

INFORMATION PACKET
for the
Wellesley Island, Dewolf Point and
Waterson Point State Parks Master Plan

PUBLIC OPEN HOUSE/INFORMATION MEETING

Minna Anthony Common Nature Center
August 21, 2014
3:00 and 7:00 PM



Governor
Andrew M. Cuomo

Rose Harvey
Commissioner

Agenda

1. Sign-in and Orientation – On going
2. Open House – Staff Available for Questions and Comments (30-40 minutes)
3. Information Session – Brief Presentation (20-30 minutes)
 - a. Introductions and Welcoming Remarks
 - b. Overview and Timeline of the Planning Process
 - c. History and overview of the Park
4. Public Input and Report-out from stations (50-60 minutes)
 - a. Next Steps

Introduction

Purpose

The purpose of this public open house/information meeting is to actively invite public participation and involvement in the planning process. Public participation will help the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) in identifying issues, concerns and alternatives as well as determining the depth to which each of the topics is explored within the plan. This information packet and the public open house/information meeting are intended to provide the public with a concise overview of the park, the setting, the resources and the issues identified to this point. Additionally, the meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for public input within the planning process.

Agency Mission Statement

The mission of 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.

Priority Themes

OPRHP has developed three Priority Themes and Initiatives that help guide its activities. These priorities are:

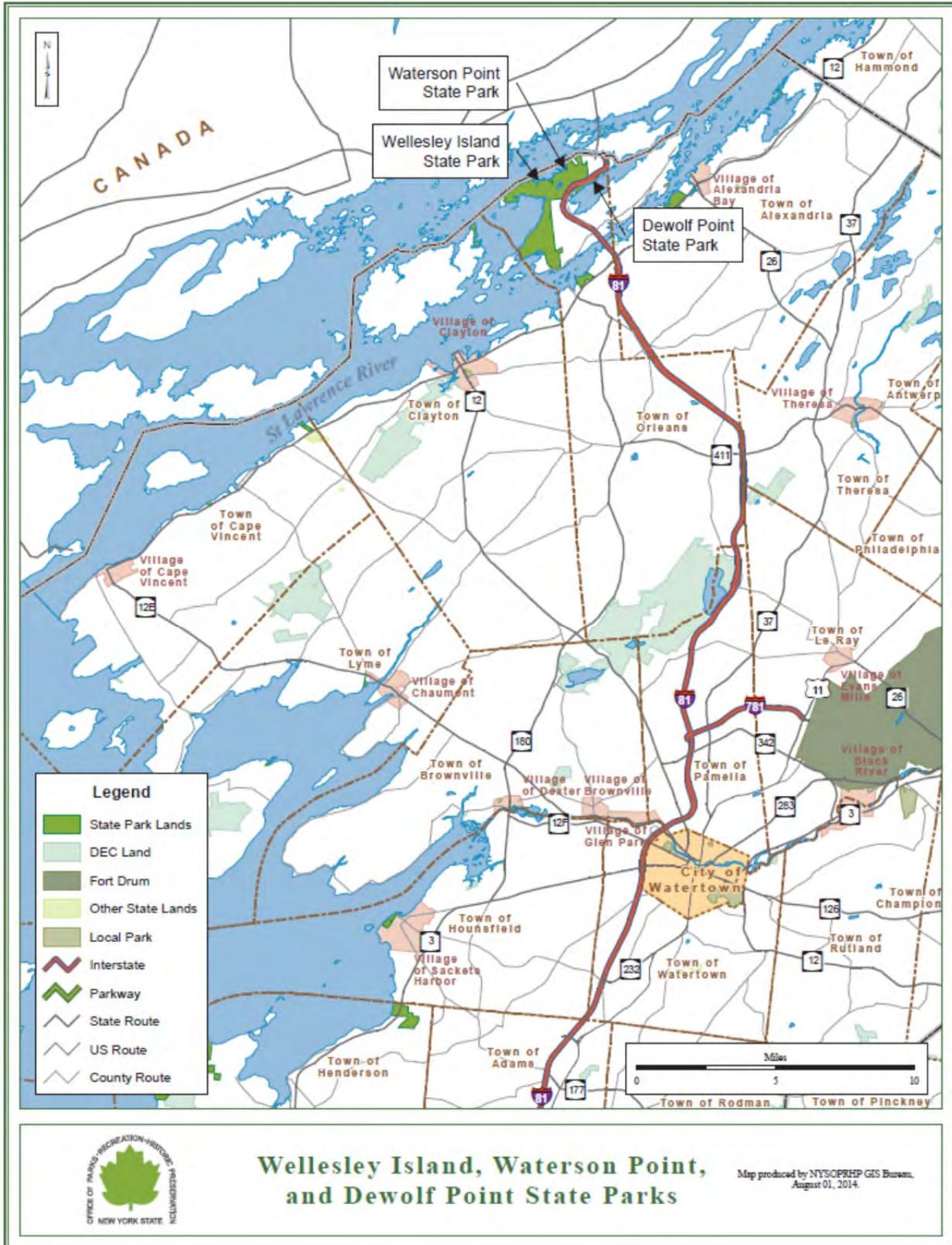
- Keep state parks and historic sites open, safe, affordable, and accessible.
- Increase, deepen, and improve the visitor experience.
- Fix our aging infrastructure and convert and transform New York's parks and historic sites into a welcoming, transformative, 21st Century parks system.

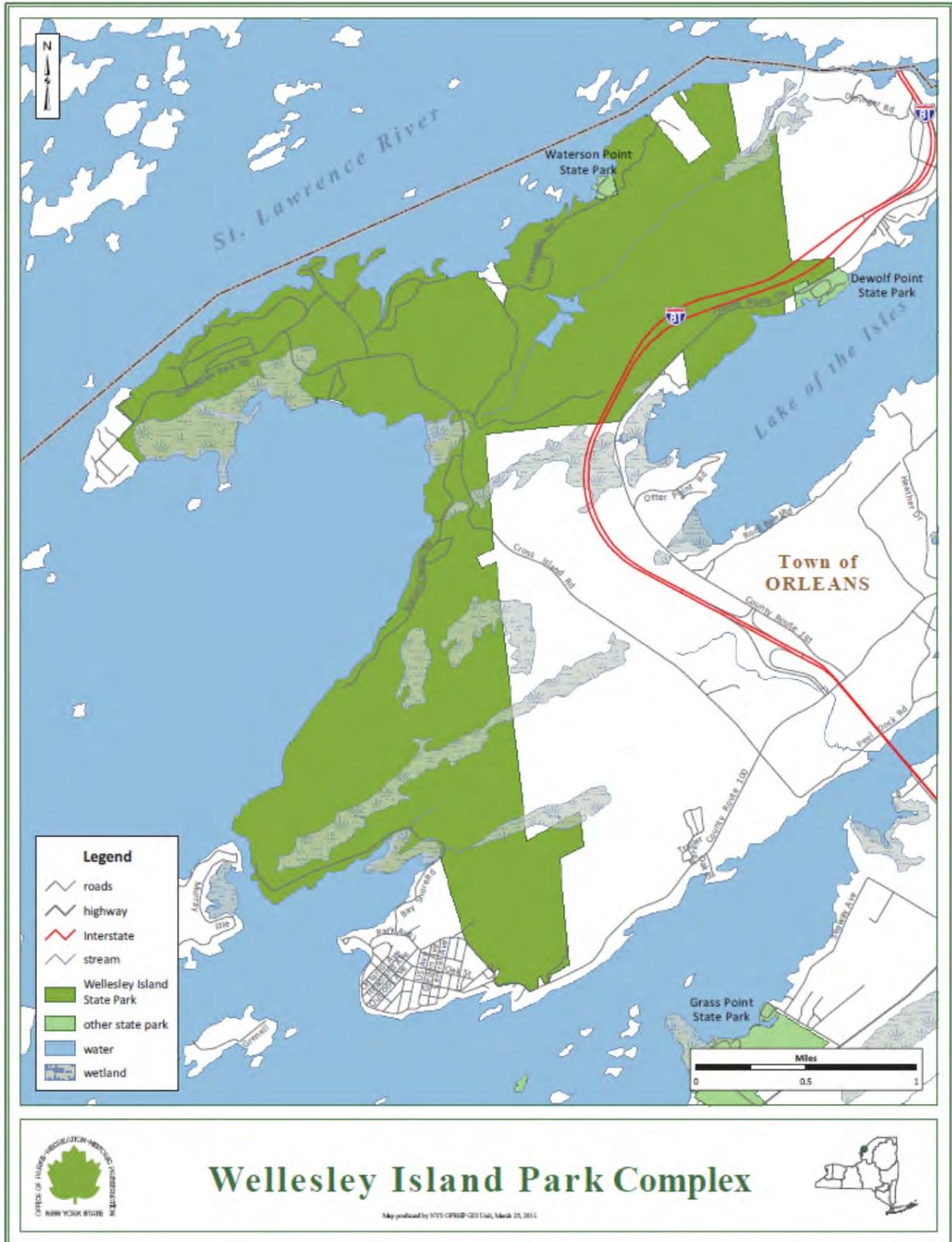
The master plan for Wellesley Island, Dewolf Point and Waterson Point State Parks (the Wellesley Island Park Complex) is part of a planning initiative that will advance these themes and determine the best course of action to preserve and utilize park resources for this and future generations.

Additional information can be obtained from OPRHP at:

Kevin Kieff, Regional Director
NYS OPRHP Thousand Islands Region
45165 NYS Route 12
Alexandria Bay, NY 13607
(315) 482-2593

Mark Hohengasser, Park Planner
NYS OPRHP Planning Bureau
Albany, NY 12238
(518) 486-2909





Master Plan Timeline

Public Open House/Information Meeting – August 21, 2014

Draft Plan – Fall 2014

Final Plan, Findings and Adoption – Winter 2014-2015

Overview of the Parks

These parks are contiguous and are operated and maintained under management based out of Wellesley Island State Park. They offer year-round recreational opportunities, access to natural and cultural resources and impressive scenic vistas along the St. Lawrence River.

Wellesley Island

Wellesley Island State Park is 2,576 acres and has the largest camping complex in the Thousand Islands region. The park's many facilities include: a beach, marina and boat launches, cabins and cottages, full hook-up, electric and basic campsites, a 9-hole golf course, a nature center with a museum, butterfly garden and trails, picnic areas, playgrounds, and playing fields. These facilities helped name Wellesley Island State Park as one of the Top 100 Campgrounds in the nation in 2004. It was also named one of Reserve America's Top Outdoor Locations in 2005.

Waterson Point

Waterson Point is a 6-acre park located on the shores of the St. Lawrence River and is surrounded by Wellesley Island State Park. It supports day use, picnicking, a historic gazebo for river viewing, 22 dock slips, and fishing.

DeWolf Point

DeWolf Point is a 13-acre park is located on the shore of the Lake of the Isles with access to the St. Lawrence River. It offers 14 campsites, 14 cabins, a picnic area, a historic gazebo, boat launching, dockage, and fishing access.

Past Planning

DeWolf Point and Waterson Point State Parks were two of the original Thousand Islands parks developed in 1898. After their development no further planning took place.

After the purchase of Wellesley Island State Park by NY State in 1951, initial development plans were implemented. Over the next 28 years, normal deterioration and heavy use by park patrons created the need for capital improvements. This need sparked a comprehensive planning process. In 1979, OPRHP staff organized a team to develop a master plan which would address the overarching needs of the park. In 1980, a draft master plan was developed; however, the plan was never released as a final plan. To improve the deteriorated facilities, proposals in the draft plan were implemented throughout the following decade. Since that time, a comprehensive planning process has not been undertaken for the park.

Environmental Setting

Location and Access

Wellesley Island State Park is located in the Thousand Island Region, in Jefferson County. It is comprised of a very diverse mix of areas, from forested parkland and wetlands to actively

managed campgrounds and day use areas. Access to the park is generally achieved by vehicle achieved via Interstate 81 with additional access by bicycle or walking for the local residents. Wellesley Island can also be accessed by boat.

DeWolf Point can be accessed from County Route 191, which parallels I-81. Park visitors can also arrive by boat.

Waterson Point Road, which travels through Wellesley Island State Park, passes by Waterson Point State Park. Patron access to Waterson Point is by boat only.

Recreation Resources

Camping is a prime focus of the complex. Wellesley Island offers group camping, 433 campsites, 10 rustic cabins, and 12 full service cottages. DeWolf Point has modest camping facilities providing 14 campsites and 14 cabins. Waterson Point is a day use facility only. Within this rustic park complex, fishing is excellent--particularly for muskie (muskellunge) in autumn. To accommodate boaters, Wellesley Island offers a full service marina and four boat launches, while DeWolf Point and Waterson Point offer modest boating facilities such as docking and boat launching. Wellesley Island offers a sandy beach on the river for swimming and sunbathing and there is a recreation barn and 9-hole golf course. One of the main attractions at Wellesley Island is the Minna Anthony Common Nature Center, which includes a museum, butterfly garden, handicapped-accessible trail, picnicking, and 3 miles of shoreline with open granite outcrops. Wellesley Island has miles of hiking trails in various habitats and provides educational and recreational programs for all ages. Wintertime recreation includes hunting, ice fishing, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing.

Historic Resources

- 1896: The St. Lawrence Reservation was created by the NYS Legislature.
- 1897: A State Commission was allocated \$300,000 to purchase parkland for the reservation.
- 1898: DeWolf Point and Waterson Point State Parks were developed by the commission.
- 1932: The Reservation Parks, including DeWolf Point and Waterson Point were incorporated into the Thousand Islands State Park Region.
- 1951: The Thousand Island State Park Commission purchased farmland and surrounding parcels to develop Wellesley Island State Park.
- 1954: Wellesley Island State Park is opened to the public offering 100 campsites and 10 cabins.

Physical Resources

Soils, Geology, and Topography

Soils within the area are generally fine-textured silt loams underlain by both metamorphic and sedimentary rocks including: leucogranitic gneiss, Potsdam sandstone and quartzite.

Similar to other islands within the St. Lawrence River, glacial forces created large areas of exposed bedrock with shallow soils that support patchy vegetation.

The topography in the park begins on the Lake St. Lawrence shoreline at approximately 243' above sea level. South of the lake, the land rises to over 400' at its highest point. The majority of the active use area is located at approximately 260-270' above sea level.

Water and Wetlands

The primary water resource is the St. Lawrence River. Eel Bay is along the western shore of the park and the Lake of the Isles is a large bay extending to the center of the island from the east. Both of these are significant high quality ecosystems and some of the largest shallow bay areas along the entire river. Within the interior of Wellesley Island State Park there are abundant beaver impounded wetlands and several deep emergent marshes along its shoreline.

Ecological Resources

The Wellesley Island Park Complex consists primarily of forest communities and open wetland complexes. The NY Natural Heritage Program determined that there are 19 distinct ecological community types observed (2003). Four of these are considered significant from a statewide perspective.

Wellesley Island State Park harbors populations of two animals classified as threatened by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation, Blanding's turtle (*Emydoidea blandingii*) and Bald Eagle (*Haliaeetus leucocephalus*). Bald Eagles also occur at DeWolf Point State Park and in the vicinity of Waterson Point. The area is area is a wintering bald eagle concentration site. Eel Bay, bordered almost exclusively by Wellesley Island State Park, also contains a number of rare fish and birds and is a waterfowl concentration site. In general, the park complex is diverse in birdlife with over 50 species of Neotropical migrating songbirds, 30 species of waterfowl and a high number of rare birds such as common tern, trumpeter swan, and osprey.

The park complex also is home to many typical fauna of the region including porcupine and beaver. There is estimated to be a fairly substantial deer population and portions of the park are open for archery hunting with a permit. Invasive species are a threat to the park's biodiversity. Emerald Ash Borer, in particular, is a threat as it has been identified in the vicinity.

Scenic Resources

The primary scenic resource of this park complex is its expansive views of the St. Lawrence River, American and Canadian river islands, and across the Lake of the Isles to the mainland of New York State. The gazebos built in the late 1800s on DeWolf Point and Waterson Point State Parks offer wonderful views of the open waters of the St. Lawrence.

Preliminary List of Potential Topics for the Plan to Consider

- Pedestrian Circulation
- Expanded/Improved Camping
- Marina
- Golf Course
- Nature Center
- Maintenance Area
- Invasive Species
- Cultural Resource Protection
- Natural Resource Protection
- Scenic Vistas
- Utilities
- Partnerships

Next Steps

- The suggestions, issues, concerns and alternatives identified at the public open house/information meetings and through written comments will be summarized and made available. The Draft Master Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) will address these issues.
- Further opportunities for public input may take place during the preparation of the draft.
- The draft will be made available for public review and will include a public hearing and a public comment/review period. Comments made during this time will be considered in the preparation of the Final Master Plan/Final EIS.
- After the release of the final plan and a public consideration period, a findings statement will be issued along with the Commissioner's decision regarding adoption of the plan.

Written comments will be **accepted until September 23, 2014**. Please send them to:

Mark Hohengasser, Park Planner
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Planning Bureau
Albany, NY 12238

Or email at: Wellesley.Plan@parks.ny.gov