

# High Peaks Advisory Group (HPAG)

## Final Report

January 2021





Dear Commissioner Seggos:

The High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group (HPAG) is pleased to submit this final report, which provides recommendations for a strategic planning framework to manage and protect the unique resources of the High Peaks, while also providing recreation opportunities to the public. The recommendations were adopted through consensus by the HPAG.

Public use continues to increase on trails in the High Peaks particularly since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. This resulting level of unprecedented use is now overwhelming many trails. HPAG believes we should anticipate this higher volume of use to remain steady, or continue to grow, for years to come. While this situation can be daunting, it also offers opportunity for increased and more diverse visitors to appreciate this area.

HPAG's work was guided by principles that should be carried forward as the strategic plan develops and when management actions are undertaken. The paramount priorities being the protection of wilderness and public safety. Overall long-term and immediate recommendations, as well as additional topic-specific recommendations, are included. Many are not new, but support existing efforts while advocating for additional attention, resources, and coordination. HPAG believes that the High Peaks are home to a world-class wilderness area and, as such, deserve world-class management and resources.

HPAG recognizes the importance of continued and expanded public engagement in the management of the High Peaks and recommends the establishment of an Adirondack Advisory Group, a new entity comprised of members representing diverse interests, to guide development of the strategic plan and the ongoing adaptive management that supports it.

Our group also supports the use of adaptive management and the adoption of the National Parks Service's Visitor Use Management Framework. We believe an outdoor recreation unit within DEC is needed to achieve related planning and implementation. Ongoing work to protect public safety, including planning for parking and shuttle management is applauded and must continue. An "all in" approach by state, local, and private parties to provide needed resources and funding is imperative to protect this world-class resource and public experience.

HPAG appreciates the opportunity to provide input on managing recreational use of the Adirondack High Peaks, and believes these recommendations provide a guide to future management of public recreation throughout the Adirondack Park.

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# Executive Summary

This report provides recommendations for a strategic planning framework that the High Peaks Strategic Planning Group (HPAG) adopted by consensus during 2020. HPAG issued an interim Immediate Actions Recommendations Report in June 2020 in response to needed, enhanced safety for the use of the High Peaks trails at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This report builds upon the interim report recommendations and also provides a broader, robust strategic planning framework going forward. Many of its recommendations are not new, but rather augment and support existing efforts that require greater focus, information, coordination, and resources.

HPAG found that the trails and facilities in the High Peaks region have become overwhelmed by visitors. They were already increasing in popularity, and COVID-19 has caused a significant boost in the volume of users. While this situation can be daunting, it also offers an opportunity for a greater number and more diverse group of visitors to appreciate this area. HPAG also recognizes that the High Peaks region is home to a world-class wilderness area and, as such, should offer world-class resources.

HPAG was guided by eight principles in its work that should be carried forward as the strategic plan is developed and when management actions are undertaken. The paramount priorities are the protection of wilderness and public safety. Additional principles include: a commitment to support green infrastructure and climate initiatives; support for social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts; use of science and best management practices; limits on acceptable change to establish management objectives; the provision of sufficient resources to meet management needs; and a commitment to an ongoing open and transparent process.

Long-term overall recommendations include:

- the establishment of an Adirondack Advisory Group, a new entity made up of members representing diverse interests to guide development of the strategic plan and the ongoing adaptive management that supports it;
- the use of adaptive management and the adoption of the National Parks Service's Visitor Use Management Framework (VUMF) as the guiding tool;
- the establishment of an outdoor recreation unit within DEC;
- real time data collection and information dissemination;
- further ongoing study and planning for parking and shuttle management; and
- an "all in" approach to provide needed resources and funding for these efforts.

Overall recommendations for immediate and chronic issues include: continuation of coordination on parking and pedestrian safety actions; implementation of achievable actions already identified in UMPs; design and implementation of the trailhead shuttle pilot; enhancement of DEC's sponsorship of portable toilets, including for winter use;

increased support of stewardship programs; and increased support for Leave No Trace (LNT) education and messaging.

Additional, specific recommendations are included in the following sections: Impacts to Wilderness and Ecology; Visitor Experience; High Peaks Wilderness Trails; Public Safety, Transportation, and Traffic Safety; and Community “Hamlets as Hubs.”

HPAG recommends continued coordination of current planning efforts with DEC, local communities, the Adirondack Diversity Initiative, and other stakeholders in the region. Continued long-term planning for recreational use, along with a robust public engagement, is critical to successful management of this world-class wilderness. The need for targeted data collection to sustain an iterative management process going forward is outlined throughout the report.

## Introduction

The High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group (HPAG) was established by New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) Commissioner Basil Seggos in November 2019. This action was taken in response to requests to initiate strategic planning among key local stakeholders to address urgent and critical management issues associated with increasing public use of the High Peaks region of the Adirondack Park.

HPAG is comprised of local government officials, private business owners, tourism entities, conservation non-profits, social scientists, and natural resource planners. It was charged to work collaboratively with New York State agency partners and serve in an advisory capacity to DEC by developing action and policy recommendations to inform future planning regarding managing public use in the High Peaks region.

Meetings of HPAG began in November 2019, with full-day meetings being conducted in person twice a month until the COVID-19 pandemic arrived in March 2020. HPAG then pivoted to more frequent, but shorter duration remote Webex meetings. Considering the challenges posed by the public health crisis, the Final Report deadline was delayed and an Interim Report was submitted in June of 2020. Many actions that were recommended in the Interim Report have been adopted and are underway.

The COVID-19 crisis resulted in record increases in use throughout the High Peaks region during the 2020 summer and fall seasons. The outdoor recreation opportunities available in the region, and in proximity to many within a short drive, created high levels of use by both seasoned hikers and novice users. The need to educate such hikers increased, along with the level of impacts on the resource. The Adirondack Park continues to be a desired place for New Yorkers and people outside the state who are in search of healthy activities and a respite from the public health crisis. The record



levels of use this summer drive home the need to invest in the management and protection of this highly valuable and finite resource.

This is HPAG's Final Report. It is anticipated that the recommendations in this report will provide the framework for future strategic planning. These recommendations build upon those provided in the Interim Report and are organized in an overall guiding principles and recommendations section, which is then followed by additional, related topic-specific items.

HPAG appreciates the opportunity to provide input from various partners on managing recreational use in the Adirondack High Peaks region. It will take commitment, resources, and the support of partners – including HPAG members and many other stakeholders - to manage recreational use of this revered wilderness region. HPAG believes these recommendations begin to lay a foundation for future management of public recreation not only in the High Peaks, but throughout the Adirondack Park.

### **Members of the High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group:**

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## **Overall Recommendations**

### **Background and Guiding Principles**

The High Peaks region, like many of our nation's public lands, is facing a crisis moment, exacerbating trends that were already showing record use. Massive and unpredictable surges in visitation and recreation are overwhelming the facilities, resources, and staff that protect and provide access to New York State's spectacular, globally significant wilderness. Parking areas, roads, trailheads, restroom facilities, and front and back country infrastructure have been overburdened. State agencies, county and local government resources, stewards, volunteers, and private landowners have been unable to keep up.



All of this means that both our natural and human resources are threatened and maintaining public safety in the face of these usage increases has required an unprecedented effort by state land managers and local municipal leaders. Protecting the High Peaks Wilderness from substantial and increasing damage has strained our public and private custodians to the limit.

There is little doubt that these challenges are going to get harder. Weekend use during the summer and fall of 2020 broke visitation records, then broke them again. This occurred despite the Canadian border being closed and a major seasonal influx of visitors forced to stay home. The High Peaks region proved to be a haven for large numbers of people seeking a sense of freedom from the COVID-19 pandemic.



*Roadside parking along Route 73 in the fall*

There is every reason to think that this dynamic of greater use will only intensify as people look for refuge and relief from the mounting effects of climate change.

The future promises visitation pressures that will challenge all previous planning methodologies. The idea of Wilderness as something of inestimable value to humanity is being proven before our eyes, as never before.

But every crisis is also an opportunity, if there is the will to make it so. Here in the Adirondacks, we have the will to turn this crisis into an equally unprecedented opportunity. The Adirondack Park is a world-class treasure and one of the great intact forest ecosystems on earth. To respond to this new era of usage, we need world-class visitor management and natural resource protection. For more than a century, New York State has shown that it is possible for people, communities, and wilderness to coexist. Only with top-line visitor management and natural resource protection can we make good on that legacy for the 21st century and beyond.

To fulfill this vision for the High Peaks region we must have broad engagement, teamwork, and a strategic plan. For the past year, the High Peaks Advisory Group has embodied this reality. The overall recommendations developed by consensus and presented here comprise a framework for the development of a robust strategic plan.

Many of these recommendations are not new. They represent experience, wisdom, and best practices learned at other wild and protected lands. They reflect an unwavering commitment to Article XIV of the New York State Constitution and the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan, which remains a seminal guiding document for the future of the

Park. They also are informed by the current High Peaks Unit Management Plan, which has many of these recommendations as approved management actions.

Throughout this process, **the HPAG has been guided by two paramount priorities;** these two priorities are inviolate guiding principles for management of the High Peaks region:

**Guiding Principle #1:** Protection of the Wilderness.

**Guiding Principle #2:** Public Safety.

In addition to these two paramount priorities, the **following guiding principles** should direct the management of the High Peaks region:

**Guiding Principle #3:** A commitment to green infrastructure, transportation, and practices consistent with New York State's Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act and related climate initiatives.

**Guiding Principle #4:** A commitment to social justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion in all aspects of management in the High Peaks region, from education to policies, visitor programs, hiring, and staffing.

**Guiding Principle #5:** A commitment to bring proven expertise, science, and best management practices into the process. These best management practices need to address the entire spectrum of management actions that will be necessary to positively meet this crisis moment and reshape visitor services and natural resource protection in a new age of unprecedented use.

**Guiding Principle #6:** Use the best methods for assessment of conditions and development of action plans. At the cornerstone is elevating the use of limits of acceptable change approaches, which requires managers to define desired resource conditions and take actions to maintain or achieve those conditions. This requires making a commitment to establish benchmarks through empirical research and continued monitoring and response.

**Guiding Principle #7:** To provide necessary funding, support, and human resources for the DEC, Adirondack Park Agency (APA), Department of Transportation (DOT), and other state agencies and local municipalities, as well as volunteer and non-profit partners, to adequately meet the needs associated with managing a world-class Wilderness destination. This principle includes Forest Rangers, Assistant Forest Rangers, Operations staff, Planners, Foresters, Trailhead and Summit and Natural Resource Stewards, outdoor recreation planners and managers, and other staff.

**Guiding Principle #8:** A commitment to an open, transparent, and ongoing process that involves a broad range of stakeholders and the public. The future of these recommendations must be built upon public engagement.

## Recommendations

**Overall-1:** Future strategic planning and design of a visitor use management structure for the High Peaks region should be undertaken in a manner that can be applied to other regions in the Adirondack Park and other regions of New York State that are experiencing high use and addressing similar issues.

**Overall-2:** The State should convene and fund an Adirondack Advisory Group (AAG) as an ongoing group of diverse stakeholders and wilderness management experts to take the HPAG recommendations forward and guide the development of a strategic plan as well as act as an ongoing resource for visitor management.

- The strategic plan should recognize and, when appropriate, build upon existing plans, such as DEC and Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) Unit Management Plans (UMPs) and the DOT Corridor UMP. These plans should be integrated with a comprehensive planning approach that employs Complex Planning (planning across different management units).
- The strategic plan should incorporate HPAG recommended actions and categorize those that are elements of a long-term plan versus contingencies or temporary measures.

**Overall-3:** The State should implement a world-class visitor management system for the High Peaks Wilderness, and ultimately the Park as a whole, using an adaptive management framework. The HPAG recommends adoption of the National Park Service's Visitor Use Management Framework (VUMF) as the adaptive management tool. This tool was designed by federal land management agencies specifically to manage across a wide range of visitor management issues on federal parklands and forests. Elements of the VUMF are currently being designed and implemented for Forest Preserve projects by both DEC and APA.

The operational role for adaptive visitor and outdoor recreation management must be formalized in a new State bureau or incorporated into an existing State bureau or other State entity. While recreation is a component of DEC's Lands and Forest Division, a renewed focus on outdoor recreation management must be accompanied by the hiring of trained outdoor recreation professionals familiar with these unique challenges and opportunities. This formal role must encompass and coordinate natural resource management, visitor experience, trail/facility

construction, operation and maintenance, and education. The role must also codify enhanced coordination among relevant state agencies, local governments, businesses, and marketing, environmental, and other non-government organizations. World-class adaptive management can only be achieved if it actively involves all stakeholders in a coordinated effort at the data level, process level, and policy level.

- Overall-4:** Data collection, information dissemination, and real-time conditions at parking areas, trails, and other amenities should be integrated into a consistent information framework, including an online app, web and social media resources, kiosks, and message boards. Ultimately, data should be available in a Geographic Information System (GIS).
- Overall-5:** An “all-in” commitment of resources and funds by the State and partners must be made to inventory, improve, and maintain the trails in the High Peaks region and recognize them as the vital infrastructure they are.
- Overall-6:** The Volpe Shuttle Feasibility Study commissioned by DEC should be the basis for in-depth planning using the Complex Planning mechanisms recommended above. Parking design and transportation are important tools for managing capacity in general and at specific sites. DEC must collect data and use that data to adjust management actions for each site. The management goal is to meet the demand for parking, while balancing need for the protection of the resource. This process will have to be ongoing.

## Immediate/Chronic Issues/Recommendations

HPAG recommends the following actions be undertaken immediately or be continued if already in place. Additional immediate actions are reflected by topic in this report.

- IA-1:** Continue to coordinate management actions along Route 73 to address parking, pedestrian safety, and enforcement: DEC, DOT, New York State Troopers, the Town of Keene, Au Sable Mountain Reserve, and stakeholder groups.
- IA-2:** Implement achievable management actions already approved in UMPs. See details in each section.



*Roadside parking along Route 73 can be dangerous for pedestrians*

- IA-3:** Design and implement a pilot shuttle service along Route 73, using the Volpe Shuttle Feasibility Study for guidance.
- IA-4:** Enhance DEC sponsorship of portable toilets and begin winter placement at busy year-round trailheads and climbing access points.
- IA-5:** Increase support for stewardship programs run by DEC and its partners, such as the Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK), ADK 46ers, Adirondack Watershed Institute, and the Town of Keene.
- IA-6:** Increase support for LNT and preparedness education and outreach, especially social media being done by DEC, DOT, the Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism (ROOST), ADK, and the Town of Keene.

## Additional Recommendations by Topic

In addition to the Overall Recommendations outlined above, the following are HPAG recommendations identified by topic area.

### A. Impacts to Wilderness and Ecology

#### **Need for Recommendations/Action**

It is essential to establish a management plan to protect the resources and ecology of the High Peaks region. As described in the Overall Recommendations section of this report, this management framework needs to be based on the six best management practices for wilderness and Limits of Acceptable Change (LAC).

#### **Condition/Current Status**

It is important to state that this suggested framework is not a specific plan or recommendation. The HPAG does not have the resources, expertise, or time to develop a specific management plan at the scale and complexity required for the High Peaks Wilderness Area region. The following is a general framework and example to illustrate a recommended direction that should form the foundation for a secondary planning process. This planning process would be carried forward by the recommended Adirondack Advisory Group (AAG).

It is also important to state that the current High Peaks UMP already supports and calls for use of LAC for future planning. In addition, DEC is implementing a Wild Lands Monitoring Program, which is entirely consistent with this framework.

Most of the following recommendations are fundamental to the LAC model as originally designed. The Ecological Complex section below is an addition; the advancing science around ecological integrity involves a wide variety of measures and would necessarily involve more complicated thresholds that include, but go beyond, the categories in the succeeding sections.

## **Recommended Immediate Actions**

- A-1:** Review and implement achievable management actions already approved in current Unit Management Plans within the High Peaks region.
- A-2:** Conduct trail maintenance and improvement, as detailed elsewhere in the HPAG recommendations.
- A-3:** Immediately increase backcountry presence of stewards and Forest Rangers to protect sensitive resources (such as summit vegetation) from further damage.
- A-4:** Continue aggressive efforts to curtail the introduction and spread of invasive species.

## **UMP Actions that Should be Undertaken**

High Peaks Wilderness Complex (HPWC) UMP – 1999

- Establish an Area Manager to oversee and coordinate all management activities in the HPWC so that wilderness goals and objectives are attained.
- Establish Assistant Area Manager(s), aka, "in-the-field" managers.

## **Overview of Resources Needed to Implement**

- Stabilize funding and increase staffing (see above) to ensure DEC and partners have the ability to address current and future challenges in the High Peaks region.

## **Agencies/Groups Responsible for Implementation**

- DEC's Division of Lands and Forests (see above recommendation information).

## Recommended Long-term Actions

**A-5:** Empower the recommended AAG to guide and participate in development and implementation of a holistic and comprehensive Wilderness and Recreation Management Plan, mirroring successful efforts done on other public lands. This plan would direct the work of the newly established recreational management entity. This action must have broad stakeholder participation, include members with specific expertise in Wilderness Management and promote the following critical elements:

- Recruit an expert third-party facilitator (such as the Leave No Trace Center for Outdoor Ethics or the NPS Conservation Institute) to facilitate the development of the Wilderness Management Plan;
- Be well-funded and have sufficient resources to engage this process over the necessary two plus years of work;
- Follow established protocols for community conservation planning, including wide stakeholder engagement, transparency, and agreed-upon conservation deliverables and outcomes; and
- Establish thresholds for the High Peaks region consistent with complex planning. Examples of recommended thresholds include:
  1. **Ecological Complex**
    - a. Ecological integrity
    - b. Disturbance zones
    - c. Wildlife corridors
    - d. Invasive species/vectors
    - e. Climate resilience
  2. **Physical**
    - a. Soil
    - b. Vegetation
    - c. Alpine vegetation
    - d. Water
    - e. Air
    - f. Wildlife
  3. **Aesthetics**
    - a. Remoteness (distance from roads or human-made facilities)
    - b. Solitude
    - c. Noise/natural quiet
    - d. Light/natural darkness
    - e. Air/drone traffic
  4. **Historical/cultural resources**

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience and High Peaks region Wilderness Trails.



## B. Visitor Experience

### Need for Recommendations/Action

The ability to have “...outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation,” as defined by the Adirondack Park State Land Management Plan (APSLMP), is central to the visitor experience in the High Peaks Wilderness. HPAG recognizes that the Adirondack Park can still provide such opportunities, but investment must be made in both front and backcountry spaces. Critical to both the spaces is establishing thresholds for capacity.

### Condition/Current Status

There are problems and conflicts in the spaces where recreational users start their High Peaks experience, i.e., the front country. There are limited restrooms, amenities, and information sources along the Route 73 corridor. Current parking lots are inadequate to meet the high demand, leading to conflict between users, managers, and enforcement, which often results in dangerous, illegal parking. While shuttles help mitigate the pressure on parking, they are only one part of a needed comprehensive user management plan.

Over the past 10 years, and even greater in the past five, there has been an increasing number of users accessing the backcountry, and greater variance in hiker experience and intent. While more hikers and new hikers have the opportunity to explore the High Peaks region, this has at times resulted in crowding, conflicts, depreciative behavior, and increased rescues. Increased use also results in distancing and passing efforts that aggravate already eroded trails through widening of the trails and braiding. Also, inexperienced hikers are often unprepared and unaware of trail etiquette, and despite many of these hikers claiming to be aware of LNT Principles, the overall increase in the number of hikers means an amplification of negative impacts from others: i.e., trash, human waste, illegal camping and fires, food-wildlife conflicts, and landscape changes, such as rock stacking or leaving tributes.



*High Peaks region visitor numbers continue to increase each year  
(pictured: Ampersand Mountain summit)*

Managers are challenged to balance effectiveness with visitor burden. They lack empirical data on what sorts of management actions would be functional and

acceptable in the varied settings of the High Peaks region, and the sensitivity of the topic with the public is stalling decisions.

## **Recommended Immediate Actions**

- B-1:** Further analysis of hiker registries to estimate hiker numbers and origin. Larger groups that travel long distances may be more resistant to dispersal or redirection messaging.
- B-2:** Build on active social research projects from recent seasons (TRPs); Pursue sampling strategies that reach both novice and expert, locals and visitors.
- B-3:** Analysis of public comments.

## **UMP Actions that Should be Undertaken**

High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP – 1999

- Support and expand the Summit Steward program.

High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP – 2018 Amendment

- **Monitoring:** Begin monitoring program for any new facility built; collect and tally trail register information annually.
- **Education:** Work to promulgate regulations proposed in the UMP Amendment. Provide seasonal education and outreach via a Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) Bear Steward, two Assistant Forest Rangers in the towns of Newcomb and North Hudson, and four Assistant Forest Rangers in the northern part of the High Peaks.
- **Parking/Access:** Work with stakeholders to develop suitable parking and access to various locations in the Chapel Pond – Ridge Trail – Round Pond Corridor on Route 73. This area includes various hiking, rock climbing, ice climbing, and sightseeing destinations.
- Work with the Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR) to maintain trailheads and parking opportunities through the AMR Easement.
- Work with stakeholders to relocate the Ampersand Mountain Trailhead, building an appropriate parking area for year-round use, and a trailhead with all its appurtenances.
- Work with ORDA through the Intensive Use Area UMP to establish a new trailhead for Cascade Mountain and the Mount Van Hoevenberg complex.
- Relocate the Pitchoff Mountain Trailhead in conjunction with the relocation of the Pitchoff Mountain Trail (from 2020 Sentinel Range Wilderness UMP).

## **Overview of Resources Needed to Implement**

- A dedicated funding stream for social research.

## Agencies/Groups Responsible for Implementation

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- NGOs with related expertise
- Academic Institution Researchers

## Recommended Long-term Actions

### Topic: Capacity

**Goal:** Address capacity issues and recreational user impacts at popular trails in the High Peaks.

**B-4:** There are many types of capacity management strategies and actions (e.g., shuttles, dispersal, permits, etc.). Investigation of which types work best for varied High Peaks settings and users must begin. To that end, HPAG recommends institution of a three-year pilot program on private land used to access public lands that places limits on use, employing various methods to help protect the natural resources, provide for public safety, and ensure the long-term preservation of the site's wilderness character.

- This action shall be based on, and will test, best and accepted practices for recreational management (e.g., Recreation Opportunity Spectrum, Limits of Acceptable Change Management Framework), and visitor and wildlands monitoring data (see subtopic: Information Gaps and Data Collection). The pilot will take place on applicable private land sites that permit public access or provide access to high use backcountry areas.
- In order to explore use management options, the program shall establish the baseline data and protocols for possible future management decisions throughout the High Peaks region and accommodate front country public safety needs, while addressing backcountry access and natural resource impacts.
- Generate a summary report and recommendations at the conclusion of year three, with recommendations on future management actions and goals, including feasibility of permanent limits on use when applicable.

### Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented

- Natural Resource Impacts: Will restore appropriate public access across and on private lands that are open to public recreation, while maintaining public safety protecting natural resources, and preserving the wilderness character that is an element of the private/public arrangement.
- Recreational Experience Impacts: Will enhance the ability of the public to enjoy a more remote and tranquil backcountry experience, while honoring the landowner's legacy of stewardship and preservation of these wilderness lands.
- Support to communities and local economies: Will allow for continued access by the public in numbers that exceed the original quotas identified in past management agreements.

- Future Management Actions: Pilot research will provide a mechanism for DEC to develop procedures and protocols for a limits-on-use program that could be replicated in other parts of the Adirondack Park in the future.

**Topic: User Intent, Impacts, and Education**

**Goal:** Inform, expand knowledge, and promote stewardship in the High Peaks region through coordinated messaging and education for the public.

- B-5:** Conduct education and outreach to ensure hikers plan ahead and prepare. Formalize the coordination of messaging development, education products and goals (in writing/a plan), including LNT messaging, shuttle schedules, parking availability, trail conditions, regulations, and special considerations for COVID-19. Assess and dedicate available funding and resources for these purposes. LNT includes messaging about practices intended to minimize recreational impacts. Continue and expand coordinated, consistent messaging through social media and other means.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented**  
Program will:

- Initiate coordination and enhancement of existing agency and private programs to increase education and awareness of the public’s access rights, along with necessary stewardship. Establish a working group that will bring practitioners from organizations and agencies together during year 1 to share knowledge and information, and collaborate on programming, planning for years 2 and 3, and assessment in year 3.
- Utilize the Authority of the Resource communication technique and the outdoor skills and ethics program to coalesce messaging across programs:
  - Encourage/inform hikers to dispose of trash and human waste properly.
  - Encourage/inform hikers about how to respect wildlife.
  - Encourage/inform hikers how to be considerate of other visitors.
  - Encourage/inform hikers about the stewardship responsibilities of users.



*Visitor education is a key element in protecting the region's natural resources*

- Generate a summary report and recommendations at the conclusion of year 3, and recommendations on future communication and education actions and goals.

**Immediate Actions Needed to Initiate the Recommendation**

- Generate a contact list of active programs and representatives.
- Reach out to groups to survey methods, messages, and materials.
- Support the Adirondack Park Social Media Working Group.

**B-6:** Provide support for stewardship programs as effective tools in protecting natural resources and managing a variety of front country and backcountry locations. Fund and support stewardship programs for the High Peaks region long-term, including Keene Front Country Stewards, Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewards, Assistant Forest Rangers, Student Conservation Association interns, and various other groups who assist with stewardship (where resources allow).

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented**

- Users will be educated on human impacts to wild areas and are more likely to protect natural resources through their future actions.
- Development of long-term advocates and stewards of public lands.
- A reduction in search and rescue missions.
- A better user experience.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety and High Peaks Wilderness Trails.

**B-7:** Create or partner to develop an Adirondack High Peaks Information and User Data Collection System with a well-designed app. Such a system will help users redistribute/self-select when situations are crowded. The app should include real-time parking information (lots full, redirect to available parking/alternate sites), shuttle information, trail conditions and closures, and breaking weather, news, and emergency information.

The following “elements” capture distinct objectives of the effort, which may stage over time or track in parallel through the site/app development and roll-out:

1. Concentration on High Peaks Region Shuttle, parking information, and trailhead status. The site/app would be updated through basic edit permissions for shuttle drivers or other authorized front-country users with a mobile device. Updates will be automatically and immediately presented through site/app when the driver syncs with cell service.
2. Provide current and static/ongoing information on hiking the High Peaks region and LNT Principles, as well as maps, equipment, seasonal conditions, preservation, surrounding communities, services available, resources and rules, etc. “Push” capabilities would also allow general or

specific information/regional updates to reach registered users on an ongoing basis.

3. Visitor Data. Provide a means to gain relevant information on users. This data might range from basic access/site registration elements to more explicit party origin, usage, and intent data that can feed broader data-driven management programs in the Park.

4. Education/Information/Awareness. Become the go-to site for user-focused content and planning of High Peaks region hiking. This will involve a combined public/private partnership (DEC, non-profits, DMOs, etc.) defining and funding associated information and communications. This site would need the authority and presence to be recognized as the official High Peaks region resource and information site.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented**

- Such a system will (1) support park management's data and decision-making needs, and (2) assist visitors in making destination and activity decisions that will keep them safe and reduce frustration caused by crowds and/or the availability of resources.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety.

**Topic: Facilities, Camping, and Services**

**Goal:** Improve quality of experiences, access, camping, and safety.

- B-8:** Support the 2018 UMP Amendment regarding actions to improve camping:
- Each primitive campsite will be purpose-built, including proper siting, vegetation clearing, hardening of a formal tent pad, and other campsite accessories as needed (access trails, privies, and fire rings).
  - Inventory and evaluate existing campsites in the High Peaks Wilderness Complex. Develop work plans to take action to improve, close, or move any site that is not sustainable or in conformance. Once the site is completed, establish a baseline photo monitoring program and periodic monitoring program.
  - DEC will post signage regarding site changes at front country and backcountry locations to inform users; Maintain a *map that is updated annually*.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented**

- Clear campsite delineation so users know exactly where to camp.
- Improves the quality of the camping experience.
- Allows DEC to better monitor campsites in the High Peaks region.
- Reduce site creep.



- If data analysis suggests a permit system for folks who want to camp, there will already be defined campsites and inventory DEC can use to inform the permit system.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety and High Peaks Wilderness Trails.

**B-9:** Research and implement a long-term strategy for managing human waste in the High Peaks Wilderness. Move away from temporary solutions like port-a-johns and build vault toilets at trailheads where appropriate, and fund sanitation personnel to clean and manage them. Innovative solutions for backcountry waste management also need to be explored and implemented. In addition, identify and erect information centers that have public restrooms with flush toilets, access to drinking water, and maps/LNT education from trained professionals such as Front Country Stewards, on-duty Rangers or Assistant Rangers. Access to WiFi.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if the Recommendation is Implemented**

- Consideration to flood resilient design and Scenic Byway aesthetics in the placement of vault toilets.
- Visitors will have access to year-round bathroom facilities with running water at all major parking hubs.

**Immediate Actions Needed to Initiate Recommendation**

- Explore funding and site opportunities for information/services hubs.

**Topic: Information Gaps and Data Collection**

**Goal:** In order to set benchmarks for limits of acceptable change, capacity, and agenda setting for education, DEC needs empirical data on users.

**B-10:** To move ahead with actions recommended in this section and others, conduct research in the following areas:

- Capacity. Conduct a year to year comparison of the number of users at trailheads in the Route 73 corridor to identify the most widely used trails, growth in use, and potential for dispersal.
- Perceptions of visitors. Conduct social research surveys and observations to collect perceptions of crowding, wilderness experiences, and the efficacy of messaging.
- Characterize visitors. Survey users regarding intent, demographics, trail preparedness, LNT, and etiquette.
- Messaging. Survey of trailhead communication and signage.
- Transportation and services. Survey of parking and results of transit research; Survey of restroom opportunities in the Route 73 corridor.



## Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented

- Data-driven decision-making.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety and High Peaks Wilderness Trails.

## C. High Peaks Wilderness Trails

### Need for Recommendations/Actions

Given the exponential increase in trail use, coupled with decades of patchwork construction, partial maintenance measures, and emergency repair, it is essential to make a significant investment in the trail infrastructure of the High Peaks Wilderness. This will not only help protect the natural resource but will create a better user experience.

### Condition/Current Status

#### Trail conditions

Trails in the High Peaks Region present severe degradation of the resource and the overall wilderness experience, primarily due to the fact they were not designed using sustainable techniques. The main trails/major arteries going in wilderness areas, which are central to hiking activities in the Park, are USFS Class 4/ DEC Class 5 trails, known as trunk trails, which have some turnouts and intersections leading to summits and other areas of interest. Poor historic trail design paired with a steady increase of users and a trend in year-round hiking seasons have led to trampling of surrounding plant communities, erosion of soil, muddy conditions, trail widening, and braiding (a network of social trails added by users who wish to avoid a condition or obstacle, or seek their own route). Assessing the conditions of main access routes will inform management actions. Recommendations include an empirical review of trunk trails, trailheads, and alpine zones to ground truth conditions, and establishing benchmarks for monitoring.



*An area eroded and hardened by visitor use*

## **Resources**

Degraded trail conditions are a direct result of limited funding and dated trail maintenance practices within the Park. With the exception of special projects like the new Cascade Trail, trail rerouting and rebuilding is rare. Due to limited funding, restrictions in Volunteer Stewardship Agreements, and NYS Department of Labor regulations, professional trail resources are underutilized and not able to keep pace with deteriorating trail infrastructure. Further, there is little communication between trail crews and programs within the Park, and no normalized information exchanges with the larger, extensive, trail building community in the Northeast.

## **Recommended Immediate Actions**

- C-1:** Support DEC's long-term monitoring plan for trails. Schedule survey activities immediately. Secure appropriate staff, technology, and tools.
- C-2:** "Emergency" trail repairs should be limited to high use areas during the survey phase.
- C-3:** Reach out to the trail's community in the Northeast for information sharing, professional development, and collaboration to expand staff knowledge, skill sets, and professional networks.

## **UMP Actions that Should be Undertaken**

### High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP – 1999

- Fund annual routine maintenance of facilities; interior outposts, trails, campsites, lean-tos, privies, litter removal, bridges, signs, etc.

### High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP – 2018 Amendment

- **Monitoring:** Develop the Wildland Monitoring Program, which will be used in association with the work planning process for the phases of implementation; Begin a monitoring program for any new facility built; Collect and tally trail register information annually.
- **Education:** Provide Seasonal Education and Outreach; Work to Educate users of the unique zones in the High Peaks.
- **Trails:** Layout and construct the Mt. Van Hoevenberg East Trail. Upon completion of the trail, establish photo monitoring points and an annual monitoring program; Layout and construct the Cascade Mountain Trail once the Mt. Van Hoevenberg Trail is completed. Upon completion of the Cascade Trail, establish photo monitoring points and an annual monitoring program.

## **Overview of Resources Needed to Implement**

- Devoted funding stream for staff to carry out these activities.

## Agencies/Groups responsible for Implementation:

- New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
- Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK)
- Tahawus Trails
- Student Conservation Association
- Northern Forest Canoe Trail
- Adirondack Trail Improvement Society
- Barkeater Trail Alliance
- Adirondack 46ers

## Recommended Long-term Actions

### Topic: Trunk Trail Survey and Monitoring

**Goal:** Address trunk trail degradation.

- C-4:** Set an agenda for trunk trail maintenance and rebuilding based on the survey. Pair with the communication program to inform and educate users and the general public.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Management Impacts: Trail work will be prioritized based on data from surveys, which will lead to better use of staff and funds.
- Natural Resource Impacts: Methodological trail improvements will allow plant communities to recover and increase water quality and wildlife habitat.
- Recreational Resource Impacts: Maintained trails with restored plant communities, in conjunction with a communication program, will create an improved wilderness experience with engaged usership.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

### Topic: Trailhead Survey and Monitoring

**Goal:** Address trailhead degradation and the widening and hardening of surfaces; support communication and education efforts.

- C-5:** Assess popular trails from trailheads to the first ½ mi. for braiding, tread durability, impacts to plant communities, and wayfinding clarity. Implement passive management, such as brushing and signage, to guide users and inform them of improvement projects and possible detours.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Management Impacts: Trail work will be prioritized based on data from surveys, which will lead to better use of staff and funds.

- Natural Resource Impacts: Methodological trail improvements will allow plant communities to recover and increase water quality and wildlife habitat.
- Recreational Resource Impacts: Maintained trails with restored plant communities, in conjunction with a communication program, will create an improved wilderness experience with engaged usership.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

**Topic: Alpine Zone Survey and Monitoring**

**Goal:** Address wayfinding and trampling issues in the alpine zone; Support protection and restoration efforts.

- C-6:** Support the efforts of the Adirondack High Peaks Summit Stewardship Program (AHPSSP) and its allies to characterize the conditions of, and wayfinding in, alpine zones; support and further adopt passive management, such as brushing, screen walls, and string fencing.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Management Impacts: Trail work will be prioritized based on data from AHPSSP, which will promote more efficient use of staff and funds.
- Natural Resource Impacts: Clear wayfinding and education will allow rare alpine plant communities to recover.
- Recreational Resource Impacts: Maintained trails with restored plant communities, along with the AHPSSP and allies (e.g., front country stewardship programs) programming, will lead to an improved summit experience for better informed hikers.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

**Topic: Build Trail Maintenance and Construction Capacity**

**Goal:** Address lack of capacity in trail maintenance program(s).

- C-7:** Develop a mechanism to include private funding as a source for trail construction and maintenance, and, working with partners, continue to pursue resources and build capacity for trail maintenance and construction. Pursue expanded trail collaboration programs that include volunteer trail adoption, training of volunteer crews, and increased coordination and partnerships with organizations in the area that have trail expertise. Reach out to trail crews and networks in the Northeast for shared training and knowledge.



*Trail maintenance is vital for both visitor safety and protection of natural resources*

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- **Management Impacts:** Increased trail maintenance and construction capacity will cover more miles of trail and allow for larger projects. Collaborative projects between staff, volunteers, and outside professionals will increase knowledge transfer and expand institutional memory, making the whole system more resilient to disruptions in funding, staffing, and weather events.
- **Natural Resource Impacts:** An increased trail crew presence will head off damage before permanent ecosystem function damage occurs.
- **Recreational Resource Impacts:** Collaborative trail maintenance programming will provide more opportunities for hikers to give back and become hands-on stewards of the resource, leading to informed behaviors.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience, Wilderness Ecology and Public Safety.

### **Topic: Trail System Research**

**Goal:** To support data-driven management decision-making for trail investment.

- C-8:** Design, implement, and support a wildland monitoring program with an emphasis on trail assessment that relies on a capacity determination. Identify five sites in the backcountry that need the most attention. Analyze and collect data for these sites, including year-to-year numbers at site and monitoring of behavior. Measure the capacity of the trails to withstand use and protect the quality of the hiking experience.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented:**

- Pursuit of social science and field research data is a long-term investment in trail infrastructure and management. Construction, maintenance and user management based on empirical data will lead to better results and cost savings over current non action or trial and error scenarios.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

## **D. Public Safety, Transportation, and Traffic Safety**

### **Need for Recommendations/Action**

Increased interest in the High Peaks region has brought large numbers of visitors to the HP/73 corridor, exceeding the capacity of trailhead parking lots. As a result, visitors are often parking along the shoulders of highways, in residential neighborhoods, and in the hamlet business district, requiring the people to walk along the road to their desired trail. This is creating a dangerous situation in some areas, and conflict with residents and

business owners in others. This results in regular, predictable dangerous situations, negative impacts on residents, and lost economic opportunity for local businesses.

### **Condition/Current Status**

- a. No Parking signs have been installed to limit the areas where people may park along the shoulders of Route 73.
- b. The presence of Law Enforcement in these areas has been increased.
- c. Additional warning signs and Portable Variable Message Signs (PVMS) have been installed, including a “Your Speed Is” sign.
- d. Town of Keene, DEC, and NYSDOT continue to coordinate efforts.
- e. The Town of Keene operates a parking lot and shuttle from Marcy Field to the Garden trailhead, which successfully ameliorates these issues when it is operating.
- f. The Town of Keene places Front Country Stewards at the Marcy Field and Garden parking lots to educate hikers and provide information about alternative hikes. This is funded by revenue generated by parking and shuttle user fees.
- g. Essex County is preparing a shuttle pilot program to run along Route 73 when public health conditions permit operation.
- h. The high level of demand for parking and camping has led to a greater need for regular enforcement along state and local roads.
- i. High levels of use and many new, inexperienced hikers have led to a greater demand on both state and local rescue services.
- j. Many trailhead access roads and parking lots are simple gravel construction, with minimal culverts. They were not built to accommodate the current number of visitors or the intense rain events that are becoming more common. The maintenance costs and environmental impact of these poorly constructed roads and parking lots is difficult to sustain. Most, if not all, of these areas are in need of updated designs to improve drainage, increase infiltration, stabilize eroding areas, better delineate parking, and decrease maintenance costs and demands.

### **UMP Actions that Should be Undertaken**

High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP Amendment – 2018

#### **Parking/Access**

- Work with stakeholders to develop suitable parking and access to various locations in the Chapel Pond – Ridge Trail – Round Pond Corridor on Route 73. This area includes various hiking, rock climbing, and sightseeing destinations.
- Work with the Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR) to maintain trailheads and parking opportunities throughout the AMR Easement.
- Work with stakeholders to relocate the Ampersand Mountain Trailhead, building an appropriate parking area for year-round use of the trailhead with all its appurtenances.



- Work with ORDA through the Intensive Use Area UMP to establish a new trailhead for Cascade Mountain and the Mount Van Hoevenberg complex.
- Relocate the Pitchoff Mountain Trailhead in conjunction with relocation of the Pitchoff Mountain Trail (from 2020 Sentinel Range Wilderness UMP).

## Recommended Long-term Actions

### Topic: Parking and Shuttles

**Goal:** Plan for parking and shuttles as part of a “system planning” effort to effectively address both front country and backcountry needs and impacts. This planning must be undertaken in a manner that can be applied to other regions in the Park and other state lands experiencing high use.

- D-1:** Education/information/parking hubs need to be placed along Route 73:
- These locations should have infrastructure in place to support this operation (a restroom, charging stations, parking spaces, a real-time communication system).
  - Hub locations would be staffed by trained professionals and volunteers who can educate and assist visitors.
  - Some locations could serve as a “Gateway” into the Park that many visitors ask for and/or expect to find.
  - This system could extend north from Frontier Town through Keene, Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake, and from Frontier Town west to Tahawus.
  - This strategy would help disperse use, address high-use issues developing in other communities, and aid in the economic development of more Adirondack towns (see the Community section of this report for more details).

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented:**

- Develop additional tools and resources to manage use and protect the resource.
  - Improved visitor safety and user experience.
- D-2:** Available parking space must be based on the allowable capacity for the trails, and be split between trailhead parking and shuttle hubs:
- Front country infrastructure, such as the number of parking spaces or shuttle routes, should be initiated based on a reasonable assumption of current use. This will allow immediate management actions to be implemented, as additional data is being collected and future adjustments are being planned.
  - Allowable trailhead parking should be in designated/marked parking spots with no parking along the shoulders.
  - DEC should contract with the Town of Keene to construct parking lots in the UMP for the Chapel Pond area.



- Additional parking would be allowed at shuttle hubs.
- Short-term parking is needed at scenic overlook locations to ensure parking is available for sightseers
- Real-time parking availability information must be easily accessible to the Stewards, and to the public at shuttle hubs.
- DOT, DEC, and the Town of Keene recommend continuing and enhancing efforts to improve communication and provide parking information. DOT and DEC continue to work together to develop the 511 system – which provides info on the status of parking, and to refine its use for outdoor recreationists. Other stakeholders should be involved in this effort, to bring their expertise and to link this tool to their existing communications efforts. For instance, New York State Parks has an app, and their experience with that app could help in developing an effective system. The Town of Keene also has an app, “Trails Less Travelled”, in partnership with Adirondack Atlas, and this app should have a link directly to the 511 system. In addition, the 511 system should be publicized as part of the Education Plan.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented:**

- Distributed use throughout the region would likely boost economic benefits for towns along the route.

**D-3:** Shuttles need to operate as part of the system of parking, capacity, and dispersal of use:

- Possible hub locations include the following:
  - Frontier Town
  - Malfunction Junction (intersection of US9 and NY73)
  - Marcy Field
  - Junction at bottom of Spruce Hill (intersection of NY9N and NY73)
  - Owls Head
  - Mount Van Hoevenberg
  - High Peaks Information Center at the Heart Lake Program Center
- Future routes could circle the High Peaks by developing front country infrastructure in a loop through Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake, and also via a route from Frontier Town to the new Newcomb/OSI facility at Tahawus.
- The shuttle system should be operated by one entity:
  - More routes, longer hours of operations, and efficiencies of scale can be achieved by a sole operator rather than multiple entities.
  - A sole operator is better positioned to use shuttle capacity as a tool for controlling the numbers of visitors in the backcountry.
  - Coordinating education and outreach is more effective across a single system.
- Shuttles equipped with internet can serve as mobile data gathering units and as access points for education and information for visitors.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Provide a safer experience for visitors while also developing an effective tool to manage use.

**D-4:** Parking passes/permits should be investigated as an option to limit use.

- Current trailhead parking could be limited to parking passes only.
- The possibility of establishing a parking pass system where people go to a central location/hub to obtain a permit. Obtaining a parking pass would be coordinated with hiker information and education materials. Visitors could get a parking pass for a particular location or use the shuttle system.
- Planning, design, and operation of parking lots must account for different users:
  - Scenic vista pullouts should be short-term parking only so that visitors can pull over briefly to enjoy the scenic vista and take a picture. Currently, hikers fill all these spots.
  - Climbers need access to cliffs, and planning should not neglect these users. This group also comprises rock climbing guides who operate on a slightly different schedule.
  - There needs to be an allocation of parking for both these user groups to access the resource.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Provide access for all types of visitors.
- Gather data that can help improve visitor access and experiences.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience and High Peaks Wilderness Trails.

**D-5:** Collect the following additional data that is needed to support system planning for parking and shuttles:

- What is the “Carrying Capacity” of the trails?
- What are the available parking spaces at each trailhead?
- Will additional off-street parking be constructed, and if so, where?
- Will all additional parking be located at shuttle hubs only?
- What are the different types of users and what are their needs?

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Gather data for developing an effective transportation system.

**D-6:** Law enforcement continue to play a role in the success of the parking plan.

- Place a Forest Ranger at busy areas early in the day on average busy/normal summer weekend days and on surge/over-capacity days.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- A safer visitor experience.
- Parking enforcement reinforces and supports all management actions.

## Topic: Pedestrians

**Goal:** No one should have to walk along the highway to reach a trailhead. The immediate actions listed below should be implemented to minimize this risk while long-term planning and management actions are developed. This will require a mix of tools and means.

- D-7:** Continue efforts by DOT for traffic calming (work is underway to put these in place in the Giant/Au Sable Club parking lots area of Route 73):
- Advisory signs that identify why drivers should reduce speed.
  - Additional signs where pedestrians cross Route 73 between the Giant and Au Sable Club parking lots.
  - DOT is providing DEC with flashing signs that display “Your Speed is...” that can be deployed on surge days.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Improved safety.

- D-8:** Collect additional data needed for pedestrian use actions:
- Can walking paths be constructed for hikers along the roadway, beyond the shoulders?

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Increased data can improve planning.

## Topic: Education for Hiker Preparedness and Dispersion

- D-9:** Continue education pop-ups to help prepare and disperse hikers.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Help users avoid putting themselves at risk.
- Reduce the number of rescues, which also protects the health and safety of responders.

- D-10:** Direct all overflow traffic to Marcy Field to obtain information. This location is currently the only parking/information hub in Keene; front country stewards are posted there Friday-Monday from 7 am to 1 pm and the parking lot is a centrally located, safe site to educate and inform hikers.
- Further coordination with DEC, DOT, and other stakeholders to direct traffic to Marcy Field.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Provides a safe, established information hub.

## Topic: Enforcement

Enforcement is going to be an essential and ongoing component of most management actions being considered.

**D-11:** Study of the costs of rescues to both state and local agencies.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Increased safety along roadsides.
- Enforcement reinforces and supports all management actions.

**D-12:** Examine laws and regulations other states, such as Colorado, New Hampshire, and Vermont, have used to collect rescue costs related to actions involving irresponsible outdoor recreationalists.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Staff and resources can be dedicated to other tasks.

**D-13:** Continue educational efforts to reduce the need for enforcement; education is a powerful tool to promote safety, thereby decreasing the need for enforcement and rescues.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Help prevent users from putting themselves at risk.
- Enforcement reinforces and supports all management actions.

**D-14:** Allow/encourage local ambulance services and DEC to charge insurance for rescues.

**D-15:** Investigate rescue insurance, such as the New Hampshire Hikers card. (<https://wildlife.state.nh.us/safe/index.html>). Two actions need to take place to continue active pursuit of this topic

- Commission a study similar to the shuttle study to research current New York State law and insurance regulations and examine the hiker/skier responsibility laws and regulations other states have adopted.
- Use the study as the basis to engage stakeholders and develop alternative plans for recouping rescue costs.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Identified models to develop appropriate legislation that could address key issues related to rescues and emergency response.

**D-16:** Increase regular enforcement of the parking and camping situation along state and local roads.

## Topic: Rescues

**D-17:** Continue educational efforts to reduce the need for rescues.

**D-18:** Study costs of rescues to both state and local agencies.

**D-19:** Examine laws and regulations other states, such as Colorado, New Hampshire, and Vermont, have used to collect some rescue costs from irresponsible outdoor recreationalists.

**D-20:** Allow/encourage local ambulance services and DEC to charge insurance for rescues.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Recoup some rescue costs.

**D-21:** Commission a study (similar to the transit study) to research current New York State law and insurance regulations and examine the hiker/skier responsibility laws and regulations other states have adopted. Use the study as the basis to engage stakeholders and develop alternative plans for recouping rescue costs.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Provide appropriate data and information for planning.

**D-22:** Investigate rescue insurance such as the New Hampshire Hikers card. (<https://wildlife.state.nh.us/safe/index.html>).

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented:**

- Provide appropriate data and information for planning.

## Topic: Flood/ Stormwater Control

**D-23:** Determine (1) how many parking lots and roads do not meet the current standards for controlling stormwater runoff, culvert size and placement, and flood resiliency, and (2) whether some roads are experiencing increased traffic that would warrant changing their classification, and thus design standards.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented:**

- Provide appropriate data and information for planning.

**D-24:** Front country infrastructure, such as trailhead access roads and parking lots, should follow best management practices for design and construction. These standards and other resources are available through the following:

- DOT Highway Design Manual  
<https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/engineering/design/dqab/hdm>

- New York State Standards and Specifications for Erosion and Sediment Control (known as the Blue Book), updated in 2016. [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water\\_pdf/2016nysstanec.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/water_pdf/2016nysstanec.pdf)
- New York State Stormwater Management Design Manual, updated in 2015. <https://www.dec.ny.gov/chemical/29072.html>
- Stream Crossings: Guidelines and Best Management Practices <https://www.dec.ny.gov/permits/49066.html>
- Rural Roads Active Management Program (RRAMP) Manual. [https://www.cwicny.org/files/RRAM\\_Manual.pdf](https://www.cwicny.org/files/RRAM_Manual.pdf)
- Cornell Local Roads Program publications. <https://www.clrp.cornell.edu/library/publications.html>

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Watershed Protection.

## E. Community – “Hamlets as Hubs”

### Need for Recommendations/Actions

The Adirondack Park is home to 105 towns and villages that support 130,000 year-round residents and 200,000 seasonal residents. The Park hosts more than 12 million visitors annually. Visitor numbers have increased exponentially - between 2016-2017, visitor numbers grew by 500,000, according to the Adirondack Council. Tourism is a large part of the North Country economy, comprising 19 percent of total employment, with a \$1.5 billion dollar industry (<https://www.roostadk.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Adirondacks-2019-NYS-Tourism-Economic-Impact.pdf>). However, as visitors arrive in increasing number and frequency, some Adirondack communities are struggling to effectively and sustainably manage the influx. Simultaneously, other communities experiencing fewer visitors would welcome more tourism. For the purposes of the High Peaks Advisory Group, the town of Keene is highlighted below in the Immediate Actions recommendations. Information hub strategies in Keene should be supported in other hamlets as foundations for the development of a regional distribution model. The Circle Around the High Peaks regional distribution model is outlined in the Long-term Actions recommendations section below.

### Condition/Current Status of Topic Area

#### Community

Parking along the Route 73 Corridor in the town of Keene is dangerous to access and creates congestion in a busy corridor. Trailheads have limited parking. The summer and fall of 2020 saw record numbers, with 350-450 cars parking along the Route 73 corridor

each weekend (even as the Canadian border was closed). Overflow parking within the hamlet displaces available parking for local residents and businesses, and frequently blocks access for emergency vehicles. In addition, noise increases in residential areas as visitors ready themselves for hiking.

### **Local Planning Efforts**

Keene has a local planning effort actively working on these issues. The town supports trained Front Country Stewards at Marcy Field and the Garden Parking Lot to offer hiker information and preparedness education (Leave No Trace). Keene operates a shuttle from Marcy Field (a 75-car parking lot) to the Garden Parking Lot (a 40-car lot that fills by 7 a.m. on weekends). **Shuttle fees** are critical for supporting shuttle operations, Front Country Stewards and portable toilets. This Keene shuttle did not operate during the 2020 season due to COVID-19 restrictions.



*Keene is a community greatly impacted by the popularity of the High Peaks region*

### **Public Health**

Public flush toilets with running water are not available in the town of Keene or anywhere between Exit 30 and Lake Placid. Seasonably available portable toilets are located along the highway in summer months (May – October) and many are located in flood prone areas. All are removed for the winter months. Contracts for portable toilets are a patchwork comprised of DEC, towns, and non-profit organizations. Two portable toilets are available at Marcy Field and one at the Garden lot.

### **Public Safety**

Local Fire and EMS, which are all *volunteer* crews, have more responsibility as they participate in increasing number of backcountry rescues/ambulance calls. The Town of Keene relies on mutual aid when its volunteers are assisting on backcountry rescues, which increases response times to local incidents. Forest Ranger staffing is sporadic and limited, as they have additional duties and are often called away for rescues. The town (with 1,000 year-round residents) has a small local government with limited resources. There is no enforcement arm or constable to monitor illegal parking or to issue tickets.

### **Communication**

There is also limited cellular access within the town. Verizon is currently the only carrier, but another may be coming soon. Expanding cell service will be critical for access to real-time parking apps and up-to-date information.



## Housing

The areas' second home/short-term rental market has displaced availability of workforce housing. Existing housing stock is older and less energy efficient, and the is limited availability of affordable, year-round rental units.

## Recommended Immediate Actions

### E-1: Hamlets as Information Hubs

- Expand on the Keene model at Marcy Field to establish Hamlets as Information Hubs.
- Explore opportunities/locations to erect an information center with public restrooms with flush toilets, access to drinking water/maps/LNT education from trained professionals such as Front Country Stewards, an on-duty Forest Ranger or Assistant Forest Ranger, and access to WiFi.
- Work with the Town of Keene Hiker Parking and Recreational Infrastructure Working Group to coordinate efforts.
- Include access to year-round public flush toilets and running water.
- Create a map featuring Information and Parking Hub locations, similar to a map of the Blue Ridge Highway in North Carolina.
- Education with consistent messaging across the region (LNT, Authority of the Resource) in all social media apps.
- Create a real-time parking information app to limit confusion/distracted driving along Route 73 Corridor.
- Expand access to WiFi and cell service, which is a critical need in the region.

### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented:**

- Creating a safe, central location for visitors to access information, bathroom facilities with water- and communicate with trained staff - will improve traffic flow, limit confusion, and promote safety and public health. Contact with a trained professional provides an opportunity for education in LNT and preparedness, which improves the visitor's experience and promotes safety in the backcountry.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

### E-2: Implement Shuttle as a Management Tool

- Expand on the Keene Shuttle concept to eliminate dangerous roadside parking along the Route 73 Corridor and limit congestion.
- Employ a shuttle system as a management tool to limit use.
- Implement a fee program, generated by user groups, to sustain the program.
- Explore funding sources for installing electric vehicle (EV) charging stations in cooperation with efforts being made for the 2023 World University Games that support EV shuttles.
- Pursue an EV shuttle system to work toward meeting the goals and requirements of the NYS Climate and Community Protection Act.

- Explore the intersection of the Information Hub concept with the Transportation Hub concept being discussed in preparation for the 2023 World University Games.
- Consider other modes of transportation (e.g., “bike to hike”).
- Consider all user groups, including climbers and guide services.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Removing roadside parking will improve safety in the Route 73 Corridor. Providing a shuttle will provide safe access to trailheads and an opportunity to manage capacity.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety.

**E-3:** Implement the 2018 High Peaks UMP Amendment

- As per the UMP Amendment, build the two approved 20-car lots near Chapel Pond. Safe ingress and egress, snow removal, access to toilets and shuttle drop access should be included in the design.
- The new parking spaces should be employed in combination with the shuttle bus as a management tool to further reduce access to roadside parking, which will increase safety and reduce congestion in the corridor.
- As per the UMP Amendment, build the new trailhead and parking area for Pitchoff Mtn.
- Contract with the Town of Keene to improve the entrance and exit to the Chapel Pond Day Use Area, with consideration of a right turn only exit.
- Contract with the Town of Keene to build these parking lots and manage snow removal.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented**

- The new lots will provide safe off-road parking and a safe shuttle stop. Once the lots are full, visitors will be directed to the nearest parking/shuttle hub, reducing congestion and confusion in the Route 73 Corridor.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety.

**E-4:** Human Waste Management

- DEC should explore alternatives to portable toilets at trailheads, such as vault toilets or other appropriate human waste management facilities. DEC should develop design standards that match conditions at the location (backcountry/front country, flood risk, degree of use).
- Develop a plan to manage sanitization and maintenance of permanent facilities, such as vault toilets.
- Develop a consistent year-round coordinated management of entities responsible for supplying portable toilets. The current system is a patchwork of entities including DEC, local municipalities, and non-profits operating independently.

- Identify locations for the installation of vault toilets or similar facilities at trailheads, with consideration to flood resilient design and Scenic Byway aesthetics. Many portable toilets are located in areas susceptible to flooding. [https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands\\_forests\\_pdf/hpwcumpamend.pdf](https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/lands_forests_pdf/hpwcumpamend.pdf)  
<https://www.fs.fed.us/td/pubs/pdfpubs/pdf13732314/pdf13732314Pdpi150.pdf>
- Access to year-round **bathroom facilities** with running water should be included at all major parking hubs.
- Extend the current season (May – October) to a year-round system. The levels of use decrease in the colder months, so scaling back the number of portable toilets can be done. Identify the critical locations where winterized toilets should be placed. (Note: Boyers Septic offers winterized portable toilets).
- Increase education on handling human/dog waste in both the front country and backcountry. Encourage proper use of and *disposal of* WAG Bag Kits for both human and dog waste.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented**

- The High Peaks region is a year-round destination for outdoor recreation, and access to a well-maintained and managed system of appropriate bathroom facilities would both improve the visitor experience and play a key role in resource protection.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Visitor Experience.

**E-5: Consult Current NYS DOT Planning Documents**

- Review the Current NYSDOT Adirondack Park Master Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan Section 5.4 C-D, Section 5.5 C-D.
- Review to 1999 Route 73 corridor Unit Management Plan Section VII: Action Plans. Review the designated Performance Measures to determine what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done.
- Make improvements to the Route 73 Scenic Byway, with consideration of all user groups (cyclists, pedestrians, motorists). Incorporate permanent traffic calming measures and reduced speed limits in critical areas, such as Malfunction Junction through the Chapel Pond and Cascade Lakes area
- Refer to concepts developed in all applicable complex planning documents, including the Great South Woods Report and DOT planning documents

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented**

- Previous planning efforts represent a tremendous amount of time and energy directed at many of the issues relevant to this report. Reviewing these documents for relevant data, developed concepts, and recommendations would be both efficient and helpful in supporting the goals of HPAG.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety.

## **UMP Actions that Should be Undertaken**

### High Peaks Wilderness Complex UMP – 2018 Amendment

- Construct two 20-car lots near Chapel Pond.
- Construct a new trailhead and parking area for Pitchoff Mountain.

## **Agencies/Groups Responsible for Implementation**

- Public/Private partnerships
- Identify potential Smart Growth grants
- Regional Economic Development Council (REDC) grants
- New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) (Clean Transportation Program)
- Town of Keene
- New York State Department of Transportation
- Ausable River Association
- Adirondack Mountain Club
- Adirondack North Country Association (ANCA)
- Adirondack Council

## **Recommended Long-term Actions**

**E-6:** Develop and adopt a regional distribution model: A “Circle Around the High Peaks,” with strategically placed information hubs. This model is consistent with Corridor Management Objectives in the DOT Travel Corridor Unit Management Plan. The route would begin at Frontier Town/North Hudson, which could be the Central Hub, with satellite hubs located in hamlets along the circle. The route would encompass Route 73 through Keene, Lake Placid, Saranac Lake, Tupper Lake, and Long Lake to Tahawus and back to Frontier Town. This long-term project could proceed in stages and develop both communities and infrastructure.

- Consider establishing Frontier Town as the central or main hub, with satellite hubs located strategically along the circle.
- Contract for a study of this regional distribution strategy, which should include the economic benefits for communities and consider the greater ability to manage the impact of visitors to the resource.
- Support current efforts in Newcomb (with OSI), North Hudson, and Frontier Town, and visitor management efforts in the town of Keene.
- Consider the circle around the High Peaks region (Scenic Byways) through the Complete Streets Lens/Safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and motorists

- Consult the *Great South Woods Report* for developed connections to this concept.

#### **Data/Information Needed**

- Using a Visitor Use Management Framework, establish baseline measures for indicating community capacity limits.
- Local fire and rescue data referencing number of rescues and related ambulance calls.
- A survey of locations that are more heavily used due to a local dispersal strategy to identify areas that will need redesign and infrastructure.
- A survey of infrastructure needed for a regional distribution strategy to be feasible.
- Data on the impact of dispersal for both local and regional. Data should measure social, community, ecological, economic impacts.
- Monitoring of data for ongoing management using the Visitor Use Management Framework to guide an iterative process.
- Data on local Front Country Stewards/number of visitors served.
- Visitor data.

#### **Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- The circle concept creates a managed approach to distributing tourism throughout the region. It also allows for a targeted approach to front country infrastructure development needed to host the increasing number of visitors to the park.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** Public Safety, Impacts to Visitors and High Peaks Wilderness Trails.

## **F. Stabilizing Financial Support**

### **Need for Recommendations/Actions**

Maintaining and improving a world-class trails system that protects ecological systems and natural beauty while holding up as essential state infrastructure is an enormous task. Supporting facilities are also needed, such as front country infrastructure. Current efforts and projects are understaffed. New tasks and projects generated by HPAG recommendations will require additional staff.

### **Condition/Current Status of Topic Area**

At this time, most of the DEC work in the Adirondack Park is funded through the Environmental Protection Fund's (EPF) stewardship program. This funding is

designated for competing projects throughout the state making it difficult to direct the continued, focused attention needed for the High Peaks region. Also, while this fund may be used for projects, tools, consumables, grants for outside organizations, and contracts, it may not be used to fund staff or staff time on projects. Current initiatives are stalled and implementing HPAG Recommendations will be held up if the staffing problem is not addressed.

## **Recommended Immediate Actions**

- F-1:** Identify areas of understaffing.
- F-2:** Identify new staff positions needed.
- F-3:** Identify gaps in project funding.
- F-4:** Identify anticipated funding gaps for executing HPAG Recommendations.
- F-5:** Establish a dedicated fund within the State.
- F-6:** Investigate feasibility for a private funding mechanism/source.

## **Overview of Resources Needed to Implement**

- Establish sustainable revenue sources through adjustments to EPF rules or creation of an additional fund

## **Agencies/ Groups Responsible for Implementation**

- DEC
- Empire State Development

## **Recommended Long-term Actions**

Most of the recommendations contained in this report require additional funding and staffing resources. The multifaceted DEC stewardship team has been understaffed for many years. In order to house and deploy an effective and comprehensive stewardship team, DEC must make hiring additional land managers, natural resource planners, foresters, rangers and trail crews a priority moving forward.

### **Topic: Dedicated Funding**

**Goal:** Address gap in funding including funding for staffing stewardship projects into the future.

**F-7:** Establish a dedicated Funding Source/Fund for stewardship projects including personal service positions and coordination between agency and state offices and initiatives.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- There will be dedicated, more predictable and comprehensive funding for the High Peaks region.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** All sections.

**Topic: Bolster Current Staffing**

**Goal:** Address gaps in staffing for current initiatives.

**F-8:** Fill vacancies.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Move projects on to completion faster.

**Direct Connections to other Sections of Report:** All sections.

**Topic: Hire New Staff**

**Goal:** Improve coordination between offices and initiatives; execute HPAG Recommendations.

**F-9:** Create new positions needed to coordinate between offices and initiatives and staff for executing HPAG Recommendations.

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation is Implemented**

- Increased communication between offices will ensure projects are not working at cross-purposes and resources will be ready when changes to the Park or policy prompts shifts in use, traffic and so on.

**Topic: Private funding for Adirondack Park**

**Goal:** Cover gaps in long term funding for Adirondack Park.

**F-10:** Ensure a mechanism exists and/or establish a fund that can accept both government grants and private donations (e.g. the Natural Heritage Trust, the Conservation Fund, the Natural Resource Account and the Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund).

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented:**

- Having a funding mechanism separate from the government office will allow more flexibility in spending and problem solving.



### **Topic: Public Involvement in Funding**

**Goal:** Connect the public with the Park through direct financial support.

**F-11:** Coordinate with Education and Communication programs to promote a pledge campaign in which park users may give back to the resource through an existing or future 501.c(3) (e.g., pledgewild.com).

**Statement of Benefit/Expected Outcome if Recommendation Implemented:**

- Members of such a pledge will move from users to stakeholders.

## **Closing Statement**

The past year's COVID-19 pandemic has magnified the need for greater focus on managing recreational uses in the High Peaks region. While the resulting exponential increase in visitor use caused significant strain on already overburdened trails and resources, it also affirmed the importance of the region's wilderness character and recreational opportunity to New Yorkers. New users are likely to become new advocates. Yet, this is a vital wilderness and it cannot be properly protected without an ongoing adaptive management and oversight. This requires dedicated, sustainable resources. The time for action is now.

# Appendix A: Draft Shared Visitor and Outdoor Recreation Data

Version 2.5 – December 15, 2020

## Purpose

The purpose of this Draft Shared Visitor and Outdoor Recreation Data document is to provide a framework for sharing data between different organizations that collect information on visitors and recreation in the Adirondacks. Until the summer of 2020, data collection was ad hoc and inconsistent, impeding the ability of any organization or the State to aggregate data in order to comprehensively measure and analyze visitor impacts. A Visitor Information data modeling effort was begun in the spring of 2020 to address the need to share data. This draft data set is the result of that effort.

The COVID-19 pandemic limited data collection activities in the summer of 2020, however for the first time, different surveying efforts were coordinated. While data sharing has not yet occurred, this data set represents a preliminary basis to do it in a format that can allow aggregation and analysis.

Neither the data set itself nor the proposed methodology for sharing data are intended to enable sharing of all data collected by different organizations. Any individual organization is free to appropriately collect whatever data on visitors and recreation they desire, and use that data as they desire. The shared data set is intended to allow aggregation of a defined subset of that data, consisting of an agreed collection of shared attributes, so that more comprehensive analysis can be performed.

## Notes

### Different Kinds of Surveys

This data set makes no distinction between face-to-face surveys, on-line surveys or pre versus post surveys. Thought needs to be given to the survey instruments themselves and how to avoid hiker fatigue.

## Privacy

Privacy policies will need to be established, consistent with existing State laws and regulations. For the purposes of this developing this initial data set, we have rejected the collection of any shared data that can identify any person by name, address or any other personal characteristic. Data collectors will need to ensure uniqueness of a person by a non-identifying ID, internal to them.

## Data Cardinality

In order to be able to effectively gather and share data, there needs to be a solid foundation of common data elements (common format and meaning) and IDs that ensure uniqueness, so that when we aggregate and analyze data we are putting the correct data together, avoiding duplicates, and counting the same things. For example, if we are counting visitors, how do we uniquely identify a person, correctly associate other information to them, or recognize that one person surveyed at x time and location by one group is the same as another person surveyed at y time and location by another group?

Given our limited scope, our constraints on privacy and the need to ensure data collectors can work independently and on their own terms, the short answer is that we cannot uniquely identify a person. Therefore, there are significant limits to how we can count, group and analyze people. This does not preclude gathering all the different kinds of data that different stakeholders want, and it does not preclude a wide range of aggregation and analysis, but it does have direct effect upon statistical significance of the data and how we interpret it.

However, we can effectively count visits. If we define a visit as a visitor at a specific location and date/time, we can assign a unique ID with a shared format and establish a basis to collect, share and analyze visits. This is what we propose: establish data cardinality around visits.

## Formalization in a Data Model

The following data set is descriptive. For it to be useable as a basis to share data, it needs to be formalized as a true data model, with complete entity and attribute

definitions. It should be accompanied by a dictionary that ensures semantic consistency – that is, ensuring that the meaning of each attribute is understood, asked for and gathered in a consistent way.

### Sharing Requirements

What data gets shared is entirely up to the data collector. Just because there is a data attribute in the shared model does not mean that a data collector must collect this data and/or share it. However if a data collector does collect a shared attribute and chooses to share their data, it must be in the agreed common format. The HPAG's proposed visitor and outdoor recreation management entity would maintain a repository of shared data, a data model and data dictionary, accessible by the State and any other data collector.

### Reconciliation with the RIDB Outdoor Recreation Database

This shared data set can benefit from reconciliation and sharing of attributes with the Federal RIDB recreation database maintained by Recreation.gov. This is a comprehensive, mature database that can serve as a model for collecting visitor and recreation data. Time did not allow for preliminary reconciliation of this draft data set with the RIDB. The proposed visitor and outdoor recreation management entity should perform this reconciliation, as well as consider additional attributes to collect that are present in the RIDB.

### Acknowledgments

The HPAG acknowledges the contributions of external stakeholders who contributed to this project. Much of the draft data set is based upon survey instruments developed for the joint Wildlife Conservation Society and Adirondack Watershed Institute study of the impacts of human recreation on wildlife, led by Heidi Kretser and Michale Glennon, and funded by a National Science Foundation grant. Dr. Kretser in particular generously shared her time and work product. Additional input, help and survey coordination were provided by Jackie Bowen of the Adirondack Council, Jay Bennett of ROOST and Peter Bauer of Protect the Adirondacks.

## Draft Shared Data Set, Version 2.5

**Crimson: semantic issue, needs discussion (what does the element mean, how do we ask a question to capture that meaning)**

### Person (Visitor)

- Person ID (alphanumeric- this should be unique to each data collecting group/agency)
- Ethnicity (alphanumeric via check box)
  - Asian
  - African
  - Black/African American
  - Hispanic/Latinx
  - Native American
  - Pacific Islander
  - White
  - Other
  - Prefer Not to Answer
- Postal code of permanent address (alphanumeric)
- Visitor or Resident (alphanumeric via check box, for example “V” or “R”)
- If Resident, Full Time or Part Time (alphanumeric via check box, for example “F” or “P”)
- If resident, what year did they start living in the ADKs (numeric, discrete)
- What year born (numeric, discrete)
- Highest level of schooling attained (numeric, discrete via ranges, for example, Heidi is using:
  - Some high school
  - High school degree
  - Some college
  - Two or four-year degree
  - Graduate school
- Email address for follow-up (valid email format, optional)

### Visitor Group

- Number of people in the group (numeric, discrete)
- The group is primarily a family (y/n)

### Visitor Vehicle

Attributes TBD – may be a separate project in the short term

### Visitor Education and Experience

- First time hiker (y/n)
- Hiking experience (possible range, TBD)
- Familiarity with LNT (possible range, TBD)

- How many times they have been to the Adirondacks before (numeric discrete)

### Visit

- Visit\_ID (alphanumeric, unique, common format: combination of person ID/ location/datetime)
- Visitor\_ID (optional, alphanumeric, to allow ad hoc aggregation by visitor to the extent possible)
- Organization\_ID (numeric, table lookup)
- Starting Location (location code, table lookup)
- Date and Time of Visit (datetime)
- Destination (alphanumeric)
- Hiked areas other than the High Peaks (y/n)
- Where visitor is coming from (TBD: alphanumeric? Zip code? Country code?)
- Visitor's length of stay in the Adirondacks in days (numeric discrete)
- Visitor's total expenditure on this visit (numeric continuous)
- Primary activity during this visit (common list TBD: hiking, climbing, paddling, scenic viewing, etc.)

### Information for Visit

- Why visitor selected this location (alphanumeric/memo)
- Visitor has visited this location before (y/n)
- How long in advance visitor made the decision to visit this location (alphanumeric)
- What information visitor had about planned activities? (alphanumeric/memo)
- Where visitor obtained information about their visit to this location (checkbox of choices)
  - Previous personal experience
  - Friend or family member
  - Commercially published guide books or maps
  - Social media (Facebook, Instagram)
  - Other websites
  - School/University
  - NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) staff
  - DEC website or written materials
  - Hiking groups/NGO
  - Visitor's Bureaus/Chamber of Commerce
  - Newspapers/magazines
  - Television
  - Hotel/Motel staff
  - Air BnB/VBRO other rental/lodging host
  - Radio
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

- When visitor got this information (TBD: are we looking at a date? Length of time?)
- How far in advance visitor needed the information to plan their visit (TBD: are we looking at a date? Duration?)
- What information visitor did not get that they wanted or needed (alphanumeric/memo: do we want a list to help)

### Visit Experience

- Visitor's overall experience of their visit (check boxes plus alphanumeric)
- Visitor's overall goals for coming to this location (check boxes plus alphanumeric)
- Visitor achieved goals (alphanumeric)

### COVID-19

- Had the COVID-19 pandemic not occurred would you be hiking here today? (y/n)

### Visitor Motivation (per the matrix, following page)



<b>Visitor Motivation Matrix:</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat disagree</b>	<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	<b>Somewhat agree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
<b>I recently went hiking in the Adirondacks to.....</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Spend time with family and friends							
Be with others who have similar interests							
Meet new people							
Do an activity still allowed under COVID-19 restrictions							
	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Enjoy the natural environment and scenic beauty							
Experience an environment free of litter, human waste and other impacts							
Hike on uncrowded trails							
Experience well-managed recreation trails							
	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Feel a connection with nature and the natural environment							
Experience a remote area away from sight and sound of cities and people							
Have the opportunity to observe wildlife							
Experience solitude							
Do an activity where I can minimize exposure to COVID-19							
	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
Enjoy physical activity, challenge, and exercise							
Hike in a new place							
Summit a 46er High Peak							
Summit as many peaks as possible							
Practice navigation travel skills through a remote wild area							

## Location Codes

<b>Location</b>	<b>Code</b>
Adk Loj	ALOJ
Ampersand	AMPS
Baker	BAKE
Cascade	CASC
Haystack	HAYS
Hurricane Mtn trail from 9N	HU9N
Johns Brook	JBRK
Rooster Comb	ROOS
Whiteface Mtn	WMTN
Adk Loj Old	LOJO
Black Pond	BPND
Catamount	CATA
Coney	CONE
Deer Pond	DEER
Giant North	GIAN
Goodman	GOOD
Hays Brook	HBRK
Hurricane Mtn East	HURE
Clements Pond	CLEM
Route 3 Moose Pond	MOOS
Copperas Pond	COPP
Crows	CROW
Gulf Brook	GULF
Indian Pass	INDI
Jay Mtn	JAYM
Noonmark	NOON
NP Averyville/Chubb	CHUB
Pitchoff East	PITC
Round Mtn AMR	RAMR
Round Pond/NY73	RPND
Silver Lake Mtn	SILV
St Regis Mtn	STRE
Whiteface Inn	WINN

## Organization Codes

<b>Code</b>	<b>Organization</b>
ADC	Adirondack Council
ADK	Adirondack Mountain Club
AWI	Adirondack Watershed Institute
AWA	Adirondack Wilderness Advocates
AWD	Adirondack Wild
ANCA	ANCA
CCCS	Cornell Center for Conservation Social Sciences
COEX	County of Essex
COFN	County of Franklin
NCCC	North Country Community College
NYSDEC	NY State DEC
NYSDOT	NY State DOT
PLSM	Paul Smiths
PROT	PROTECT
ROOST	ROOST
SUNYESF	SUNY-ESF
TOKN	Town of Keene
TONC	Town of Newcomb
TONE	Town of North Elba
TONH	Town of North Hudson
WCSNSF	Wildlife Conservation Society NSF Project

# Appendix B: Visitor Use Management Framework

### WHY MANAGE RECREATION?

Outdoor recreation is fundamental to American culture. Every year, more and more people travel to public lands and waters to pursue a growing variety of recreational activities. To continue to benefit from the opportunities created by expanding recreational use, this nationwide trend requires that all of us—visitors, managers, and citizens—adopt more effective ways to manage visitor access and use that ensure these special places, and the benefits they generate, persist for this and future generations.






**1 PLAN** Build the Foundation

**2 PREPARE** Define Visitor Use Management Direction

**3 MOVE** Identify Management Strategies

**4 DO** Implement, Monitor, Evaluate, and Adjust



INTERAGENCY  
**VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT**  
COUNCIL

### Elements and steps of the Visitor Use Management Framework



*Backpackers getting oriented before their hike*



*Enjoying a guided horseback riding opportunity*

**Steps:**

1. Clarify project purpose and need.
2. Review the area's purpose and applicable legislation, agency policies, and other management direction.
3. Assess and summarize existing information and current conditions.
4. Develop a project action plan.

**Outcome:** Understand why the project is needed, and develop the project approach.

**Steps:**

5. Define desired conditions for the project area.
6. Define appropriate visitor activities, facilities, and services.
7. Select indicators and establish thresholds.

**Outcome:** Describe the conditions to be achieved or maintained and how conditions will be tracked over time.

**Steps:**

8. Compare and document the differences between existing and desired conditions, and clarify the specific links to visitor use characteristics.
9. Identify visitor use management strategies and actions to achieve desired conditions.
10. Where necessary, identify visitor capacities and additional strategies to manage use levels within capacities.
11. Develop a monitoring strategy.


**Outcome:** Identify strategies to manage visitor use to achieve or maintain desired conditions.

**Steps:**

12. Implement management actions.
13. Conduct and document ongoing monitoring, and evaluate the effectiveness achieving desired conditions.
14. Adjust management actions if needed to achieve desired conditions, and document rationale.

**Outcome:** Implement management strategies and actions, and adjust based on monitoring and evaluation.

VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK  
A Guide to Providing Sustainable  
Outdoor Recreation  
Edition 1



Document available online at:  
[https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/Content/documents/VUM\\_Framework\\_Primer\\_IV\\_UMC.pdf](https://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov/Content/documents/VUM_Framework_Primer_IV_UMC.pdf)

*(continued on the following page)*

## WHAT IS THE VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK?

The Visitor Use Management Framework (the framework) is a process designed for federal managers to collaboratively develop, implement, and monitor strategies and actions to provide sustainable access to lands and waters. The intent, and ultimate desired outcome, is to provide high quality visitor experiences, while protecting natural and cultural resources. Responsive and effective visitor use management requires managers to:

- Identify desired conditions for resources, visitor experiences and opportunities, and facilities and services;
- Gain an understanding of how visitor use influences achievement of those goals; and
- Commit to active / adaptive management and monitoring of visitor use to meet those goals.

The framework can be incorporated into existing federal agency planning and decision-making processes and is applicable across a wide spectrum of situations that vary in complexity and spatial extent from site-specific to large-scale planning efforts. The framework is a legally defensible and transparent planning and decision-making process that:

- Integrates applicable laws and policy requirements;
- Provides sound rationale upon which to base management decisions; and
- Facilitates adaptive management.

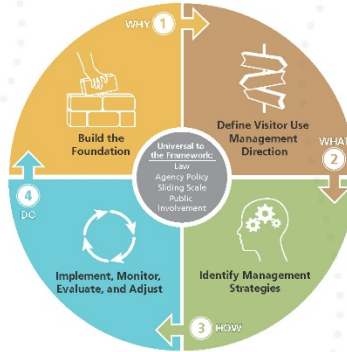


For more information, please see website [visitorusemanagement.nps.gov](http://visitorusemanagement.nps.gov)

## FRAMEWORK ELEMENTS, STEPS, AND OUTCOMES

The framework identifies four overarching elements with discrete steps under each. The graphic below illustrates the sequence (with a more detailed diagram on the back) and outcomes of these elements as well as the necessary steps in achieving each of the elements. It is important to note, these elements and steps are highly iterative in nature. The framework is intended to be applied in a flexible manner using the sliding scale concept. The strengths of this framework are that it is iterative, adaptable, and flexible.

### Overview of the Visitor Use Management Framework



Family exploring a trail

## THE SLIDING SCALE APPROACH

A sliding scale is used to ensure the investment of time, money, and other resources for the planning effort is commensurate with the complexity of the project and the consequences of the decision. Issues with clearly small impacts usually require less depth and breadth of analysis than those with impacts of greater significance. Applying this 'sliding scale of analysis' seeks to match the investment made in analysis with the level of uncertainty and risk associated with the issues being addressed. The sliding scale is used in each element of the framework. Regardless of the significance of the situation, all framework steps still apply. That is, the process does not vary with project complexity, rather the investment of time and resources varies.

Use the following criteria to determine the level of analysis for an issue:

- Issue uncertainty: What is the level of uncertainty about the issue?
- Impact risk: Are there considerable threats to the quality of resource conditions and visitor experiences?
- Stakeholder involvement: What is the level of stakeholder interest in the issue?
- Level of controversy/potential for litigation: What is the level of controversy/potential for litigation?

Once the sliding scale of analysis level has been determined, it is then used to determine the amount of effort needed for each element and step.

