

FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

Fiscal Year 2025- 2026
Project # 2025-ORDA-011
CO-WP-400

<u>Region</u> 5	<u>Project Title</u> Wildway and 2200 Road Trail Widening
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<u>Project Type</u>	<u>Town(s)</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Management Unit</u>
Modification of Existing Structure/Improvement	Wilmington	Essex	Whiteface Mountain Intensive Use Area

Description of Existing and Desired Condition(s) for Project

Existing Conditions

The 2200 Road trail and Wildway Trail are approved ski trails in the 2021 Whiteface Mountain UMP amendment. Presently the 2200 Road trail is approximately 389 feet long with an average width of 60 feet and Wildway is approximately 145 feet long and 30 feet wide. Limited access to lesser challenging terrain dictates the need to make adjustments to some trails and transition areas. Currently, ski patrol staff are needed to rescue skiers who find themselves in an area beyond their skill level on expert terrain, this area is of particular need.

Desired Conditions

The 2021 UMPA for Whiteface Mountain references the widening of Wildway (59A) and the 2200 Road (61) in the section " Prioritization and Schedule of Management Actions." Please see the attached document 2022 UMP for Whiteface Mountain section 2 - 7. The Wildway (59A) and the 2200 Road (61) ski trails will be widened to accommodate a broader range of skiers with varying skill levels. This approved action aims to enhance the trails, ensuring a safer and more enjoyable experience for intermediate skiers using the Little Whiteface Lift. Please see the attached document from the 2022 UMP for Whiteface Mountain, Section 2 - 3.

A 100 foot section of the 2200 Road trail will be widened to an average width of approximately 60 feet. Wildway will be approximately 60 feet long and 100 feet wide.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Description of Project Specifications

Please see the highlighted portion in figure 2, attached to this application. The project will require tree clearing and minor regrading. Please see the tree counts attached to this application.

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

It is essential to remove trees to expand the 2200 Road (61) and Wildway (59A) trails. This project will not impact wetlands or waterbodies. Additionally, there will be no adverse effects on rare, threatened, or endangered species as the work will be completed outside of the Bicknell's thrush's nesting season.

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

The 59A and the 61 trail improvements will offer a safer and less congested area for skiers that are traveling from Upper Wilderness, Freeway, and the mid-station area. This project was designed as part of the 2022 UMP for Whiteface Mountain and determined to be the proper solution for these trails, located in the trail systems serviced by Lift G and Lift H.

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

To effectively widen 59A and the 61 trail, we will use motorized equipment: chainsaws, excavators, minor blasting, bulldozers, skidders, track drills, and UTVs.

Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

Whiteface Mountain provides many opportunities for adaptive winter recreation at the mountain. Instructors are trained in adaptive winter recreation practices.

Other Relevant Considerations

This project has been developed with a particular emphasis on the Bicknell Thrush, especially considering that the work is located at elevations exceeding 2,800 feet. A study conducted in 2024 indicated that the Bicknell Thrush breeds and nests at higher elevations on the mountain than in our project area. During the study, the bird surveyor noted that the area within the Little Whiteface Lift trajectory, including the ski trails subject to this work plan, is not suitable for the habitat typically preferred by the Bicknell Thrush. Based on our study and the scope of this project, we have determined that there will be no negative impact on the Bicknell Thrush. Please find the 2024 Bicknell's Thrush Survey for Whiteface Mountain Ski Slopes, Lift Pathways, and High Elevation Access Roads attached to this application.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Prepared by (Name & Title): Jordan Clymer,
Environmental Compliance Manager
Phone: (518-) 524-3679

Date: 5/15/2025

Approvals:

Comments:



Regional Program
Manager Date: 8/8/2025



Regional Director
Date: 10/30/2025



On Behalf of the Division Director
Date: 10/1/2025

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>		2021 UMPA
	Tree Cutting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	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"/>		
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	EAF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Negative Declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	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"/>		



E. Prioritization and Schedule of Management Actions

The following is a listing of new 2021 management actions by priority.

Top Priority

- Widen Upper Thruway Trail
- Widen Upper Parkway Trail
- Widen Lower Thruway Trail
- Widen Burton’s Trail
- New Lift Between Bear Den and Legacy Areas with Skiable Trail Underneath
- Install EV Chargers

Moderate Priority

- New Yellow Dot Trail
- Widen Wildway Trail
- New High Country Road Trail
- Widen 2200 Road
- Replace Outhouse Building with Toilet Building

Lower Priority

- Widen Danny’s Bridge and Brookside Trails
- New Mountain Biking Trails
- New Hiking Trails
- NYSEF Building Expansion

The anticipated schedule for implementing these management actions is as follows

Management Action	Anticipated Implementation	
	2022	2023
New Yellow Dot	X	
New High Country Road		X
Widen Wildway		X
Widen 2200 Road		X
Widen Upper Thruway	X	
Widen Upper Parkway	X	
Widen Lower Thruway		X
Widen Burtons		X
Widen Danny's Bridge	X	X
Widen Brookside	X	X
Bear Den to Legacy Lift	X	X
Hiking Trails	X	X
Biking Trails	X	X
Expand NYSEF (2025)		

lift line corridor clearing will be 50 feet wide where the lift passes through currently wooded areas. The total length of the lift is just over 4,300 feet, and the new tree clearing needed to construct the lift will be a total of 500 feet long in multiple locations, with an average additional clearing width of 50 feet. ORDA considered alternative configurations for this lift, including a straight lift without a midstation terminal at the turn. See **Figure 5 in Exhibit 3** showing a plan view of the alternatives and **Figure 5A in Exhibit 3** showing elevation profiles of the proposed lift and the alternative considered. Such an alternative would not provide a low elevation drop off point for learning skiers and snowboarders, and the straight line lift would have to pass up and over a 300 feet vertical ridge that exists between Bear Den and Legacy where lift riders would leave the protection of the tree line and be exposed to the elements of the barren rock ledge. There would also be significantly more tree clearing and soil disturbance with this alternative.

6. New Yellow Dot Trail (95) – construction of the new Yellow Dot Trail will allow easier access to Lower Skyward off the gondola. Currently, Lower Skyward is only accessible by skiing Upper Skyward. Lower Skyward is underutilized and is often an easier route for intermediate skiers as compared to the Victoria trail. The new Yellow Dot trail will be approximately 260 feet long with an average width of 23 feet wide on relatively flat ground.

7. **Widen Wildway Trail (59A)** – widening Wildway will allow for access to Mountain Run from Upper Wilderness. This will allow skiers to access Mountain Run without skiing around the midstation on the Little Whiteface lift or through the existing narrow area at the bottom of the approach. Widening will involve 145 feet of existing trail with an average widening width of 30 feet.

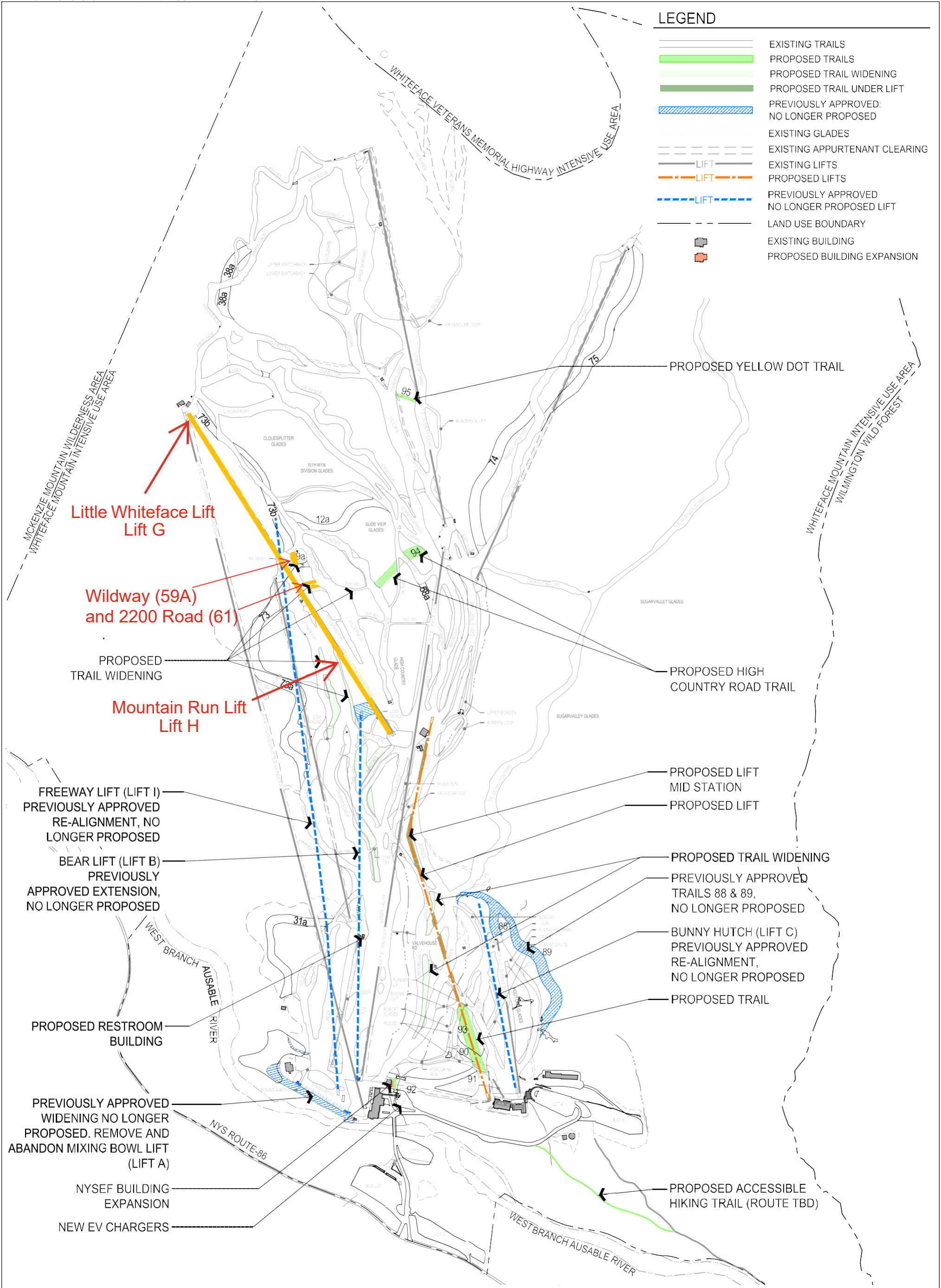
8. New High Country Road Trail (94) – this action involves recutting the old High Country Road Trail and extending it down to Lower Empire. Reestablishing this connection will allow access from the top of Freeway and the midstation area of the Little Whiteface Lift to the Summit lift. It will also provide a non-expert “escape” route from the top of Freeway. This new management action involves approximately 560 feet of trail and an average width of 99 feet.

9. **Widen 2200 Road Trail (61)** – portions of the 2200 Road Trail totaling approximately 390 feet in length (between 2 sections) will be widened an average of 60 feet. Like the High Country Road Trail, widening the 2200 Road will allow access from Freeway and the midstation area on the Little Whiteface lift to the Summit Lift and also provide for the better “escape route” that avoids expert terrain.

10. Widen Danny’s Bridge/Brookside Trails (28 & 68) – This area is often used as a terrain park. The proposed widening will occur on skiers left with 500 feet of Danny’s Bridge widened to by an average 43 feet to 120 feet, the upper 220 feet of Brookside widened to 160 feet and the lower 720 feet of Brookside widened to 120 feet. This will allow for more terrain park area and more options for terrain park users. The widening will also allow for safer passage around the jumps in the terrain park for non-users.

LEGEND

- EXISTING TRAILS
- PROPOSED TRAILS
- PROPOSED TRAIL WIDENING
- PROPOSED TRAIL UNDER LIFT
- PREVIOUSLY APPROVED; NO LONGER PROPOSED
- EXISTING GLADES
- EXISTING APPURTENANT CLEARING
- EXISTING LIFTS
- PROPOSED LIFTS
- PREVIOUSLY APPROVED NO LONGER PROPOSED LIFT
- LAND USE BOUNDARY
- EXISTING BUILDING
- PROPOSED BUILDING EXPANSION



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Prepared for:

OLYMPIC REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY
 Olympic Regional Development Authority
 2634 Main Street
 Lake Placid, New York 12946

WHITEFACE LAKE PLACID
 Project Title:
 Whiteface Mountain: 2021 Unit Management Plan
 Draft Amendment

Drawing Title:
2021 Proposed Actions

 SCALE: 1" = 1000' AT 11x17

Date: January 25, 2024
 Scale: As Noted
 Design: MJJ
 Drawn: KAC
 Checkd: KIF
 Project No: 201283
 Drawing No:
Figure 2

FOREST PRESERVE WORK PLAN TREE TALLY

Project Name: Wildway & 2200 Road Trail Widening

State Land Unit: Whiteface Mountain IUA

County: Essex

Town: Wilmington

Date Talled: April 2025

Talled By: Aaron Kellett

Species	Diameter															Total
	1 to 3	4	6	8	10	12	14	16	18	20	22	24	26	28	30	
Hemlock	25		22	7	3											57
Striped maple	30		9													39
Spruce, spp.	4		1													5
White birch	8		6	4	1											19
Pin cherry		3														3
<i>Total 2200 Road</i>	<i>67</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>38</i>	<i>11</i>	<i>4</i>											<i>123</i>
Hemlock	62		27	19	8	4		2								122
White birch	3		15		9	3		4								34
Pin cherry		3	2													5
<i>Total Wildway</i>	<i>65</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>44</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>17</i>	<i>7</i>		<i>6</i>								<i>161</i>
Grand Total	132	6	62	30	21	7		6								

Note: 1"- 3" size class are trees from 1.0" to 2.9" DBH. 4" size class are trees from 3.0" to 4.9". 6" size class are trees from 5.0" to 6.9".

2024 Bicknell's Thrush (*Catharus bicknelli*) Survey for
Whiteface Mountain Ski Slopes, Lift Pathways, and High
Elevation Access Roads



Here a Bicknell's thrush is perched singing at survey point #6 the first day of this study.

Wild Neighbors Nature Connection, LLC was contracted by the Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) to complete this study and report. This report was submitted by Rich Hanlon, owner and operator of Wild Neighbors Nature Connection, LLC. Rich's contact information is below:

Rich Hanlon
330 Old Meacham Rd.
Malone, NY 12953
RichHanlon7@gmail.com
412-992-6648

Purpose

The purpose of this study was to identify areas of habitat and habitation of Bicknell's thrush on high elevation ski slopes on Whiteface Mountain. The study area included the trails, lift trajectories, and maintenance roads between Summit Lift and little Whiteface Lift, from the bottom to the top, and all trails in-between. This information is meant to allow ORDA to be aware of the locations where Bicknell's thrush is present so that work can be done at a time and in a manner that is least detrimental to Bicknell's thrushes residing on the mountain in proximity to the ski area.

Background

Bicknell's thrush is an endangered species of bird that breeds in high elevation spruce fir forests in New York, Vermont, New Hampshire, Maine, and Canada where Canada borders these US states. Whiteface Mountain is home to a population of Bicknell's thrushes. Preferred habitat is in the Krumholz zone of the mountain, at edge habitat created by the formation of fir waves. Bicknell's thrushes are colonial nesting birds, meaning that a colony of nesting birds is composed of multiple males and multiple females. This means that Bicknell's thrushes can be found in clusters or groups within this preferred krummholz habitat. While males are known to be most vocal, females may also vocalize, including singing.

Survey method:

In order to be consistent with past surveys, the survey method chosen is similar to that which was used by Michale Glennon and Leslie Karasin in their 2008 Study, *Use of Whiteface Mountain by Bicknell's Thrush and Other Montane Forest Bird Species*.

Survey points were about 200 meters apart and the surveyor remained at each survey point for a duration of 10 minutes. The surveyor noted the presence and behavior as well as song and other vocalizations of the survey's target species, Bicknell's thrush.

At each survey point, the surveyor noted the following:

- 1) The number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes.

- 2) Whether or not a survey point contains appropriate breeding habitat.
- 3) The names and abundance of other bird species that were present.

Survey logistics:

This survey was conducted on ski slopes and access roads between the elevations 3400ft above sea level on the low end and 4400ft above sea level on the high end. An ORDA employee provided transportation via ATV to the contracted surveyor from the base of the mountain to the study area both days of the Bicknell's thrush survey.

The survey was conducted between the hours of 5:39am-9:12am on Monday June 3, 2024 and between the hours of 5:31am-7:20am on Tuesday June 4, 2024.

A total of fifteen-point surveys were required to assess the Bicknell's thrush breeding population on Whiteface Mountain's high elevation ski trails, lift trajectories, and maintenance roads between Summit Lift and Little Whiteface Lift.

Four survey points were done twice, once on each day of the survey to get an idea of similarities and differences in the amount of bird vocalizations between the two survey dates.

Four proposed survey points along Summit Lift's trajectory below Lower Crossover Trail were dropped because the four points above did not yield any Bicknell's thrushes and because a visual assessment of the area below Lower Crossover Trail revealed that the habitat is not conducive to Bicknell's thrushes due to an abundance of tall deciduous trees and an absence of thick balsam fir growth.

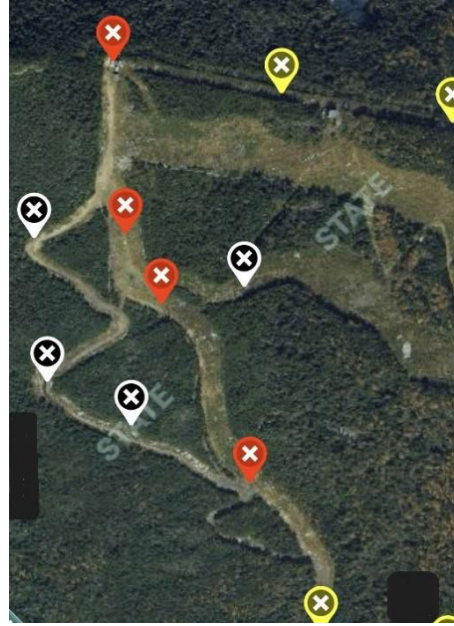
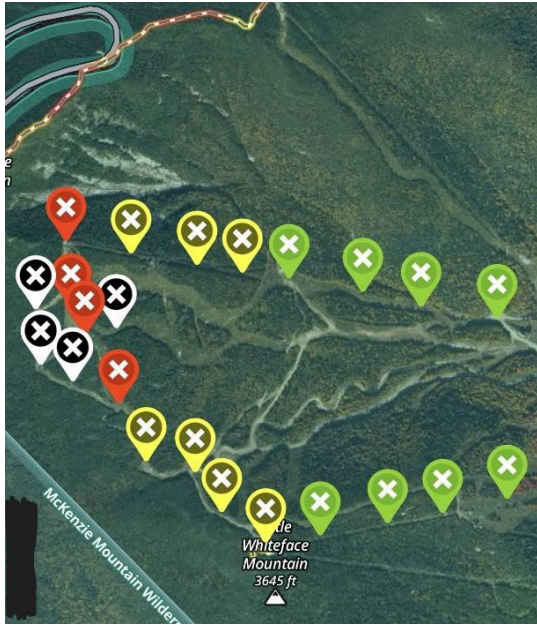
Another four proposed survey points along Little Whiteface Lift's trajectory were dropped because no Bicknell's thrushes were reported at the top of Little Whiteface lift or at the three survey points that were worked above it. A visual assessment of Little Whiteface lift from the top looking down reveals that it is not appropriate habitat for Bicknell's thrush due to an abundance of tall coniferous trees near the upper half of the lift's trajectory lacking any low thick growth and lacking in any fir wave formation. Farther down the lift the forest becomes mixed and then predominantly deciduous, making this area not appropriate habitat for Bicknell's thrush.

Four survey points were added on the second survey day in order to more thoroughly assess the areas on the slopes where Bicknell's thrush is present; three survey points were added along the high elevation maintenance road and one survey point was added along Cloundspin/Niagara Ski Trail.

Results

See the attached photos below. Red dots represent proposed survey points where Bicknell's thrush was detected. Yellow dots represent proposed survey points where Bicknell's thrush was not detected. White dots represent survey points that were not proposed but were later added in order to gain a more complete assessment of Bicknell's thrush presence and habitat. Bicknell's thrush was detected at each white dot survey point. Green dots represent proposed survey points

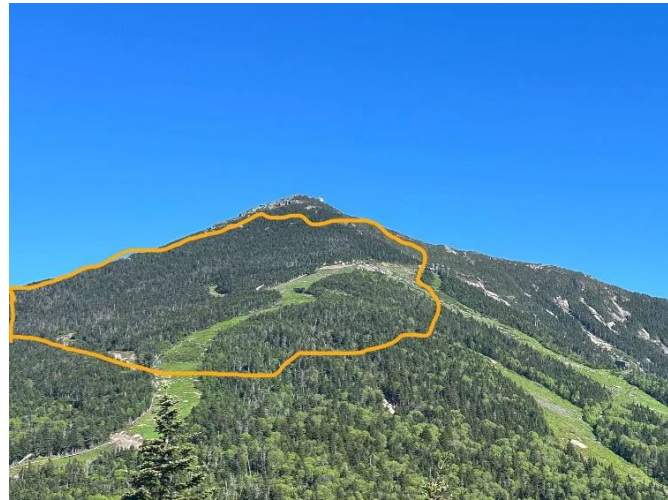
that were dropped after a visual assessment determined that those areas are not conducive to Bicknell's thrush.



This is a map of the labelled survey points:



The area to the left of the orange line (in left photo) and the area inside of the orange circle (in right photo) shows the extend of breeding Bicknell's thrush colonies in the high elevation slopes on Whiteface Mountain.



The weather for June 3, 2024 on Whiteface Mountain ski slopes was clear skies, some high clouds, sunny, 54F, wind 5mph.

The weather for June 4, 2024 on Whiteface Mountain ski slopes was clear skies, sunny, 55F, and with little to no wind.

Results for Each of the 15-point surveys are printed below:

Survey number: 1

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 5:39am-5:49am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36444671635751, -73.89944434850808

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Thick balsam fir around edge of open area and fir waves north and west of survey point.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 4

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, common raven, ruby-crowned kinglet (2), Swainson's thrush, dark-eyed junco (2), white-throated sparrow (2), mourning warbler, blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler (2), black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 1

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 5:31am-5:41am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36444671635751, -73.89944434850808

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Thick balsam fir around edge of open area and fir waves north and west of survey point.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 1

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher (2), boreal chickadee, ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren, Swainson's thrush (4), white-throated sparrow, blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler (2), black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 2

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 6:00am-6:10am

Survey Coordinates: 44.364130676600226, -73.89717535582682

Habitat assessment: Inappropriate habitat for Bicknell's thrush because forest is too fragmented with too many openings and the balsam fir corridors are too narrow.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren (2), Swainson's thrush, white-throated sparrow, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 3

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 6:24am-6:34am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36386646304475, -73.89490471857155

Habitat assessment: Inappropriate habitat for Bicknell's thrush due to about 30% deciduous trees.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, Swainson's thrush (2), purple finch, pine siskin (2), Nashville warbler (2), yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 4

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 6:43am-6:53am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36352468524647, -73.89266817871774

Habitat assessment: Inappropriate habitat for Bicknell's thrush; forest too fragmented and about 40% deciduous (birch, mtn ash, and striped maple).

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Winter wren, white-throated sparrow (3), black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 5

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 7:41am-7:51am

Survey Coordinates: 44.362819331762935, -73.89935406217813

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Forest edge connected with island patches of balsam fir on both sides of the trail, each island containing within it some fir wave formations.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 2

Other species present: Winter wren, dark-eyed junco (2), white-throated sparrow, blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 5

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 6:02am-6:12am

Survey Coordinates: 44.362819331762935, -73.89935406217813

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Forest edge connected with island patches of balsam fir on both sides of the trail, each island containing within it some fir wave formations.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 3

Other species present: Black-backed woodpecker, yellow-bellied flycatcher, winter wren (2), Swainson's thrush, pine siskin (12), dark-eyed junco (2), white-throated sparrow (3), blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 6

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 7:54am-8:04am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36154497334618, -73.89819579221155

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Forest edge connected with island patches of balsam fir on north, south, and west edges of the trail, each island containing within it some fir wave formations. Also, the larger balsam forest to the east contains fir wave formations too.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 4

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher (2), American crow (2), ruby-crowned kinglet (2), American robin, dark-eyed junco, white-throated sparrow (2), blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 6

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 6:31am-6:41am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36154497334618, -73.89819579221155

Habitat assessment: Excellent Bicknell's thrush habitat.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 2

Other species present: Peregrine falcon (flyover), yellow-bellied flycatcher, ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren, Swainson's thrush (2), American robin, pine siskin (2), Nashville warbler, magnolia warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 7

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 8:10am-8:20am

Survey Coordinates: 44.360060562112324, -73.89737966108967

Habitat assessment: Excellent Bicknell's thrush habitat. Sizeable fir islands containing fir wave formations to south and northwest. Fir forest with fir wave formations to east and west.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 3

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, American crow, Swainson's thrush, American robin, white-throated sparrow, magnolia warbler.

Survey number: 7

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 7:10am-7:20am

Survey Coordinates: 44.360060562112324, -73.89737966108967

Habitat assessment: Excellent habitat for Bicknell's thrush.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 2

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren (2), dark-eyed junco, magnolia warbler, blackpoll warbler.

Survey number: 8

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 8:23am-8:33am

Survey Coordinates: 44.35864709349936, -73.89654237159823

Habitat assessment: Potentially fair habitat for Bicknell's thrush, but not ideal. About 10% deciduous trees.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush (2), American robin, purple finch, pine siskin, Nashville warbler, American redstart, magnolia warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

Survey number: 9

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 8:36am-8:46am

Survey Coordinates: 44.358242699489885, -73.89480347183262

Habitat assessment: Poor habitat for Bicknell's thrush. Transition zone between coniferous and deciduous forest.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Blue-headed vireo, boreal chickadee, winter wren, Swainson's thrush (2), American robin, purple finch, dark-eyed junco, white-throated sparrow, black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 10

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 8:48am-8:58am

Survey Coordinates: 44.35704026903423, -73.89339763136557

Habitat assessment: Poor Bicknell's thrush habitat. Mixed forest.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, boreal chickadee (2), ruby-crowned kinglet (2), winter wren, Swainson's thrush, purple finch, pine siskin, magnolia warbler, black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 11

Date: 6/3/2024

Time: 9:02am-9:12am

Survey Coordinates: 44.35623484156195, -73.89184526252254

Habitat assessment: Poor Bicknell's thrush habitat; mixed forest with no fir waves nearby.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 0

Other species present: Yellow-bellied flycatcher, winter wren, Swainson's thrush, chipping sparrow, black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 12

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 5:49am-5:59am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36250747043265, -73.90065199871079

Habitat assessment: Excellent Bicknell's thrush habitat.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 4

Other species present: Ruby-crowned kinglet, winter wren, Swainson's thrush, white-throated sparrow.

Survey number: 13

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 6:44am-6:54am

Survey Coordinates: 44.361096105231034, -73.90054471035155

Habitat assessment: Excellent Bicknell's thrush habitat. Fir wave next to maintenance road connected with thick balsam fir forest.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 3

Other species present: Ruby-crowned kinglet, Swainson's thrush, pine siskin (3), magnolia warbler, yellow-rumped warbler, black-throated green warbler.

Survey number: 14

Date: 6/4/2024

Time: 6:18am-6:28am

Survey Coordinates: 44.36216997313181, -73.89760500930232

Habitat assessment: Good Bicknell's thrush habitat above Cloudsplitter Cut and south of Cloudspin/Niagara trails. Habitat makes a quick transition from spruce-fir to mixed-deciduous forest just downslope of Cloudsplitter cut and that seems to be where the invisible line of habitation for Bicknell's thrush is drawn.

Number of vocalizing Bicknell's thrushes detected: 2

Other species present: Boreal chickadee, winter wren, Swainson's thrush, white-throated sparrow (2), Nashville warbler, mourning warbler, magnolia warbler, blackpoll warbler, yellow-rumped warbler.

This photo shows fir islands that have the appearance of appropriate habitat. However, this survey revealed that there are some fir islands that hold Bicknell's thrushes (red highlights) and other fir islands that do not hold Bicknell's thrushes (yellow highlights).



Discussion:

During this study of the Whiteface Mountain ski trails between Summit Lift and Little Whiteface Lift, Bicknell's thrush populations were only detected at elevations above 3800' where balsam fir forests exhibit krummholz structure, including low, thick growth and fir wave formations. Below 3800' the habitat is not conducive to Bicknell's thrush due to forest composition that is mixed deciduous/coniferous and where trees grow taller and fir wave formation is absent.

It is also worth noting that there are four fir islands inhabited by Bicknell's thrushes in the study area. Three of these fir islands are bordered on all sides by ski trails or maintenance roads and one is bordered by ski trails on two sides and by mixed deciduous/coniferous forest on one side. There are five additional fir islands that are composed of balsam fir trees but are not inhabited by Bicknell's thrushes. The fir islands that are not inhabited by Bicknell's thrushes are likely too small and/or too narrow for Bicknell's thrushes to inhabit it.

It is likely that some disturbance, in the form of the maintenance of existing ski trails and maintenance roads in the study area are helping to create viable habitat for Bicknell's thrushes. It also seems likely, based on the size of inhabited fir islands versus uninhabited fir islands, that any further fragmentation of ski slope fir islands would likely have a detrimental effect on Bicknell's thrush populations in the study area.

Management Recommendations:

The following recommendations are presented as management strategies that, if adopted, may result in the continued flourishing of Bicknell's thrushes in the study area. The one caveat here is that while managing the structure of the study area is within ORDA's control, climate change presents an issue that is beyond the scope of this study and during the next several decades may have implications for Bicknell's thrush populations that are out of ORDA's control.

The first recommendation is that the ski slopes, access roads, and adjacent forested areas in the study area above 3800' should be maintained as is with no further fragmentation of fir islands.

The second recommendation is that there should be no cutting of any trees during the breeding season of Bicknell's thrushes, between May 15-August 1.

It should also be recognized that noise pollution as a result of lift maintenance would be unlikely to have a negative impact on nearby Bicknell's thrush breeding colonies. The rationale of this statement is that Bicknell's thrushes that nest in proximity to Whiteface Memorial Highway continue to flourish in spite of the regular noise pollution produced by motorcycles and radios during the height of the breeding season.