



Adirondack Park Agency

SHERMAN CRAIG
Chairman

TERRY MARTINO
Executive Director

DRAFT MINUTES
State Land Committee
July 13, 2017
Agency Meeting
KF:KDR:mp

State Land Committee July 13, 2017

The State Land Committee convened at 9:30 am.

State Land Committee Members Present:

Chad Dawson, Acting Chair, Arthur Lussi, William Thomas and Robert Stegemann (DEC)

Absent - Karen Feldman

Other Members and Designees Present:

Sherman Craig, Chairman, Daniel Wilt, John Ernst, Barbara Rice, Bradley Austin (DED) and Lynne Mahoney (DOS)

Local Government Review Board

Frederick Monroe, Executive Director

Agency Staff Present:

Terry Martino, Executive Director, James Townsend, Kathy Regan, Walt Linck, Matt McNamara and Mary Palmer

Approval of May 2017 Draft Minutes

By motion of Mr. Lussi, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the June minutes were unanimously approved with one typographical correction.

Deputy Director Report

Ms. Regan commended the Department on the public comment period for the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest. She said they are having availability sessions in the afternoon followed by public meetings and presentations in the evening. This enables people to look at maps, documents, and talk to staff one-on-one prior to the formal presentation.

Ms. Regan said DEC and APA staff will present four items for action: Buck Pond and Caroga Campground UMPs which staff will ask the Board for adoption of the Resolution with the State Land Master Plan (SLMP); Blue Mountain Wild Forest and Siamese Ponds Wilderness/Jessup River Wild Forest are UMP amendments, which staff will also ask for adoption of conformance with the SLMP.

Ms. Regan noted that the UMPs were presented to the Board in May and were all out for simultaneous public comment.

Buck Pond Campground

Josh Houghton (DEC) gave a brief overview of the proposed final UMP. Some of the proposed management actions include: replacing four comfort stations; replacing the ticket booth; improving the boat launch; replacing the playground in the day-use area; rehabilitating fifteen campsites with four of them meeting universal standards; replacing the main waterline and burying overhead power lines. Also proposed is construction of a universally accessible trail.

Mr. Houghton said they received four public comments. Three were general suggestions and one strongly objected to the closure of one of the island campsites. No changes were made to the UMP as a result of the comments.

Mr. Stegemann commended staff for the coordination of making an accessible trail at DeBar Mountain. He noted that he would like to see that accommodation be made for other UMPs in the future.

Ms. Rice asked if there is a timeline for the work. Mr. Houghton said as with all proposed management actions, the first step is approval and then securing the funding. There is no specific timeline.

Mr. McNamara (APA) reminded the Board that the context of reviewing campground UMPs includes consideration of the generic campground UMP which is applicable to all campgrounds.

Mr. McNamara said the Agency did not receive any public comments related to SLMP conformance. The one comment that both agencies shared was the objection to the closure of one of the island campsites. Closure of that campsite brings the UMP into conformance with respect to separation guidelines for primitive tent sites.

Mr. McNamara said Agency staff recommend the UMP be found in conformance with the guidelines and criteria of the SLMP.

Mr. Lussi asked if people have to reserve the island campsite. Mr. Houghton said they do. There were management issues on the island. Staff believe having one less site may also help to reduce these problems.

Dr. Dawson asked for a motion for approval.

By motion of Mr. Stegemann, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the UMP Resolution was unanimously approved.

Caroga Lake Campground

Mr. Houghton gave a brief overview of the proposed final UMP. Some of the management actions include: converting three campsites to universal design; replacing overhead power lines with an underground system; installing backup power systems for water and sewer; replacing fencing; rehabilitating the seawall; rehabilitating twenty campsites and installing information on invasives and a drop box at the boat launch.

Mr. Houghton said staff received two public comments, both which were outside the scope of the UMP.

Mr. Ernst asked why the satisfaction rate for the campground was low. Mr. Houghton said the campground is showing its age and was developed prior to State ownership. An additional factor might include its location and that it is a very dense campground.

Mr. Stegemann commented that improving the septic all within one season has made it a painful year, but doing so should enable the campground to reopen soon. He applauded staff for starting the work as soon as the problem occurred.

Mr. Linck said the Agency received no public comments and staff recommend the UMP be found in conformance with the guidelines and criteria of the SLMP.

By motion of Mr. Lussi, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the UMP Resolution was unanimously approved.

Blue Mountain Wild Forest UMP Amendment

Josh Clague (DEC) noted that this is an amendment to the 1995 UMP.

Mr. Clague gave a brief overview of the proposed final UMP amendment. Some of the management actions include: the addition of an accessible tent site on Lake Durant; constructing a spur trail into Long Lake off of the Northville-Placid Trail; the addition of a new lean-to on the Northville-Placid Trail; and modifications to Blue Mountain summit facilities.

Mr. Clague said two comments were received for the accessible tent site. One was in support of the amendment and the other wanted assurance that DEC was not providing any camping equipment for people using that lean to, which they do not.

Mr. Clague said several comments were received for the trail spur both in support and with concern. The most notable concern was with the route being identified in other reports which were not reviewed by the public in a SEQRA process and should not be used to make recommendations. The Department response to this was that this proposal did reference the Hut-to-Hut report because staff felt like it provided a context for the trail. However, this trail does stand alone and provides benefits, regardless if anything in the Hut-to-Hut report is implemented.

Mr. Clague said the Department regularly engages with partners to implement projects like this and in consultation with Agency staff felt that this proposal does conform to the SLMP. Department attorneys have stated that projects that stand on their own can be introduced in a UMP.

Mr. Thomas noted the reference to Hut-to-Hut Connection and asked if the report would be the subject of a future discussion for these lands. Mr. Clague said the report identifies a number of concepts including the use of trails to connect communities where trails do not exist.

Mr. Stegemann said it is routine for the Department to try to connect communities to the Forest Preserve.

Mr. Thomas asked if they would be endorsing Hut-to-Hut by approving the amendment. Mr. Clague said staff are only asking for conformance approval for this amendment, not the entire report. The reference was only given for the public to understand how it fits into a larger set of proposals that can be implemented.

Ms. Regan said before the Hut-to-Hut report came out staff were advocating how to connect communities to the Forest Preserve. This trail would provide a connection showing how you can get the community into the Forest Preserve and users of the Forest Preserve into the community.

Mr. Craig reminded the Board that their job today is to make sure this plan conforms with the SLMP.

Mr. Ernst commented that the Board is being asked for approval by reference with no SEQRA process and suggested striking the reference of Hut-to-Hut without making any changes to the UMP. Dr. Dawson agreed.

Dr. Dawson noted that the Board is uncomfortable with the reference of Hut-to-Hut or Hamlet-to-Hut because it has never come up as a policy issue. It seems like it is going to keep coming up and suggested the need for more strategic discussion.

Mr. Stegemann said the reference to Hut-to-Hut does not dismiss the SEQRA process and it provides a helpful context to the public as they look at these trails.

Mr. Townsend noted that the Department is aware of the criticisms. They have also said that we have two jobs: one is to determine conformance with the SLMP and the second is SEQRA. He suggested adding a paragraph to the resolution that says "historically it has been the approach of this Agency and the Department to connect communities to the Forest Preserve" and asked if that would address the Board's concerns. Mr. Ernst said that is a reasonable solution.

Mr. Clague said the comments received for the lean-to and summit facilities proposals were positive.

Mr. Monroe asked if anyone confirmed with Hamilton County that the radio building was no longer in use. Tom Martin (DEC) said all of the Hamilton County radio equipment and antennas have been moved from the block building.

Mr. Linck noted that this proposal will be a significant improvement. The agency received two public comments which did not relate to the summit, but to the Great South Woods Plan (GSW) and the Hut-to-Hut.

Mr. Linck said staff recommend the UMP be found in conformance with the guidelines and criteria of the SLMP.

Mr. Thomas asked if the GSW and Hut-to-Hut are just conceptual plans at this time and if the DEC will be following up on that as part of their planning process. Mr. Stegemann said the GSW is just that, only a plan, not a generic UMP. Pieces of the plan will eventually be looked at and included in a UMP amendment if appropriate.

Dr. Dawson said they would wait until the end of the next UMP to vote on the approval of this UMP so they will be able to hear the paragraph that would be added to the resolution.

Siamese Ponds Wilderness and Jessup River Wild Forest UMP Amendments

Kirstin Seleen (DEC) gave a brief overview of the proposed final UMP amendment.

Ms. Seleen said fourteen positive comments were received for the installation of a gate at the bat cave entrance.

Ms. Seleen said several comments were received for the Wakely Brook Trail, which also references the Hut-to-Hut report asking if the Department is implementing the entire report.

Ms. Seleen said another proposal is to formalize a little over seven miles of existing trails that are currently unmarked. About half of them are sections of the North Country National Scenic Trail.

Ms. Seleen said there is a proposal to retain the Eastern Puffer Pond Lean-to. The UMP previously called for its removal, but the Department decided to retain it because it is a popular destination and the site is sustainable. Some repairs to the lean to will be needed and when those occur, the lean to will be moved back a minimum of 100 feet from the mean high water mark.

Ms. Seleen said there is a proposal for a community connector trail that would connect the Siamese Ponds Wilderness trail system to within three miles of the Town of Indian Lake. This proposal also has the same issues discussed earlier regarding reference to Hut-to-Hut.

Ms. Seleen said a fifty-five foot bridge over the East Branch of the Sacandaga River washed out. Several public comments stated that they use it frequently in the winter for skiing. Staff prefer to leave the trail where it is and monitor it for resource degradation and safety concerns. Following this monitoring, the Department would decide between re-routing the trail or replacing the bridge.

Ms. Seleen said the seventh management proposal is the re-route of Clear Pond Trail to bring the trail off the road and make a completed loop. She added that this trail may become a good ski trail.

Ms. Seleen said the Department received many positive comments as well as comments similar to those mentioned in the Blue Mountain WF amendment regarding large scale planning and the SEQRA process.

Mr. Linck said the Agency received three comments with the same planning and SEQRA concerns. Staff recommend the UMP be found in conformance with the guidelines and criteria of the SLMP.

Mr. Ernst said he had the same concern about approving by reference.

There was a discussion on the wording for the resolutions for both the Blue Mountain and Siamese Ponds UMP Amendments.

After agreement on the additional paragraph(s) for each resolution as drafted and read by Mr. Townsend, by motion of Mr. Lussi, seconded by Mr. Thomas, the resolution for Blue Mountain Wild Forest UMP Amendment was unanimously approved for conformance with the SLMP.

By motion of Mr. Lussi, seconded by Mr. Stegemann, the resolution for Siamese Ponds Wilderness and Jessup River Wild Forest UMP Amendments was unanimously approved for conformance with the SLMP.

Old Business

Dr. Dawson commented that they are still waiting on the classification and suggested that the Boreas Tract be separated from the remaining parcels in the classification package. He said the majority are not controversial and could be ruled on separately. Dr. Dawson renewed his request to separate action on these parcels.

Mr. Craig said the issue has been raised with those involved. After looking at all of the staff information, all the comments received, and the public meetings that were held it was found that we needed to do some additional field work. There seems to be no advantage of separating the parcels.

Dr. Dawson asked Agency Counsel if the Board could vote on them separately and if they could be separate actions with separate resolutions.

Mr. Townsend said the classification package contains two separate actions: the acceptance of the FSEIS and a resolution to amend the SLMP. The Board will be asked to approve one FSEIS which is its own package and needs to be approved on its own. The SLMP action will allow separate considerations of classification and re-classification proposals by a separate resolution.

Mr. Townsend added that the Board will be adopting a recommendation to send to the governor. The Board can withhold, approve all or some, depending on the will of the Board.

New Business

None

Dr. Dawson, acting Committee Chair, adjourned the meeting at 11:10 am.