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# Adirondack EXPLORER

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Our current issue



Friday, March 15, 2019

## Hammond Pond plan includes interstate trail

No Comments



Bloody Mountain, rising above Hammond Pond, could see a new trail under a management update for the area. *Photo by Tim Rowland.*

### **By TIM ROWLAND**

The Adirondack Park Agency has opened a public comment period for a Hammond Pond Wild Forest plan update that includes a path for an interstate trail and may yet retain a boat launch that the state had planned to close.

Department of Environmental Conservation forester Corrie Magee told the board on Thursday that a popular boat launch on Eagle Lake will, at least for now, remain undisturbed while the state studies the matter. Also, a section of proposed trail was removed from the plan following public concerns that it would encroach on delicate wetlands.

The Hammond Pond Unit Management Plan calls for miles of new trails, including a link in the North Country National Scenic Trail, proposed to traverse seven states from North Dakota to Vermont. APA Natural Resource Planner Walter Linck said the federal government approved use of the Crown Point bridge for the developing trail network two weeks ago, which will connect the North Country trail with the Appalachian Trail in Vermont. He said that's an exciting development that would allow a long-distance hiker to wake up in a Middlebury, Vt., bed-and-breakfast with an itinerary that included Adirondack lake communities in the coming days.

The Hammond Pond Wild Forest is an elongated sliver of the Adirondack Park on 45,500 acres loosely running north and south between Ticonderoga and Elizabethtown, and bordered by Lake Champlain and the

Interstate 87 Northway to the east and west. It was established in 1988, but its management plan has been little-changed since, even as the state added new lands.

Hammond Pond is lightly used and could provide an escape from crowding for High Peaks hikers in Keene Valley, Magee said. One commenter, in fact, favored keeping the area a well-kept secret, and feared state efforts to channel more people into its confines.

Hammond Pond also is integral to Frontier Town, and the proposed plan calls for new hiking, biking, horse and snowmobile trails radiating out from the new campground and day-use center that will open there this spring. It includes a trail link that will connect Frontier Town and North Hudson with points west to communities such as Newcomb and Indian Lake.

The area is useful to wildlife, as it includes several pedestrian passages under the Northway. Wildlife advocates have championed undeveloped corridors between Lake Champlain and the High Peaks that serve historical migration patterns.

Magee said that a key point of entry to Hammond Pond will be to the north at Exit 30, which provides access on Route 73 to Keene Valley. An existing parking area is slated for improvements including more parking, bathrooms and hiking information, including Hammond Pond trails to the east. Magee added that there is also a thought of a parking area on the northeast side of the Route 73/9N — popularly known as “malfunction junction” for its confusing bird nest of traffic lanes — with a shuttle service to the mountains.

Hammond Pond itself will get a significant trail upgrade, perhaps most notably with a trail angling to the northeast from Schroon Falls over Bloody Mountain to the 2,300-foot Bald Peak, with views of both the Champlain Valley and the High Peaks.

The plan would add a half-mile, wheelchair-accessible trail along the shores of Lincoln Pond and a more orderly approach to the popular Split Rock Falls near New Russia. There would be a viewing area at the top of the falls and a hardened trail to the bottom, replacing a scramble of eroding herd paths. Parking would be limited to existing spaces, with roadside parking prohibited.

But by far the most controversial part of the plan was a proposal to block the Eagle Lake boat launch from wheels-in-water trailers. Residents of Eagle Lake said this was an unfair penalty to anglers, many of whom are older and would not be able to muscle boats over the barricade and into the water. Residents said they had been unaware of the change until after the DEC public comment period had closed. Magee said the DEC reopened the comment period to take their concerns into account.

To keep the boat launch, a small parcel would have to be reclassified from wild forest to high-intensity use. It would also take a change to the state master plan that bars boat launches on lakes of less than 1,000 acres. Magee said the small, gravel launch with adjoining dock will remain open while the state decides how to proceed.

The APA’s public comment period for Hammond Pond will remain open until April 15, and the agency’s board is expected to be acted on it at its May meeting. Comments can be emailed to [SLMP\\_UMP\\_Comments@apa.ny.gov](mailto:SLMP_UMP_Comments@apa.ny.gov) with “Hammond Pond” in the subject line.

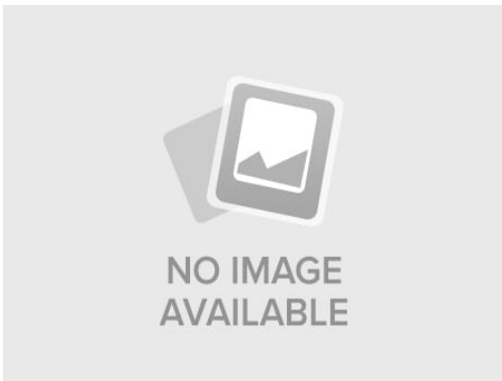
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