

**DRAFT SCOPE
FOR THE
DRAFT MASTER PLAN AND
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT**

**STERLING FOREST® STATE PARK
TOWNS OF TUXEDO, WARWICK, AND MONROE
ORANGE COUNTY, NEW YORK**

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PUBLIC INFORMATION/SCOPING MEETINGS

DATE:	May 4, 1999	DATE:	May 5, 1999
TIME:	7:00 pm	TIME:	7:00 pm
LOCATION:	George Baker High School Tornado Drive Tuxedo, NY 10987	LOCATION:	Greenwood Lake Union Free Elementary School 80 Waterstone Road Greenwood Lake, NY 10925

CLOSE OF COMMENT PERIOD ON DRAFT SCOPE:
May 19, 1999

Proposed Master Plan of Sterling Forest State Park Scope for Draft Environmental Impact Statement

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (State Parks) and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) have initiated a master planning process for Sterling Forest State Park. The 15,280 acre park is located in the Towns of Monroe, Tuxedo and Warwick in Orange County and is shown on the attached map. The master planning process will establish specific directions and implementation strategies for the park. The master planning process reaches beyond physical development to include land use, resource management, boundary protection, operations, and program services. Master plans provide a firm basis for natural and cultural resource management, capital, equipment, program and staffing decisions. State Parks and PIPC will formally begin the master planning process by conducting a scoping process which includes public information/scoping meetings to be held on May 4 and 5, 1999.

This Draft Scope has been prepared in accordance with Part 617, the rules and regulations implementing the New York State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). State Parks and PIPC, as co-lead agencies, have determined that the action of adopting a master plan for Sterling Forest State Park may have significant environmental impacts and, therefore, a Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) will be prepared. Part 617 provides opportunity for "scoping". This is the process by which Parks and PIPC will identify potentially significant impacts related to master plan adoption and implementation that are to be addressed in the DEIS. State Parks and PIPC will be conducting a scoping process which includes public information/scoping meetings to be held on May 4 and 5, 1999.

Part 617 also outlines the elements within a draft scoping document. These are: (1) a brief description of the proposed action; (2) potentially significant adverse impacts; (3) the extent and quality of information needed for each impact to be adequately addressed; (4) initial identification of mitigation measures; (5) reasonable alternatives to be considered; and (6) identification of information to be included as appendices rather than in the body of the Draft EIS.

Since most of the requirements of a DEIS are consistent with the content of a master plan, State Parks and PIPC will prepare a single document - Draft Master Plan / Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Plan/DEIS). This Draft Scope has been organized in accordance with the format of the Draft Plan/DEIS, and includes all the elements for a Draft Scope listed above. Parks has found that use of the actual format of the Plan/EIS helps facilitate the understanding of how the scoping process relates to Plan/EIS preparation.

COVER SHEET

The cover sheet will state that the document is a Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (Draft Plan/DEIS), and will include the title and location of the park, the name and address of the Lead Agencies, the names of the preparers of the Draft Plan/DEIS, a list of Involved Agencies, the date of completion, and the date by which comments must be submitted.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The executive summary will provide a concise overview of the Draft Plan/DEIS. It will include summaries of the environmental setting, plan alternatives, the Draft Master Plan for the park, adverse environmental impacts and mitigation measures. A brief description of permits and approvals required for the completion of the project will also be included here.

SOME QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THIS DRAFT MASTER PLAN AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Planning and Environmental Review Process

This section identifies the proposed action and the format of the Draft Plan/DEIS. It describes the process followed in development of the Draft Plan/DEIS. It contains an outline of the planning process in State Parks. Also, the environmental review process under SEQR, as it pertains to this project, will be outlined.

B. Relationship to Other Programs

This section identifies other plans/programs of federal, state, and local agencies that will affect the implementation of the Master Plan. The Draft Plan/DEIS will contain a listing and a discussion of the State and Federal permits and approvals necessary for completion of the project. This section will describe each permit that is required, what activities are covered under each permit, and the agency administering each permit.

II. ENVIRONMENTAL SETTING

This section contains baseline information from surveys and inventories. It contains a description of the existing conditions both within and external to the park.

A. The Region

This section identifies and describes the relationship of the park to other state parks and its

surrounding areas. It will include a location map. The general study area for the master plan will be identified and described. .

B. The Park

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will discuss the existing environmental, demographic, and built conditions of the site as a base for analysis of the Sterling Forest Master Plan alternatives.

1. History

Background information on the park and the master plan development will be presented to provide an historical overview of the proposed plan. History of the area, recreational use, and purchase of the property for resource protection and park development will be discussed, along with the content of the Interim Management Guide prepared for the park.

2. Legal Considerations

This section will describe easements and any deed restrictions which affect the planning for the park.

3. Park Boundaries and Adjacent Land Uses

The project location will be described on a local and regional scale. A site location map (using USGS quadrangles) and regional location map will be included in the Draft Plan/DEIS. The local scale map will show the relation of the proposed project site to other State lands and facilities.

4. Physical Resources

a. Surface Geology

The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe the surface geology of the project site. Mapping of the soil types found on the site will be included. The description will encompass the physical and engineering properties and constraints on each of the mapped soil types as they pertain to the development of the master plan components.

b. Subsurface Geology

The subsurface geology of the project site will be described, including depth to bedrock, type of bedrock, and bedrock outcropping. If necessary, any geologic features that could affect the development of the master plan will be identified and mapped.

c. Topography

The topography of the site will be illustrated on an appropriate topographic map in the Draft Plan/DEIS. Site topography and its influence on drainage patterns will be included in this discussion. Steep slopes and their impact on site planning will also be discussed.

d. Water: Surface and Groundwater

1) Lakes and Streams

The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe the waterbodies found in the park in terms of size, location, hydrology and use. Some of the lakes and streams that may be included are Jennings Creek, Sterling Lake, Greenwood Lake, Wanaque Reservoir, Ringwood River, Ramapo River, Lake Mombasha, and their tributaries. Existing baseline studies and data to be collected at selected streams and lakes will form the basis of the description of existing surface water quality to be included in the Draft Plan/DEIS.

2) Groundwater Resources

The Draft Plan/DEIS will provide a description of groundwater resources in the park based on historical and existing data and information. Sources of groundwater in the area will be identified and described. The discussion on groundwater quality will specifically address the potential for contamination that may have resulted from on-site mining activities or from surrounding areas.

2. Biological Resources

Information on vegetation, wetlands and wildlife will be discussed at the community and park level, and in terms of relative significance at the regional level. Particular attention will be given to communities that lie within areas of proposed park development.

a. Vegetation

Vegetation communities in the park will be identified using aerial photographs and will be field verified. Identified communities will be mapped consistent with NY Natural Heritage Program classifications (Reschke. 1990 Ecological Communities of New York State), and resultant mapping will be included in the Draft Plan/DEIS. A listing of plant species found within each community type will be compiled during periodic field inspections conducted from spring through fall. The value of the various vegetative community types as habitat for wildlife will also be discussed in the Draft Plan/DEIS. Finally, the significance of the Sterling Forest ecosystem on a regional level will be discussed.

b. Wildlife

The Draft Plan/DEIS will contain a description of the fauna within the park based upon field investigations, file searches of regulatory agencies, and document research. Fish, birds, amphibians and reptiles, and mammals will all be considered.. A list will be compiled of all species observed on the site and those species likely to occur on the site based on habitat requirements and geographical distribution. The inventory of fauna on the site will be correlated with the plant community mapping. On-site investigations will be based on the four seasons, so as to attempt to identify summer resident species, as well as transient species that may only occur during migration. Wildlife corridors such as

Jenning's Creek will also be discussed here, including geographical extent of the corridors and species that are expected to use them.

c. Rare and Endangered Species

Information concerning rare, threatened, endangered species and species of special concern that are present in the park will be presented and discussed. Specific locations of rare species are considered confidential.

d. Wetlands

Wetland boundaries in the park will initially be determined using aerial photography and available State and Federal wetland, soil and topographical mapping. There are two levels of wetland identification – the park as a whole and specific areas proposed for development of some type. Because of the large size of the park, detailed on-site wetland delineations for the whole park will not be conducted. However, site-specific wetland delineations will be performed in those areas potentially impacted by recreation developments.

Certain critical areas will be checked in the field for accuracy. A figure illustrating wetland boundaries on the project site will be included in the Draft Plan/DEIS. A brief description of the delineation methodology will be provided. Wetland boundaries shown on State and Federal mapping are determined by two different methodologies; both will be addressed. All mapping will be compatible with the base mapping for the Master Plan/EIS. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and National Wetland Inventory (NWI) wetland classifications will also be shown. A wetland delineation report including sampling locations and data will be prepared and referenced within the Draft Plan/DEIS. The discussion of wetlands in the Draft Plan/DEIS will include the characteristics of each identified wetland area, such as classification, size, hydrological relationship to the rest of the park, and the function and value of the wetlands and their floral/faunal communities.

6. Recreational Resources

The Draft Plan/DEIS will contain an inventory of current recreational facilities and programs. Recreational uses of surrounding public and private lands and waterbodies will also be identified. Included in this inventory will be hunting areas and hiking trails, such as the Appalachian Trail, as well as other forms of recreation.

7. Transportation

The Draft Plan/DEIS will include an analysis of existing traffic studies and an updated traffic study, as necessary. The capacity and condition of existing public transportation around and to the site will be discussed. Included in this discussion will be the current seasonal availability of service as well as the present level of use. The Draft Plan/DEIS will also provide an analysis of the pedestrian environment that will identify and evaluate existing trails as they relate to other forms of transportation and to the use of the park. Hiking trails will be discussed in the Recreation Section. Finally, this section will describe the current availability of parking in the vicinity.

8. Land Use and Zoning

The land uses surrounding Sterling Forest State Park will be described and shown on a map.

9. Park Infrastructure and Utilities

This section will describe the existing park facilities, including electric, water, septic, telephone, roads and bridges, parking, and buildings.

10. Park Operations and Maintenance

This section will describe current park operations and maintenance.

11. Community Support Services

Local providers of community support services will be identified and asked to assess their capabilities of providing adequate service to the park. Potential demands from the park will be generated from collected information from other similar facilities. The results of the assessment of community service providers will be described in the Draft Plan/DEIS. The Draft Plan/DEIS will also include a figure illustrating the location of the service providers in relation to the park. These will include emergency services, police, water, sewer, solid waste disposal and utilities.

12. Historical and Archeological Resources

The Draft Plan/DEIS will provide a description and the location of any historic areas or structures listed on the State or National Register or designated by the community as historically significant. Sites having potentially significant archeological value will be identified, and the results of cultural resource surveys conducted for Sterling Forest State Park and the newly acquired properties will be described.

13. Scenic Resources

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will provide a description of areas of significant scenic value and identification of any structures of significant architectural design. The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe significant viewsheds within the park and identify areas of access to important views.

14. Phase I Environmental Assessment (Audit)

A Phase I Environmental Assessment was conducted as part of the acquisition process. This assessment identifies the likely presence of hazardous substances or petroleum products under conditions that indicate the potential for or a history of release. Findings will be described and the report referenced in the Draft Plan/EIS.

15. Social and Economic Considerations

An overview of the current socioeconomic conditions will be presented based upon existing data.

Information that will be included in this section of the Draft Plan/DEIS includes information on community characteristics and local recreational opportunities.

III. VISION AND GOALS

A. Park Vision Statement

This section will include a vision statement for the park.

B. Goals

Goals for natural, cultural and recreational resources, communication/coordination, and management and operation will be described.

IV. ALTERNATIVES AND ANALYSIS

A. Introduction

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will present categories of alternatives that were considered, examples and elements of each, and the criteria used to select the preferred alternative. Discussion of each will be at a level sufficient to permit a comparative assessment of the pros and cons and environmental impacts for each alternative, including a no-action alternative.

B. Parkland Classification

State Park's Parkland Classification will be described. Alternative classifications will be evaluated. The preferred Parkland Classification will be identified along with the rationale for its selection. The implications of the proposed classification and vision and goals statement will be described relative to recreational use and resource protection.

C. Resource Analysis

The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe the findings of analysis of the resource inventory information contained in the Environmental Setting section. The suitability and limitations of parkland resources for development will be mapped as overlays and described in narrative form.

D. Opportunities and Limitations Analysis.

Based upon the physical, natural, and cultural resources, this section summarizes opportunities and constraints to be considered during the analysis of recreation, park protection, and development options. Using the series of overlays prepared in Section C., a composite map(s) will be prepared that identifies areas with particular suitability for recreation use and resource protection. The narrative describing such maps will outline the special development and resource protection requirements that may apply to certain areas.

E. Recreation Use Alternatives

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will evaluate each recreational element and identify the development options. A preferred option and the relevant selection criteria will be identified.

- 1. Trail Uses**
- 2. Camping/Cabins**
- 3. Hunting**
- 4. Fishing**
- 5. Swimming**
- 6. Picnicking**
- 7. Court and Field Games**
- 8. Boating**
- 9. Control, Access and Circulation**
- 10. Other**

F. Program Alternatives

Alternative program development options will be evaluated, including the following:

- 1. Environmental Interpretation/Education**
- 2. Research/Monitoring**
- 3. Visitor Center**

G. Master Plan Alternatives

- 1. Status Quo.**

This alternative consists of the existing recreational uses and resource protection actions outlined in the interim Resource Management Guide.

- 2. Preferred Alternative.**

This alternative consists of the preferred alternatives for each of the recreational uses and resource protection strategies identified in the previous section. The alternative will include any changes deemed necessary after evaluation of the interactions of each of the preferred alternatives for each recreational use. This “synthesis” may identify conflicts or additional recreation and/or resource opportunities for the park.

- 3. Other Alternatives.**

In evaluating the two primary master plan alternatives additional alternatives may become apparent. These will be described.

V. THE DRAFT MASTER PLAN

A. Introduction

This section provides detail on the draft master plan (i.e., The Preferred Alternative). The Draft Master Plan will include a conceptual map depicting the plan for the park both in terms of recreation use and resource protection.

B. Description of the Master Plan Elements

Each element, as listed below, will be described in detail. Detailed drawings of protection/development areas will be provided where applicable.

- 1. Parkland Classification**
- 2. Control, Access and Circulation**
- 3. Recreation Elements**
- 4. Visitor Center Interpretive Facilities**
- 5. Cultural Resources**
- 6. Natural Resources**
- 7. Education and Research Programs**
- 8. Maintenance and Operations**
- 9. Infrastructure and Utilities**
- 10. Transportation**
- 11. Open Space Conservation**
- 12. Design Guidelines**

C. Implementation Strategy

The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe the program and capital needs for the implementation of the Master Plan. This section will also briefly identify a timeline (phases) for the implementation of the Draft Master Plan.

VI. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS

A. Introduction

This chapter of the Draft Plan/DEIS will assess the potential effects that the Master Plan may have on the environment during the construction and operation. Potential impacts will be identified as will the magnitude of each potentially significant impact. Measures will be proposed to mitigate each potentially significant adverse environmental impact.

B. Environmental Impacts of Alternatives

The Draft Plan/DEIS will provide an analysis of the environmental impacts of each of the plan

alternatives discussed in Chapter IV.

C. Environmental Impacts of the Master Plan and Mitigation of Adverse Impacts

This section will contain a description of the environmental impacts associated with the Draft Master Plan described in Chapter V as they affect the resources discussed in Chapter II. The Draft Plan/DEIS will describe the mitigation steps that will be used to reduce the magnitude of any adverse impacts to these resources.

1. Land.

Potential impacts are categorized into short-term construction impacts and long term impacts. During site preparation sediment and soils may become mobilized and impact the character and quality of land formations. Mitigation will be addressed through detailed sedimentation and erosion control plans which shall be put in place prior to actual construction. Longer term impacts would include changes to topography and grade associated with facility construction.

2. Water.

Water resources are particularly vulnerable to sedimentation and erosion processes during construction. The sedimentation and erosion control plan is also an important mitigation tool for protection of water quality. Alteration of topography and construction of facilities will change the patterns and intensity of runoff. These can have impacts on the hydrology of streams and the quality of water resources. Mitigation will be addressed through sensitive environmental design and facility location. Day use and overnight accommodations will require water and waste water treatment. These systems will be designed to reduce, if not eliminate, adverse impacts to water resources. Hydrology is an important consideration at Sterling Forest. Changes in hydrology could impact both surficial and subsurface water flow regimes, and, in turn, impact the groundwater levels and wetland characteristics. Facility development may impact state or federal wetlands or buffer areas. Mitigation will primarily be in the form of avoidance of sensitive areas, and facility design which is within the resource constraints of the natural environment.

3. Air.

The type and extent of recreational use at the park is not expected to reach a level where air quality is impacted noticeably. During construction there may be short term changes in the levels of ambient air quality.

4. Plants and Animals.

The flora and fauna of the park may be impacted directly by construction and by patron use. Mitigation will be through sensitive location and design of facilities, and thorough environmental education programs designed to create a fuller awareness within the park user of the resources potentially impacted, and the types of steps he or she can take to reduce such impacts. The plan will also address the issue of impacts on biodiversity by invasive plants and animals.

5. Aesthetic Impacts.

The park contains significant scenic resources. Depending on the location and design of facilities these resources (and access to them) can be impacted. Mitigation of potential adverse impacts will be done through a careful assessment of these resources, which includes an inventory and identification of guidelines to protect, and even enhance, the aesthetic value of the park to park users.

6. Historic and Archeological Resources.

The Park will be surveyed for buildings and sites eligible for the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Mitigation of any potential adverse impacts on these areas will be through historic resources studies and review and comment by staff of the Historic Preservation Field Service Bureau of State Parks.

7. Open Space and Recreation.

The plan is proposed to enhance recreation use and to protect open space. Nonetheless, potential adverse impacts may exist in association with facility development and attendance. Mitigation measures will be identified that respect open space protection that keeps attendance within the carrying capacity of the park and its resources.

8. Critical Environmental Areas.

During the inventory phase of the master planning process, areas may be identified that may be considered critical with respect to their environmental character.

Such areas will be identified and steps outlined for their protection. It is anticipated that the focus on any critical environmental areas will be on their protection and the avoidance of any adverse impacts associated with facilities and program development.

9. Transportation.

Implementation of a master plan for the park will result in changes to patterns of movement of people and supplies. Such changes may have adverse impacts. Mitigation will be again addressed through careful evaluation of capacities and the design and location of transportation related facilities.

10. Energy.

Upon implementation, increases in energy consumption can be expected, both by the park patrons and as a result of park operation and maintenance. While it is not anticipated that such increases will be significant, they may call for infrastructure improvements that may impact the environment. Mitigation will be through energy saving design elements and location and design of infrastructure that is consistent with the character of the park and its resources.

11. Noise and Odor.

There is likely to be some increase in noise associated with potentially expanded recreation uses. Odor concerns are minimal. Mitigation of noise impacts will be addressed through facility location, recreational uses allowed in the park, and the provision of buffer areas.

12. Public Health.

Whenever the public comes in close association with the natural environment, concerns over health impacts exist. These include lyme disease, rabies and waterborne pathogens.

Mitigation of the risk of health problems will be through rigorous adherence to state sanitary code guidelines and through environmental education programs.

13. Growth and Character of Community.

Although the type and extent of uses proposed at the park are not anticipated to be at a level to produce noticeable changes in the character of adjacent communities, the potential for such changes does exist. The gateway community concept will be discussed within the plan, and the role and relationship of the park to growth and character in adjacent communities discussed.

D. Unavoidable Adverse Impacts

The Draft Plan/DEIS will identify any adverse impacts associated with the project which cannot be avoided, or adequately mitigated, if the proposed plan is implemented.

E. Irreversible and Irrecoverable Commitments of Resources

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will include those natural and human resources identified in Chapter II that will no longer be available for future use if the project is implemented.

F. Growth Inducement

The secondary impacts that implementation of the Master Plan may have in inducing economic growth or development in the vicinity of the park will be discussed in this section.

G. Supplemental Environmental Review .

This section of the Draft Plan/DEIS will outline those types of actions or programs that will require additional environmental assessment.

VII. RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER PROGRAMS

This Chapter of the Draft Plan/DEIS will identify how other federal, state, and local plans/programs relate to the Master Plan, including:

- A. Harriman State Park**
- B. Appalachian Trail**
- C. Adjacent New Jersey Recreation and Wildlife Areas**
- D. Public and Private Water Supplies**

VII. COMMENTS AND RESPONSES

This Chapter will be present in the Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement only. It will identify comments received during the public comment period on the Draft Plan/DEIS and will list the agency's response.

PRELIMINARY LISTING OF ISSUES, IMPACTS AND CONCERNS

This list has been developed by staff of State Parks and PIPC based on input from members of the planning team. This is a preliminary listing and will be amended as per the input of the public and interest groups during the scoping process.

- * Type and extent of recreational access
- * User group coordination and cooperation
- * The impact of park development and operation on water resources in the park and downstream from it.
- * Conditions associated with existing deeds
- * Coordination of park operations with New Jersey
- * Gateway communities
- * Carrying capacity of park for visitors
- * Composition and role of Study Group
- * Composition and role of Science Group
- * ADA Accessibility
- * Utility line maintenance
- * Type and extent of any pesticide use
- * Design guidelines – content and implementation strategy
- * Water rights/restrictions
- * Greenbelt issues
- * Type and extent of monitoring and research activities
- * Cultural resource use and protection
- * User fees
- * Types of partnerships with interest groups / private sector
- * Transportation network impacts
- * Permitted uses at Doris Duke area