
Subject: Comments to APA

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Chris and Rolf,

Here are the comments I submitted to APA. They are pretty narrowly focused; I presume ELPOI will submit something more broadly addressing the issues. Post this on your Web site if you choose; it's a public document.

Floyd

Comments on the Hammond Pond Wild Forest UMP with respect to the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan Conformance Plan

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Introduction

Before the Hammond Pond Wild Forest UMP is approved, two steps should be taken. First, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan should be amended to reflect that the DEC campsite and boat launch on Eagle Lake are not two separate parcels of wild forest, but should be seen as an integrated, intensive use pair, reflecting how they have been used for a century or more. Moreover, each in its own right is intensively used. Both parcels should be reclassified accordingly. Secondly, the use of 1000 acres as a threshold for the size at which a lake requires, should have, or deserves a boat launch should be recognized for the arbitrary and analytically unsupportable policy it is. It should be immediately abandoned.

Eagle Lake Campsite and Boat Launch

5 miles to the east of the Eagle Lake boat launch on Route 74, there is a DEC campsite and boat launch on Paradox Lake. The combination is classified as intensive use. Paradox Lake is 880 acres. When seen on a map or in a satellite image, however, it is actually two 400 acre lakes – basically two Eagle Lakes - joined by a narrow channel.

Roughly 8 miles from the Eagle Lake boat Launch, travelling to the east then south, there is a DEC campsite and boat launch on Putnam Pond. The combination is classified as intensive use. Putnam Pond is 185 acres.

The UMP treats the campsite on Eagle Lake and the boat launch on Eagle Lake as separate parcels that are non-conforming uses in a wild forest area. This is an erroneous view of how these two parcels function today and have for the past century or more.

A common use pattern is for people to launch a watercraft (kayak, canoe, open fishing boat, bass boat, etc.) at the boat launch and travel to the campsite area. Many fish while travelling this distance. Once at the campsite, they may spend the day, swim at the sand beach, cook out, and then boat back to the boat launch. Others may bring camping gear and stay for a few days before returning to the boat launch. Launching a boat and travelling along a lake to go camping is a quintessential Adirondack experience.

There is another common use pattern for those who own property or are visiting those who own property on the lake. The DEC campsite has the only good sand beach on the lake; in fact, the campsite is known to the locals as “the beach”. Our own young grandchildren delight in going to the beach and wading or swimming there, rather than at the somewhat rocky area around our dock. It is very likely that lake residents have been using the beach as a day use area for well over a century.

The boat launch, which appears to have been opened around 1920, supports access to the campsite, which is landlocked and only accessible by water. The two are inextricably linked. Additionally, the boat launch supports a long-standing tradition of fishing on a lake that is known locally as a good place to go. Even tournament fishermen from Lake Champlain will bring their bass boats to Eagle Lake for some variation in their sport.

In the spring and fall, the boat launch has another critical and intense short-term use. It is the only public access to the lake and is used extensively by lake residents to launch and retrieve their boats. As I said in my comments on the draft UMP, the 15 foot Boston Whaler with a 70 Horsepower outboard (weighing in at a total 1000 pounds) that my wife and I own is a typical boat used by residents of the lake. (There is another 15 foot Boston Whaler almost identical to ours on the lake. There are also two 13 foot Whalers and a 17 foot Whaler, not to mention numerous boats of other brands that are comparable in size and equipment.) Residents may also own canoes, kayaks, guide boats, sailboats, and paddleboards, but they water ski, knee board, and tube behind motor boats. Motorboats are also the primary vessels for fishing. The boat launch is critical to traditional and conventional use of Eagle Lake by its residents.

Treating the campsite and boat launch on Paradox Lake as a combined intensive use area is rational; treating the campsite and boat launch on Putnam Pond as a combined intensive use area is rational; failing to treat the campsite and boat launch on Eagle Lake as joined intensive use areas simply because there is water between them is not. Treating either area as not intensively used, irrespective of the connection, is equally illogical and narrow-minded.

1000 Acre Standard for a Boat Launch

There has been much discussion in the proceeding around the draft UMP that only a lake over 1000 acres requires, should have, or deserves to have, a boat launch. As the boat launches at Putnam Pond and Paradox Lake prove, this is completely irrational. There is not one shred of evidence or relevant analysis to show that the 1000 acre number or any other acreage number has any bearing on how intensively a lake is used or the need for a boat launch. The nature and intensity of use, not acreage, matter. This irrelevant 1000 acre standard should be put to rest.

Conclusion

The parcels of land that encompass the DEC campsite and the boat launch on Eagle Lake should be immediately reclassified as intensive use. Each in its own right warrants the reclassification. Recognizing that the two function together to provide a classic Adirondack experience should seal the justification for reclassification.

The standard for whether a lake should or should not have a boat launch needs to be based on how the lake is used, not the lake's size. The unsupportable 1000 acre standard for justifying a boat launch should be abandoned. Eagle Lake is intensively used by boaters using watercraft of a size that require a boat launch, irrespective of the lake's acreage.