



Adirondack Park Agency

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

TERRY MARTINO
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: Terry Martino, Executive Director

FROM: Kevin Prickett, Environmental Program Specialist 1 (Natural Resources)

DATE: October 5, 2021

RE: Staff Review of the September 2021 Proposed Final UMP Amendment for Fish Creek Pond Public Campground

Staff have completed review of the September 2021 Proposed Final Draft Unit Management Plan for the Fish Creek Pond Public Campground and recommend a determination by the Agency Board that the Unit Management Plan (UMP) complies with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP).

The UMP proposes the following management actions:

- replace six comfort stations: ## 3, 7, 13, 17, 24, 29;
- reconstruct roads to accommodate two-way traffic and repave roads;
- replace bathhouse;
- construct a new caretaker cabin;
- reconstruct a trailered boat launch in day-use area;
- expand extra car parking sites;
- make improvements at amphitheater;
- improve bike path;
- construct parking lot at Floodwood trailhead;
- extend internet connection through campground to Rollins Pond for administrative use;
- add utility sinks to all comfort stations;
- continue shoreline stabilization;
- plant trees and shrubs; and
- campsite restoration.

Agency staff worked with DEC staff to assure compliance with the APSLMP, including avoiding wetlands by providing the DEC with more accurate wetland mapping of the campground.

On May 14, 2021 the Agency Board authorized staff to proceed to public comment for the proposed UMP. The public comment period ran through June 14, 2021. Fifteen public comments (i.e., emails and letters) were received during this period.

Comments received regarding the proposed boat launch included concerns about keeping a hand launch opportunity and the need to upgrade the existing boat launch. Others expressed concerns that the proposed boat launch relocation does not include steps to address prevention or introduction of Aquatic Invasive Species. Some commenters expressed concerns about the proposed road management affecting the character of the campground. The need for an assessment of carrying capacity was also expressed in the public comments. Agency staff believe that these concerns have been adequately addressed.

Staff evaluated the proposal to maintain the current boat launching site as a fishing and waterway access site and found the proposal warranted given the need for such access to that area. Staff also evaluated the proposal to relocate the boat launch near the fishing pier west of the day-use parking lot and concluded the proposal will provide the benefits outlined in the UMP including reducing congestion, providing a more functional launch area, affording adequate parking, and reducing traffic in the campsite loops.

As part of ensuring the preservation of the natural resources of the area, Agency staff evaluated management steps to address aquatic invasive species (AIS). Staff evaluated the following management steps identified in the UMP to address AIS: partnerships, regulations, signage and education, funding, and infrastructure.

The UMP notes the partnerships that are instrumental in the DEC's effort to monitor and prevent the spread of invasive species, including work with Upper Saranac Lake Association, the Upper Saranac Foundation (USF), the Adirondack Watershed Institute and other organizations. DEC works cooperatively with the USF to assist efforts to control milfoil and its spread. DEC, through the Invasive Species Rapid Response and Control Grant, supports the USF efforts to remove Eurasian watermilfoil (EWM) and variable leaf milfoil (VLM).

New York State regulations require all boaters clean, drain, and dry their boats before launching into public waterbodies including Fish Creek Pond and Fish Creek. The UMP identifies that standard signage intended to remind boaters of regulatory requirements will remain in place at the existing boat launch and DEC plans to utilize similar signage at the proposed new boat launch. The UMP includes a proposal for locating infrastructure associated with aquatic invasive species monitoring and a boat washing station as part of the proposed boat launch reconstruction. DEC has conveyed to APA staff that it is DEC's intent to provide a decontamination station at Fish Creek Pond when the launch is constructed and other factors (e.g., budget and resources) are addressed.

Agency staff considered construction details, the current conditions of the roads, and proposals in other approved UMPs as part of reviewing the proposal to repave all 5.4 miles of the campground roads and add gravel on the shoulders. Staff evaluated the proposed road reconstruction's impact as part of providing outdoor recreational pursuits in a setting and on scale that are in harmony with the relatively wild and undeveloped character of the Adirondack Park. Furthermore, staff evaluated whether the proposed management actions will minimize extensive topographic alterations and limit vegetative clearing.

Agency staff worked closely with DEC staff on the campsite restoration management action to ensure conformance with the APSLMP, which requires that each individual campsite retain the natural character of the surrounding forest and that "any new, reconstructed or relocated camping sites will be set back a minimum of 100 feet from the mean high water mark and will be located so as to be reasonably screened from the shoreline and so as to avoid intruding on its natural character or public enjoyment and use thereof." DEC, in consultation with the Agency, will select a minimum of nine campsites per year at Fish Creek Pond for temporary closure for the purpose of rehabilitation to render the site's character similar to the surrounding forest. Rehabilitation work will include stabilizing shorelines; maintaining the campsite surface to reduce erosion, soil loss and soil compaction; revegetating the site (between sites and along shorelines); and replacing fireplaces and picnic tables. Upgrading sites to meet current accessibility standards for persons with disabilities will be given priority. Individual campsites may be relocated or closed.

Within the next four years DEC staff, in consultation with Agency staff, will develop visitor use management and wildlands monitoring guidance to support the planning and management of Intensive Use Areas in the Adirondack Park, consistent with the federal Interagency Visitor Use Management planning framework. The guidance will identify desired conditions, indicators, and standards for the management of Intensive Use Area campsites, and will then be incorporated into this and other Intensive Use Area UMPs.

The UMP also lists an anticipated future management action, to propose to reclassify approximately 30-50 acres of lands between Fish Creek Pond and Rollins Pond campgrounds from Wild Forest to Intensive Use Area to eliminate the existing non-conforming uses. We expect this proposal will be presented in the Rollins Pond Campground UMP.

Staff recommend adoption by the Agency Board of the attached resolution determining that the September 2021 Proposed Final UMP conforms to the general guidelines and criteria of the APSLMP.