by Section 4 of Article 14 of the State constitution. It provides for the designation of state lands, outside the Forest Preserve counties, that have exceptional beauty, wilderness character, or geological, ecological or historical significance to the State Nature and Historical Preserve. At the present, Article 45 of the Environmental Conservation Law (ECL), which is the implementing legislation, currently has 11 properties dedicated to the State Nature and Historical Preserve. These properties are listed in Appendix G.

Wildlife Management Areas

The primary purpose of Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) is for the production and use of wildlife. DEC manages more than 85 WMAs containing more than 190,000 acres - including 124,000 acres of upland and 53,000 acres of wetland. (DEC, 2007)

The WMA program is part of a long term effort to establish permanent access to lands in New York State for the protection and promotion of its fish and wildlife resources. Beginning in the early 1900s with the acquisition of abandoned farm lands and fields, DEC and its predecessor (NYS Conservation Department) worked with the federal government, state government and sportsmen and women to secure these land parcels for public use.

Money used to acquire lands included in the WMA system has been a combination of state and federal funding. The Conservation Fund (begun in 1925) was the first dependable source followed by two federal programs in the 1930s: 1) the Federal Resettlement Administration bought marginal and worn-out farmland and later donated it to the state for wildlife management purposes, and 2) the Pittman-Robertson Act, still in effect today, places an excise tax on guns and ammunition to fund restoration and management efforts for wildlife, including purchase of habitat. In addition, several New York State Bond Acts (1960, 1972 and 1986) also helped expand the WMA system.

WMAs provide unique areas for the public to interact with a wide variety of wildlife species. Since sportsmen and women have funded the acquisition of a large portion of the WMAs through their license fees and the federal tax on guns and ammunition, the emphasis is on game species.

However, while fishing, hunting and trapping are the most widely practiced activities on many WMAs, they are not limited to these activities. Most WMAs also provide good opportunities for hiking, cross-country skiing, bird watching, or just enjoying nature.

WMAs also provide areas for research on various wildlife species. A grouse study conducted on Connecticut Hill WMA is considered the standard reference on ruffed grouse in the

Northeast. In addition, habitat management methods and techniques such as mowing, use of controlled burns, and planting of wildlife shrubs and food plots have been established and refined on WMAs.

For most areas, statewide hunting and fishing regulations as well as statewide WMA regulations are applicable. In general, prohibited activities include any use of motorized vehicles including motorcycles, all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles (except on town, county or state highway rights-of-way), overnight mooring or boat storage. No fires are permitted except for cooking, warmth or smudge. Activities prohibited, with exceptions under certain conditions, include camping, swimming, skiing (other than cross-country), picnicking and mechanized boating. In certain cases, however, additional special regulations are also in force. These special regulations are usually reductions in hunting hours, restrictions on the number of people using the area and increased requirements for sportsmen and women to report on the results of their activities. (DEC, 2007)

State Forests

State Forest is a generic term used to describe the nearly 776,000 acres of DEC administered land located outside the Forest Preserve and under the direction of the Division of Lands and Forests in DEC. "State Forests" generally include lands classified as Reforestation Areas, Unique Areas and Multiple Use Areas. There are approximately 480 State Forest areas, ranging in size from less than 100 acres to over 9,000 acres. The State Reforestation Law of 1929 and the Hewitt Amendment of 1931 set forth legislation authorizing DEC to acquire land for Reforestation Areas, which make up approximately 85% of lands classified as State Forests. These lands are to be forever devoted to "reforestation and the establishment and maintenance thereon of forests for watershed protection, the production of

timber, and for recreation and kindred purposes." State Forests are "working forests" and are managed by employing multiple use principles to provide a wide variety of resources, products and opportunities to meet the varied demands of today's society. The demand for recreational use of State Forests has greatly increased in recent years. Recreational activities are now a major component of State Forest Unit Management Plans and include diverse pursuits such as snowmobiling, horse back riding, hunting, fishing, hang gliding, picnicking, cross-country skiing, bird watching and hiking. The archer, the dog sledder, the rock climber and the orienteering enthusiast also claim the need for a place to enjoy their sport. More than 2,000,000 person-days of hunting take place on State Forests annually, and approximately 570,000 person-days of freshwater fishing are estimated for the lakes, ponds and streams located on State Forests.

State Forests often contain features of unique interest. Cultural resource sites such as old homesteads, cemeteries, Native American sites, and historical sites can provide notable opportunities and experiences for inquisitive visitors. State Forests can also harbor rare and endangered plant communities and ecosystems. These special habitats add emphasis to the stewardship responsibilities of State Forest management. Some of these communities, such as the pine barrens of Long Island and the oak savanna in Monroe County, provide the land manager with the challenge for their restoration and perpetuation and the recreational naturalist with the opportunity to observe the components of the communities.

Canal Corporation

Canal Recreationway and Canalway Trail System

Significant progress has been made over the last decade to develop the New York State Canal Recreationway, which spans the 524-mile New York State Canal System, consisting of the legendary Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. The New York State Canal Corporation, a subsidiary of the New York State Thruway Authority, operates, maintains and promotes the system and has spear-headed the canal revitalization effort throughout New York State.

The Canal Recreationway Plan and subsequent Canal Revitalization Program, adopted in 1996, laid the foundation for Canal System redevelopment efforts with the objective of transforming the canals into a world class recreation resource. Significant public outreach went into the documents through regional canal plans, focus groups and other meetings held to encourage public participation. The fundamental goals of these documents are to:

- preserve the best of the past;
- enhance recreational opportunities; and,
- foster appropriate and sustainable economic development.

The major element of the Canal Recreationway Plan is the development of a network of Canal Harbors and Ports aimed at improving the linkages between the waterway and canal communities.

Canal Harbors were developed at seven canal gateways and other strategic locations. Six of the seven harbors

were completed in 2000. The seventh Canal Harbor was completed in 2003.

In addition, nearly 100 Canal Ports have been constructed or are currently under improvement at Canal Locks and waterfronts along the system. There were 96 port and lock improvement projects proposed for the Canal System under the Canal Recreationway Plan. Improved visitor services and amenities are now available at 60 locations with plans underway locally to complete the remaining 36 sites.

In 2006, the Greenway Grant Program awarded over \$8.9 million in grant funding to local communities and non-profit organizations for Canal-side improvement projects. The approved projects are designed to enhance tourism and economic development along the Canal System and further capitalize on this historic national resource for the benefit of local communities.

Completion of the end-to-end Canalway Trail is another major element of the Canal Revitalization effort. The Canalway Trail, which parallels the entire New York State Canal System, will be the longest multiple use trail in the United States. More than 170 miles of trail have been completed since the Canal Corporation began the program in 1995. A total of 280 miles of trail now exist, primarily along the Erie Canal corridor. The Canalway Trail parallels the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals, creating the spine of a statewide network of trails. Major existing segments are located in the Capital District from Albany to Rotterdam Junction, between Amsterdam and Little Falls, between Rome and Syracuse in the Old Erie Canal State Park and between Newark and Lockport. Other shorter segments exist along the Erie, Champlain and Oswego Canals.

The Canalway Trail will link to other important state greenway and trail systems, including the Hudson River

Valley Greenway Trail System and the Genesee Valley Greenway Trail, helping to create a network of trails spanning the State. The primary funding source for Canalway Trail development has been the Federal Transportation Enhancements program through ISTEA, TEA 21 and SAFETEA-LU with matching funds provided by the Canal Corporation.

The Canal Corporation has also begun research and planning for the development of the New York State Canalway Water Trail, a coordinated water-based "trail" with boat launches and landing sites, along with campsites located on the shores of the Canal System. The Canal Corporation has developed an informational brochure and has begun an inventory of existing and potential sites for future improvement and enhancement.

The Canal Corporation has recently begun the transfer of hundreds of acres of surplus Canal-owned lands to OPRHP and DEC for recreation and preservation purposes. Pending transfers to OPRHP include Old Erie Canal land (Rome), Moss Island (Little Falls), Old Champlain Canal land (Saratoga), open space in the Village of Fayetteville, Delta Lake (City of Rome, towns of Western and Lee) and lands adjacent to Lock E-7 (Niskayuna). Recently Completed transfers to DEC include Chub Pond and Twin Lakes Reservoir (Ohio).

As a result of these investments and initiatives, the Canal Recreationway has been recognized for its recreational and cultural potential for boating, biking, hiking, snowmobiling and other water and trailway pursuits.

Office of General Services (OGS)

OGS operates under the Public Lands Law to administer state-owned land, including uplands and all ungranted lands under or formerly under the waters of New York State. The Agency issues licenses, permits, leases, easements and occasionally grants to underwater lands; disposes of uplands determined to be surplus to the needs of the State; and, provides transfers of jurisdiction for state agencies and local agencies for certain specific purposes (including recreational uses) subject to special acts of the State legislature. The latter provision is related to Article 3, Section 34 of the Public Lands Law whereby OGS facilitates the transfer of jurisdiction of state lands to county or local governments for listed purposes such as park, recreation and playground areas. These transfers are subject to reversion to the State should these uses no longer be pursued.

OGS's participation in various programs such as the Hudson River Valley Greenway, and the Heritage Rivers Program, provides the agency with the opportunity to further recreational objectives. One way OGS participates in recreational programs is by providing local communities with rights to lands underwater or filled (previously underwater), for connection and access areas.

OGS is also a member of the ad hoc Interagency Committee for Submerged Cultural Resources. The Committee has participants from OPRHP, DEC, the Department of Education (State Museum), DOS's Coastal Management Program, the Attorney General's Office and the Canal Corporation. This Committee reviews proposals and issues affecting submerged historic, archaeological, and cultural resources, predominantly shipwrecks. The Committee

established the first dive preserves, including the radeaux Land Tortoise in Lake George, a floating gun platform of the French & Indian War, reputed to be North America's oldest intact warship.

Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA)

The facilities and venues that ORDA manages and maintains are not just for elite winter athletes. They're also a winter vacationer's paradise. ORDA manages and operates the ski centers at Gore Mountain in North Creek, NY and Whiteface Mountain in Wilmington, NY. These facilities are open to the public and operate from mid-November to mid-April.

The public also has the opportunity to experience the bobsled track and luge run at the Olympic Sports Complex in Lake Placid, NY. Also at the Sports Complex, the 31 miles of cross-country ski trails that were used during the 1980 Olympics are available to the public for skiing or snowshoeing. Lastly, ORDA offers public skating from December through March on the Speed Skating Oval used in the 1980 Olympics.

Others

There are various other state agencies that manage open space and/or provide recreation programs. The Health Department encourages recreation activities to improve the health of the citizens of New York. The New York State Museum provides interpretive facilities, programs and kiosks. The Office for the Aging and Office of Children and Family Services also provide programs.

Enhancing and Revitalizing the State Outdoor Recreation System

New York has one of the nation's oldest and largest outdoor recreation system but also one that has been expanding. Within the last fifteen years more than one million acres has been acquired. This has resulted an increase in stewardship responsibilities to manage these new natural, recreational and cultural resources. The basic infrastructure for many of the facilities has exceeded its life expectancy and needs to be rehabilitated, upgraded or in some cases adaptively reused. Of equal or greater concern is the stewardship of the natural resources and their role in protecting habitats, reducing the impacts of climate change and improving the quality of life.

State Parks

The State Parks System is comprised of 178 Parks and 35 Historic Sites, marine facilities, trails and parkways. The system serves more than 55 million visitors annually. Niagara Falls State Park's annual attendance of 7.8 million visitors is greater than that of the Grand Canyon and Yosemite National Parks combined. More than six million people visit Jones Beach State Park which is twice the number that visits Yellowstone. The system is also the oldest state system in the nation with Niagara Falls established in 1885 and Washington's Headquarters in 1850.

The system continues to grow. Over the past 15 years, the size of the Park System expanded from 184 sites in 1992 to 213, an increase of 29 new facilities. The land resource under the stewardship of the agency has grown from 257,000 acres in 1992 to 326,000 acres, an increase of 27%.

The guidance provided in the mission of OPRHP to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities and be responsible stewards of the natural, historic and cultural resources, provides the basis for the assessment of the condition of the Park System. As such, the assessment is defined within four categories:

Health and Safety

There are number of health and safety issues facing the State Park System. Drinking water systems need to be upgraded or replaced, aging sewage treatment systems have exceeded their useful life, various dams on the state's high hazard list do not meet modern dam safety standards, and bridges have been flagged as potential hazards. In addition, outdated electrical systems and underground petroleum storage tanks need to be removed and landfills that, although inactive for many years, were never closed to DEC standards need to be addressed.

Rehabilitation of Existing Facilities

This category is by far the largest, comprising approximately 65% of OPRHP's total identified capital needs. It encompasses capital rehabilitation of existing infrastructure in the Parks and Historic Sites including: replacing facilities that have long exceeded their practical and operational effectiveness and are in various stages of disrepair. This includes roofs, heating and plumbing systems, contact stations, campgrounds, boat launches, picnic shelters, recreation fields, pools, swimming areas, visitor centers, bathrooms, roads, parking

areas, hiking trails, and maintenance centers. There is also a significant backlog of repair and maintenance needs for historic buildings and structures at the Historic Sites, as well as energy efficiency investments in aging buildings.

New Facilities Development

As identified above, the park system has increased by 29 facilities over the past 15 years. Many of these new parks consist of a sign, a car pull-off and a minimum level of recreational opportunities. Investments are needed to create entrance areas, parking areas, restrooms, trail systems, and picnic areas and other compatible recreation facilities, to make these new acquisitions available to the public. However, the need to expand recreation opportunities is not just restricted these parks but also includes existing facilities. Many of the existing parks either have outdated or no master plans. Through the planning process, new recreation and interpretive opportunities may be proposed that require support facilities.

Natural Resource Stewardship

The State Park's natural resources – plant, wildlife, and ecosystems – face varied treats, such as pollution of lakes and rivers, impaired wetlands, invasive species, soil erosion, global warming, and sea level rise. There is a need to restore habitats and ecosystems to assure that natural resources in the State Parks remain "unimpaired for future generations".

Capital Needs

To address the health and safety, rehabilitation, new development and natural resource needs will require a significant capital investment. The capital expenditures for State Parks in 1992 were \$60 million. The capital expenditures in 2007 from all sources

were \$40 million. Adjusted for inflation, the existing capital budget is in essence 50% less than in 1992.

The backlog of urgent capital needs is estimated to be \$650 million. The \$40 million available only scratches the surface. A comprehensive plan to revitalize New York's State Parks and Historic Sites is needed. This comprehensive plan includes the following components:

- A multi-year plan is being developed that addresses the several decades of backlogged capital projects facing the State Parks system. It will require a sustained effort to solve, with a multi-year, dependable commitment of funds.
- The federal government must be partner in this effort. Federal funding for State Park projects has all but disappeared. The current allocation from the State's primary source of parks funding, the Land and Water Conservation Fund, is only \$2 million. Federal support for LWCF and other federal programs needs to increase.

- Although New York State will be the primary source of capital funds, increased efforts are needed to raise private contributions from private individuals, foundations, Friends Groups, and the corporate sector.
- Approval of the \$100 million for the rehabilitation and revitalization of the State Park System recommended in the Governor's proposed 2008-2009 budget.

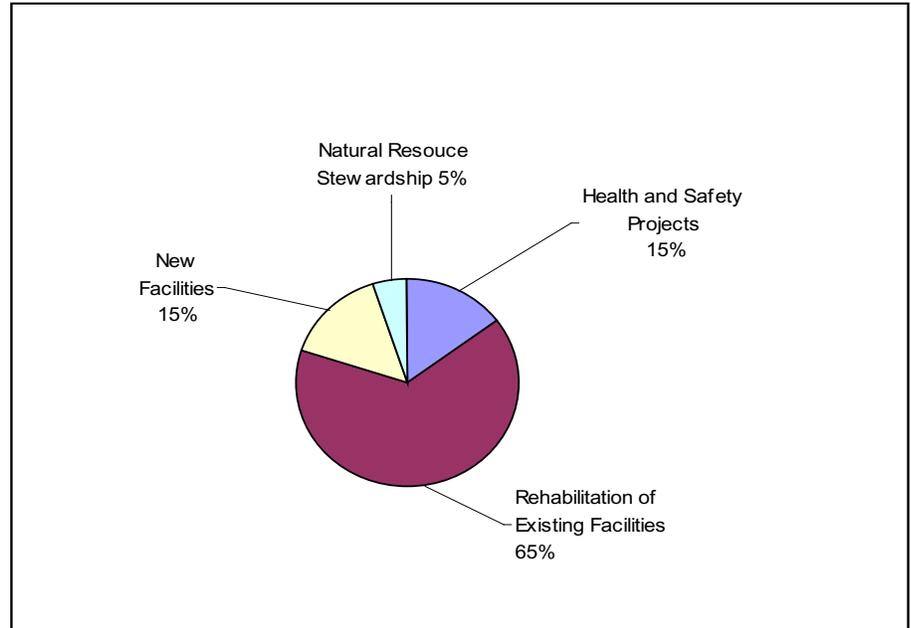
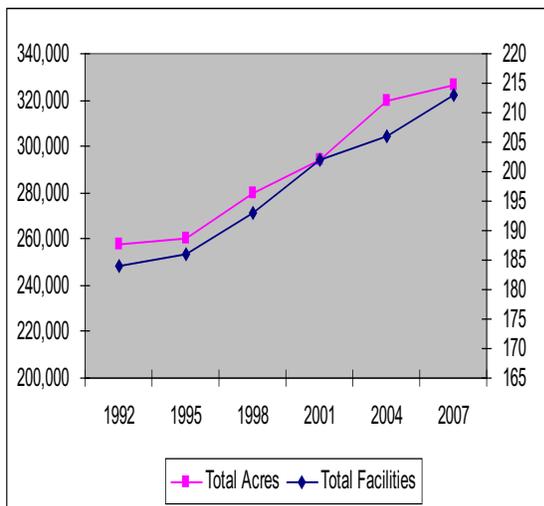


Figure 8.2 - Breakdown of \$650 million- State Parks and Historic Sites Capital Needs

OPRHP State Park System



OPRHP Capital Budget

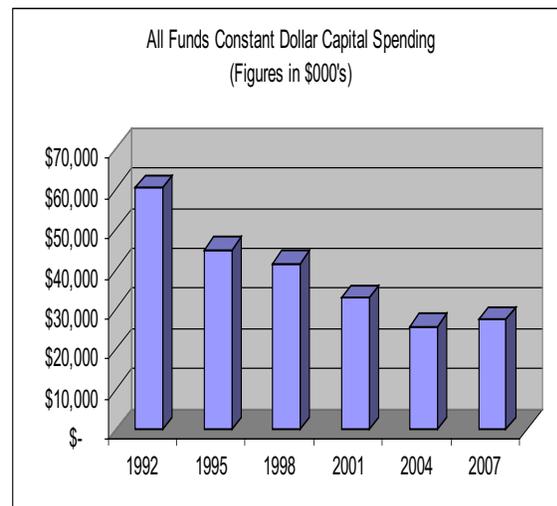


Figure 8.3 - Park System Expansion vs. Capital Budget

DEC Lands and Forests

DEC manages nearly 4 million acres of Forest Preserve, State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas and other lands throughout the state. Within these lands, DEC maintains roads, campgrounds, day use areas, environmental education centers, fish hatcheries, ski resorts and other support facilities.

Public Forest Access Roads

There are over 600 miles of all-weather roads maintained on State Forests. These roads, along with other seasonal-use-only roads, provide the primary access system to the lands for recreationists. The roads are constructed to standards that will provide reasonably safe travel and to keep maintenance costs to a minimum. Turnoff, parking areas and cul-de-sacs provide space for the recreationists to leave their vehicles while enjoying the forests. Parking areas for horse riding enthusiasts include a stabling area, track area and even primitive camping sites for their use. These areas are reached from the public forest access road system.

The smaller seasonal-use-only roads are often developed as a result of a timber sale. While the sale is in progress, these "haul" roads provide the timber harvester with the means to enter and extract forest products from the sale area. Once the sale is completed, the roads are usually removed from motorized use and become available for hiking, mountain biking, skiing and snowmobiling.

Trailways

A survey conducted in 1991 identified 2,081 miles of single and multi-purpose trails. These trails range in use from hiking, cross-country skiing and horseback riding to mountain biking, running, snowshoeing, snowmobiling and nature walks.

Hiking is permitted on most of the trailways. These may range from a hiking experience of a mile or less on a nature/interpretive trail to the extended Finger Lakes Trail and the Long Path systems.

Equestrian trails are located in many of DEC's regions. The large system at Brookfield, Madison County has its counterpart at the Otter Creek system in Lewis County. These two and others are also used for snowmobiling during the winter months and receive intensive use for both pursuits. While 370 miles of trail are specifically signed for snowmobiling, this activity is not currently restricted on State Forests to trails and consequently uses more State land than is commonly recognized. Snowshoeing and cross-country skiing are other winter sports that make use of State Forest trail systems. Over four hundred miles of trail are designated for these uses and have become very popular with enthusiasts of these sports.

Currently, ATV use is not permitted. Future development of dedicated off-road ATV trails on State Forests is expected to be unlikely due to environmental and public safety concerns,

limited enforcement capabilities, and lack of legislative funding.

Belleayre Ski Center

DEC administers the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center located in Highmount, New York in the Catskill Forest Preserve. Since 1949 this modern ski area has offered full service downhill and cross-country skiing. The center serves an average of 103,000 skiers per year. The facilities, which include 33 downhill slopes and trails, 4 cross-country trails and 8 passenger lifts and tows, generate about \$2 million in revenue annually.

Belleayre Mountain Day-Use Area, located in the vicinity of the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center, was opened to the public in July of 1993.

Campgrounds and Day Use Areas

Many programs and services are offered to the public at DEC administered recreation facilities. These facilities are located in the Forest Preserve, either in the Adirondack or Catskill Parks.

Campgrounds and day use areas afford the public opportunities for day



Figure 8.4 - DEC Campgrounds

and resident camping and for other activities within the Forest Preserve setting. There are a total of 52 campgrounds (Figure 8.4) within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks and 8 campgrounds offer structured interpretive/activity programs.

Interpretive and Activity programs have been offered within the Forest Preserve, on and off, since 1935. In 1996, the current program was re-vamped and a set of goals were established for the program. They are:

- To provide educational and recreational opportunities, for the enjoyment of campers, that are compatible with the Forest Preserve.
- To heighten awareness, appreciation and understanding of the environment.
- To foster proper recreational use of the Forest Preserve and its facilities.
- To promote understanding of the Department and its programs (DEC 2007).

Beginning in 1997, the new program was launched at 7 DEC campgrounds. The Junior Naturalist Program and Adventure Discovery packs were incorporated into the regular interpreter Activity Program. In addition the Interpreter Activity Program staff began visiting other area campgrounds to conduct activities. The Junior Naturalist Program, in particular, is very successful and other state agencies, such as OPRHP, have adapted the program to suit their facilities.

Since the initiation of the new program, the program has served 23,156 participants in 1997, 32,228 in 1998, and 26,519 in 1999. High visitor satisfaction and demand prompted the expansion of the program to an eighth campground in the year 2000. Participation for 2000 was 31,130 attendees.

Over the past four years, improvements and changes have been made regularly. The program will continue to expand through its outreach efforts and upgrade its presentations to use the most current technology. The balance of recreation and interpretation in DEC's camper programs gives the public an increased sense of the natural world

while fostering an appreciation for the resources of the Forest Preserve (DEC, 2007).

Capital Needs

For the period 2007-2012 DEC's capital plan proposes a total of \$86 million to be invested in recreation facilities administered by DEC within the Forest Preserve and other State lands. Resource projects planned for the next five years include: \$18 million in rehabilitation and replacement of fish hatcheries and hatchery equipment; \$14 million in infrastructure renovation,

modernization of computerized fishing licensing systems, and fisheries research vessels; and \$4.4 million habitat restoration. Recreation related capital projects planned for other State lands during 2007-2012 include: \$11 million in expansion of Belleayre Ski Center Base Lodge; \$2.5 million in development of Phase 2 Schroon Manor Campground; \$5 million in construction of fishing pier and access at Wildwood State Park; and \$9.4 million in rehabilitation and modernization of boat launches, fishing piers, and access points across the state.

Table 8.1 - Detail of DEC's 5-Year Recreation Capital Investment Plan

Expenditure Description	Total Expenditures FY 2007 - 2012
Fish, Wildlife and Marine Resources	
Hatcheries – Rehabilitation of Infrastructure and Replacement of Hatchery Equipment	\$18,000,000
Fishing Access - Develop New Boat Launches, Fishing Piers and Angler Parking	\$8,700,000 [\$5,000,000 for Fishing Pier at Wildwood State Park]
Fishing Access - Rehabilitate and Modernize Boat Launches, Fishing Piers and Fishing Access Points	\$9,400,000
Habitat Restoration	\$4,400,000
Infrastructure Renovation or Replacement of Facilities, Computerized Licensing Systems and Fisheries Research Vessels	\$14,000,000
Federal Clean Vessel Act - Boat Sanitary Waste Pump-out Grants	\$2,500,000
Rehab & Infrastructure in State Forest and Forest Preserve	
Major Department Facilities Reconstruction	\$7,500,000
Total	\$64,500,000
Recreation and Ski Center	
Recreation	
Schroon Manor Campground Development – Phase 2	\$2,500,000
Campground Road Rehabilitation	\$1,500,000
Modernization of Existing Facilities	\$1,000,000
Shower Buildings	\$2,000,000
Water/Sewer	\$1,000,000
Belleayre Ski Center	
New Maintenance Center	\$2,500,000
Base Lodge Expansion	\$11,000,000
Total Recreation and Ski Center	\$21,500,000

Canal Corporation

5-Year Capital Plan

The NYS Canal Corporation is playing a leading role in the development of the end-to-end Canalway Trail along the four branches of the New York State Canal System. Over 170 miles of trail have been constructed since the Canal Corporation began the program in 1995, resulting in 2860 miles of completed trail. The Canalway Trail parallels the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca canals, creating the spine of a statewide network of trails.

Erie Canalway Trail

The recent emphasis of the Canalway Trail Program has been to complete the 371-mile Erie Canalway Trail from Buffalo to Albany. Nearly three-quarters of the Erie Canalway Trail is complete. Federal TEP funds have been allocated to two Erie Canalway Trail projects but matching funds are needed to progress the projects. New York State Transportation Bond Act funding is in place to develop 16 miles of new and rehabilitated trail over the next five years.

Table 8.2 - Erie Canalway Trail 5-year Plan

Segment	Letting year	Length	Cost	Source
Little Falls to Ilion	TBD	8 miles	\$6.3 M	TEP
Canastota to Rome	TBD	20 miles	\$2.2 M	TEP/CC
Pittsford to Fairport	2010	10 miles	\$3.0 M	Bond Act
City of Rome	2010	6 miles	\$2.5 M	Bond Act

Bid documents are being developed for the following Erie Canalway Trail projects, but funding for actual construction has not been identified:

Table 8.3 - Erie Canalway Trail Projects

Segment	Length	Estimated Cost
Newark to Clyde	15 miles	\$3.5 M
Utica to Schuyler	6 miles	\$4.5 M
Schenectady	2 miles	\$1.5 M
Lockport to Amherst	6 miles	\$4.4 M

Champlain Canalway Trail

Currently, 7 miles of trail are complete along the proposed Champlain Canalway Trail. Upon completion from Albany to Whitehall, it is expected that this trail will total 58 miles. Funding is in place to complete a portion of the remaining trail, as follows:

Table 8.4 - Champlain Canalway Trail Projects

Segment	Letting Year	Length	Estimated Cost	Source
Fort Edward to Fort Ann	2011	12 miles	\$5.0 M	2005 Rebuild and Renew Transportation Bond Act

Several locally generated projects will add approximately three additional miles of Champlain Canalway Trail over the next two years.

Cayuga-Seneca Canalway Trail

The Cayuga-Seneca Canalway Trail is proposed from Geneva to Montezuma and is expected to total approximately 18 miles. Seneca County and the Cayuga-Seneca Regional Canalway Trail group are working to complete an 8-mile segment between Geneva and Seneca Falls. Negotiations are taking place with New York State Electric & Gas for use of an abandoned rail line adjacent to the Canal that will accommodate the trail. An EPF grant is being used for survey and preliminary design and additional grants are being sought.

A plan exists to complete the remaining 10 miles of the Cayuga-Seneca Canalway Trail from Seneca Falls to Montezuma but no funding has been identified for design and construction.

Oswego Canalway Trail

The Oswego Canalway Trail is proposed to extend from Syracuse to Oswego for 38 miles along the Oswego Canal. Approximately two miles of trail have been completed in the City of Oswego.

Resource Planning for the State Outdoor Recreation System

In response to the stewardship needs for state lands and the condition of the existing facilities, there is a need to provide sound planning. Plans establish an overarching vision for each park, site and management area, clarify appropriate public use and recreation activities, define capital facility development and investment needs, and identify natural and historic resource stewardship and interpretation opportunities.

Planning Process

Over the years, the planning processes have evolved that are utilized by OPRHP and DEC to protect and manage the natural, cultural and recreation resources and recreational demands. The planning framework is identified by Figures 8.5 and 8.6. At the base of the pyramid is the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP). The SCORP is a broad policy and assessment document that provides a vision for recreation in New York State. SCORP encompasses both the public and private recreation systems for the entire state.

The next level includes statewide plans that focus on a particular aspect of natural, cultural and recreational resource management and provide more specific guidance for OPRHP and DEC. Included within this level are New York State's Open Space Conservation Plan, and the Statewide Trails Plan. The Open Space Conservation Plan defines the needs and outlines some strategies for

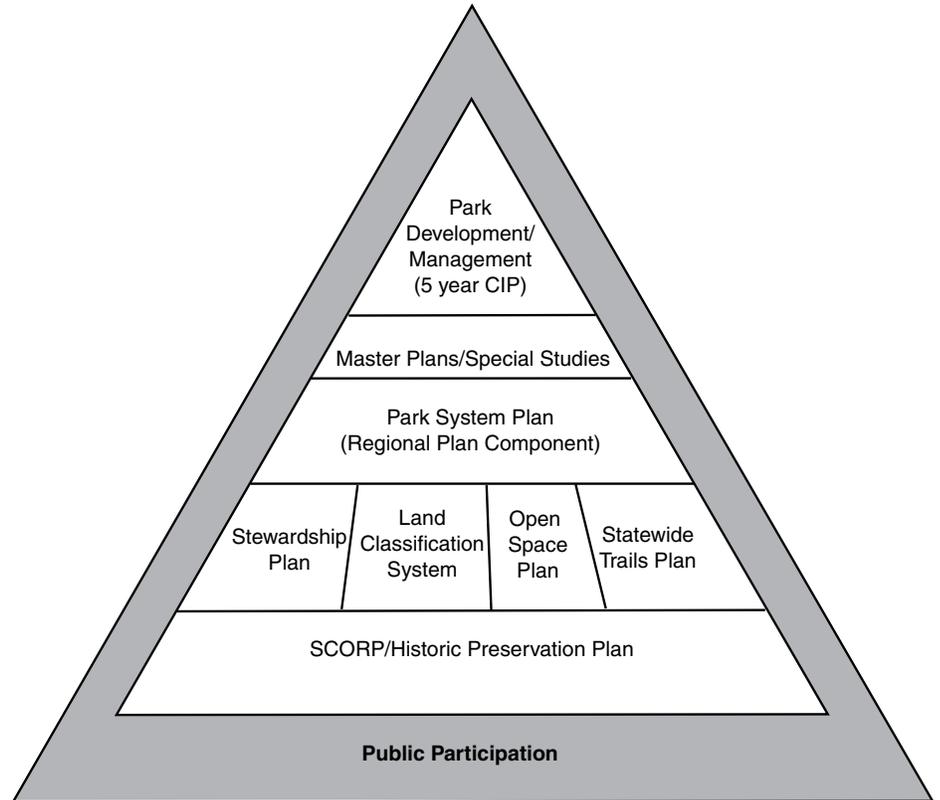


Figure 8.5 - Planning Hierarchy for OPRHP

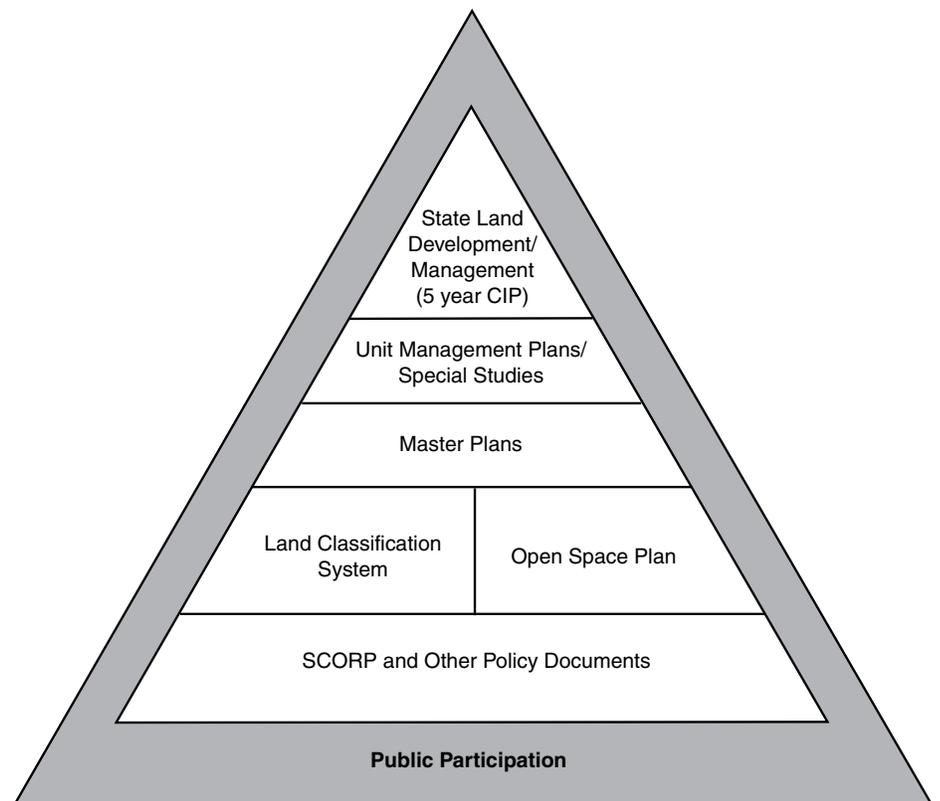


Figure 8.6 - Planning Hierarchy for DEC

The State Outdoor Recreation System

conserving open space lands. The plan provides a "unified system" for both agencies to use when evaluating open space projects.

All of these statewide planning initiatives are used as a basis for developing more specific system and site plans. In addition, regional and local plans such as the Long Island South Shore Estuary Reserve Comprehensive Management Plan, the Long Island Sound Coastal Management Plan and Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs are considered in the development of OPRHP and DEC plans.

OPRHP's Management and Master Plans and DEC's Unit Management Plans are site specific. Within the plans specific policies are identified; use, and natural, cultural and recreation resources are analyzed; alternative management strategies are evaluated; and a preferred alternative is selected. The Capital Investment Plan (CIP) outlines projects (i.e. new development and rehabilitation projects, management actions) that are scheduled to be undertaken within five years. The CIP is updated annually. Ultimately, the public experiences the results of this planning process in their enjoyment of the natural, cultural and recreational resources.

An important component of the planning process within OPRHP is environmental review. For all projects, the agency must make a determination of whether the project may or will not have significant environmental impacts. If significant adverse impacts may be associated with a proposal, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is prepared. If it is determined that there will not be any impacts, then a formal determination of no impact is issued. For State Park master plans, the agency has combined the plan and environmental review into a single document generically entitled "Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement". Many of the requirements under the State Environmental

Quality Review (SEQR) Act for an EIS are consistent with the components of a good planning document. Thus, merging the two concepts within a single document reduces duplication of effort and provides appropriate consideration to the environmental effects of plans. Also, the public participation elements of both the planning and the environmental review processes are combined in order to further streamline the process. Individual projects within the State Parks Capital Plan may also be subject to environmental review and are addressed on a project-by-project basis.

Therefore, the resource planning process is a progression from statewide policies and goals, to system management directions, to park and site plans, to the implementation of capital projects and resource management actions.

Land Classification System

The land classification system has been a component of OPRHP's planning process and SCORP since its development in 1974 and is constantly being updated as new information is developed. The current system utilizes natural and cultural resources characteristics, land uses, levels of improvements, physical capacity and other management related data to identify appropriate activities and classifications for lands administered by OPRHP and DEC.

The system provides six major classification categories. These are: Park and Land Resources, Water Access, Historic Resources, Linear Systems, Underwater Sites, and Environmental Education Facilities. Within these categories, there are 23 subcategories by which the parks and sites are classified (Figure 8.7 and Table 8.5). Each classification is defined by resource characteristics, level of use, land use, activities, and facility improvements. In addition, criteria and inventory data for the natural resources, such as ecological communities and

significant fish and wildlife habitats, are being developed, and will be incorporated within the revised system over the next five years. The classifications reflect the current characteristics of the park and sites. As more information on natural, cultural and recreation resources becomes available, the classification of a park or site can be reevaluated and changed, if appropriate.

LEVELS OF PHYSICAL IMPROVEMENT		Parks and Land Resources	Water Access	Historic Resources	Linear Systems	Underwater Sites	Environmental Education
High Level of Improvement may have Natural Areas	Metro Park	Marine Park	Historic Site	Parkway	N/A	N/A	N/A
	Recreation Park						
Moderate Level of Improvement in Natural Areas	State Campground	Boat Launching Site	Heritage Area and Heritage Corridor	Linear Park	Historic Park	Historic Park	Fish Propagation Facilities
	Scenic Park						
Little or No Improvement within Primarily Natural Areas	Management Areas	Cartop Boat & Fishing Access (includes stream easements)	Historic Park	Recreation-way	Park	Underwater Historic Preserve	Interpretive Environmental Education Centers
	Forest Preserve						
	Park Preserve		Historic Preserve	Primitive Trailway	Underwater Reserve	Environmental Education Summer Camps	

Figure 8.7 - Land Classification Framework

Table 8.5 - Land Use Criteria

Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Use Characteristics			
		Designed Level of Use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Metro Park P-1	Located in urban, industrial or suburban surroundings with man-made architectural treatment of the environment	High	0 to 75	0 to 100	0 to 7
Recreation Park P-2	Natural surroundings in suburban or rural areas. A mix of natural and developed areas significant natural areas are not essential	High	0 to 15	0 to 100	0 to 100
State Campground P-3	Primarily in a rural setting. A mix of natural and developed areas, significant natural areas are not essential.	Moderate	0 to 10	0 to 80	20 to 100
Scenic Park P-4	Natural setting, limited development, scenic attractions within urban, suburban or rural areas. A mix of natural and developed areas with significant scenic features	High	0 to 5	0 to 50	50 to 100
Management Area P-5	Primarily wooded or wetland areas; rural natural setting; limited or no development; offers significant recreation and wildlife observation opportunities.	Low	0 to 15	0 to 5	85 to 100
Forest Preserve P-6	Natural forested areas; low to moderate development of facilities usually related to compatible activities; recreation opportunities range from low-impact, wilderness activities to limited motorized activities.	Low	0 to 5	0 to 5	95 to 100
Park Preserve P-7	Natural areas, few developed facilities within urban, suburban or rural areas. Could have salt marshes, wetlands, bogs, dunes, unusually steep topography, flood prone areas, or other significant environmental resources.	Low	0 to 5	0 to 15	85 to 100

Table 8.5 - Land Use Criteria (Continued)

		Use Characteristics			
		Designated Use Areas			
Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Designed Level of Use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Marine Park B-1	Variety of marina services, urban to rural areas, predominately man-made, may have significant environmental areas.	High	0 to 90	0 to 100	Balance
Boat Launch Site B-2	Launching, limited services, urban to rural areas, predominately man-made, may have significant environmental areas	High	0 to 90	0 to 100	Balance
Cartop and Fisherman Access B-3	Provides shoreline access. Primarily in a rural setting. A mix of natural and developed areas significant areas not essential.	Low	0 to 90	0 to 100	Balance

		Use Characteristics			
		Designated Use Areas			
Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Designed Level of Use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Parkway R-1	Designated scenic highway corridors, limited access, linked to parklands, corridors landscaped. Urban to rural areas.	Moderate	0 to 25	0 to 100	Balance
Linear Park R-2	Parkland associated with natural or man-made features (i.e. waterways) generally long and narrow in configuration; may be part of a recreationway; accommodates a variety of activities. Urban to rural areas.	High	0 to 25	0 to 100	Balance
Recreationway R-3	System of linear parks, canal parks and associated linkages.	Moderate	0 to 25	0 to 100	Balance
Primitive Trailway - Wild and Scenic Rivers R-4	Natural Scenic features, may provide for aquifer recharge floodplain, protection, weather buffers, wildlife habitat protection.	Low	0 to 2	0 to 5	95 to 100

Table 8.5 - Land Use Criteria (Continued)

		Use Characteristics			
		Designated Use Areas			
Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Designed Level of Use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Historic Site H-1	Contributing landscape, structures, and/or archeological areas of historical significance surrounded by limited open areas, urban to rural areas	High	0 to 100	0 to 100	Balance
Historic Park H-2	Contributing landscape, structures, and/or archeological areas of historical significance situated on substantial areas of land, urban to rural	Moderate	0 to 15	0 to 75	25 to 100
Historic Preserve H-3	Historic significance to the area with limited contributing structures on substantial areas of land, may have significant environmental areas. Urban to rural use.	Low	0 to 50	0 to 50	50 to 100
Heritage Area/ Heritage Corridor H-6	Preservation, interpretation, development and use of cultural, historical, natural and architectural resources within urban areas.	High	0 to 100	0 to 100	Balance

		Use Characteristics			
		Designated Use Areas			
Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Designed Level of use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Interpretive/ Environmental Education Center E-1	Developments in a natural area located in urban, suburban or rural settings which provide cultural, environmental and/or historical information about a geographic area. These may have significant natural elements.	High	2 to 20	16 to 53	18 to 100
Conservation Education Summer Camp E-2	Natural areas primarily in rural settings with a mix of natural and developed areas, for the purpose of learning about the environment.	Seasonal	2 to 16	22 to 42	58 to 100
Fish Propagation Facility E-3	Suburban or rural settings with man-made or significant natural elements.	High	1 to 20	2 to 25	70 to 100

Table 8.5 - Land Use Criteria (Continued)

		Use Characteristics			
		Designated Use Areas			
Planning Category	Resource Characteristics	Designed Level of Use	% Developed Areas	% Managed Areas	% Natural Areas
Underwater Park U-1	Natural aquatic areas or areas with geological formations, good water quality and clarity, few man-made features or historically significant structures.	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A
Underwater Historic Site U-2	Contains historically significant archaeological sites, good water quality and clarity	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A
Underwater Historic Preserve U-3	Contains significant archaeological sites, good water quality and clarity	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A
Underwater Reserve U-4	Contains significant natural aquatic communities.	Low	N/A	N/A	N/A

Master Plans/UMPs

Master Plans, Unit Management Plans (UMPs) and Recreation Management Plans (RMPs), Interim Management Guides (IMGs), and Trail Plans represent the next level of recreation and resource planning. These plans focus on specific Parks, Forest Preserve Units, State Forest Units, and Conservation Easements. Both OPRHP and DEC have evolved planning processes tailored to the types of land each agency manages.

OPRHP Master Plans

The master planning process establishes specific long-term direction and implementation strategies for individual parks and historic sites and groups of parks. Many facilities do not have master plans, or existing plans were prepared several decades ago prior to the current requirements for public participation, environmental review and stewardship awareness. The need for master plans has been identified in past SCORPs, and the Open Space Conservation Plan. Increasing the pace

of master planning efforts has also been a long-recognized need.

The current concept of master planning reaches beyond the physical development of facilities to include: an overarching vision, land use, resource management and interpretation, boundary protection, operations, and program services requiring a much broader direction for the development and management of natural, cultural, and recreational resources. There is a need to consider systems of parks, resources, programs, and markets, with full interaction with other recreation and park providers. There is also a need to consider impacts of park development on natural systems both within and outside park boundaries.

A completed set of master plans will provide a firm basis for natural and cultural resource management, capital, equipment, program and staffing decisions. Master plans should be reviewed on a regular basis to assure that they continue to reflect broad policy directions, resource conditions and recreation needs. Coordination with the general public and special interest groups should continue to occur

through scoping meetings, workshops, public hearings, task force studies and advisory committees.

OPRHP Interim Management Guides

The need and importance to have a master plan for each park and historic site is recognized. In order to accomplish this, considerable staff, financial resources and time are required. Due to funding limitations, many parks and historic sites continue to function with an outdated plan or without a master plan. Therefore, in many instances, management guides, which are less costly and time-consuming, are utilized. These guides provide policy and stewardship direction, a preliminary assessment of the natural, cultural and recreational resources and an identification of issues and concerns.

An Interim Management Guide (IMG) provides written direction for managers and staff for the day to day protection, maintenance and improvement of a New York State Park, Historic Site, or other OPRHP facility ("park"). The IMG also provides direction for

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the preparation of subsequent plans, reports and environmental assessments required for future decisions on new park management initiatives or objectives.

The purpose of the IMG is to provide clear and concise directions for daily management decisions in order to ensure the appropriate use and stewardship of the park's resources and the safety of patrons and staff, and to consider management strategies within the context of the longer term vision of the park. Current natural, cultural, and recreational resources are coupled with management practices in order to direct decision making at park, regional, and statewide levels. The guide should be considered a living document, updated as changes occur over time; it does not replace the need for master planning. However, it does provide an initial database for the preparation of a master plan. The guide is intended to provide park information in a concise, usable manner that will allow park managers and their staff, as well as regional and Albany office staff, to make informed decisions. The process for development of management strategies is designed to be accomplished within a short period of time.

OPRHP Trail and Natural Resource Management Plans

In addition to the comprehensive Statewide Trails Plan, individual trail plans are developed for a specific park or sites, geographic area or system of trails. Such plans focus on trail locations, development, operations, maintenance, roles and responsibilities and partnerships with trail organizations and other interested parties.

Resource Management Plans are developed in response to specific natural resource issues. These may range from the control of invasive species and nuisance wildlife to the protection and

management of threatened or endangered species.

DEC Unit Management Plans

The key element to future recreational activity and for all management policies and procedures DEC land units is the Unit Management Plan (UMP). The 472 State Forests have been grouped, where feasible, into 165 State Land units based on proximity to one another, similarity in treatment or management needs, and shared characteristics. Similarly, the Forest Preserve Lands in the Adirondack and Catskill Parks have been organized into 51 Adirondack planning units and 21 Catskill planning units. Where possible and practical, units also encompass other land-use classifications such as Wildlife Management Areas and Conservation Easements. Using these criteria, the planning units have been classified and more than 40 UMPs have been completed. Approximately 35 unit management plans are in various stages of development.

The regional forestry staff is responsible for the development of UMPs. The plans include an assessment of existing recreational values, describe the needs for future development, and provide a schedule for the improvement and expansion of the current facilities as well as the development of new ones. Allocation of funding for proposed recreational facilities is based, to a large part, on whether or not the project is included in a UMP. Through the planning process, the public is strongly encouraged to provide input through public meetings, email and letters for consideration in final plans. Each plan has profited from this public participation not only by producing a stronger plan, but also by lending credibility to it and the proposed prescribed management activities.

UMPs developed for State Forest Lands outside the Forest Preserve

boundary are developed for a ten-year period with revisions required every five years. The UMP process is constantly refined through technological advances and additional public participation. UMPs developed for lands within the Forest Preserve boundary are required to be up-dated every five years.

Long range planning for the Adirondack Forest Preserve lands, and subsequently the Catskill Forest Preserve lands, received its initial impetus from the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) published by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA) and approved by Governor Rockefeller in 1972. This plan directs DEC to implement legislative requirements for the development, in consultation with the APA, of Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for each unit of land as classified by the APA in the APSLMP. UMPs must provide the guidance for the development and management of State lands in conformance with the criteria as outlined in the APSLMP. Both the APSLMP and each completed UMP are reviewed periodically and amended as required to provide the management direction needed for the next five-year period.

The Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (CPSLMP) was developed by DEC and approved in 1985. This plan closely follows the format of the APSLMP and also mandates the development of UMPs. This plan relates to the management of state land only. Unlike the Adirondacks there is no state plan controlling development of private lands within the Catskill Park.

The importance of UMPs to the State's management of open space should not be minimized. The total acreage of New York State is 31,726,640 acres. Of this total, UMPs provide management direction for nearly 3 million acres of Preserve or 9.4% of the State's total area.

The master plans for both the Adirondacks and Catskills established a

land classification system based on land unit characteristics and their capacity to withstand use. The APSLMP contains nine basic categories as a result of this classification system: Wilderness, Primitive, Canoe, Wild Forest, Intensive Use, Historic, State Administered, Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers and Travel Corridors. The CPSLMP established only four categories: Wilderness, Wild Forest, Intensive Use and Administrative Areas.

The paramount responsibility of DEC regarding the management of Forest Preserve lands is the protection and preservation of the natural resources. Public use and enjoyment of these lands is permitted and encouraged to the extent that the natural resources are not physically or biologically degraded. Use must also be kept at a level so as not to unnecessarily detract from the experiential expectations of the users.

Both the APSLMP and CPSLMP set forth lists of conforming and nonconforming uses. Nonconforming uses are to be removed within specific time periods. Conforming structures and improvements may receive normal maintenance and rehabilitation without being addressed in a UMP. The construction of new conforming structures cannot be accomplished without being addressed in an approved unit management plan. Within the Adirondack and Catskill Parks 185 individual land units have been identified as follows: 21 Wilderness Areas; 36 Wild Forest Areas; 32 Primitive Areas; 1 Canoe Area; 59 Campgrounds and Day Use Areas; 30 boat launching sites; 4 winter recreation sites (3 administered by ORDA); and 2 scenic highways (1 administered by ORDA).

In order for UMPs to be responsive to the needs of the public, the plans must be subject to public review and input. In some instances this input is obtained through the use of Citizen Advisory Committees which work with DEC staff from the inception of a specific plan.

Public hearings and informational meetings are frequently used to obtain public review of proposed management plans and actions.

DEC State Forest/ Wildlife Management Area Unit Management Planning

DEC revised its long-range management procedures through the development of the State Forests Master Plan in 1988 and the State Forest Unit Management Handbook in 1989. These documents set guidelines and policies for the management of DEC lands outside the Forest Preserve. The Division of Lands and Forests has identified 165 separate management units, totaling 892,297 acres. This list includes State Forests, Wildlife Management Areas, Unique Areas, Multiple Use Areas, some detached parcels of Forest Preserve and other land classifications. Plans are to be developed for ten-year time periods with a five-year interval for review and possible update. Public involvement in the development and review of these plans is an integral part of the process.

The primary goal of DEC is to manage these Units for multiple uses to serve the needs of the people of the State. These uses for State Forests are directed by the Environmental Conservation Law 9-0501 which authorizes DEC to acquire lands outside of the Catskill and Adirondack Parks "... which are adapted for reforestation and the establishment and maintenance thereon of forests for watershed protection, the production of timber and other forest products, and for recreation and kindred purposes... which shall be forever devoted to the planting, growth and harvesting of such trees..." The management goals for Wildlife Management Areas are directed towards wildlife habitat improvement while the goals for Unique Areas are to protect the unique resources present that caused DEC to acquire these lands.

The ECL 11-2103 authorizes DEC to acquire lands and waters as "public hunting, trapping and fishing grounds," and under the ECL 11-213 it is authorized to set aside land or water owned by the State "as a refuge for the protection of fish, wildlife, trees and plants." These lands are generally known as Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs). The management goals for these areas are directed towards wildlife habitat improvement and protection, and providing recreational opportunity. Each area is managed differently for different purposes; whatever the area is best suited for. Typically, each area will have at least some facilities to serve public recreation; facilities management comprises a substantial part of the management of each area. Habitat management and protection may be directed at improving public recreation opportunity or it may be for purposes of restoring and enhancing populations of wildlife associated with the habitat types found in the area.

As the Division of Lands and Forests is moving into a more complete statewide landscape-ecosystem planning perspective, consideration is being given to developing region-wide plans versus separate plans for each forest unit. These larger scale plans will be supplemented with a shorter more site-specific state forest unit plan that addresses that unit's unique natural resources, recreation opportunities and timber management activities. UMPs will continue to be the guiding documents for future use management and funding for capital improvements of trail systems and facilities on lands administered by DEC outside of the Forest Preserve.

DEC Resource Management Planning

Since 1995, the State has acquired over a half of million acres in conservation easements that will be managed by DEC. As recreational rights were purchased on many of these easements, DEC is required to write plans that will

The State Outdoor Recreation System

address development and management of facilities to support the recreational opportunities. Similar to Unit Management Plans (UMPs) for State Forest lands, Recreation Management Plans (RMPs) for conservation easements will need to be developed through a public process, in addition to being reviewed and approved by the private landowner.

As with State Forest UMPs, Regional forestry staff is responsible for the development of RMPs, which will be developed through a newly established RMP planning process. These particular plans will address the assessment of existing recreational resources, describe the needs for future recreational development, and provide a schedule for development, improvement and expansion of recreational facilities. RMPs will vary from UMPs, as any proposed recreational activities and development must be taken into consideration with the private landowner's timber management activities and will require review and approval by the landowner. As with the UMP process, the public will be strongly encouraged to provide input through public meetings, email and letters for consideration in any final RMP.

Part of the State's acquisition of conservation easements on private lands, requires DEC is to develop a Recreation Management Plan (RMP) that is subject to the terms and conditions of each individual conservation easement. All RMPs are developed pursuant to, and are 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, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation ("DEC") rules and regulations, DEC policies and procedures and the State Environmental Quality and Review Act, as well as the conditions of the conservation easement, which cover the lands included in its corresponding RMP.

Unlike UMPs, which address the management of lands where the State owns full fee title, RMPs address the management of lands that remain in private ownership. RMPs must therefore provide a detailed description of how public access and recreation on the private lands will be managed, who will have responsibility for such management, and how public access will interact with the private landowner and land management activities. As the State often purchases certain public recreation rights from a landowner, DEC is given the primary responsibility for managing the allowed public access and recreation.

Almost all conservation easements purchased by the State, require that necessary facilities, such as signs, gates, parking, and trails, be designated and developed prior to public access being allowed. As these lands are under private ownership, clear public-use designations and notification of allowed recreation activities needs to be established. With most conservation easements purchased on working forest lands, the landowner retains the right, in accordance with the provisions of each individual conservation easement, to temporarily exclude the public from areas where active forestry operations are underway.

RMPs are public documents. As with UMPs, RMPs introduce the public, local governments, and other interested parties to DEC's planning process and provides opportunities for all stakeholders to voice their opinions, learn, evaluate, and influence decisions about how the lands should be managed. As RMPs are subject to a specific conservation easement's terms and conditions with a private landowner, most easements are requiring annual RMP review, with updates as needed.

Planning Strategy

OPRHP

Goals and Actions

Given that planning is a critical prerequisite to sound public use, infrastructure development, and natural resource stewardship decision-making, OPRHP has made planning a priority for the next five years.

Goal

OPRHP is committed to meeting this goal of completing 25 master plans and 25 other plans within 5 years.

Action

- Conduct resource inventories and develop GIS data basis.
- Complete 5 master plans annually.
- Complete 5 additional management plans annually that, while less than full master plans, focus on a specific management issues at individual parks (e.g. interim management guides, recreation trail plans, and natural resource stewardship plans).
- Expand staffing resources that will be dedicated to the planning initiative.

DEC

Goals and Actions

DEC is receiving increased pressure to provide more recreational opportunities in more varieties than ever before. Recreation technology has responded to the increased level of leisure time that many New Yorkers enjoy by creating new and improved ways to spend that time. Adding this demand to the already large demand evident in the more traditional activities (such as hiking, camping and snowmobiling) results in tremendous pressure on State Forest lands. The impact of more intensive

use of trails and recreational facilities is manifested in their present condition. DEC is committed to preserving these areas for the public's use and enjoyment.

Goal

To restore the trails on State Forest lands, where appropriate, to usable and safe conditions.

Actions

- Improve present trail systems.
- Construct additional miles of single and multipurpose trails.
- Rehabilitate and construct additional miles of public forest access roads.

Goal

To responsibly expand the recreational opportunity that the State Forest resources represent.

Actions

- Expand, improve or construct recreational facilities such as lean-tos, horse-stabling areas for the public and for people with disabilities.

Goal

To begin development of recreational facilities on certain International Paper/Lyme Timber Conservation Easements that offer significant public recreational opportunities.

Actions

- Develop RMPs for International Paper/Lyme Timber conservation easements utilizing the public recreation management planning process.
- Identify and allocate funding for the development of recreational facilities on easements with approved final RMPs.
- Begin development of recreational facilities.

