

APA OKs Saranac Lakes Wild Forest plan

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Outdoors Writer

RAY BROOK — The state Adirondack Park Agency board determined that a plan for 75,000 acres of state land in the Tri-Lakes conforms with the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan at its monthly board meeting on Friday.

The agency also approved a variance for a trail at the state's new Frontier Town campground in North Hudson.

Saranac Lakes Wild Forest

The Saranac Lakes Wild Forest Unit Management Plan was released by the state Department of Environmental Conservation in 2017 and was more than 15 years in the making. The UMP calls for sweeping changes to public lands around Saranac Lake, Lake Placid and Tupper Lake, and includes dozens of proposals on everything from boat launches to campsites to mountain bike trails.

The UMP includes new hiking, snowmobiling and mountain bike trails and proposes reroutes of some existing trails, road closures and the addition of parking areas and fishing access sites, and the closure or relocation of dozens of backcountry campsites.

Bob Stegemann, head of DEC's Region 5 and the department's representative on the APA board, said DEC is ready to start working on some of the projects outlined in the UMP.

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"We're ready to go all the time. It's a great thing to get over the goal line because now it sets the template for us to move forward," he said. "We have plans to move forward with all this stuff, and we will do it as rapidly and thoughtfully as we can."

APA board member Chad Dawson commended the DEC and APA staff on improvements to monitoring carrying capacity on the terrestrial side in the UMP, but lamented the lack of study on how many people and boats waterbodies can sustain.

"I'm left with deep concern about the carrying capacity of

waterbodies," Dawson said during committee comments.

Dawson cast the lone dissenting vote on the UMP, adding that he was doing so "respectfully."

Frontier Town

The APA board also approved a permit for the state's Frontier Town Campground, Equestrian and Day Use Area in North Hudson. The roughly 90-acre campground — which is on land owned by the town of North Hudson and Essex County — officially opened last year with two day use areas, a caretaker's and staff cabin and several other buildings. The whole project is slated to

be completed in several phases over the next couple of years.

The permit approved Friday will allow the DEC, which is building and managing the campground, to build a stone staircase and small bridge within the setback of the Schroon River. The bridge will be made of white cedar wood with granite steps.

Etc.

The APA on Thursday also heard a presentation from Paul Smith's College professors Curt Stager, Celia Evans and LeeAnn Sporn on climate change.

The APA's next monthly meeting is scheduled for Thursday and Friday, March 14 and 15.