



Board of Directors

February 7, 2023

Charles Clusen
Chair

Michael Marsh, Forester
NYS DEC
225 North Main Street
Herkimer NY 13350

James McMartin Long
Michael Wilson
Vice-Chairs

Barbara Rottier
Secretary

Re: Pigeon Lake Wilderness Draft Work Plans

David Quinn
Treasurer

Dear Michael,

Nancy Bernstein
John Caffry
Andy Coney
Dean Cook
James C. Dawson
Lorraine Duvall
Robert Glennon
Roger Gray
Evelyn Greene
Sidney Haring
Dale Jeffers
Mark Lawton
John Nemjo
Peter O'Shea
Philip Terrie
Chris Walsh

Protect the Adirondacks has reviewed the draft Work Plans prepared by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) for several proposed projects in the Pigeon Lake Wilderness noticed in the January 25, 2023 Environmental Notice Bulletin. We appreciate the opportunity to review and comment on these draft Work Plans that provide clarity about the work that DEC proposes to perform on Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack Park. We offer the following comments for your consideration prior to finalizing the Work Plans.

Cascade Lake Trail

Staff

The purpose of the Cascade Lake Trail Turnpike II and III proposals is to address problems of trail widening, erosion, rutting and impact to vegetation as a result of significant public use and difficulty keeping the trail surface dry and drained. The trail work is being designed, in part, to support equestrian use even though the Unit Management Plan (October 1992) designates the southern portion of the Cascade Lake Trail as a cross country ski trail and hiking trail and not as an equestrian trail. The UMP (p. 70) states that "horses are allowed to use that portion of the Cascade Lake Trail from the Big Moose Road to the northwest shore of Cascade Lake", and that "[w]hile use [by horseback riders] is estimated to be light, resource impacts can be proportionately high when compared to other recreational activities".

Peter Bauer
Executive Director

Claudia K. Braymer,
Esq.
Deputy Director

The Cascade Lake Trail Turnpike II proposal involves the construction of a turnpike on either side of a stream corridor on the existing Cascade Lake Trail. The turnpike will be 60 feet long and consist of a geotextile fabric bottom, coarse rock, and crushed rock base layers capped with mineral soil to a maximum height of one foot above the natural grade. The Work Plan indicates that there will be no cutting of trees 3" DBH or above, but it does

Christopher Amato,
Esq.
**Conservation Director
and Counsel**

not state if there will be any cutting of trees 1" DBH or above. The Work Plan states that no motorized vehicles or equipment will be used.

The Cascade Lake Trail Turnpike III proposal involves the construction of a turnpike through a wet section of the existing Cascade Lake Trail. The turnpike will be 90 feet long and consist of a geotextile fabric bottom, coarse rock, and crushed rock base layers capped with mineral soil to a maximum height of one foot above the natural grade. The Work Plan indicates that there will be no cutting of trees 1" DBH or above and that no motorized vehicles or equipment will be used.

DEC's draft Forest Preserve Work Plan Policy requires that proposed new structures and improvements must be identified and authorized in an approved UMP. The proposed modifications to the Cascade Lake Trail, that essentially create a new equestrian trail by modifying terrain and placing a fabric bottom, coarse rock and crushed rock, are not authorized in the current UMP, and they should not be undertaken unless and until the UMP is amended to allow this new trail. It is questionable that a new horse trail at this location would be consistent with the State Land Master Plan (SLMP) because the SLMP prescribes that new horse trails are to be "limited to those that can be developed by conversion of appropriate abandoned roads". SLMP p. 24. In addition, this may not be an appropriate place for a new horse trail due to the wetness and ecological sensitivity of the area.

Moreover, there should be carrying capacity analysis to ensure that the natural resources and visitors' experiences will not be adversely impacted by these potentially conflicting user groups, and that the level of visitor use that has caused the problems is adequately being addressed by this Work Plan. In addition, DEC should count the trees 1"-3" DBH and above that will be cut (if any) and report that in the Work Plan for the Cascade Lake Trail Turnpike II proposal. DEC should also indicate in the Cascade Lake Trail Turnpike II Work Plan whether motorized equipment will be used.

Windfall Pond Trail – Foot Bridge Replacement

The purpose of the Windfall Pond Outlet Bridge Replacement is to replace a foot bridge across the Windfall Pond Outlet on the Windfall Pond Trail. The proposed 3' x 30' bridge will replace a 3' x 24' bridge that is deteriorating and will be removed. The Work Plan indicates that there will be no trees 1" DBH or greater cut, and states that there will be motorized hand tools, but no motorized vehicles, used for the proposal, which involves bringing treated poles and dimensional lumber to the site. We appreciate that DEC is proposing to use a draft horse to move the materials to the site.

Note that the use of motorized equipment, while confined to off-peak season, requires the written approval of the Commissioner of DEC pursuant to the SLMP (p. 25). The Work Plan does not indicate that such approval has been obtained (in fact, the Work Plan incorrectly states that Commissioner approval is not needed). Therefore, the work should not be undertaken with motorized equipment until written approval of the Commissioner is received.

Constable Pond-West Mountain Trail – Foot Bridge Replacement

The purpose of the Constable Creek Foot Bridge Replacement is to replace a foot bridge across the Constable Creek on the Constable Pond-West Mountain Trail. The proposed 3' x 44' bridge replaces a 3' x 41' bridge that had deteriorated and was removed. The Work Plan indicates that there will be no trees 1" DBH or greater cut and states that there will be motorized hand tools, but no motorized vehicles, used for the proposal, which involves bringing treated poles and dimensional lumber to the site. We appreciate that DEC is proposing to use a draft horse to move the materials to the site.

Again, note that the use of motorized equipment, while confined to off-peak season, requires the written approval of the Commissioner of DEC pursuant to the SLMP (p. 25). The Work Plan does not indicate that such approval has been obtained (in fact, the Work Plan incorrectly states that Commissioner approval is not needed). Therefore, the work should not be undertaken with motorized equipment until written approval of the Commissioner is received.

On behalf of the Board of Directors of Protect the Adirondacks, please accept our gratitude for the opportunity to share our comments on these draft Work Plans.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claudia K. Braymer".

Claudia Braymer,
Deputy Director