

# FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

**Fiscal Year 2024**  
**Project # WP-CO-347**

<u>Region</u> 6	<u>Project Title</u> Beach Mill Trail Reroute
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<u>Project Type</u> Modification of Existing Structure/Improvement	<u>Town(s)</u> Watson	<u>County</u> Lewis	<u>Management Unit</u> Independence River Wild Forest
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Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project

Desired conditions on the Beach Mill Trail relate to two core principles – 1) the protection of Wild Forest character and natural resources and 2) Facilitation of access and enjoyment of the forest preserve where compatible with principle #1.

The Beach Mill Trail was identified as a hiking trail and ongoing management of the trail is guided by the 1986 Independence River Wild Forest UMP. The UMP echoes APSLMP themes, identifying land management goals to “sustain and protect the Wild Forest setting” and providing for “a variety of recreational pursuits which are compatible with the spirit of the Wild Forest concept as stated in the State Land Master Plan.” The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) states that “when public access to and enjoyment of the wild forest areas are inadequate, appropriate measures may be undertaken to provide improved access to encourage public use consistent with wild forest character.”

Currently, a segment of the Beach Mill Trail abuts a sizeable beaver meadow. This segment of the trail is wet and part of the segment is regulated wetland. It is highly likely that at some point in the future, beaver activity will raise water levels (as has occurred in the past), flooding the current trail and forcing hikers to navigate adjacent to the designated trail. Current trail conditions adjacent to the beaver meadow do not align with desired conditions on hiking trails in the Independence River Wild Forest – in particular sensitive natural resources are being impacted, and public enjoyment of the trail is degraded by wet trail conditions. For these reasons, relocating this segment of the Beach Mill Trail over a more sustainable route is desirable to facilitate access to Gleasman Falls while avoiding sensitive habitat. While not specifically contemplated in the Independence River Wild Forest UMP, this reroute will generally retain connectivity and access as proposed for the Beach Mill Trail in the UMP.

Description of Project Specifications

Nine hundred and twenty (920) feet of the Beach Mill Trail (also known as the Gleasman Falls Trail) will be relocated to avoid wet and muddy trail conditions. The current trail abuts a sizeable beaver meadow, and while water levels have decreased in recent years, this portion of the trail remains wet. The new trail segment will parallel the old one, directly upslope, but further away from the wetland. The new trail will be cleared 6-feet wide and 8-feet high, and a 4-foot wide trail tread will be maintained, mirroring the rest of the Beach Mill Trail. Minimal tread construction is required in this location – the

organic soil layer may be removed from the trail tread, and some mineral soil (tread) may be raked from peaks in the tread surface to fill low areas. Bench cutting is not necessary during trail construction because cross-slope is only moderate along the reroute. However, it is anticipated that with use, a slight bench will form and maintenance of the trail should and will include making sure that the tread out-slopes (cross-slopes downhill). Upon construction of the new trail segment, the old rerouted segment will be blocked with brush and trail markers will be removed.

#### Description of Measures Taken to Avoid, Mitigate and Minimize Impacts to Natural Resources

The wetland the current trail abuts will be less impacted by relocating the trail away from the wetland – and over time the portion of the old trail that crosses wetland soils will re-vegetate. In order to minimize impacts to other natural resources, trail alignment and grade served as primary considerations when selecting a sustainable route for the new (relocated) trail. Rough alignment of the trail was flagged avoiding wetland, hummocks, steep grades and large trees, followed by fine alignment around trees >1" DBH when possible - but not at expense of suboptimal trail alignment. A trail bridge at the west end of the trail segment and reconnection to the existing trail east of the beaver meadow served as anchor points. Two trees >1" DBH will need to be cut to construct the new (relocated) trail: one (1) 1" DBH sugar maple and one (1) 1" cherry tree. Minimal tread work will be completed during construction - the organic soil layer may be removed from the trail tread, and some mineral soil (tread) may be located from peaks in the tread surface to fill low areas. While high use trails may benefit from removal of all organic soils, and extensive shaping of the bare mineral soil tread, use on the Beach Mill Trail is low enough (according to trail register data, generally less than 1000 user days per year) and the relocated trail route slope is moderate enough that extensive earth moving/tread construction is not necessary. Finally, no Rare, Threatened or Endangered species, plant communities or habitats have been documented within the vicinity of this project (screening completed using Natural Heritage Program Project Review GIS layers).

#### Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

Alternatives considered prior to proposing a reroute of the Beach Mill Trail include: no action, improving the current trail tread with turnpike or bog bridging, or constructing short reroutes around the worst wet locations along the existing trail. No action would lead to continued wet trail conditions through wetland soils and use of braided herd paths upslope from the trail. With both a wet official trail and sub optimally located herd paths, this alternative would provide a poor user experience and is not a sound environmental choice. Both turnpike and bog bridging would require extensive import of materials and would require wetland fill (parts of the existing trail tread are designated wetlands). Furthermore, should beaver activity lead to higher water levels in future years, there is no guarantee that turnpike or bog bridging would remain above the waterline. Finally short reroutes around the worst wet locations along this trail segment would also require cutting some >1" DBH trees and more <1" vegetation than the preferred alternative, due to higher density of vegetation directly next to the existing trail. Short reroutes would require benching during trail construction due to steeper cross-slope, and portions of the trail segment that were not rerouted would remain vulnerable to future rising water levels from beaver activity. For these reasons, a reroute of the entire trail segment adjacent to the beaver meadow following a more sustainable route is the preferred alternative.

#### Description of Use of Motorized Equipment and/or Motor Vehicles (if any)

No motor vehicles will be used pursuant to this work plan. Chainsaws will be used to cut the new (relocated) trail for efficiency sake.

#### Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

Consistent with ADA requirements, DEC incorporates accessibility for people with disabilities into siting, planning, construction, and alteration of recreational facilities and assets supporting them. In addition, Title II of the ADA requires, in part, that services, programs, and activities of DEC, when viewed in their entirety, are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. DEC is not required to take

any action which would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the service, program, or activity, or would present an undue financial or administrative burden. When accommodating access to a program, DEC is not necessarily required to make each existing facility and asset accessible, as long as the program is accessible by other means or at a different facility. The Beach Mill Trail is existing and is not an Accessible trail. This relocated trail segment will be constructed with similar techniques to the existing trail, as it would not be pragmatic or serve to increase Accessibility to construct just one portion of this trail to meet Accessible trail requirements.

Other Relevant Considerations

A state land consultation form was submitted to the Adirondack Park Agency on 6/7/2022 which included this proposal along with bog bridging on the Beach Mill Trail, and a field visit was conducted with an APA wetland biologist on 9/20/2022. APA staff confirmed that the current trail does pass through jurisdictional wetland, and that the proposed reroute does not.

The returned state land consultation SL2022-0016 noted that the reroute proposal for Beach Mill Trail had been withdrawn (at the time these types of projects were not being approved). Since 2022, in a memo dated August 25, 2023 from Kevin Prickett (APA) to Robert Daly (DEC), it has been communicated that trail relocations less than 0.25 miles do not require consultation. As such, no new consultation for this project has been submitted.

Prepared by (Name & Title): Matthew Nowak;  
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Date: 2/27/2024

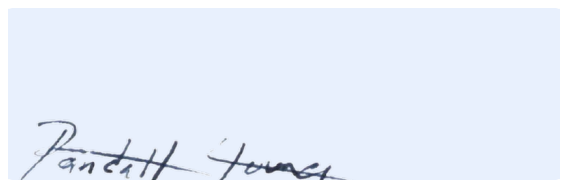
Approvals:

Comments:




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Regional Program Manager  
Date: 4/3/2024



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Regional Director  
Date: July 17, 2024



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Division Director  
Date: 07/16/2024

**REGULATORY CLEARANCE CHECKLIST – STATE LANDS and CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECTS**

PROGRAM	PERMIT	REQUIRED		SECURED BY	COMMENTS
		YES	NO	(NAME)	
Air Resources	Restricted Burning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Mineral Resources	Mining	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Materials Management	Solid Waste Mgt. Fac.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Water	Dam Safety Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Const. in Flood Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Public Water Supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	SPDES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Spills Management	Petro. Bulk Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Lands and Forests	Unit Management Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	M. Nowak	Trail is listed facility in IRWF UMP
	Tree Cutting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	M. Nowak	Trees >1" have been tallied and are listed in work plan
	Protected Native Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Historic Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Fish and Wildlife	Freshwater Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No wetlands per APA wetland biologist field visit
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	EA/FA	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Trail covered under UMP
	Negative Declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Trail covered under UMP
	Env. Impact Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Water Quality Cert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
DEC (other)	CP-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Commissioner (aircraft, motorized equipment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Flight Request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Contract Clearance Sh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	DOB Exemption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Other Agencies	APA MOU	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	M. Nowak	See attached "Note Regarding Consultation..."
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		No wetlands per APA wetland biologist field visit
	Corps. of Engineers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Building Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Local Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Easements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Highway Enter DOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Wastewater Disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		