



**New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

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David A. Paterson
Governor

Carol Ash
Commissioner

**AGENCY DECISION
AND
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**Adoption of Final Master Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement
for Allegany State Park
Designation of a Bird Conservation Area
Designation of a Natural Heritage Area
Designation of a Park Preservation Area**

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Master Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), dated June 30, 2010 for Allegany State Park located in the Towns of Red House, Carrollton, Cold Spring, South Valley, Salamanca, and Great Valley in Cattaraugus County.

By the authority vested in me in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, I do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan / FEIS for Allegany State Park. I also designate the park as a Bird Conservation Area and as a Natural Heritage Area. A portion of the park, as detailed in the Master Plan, is also designated a Park Preservation Area.

This decision is based on the Findings Statement and the content of the Final Master Plan/ FEIS, which have been prepared according to the provisions of Part 617, the regulations implementing Article 8 of Environmental Conservation Law - the State Environmental Quality Review Act.

Carol Ash
Commissioner
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

July 21 - 2010
Date

SEQR FINDINGS STATEMENT
Allegany State Park Final Master Plan / FEIS

July 12, 2010

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQRA) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), as lead agency, makes the following findings.

Title of the Action:

Adoption and Implementation of a Final Master Plan / Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) for Allegany State Park

Location:

Allegany State Park is located in the Towns of Red House, Carrollton, Cold Spring, South Valley, Salamanca, and Great Valley, in Cattaraugus County, NY.

Description of the Action:

The final Master Plan for Allegany State Park provides long term guidance for the development and management of the park and protection of its resources as summarized below.

Date of Completion of the Final EIS: June 30, 2010

Findings:

1. These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the final EIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations; provide a rationale for the agency's decision; certify that the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and certify that consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one which avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that included within the plan are those mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable.
2. The Final Plan/FEIS was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including public information meetings and 2 public hearings.

3. The Final Environmental Impact Statement contains a chapter on responses to comments on the Draft EIS. This chapter contains clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft EIS. It also provides information that has been used in the preparation of the Final Master Plan/FEIS.

4. Allegany State Park was established in 1921 and is the largest state park in New York State comprising approximately 64,800 acres within its legislated boundary. It is located in Cattaraugus County in the OPRHP Allegany Region. The park is open year-round and hosts approximately 1.5 million visitors annually.

5. The geology of Allegany State Park is unique in New York State for being non-glaciated. The park is within the Salamanca Re-Entrant, a portion of northern reaches of the Allegheny Plateau never reached by the last Wisconsin ice sheet. This distinction influences the soils, surficial geology, topography and flora and fauna of the park. The water resources of the park include approximately 64 miles of fresh water stream plus many smaller tributaries as well as 3 man-made lakes and several state and federally designated wetlands. There are areas of the park which have been virtually undisturbed since its establishment and, in some cases, for many years before that. This has allowed vast stretches of forest to mature with little or no human intervention. Thus, many of the ecological communities that have developed in the park during this time are either rare for New York State or are of significance because of their high quality as examples of the community type. Wildlife is also abundant in the park with many species of birds, fish, mammals, reptiles and amphibians.

6. Several of the structures within Allegany State Park including portions of the Red House Area, Quaker Area, group camps and Stone Tower have been recommended by OPRHP's Field Services Bureau as eligible for designation on the National Register of Historic Places. In addition, a cultural resources survey conducted by the NYS Museum indicates considerable areas with high sensitivity for historic and prehistoric sites.

7. There is a wide variety of recreation resources in the park. Camping, cabins and cottages are available for overnight visitors. Swimming, picnicking, hunting, fishing, hiking, bicycling, horseback riding, skiing, snowshoeing, snowmobiling, , birding, photography, nature studies other passive recreation activities are all available at the park as well as just relaxing and enjoying many scenic vistas.

8. The plan identifies a vision statement and goals for the park. The vision statement is: Allegany State Park will be a place for the public to visit, enjoy and appreciate the natural, cultural and physical resources and the recreational opportunities that the park offers. A balance will be achieved between recreational use and the protection and interpretation of

the biological, physical and cultural resources of the park. The overall goal is to: Provide a diversity of high quality recreation opportunities balanced with stewardship of the park's natural and cultural resources.

9. The plan presents a series of "preferred alternatives" for future development and operation of Allegany State Park. Cumulatively, the actions described in the plan present OPRHP's long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of the park.

10. Status quo alternatives were evaluated for each element of the plan as well as other feasible alternatives. The Preferred Alternative combines the preferred options for recreation development and resource protection into one that best meets the goals for the park. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan.

11. The final Master Plan considers the historic, cultural, natural, geological, and recreational resources of the park and responds to the needs and safety of patrons, protection of cultural and natural resources, and principles of sustainability. It also details the designations, park preservation area designations, recreation and stewardship elements. The plan also prioritizes implementation actions and recognizes that implementation will be dependent on public and private funding.

12. Article 5 - Title 11 - Section 0539 of the NYS Environmental Conservation Law calls for the dedication of state-owned lands with rare species and/or significant natural communities as Natural Heritage Areas (NHA). These lands must meet certain criteria identified within the law. Allegany State Park was evaluated by the NY Natural Heritage Program and the entire park will be designated as an NHA. Designating the park as a NHA provides additional recognition of the significant ecological communities within the park. All of the current and proposed recreational activities in the park are consistent with the NHA designation.

13. The Bird Conservation Areas program is established in Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-2001, and authorizes the designation of BCA's in order to safeguard and enhance significant bird habitats located within state parks and other state-owned lands. The entire Allegany State Park is designated as a Bird Conservation Area. The BCA designation provides a level of recognition on a statewide level relative to other state parks and sites. The BCA designation does not prohibit existing or future recreation uses or park operations.

14. Article 20 of the Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law outlines the process for designation of entire parks or portions of parks as part of a statewide Park Preserve system. The purpose of such designations is to conserve and protect park lands containing wildlife, flora, scenic, historic and archeological sites that are unique and rare in New York State.

Given the extent of cabins, campgrounds and other facilities within the park, OPRHP determined that Park Preservation Area designation is appropriate under Article 20. The Park Preservation area for Allegany State Park encompasses the entire park with the exception of developed areas, existing roads, the snowmobile trail system (including any future connections of the snowmobile trail system to surrounding communities and trail systems) and well head areas and roads within the National Fuel Gas Storage area. The Park Preservation Area is approximately 83% of the park This designation is consistent with the current management of the park and represents the Agency's commitment to continue the park's historical and present management philosophy into the future.

15. The plan provides protection of natural resources through several means including: the designations discussed above, continued management of selected streams for native brook trout, development of a stream monitoring program for the Quaker Run watershed, survey and management measures for aquatic invasive species in the lakes, continued periodic dredging of the lakes as needed, development of an invasive species management plan for the park, location and mapping of spring seeps and ephemeral wetlands, continued maintenance of open field areas, passive management of the park's forests in accordance with Agency policy, prohibition of development of state-owned sub-surface resources and use of the Agency protocol and permit system for requests to access privately-owned subsurface rights in the park.

16. The plan also calls for several improvements to recreation opportunities at the park including:

- RV sites will replace some campsites at the Red House Camping area.
- Red House and Cain Hollow areas will receive electrical system upgrades.
- A primitive carry in-carry out camping area will be added at Cain Hollow.
- Backpack camping will be allowed, by permit, in certain areas in Wolf Run.
- A new loop of 5-10 cottages will be added on Bova Road above Camp Allegany.
- Some additional new cottages will be constructed on Parallel trail.
- Group Camp 5 will be rebuilt with barracks style accommodations and a new wash house.
- Group Camp 12 cabins will be replaced with new ones of the same design, a new wash house and rehabilitated mess hall.
- Camp Allegany will get utilities upgrades, rehabilitated barracks and mess hall and a study into the feasibility of more green building features.

- A new horse corral will be built on the north side of ASP 3 for Camp Turner.
- A new equestrian camping area will be developed at Group Camp 10, integrating it with the current area on the east side of ASP 2.
- New equestrian staging areas will be built in Bay State, Bradford entrance and Rice Brook areas.
- A new visitor and nature center will be built in the Beehunter area.
- Bath houses at both swimming beaches will be upgraded and a study will be completed to determine the feasibility of reinstating diving at the Quaker Lake beach.
- A picnic area will be formalized in the vicinity of Quaker beach.
- Two new picnic shelters will be constructed, one each in Quaker and Red House.
- Rest rooms at the picnic areas will be upgraded.
- Court and field game facilities will be upgraded in Quaker and Red House.
- A new basketball court will be developed in the Cain Hollow area.
- Playground equipment that was removed in Red House will be replaced.
- A new car top boat launch will be developed at the southern end of Quaker Lake.
- The water depth at the existing launch will be increased.
- A boat rental concession will be developed near the Quaker beach.
- The concession building at Red House will be rehabilitated.
- Sanitary facilities and accessibility at the Friends Boat Launch will be improved.
- The existing types of hunting opportunities will be maintained.
- Special fishing restrictions (delayed harvest on some stream segments) will continue.
- Active fish stocking will continue in selected stream segments and the lakes.
- Ice fishing will continue on both Red House and Quaker Lakes.
- Public access to all fishing areas will be improved.
- An additional accessible fishing platform will be developed at Red House Lake.
- A formal sledding area will be designated in the Summit area with an expanded warming hut that will serve the cross country ski area as well.

17. The ASP Final Trails Plan provides for approximately 227 miles of existing and proposed trails. The proposed trail system adds approximately 30 miles of undesignated trails and 50 miles of new trails to the existing designated trail system. Approximately 44

miles of undesignated trails would not be designated and would be officially closed and restored. The trails plan includes improvements to all of the Park's trail systems including: a new 7.6 mile Quaker area bikeway and improvements to the Red House Bikeway, construction of approximately 20 miles of new single-track trails for mountain biking and designation of approximately 58 miles of trails for biking, improvements and expansion of the equestrian trail system to 67 miles of designated trails, improvement and expansion of the park's hiking trail system to a total of 185 miles, rehabilitation and upgrades to the Art Roscoe Cross-country ski area, expansion of the snowmobile trail system to approximately 88 miles including proposed future connections to trails outside the park, expansion and improvement of park trailheads and parking areas, and improvement and expansion of interpretive trails within the park.

18. Allegany State Park is an integral part of the history of the area. As such the protection and interpretation of the cultural resources found there is also an important part of the master plan. Measures to protect and interpret cultural and historic resources in the park preserve include: Protection of the archaeological resources on a case by case basis where ground disturbance is anticipated, maintenance and restoration of historic structures according to the recommendations of the memorandum of resolution from the OPRHP Field Services Bureau, enhancement of cultural resource interpretation at the new visitor center as well as development of some historic interpretive trails.

19. Park operations, maintenance and infrastructure will be improved, including: The regional maintenance center will phase into using the area above the carpenter shop west of Quaker Run with new facilities, The sawmill and building it is in will be stabilized to preserve and protect them and guided tours will be provided, a new premier entrance and new building with camper registration facilities will be constructed at the park entrance from the Southern Tier Expressway on ASP 2, the Red House maintenance facility will be moved to the new location adjacent to the sawmill, the storage and work areas at the Quaker maintenance facility will be expanded, the Quaker administration building will be improved to provide accessible restrooms, an historic structures report will be produced for the Regional Administration Building.

20. In addition, the plan recognizes that implementation of all of the actions identified within the plan will require substantial investment of state funds, along with additional funding from other public and private sources. The implementation of the Master Plan is divided into three priority phases. The initiation and completion of these priority phases will depend upon funding and demand and will be balanced with the need to make ongoing capital improvements to maintain and rehabilitate the park's roads, bridges, utilities, buildings and infrastructure.

21. Environmental impacts associated with the implementation of the plan were addressed under nine general areas including land, water, air, biological resources/ecology, historic and archeological resources, scenic resources, recreation/open space, public health and safety and energy, noise and odor.

- The plan will result in some physical change to the land, particularly where new recreation facilities and trails will be constructed. Most new recreation facilities will be located in areas of the park that are already developed and will require minimal land disturbance. Most of the increased parking will be accomplished through formalizing or restriping existing areas or slightly enlarging existing pull-offs. Pervious pavements will be used wherever possible. Some new facilities and trails will be located in areas where the soils and slopes combine to pose a moderate to severe hazard for erosion. Careful site-specific planning will be applied in these areas to minimize erosion potential. Erosion control and storm water management techniques will be incorporated into site specific designs for all construction projects that will disturb park soils. Some measures anticipated to be used include minimizing soil disturbance and vegetation clearing, the use of silt fencing and straw bales, preservation of vegetated buffers and seeding of disturbed areas as soon as possible following work.
- Master Plan implementation will result in beneficial impacts to park water resources by relocation of the Regional Maintenance center away from Quaker Run and the Red House Maintenance center away from Red House Creek. Stream monitoring in the park will be conducted to obtain baseline information on park streams and to be able to detect changes in water quality associated with construction. Continued periodic maintenance dredging as needed will occur at all 3 of the man-made lakes in the park. This will improve the water quality and recreation opportunities of the lakes and reduce turbidity impacts downstream for example at the Red House Lake Beach. Temporary adverse impacts associated with dredging will be addressed through DEC and Corps of Engineers permit processes. Park streams could be impacted by proposed facility development projects or trail improvements or construction. Erosion control and stormwater management techniques as discussed above will be incorporated into site designs and a 50 foot buffer will be retained between proposed new developments and streams where possible. Buffer plantings may also be incorporated in some areas. Site specific design for new trails will seek to minimize the number of stream crossings and provide buffers between

trails and water bodies. All trail work will be undertaken using established guidelines from trail maintenance manuals and consultation with other agencies will occur as needed. Eurasian water milfoil has been identified in Quaker and Red House Lakes. A more detailed survey will be conducted to determine the location and extent of these invasive plants and steps will be taken to remove them from the lakes. Development of oil and gas resources beneath park lands also has the potential to impact park water resources. The agency's policy, protocol, permit and environmental review processes will be used to minimize any potential impacts to park resources.

- The importance of the park's natural resources has been recognized in the designation of the entire park as a Bird Conservation Area and a Natural Heritage area. These designations will bring additional recognition, potential increased visitation by eco-tourists and possible funding opportunities especially for environmental interpretation. Areas of the park have also been identified as Park Preservation Areas under Article 20 of the state Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. This designation will provide additional recognition to the importance of these areas and provide an additional layer of protection against future development proposals in these areas.
- Most of the proposed new facility development in the plan will not impact the park's significant ecological communities. Less than 35 acres of the thousands of acres of significant natural communities in the park may be affected by proposed new development or trails. This amount will likely be reduced during actual site design of trails and facilities. In accordance with agency policy, tree removal will be minimized. New trails proposed could impact park wildlife either directly through trail construction or indirectly through the effects associated with the trail uses. Most of the new proposed trails are in areas of the park that are already heavily used by recreationists. The park contains some large areas that have no roads or trails and are considered important to maintain dynamic ecological processes as well as to provide habitat for wildlife species more sensitive to disturbances. The proposed master plan and trails plan represents a balance between recreation and stewardship of the park's natural resources. Large roadless blocks within the park will remain intact. New trails proposed have been kept near the edges of these areas leaving relatively unaffected large forest interior habitats. Site specific design of all proposed new facilities and trails will

include surveys for rare plants and animals. An invasive species management plan will be developed for the park which will help inventory invasive species and prioritize removal projects. The Agency will continue to work with NYSDEC and NYS Dept. of Ag. & Markets to address the Emerald Ash Borer and other invasive forest pests.

- The Master Plan recognizes and protects the important historic and archeological resources within Allegany State Park. Structures that are considered contributing to the parks eligibility for the National Register will be protected by following the recommendations identified in a memorandum from the Agency's Field Services Bureau (FSB). Ground disturbing activities that are not considered categorical exclusions will require consultation with the FSB to determine if additional archeological surveys are needed.
- The park's significant scenic resources will be protected and maintained through Master Plan implementation. The plan proposes continued maintenance of scenic vistas throughout the park as well as restoration and interpretation of some historic vistas.
- The master plan will result in substantial beneficial recreation and open space impacts through improved and expanded recreation facilities and visitor amenities such as a new park visitor and interpretation center, new premier entrance providing park information and camper registration services, new cottages, picnic shelter, bikeway, and boating facilities. The Trails Plan will result in a better organized and maintained trail system, some new recreational opportunities such as single track mountain bike trails, a variety of trail lengths and difficulties for patrons of different abilities and additional interpretive trails.
- Traffic and circulation and public safety will be improved through construction of the premier entrance at Red House which will remove congestion and large trailers from the Red House Administration building area, and construction of the Quaker Bikeway which will provide a safe path for families on bicycles in the Quaker area of the park. New facilities will be designed to meet all applicable health and safety codes as well as incorporating sustainability principals and energy efficiency.

22. The plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review and provides for

guidance as to when additional environmental review may be required and identifies the types of actions that are likely to require additional review. These include new actions not addressed with the final Master Plan/FEIS that are not Type II actions within Part 617, any change from the preferred alternative for recreational and facility elements of the plan that may result in significant adverse environmental impacts and any leases, easements or other agreements between OPRHP and other entities that would affect resources in a manner that is not adequately addressed in the final Master Plan/FEIS. Specific elements of the plan are also identified that will be evaluated as to the need for additional review dependent on the outcome of more detailed planning.