



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

AGENCY DECISION

AND

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

**Adoption of Final Master Plan & Final Environmental Impact Statement for
Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park**

Designation of a Bird Conservation Area

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), dated July 15, 2015 for Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park located in the Town of Smithtown, Suffolk County, NY.

By the authority vested in me in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, I do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan and FEIS for Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park. I also designate a portion of the park, as detailed in the Master Plan, as a Bird Conservation Area.

This decision is based on the Findings Statement and the content of the Final Master Plan and 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.

Rose Harvey
Commissioner
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

8-28-15
Date

An Equal Opportunity Employer/Affirmative Action Agency

SEQR FINDINGS STATEMENT

Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

August 24, 2015

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQR) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) as lead agency, has prepared this Findings Statement. These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the FEIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations and provide a rationale for the agency’s decision.

Title of the Action:

Adoption and Implementation of a Final Master Plan for Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park.

Location:

Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park is located on the north shore of Long Island at the terminus of the Sunken Meadow Parkway. The park is located in the Town of Smithtown in Suffolk County, NY.

Description of the Action:

The Final Master Plan for Governor Alfred E. Smith/Sunken Meadow State Park (available at <http://nysparks.com/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>) 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 FEIS: July 15, 2015

Findings:

1. The Final Master Plan was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including a public information meeting, a public hearing and a consideration period.
2. Chapter 8 of the FEIS contains the agency’s responses to comments received on the Draft Plan and Draft EIS. This chapter also includes clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft Plan and DEIS and provides information on modifications to the Final Master Plan and FEIS as a result of comments received.
3. The plan presents a series of “preferred alternatives” for future development and operation of the park. Status quo alternatives were also evaluated for each element of the plan as well as other feasible alternatives. The various preferred alternatives were combined to create a single preferred alternative that best met the long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of public use facilities and the protection and preservation of cultural and natural resources. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan.
4. The Final Master Plan considers the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the parks and responds to the needs and safety of park patrons, protection of natural, cultural and scenic resources and the principles of sustainability. It also details designations, recreation and stewardship elements. The plan also prioritizes implementation actions and recognizes that implementation will be dependent on the level of public and private funding available to OPRHP in future years.

5. Portions of the park have been designated as a Bird Conservation Area (BCA) under Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-2001 which authorizes the designation of BCAs in order to integrate bird conservation into agency planning and management. Under the Master Plan the BCA boundary will include all undeveloped areas of the park, including the golf course. This strategy highlights the most important portions of the park for bird habitat protection and management. The designation provides recognition on a statewide level relative to other state parks and sites. The BCA designation itself does not preclude existing or future recreation uses or park operations. The BCA Management Guidance Summary (Appendix P) provides guidelines for management of various areas in the park for bird habitat.
6. The Final Master Plan describes the development of a comprehensive invasive species management plan and continuing to follow the recommendations of agency staff and biologists to control existing invasive species and for early detection and rapid response to new invasive species occurrences in the park.
7. The plan calls for the following improvements to recreation resources. Each of these recreational improvements has been evaluated and located to minimize environmental impacts. Best Management Practices will be used during all improvements.
 - The East Orchard bathrooms will be rehabilitated. To address the need for additional picnicking, a portion of Parking Field 2 will be used to expand the adjacent picnic area. Parking Field 5 will be rehabilitated to include suitable overflow parking and picnicking and the west portion of Parking Field 2 will be removed to expand picnicking and sports fields. Picnicking will also be expanded between Field 2 and the Sound. Shade/rain shelters will be constructed in this area for patron use. Parking Field 3 will be reduced in size to provide additional picnic space and play area.
 - A spray park will be constructed for children in the West Orchard Picnic Area. Constructing a spray park at this location will serve a significant need and reduce the volume of patrons traveling from the picnic area to the beach and increase recreational diversity in the area.
 - The swimming beach will remain as is. The guarded swimming opportunities will remain in their present location. Operational constraints as well as resource protection do not warrant the expansion of the guarded swim beach. OPRHP policy does not allow unguarded swimming facilities on OPRHP parkland.
 - The existing pavilion, located in the East Orchard Picnic Area, will be placed on the reservation system. The enclosed room will be adapted for food preparation and warming. An additional pavilion will be constructed in the East/West Orchard Picnic Area for large group rental.
 - To improve water access for park patrons and protect the surrounding maritime grassland habitat, changes will be made to improve and consolidate the access points for kayak/canoe/paddle boards on Sunken Meadow Creek. Windsurfing access to the Sound will remain unchanged with access provided to the Sound from the shoreline.
 - Primitive group camping opportunities will be provided to scouting groups wishing to use the park for park service projects. Scout camping activities will be based out of the Parking Field 5 area with minimal development provided for this activity.
 - Areas of the park will be designated for SCUBA access providing additional opportunities for SCUBA diving and improving wildlife habitat in the creek.
 - Fishing access along the creek will be reevaluated to provide suitable fishing opportunities for patrons. A fishing pier is possible if permitted by the NYS Department of Conservation.
 - Opportunities will remain in the Parking Field 2 until its redevelopment. Any further additional seasonal expansion will be considered at Nissequogue River State Park.
 - All maintained softball fields will continue to be maintained. Informal softball fields and open areas will remain available for informal softball games and other activities. One designated but often unused softball field adjacent to Field 3, will be removed to allow space for additional development.

- Undesignated soccer opportunities will be allowed in open grassy areas throughout the park. The creation of a designated soccer field will limit the flexibility needed at this park to provide various activities for a wide variety of user groups. A designated soccer field will not be constructed in the park.
 - A disc golf course will be allowed in the park if it is constructed and maintained by an outside organization and does not interfere with other activities in the park.
 - Considerations will be given to the construction of a mini golf course to the northwest of the traffic circle if funding and staffing levels improve. Until that time, a mini golf will not be constructed in the park.
 - Golf courses will continue to serve mid-level golfers. Improvements made to the existing course features will raise course standards and improve the quality of play for patrons. Improvements include rehabilitating and expanding the irrigation system, pave cart paths and service roads where needed, upgrade electrical system, expand golf cart storage area, install lightning in shelters, replace sand bunkers, make courses ADA accessible, and plant trees suitable for a golf course.
 - Volleyball will continue to be allowed on the beach. Patrons must provide their own equipment.
 - The park will continue to allow patrons to fly kites year-round in Parking Field 2 when available, on the shoreline outside of the swim beach and on open grass areas in the picnic area.
 - Additional basketball courts will be considered during the design phase for picnic area improvements.
 - A sand bocce ball and badminton/volleyball/croquet court will be constructed. Patrons shall provide their own equipment.
 - Consideration will be given to the creation of shuffleboard courts adjacent to picnic areas and/or the boardwalk for both day and evening users.
 - A portion of a parking field can be used off season for an ice skating rink if operated and maintained by a concessionaire.
 - Upon the replacement of existing playgrounds, the location will be evaluated to determine if a better suited location exists within picnic areas or adjacent to play fields. Shade structures, seating for guardian, universal accessibility and poured in place surfacing will be considered upon the design.
 - The overlook area, located to the east of East Orchard Picnic Area will receive selective pruning and removal of the trees allowing patrons views from a former significant vista point of the Long Island Sound.
8. The plan includes the following trail and pedestrian connectivity improvements and changes:
- Connections to the surrounding communities will be improved and the usage of non-motorized transportation to the park encouraged to reduce congestion and associated impacts. Connections to Callahan's Beach Park, Nissequogue River State Park and Route 25A will be improved to allow pedestrians convenient access to the park. Connections will also be investigated to the Long Island Railroad station as well as the Long Island Expressway. Connections inside the park will also be improved and include improving the connection between the golf course area and the Parking Field 3 area and connecting Parking Field 4 with Old Dock Road.
 - OPRHP will partner with local mountain biking and hiking groups to improve the trail system. A well thought out layout for multiple uses will be developed which takes advantage of the existing sustainable trails, relocates unsustainable sections of trails and revegetates all relocated trails per OPRHP Guidelines for Closing Trails. Trail maps and signage will be improved per the OPRHP Trail Signage Guidelines to aid trail users and reduce confusion on the trail system.

- The Greenbelt Trail will receive maintenance on portions identified as having erosion. Trail blazes will be placed along this trail to provide patrons with improved guidance and direction. Park staff will coordinate with The Long Island Trail Conference to assist with these improvements.
- Skiing and snowshoeing is allowed on all trails in the park. The limited season and conditions on Long Island does not warrant the expansion of this activity or trail grooming. However, trail signage and map improvements will be provided to help guide patrons to appropriate locations for their abilities.
- The cross country running course will remain in its present layout. The park will continue to improve the trail surfacing where needed by including asphalt millings to improve stability, traction and durability of the surface. Regular maintenance by park staff will be provided to the course during the cross country running season. Groups wishing to provide maintenance to these trails during the off season must contact the park manager.
- Equestrian usage at the park is minimal. Topography and wetlands limit the size of new development and expansion of this activity is not recommended. Equestrian use will remain on the Bridal Path and Parking Field 5 will remain the designated trailhead.
- On-leash dog walking opportunities will remain in their present location. Trail signage will be installed at access points identifying the trail conditions at each location. Access to the dog walking area from Kohr Road allows patrons use of open trails with a slight grade. Access from the Smithtown boat launch area provides a more rugged experience along the bluff for patrons and their dogs. Poison Ivy located along these trails will be investigated and controlled as appropriate.
- A trail signage plan will be developed for the park. Intersections will be clearly marked and trail blazes or directional signage placed along all trails. The designated trailheads in the park will include Parking Fields 2, 3, 4 and 5.

9. Infrastructure and facility improvements include:

- Parking Fields 2, 3, 4 and sections of the park roadways will be milled and repaved. The vehicular bridges over Route 25A and Sunken Meadow Creek will be rehabilitated. Upon the construction of a separate pedestrian bridge over Sunken Meadow Creek downstream from the vehicular bridge, the sidewalk will be removed from the vehicular bridge and the vehicle lanes widened. A pedestrian bridge in place of the former dike near the mouth of the creek will also be constructed that will continue to provide tidal flow in the creek but reestablish access for recreation purposes.
- To meet the significant demand for picnicking and field opportunities, the small, adjacent picnic area will be expanded into a portion of Parking Field 2. Reinforced grass will allow for recreational activities much of the year and overflow parking during peak demand days and will reduce impervious surfaces. The northwest portion of the parking field will be separated by a landscaped buffer from the main area and designated for concession parking.
- Wastewater systems for the main bathhouse and the East/ West Orchard Picnic Areas will be replaced.
- The electric system throughout the park will be investigated. Upgrades to the system will be made as required. Permanent emergency generators will be provided for main facilities including the bathhouse, maintenance area, golf course irrigation system, and concession buildings as appropriate.
- To improve the water quality and drainage in the park, the stormwater system will be assessed and improved or cleaned where appropriate. Natural stormwater filtration will be considered during site designs throughout the park.

10. The plan includes the following natural and cultural resource improvements:

- Shoreline protection and nourishment will continue. OPRHP will continue to place the spoils from County led dredging operations in the Nissequogue River on the shoreline as they become available. When they become unavailable, parks will reconsider shoreline management strategies. To protect the bluff, the placement of spoils will be expanded to include both sides of the jetty.
- OPRHP will coordinate with the Town of Smithtown to explore the construction of a bank stabilization project previously developed for the Kings Park Bluff. Points along the bluff receiving significant erosion from patrons will receive improvements to both educate patrons, direct access to the water and protect the bluff.
- Water quality in Sunken Meadow Creek will continue to be monitored. The most significant threat to water quality from the park is stormwater containing oil and other fluids leaked from parked cars. This stormwater flows into culverts and then into the creek. Best Management Practices to address stormwater runoff, such as porous pavement, stabilized soil or other means of naturally filtering water will be used on projects involving parking lot modifications or improvements.
- As part of its commitment to protecting water quality, Integrated Pest Management (IPM) principles will continue to be followed at the golf course, using an environmentally sensitive approach to the management of pests such as insects and weeds.
- Wetland monitoring and protection will continue. OPRHP will encourage additional research projects and develop an interpretation and education program to assist patrons with actions they can undertake to protect this and any other wetland. The 2012 breach of the Sunken Meadow Creek dike has greatly enhanced the quality of the wetland and is fundamentally restoring the natural habitat.
- The Master Plan calls for the development of an invasive species management plan at the park to focus on prevention, identification of invasives, early detection, rapid response, and eradication from sensitive habitat areas. Best Management Practices will be implemented during construction, park operations and general maintenance to limit the potential for introduction or spread of invasive species by construction equipment.
- OPRHP will continue to implement park policies concerning wildlife. Current policies and programs dealing with wildlife resources at the park are adequate and effective. The park will continue its relationship with OPRHP partners as a part of these policies to advance OPRHP's wildlife management goals.
- OPRHP will continue to monitor and protect rare and endangered species by addressing patron and wildlife impacts. Education and interpretive programming will be improved to convey information to patrons about these species and the impacts to their habitat. The management plan for rare and endangered species will be updated to include changes which have taken place in the park.
- Structures that are National Register Eligible (NRE) include the Main Bathhouse, the toll plaza and the Park Managers residence. OPRHP will coordinate with the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to ensure the historic integrity, character or themes are kept upon starting construction projects on these facilities.
- Park staff will outreach to local history groups to gain a greater understanding of what the former fish hatchery area and its significance. Upon developing that research, interpretive programming and signage may be developed to educate patrons depending on the information collected. The historic integrity of the area has been retained through the years and with additional research, this area may be considered NRE.
- The designation of the Bird Conservation Area (BCA) will provide added recognition of the importance of the park for bird habitat.

11. The following environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the implementation of the Master Plan were identified in the FEIS as follows:

- The plan will result in some physical change and disturbance to land where new construction is proposed, such as the new comfort stations, septic systems, main bathhouse improvements, recreational additions, new picnic pavilions, toll booth replacement, maintenance area improvements, the new golf course maintenance area, bicycle and pedestrian improvements, the bandshell construction and picnic area improvements. However, the plan also calls for the removal and restoration of portions of parking areas and the conversion of Parking Field 2 to a porous parking area, the use of rain gardens to filter stormwater and the reconstruction of trails to meet current sustainability and erosion guidelines. The overall net new developed area in the park is thus only about 1 acre. Most of the new facilities will be in areas that are already developed or lawn and the amount of grading necessary will be minimized. All projects which involve ground disturbance, whether new or within an existing developed area, will minimize sedimentation and erosion impacts through the use of Best Management Practices.
- The Master Plan implementation is expected to have minimal negative impact to water resources. None of the projects in the Master Plan will result in adverse impacts to the Long Island Sound. The Sunken Meadow Creek restoration project will have significant positive impacts on the creek habitat as well as invasive species management. Best Management Practices for erosion and sediment control will be used to reduce impacts to water quality during construction and a Stormwater SPDES general permit will be obtained for any projects disturbing more than one acre. There will be a substantial increase in pervious surfaces at the park by approximately 20 acres as a result of new Master Plan improvements including the redesign of Parking Fields 2 and 3. Permeable materials will be used whenever practicable. During field layout of new trails, stream crossings will be minimized to the extent possible and retain a buffer between trails and water bodies.
- Impacts to air quality are expected to be minor due to some increase in the number of vehicles travelling to the park.
- Impacts from increased lighting will be minimal, however, to enhance patron experience during low light and evening events, low level lighting will be provided in areas of high use around the bathhouse/park office. Lighting will be installed in portions of Parking Field 1 adjacent to the bathhouse/park office and adjacent to the West Pavilion in Parking Field 2. To reduce the impact of lighting on the surrounding area, strategies to minimize light pollution will be used during the design of these lighting systems. Renewable energy opportunities will be considered during the design of additional park lighting.
- Limited new development is proposed and therefore direct impacts to biological resources are expected to be minimal. Projects have generally been sited in areas with previous development, limited environmental sensitivity and which generally possess accessibility to and use of existing infrastructure. However, the proposed park improvements will result in disturbance of approximately 0.5 acres adjacent to the golf course roadway. These impacts will be mitigated through site specific design to minimize vegetation removal.
- The Master Plan will have impacts to one National Register Eligible (NRE) building, the main bathhouse, however, approval has been granted for site improvements. Educational signs and materials will be developed to interpret the historic resources in the park.
- Any ground disturbing activities in the park will be reviewed by the State Historic Preservation Office to determine if they are near areas of archeological sensitivity and if any surveys are needed. Steps will be taken to avoid or mitigate any adverse impacts to any archeological resources discovered.

- The master plan is expected to result in beneficial impacts to the scenic character of the park by restoring and opening up a former overlook area of the Long Island Sound. The master plan also provides for the protection of views of the escarpment from outside of the park.
 - Implementation of the Master Plan will result in substantial beneficial impacts to recreation at the park by providing for a wide variety of new and improved recreational facilities and visitor amenities and a better organized trail system. Additionally, patron health and well being will be improved as a direct result of these recreational improvements.
 - Implementation of the Master Plan will not result in any adverse impacts to open space. Additional acquisitions will be considered as they become available to further protect open space in this area of increasing development pressure.
 - There may be minor increases in traffic due to the increased number of picnic site, pavilions and the construction of the spray park; however, access and transportation resources will not be impacted.
 - New and improved facilities will be designed to meet all applicable health and safety codes including the Americans with Disabilities Act.
 - Sustainability principles and energy efficiency will be incorporated into the design of all new park buildings. Implementation of the Master Plan may result in some minor temporary increases in noise during construction.
 - Implementation of the plan will result in some unavoidable adverse impacts including a minor permanent loss of pervious soil surface and vegetative cover as a result of construction of the new maintenance area, bandshell, spray park and picnic shelter.
 - The planning, development and implementation of the Master Plan will involve the irreversible and irretrievable commitment of public resources in the form of time, labor and materials as well as a long term commitment to the operation and maintenance costs of the park.
 - Implementation of the master plan will result in some increased visitation to the park. This is expected to enhance economic impacts to the communities surrounding the park in the form of added business to local gas stations, restaurants and convenience stores.
12. The plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review and 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 with the Final Master Plan/FEIS that are not Type II actions within Part 617; any change from the preferred alternative for natural resource protection, recreational and facility development or other elements of the plan which could result in significant 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 Final Master Plan and FEIS.

Certification To Approve/Fund/Undertake :

Having considered the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied on to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

- The requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and
- Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is the one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse impacts will be avoided or minimized to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigative measures that were identified as practicable.

cc:

Mr. Patrick R. Vecchio - Town of Smithtown – Supervisor

Mr. Roger Evans - DEC Region 1 Permit Administrator