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Robert Stegemann
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Mr. Stegemann,

I am writing the letter in regards to the most recent draft version of the Hammond Pond Wild Forest Unit Management Plan (UMP). Specifically I have concerns regarding the removal of the boat launch at Eagle Lake and placing a physical barrier at the launching point. A physical barrier is used to make it a carry in launch versus the existing traditional launch where a boat could be launched by trailer.

My wife and I own a home on Eagle Lake and spend approximately 20% of our time there. We use the existing boat launch several times a year and would not be able to get either of our boats to our house without use of the launch. We rely on the use of this launch. There is also a DEC campsite on the far eastern side of the lake, which is approximately 3 miles from the launch and only accessible via boat.

My understanding is the draft UMP portions that are specific to Eagle Lake are to bring the launch into compliance with the State of New York Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) and its most recent revision from December of 2016. In doing so, the draft UMP designates Eagle Lake within the "Wild Forrest Land Classification." I take exception to this classification. While Eagle Lake is ~410 acres and clearly less than 1000 acres as identified in the draft, there are other characteristics that should qualify for continued use of the existing boat launch. For one, the APSLMP dictates that "the classification system take into account the established facilities on the land." (There is an existing boat launch and campsite.) Additionally, the lake is bifurcated by Route 74 which is identified in the APSLMP as a "Travel Corridor." Per the ASPLMP, "the presence of a highway determines the classification of a travel corridor" and "the presence of an existing campground or ski area requires the classification of intensive use." Further, the ASPLMP states that the "mixture of public and private land is a distinguishing feature of the Adirondack Park." Eagle Lake is not characteristic of the rest of the surrounding land. The ASPLMP also notes that the state accounts for "some forty-four percent" of the "land within the Park." The vast majority of the shoreline along Eagle Lake is

privately owned. Considerably less than 44% is owned by the state. To further support this point, the ASPLMP notes that the Department of Environmental Conservation “may not have such authority to regulate certain uses of waters where all or part of the shoreline is in private ownership.”

The “theme” of this master plan “drawn not only from the Adirondack Park Agency Act (Article 27 of the Executive Law – “The Act”) and its legislative history.” The Act “mandates periodic reviews of the master plan” and goes on to say that the plan must address issues and “reclassification resulting from ... minor technical changes, clarifications and similar matters.” I would suggest such reclassification should be considered.

Most of the shoreline on Eagle Lake is privately owned. Removal of the boat launch will have a huge impact on the residents of Eagle Lake. Many Eagle Lake residents utilize this launch. It would be impractical, often not possible and require significant construction for owners to build private launches. There are several privately owned properties on Eagle Lake that are only accessible by boat. The removal of the launch would also have a negative impact on home values. Many residents already expressed this concern and intend to challenge their tax assessments. Many of these homeowners and their families have lived and vacationed here for generations.

Elimination of the launch creates a safety hazard. Should there be any accidents on the lake it would be difficult for emergency personnel to get there to help. A fire at one of these properties could be catastrophic to the surrounding forests. Two years ago there was a small fire on Fox Island and local fire personnel had to access the island via boat to put the fire out. Similarly, Charles’ Island has the remaining chimney structure from a past fire. Should there be a medical emergency at one of the properties with no road or off road access, there would be no way to get them out.

Elimination of the boat launch will diminish recreational activities. A physical barrier removes handicap access to the lake. As per the APSLMP, the UMP shall promote “wild forest areas accessible by motor vehicles, of measures that can be taken to improve access to and enjoyment of these lands, and associated structures and improvements, by persons with disabilities.” Removing the boat launch does not meet this objective for persons with disabilities. Additionally, removal of the boat launch diminishes fishing access and opportunities. The campsite is ~3 miles from the boat launch, decreasing peoples ability to use the camping area. This would affectively eliminate certain water sports that many families enjoy.

I also take exception to the notification and public comment period of the draft UMP. I came to know of the proposed changes when a local resident had a discussion with a local forest ranger. I registered to receive DEC updates and still did not see anything regarding a public comment period. The DEC’s public comment policy for UMP’s calls for “an extensive public input process” and “a minimum comment period of at least 30 days.” The DEC failed to adhere to this policy, only allowing for 24 days. Further there was little attempt for public comment. Eagle Lake is a lake who’s shoreline is vastly privately owned. None of the owners or board members had an opportunity to voice their opinion in the public comment

period; this is hardly extensive. Additionally, the APSLMP suggests that “strong public involvement in the process of revision and review should be encouraged.” The APSLMP further goes on to state that “opportunity will be made for review and comment on the draft unit management plans by the public and other interested parties, and a public meeting or meetings will be convened as appropriate for that purpose.” I’m requesting that more than one public meeting be held for interested parties to be heard.

I am an avid outdoorsman. I have NYS lifetime licenses in both hunting and fishing. I hike regularly, having completed over half of the 46 high peaks in NYS. I own two boats, 2 kayaks, 2 paddleboards, a canoe, 2 snowmobiles, and belong to multiple outdoor clubs. We contribute to multiple environmental efforts. My wife is business owner in New York. This business has been operating in New York for almost 75 years. Most importantly, we vote in every election from school budgets to president.

In addition to being a homeowner on the lake, I’m an elected board member to the Eagle Lake Property Owners, Inc.(ELPOI). ELPOI was established in 1907 and is a not for profit organization that serves to protect the mutual interests of it’s property owners and to maintain the environmental and recreational quality of Eagle Lake. As a group we have been sound environmental stewards of the lake. We voluntarily participate in invasive species studies and educate our residents. We voluntarily perform water testing. We maintain the lake level through the VSA program. We voluntarily perform adopt a highway cleanup along Route 74 along the lake. As sound environmental stewards, we deserve input into the proposed plan.

Thank you,



Zachary Dorfman

Cc:

Basil Seggos - Commissioner New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Adirondack Park Agency Chairwoman Karen Feldman
Anne Marie Peer - Adirondack Park Agency
Congressman Paul Tonko, US Representative – 20th District (Representative for Primary Residence and Business Location)
Congresswoman Elise Stefanik, US Representative – 21st District (Representative for our Lake Residence)
Assemblyman Dan Stec – District 114 (Lake Residence)
Assemblywoman Mary Beth Walsh – District 112 (Primary Residence)
Assemblyman Angelo Santabarbara – District 111 (Business Location)
Senator Betty Little – 45th District (Lake Residence)
Senator James Tedisco – 49th District (Primary Residence)
Senator George Amedore – 46th District (Business Location)
New York State Governor Andrew Cuomo
US Senator Chuck Schumer
US Senator Kristen Gillibrand