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Josh Houghton  
NYS DEC Bureau of Recreation  
625 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12233-5253

Dear Mr. Houghton,

This letter represents the Upper Saranac Lake Association's comments relevant to the UMP for the Fish Creek campgrounds in the town of Santa Clara. Fish Creek campground has provided wonderful camping experiences for 94 years. The DEC developed UMP for the facility provides a great framework for updating and enhancing the campers experience while visiting the pristine waters of the Upper Saranac Lake watershed.

The Upper Saranac Lake Association represents about 550 members, most of which own property on the shores on Upper Saranac Lake, Fish Creek ponds and several ponds in the Saranac Inn area. The purposes for which the USLA corporation is organized are: to preserve, enhance and protect the natural beauties and environmental purity of Upper Saranac Lake, its adjoining waters and the adjacent lands and forests; to encourage and assist in improving the recreational enjoyment of these waters and lands without thereby degrading or deteriorating the natural environmental quality thereof and generally to conserve and protect the interests of owners and tenants of the area embraced within the Upper Saranac Lake watershed.

The UMP contains many suggested improvements to the Fish Creek campgrounds. We agree with the replacement of obsolete comfort stations and associated septic systems, movement of the boat launch, improved amphitheater and playground, along with shoreline stabilization/restoration including tree/shrub plantings. All of these improvement will enhance camper experiences while revitalizing the environmental beauty of the facility.

We are not in agreement about suggested road and parking improvements. Paving an expanding two lane road creates two new problems. One, by having two lanes so vehicles can pass easily, it also provides for faster moving traffic on a road where vehicles compete for space with pedestrians and bicycles. We see more accidents, not less. Second, and more importantly, the additional paving creates a substantial increase in impervious coverage, hence

runoff of rainwater towards the lake. More paved parking only adds to the runoff problem. We suggest creating interspersed wider passing areas to slow traffic while keeping the road at its current width. Include a better kept shoulder that prevents runoff to the ponds.

What concerns us most is what is missing from the UMP: A discussion on management of pond water quality and control of invasive species. This Association and the Upper Saranac Foundation have invested a lot of resources to clean up the Fish Creek ponds of milfoil. The Foundation continues that effort up stream while maintaining already cleaned-up areas. Milfoil removal is a continuous process; any progress is lost with even short term neglect. Every new boat entering the ponds represents a possible new hazard. To maintain progress in this area we recommend the following suggestions as part of the UMP:

- Require every boat that enters the campground be inspected for invasive species at the main gate by Watershed personnel.
- Provide a hot water, high pressure boat decontamination station at the boat launch ramp site for Watershed personnel use.
- Allow use of the boat launch ramp during hours when it can be staffed by Watershed personnel
- Conduct training of campground DEC employees on the importance of maintaining water quality and invasive species mitigation so they can become part of the overall effort in their daily work.

Lastly, while the UMP states the number of campsites does not increase, the enhanced quality of the campground will inherently increase demand, hence use. The UMP should include a study of both campground and pond capacity to handle the camper/boat load. An overloaded facility increases sound, light and groundwater pollution along with additional traffic and garbage. And, wave erosion at shoreline locations both within the facility and along Fish Creek to Upper Saranac Lake is already concerning at existing usage and speeds observed. The negative impact of overloading on the environment will slowly degrade the overall experience for both campers and the local population.

The campground allows for a large number of people to enjoy the beautiful Upper Saranac watershed and the greater Adirondack Park. In general, we welcome the suggested upgrades to the facility but ask that the DEC also recognize the substantial investment in maintaining the watershed environment for all users made by campground neighbors. We ask that they work with all stakeholders to enhance and maintain the pristine waters for future generations.

Regards,

Larry Koch  
President

cc: Tom Swayne, USL Foundation