

ANDREW M. CUOMO
GOVERNOR



JOE MARTENS
COMMISSIONER

STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK 12233-1010

DEC 31 2012

MEMORANDUM

TO: Chairwoman Lani Ulrich

FROM: Commissioner Martens *JM*

SUBJECT: Proposal for Public Access and State Land Classification of the Former Finch and Pruyn Lands

As we recently closed on the first phase of acquisition for the former Finch fee title lands, I am transmitting the attached Proposal for Public Access and State Land Classification of the Former Finch and Pruyn Lands (Proposal) which has been prepared by Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) staff in consultation with Adirondack Park Agency (APA) staff. This official transmittal will constitute the DEC recommendation for the basis of classification of these lands pursuant to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP).

This Proposal focuses specifically on recreation and access opportunities for the public – persons with disabilities, young and old, families, fishing and hunting enthusiasts and those seeking the challenges and solitude offered by wilderness areas. The Proposal is based on extensive field work and discussions between DEC, The Nature Conservancy and the APA and reflect ideas from the recreating public and local communities in the Park.

Historically, DEC has developed recommendations for APSLMP classification only after lands are acquired. Such recommendations are also traditionally focused on the particular parcels of lands we are requesting to be classified. As you are aware, we have approached planning for the former Finch fee title lands in a new manner which has involved a great deal of interagency and public involvement prior to State acquisition. Although the first parcels classified will be those we purchase in Phase One, this Proposal outlines a balanced approach across all of the fee parcels, to be purchased in five phases. At this point, we will be requesting APA review this comprehensive and balanced Proposal when they focus on the classification of lands in the Essex Chain and Indian River parcels specifically.

I have stated publically that public access to newly acquired lands is a priority for DEC and I take this commitment very seriously. This Proposal outlines a balanced approach to providing appropriate public access for the range of recreational users who will benefit from the premier recreational opportunities which will be made available through the acquisition of these lands. I hope you will agree that the ideas outlined will also further our collective responsibilities to protect Forest Preserve resources for the purposes set forth in both the New York State Constitution and the APSLMP.

DEC is eager to work with APA as we proceed through the land classification process to take the steps which will be necessary to open these lands to the public as they are acquired.

Attachment

c: T. Martino.
J. Connolly

Proposal for Public Access and State Land Classification of the Former Finch-Pruyn Lands: Pursuant to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP)

Prepared by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for Consideration by the Adirondack Park Agency (APA)

The former Finch and Pruyn lands, currently owned by the Nature Conservancy (TNC), called by some the "jewel in the Adirondack crown," are remarkable for their ecological diversity, astounding beauty and the opportunities they provide for drawing visitors to the heart of the Adirondack Park. Conservation Easements have been acquired on 89,036 acres which allows for the continued flow of forest products from these lands while providing a myriad of opportunities for public recreation. Acquisition of the remaining 65,000 thousand acres of former Finch-Pruyn land to be included in the Adirondack Forest Preserve will provide benefits which will enhance the Adirondack Park's draw as a world-class tourist destination.

Within the entire 65,000 acres of fee acquisition lands, there are 180 miles of rivers and streams, 175 lakes and ponds, 465 miles of undeveloped shoreline (rivers, streams, lakes, ponds), six mountains taller than 2,000 feet and countless smaller hills. One will find an astounding variety of mountains, cliffs, wilderness lakes, ponds, bogs, fens, swamps, alluvial forests, and flat and white-water rivers found in no other private ownership in the park, and equaled by few state ownerships of comparable size. There also exists extensive habitat for mammals such as moose, bobcat, and black bear and aquatic habitat for brook trout, landlocked salmon, and small and largemouth bass.

The majority of these lands are concentrated within the central lake and tourist region of the Adirondack Park in the towns of Newcomb, Indian Lake, North Hudson and Minerva. When these lands are purchased as Forest Preserve, residents and visitors alike will gain access to these special places for the first time in nearly 150 years. In addition to the establishment of a network of snowmobile and hiking trails linking North Hudson, Newcomb, Long Lake, Minerva, and Indian Lake to each other and neighboring Park regions, paddling opportunities will be opened up on some of the wildest stretches of rivers in the eastern United States. Abundant public opportunities for premier hunting, fishing, hiking, camping, mountain biking and cross country skiing will be accessible for a broad array of recreational users in a manner in which local communities have expressed is important to them. And, while the location of these lands in the center of the Park adds to the acreage of lands to be kept 'Forever Wild,' allowing this globally important forest landscape to be protected, new public access will draw visitors in perpetuity to population centers which rely on visitors to support sustainable communities.

Large and intact landscapes such as these also respond and adapt to disturbances like wind and ice storms and provide better flood control. They also provide safe havens for species to move upslope and northward in response to a changing climate, and can better withstand invasions of damaging non-native plants, pests, and pathogens.

Important ecological and outdoor recreation treasures slated for acquisition in fee include the Essex Chain of Lakes, Boreas Ponds, Upper Hudson River, Blue Ledges, OK Slip Falls, Cedar River, Opalescent River headwaters, Ice Meadows and the 1,000 Acre Swamp. Once they are acquired by the State of New York, they become publically owned Forest Preserve lands, to be classified pursuant to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), as approved by the Governor. Each parcel and the lands within have the potential for providing a spectrum of recreation opportunities ranging from remote, interior backcountry areas proposed to be classified as Wilderness areas to more intensively used front country corridors which can provide access for both the public and administrative purposes. Areas classified Wild Forest will allow for public motor vehicle and floatplane access and connecting communities on snowmobile trails in the winter months. As described for each parcel in the following sections of this Draft Proposal for Public Access and State Land Classification Pursuant to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP), opportunities will be provided for people of all ages and abilities, families, fishing and hunting enthusiasts and those seeking the challenges and solitude offered by wilder areas linked to existing Wilderness areas in the Park. The principles of Universal Design will be applied to all new construction and rehabilitation of recreation features to the greatest extent possible in keeping with the preservation of the natural setting and the land classification.

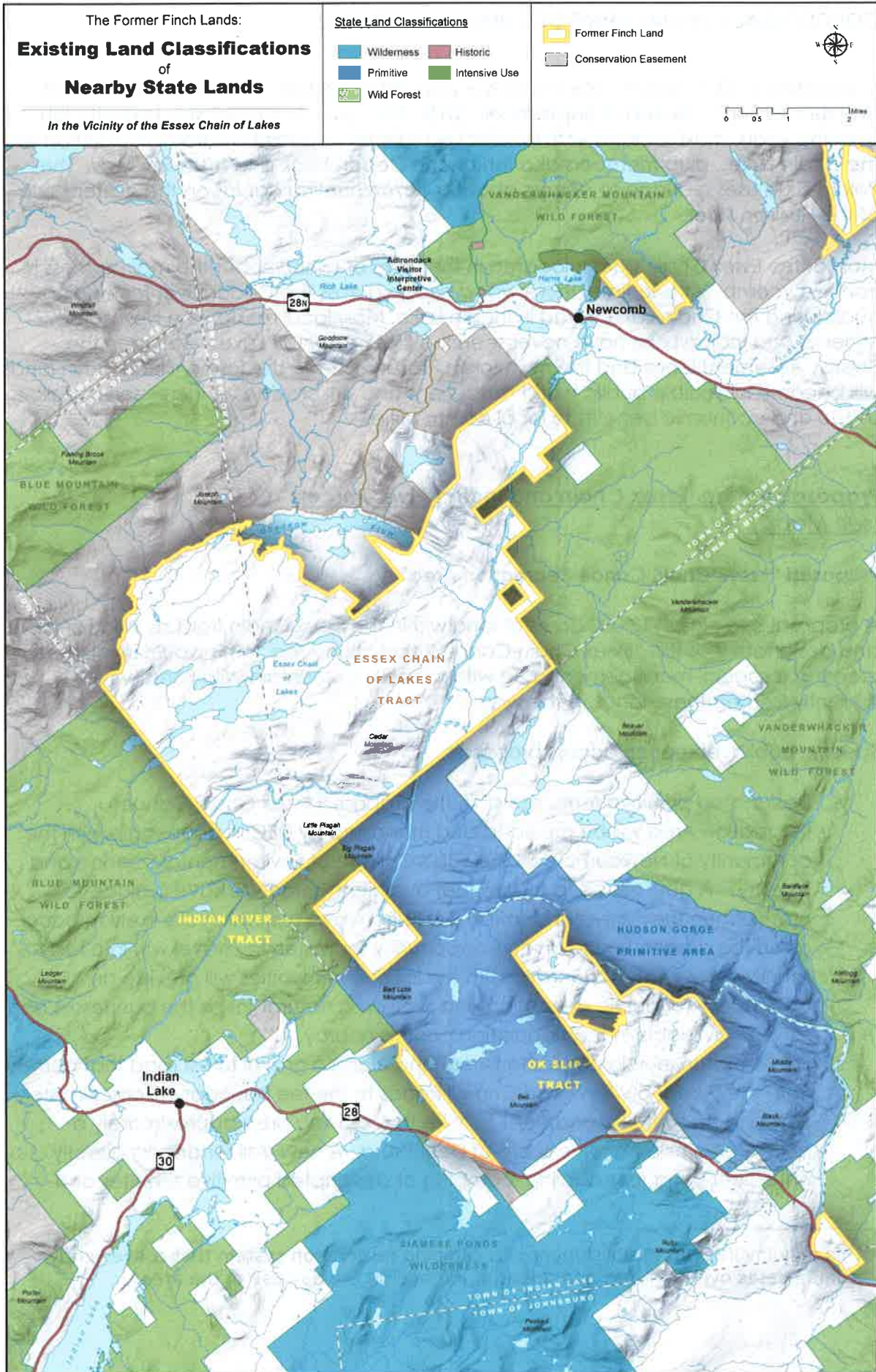
When property is added to the publicly-owned Forest Preserve, and existing leases expire, leasing for private use is no longer an option, but the land does become available for many of the same uses (hunting, fishing, paddling) by the public (including former leaseholders). All of the clubs that fall wholly or partially within lands slated for transfer to public ownership have an opportunity to relocate camps onto adjacent conservation easement lands. Some clubs have already taken advantage of those opportunities (and in some cases merged and relocated); some did not.

Essex Chain of Lakes and Indian River Tracts

(see Map 1)

The 18,188 acre Essex Chain tract of land resides within the Towns of Minerva and Newcomb in Essex County. It is accessible from the north from Newcomb on Route 28N and from the south from Indian Lake on Route 28/30. With eleven lakes and ponds interconnected or within portaging distance of each other to provide a 6 to 7 mile canoe route, 14.7 miles of Hudson River shoreline, and 8.5 miles of Cedar River shoreline, this tract will attract anglers, paddlers, mountain bikers, hikers, photographers and campers. There is a history of stocking that includes brook trout and landlocked salmon which will provide a significant draw of visitors.

The Gooley and Polaris clubs currently lease the Essex Chain tract—roughly 16,000 acres (larger in size than Manhattan Island) that includes lands on the west and east sides of the Hudson River. The Gooley Club has 133 members; the Polaris Club has 59 members. Their exclusive use of the land, primarily for hunting and fishing, runs through the end of



September 2013, at which time the leases convert to exclusive camp envelopes only and runs through the end of September, 2018. Third Lake has been stocked with fish over the years; most recently with landlocked salmon and rainbow trout. In addition to the Chain Lakes, club members also fish on the Cedar, Rock and Hudson Rivers. The Polaris Club uses a bridge to access about a dozen hunting cabins on the eastern side of the Hudson River.

Most of the Essex Chain tract is located in the town of Minerva, but the main access is from Newcomb. At one time, there was a bridge across the Cedar River for logging trucks using the Chain Lakes Road in Indian Lake. Most local residents in Newcomb, Minerva and Indian Lake have never seen the Essex Chain of Lakes. Between the nearby easement lands and the new Forest Preserve lands, the former Finch-Pruyn lands will become incredible public tourist attractions and will provide an increase in public usage and economic benefits to local communities.

Proposals for the Essex Chain and Indian River Parcels *(see Map 2)*

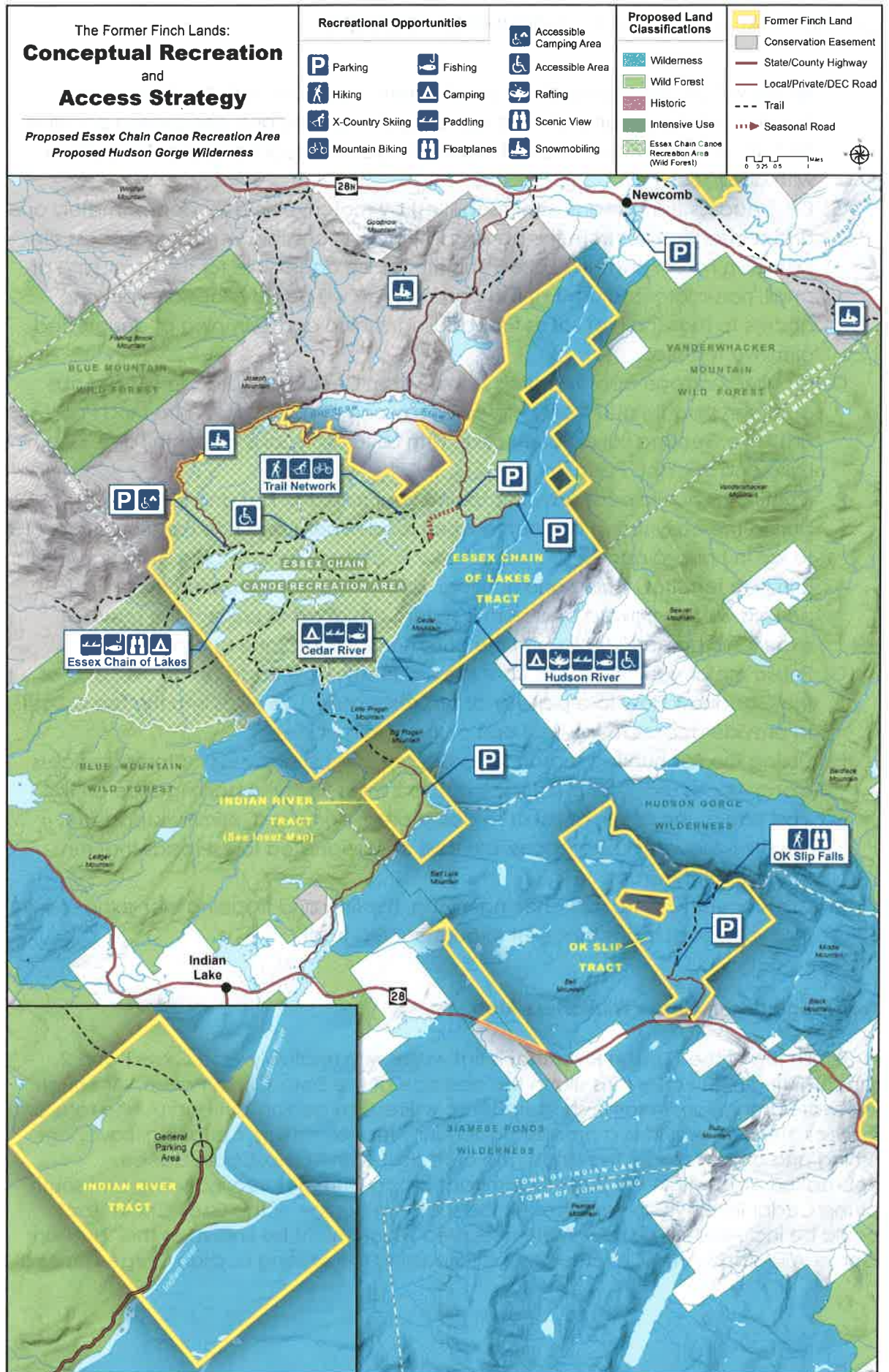
Proposed "Essex Chain Canoe Recreation Area"

A proposal is to classify 13,000 acres of land within the Essex Chain tract as Wild Forest and designate it as the "Essex Chain Canoe Recreation Area." This would involve creating a special management area within the Blue Mountain Wild Forest which currently borders these lands to the west.

Specific public recreation access proposals:

- A. Designated primitive tentsites within the proposed Essex Chain Canoe Recreation Area will be provided and managed by DEC in partnership with the community of Newcomb and the SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry. A goal will be to ensure that overnight visitors will have a place to camp when they arrive and limit impacts from overuse which are likely to occur given the attractive and unique opportunity for waterway travel within a fairly small vicinity. ¹ The partnership with the local communities will provide an opportunity for public education and provide a natural link to the businesses and services available in the population centers nearby.
- B. Public motor vehicle access to Deer Pond along a gravel forest road that comes from the Goodnow Flow and Cornell Roads to the fee boundary (approximately 6 miles) and south for another 1 ¼ miles to a parking area approximately a quarter of a mile from the shore of Deer Pond. A new trail for access directly onto Deer Pond for paddling, camping at designated primitive tentsites and

¹ This may involve the establishment of a camping reservation system that conveniently accommodates overnight use and does not infringe on the day use of the area.



fishing will be developed at the point where Deer Pond is first visible as one travels from the parking lot. The launch, parking area and designated primitive tentsites on Deer Pond will be designed to accommodate access for persons with disabilities.

- C. CP-3 Access (for persons with disabilities) by motor vehicle for approximately one and a quarter miles from this parking lot to an accessible waterway access site between Fourth and Fifth Lakes. This site will be accessible for the launching of small, non-motorized craft and a parking area will be developed to provide access to the Chain of Lakes for paddling, fishing and camping at designated primitive tentsites.
- D. A public portage approximately ½ mile from Deer Pond to access Third Lake and then paddle and travel via waterway and short portages into Mud Pond, First Lake, Second Lake, Fourth Lake, Fifth Lake, Sixth Lake, Seventh Lake, Eighth Lake and Jackson Pond.
- E. Continued public access by floatplane year round to First and Pine Lakes.
- F. During the early spring (ice out to when roads open) and late Fall (September 15 to ice in,) public access to Third Lake by floatplane for camping at designated primitive tentsites, fishing and hunting. Floatplane access during these time periods will be allowed by a permit system designed to protect the remote experience in partnership with the commercial floatplane operators.
- G. Public motor vehicle access from the Goodnow Flow Road at the east end of the Goodnow Flow to a parking lot approximately 1.25 miles into the fee parcel to provide access to the east end of the Chain of Lakes.
- H. During the Fall hunting season (after September 15) allow for motorized access along woods roads for a distance of 1 to 2 miles from the parking area on the east side of the Chain of Lakes to designated, permitted, primitive roadside tentsites. Mountain bike accessible trails on designated forest roads that run throughout the Tract.
- I. Cross country skiing, snowshoeing, hiking, hunting and trapping along the many miles of woods roads that exist throughout the tract.

Proposed Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area

A 10 mile run of the Hudson River that is flat water with relatively short Class 1 and 2 rapids during high water runs along the east side of the Essex Chain Parcel. Although low water conditions in some short stretches will require getting out and pulling rafts and canoes, the river provides a premier opportunity for day rafting, canoeing, kayaking, fishing and also overnight river trips. The area east of the Essex Chain Canoe Recreation Area within the Essex Chain tract, along with the area including and south of the Cedar River which runs through the southern portion of the Essex Chain Tract could be included into a new Wilderness area which might be known as the "Hudson Gorge Wilderness Area," eventually encompassing the existing Hudson Gorge Primitive

Area; the former Finch and Pruyn OK Slip Falls and Blue Ledges parcel; and sections of the Indian River parcel. These lands will be added to the existing Hudson Gorge Primitive area and together, they will create a new, expansive Wilderness area encompassing the wildest stretches of the Hudson River that exist today. This will be an incredible draw for visitors seeking this unique and limited wild rivers experience, bringing people to the communities of Indian Lake, Blue Mountain Lake, Long Lake, Newcomb and Minerva to seek accommodations and supplies.

Specific public recreation access proposals:

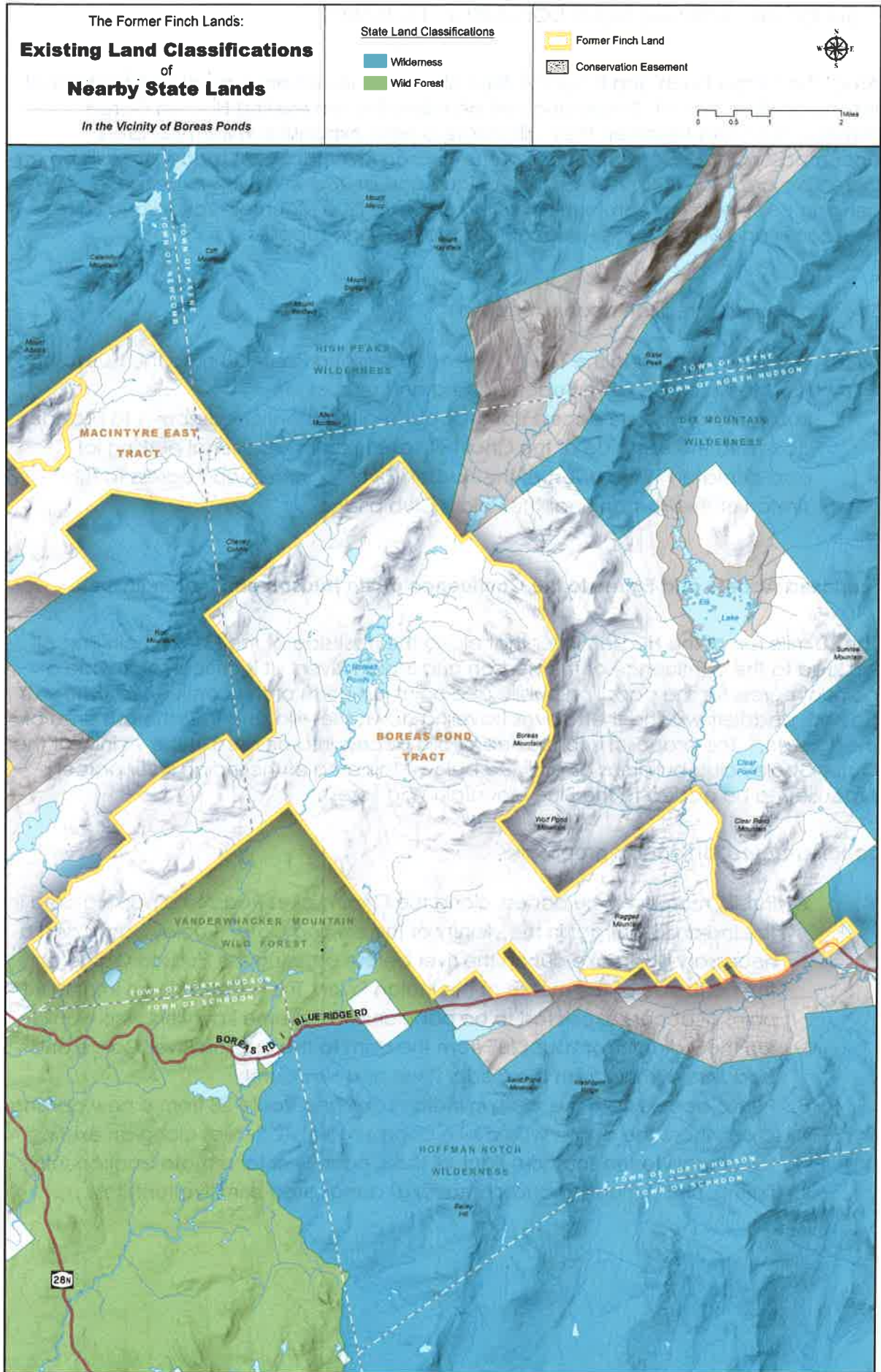
- A. Waterway access in the Town of Newcomb along Route 28 onto the Hudson, likely to be at the Town Beach parking and access site.
- B. Public motor vehicle access from the parking lot (mentioned above to provide access to the east side of the Chain of Lakes) to an additional parking lot approximately ¼ mile west of the Hudson River for ingress and egress to this stretch of the Hudson near the Polaris Club bridge.

Proposed Access and Egress to the Confluence of the Hudson and Indian Rivers

The 10 mile run of the Hudson River that along the east side of the Essex Chain Parcel will lead to the confluence of the Hudson and Indian Rivers. It is critical to provide a point of egress for the paddling public at a point just north of this confluence, where, if passed, paddlers will find themselves traveling down the wild and treacherous area of the "Gorge." The proposal is to provide public access into an area in the vicinity of the Outer Gooley club buildings as outlined below. This area of the Indian River parcel is proposed to be added to the Blue Mountain Wild Forest.

Specific recreation access proposals:

- A. Public motor vehicle access along the Chain Lakes Road to a parking area in the Indian River tract in the vicinity of the existing Outer Gooley camp and a necessary boat take out on the river before entering the Hudson Gorge on the north side of the mouth of the Indian River. This will also be an important point of access expected to be popular with extreme kayakers who would run the Indian River "bubble" from the dam to the Hudson River Gorge and paddlers coming from the Cedar River and Newcomb.
- B. Public access from the south in Indian Lake and Route 28 from a new parking area where the public would hike approximately 2.5 miles along an existing forest road to the southern Bank of the Cedar River for remote backcountry fishing, hiking, hunting and camping at designated primitive tentsites.



Boreas Pond Tract

(see Map 3)

Located in the Town of North Hudson and bordering the High Peaks and Dix Mt. Wilderness Areas along the northern boundaries and accessible to Conservation Easement and Wild Forest to the south, this spectacular 22,000-acre property provides abundant opportunities for hiking, paddling, hunting, trapping, camping, fishing, cross country skiing and snowshoeing.

The existing established and well maintained Gulf Brook Road provides a logical boundary for dividing this large tract into Boreas Ponds North and South. A proposal is to classify the areas within the Boreas Ponds North as Wilderness and the areas within the Boreas Ponds South as Wild Forest.

Proposals for the Boreas Pond Tract

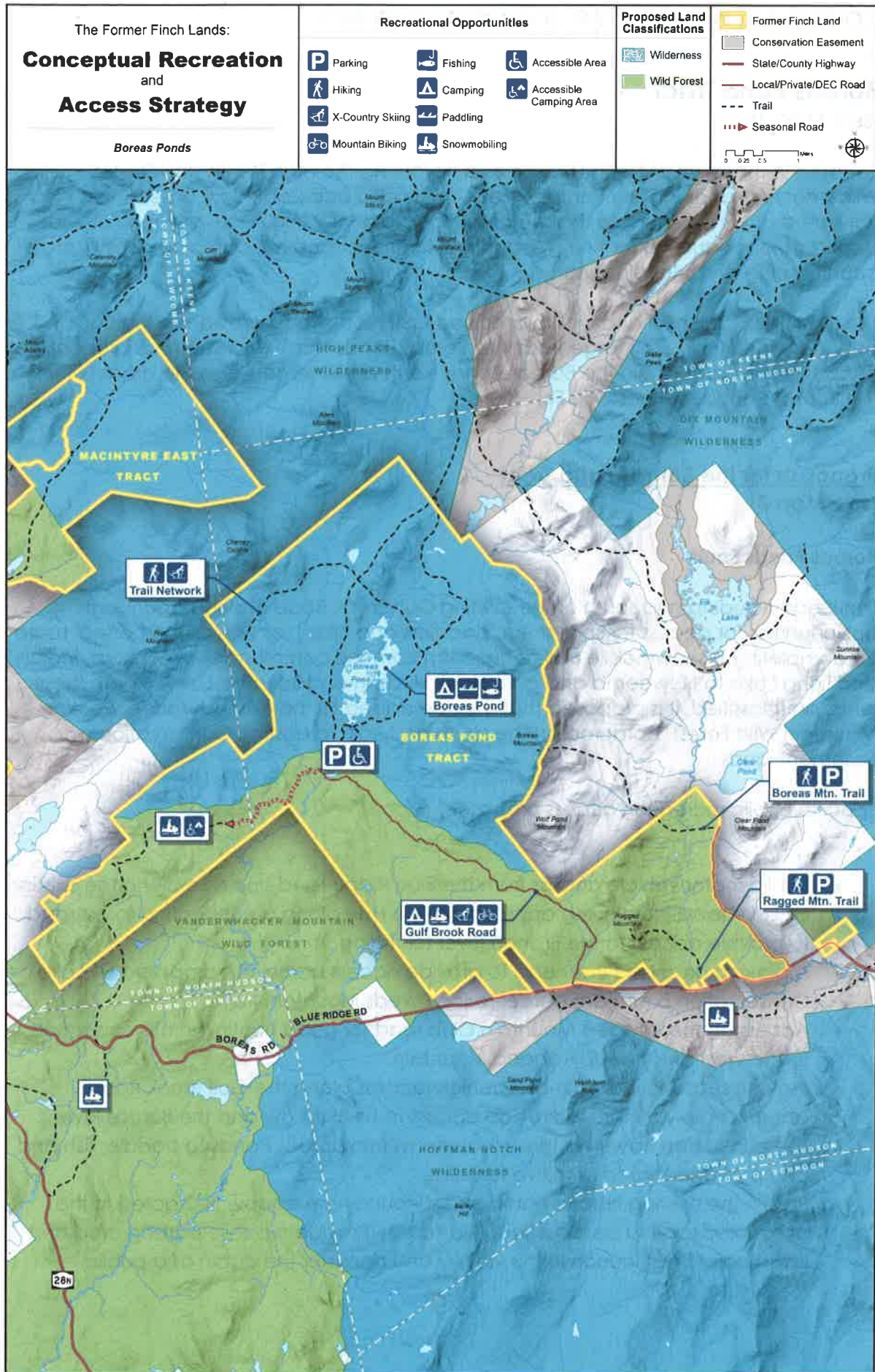
(see Map 4)

Boreas Ponds South

The lands including and south of the existing Gulf Brook Road provide abundant opportunities for access for sportsmen, paddlers and hikers, as well as the perfect route for completing a snowmobile trail connection from the communities of Minerva, Indian and Long Lake to Newcomb and onto North Hudson and Schroon Lake. When these lands are classified, it is proposed that they be added to the existing Vanderwacker Mountain Wild Forest, bordered on the south and east to existing Conservation Easement lands.

Specific public recreation access proposals:

- Public motor vehicle access from the Blue Ridge road one mile along the existing Elk Lake road, continuing approximately a mile along a connecting forest road to provide access to the Branch River for fishing.
- A parking area and trail head to provide access across the proposed Elk Lake Conservation Easement parcel to the Boreas Mountain trail.
- Access on the Ragged Mountain Club road for good hunting in the cedar flats to the west and trail up Ragged Mountain.
- Provide seasonal public motor vehicle access along the Gulf Brook Road approximately 5 miles to provide access to La Bier Flow and the Boreas River. The public can travel via these waterways into Boreas Ponds to paddle, fish and camp at designated primitive tentsites.
- Retain the existing historic cabin and surrounding meadow (1-2 acres) in the areas proposed to be classified Wild Forest. Provide a public parking area and hand carry boat launch in this vicinity and consider the cabin as a public



information center or location for a seasonal Assistant Forest Ranger or Backcountry Steward presence. The site provides for a good area for parking and public information center.

- A Primitive Corridor for administrative access from the historic cabin along the existing gravel road to the area of the existing dam at the south end of Boreas Pond. The Boreas Pond Dam is in good condition but will require maintenance into the future to provide for water based recreation and fishing on Boreas Pond.
- Seasonal public motor vehicle access for fall hunting and trapping along the length of the Gulf Brook Road, extending west from the La Bier Flow area for camping at designated, permitted, roadside primitive tentsites along this road.
- Connect the snowmobile trail system coming from Minerva and Newcomb through the existing Vanderwacker Wild Forest to the west end of the Boreas Pond South parcel, onto the Gulf Brook Road. Winter snowmobile access would continue onto the Conservation Easement lands to the southeast and to tie this community connection snowmobile trail into North Hudson, to points southeast in Schroon Lake and north to the Lake Champlain region.

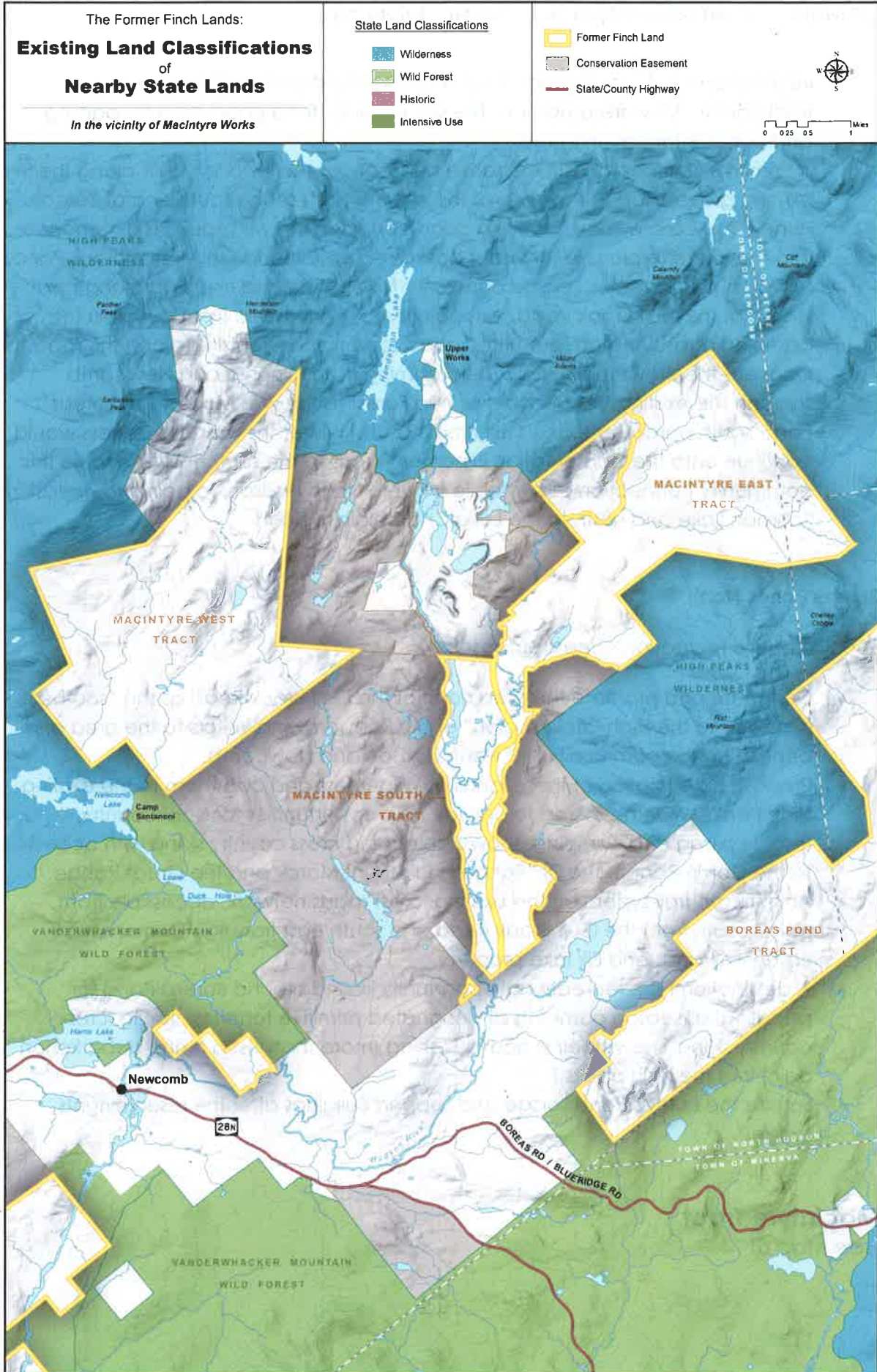
Boreas Ponds North

Specific public recreation access proposals:

- Designate and promote the area north of the Gulf Brook Road as the "southern gateway to the High Peaks region" of the Park, drawing visitors to the area and benefitting the communities of North Hudson and Newcomb.
- Propose classification of these lands as Wilderness and add them to the existing High Peaks Wilderness Area to provide new opportunities for backcountry, remote hiking and camping, snowshoeing and cross country skiing with access to the Colvin Range, the Dix Range and Mount Marcy and the Great Range.
- An intricate trail system on the existing forest roads network, accessible from points south from the Gulf Brook Road and south east from the Conservation Easement lands and Elk lake property.
- A destination type recreational opportunity in and around Boreas Pond for paddling, all season camping at designated primitive tentsites, fishing, cross country skiing, snowshoeing and ice fishing (more than just a hiking debarkation point into the high peaks.)
- Surplus the Boreas Pond Lodge and Support Buildings after the reserve rights expire.

Macintyre Tract

(see Map 5)



The Macintyre tract includes three fee purchase areas which provide access to Conservation Easements lands southeast and southwest and Forest Preserve Wilderness areas northeast and northwest.

Proposals for the Macintyre Tract
(See Map 6)

Macintyre South

The Delaware and Hudson (Tahawus Line) rail corridor traverses south to north in this parcel as does the Hudson River where it meets with the Opalescent River. The Opalescent River Road heads east from the Tahawus Road over the fee property, crossing a bridge over the Hudson River and then bordering the Opalescent River before it exits the fee property onto conservation easement lands. This road provides access to the private property encumbered by the Conservation Easement for timber management purposes and for the Opalescent Club (recreational lessees). This land within the Macintyre South portion of this tract is proposed to be classified as Wild Forest, added to the existing Vanderwacker Wild Forest.

Specific public recreation access proposals:

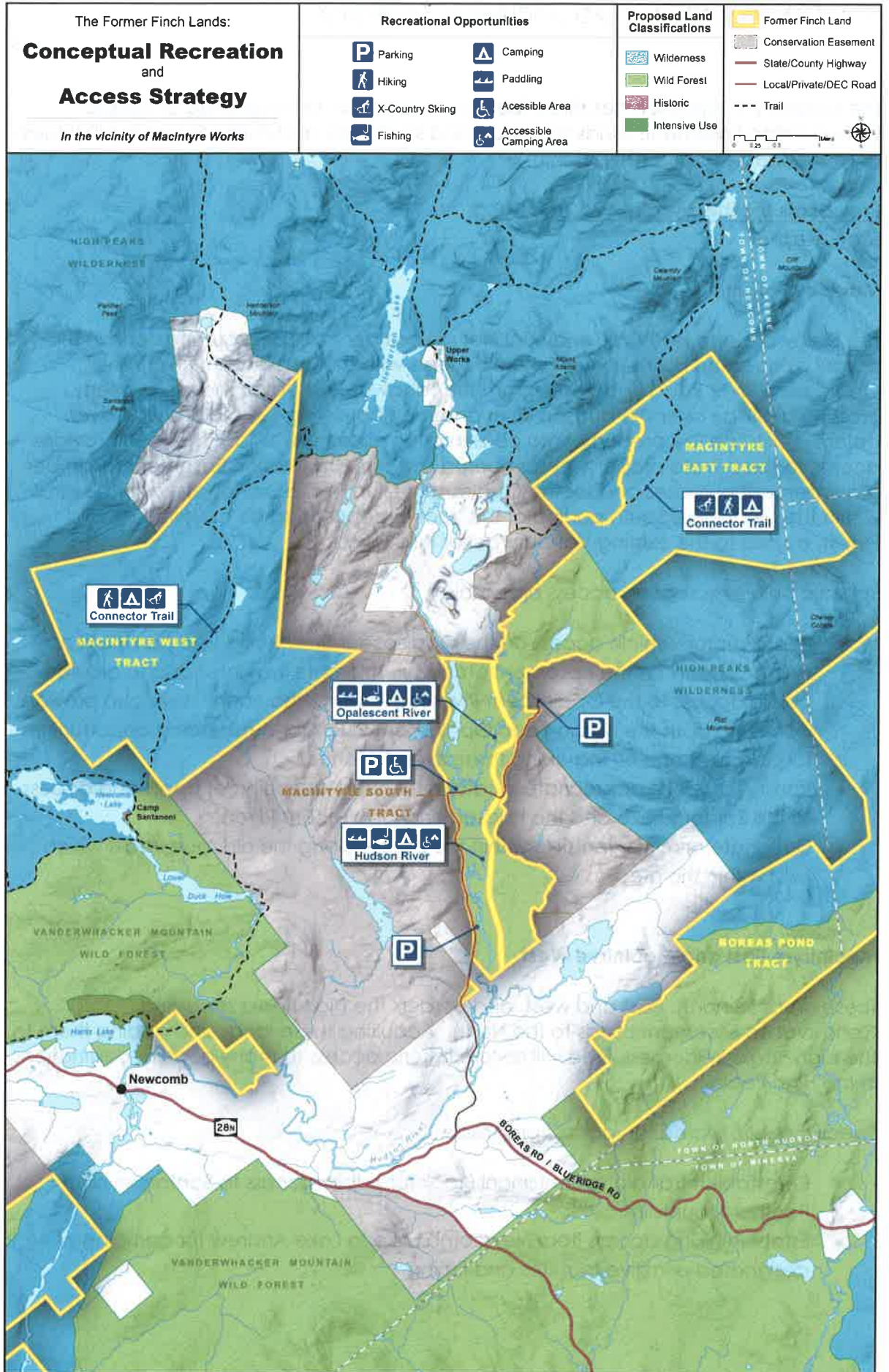
- Public motor vehicle access on the Opalescent River Road to a parking area and trail head on the easement property. This route was intended to provide public access to the Opalescent River fee lands to the north. It will also provide access to both the Hudson and Opalescent Rivers for outstanding opportunities for paddling and fishing along these river stretches.
- Parking areas at appropriate locations for hand launching of boats and access to the Sanford Lake and the Hudson and Opalescent Rivers.
- Designate primitive tentsites within the parcel along the old roads/trails which exist within this area.

Macintyre East and Macintyre West

These areas lie north, east and west, and borders the High Peaks area and Conservation Easement Lands to the North. Acquiring these lands and adding them to the High Peaks Wilderness Area will restore historic access to many popular destinations in the High Peaks.

Specific public recreation access proposals:

- Re-establish trail along Santanoni Brook for public access to Santanoni and Panther Mountains.
- Establish hiking access from Newcomb Lake to Lake Andrew for camping at designated primitive tentsites and fishing.



- Restore historic access to Mount Allen in the High Peaks Wilderness area from a parking area and trailhead leading from the neighboring Conservation Easement Lands.
- Camping at designated primitive tentsites throughout the area for year round use including on Lake Andrew and along Sucker and Dudley Brooks.

Southern Tracts

(see Map 7)

Thousand-Acre Swamp (Town of Edinburgh, 1,250 acres) – This Saratoga County tract, to be added to the Wilcox Lake Wild Forest, provides habitat for moose and a host of other wildlife. The town of Edinburg is already planning for an accessible boardwalk for outdoor recreation/wildlife viewing in anticipation of state ownership. At the Town's request, TNC intends to retain rights for a new snowmobile connector across this tract linking into the popular Mulleyville snowmobile trail system.

Pennyork Lumber Tract (Town of Greenfield, 140 acres) – Along with the Daniel's road tract (below), this parcel will help Saratoga County complete the proposed Palmertown Range Trail, a proposed multiple use trail connecting Moreau Lake State Park with Saratoga Spa State Park. The trail concept is included in the Town of Greenfield Comprehensive Plan and the Saratoga County Green Infrastructure Plan. This tract will become part of the Lincoln Mountain State Forest.

Daniels Road Tract (Town of Greenfield, 540 acres) – This tract just north of the city of Saratoga Springs could easily accommodate mountain biking and other multi-use trails in an area experiencing development pressures. The Saratoga Mountain Biking Association currently maintains 18 miles of mountain biking trails for exclusive use by its 350 members. This tract will become a new State Forest area.

Benson Road Tract (Town of Mayfield, 3,800 acres) – The Town of Mayfield is updating its Comprehensive Plan, and town officials are particularly interested in the potential this tract holds for securing two snowmobile connectors, providing fishing access to Stony Creek, and the opportunity to create a network of non-motorized (hiking, skiing, mountain biking and horseback riding) trails which might eventually link to the Town beach on Lake Sacandaga. This tract is to be added to the Shaker Mountain Wild Forest.

