

Executive Summary

Introduction

The Commissioner of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is proposing the action of adoption and implementation of a Master Plan for Midway State Park.

One public information meeting was held to gather information, concerns and issues surrounding the development and management of Midway State Park. One public hearing was held on August 12, 2009, after the completion of the Draft Master Plan/DEIS, to receive comments on the draft plan. A comment period was observed, ending on September 18, 2009 to receive comments on the draft plan.

Comments that were received at the public hearing and during the public comment period have been summarized and those comments along with the agency's responses can be found in Chapter 8 – Comments and Responses.

The Commissioner has decided that a Master Plan/EIS is necessary to guide the management and development of the resources at Midway State Park.

Environmental Setting

The park property was acquired by New York State in 2006 and opened as Midway State Park in 2007.

The park is located in the Town of Ellery within the Allegany Region. The park consists of 42.6 acres of which almost 100 percent are developed.

The general topography of the park is a series of three flat terraces running approximately parallel to the lake shore with moderate slopes in between. The ecological communities occurring in the park have been extremely influenced by the high level of development.

Chautauqua Lake and Maple Springs Creek are the two main water bodies within and abutting the park boundaries. Maple Springs Creek empties into Chautauqua Lake which is in the Chadakoin watershed and the Allegany River basin.

The park is made up of a historic trolley park from the early 20th century and an amusement park dating from the 1930's to the present time. The park was listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places in 2008 (State) and 2009 (National).

Recreational resources at the park include arcade games, "kiddy land" amusement rides, go carts, miniature golf, picnic area and picnic shelters, an historic carousel, fishing, small boat dockage and a hippodrome building. The hippodrome building houses a roller skating rink (inoperative as of this writing), restaurant and bar, food concession and museum.

Annual attendance in 2007 was 148,000.

Vision and Goals

Agency Mission Statement

The mission of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation 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.

Park Vision

Midway State Park will be a place for all visitors to enjoy and appreciate the historic, cultural, natural, and physical resources and the recreational opportunities that the park offers.

Overall Park Goal

Achieve a balance between recreational use and the protection and interpretation of the historic, cultural, natural, and scenic resources of the park.

Recreation Goal

Provide recreational use that is compatible with the park's historic, cultural, natural and scenic resources.

Cultural Resource Goal

Identify, protect, preserve and interpret structures, uses and areas within the park that are significant to the history, archaeology and culture of the local community, region, state and nation. If Adverse Impacts to resources cannot be avoided, appropriate mitigation will be pursued.

Natural Resource Goal

Identify, protect and interpret the natural resources within and associated with the park.

Scenic Resource Goal

Protect and enhance the scenic qualities and viewshed of the park, particularly the views of Chautauqua Lake.

Accessibility Goal

Provide access to park resources for persons with disabilities in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

Education and Interpretation Goal

Provide opportunities for education and interpretation of the historic, natural, cultural and recreational resources of the park.

Facility Development/Capital Investment Goal

Develop facilities that are needed to preserve the resources and operate the park in a safe, sustainable, and fiscally responsible manner.

Operation and Maintenance Goal

Operate and maintain the park in a safe, clean and sustainable manner that protects the historic, natural and cultural resources.

Sustainability Goal

Plan, operate and develop the park using sustainability concepts wherever possible.

Communication and Partnership Goal

Develop partnerships with organizations, federal, state and local agencies, not-for-profit organizations and the private sector.

Inventory, Monitoring and Research Goal

Encourage scientific research into the natural and cultural resources of the park.

Alternatives

The Plan presents a series of “preferred alternatives” for future development and operation of Midway State Park. Cumulatively, the actions described below present OPRHP’s long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of public use facilities at Midway State Park.

Classification

Midway State Park will be classified as a Historic Park. Two other designations -- Historic Site and Recreation Park -- were also considered, but because of its mix of historic and recreation resources, Historic Park is considered the most appropriate choice.

Designations

No special parkland designations are appropriate for the park.

Hippodrome

The Hippodrome is a contributing historic structure in the park. The status quo is not appropriate in that the building is in need of repair and rehabilitation. The preferred alternative provides the most flexibility in using this important structure while maintaining and improving its historic integrity. This option also allows the arcade activity to move to the Hippodrome thereby extending the useful season and better protecting the games.

Central Pavilion Area

The status quo of this area is not desirable because it is too crowded. Additionally two shelters were lost in summer of 2008 due to tree fall. The preferred alternative is to move two of the shelters that are closest to the carousel, build two shelters to replace the two that were lost and build one more shelter. This alternative will add more spaciousness to the pavilion area, ease crowding at the carousel and provide more room for group picnic rentals. The area will be designed to be barrier free (ADA accessible) and several pavilions will be renovated to appear like the more historic structures.

Main Entrance

The addition of a new comfort facility and information kiosk at the new parking area is the preferred alternative because of the need for improvement to pedestrian flow and orientation. The new information kiosk will also provide patrons with useful information about the park and its history.

Comfort Stations

Lack of adequate comfort stations was mentioned at the public hearing. The construction of new comfort stations is the preferred alternative. These facilities will be located at critical locations such as park entry, picnic pavilions, Hippodrome, staff break rooms and in areas of gathering such as the amusement ride area.

Existing Park Office

The preferred alternative is to remove this structure. This allows for opening the park shore to public access. The existing building is inadequate for any park purpose, is heated with a space heater and is sinking into the ground due to foundation problems. Removal of this building will ease congestion and improve public access to the lake shore. Adaptive re-use of this existing park structure does not fit in with centralizing park patron services such as a museum and gift shop at the Hippodrome. The

existing park office is a contributing historic structure in the park. A memo on adverse impacts to contributing structures and 14.09 compliance has been issued and is appended to this document (Appendix B).

Arcade Building and Activity

The status quo is not considered appropriate because the building is structurally unsound and its historic appearance and materials have been compromised. The arcade is a contributing historic structure in the park. The preferred alternative is to remove the building and move the arcade activity to the first floor of the Hippodrome. This option will improve safety at the park and provide a location for the arcade games that will extend the season and increase the level of use of this activity. Additionally, removal of the building will open up the center of the park and provide better views of the Hippodrome, Carousel, and views to the vistas across Chautauqua Lake. A memo on adverse impacts to contributing structures and 14.09 compliance has been issued and is appended to this document (Appendix B).

Picnic Grove

The preferred alternative is to keep the picnic grove in its present location while eliminating the central park road. This increases patron safety and keeps the family-style picnic area close to the amusement ride area.

Tour Boat Dock

The preferred alternative is to design and build a new Tour Boat Dock that will accommodate the tour boats on Chautauqua Lake and replace the existing dock. The status quo, an existing dock which cannot accommodate the tour boats, was considered. Installation of a new dock is desirable in that it will expand the ability to attract patrons, re-institute the historic connection between the park and the lake and provide an entirely different experience of the history of the park.

Car Top Boat Launch/Transient Small Craft Dock

The status quo is that there is no car top boat launch at the park. The preferred alternative is to provide this facility to park patrons. The new launch will increase the lake access and the new transient boat dock will allow more boats to dock for day use.

Ice House

The preferred alternative is to remove this building. Removal of this building will improve the functioning of the park. The plan calls for open space around the Hippodrome building to allow park patrons to enjoy both the building and the lake shore. Additionally, because of the presence of black mold, non-compliance with current building codes and the compromising of its historic appearance and materials, removal is appropriate. The Ice House is a contributing historic structure in the park. A memo on adverse impacts to contributing structures and 14.09 compliance has been issued and is appended to this document (Appendix B).

New Park Manager's Residence

There is currently no on-site park manager's residence. Because of this lack of 24 hour on-site staff presence, some vandalism has occurred to the park. It is expected that an official permanent on-site presence would reduce or eliminate this type of unwanted activity. Additionally, there is currently no staff to react to safety or emergency situations which may occur during off hours.

Maintenance Facility

The status quo is not a desirable alternative because of the high level of maintenance needed at this park for the amusement rides. There is no central maintenance or winter storage for the rides. The preferred alternative is to build a new maintenance facility in the upper operations area. The two most important considerations in this alternative are safety and service. Safety of park patrons and staff is dependant on the proper maintenance of the amusement rides and other facilities at the park. Adequate storage and centralized maintenance facilities will improve the functioning of Midway State Park.

Amusement Ride Area

The preferred alternative is to keep all the existing rides and to add operating rides that match the historic era of those existing rides as they become available. The layout will be changed to allow more pedestrian flow through the park and to create an area for expansion when new rides become available.

Trails

Developing trails is the preferred alternative. This will add a significant new recreation opportunity for park patrons. The new trails can be designed to include components to interpret the natural and historic resources of the area. This will attract school groups. Additionally improvements to the existing informal trails will improve user safety and provide for barrier free use wherever possible.

Parking

The current status quo was not deemed desirable due to its location and the need to lease space from adjoining properties during peak attendance. The preferred alternative is to build new parking areas as part of the new entry and gateway. This will accommodate up to 900 cars in three phases. The new parking area eliminates the need for parking in the middle of the park.

Swimming

The preferred alternative is to maintain the status quo of no swimming at the park. The swimming alternative was found to be inappropriate due to the lack of bath house facilities, potential impacts to a rare animal found in the lake at the shore of the park, and water quality issues.

The Master Plan

The master plan considers the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the park and responds to the needs and safety of park patrons, protection of natural resources and principles of sustainability.

It will require a least a decade, and likely longer, to complete all of the actions described in the Master Plan. The pace at which these improvements will be undertaken will be determined by the availability of funding, which is a function of the size of OPRHP's annual capital budget and the need to balance investments in Midway State Park with many other competing capital rehabilitation priorities in the Allegany Region and the entire State Park System.

The agency anticipates park attendance continuing at its current level. The agency also anticipates continuing the current practice of operating the amusement rides in the park from Memorial Day through Labor Day. The Arcade games would become a year-round activity once they are moved to the renovated Hippodrome. Other uses in the spring, summer and fall would include boating, fishing, picnicking, walking, visiting park facilities such as the Hippodrome and lake shore and interpretive

exhibits. Winter activities will also include lake access for ice fishing, limited snowmobile use and, when fully renovated, a restaurant in the Hippodrome.

This plan improves pedestrian and vehicular circulation, augments public access to the lake shore, protects both cultural and natural resources, enhances recreation opportunities and improves the overall functioning of the park.

Public shoreline access, a major feature of the park, will be enhanced through docks, a car top boat launch facility, boardwalks and trails. The plan also calls for the removal of four existing structures in order to improve lake access, reduce congestion and improve the recreational opportunities for park patrons. The historic connection of the park to the lake will be enhanced through the addition of a dock capable of accommodating Chautauqua Lake tour boats.

Existing pedestrian circulation will be improved by keeping vehicles out of the center of the park. A parking lot, using porous paving in two-thirds of its area, is planned at the open field with a new information kiosk acting as the gateway to the main part of the park. Some changes to the layout of the rides are also suggested in order to improve pedestrian circulation. The main walkway will become entirely pedestrian and will lead visitors from the parking lot, through the amusement rides and the rest of the park, down to the Hippodrome, carousel and waterfront activities.

A stormwater management system, based on vegetated swales, will minimize impacts to the lake and stream water quality. Natural vegetation regeneration zones will allow native vegetation to establish in part of the park. These areas will also have trails with new interpretive features.

The Hippodrome will be rehabilitated and renovated to accommodate more park functions on the first floor and re-establish roller skating on the second floor.

A park manager residence will be constructed in the lower operations area and a new maintenance facility will be constructed in the upper operations area. These additions will improve on-site security and the efficiency of maintenance operations.

The picnic pavilions will be rearranged to reduce congestion and will be rehabilitated to resemble the historic era. Two shelters that were lost in the summer of 2008 will be replaced and a new shelter will be built.

The master plan map (in the folder at the end of the document) illustrates the final layout and facilities as depicted in the master plan.

Acquisition priorities include additional lands for parking and buffering the park from the surrounding community.

Implementation

This plan presents a long-term vision for the rehabilitation and construction of improvements to Midway State Park. The plan envisions short term (5 to 10 years) capital improvements of approximately \$5 million. The pacing of plan implementation will depend on the availability of capital funds to advance the proposed improvements, which need to be sequenced with other pressing capital investments in the Allegany Region and across the entire New York State Park System. It will require at least a decade, and likely longer, to complete all of the park improvements recommended in the plan.

The first phase of capital improvements will likely require five years or longer to complete. Phase I options include renovation and restoration of the Hippodrome and Carousel Roundhouse, renovation, reconfiguration and construction of picnic pavilions and new comfort facilities, removal of the arcade building and moving the arcade games to the Hippodrome.

Environmental Impacts

Beneficial impacts of Master Plan implementation include renovation, restoration and interpretation of historic resources at the park, improvements in patron safety, enhancement of existing recreation facilities and restoration of natural vegetation. The Historic Hippodrome and carousel buildings will be restored in accordance with the U.S. Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. New and restored buildings will be accessible, more energy efficient and will meet current building codes. Patron health and safety will significantly improve by moving the roads and parking from the center of the park to the outer area. Removal of some structures will also significantly improve views and access to Chautauqua Lake.

Potential adverse impacts and proposed mitigation measures are identified below:

Soil Erosion and Water Quality. Plan implementation will result in construction activities that could temporarily result in movement of soils and sediment, especially following storms. Soil erosion and stormwater runoff into Chautauqua Lake will be limited by several measures including the construction of vegetated swales, restoration of natural vegetation and new plantings, preparation of erosion control plans, use of Best Management Practices, and adherence to the conditions of the SPDES General Permit. Construction of proposed new docks could increase turbidity in the lake during the installation and removal process. These impacts will be mitigated through the use of installation techniques designed to minimize the suspension of sediment.

Threatened and Endangered Species. A rare freshwater mussel species, the Kidneyshell, was documented in 2008 off the shores of the park in Chautauqua Lake. Installation of new docks could impact this rare species. A more detailed survey will be conducted which will help determine the best locations for these new docks. In addition, research will be conducted into innovative dock designs that may not require annual installation and removal and installation techniques that would minimize the suspension of sediments.

Animals. When the Hippodrome and Carousel buildings are renovated, they will no longer provide summer nursery colony habitat for Little Brown Bats. Since bats are beneficial, alternative habitat will be provided through the construction and placement of bat houses throughout the park.

Historic and Archeological Resources. The Master Plan proposes removal of several buildings identified as contributing to the Park's designation to the National Register of Historic Places. By definition, this approach will constitute an Adverse Impact on historic resources at the Park. However these buildings have been examined in accordance with the provisions of Section 14.09 of the New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Act of 1980, and no prudent or feasible alternative to the proposed treatment has been found. They have been documented to be structurally unsound, not meet current codes, and/or pose a health threat to patrons. In addition, the location of the buildings prevents visual and physical access to Chautauqua Lake. A memo has been drafted and signed that documents this review process as well as the agreed upon mitigation measures (see Appendix B). Mitigation under Section 14.09 will include documentation of the buildings via photographs and maps prior to removal, and historic interpretation in the park museum. New buildings will also be designed in consultation with the SHPO to help maintain the historic character of the park. Archeologically sensitive areas to be disturbed by proposed master plan elements will undergo additional survey work and mitigation in consultation with the SHPO.

Transportation/Traffic. Traffic is not expected to significantly increase as a result of Master Plan implementation. The flow of traffic within the park will be significantly improved with the provision of bus queuing and parking areas and separation of parking and roadways from recreation areas. OPRHP will work with DOT to address any traffic safety issues on Route 430 near the park entrance.

Midway State Park is within the Coastal Zone. The proposed Master Plan is consistent with the key coastal policies identified in the Draft LWRP for Chautauqua Lake.