



Department of
Environmental
Conservation

Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor

Proposed Final Amendment

to the

1996 Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan

Final Supplemental
Environmental Impact Statement

River Area Management Plans

for the

Main Branch of the Saranac River, the Main Branch of the Raquette River, Middle Branch of the Moose River, North Branch of the Moose River, South Branch of the Moose River, and Main Branch of the Moose River

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- NYSDEC and OGS will build the trail segments as engineering design and yearly NYSDEC funding permit.
- NYSDEC will oversee the administration, monitoring, and maintenance of the Adirondack Rail Trail.
- NYS DOT will transfer administration of all use and occupancy (U&O) permits including utility, private property owners, businesses, NYS Snowmobile Association, etc. within the TLLP segment to NYSDEC.

4. 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act

New York State agencies are committed to ensuring all programs consider the future physical risks from climate change in order to protect New Yorkers and our environment. Under the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York State committed to eliminating greenhouse gas emissions in the state and to ultimately achieve net zero emissions. The Act extends and enhances a number of New York's successful clean energy initiatives. It codifies Governor Cuomo's ambitious goals to accelerate the development of wind and solar power, increase energy efficiency, and facilitate the growth of energy storage technology.

In accordance with Section 7 of the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, the management actions proposed in this 2020 UMP Amendment/SEIS have taken climate change, greenhouse gas emissions, and the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act into consideration in the following ways:

- The Act requires a Statewide reduction in greenhouse gas emissions of 40% by 2030 and 85% by 2050. To that end, the extremely limited transportation function that this Corridor represents in the Statewide context constitutes minimal greenhouse gas emissions when compared to the transportation systems of larger population hubs in the State, especially New York City.
- Both train service and the rail trail are tourist attractions intended to attract non-local visitors, who will usually be transported to the region in the form of electric- and gas-powered automobiles.
- Train service will start again south of Tupper Lake (45 miles), for the first time since the 1980 Olympics. The number of trips per year is unknown at this time.
- Train service will be removed north of Tupper Lake (34 miles). Service had been provided intermittently since the 1980 Olympics.
- Snowmobiles have been permitted to use the entire 119-mile Corridor from December 1st through April 30th since the early 1990's. Snowmobiles will continue to be permitted during this same period each year, unless such permit(s) are revoked by the State.
- The State acknowledges that the Corridor may be the single most important snowmobile trail in the Adirondack Park because since it connects multiple communities that depend on snowmobiles for a winter economy. It is also one of the most appropriate trails for snowmobile use in the Park as it was built to withstand heavy transportation use.

- Overall snowmobile use is decreasing Statewide, most likely due to climate change and diminishing snow accumulations compared to historical winter snow levels. This is demonstrated by a downward trend in snowmobile registrations since its peak in the early 2000's. Despite the likelihood that the TLLP Segment will be more attractive to snowmobilers with removal of the tracks, it is impossible to predict the change in snowmobile numbers in the Corridor because it is counterbalanced by diminishing snow accumulation trends and a decrease in the number of snowmobilers statewide. Fewer snowmobilers statewide likely means fewer snowmobilers in the Corridor. See NYS OPRHP Snowmobile Unit Season Report 2017-2018 for snowmobile registration trends in New York State (page 15) <https://parks.ny.gov/recreation/snowmobiles/documents/OPRHPSnowmobileSeasonReport20172018.pdf>.
- The rail-trail north of Tupper Lake encourages non-motorized travel as the main attraction: walking, running, bicycling, and cross-country skiing. The State anticipates a potential decrease in local automobile traffic by residents and tourists between Tri-Lakes communities and campgrounds, and an increase in recreation and commuting in the Corridor (extent unknown).

Taking the above list of project attributes into consideration, with implementation of this plan the State does not expect overall greenhouse gas emissions to change from pre-implementation conditions. With respect to climate change, and in careful consideration of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, the State concludes that any potential negative impacts associated with the preferred alternative in this 2020 UMP Amendment/SEIS are not substantial enough to warrant mitigation or a change in the management actions.

E. SEQOR

The 1996 UMP/EIS is supplemented herein by the discussion of potential environmental impacts (Chapter VIII) and measures proposed to mitigate such impacts (Chapter IX).

One of the basic purposes of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) is to incorporate the consideration of environmental factors at an early stage of project development. This often means that an environmental impact statement (EIS) would be prepared before final detailed plans are available. As a general rule, the amount of detail regarding a specific impact in an EIS should depend on the magnitude and importance of the impact. Although final plans are not necessary, the EIS should contain enough detail on size, location and elements of the proposal to allow an understanding of the proposed action, the associated impacts and the effectiveness of the proposed mitigation.

The adoption of this 2020 UMP Amendment/SEIS will serve as a roadmap for obtaining all required permits for the proposed management actions, in coordination and consultation with all involved agencies. Detailed design and work plans will be shared and coordinated with other involved agencies as they are developed pursuant to the 2020 UMP Amendment/SEIS.

Trail Connections

Many existing trail systems intersect with the project corridor. The Adirondack Rail Trail will provide a new access opportunity for these local and regional trail systems. Identification signage will be located at each trail junction to assist trail users in wayfinding among the various trail opportunities.

Two proposed trail connections are being investigated to connect the Fish Creek/Rollins Pond Campgrounds to the trail. The northern connection occurs at the northern end of the campground and involves an approximately ¼-mile trail connection through forested lands to the Adirondack Rail Trail. The proposed trail will be ADA-accessible with one bridge crossing the Rollins Pond to Floodwood Pond outlet to allow campers to access the Adirondack Rail Trail approximately 1.1 miles south of Floodwood Road, or approximately 7.3 miles from Main Street in Tupper Lake.

The more challenging southern connection consists of an approximately 1-mile long trail from the south end of the campgrounds routing along the south end of Rollins Pond. The proposed trail will not be ADA-accessible due to the steep and varied terrain between the campground and the trail corridor. Two creeks that drain into Rollins Pond will need to be crossed in order to access the Adirondack Rail Trail corridor. The existing ground cover is primarily forested with some wetlands associated with the drainage ways.

Trails in the Corridor connecting to neighboring or nearby Forest Preserve units will be in accord with the unit management plans for those units.

At the eastern terminus of the Adirondack Rail Trail, the State's fee-ownership of the Corridor ends at Station Street. The Lake Placid Depot and surrounding lands are privately owned by the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society (LPNEHS) and the state holds a railroad easement over a portion of the LPNEHS parcel. The LPNEHS has developed a Master Plan for its campus and are cooperatively working with the NYSDEC and Stakeholder group to accommodate a suitable origin/termination for the trail. This will include a major trailhead with kiosk and signage, a trail connection through the campus to the depot, and at the west end of the campus a car parking area and restroom facilities.

Until the State can acquire a more permanent interest in the Lake Placid Depot parcels, such as an easement, NYSDEC and the LPNEHS have developed a public access agreement for a portion of the LPNEHS property (see Appendix C).

Emergency Access

As noted under the Trail Signage section, a trail marker system is proposed for the trail, spaced at ½-mile intervals with the corresponding mile labeled on the trailside marker. Emergency vehicle access points will be available at all roadway crossings along the 34-mile trail length. At least 22 roadway intersections cross the trail (refer to the "At Grade Road Crossings" Table on page 10 of the Bergmann report) and provide potential access points for emergency responders. The longest segment between access points from the nearest public roadway intersections is the section of trail from Floodwood Road to the NYSDEC Fish

Guidelines for Outdoor Developed Areas standards. Where this cannot be accomplished, the NYSDEC will construct facilities that are compatible with as many levels of user-ability as possible.

H. PUBLIC USE MANAGEMENT AND CONTROLS

1. Trespass

Although experience with other recreational trails shows that a travel corridor with extensive public use deters illegal trespasses, education of the user public about the need to respect the rights of private landowners is important to prevent trespass on private land as much as possible. As with hiking trails on other State land, signs will be posted at all junctures and private roads and trails, indicating the adjacent property is private and access is not permitted.

It is the intent of the State to monitor user counts and trespass. The issuance of an annual Corridor snowmobile permit will continue. If documented misuse becomes substantial and illegal intrusion onto adjacent land is verified, the permit could be revoked.

It is necessary to provide a mechanism of law enforcement for those law enforcement personnel involved with this unique series of linear State parcels, especially where the Corridor is not adjacent to existing Forest Preserve land. To promote more effective enforcement and maintenance, the State will seek the active participation of local governments and snowmobile clubs. As has been noted, ATVs and public motor vehicles other than snowmobiles, are prohibited throughout the entire Corridor.

2. Controlled Access to the Forest Preserve

It is readily apparent that recreational opportunities abound along the Corridor. It is unusual that concern for State land over-use can be alleviated, and perceived impacts can be mitigated, through public access by train in the RTL Segment. The ease of controlled access offered by recreationists traveling to the backcountry by rail is an enviable land management advantage. Maximum visitor limits to any given area accessible from the Corridor can be easily set and controlled by ticket sales and destination regulation through determinations made in the unit management planning process. This will prevent environmental degradation as well as provide for a quality Forest Preserve experience.

NYSDEC experience with other trail systems has demonstrated that most people using the travel corridor will likely stay on the corridor and the large majority of those who access the adjacent Forest Preserve lands will do so on trails and roadways designed for that type of use.

3. Rail-Trail Safety

The dangers posed by railroads to pedestrians and motorists are well known. While there are a number of places across the country where trails share rights-of-way with operating railroads, such partnerships have succeeded because various measures have been taken to protect trail users. On the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor, safety considerations will play a major part in the process of determining what segments are suitable for construction of connections to recreational trails.

Even though rail traffic may be limited during the period of initial rail development on the RTL Segment, rail and trail uses will not be allowed to occupy the rail bed concurrently. Physical dangers exist on the rail bed even when trains are not running. Bridges unprotected by deck planking or safety rails will be off limits. Such restrictions are imposed with the safety of the public in mind.

Where connections to recreational trails will be constructed in the RTL Segment, they will be developed in such a way as to emphasize the separation of rail and trail. Where physical barriers will be necessary to prevent trail users from entering the active track area, fences will be erected, and appropriate warning signs will be posted. The design of any such fence will consider the Adirondack Park setting and avoid introduction of a hazard to snowmobile users.

4. Public Use within the Tupper Lake to Lake Placid Segment (TLLP Segment)

Management of public use on this trail is likely to present many challenges. Reasons for this may include: ~~the trail may receive~~ high levels of use, ~~there is~~ the potential for conflicts between different user groups, and ~~there will be~~ interactions between adjacent property owners and trail users. The management actions specified in this UMP Amendment/SEIS have been developed based on a review of management actions used for shared used trails and rail-trails in other areas of New York and the United States. Management of this trail will require flexibility to alter public use controls as needs and experience dictate.

The following will apply to public recreation use of the trail; this will not apply to private or public rights-of-ways that cross the trail. The following does not apply to administrative uses of the trail.

- Allowable public uses of this trail will include any pedestrian activities (including but not limited to running, cross-country skiing, and snowshoeing), bicycling (which includes use of multi-wheeled cycles and class 1 electric bikes), and snowmobiling. The trail will be open for public use at all hours. Rules for trail users will include stopping at all road crossings and keeping to the right except when passing.
- Public uses not allowed will include camping, discharging a firearm from or across the trail, operating motorized vehicles (except as noted above), and starting fires outside of provided fire rings.

Contributing Features within the TLLP Segment

The proposed TLLP Segment Project Impact Area is congruent with a segment of the New York Central Railroad, Adirondack Division Historic District between the Tupper Lake Depot and the Lake Placid Depot. In addition to the right-of-way (rails and ties) counted as one structure, and minor features such as culverts, switch stands, and mile markers not individually inventoried, this segment includes the following contributing features:

**Table 2. List of NR Contributing Features within/adjacent to the TLLP Segment³
Specifically named Contributing Structures in the National Register Nomination**

Name	Description	Location	Milepost	Built
Lake Placid Station*	Passenger Station	0+00 R15	0	1903
Lake Placid Freight*	Freight House	0+67 L75	0	1903
Ray Brook Station	Passenger Station	304+13 /R15	5.76	1930
Chubb River Bridge	Steel timber deck bridge	33+69 C/L	5.96	1903
Saranac River Bridge	Steel timber deck bridge	496+92 C/L	9.62	1903
Saranac Lake Station	Passenger Station	513+01 L24	9.73	1903
Saranac Lake Freight	Freight House	514+61 R55	9.71	1915
Lake Clear Junction Station	Passenger Station	695+294 40	131.68	1909
Clear Pond Outlet Bridge	Steel timber deck bridge	686+061 C/L	129.94	1914
Floodwood House	Section Foreman Dwelling	644+410 L30	121.84	1898

* The Lake Placid Station and Freight House are privately owned (~~by the~~ Lake Placid North Elba Historical Society) ~~by the~~ and ~~is are~~ not considered a part of the Remsen-Lake Placid Travel Corridor.

iii. Archaeological Resources

All construction proposed within both the RTL and TLLP Segments would occur in previously disturbed soils associated with construction and operation of the railroad corridor for more than 100 years. As such, no archaeological resources have been identified.

3) IMPACTS ASSESSMENT

a) Alternative 6 – No Action Alternative

As described in the analysis, the full length of the district will remain unchanged. A trail would not be constructed within the district and NYSDOT would continue routine inspections and maintenance. Rail operations would continue in the RTL Segment between Remsen and Big Moose. No alteration to the setting of the resource will occur.

This option would not have an impact on the resource in the short term. However, if contributing features between Big Moose to Tupper Lake in the RTL Segment and the entire TLLP Segment deteriorate through a continued lack of reuse, this could be considered adverse to the resource as the condition of rails, ties, culverts, bridges and infrastructure

³ National Register 1993, section 7, pages10-12.

C. Potential Impacts Not Considered Significant

The following issues were considered in the review of the environmental assessment form or raised during scoping, and determined to be neither relevant nor environmentally significant:

1) Impacts to wildlife, fisheries, vegetation and habitat.

The NYSDEC and NYSDOT reviewed the proposed action and determined that impacts to wildlife, fisheries, vegetation and habitat will not be significant. Several potential impacts were considered including damage or disturbance to habitat caused by rail removal and trail construction; disturbance to wildlife by trail users; controlling beaver population as a result of any flooding caused by beavers; and impacts to rare, threatened or endangered species, and significant natural communities during rail removal and construction.

The NYSDEC and NYSDOT have used existing natural resource information, Natural Heritage biologists and databases, and existing reports documenting the locations of rare, threatened, or endangered species in order to examine the potential impacts of operational and construction activities in the TLLP and have determined that potential impacts to these resources are not significant.

NYSDEC wildlife and fisheries staff have been consulted and conclude that impacts to wildlife and fisheries will not be significant. The timing of construction activities can be controlled, if necessary, so that nesting/breeding periods of relevant wildlife species are not impacted. Public education, with signs and kiosks, about adjacent significant natural communities, or wildlife nesting areas, and the need for protection of such places, can be implemented.

2) Air Resources

The NYSDEC and NYSDOT do not anticipate significant adverse impacts to air resources due to rail rehabilitation and removal, trail construction, or operation activities associated with this project. Several potential impacts were considered including the reduction in air quality due to a potential increase in snowmobile traffic, and acceleration of climate change due to a potential increase in fossil fuel combustion from snowmobiles.

The NYSDEC and NYSDOT have determined that any potential increase in snowmobile traffic and resultant air quality will not be a significant impact.

2)3) ~~and~~ Climate Change.

New York State agencies are committed to ensure all programs consider the future physical risks from climate change in order to protect New Yorkers and our environment. Under the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, New York State committed to eliminating greenhouse gas emissions in the state and to ultimately achieve net zero emissions. The Act extends and enhances a number of New York's successful clean energy initiatives. It codifies Governor Cuomo's ambitious goals to accelerate the development of

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Taking the above list of project attributes into consideration, with implementation of this plan the State does not expect overall greenhouse gas emissions to change from pre-implementation conditions. With respect to climate change, and in careful consideration of the 2019 Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, the State concludes that any potential negative impacts associated with the preferred alternative in this 2020 UMP Amendment/SEIS are not substantial enough to warrant mitigation or a change in the management actions.

3)4) Perceived decrease in property values with conversion to rail-trail.

There are numerous studies that have been compiled on this issue. According to a report by the University of Delaware (Racca and Dhanju, 2006) that compiled many reports/studies on this topic:

“The majority of studies examined indicate that the presence of a bike path/trail either increases property values and ease of sale slightly or has no effect.”

4)5) Perceived increase in non-motorized unlawful activity along rail-trails.

With a potential increase in the number and frequency of users on a rail-trail, there could be less unlawful activity as the trail users may be able to monitor and report illegal activity along the TLLP. A report by the University of Delaware (Racca and Dhanju, 2006) that compiled many bike path studies/reports (included converted rail-trails) concluded, that quality of life has improved in neighborhoods through which bike path/trails pass. An improved quality of life is not consistent with an increase in unlawful activity.

5)6) Increase in unlawful ATV/dirt bike use on the TLLP Segment.

ATVs and dirt bikes have allegedly been using the TLLP unlawfully for a long period of time. A rail-trail will foster more responsible and appropriate usage since it will have year-round activity, and this year-round activity may help monitor and report illegal motor vehicle usage in the TLLP.

6)7) Landowners adjacent to the TLLP assuming the railroad had an easement over their property

In 1974, the State acquired the Corridor from Penn Central by exercising the power of eminent domain in order to preserve the right-of-way until the best use could be determined. In May of 2019, the State purchased the NCCC parcels. There are no reversionary rights to adjoining landowners, and the State’s control over the Corridor is not by railroad easement over any of the properties, but by fee ownership except for a few parcels at the end of the line at the Lake Placid depot, where the State has an access agreement to a portion of the property owned by the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society (LPNEHS).