



Eagle Lake Property Owners, Inc.



– President: Keith Park – Vice President: Chris Hyde – Secretary: Edward Leahy – Treasurer: Rolf Tiedemann –
31 Barkwood Lane, Clifton Park, NY 12065 ~ www.eaglelake1.org
ELPOI is a totally volunteer run 501(c)(3) not-for-profit

June 2, 2023

Honorable John Ernst, APA Board Chair
NYS Adirondack Park Agency
P.O. Box 99
1133 NYS Route 86
Ray Brook, NY 12977

Dear Commissioner,

I am writing to you as President of the Eagle Lake Property Owners Association (ELPOI). We are concerned with the seemingly unilateral decisions being made by one individual relative to the proposed closure to float on/off boat launching on Eagle Lake, without compliance to the Hammond Pond Unit Management Plan (UMP). That plan states that the existing launch was a non-conforming use according to APSLMP guidelines even though the launch has been available to the public for at least 50 years with no degradation to the lake. The plan lists three options to resolve the non-compliance and very clearly and in bold-type under option three the plan says “**Given the context of this particular site, this alternative is the preferred alternative for Eagle Lake.**” Accordingly, anyone providing input or comments to the plan as part of the public review process would have made those comments in regards to option three and not options one or two.

Option three states “allows for an assessment of Eagle Lake access and conditions to inform a future decision to either alter the site in accordance with the APSLMP Wild Forest guidelines (actions in Alternative 2) or propose a reclassification of the area to Intensive Use.” This option was consistent with the stated management objective to “Facilitate safe public boating opportunities, while implementing measures to protect sensitive, natural aquatic ecosystems.” During the assessment period DEC was tasked to develop information necessary for the evaluation of the boat access site against the guidelines for an Intensive Use Boat Launching Site; including:

1) Adequate public or private boat launching facilities open to the public are not available to meet a demonstrated need;

- 2) The physical, biological and social carrying capacity of the lake, or a portion of the lake, or other water bodies accessible from the site will not be exceeded;
- 3) The boat launching site or attendant water uses will be compatible with the state or private land use classifications and attendant management guidelines as land use controls surrounding the water body;
- 4) The boat launching site is located in a manner to avoid adverse impact on adjacent or nearby state and private lands;
- 5) Motor size limitations appropriate to the carrying capacity of the lake are provided; particularly for lakes with embayment or shoreline configurations providing the character of small lakes;
- 6) There will be no material adverse impacts on physical, biological or scenic resources of the water body and surrounding land.

The UMP was not followed and DEC did not develop the information deemed required to inform a decision on the boat launch. Instead, one individual, Megan Phillips, was allowed to override the UMP and switch to option two without public input or reasonable need to close a launch that has operated for decades without issue.

Had the DEC developed the requested information, they would have seen:

- 1) There are NO public or private boat launching sites on the lake for trailered boats other than the state launch and many lake residents have relied on this launch for not only enjoyment of the lake but critical access to their property and camps as many properties are land-locked.
- 2) A carrying capacity study was done on the lake but Ms. Phillips stated that her decision was not based on any results from that. A mere several minutes looking at the archived video from our lake cameras, especially around holiday weekend will show that we are nowhere near any previously defined carrying capacity limit. Cameras can be found at: eaglelake1.org. No social or biological studies were done at all.
- 3) The third task in the list was not done for Eagle Lake, Eagle Lake was **in compliance** in 1972. If it had been out of compliance with the state land master plan it would have been closed in December of '75 as the state land master plan is very clear in indicating that anything that is non-compliance would be removed by that date. If we fast forward to 1988 and look at page 60 of the Hammond Pond UMP that was written and approved at that point stating in the 1988 UMP that "additional boat launching sites are located at And Eagle Lake" " These facilities will be covered in separate plans but deserve mention in this plan as their use frequently provides a related use on the resources of this unit". Why was it written that Eagle Lake was to have its own separate UMP? This UMP was never done. it states in the 1988 UMP those features that were non-conforming as of that date would have been removed. In the 2019 state land classification map it can be seen that the cartographers of the day saw fit to leave a piece of wild forest Land open

as a “no man's land” at the area by the boat launch. Was a process at that time supposed to classify that little piece of property, just over .2 acre, that was left open as intensive use? Was this piece of property part of the 1988 UMP that stated Eagle Lake would have its own separate UMP for the boat launch? Just because it was recently stated by the DEC that the 2019 UMP supersedes the 1988 UMP does not remove from the law the fact that Eagle Lake was supposed to have had a separate UMP written for its boat launch in 1988.

- 4) If one measures the amount of Wilderness classified land, the most restrictive in the park that is impacted by the boat launch on Eagle Lake it is approximately .47 miles. The remainder of the property around Eagle Lake is private and classified as either low intensity use or resource management with a 3 pieces of wild forest abutting the shoreline. The wild forest land abutting the water's edge is .37 miles in crown Point Bay, .17 miles for the North Shore property, and .49 miles from the boat launch to the Open Water of the lake proper. From these measurements the state owns just over 1 mile of the total 7.8 miles of Shoreline of Eagle Lake. If one looks at the Paradox Lake 1990 and 1994 UMP's that were written for this 800 acre Lake and they look at the carrying capacity studies that were done for keeping this pre-existing boat launch as it is mentioned in the UMP specifically for review, the office of Parks and Recreation and historic preservation indicates that it is acceptable to have as few as 6 to 8 Acres assigned per boat using the lake. If one were to do the math for Eagle Lake at 420 Acres of size for Eagle Lake, assigning six acres per boat would allow one to have 70 on the lake at any one point in time.
- 5) Eagle lake is protected from public launch of larger boats by the causeway that transects it. A new bridge was just installed and both the height and width keep larger boats out of the main lake. Over the past 50+ years on the lake have been using it, shorelinewith the launch, erosion has not been a problem and shorelines have not changed. Loons are recent arrivals on the lake, and after many years of water testing through the CSLAP program Eagle Lake is not in decline. There were no studies done to determine material adverse impacts on physical, biological or scenic resources either. Invasive species are already in the lake and introduced in times when that subject was not addressed decades ago. Scenically, closing the launch to trailered traffic would not change any views in that area but it would prevent any public access to one of the most beautiful and scenic state camping areas at the opposite end of the lake.
- 6) We, the ELPOI, are concerned that when Ms. Phillips presented the closure decision to the APA Board; she did not inform the board about the negative impact of this change on the Eagle Lake community or the Town of Ticonderoga, nor did she inform the Board that both the Town and County of Essex have passed resolutions in opposition of this action as well as the fire company that provides fire protection in the area. Additionally, over 1,600 have signed a petition in opposition to this action.

It is alarming that Ms Phillips presented a set of meeting minutes that did not capture any of the ELPOI officers' concerns as to where or how this decision for closing the boat launch was made. A complete document of the meeting showing the vast difference between APA notes and what was actually said can be provided.

The property owners around Eagle Lake in 1908 were so concerned about the quality of life and the issues of the lake proper that they formed an organization that is still in existence today that protects and monitors what activities take place on the lake. The officers of the ELPOI have spent the past several months collecting numerous documents that show the Eagle Lake boat launch should remain as a pre-existing condition and be reviewed as it was stated in 1988 and have its own separate UMP that allows it to exist as a float on float off boat launch with periodic review for the impacts that it may have on Eagle Lake. We would like the opportunity to share this information with you and the APA board.

We feel that there is a path forward here that according to the APA documents allows Eagle Lake to remain open to float on-off boat launching and has us in compliance with the UMP or has us with our own UMP re-classifying the small parcel of land cut out for the Eagle Lake boat launch as intensive use as was discussed in the past. We ask that you, as the Chair of the APA Board, reverse this deviation from option three of the UMP and ask DEC to perform the evaluation detailed in the UMP so any future decision can be based on study results and be in accordance with the Unit Management Plan and include review by stakeholders.

We hope to hear from you soon to learn how we can work together to develop a plan to continue to protect the lake while allowing for safe public boating opportunities that have existed for decades in accordance with the vision clearly stated in the unit management plan. We hope you agree with us that the park should be open to use for public enjoyment to the extent it is consistent with protection of the wilderness resources

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Regards

Keith Park, President
For the ELPOI Board

