



**New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

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**David A. Paterson**  
Governor

**Andy Beers**  
Acting Commissioner

**AGENCY DECISION  
AND  
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**Adoption of a Master Plan for Robert G. Wehle State Park**

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Master Plan, dated November 17, 2010, for Robert G. Wehle State Park.

By the authority vested in us in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, we do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan for Robert G. Wehle State Park.

Our decision is based on the attached Findings Statement and the content of the FEIS, which have been prepared according to the provisions of Part 617, the regulations implementing Article 8 of Environmental Conservation Law - the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

Andy Beers  
Acting Commissioner  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation

12/10/10

Date

**State Environmental Quality Review  
FINDINGS STATEMENT  
Robert G. Wehle State Park Master Plan**

**December 8, 2010**

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQRA) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), as lead agency, makes the following findings:

**Title of the Action:**

Adoption and Implementation of a Master Plan for Robert G. Wehle State Park

**Location:**

Robert G. Wehle State Park is located in the Town of Henderson in Jefferson County, NY.

**Description of the Action:**

The Master Plan for Robert G. Wehle State Park provides long term guidance for the development and management of the park and protection of its resources as summarized below.

**Date of Completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS):** November 17, 2010

These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the Final EIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations; provide a rationale for the agency's decision; certify that the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and certify that consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one which avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that included within the plan are those mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

**Findings:**

1. The Final Plan was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including a public information meeting and a public hearing. The Final EIS contains a chapter on responses to comments on the Draft EIS. This chapter contains clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft EIS. It also provides information that has been used in the preparation of the Final Plan.
2. The park is located on the eastern side of Lake Ontario on Stony Point, approximately eight miles south of Sackets Harbor. It consists of 1,067 acres and has three miles of Lake Ontario shoreline. The southern boundary is adjacent to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's Henderson Shores Unique Area.

3. The topography of the park is generally flat with a gradual rise in elevation from lake level on the southwest end of the park to cliffs as high as 85 feet along the shoreline at points further north. The topography is one limiting factor in providing lake access opportunities at the park. In addition the soils are generally shallow with bedrock depths from 0-20' and are also limiting factors for the development of groundwater supplies and septic systems at the park.
4. There are eleven ecological community types located in the park. Of the eleven, calcareous pavement barrens and calcareous shoreline outcrops are identified as significant natural communities by the New York Natural Heritage Program. These calcium-rich bedrock outcrops are one of the most prominent features of the park. The primary water feature is Lake Ontario which provides significant scenic vistas. There are also approximately 98 acres of wetland habitat in the park.
5. The flora of the park is characteristic of limestone areas of northern and western New York and the wildlife is typical of the region and the rural setting. The park has an extensive infestation of the invasive plant pale swallow-wort. Research by OPRHP and the U.S. Department of Agriculture into the control of pale swallow-wort is currently being conducted in the park.
6. Between 1895 and 1947, the U.S. Military used the property for training purposes. The area was known as the Stony Point Rifle Range. Several historically significant structures remain on the land today including spotter stations, building foundations and rifle range landscape features.
7. In 1968 Robert Wehle acquired the land from his father's estate, later constructing several of the structures seen on the site today. Buildings from the Robert Wehle period still present at the site include the former Wehle summer home, a log cabin, barns, dog kennels, a maintenance shed, bird coops and other supporting structures. Archeological studies conducted in the park found evidence of previous habitation by Native Americans, the sites of old farmsteads and remnants of past military activities.
8. Recreational activities in the park include hiking, mountain biking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, wildlife viewing, picnicking, tennis, volleyball, and hunting. Interpretive/educational displays are also located at parking areas and at the park's visitor center. In addition, the former Wehle summer home overlooking Lake Ontario is available for rent.
9. The Plan identifies a vision statement and goals for the park. The vision statement is: Robert G. Wehle State Park will continue to be a place for visitors to enjoy, appreciate and learn about the park's natural, cultural, and physical resources, and participate in the recreational opportunities that the park offers. The overall goal is to preserve and protect the natural, cultural and physical resources of Robert G. Wehle State Park while making available to the public compatible recreational and educational opportunities.
10. The Plan presents a series of "preferred alternatives" for future development and operation of the park. Status quo alternatives were evaluated for each element of the Plan as well. The Status Quo Alternative consists of the current facilities, programs and practices. The various

preferred alternatives were combined to create a single preferred alternative for recreation development and resource protection into one that best met the goals for the park. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan. Cumulatively, the actions described in the Plan present the long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of public use facilities and the protection and preservation of the cultural and natural resources at the park.

11. The 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, cultural and scenic resources and the principles of sustainability. The Plan also recognizes that the initiation of each specific action will be determined by the level of funding available to OPRHP in future years.
12. Under the Plan the park will remain classified as a Scenic Park, which reflects the scenic nature and the type and level of development proposed within the Master Plan.
13. The Plan process included the preparation of an Invasive Species Management Plan. The biggest threat to the park's biodiversity is the prevalence of the aggressive non-native plant, pale swallow-wort. The invasive species management plan provides guidance and priorities so that control efforts may be undertaken in the most effective means possible, both ecologically and economically. Near term activities that are being implemented under this plan include installation of swallow-wort seed check/boot cleaning stations and experimental swallow-wort control plots where swallow-wort is tilled and removed and replaced with native vegetation.
14. The Plan also calls for protection of the significant natural communities. The protection of the calcareous shoreline outcrops will be incorporated into the design of the new picnic area. In addition, the Master Plan calls for the protection of shoreline buffer through monitoring and removal of invasive species. The Plan also calls for the removal of invasive plants in the calcareous pavement barrens followed by the restoration of native vegetation. The current extent of the barrens will be maintained. The trail network through the barrens will be reduced to promote a balance between recreation and conservation of this rare habitat.
15. Recreation facilities at the park will be improved under the Plan. The trail system will be improved, including new signage. A new group camping area and a new ADA accessible picnic area will be constructed. The log cabin will be provided as an optional amenity to the rental compound.
16. The remnants of the park's military history will be protected. The military features including the firing range, gun wall and the spotter stations will be managed to protect these features. The firing range will have some vegetation management and the firing wall will be cleared of vegetation.
17. Interpretative and educational opportunities will be expanded to include additional topics such as the military activities. A Swallow-wort Interpretation Plan was also prepared during the master planning process and will be implemented to educate patrons on how to prevent the spread of this plant.
18. Impacts associated with the implementation of the Plan and mitigation measures identified are

as follows:

- The Plan will result in beneficial recreational improvements including changes to the trail layout and wayfinding, an additional picnic overlook area and new group camping area, rental cabin option and additional interpretive opportunities.
  - Implementation of the Invasive Species Management Plan will provide further protection of the biodiversity at the park. Various methods of control are being implemented and studied. Mowing will remain a significant method of controlling pale swallow-wort.
  - Health and safety of patrons and staff will continue to be a priority. Overall the additional amenities are not expected to significantly increase visitation of the park. The Plan proposes minimal changes to traffic circulation or access and current capacity is expected to meet the proposed needs.
  - Protection of shoreline plant communities and utility upgrades at some facilities will protect water resources.
  - Plans for improved management of cultural/archeological resources will not only serve to protect those resources but will also offer new interpretive opportunities.
  - The maintenance of appropriate overlooks and the careful design of shoreline development will protect scenic resources.
  - The establishment of a new picnic area overlook, group camping area, and the clearing of the firing range and gun wall will require the removal of approximately three to five acres of some trees and shrubs. Clearing will be kept to a minimum and will provide improvements to recreation and historic interpretation.
  - Approximately 2.5 miles of existing trails will be removed but the revised trail layout will clarify routes and lead to better enjoyment of the remaining 13.5 miles of trails in the park.
19. The Plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review. The Plan also provides for guidance as to when additional environmental review may be required and identifies the types of actions that are likely to require additional review. These include new actions not addressed within the Plan that are not Type II actions within Part 617, any change from the preferred alternative for recreational and facility elements of the Plan that would result in significant adverse environmental impacts, and any leases, easements or other agreements between OPRHP and other entities that would affect resources in a manner that is not adequately addressed in the Plan.
20. As the park is located within New York's coastal area, the Plan was reviewed for consistency with the NY Coastal policies. Based on review of applicable policies it is OPRHP's determination that the Plan will not substantially hinder the achievement of any of the State's coastal policies.