



Chapter 10 - Environmental Impacts

Environmental Review

New York's State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR) requires all state and local government agencies to consider environmental factors in agency decision-making processes along with social and economic factors. Agencies must assess the environmental impacts of actions which they propose, evaluate alternatives, develop methods for minimizing potential adverse impacts, and provide an opportunity for the public to participate in the planning process when proposals may have significant impacts. This means these agencies must assess the environmental significance of actions they have discretion to approve, fund or directly undertake. SEQR requires the agencies to balance the environmental impacts with social and economic factors when deciding to approve or undertake an "action". The action in this case is the development and update of SCORP.

When an action is determined to have potentially significant adverse environmental impacts, an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required. The SEQR process uses an EIS to examine ways to avoid or reduce adverse environmental impacts related to a proposed action. This includes an analysis of all reasonable alternatives to the action. The SEQR decision-making process encourages communication among government agencies, project sponsors and the general public.

The updated SCORP will guide future recreational planning, activities, and development. Its adoption and implementation has the potential for significant effects, thus it was determined that an

EIS should be prepared. Since SCORP is a broad-based plan, an EIS that evaluates site-specific impacts of projects is not possible; thus, a Generic EIS (GEIS) is being prepared. A generic EIS (GEIS) is an assessment of the potential impacts of broad based or related groups of actions. It is more conceptual in nature than a site specific EIS which addresses a particular proposed project. It may provide a general discussion of the rationale and impacts of the proposed action.

This chapter, together with the remaining chapters of SCORP, constitutes a draft GEIS for SCORP. Chapters 1 through 9 describe the proposed action as well as numerous ways in which the impacts of SCORP are mitigated. These other chapters provide the reviewer with detailed information on the recreation resources and needs, the natural, cultural, and historic resource settings, policies, actions, and an overall implementation scenario. They are thus integral components of the GEIS and should be referred to while reviewing this chapter.

This chapter discusses impacts and mitigation of impacts associated with adoption and implementation of the 2008 SCORP by OPRHP. This chapter also briefly identifies the Environmental Setting for SCORP, and alternatives to the SCORP as proposed. Other chapters of SCORP are discussed briefly within the context of the policies and strategies. Discussions of consistency of SCORP with coastal policies under the State's Coastal Management Program (CMP) are also included in the Policies and Strategies section of this chapter. Many of the issues identified in this GEIS have been previously addressed in earlier GEIS's for SCORP, particularly in the 2003 SCORP and Final GEIS. This GEIS also references the Open Space

Conservation Plan and its GEIS (DEC et. al. 2006).

SCORP 2008 represents an extensive analysis of changing recreational needs, development of updated policies and objectives, and general projections for future recreation needs and activities. This chapter contains an analysis of the overall SCORP direction in the context of maximizing needed recreational opportunities while protecting the State's natural and cultural resources from significant adverse impacts. The environmental analysis of SCORP focuses on the adequacy, clarity, and appropriateness of the stated policies and action strategies that implement the vision of SCORP (Chapter 2). The GEIS is not intended to provide a comprehensive analysis of impacts of each program or project which may be undertaken pursuant to SCORP. It serves as a reference and sets forth the process for evaluation of future actions and related impacts, providing a sound environmental planning base. Existing evaluation and review processes are discussed in terms of assuring that resource protection is given appropriate consideration during planning and implementation of programs and activities under the SCORP "umbrella".

Specific recreational projects undertaken, funded or approved by state or local agencies pursuant to SCORP are subject to SEQR if the projects meet certain thresholds as defined by SEQR regulations. Evaluation of some of these specific proposals will result in determinations that they will not have significant adverse effects on the environment as a result of undertaking the actions. Other proposals, those that may have a significant adverse effect on the environment, will require the preparation of EISs. Under SEQR, the EIS process assures that an action to be undertaken will avoid or minimize adverse

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environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable. Through SEQR and other existing review mechanisms such as permit processes, consideration of environmental factors is a part of all plans or specific actions undertaken to implement SCORP.

The Draft SCORP/GEIS are being made available for public review and will be the subject of a public hearing in accordance with the public review process of the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQR). Comments on the Draft SCORP/GEIS are welcome and will be incorporated and addressed in the Final SCORP/GEIS as part of the SEQR record, prior to adoption of SCORP.

Environmental Setting

The environmental setting for SCORP consists of the people and the natural, recreational, scenic, historic and cultural resources of New York State, as well as social and economic characteristics. The resources potentially affected by SCORP include recreational areas, lakes, rivers, streams, wetlands, coastal and estuarine waters, significant habitats, fish and wildlife, rare species of plants and animals, forests, agricultural areas, parklands, historic sites, archeological areas, scenic areas, and communities. The setting also includes the general public, park and recreation service providers and both resident and nonresident users.

The other chapters in SCORP provide more information on: recreation resources and needs, including socioeconomic factors; recreational, natural and cultural resources; and the State Outdoor Recreation System.

Alternatives

At the plan level, non-preparation of a plan is not a viable option since the state is required to prepare SCORP, both

pursuant to State law and to maintain eligibility of federal funds under the LWCF.

At the implementation level, it would mean that there would be no statewide guidance for the provision of recreation, or if the 2003 SCORP were continued, there would be no revisions that provide updates concerning recreation supply and demand, policies and strategies as well as the numerous programmatic changes and initiatives.

In addition, failure by the State to implement SCORP may result in the loss of needed opportunities for public access and outdoor recreation, without proper identification of those needs. Significant adverse impacts to the environment could occur without the guidance provided in the policies and strategies. Moreover, without the focus and priorities set by SCORP, the opportunity for creation and maintenance of statewide systems of natural, cultural and outdoor recreation facilities will be substantially hindered.

Another alternative to SCORP as proposed would be a much smaller scope, such as a focus on OPRHP actions only, or limited to those actions which may be funded under LWCF. Limiting SCORP in this manner would not capture the breadth of the outdoor recreational programs and opportunities within the state. Alternatively, attempting to address every outdoor recreational program and facility in the state is clearly beyond the realm of possibility. SCORP as proposed provides a balance, providing the best information available on state and regional programs, facilities and actions related to outdoor recreation and open space resources. SCORP also provides the statewide framework to guide the provision of outdoor recreation and open space opportunities at the local level.

Environmental Impacts and Mitigation

Within this section, each program and/or policy is briefly described and the implications as to the environmental impacts discussed. Where possible, general approaches that mitigate potential adverse impacts are also identified.

Planning Process

The planning principles described in Chapter 1 assure that recreation planning in the State considers natural as well as human resources. Through participation by all levels of government, the private sector, and citizens, coordination of recreation service delivery is achieved. Also, constantly reevaluating assumptions, methods and objectives in the planning process helps assure protection of natural resources by adjusting preservation measures when conditions change or new information is available.

The objectives of OPRHP's planning process continue to support SCORP goals and planning principles. These objectives further the protection of resources by guiding agencies in formulating priorities. Adequate information and analysis, coordination and citizens' participation are key to wise implementation of actions that protect resources.

The planning process described in Chapter 1 incorporates consideration of land and water resources and user impacts, and emphasizes the best use of available resources.

Participation by the public in the planning process provides a balance of interests in plan formulation. Protection of open space, natural and cultural resources, and interests and priorities of the public, are reflected in SCORP as

well as in specific programs and projects implemented pursuant to SCORP.

Policies and Strategies

Following is a discussion of the policy framework (refer to Chapter 2) in the context of the importance of balancing policies in project evaluation, the appropriateness of the policies and action strategies, and measures needed or in place which effectively implement the policies and actions to provide adequate resource protection. Discussions of consistency of policies and action strategies with coastal policies are included in this section.

In order to maximize the social and economic benefits associated with providing recreation while minimizing adverse impacts to the resource, it is critical that during planning for recreation programming and development of recreational facilities, consideration be given to the entire set of SCORP policy statements. Reliance on a portion of the policies or giving undue weight to certain of the strategies can result in substantial reduction in the quantity of potential recreation services (and the associated benefits) or in the quality of the State's natural and cultural resources. For example, the policies regarding resource protection may result in unnecessary restriction of recreational opportunities; while on the other hand, emphasis on water access has the potential for significant adverse impacts on the environment.

The SCORP policies and action strategies are comprehensive and are consistent with OPRHP's mission to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all state residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of the valuable natural, cultural and historic resources under its care. The policies and action strategies also reflect the guiding principles of the mission which are commitments to people, preservation, service and leadership. The Parks, Recreation and Historic

Preservation Law contains a provision to declare stewardship of resources as a responsibility of the State, and includes as a guiding principle that OPRHP conserve, protect and enhance the natural, ecological, historic, cultural and recreation resources and provide public access in a manner that will protect them for future generations.

Assurance that the entire set of SCORP policies and action strategies is applied to development of recreational programs and facilities is provided through use of grant allocation criteria (State and Federal Funding, Chapter 9), planning processes and public participation (Chapter 1), and environmental review procedures. Resource protection policies are continually balanced with other policies to achieve optimal levels of recreational facilities and programs in view of the capability of resources to support use. Each time that SCORP is updated, suggestions for policy and strategy additions or revisions are sought from OPRHP staff, State Council of Parks and regional councils, and cooperating agencies as well as the public through the public participation process. This process assures that the policies and strategies continue to be responsive to recreational needs and resource protection.

Since SCORP is essentially a broad framework within which more detailed planning will take place, it is not possible to definitively identify adverse effects. It is consequently infeasible to suggest specific mitigation measures. Consistent, however, with OPRHP's stewardship mission, the review processes assure that due consideration is given to protection of the State's natural and cultural heritage. These processes by which more detailed plans and projects are developed and evaluated should serve to minimize, if not eliminate, adverse effects possibly associated with development of recreational facilities.

As explained under Environmental Review in this chapter, this GEIS serves as a reference for evaluation of future actions. Site specific reviews will assure consistency with SCORP and projects which enhance or are compatible with natural and cultural resources.

In the remainder of this section, each of the major SCORP policies and their corresponding action strategies will be discussed in terms of potential impacts. Differences between the 2003 SCORP and the current proposed SCORP will also be analyzed. In a few instances, policies or action strategies have been revised slightly to broaden their applicability. Such changes are considered to be a more accurate representation of statewide policy and may not be discussed on an individual basis.

The 2008 policies have been grouped into four major initiative areas and are presented here within that initiative framework. These initiatives reflect major issues and provide a larger context to enhancing existing recreational programs and activities across New York State.

Revitalizing our Parks and Historic Sites

Policy: Improve recreation and historic site operation, maintenance and resource management practices.

This policy is the same as that in 2003 and overall adverse impacts are limited. The action strategy to rehabilitate and adaptively reuse existing facilities to satisfy recreation, interpretive and education needs, continues to be important in efficient delivery of recreation. Rehabilitation has significant beneficial impacts, and with the exception of major expansion or reconstruction, adverse environmental effects are minor. Rehabilitation is generally more cost effective than development of new facilities.

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Outmoded facilities can be phased out and adaptively reused where possible and feasible. Adaptive reuse enables the preservation of historic structures, furthering the objective to preserve cultural resources as covered under the previous policy. This action strategy also advances coastal policies with regard to historic and cultural resources, as well as restoring and redeveloping deteriorated and underutilized waterfront areas. The strategy includes consideration of feasibility. In carrying out the objective of rehabilitation and adaptive reuse, it is important to assess compatibility of existing or proposed new uses of facilities with the site's natural resources. In addition, modifications of historic structures to provide access for the disabled, as well as other needed modernizations, must be sensitive to the historic integrity of the buildings. Interpretation is also included in this strategy to reflect an emphasis on adapting existing structures or other facilities for interpretive purposes.

The encouragement of compatible multiple uses as well as extension of user seasons means more efficient use of existing recreational facilities, but an overall increase in the numbers of users at a specific site. Multiple use can result in more even distribution of users over the course of a day, and extension of user seasons has a similar effect over the course of a year. The quality of the recreationist's experience can thus be improved through potentially lower peak use periods. At the same time, an increase in the total number of users has the potential for adverse impacts on resources. Planning for each facility must be done with a careful evaluation of the capacity of resources to accommodate increased use and effects on the quality of recreation, with an emphasis on compatibility of the uses with the resources.

Health and safety concerns and accessibility for the handicapped have been and continue to be important. Health and safety concerns, however,

must be reflected not only in rehabilitation and new construction, but in setting priorities for project funding.

Particularly relevant to impacts on natural resources, energy conservation is mandated for new construction or major reconstruction by the State Energy Code. Conservation of energy results in cost savings, and can offset increased energy use associated with extended user days and seasons. For instance, enclosing a swimming pool, while increasing swimming opportunity, requires increased energy consumption. Energy conservation in design and operation of these facilities is therefore extremely important. Energy conservation techniques involving modest investment such as improved insulation, storm-windows and heating systems are emphasized in rehabilitation of existing structures. A new policy area regarding sustainability is closely related to energy efficiency, but is much broader in scope. Sustainability policy is discussed later in this section.

Protection of natural and cultural resources is important in undertaking park and historic site operation and maintenance activities. This action reflects the awareness that operation and maintenance activities need to be improved to ensure resource protection.

Proper management of the resources requires the training of park, historic site and land managers. This should be done on a continuous basis to assure best management practices are being utilized in protection of environmentally sensitive areas. This strategy has been revised to include training for operation and maintenance of facilities to ensure public health and safety. For instance, operators of drinking water systems and sewage treatment plants need continued training to insure safe operation of these facilities and to protect the public and water resources.

There is also a need to improve access to trails, parks and other recreation

opportunities within urban areas and other centers of human activity. This will encourage physical activity and provide more recreational opportunities for underserved communities. It will also encourage alternative transportation and energy savings in suburban areas.

Two new strategies have been included under this policy, reflecting major state initiatives: significantly increase the state's investment in management and operations of recreation and historic facilities, and develop a sustainability plan. The first reflects the immense park management needs of a greatly expanded recreational facility system. The second reflects the need for a comprehensive effort to minimize energy use and reduce our carbon footprint, as discussed in Chapter 6. Additional priorities concerning sustainability are discussed later in this section.

Overall, the policy to improve operation, maintenance and resource management practices is consistent with and may advance coastal policies under the Coastal Management Program (CMP). For instance, rehabilitation and adaptive reuse promotes the CMP's development policy to restore, revitalize and redevelop deteriorated and underutilized waterfront areas. Training of managers in best management practices can advance the fish and wildlife policy to protect, preserve and restore habitats; the recreation policy to protect, enhance and restore historic sites or areas; and, water resources policies related to the use of best management practices in control of storm-water runoff and non-point discharge of pollutants.

Policy: Improve and expand water-oriented recreation opportunities.

Additional public access to water resources and additional water recreation opportunities continue to be a concern. Major investments must be made on a priority basis to satisfy

existing and projected water access needs. Recreation providers particularly in the public sector should, however, be encouraged to provide simple cost effective means of providing access.

The expansion of water access opportunities has significant potential for adverse environmental impacts due to resource limitations such as the existence of significant habitats, wetlands, steep slopes and erosion hazards. In encouraging the acquisition and/or development of parks and recreation resources that are accessible to waterbodies, state and local agencies must assure that provisions for access are compatible with existing natural and cultural resources.

The policy recognizes the need to improve existing access sites. It is important to capitalize on existing sites to provide an optimum of water-oriented recreation opportunities. This should limit the need for new access sites and associated impacts. Caution must be exercised, however, to avoid development beyond the capacity of the resources.

Upgrading and protecting water quality is essential to maintain the habitats and species which rely on water bodies, as well as to provide a quality recreational experience. The Open Space Conservation Plan contains recommendations and has implemented numerous projects to promote clean water. Continuing strict enforcement of water pollution control laws helps implement this strategy. Numerous lake or watershed-specific plans have been implemented or are underway that provide a comprehensive approach to protection of water quality through wise management of waters and adjacent areas. OPRHP continues to enhance the monitoring and operation of drinking water treatment systems and bathing beaches under its jurisdiction. A water quality manual outlines concisely and in plain language the monitoring requirements under the regulations of the State's Department of Health (DOH).

OPRHP also participates with DOH in a program administered by EPA that calls for the classification of ocean and freshwater bathing beaches according to water quality levels. It also fosters the preparation of monitoring protocols and public notification of beach water quality levels.

OPRHP also conducts periodic monitoring of lakes within the State Park System to determine long term trends in shifts in trophic status or the amount of nutrients indicated by the amount of production of organic matter. Continued monitoring and evaluation of data will assist OPRHP in identifying problem areas and whether there is a need to take corrective actions, such as controlling nutrient input.

EPF provides funds for such projects as non-point source pollution control and wastewater treatment improvement. Combined sewer overflows are also being abated under specific management programs. Water quality monitoring and research are extremely important to assure identification of water quality issues and to provide the basis for responding to such issues.

Preservation of shorelines, wetlands, and upland areas is integral to meeting water quality standards, as well as to enhancement of the recreational experience. Similarly, the proper management of coastal areas is critically important for protection of aesthetic and ecological resources that contribute to water-oriented recreation opportunities. The availability of matching funds under EPF to develop LWRPs along with funding for planning, design and construction costs of projects incorporated in approved plans has provided incentives for further shoreline protection efforts.

Measures to protect the quality of the State's water resources may be accompanied by increased costs. Maintaining water quality standards, however, increases the diversity of aquatic life including fish, and improves

aesthetics. These benefits in turn increase the attractiveness of a water body for recreational uses. Increased water-related recreation has positive economic effects on localities through direct and indirect expenditures. It is critical from both environmental and economic perspectives that a portion of economic benefits be reinvested in resource protection to assure continued maintenance of water quality.

The action strategy to support management practices which reduce conflicts among water-related activities includes reduction of conflicts with significant natural water resource areas. Management practices would be supported which relate to recreational zoning of use areas, such as swimming, boating and shore fishing. This objective recognizes that while access for water-oriented activity is important, demand for various water activities generates potential conflicts among different user groups. The appropriateness and capacity of sites to accommodate a variety of water recreation opportunities must be evaluated, and where multiple uses are possible, site specific planning, design and management practices must be undertaken to provide proper demarcation of use areas. Other examples of management practices to decrease conflicts include boating speed limits, designation of areas where no boat wakes are allowed, designated water skiing areas, motor boat horsepower limitations, and even increased boating fees. Invention and proliferation of new forms of water recreation, such as parasailing and extreme sports, is a concern when there is potential for serious conflicts with conventional uses. Consideration may be given to banning these types of uses in certain water bodies which cannot accommodate a large variety of uses. Emphasis should be placed on designating specific areas where these uses can appropriately take place, particularly to reduce conflicts with swimmers. This approach is emphasized in the last action strategy under this policy regarding zoning of water-related activities.

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As demand for use increases, multiple use planning and management become essential to maximize use of an essentially fixed resource base, minimize user conflicts, ensure patron health and safety, and prevent damage to facilities and resources caused by inappropriate use. Inclusion in this action strategy of consideration of use conflicts with natural resource areas provides emphasis on the resource aspect of planning for water-related activities, and is thus consistent with the coastal policy to protect, preserve, and where practical, restore significant coastal fish and wildlife resources.

Underwater lands that have significant natural, cultural and recreational qualities are protected through OGS management and coordination with agencies and localities as described in Chapter 7. The strategy to encourage the interpretation and access to significant underwater natural and cultural resources is consistent with coastal policies, provided underwater archeological resources and aquatic resources are protected. The inventory and recognition of underwater natural and cultural resources has increased. This has resulted in a growing demand to make these resources available for interpretation and viewing by the public. There is recognition that there is a limited amount of waterfront available. Use of these areas should be for water dependent development and access, consistent with coastal policies.

Strategies related to increasing water access and protecting water resources are consistent with coastal policies dealing with public access, water dependent and water enhanced recreation, recreational use of fish and wildlife resources, and water resource quality. The strategy of encouraging waterfront development that is water-dependent and provides public access directly promotes coastal policies. Potential conflicts exist, however, with regard to impacts of developing access. For instance, dredging in coastal waters

to improve or maintain boating access must not significantly interfere with natural coastal processes, must avoid causing increases in erosion, and must protect aquatic habitats. Natural protective features such as dunes and bluffs must be protected from development encroachments. Extensive planning is necessary where potential access sites would require erosion protective structures so as to minimize increases in erosion or flooding on site or elsewhere, and to determine whether public benefits of outweigh long-term monetary and other costs.

Policy: Apply research techniques and management practices to improve and expand parks and other open spaces.

Such activities as basic information gathering, research and planning must take place to support the achievement of other policies and objectives. This policy is no less important than protection and preservation of resources since only through an adequate information base and proper planning can such protection be assured.

In meeting long-term development strategies, it is important to identify and implement short-term action programs. For instance, there is a recognized need to develop master plans over the coming years for many more state parks, but an action plan will advance this effort over the next few years and identify specific parks and level of planning effort needed. Long term development can be accomplished within those parks for which appropriate planning and environmental review processes have been completed or are underway. The remainder of the long-term potentials can be progressed after completion of needed plans. Another tool for accomplishing needed planning, particularly with respect to new facilities, is Interim Management Guide. An IMG is intended to provide guidance regarding use and resource protection on a short-term basis until a master plan can be

completed. Other types of plans, such as invasive species management plans, can also be progressed as needed. A more effective master planning process will thus be advanced.

The strategy to develop master and management plans for parks, recreation, natural, historic and cultural areas recognizes the potential for substantial adverse environmental effects due to the lack of proper planning. Deficiencies in resource inventories can result in damage to significant resources, and overuse due to unknown resource capacity. Without adequate knowledge of resources, facility design and park operations may be inadequate to assure resource protection. The absence of planning may result in otherwise unnecessary environmental reviews of individual projects. This can duplicate previous efforts resulting in delays of project implementation.

Continued emphasis will be placed on GIS and accompanying resource inventories necessary to supply an adequate database. Program areas of particular importance, such as information from the Natural Heritage Program on habitats in State Parks, have been incorporated into this system. Use of GIS is enabling agencies to make better decisions based on more comprehensive resource information.

Research and analysis of new forms of leisure activities is important to anticipate recreation trends, as well as potential impacts on resources. New activities often center around new or modified equipment such as personal watercraft. These activities may place additional pressure on public lands and waters, competing with other existing activities and often causing user conflicts. It is important to recognize that new or modified activities will continue to be developed, and to be aware of what is needed to accommodate such uses in an appropriate manner. There is a need for research regarding recreational demands and potential impacts,

and also planning to minimize user conflicts and adverse impacts to resources.

Public participation in planning activities is discussed under the "Improve cooperation and coordination..." policy. Surveys are essential tools to assure public participation in planning and research efforts. Public meetings can assist greatly in providing the public with information about such efforts, and gaining important feedback to improve planning and research.

Recreation research is needed to improve service delivery. Such issues as new forms of recreation or equipment, and implications for management and environmental impacts are important in identifying future needs.

By developing park management information systems, administration of park programs and projects will be more effective. These systems provide for continuous updating of information related to recreational needs and facilities, assessment of the effectiveness of programs and facilities, and the reevaluation of goals and policies. There is a focus on factors such as cost effectiveness, user satisfaction and preferences. Information gathered can also assist in evaluating the impacts of park, recreation and preservation programs on communities as well as in evaluating the effectiveness of programs to preserve threatened natural and cultural resources. Consideration of intrinsic values of resources in cost/benefit analyses is an important element of this strategy which recognizes values beyond direct economic implications.

Innovative management practices should be encouraged; particularly those which help preserve and protect natural and cultural resources. Recognizing technological advances will promote taking advantage of opportunities that the internet, GIS, and other electronic media have to offer in providing access by the public and professionals to information on facilities, activities

and research at park, recreational and cultural resource areas. An example of GIS information used to provide information is a map program on OPRHP's web site that allows users to locate a park or site on a map and thereby plan their trips. Support should be provided to increase the availability of information available through agency web sites. The extension of electronic media in providing services, such as for interpretation, should also be encouraged.

Encouraging public/private partnerships that are compatible with the natural, cultural and recreational resources is a strategy that can be used effectively in meeting the goals of State Parks and Historic Sites. Partnerships are used in all aspects of facility and resource management and operation. Also refer to the discussion on private sector involvement under the cooperation and coordination policy. Increased use of partnerships for such purposes as data gathering and research will help promote other goals, such as to preserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

Developing technical documents on various recreational facilities fulfills a recognized need to provide more detailed guidance and standards to agencies and interest groups on development, management and operation of such facilities as camping and trails. These technical documents are a collaborative effort of key agencies and organizations to assemble relevant information and recreation research needs in these use areas. Methods are included within technical documents to avoid or mitigate environmental impacts of development and the use of the subject facilities.

There are four new action strategies under this policy in the 2008 SCORP reflecting newly established state programs regarding invasive species and ecosystem-based management. GIS database and clearinghouse and a research institute regarding invasive

species will implement recommendations contained in the ISTF report, now being implemented through the ISC and the Office of Invasive Species in DEC. An ocean and coastal resources atlas which will make information available to the public and decision makers is part of the ecosystem-based management initiative under the New York Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Council. Information sharing and a research agenda are also needed, not just for coastal resources, but on a statewide basis regarding recreational, natural and cultural resources to inform ecosystem-based management decisions and enhance ecosystem management capabilities.

The use of these applied research techniques and management programs are supportive of coastal policies. Proper inventory, research, analysis and planning are all necessary for effective programming in coastal areas that is compatible with resource values, and advance achievement of ecosystem-based coastal management.

Resource Stewardship and Interpretation

Policy: Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources.

This policy is imperative to carrying out the State's stewardship responsibilities. Protection of the State's resources is critical in providing opportunities to use those resources and maintain quality recreation.

The first strategy under this policy is to ensure that recreation development is compatible with environmental limitations and carrying capacities of resource areas. This is accomplished through the various review processes previously discussed. It is important to note, however, that better resource information is necessary to identify limitations and carrying capacities, as discussed under another action strategy.

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With regard to acquisition of open space resources, this action strategy is consistent with the Open Space Conservation Plan. The overall impact of supplying open space where it is most needed is beneficial; however, careful consideration, planning and public cooperation is necessary. Preservation of open space in metropolitan areas is important, since these are areas with high populations and limited open space opportunities. The strategy also responds to an environmental justice issue.

Another strategy is acquisition of in-holdings and important properties adjacent to existing public landholdings. Acquisition of such properties is normally cost effective, since operational mechanisms are already in existence. If additional land is acquired for the purpose of new recreational development, careful analysis is necessary to assure that the new facilities are needed and that development will be compatible with existing resources. The impacts of acquisition were addressed within the 2006 Open Space Conservation Plan.

Responsible stewardship of plants, animals and their habitats reflects the broad duties of protectors of open space to be caretakers of the biological resources under their jurisdiction. This strategy is accomplished through the various programs described in Chapters 4, 7 and 9. The strategy recognizes that species and their habitats need to be protected, which may not always require management.

The strategy for the use of non-fee acquisition techniques for scenic and historic property has proven to be a useful tool for resource protection as endorsed in the Open Space Conservation Plan. Such actions as transfer of development rights, acquisition of easements for protection of resources, tax incentives (e.g., for historic preservation efforts), and zoning and subdivision regulations on a local level can accomplish much to preserve open

space and other resources while limiting investment which would be needed for fee acquisition. Implementation of open space programs certainly contributes to the overall policy of preserving and protecting natural and cultural resources.

Efforts of the Natural Heritage Program and the BRI and its funded research provide more informed bases for decisions regarding stewardship of biological resources. Informed management is not possible without adequate resource inventory and evaluation in order to properly identify important resources. Inventory and evaluation of natural and cultural resources has been supported but requires additional focus and resources. DEC has been a leader in inventory and identification of resources such as wetlands, significant habitat, and threatened and endangered species. Through the federal Historic Preservation Fund administered by NPS, Heritage Areas program funding and other historic preservation programs, the identification and evaluation of cultural resources throughout the State has been possible.

The protection and maintenance of biodiversity is also being advanced through the BRI as discussed in Chapter 7. Partnership efforts regarding invasive species policy and management and education efforts will also enhance awareness and sensitivity to the impact of invasive species and result in measures to reduce the effect of such species and enhance biodiversity.

The Natural Heritage Program inventory of state parks is the first comprehensive biological inventory of the entire State Park System. This inventory provides information critical to the protection of the many sensitive and rare environmental resources in state parks. It also allows for more sensitive siting and efficient design to locate projects away from sensitive resources. This inventory information also provides resource information that is incorporated

into the environmental and interpretive programming within State Parks.

A new strategy in the 2008 SCORP, identifying and protecting biodiversity "hot spots" and expanding protection of habitat corridors and buffer areas were discussed in Chapter 5. These efforts will further biodiversity identification and protection in the state.

Compliance with state and federal environmental regulations and restoring environmentally sensitive areas adversely impacted by past practices reflect a commitment to carrying out the provisions of environmental audit legislation enacted in 1987 and strengthened since then to include compliance plans and incorporation into five-year capital plans. The Environmental Audit Law has directly contributed to addressing noncompliance with Environmental Conservation Law by state agencies due to failing or improperly designed facilities. Significant amounts of funds from the EPF have been allocated to address agency noncompliance.

The strategy regarding compliance includes historic preservation regulations and guidelines. The National and State Historic Preservation Acts require review of state and federal projects that may cause any change in the quality of historic and cultural properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In New York State, the Commissioner of OPRHP is responsible for conducting such reviews. The Commissioner also reviews state agency actions affecting properties eligible for the State Register. OPRHP review of federal and state actions includes evaluation of projects to assure that the projects meet the US Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and Guidelines for Rehabilitation of Historic Buildings, as well as guidelines for new construction compatible with historic properties.

In addition to allowing for more sensitive siting and efficient design to locate projects away from sensitive

resources, the management recommendations of the Natural Heritage reports identify areas that may have been impacted by past practices that could be restored. Related to past practices or impacts of land use is the proliferation of invasive species. A strategy has been added in 2008 to prepare a comprehensive invasive species management plan. This plan, to be developed under the guidance of the newly established ISC and Office of Invasive Species, will ensure that New York State is fully prepared to prevent and combat invasive species, which will further enhance biodiversity in the state.

Identifying threats to natural, cultural and recreational resources assists in preservation efforts by anticipating potential adverse impacts. Improved resource inventories and evaluation help identify those important resources that may be impacted by actions occurring outside or within recreation resource bounds.

SCORP objectives with regard to resource protection are consistent with, and promote, a number of coastal policies identified in the Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act, the State's CMP. Open space programs promote coastal policies dealing with preservation, recreational use of fish and wildlife resources, public access and water recreation. Significant coastal fish and wildlife habitats can be identified through inventory and evaluation and protected through acquisition and compatible development. These habitats can be restored and preserved through improved stewardship of plant and animal species and their habitats, promotion of biodiversity, compliance with environmental regulations, and restoration of areas adversely impacted by past practices. Scenic resources in the coastal area are among the resources to be protected; in some cases these are natural (e.g., geological resources such as Niagara Falls), in others, man-made (e.g., Montauk Point lighthouse). The protection of coastal

scenic areas can be enhanced through the designation of Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance under the State's CMP. Significant historic, archeological and cultural resources will continue to be protected, enhanced and restored through ongoing programs, such as the State Historic Sites System, funding of historic preservation and Heritage Area projects, as well as a commitment to improved inventory and evaluation of cultural resources. Ensuring facility development that is compatible with environmental limitations is consistent with flooding and erosion hazard policies which recognize coastal processes and the value of natural protective features including beaches, dunes, bluffs and barrier islands.

Policy: Support compatible recreation and interpretive programs.

Environmental interpretation is essential to instill an environmental ethic in our society. Preservation and protection of natural and cultural resources will be ineffective without an awareness of the value of, and proper techniques for, preserving and protecting these resources. Proper training in providing interpretation and education is important in furthering the first action strategy.

The action strategy regarding outreach and technical assistance is also necessary to deliver meaningful recreational and interpretive opportunities. State programs in these areas must be made available at the local level to be truly effective.

A new action strategy in the 2008 SCORP, preparing a state park facility environmental interpretation plan, is consistent with OPRHP's environmental education initiative. A broad plan is needed to include staffing, training, infrastructure and cooperation with partners. OPRHP has often partnered with other key education/interpretive agencies, such as DEC and the Adirondack

Park Agency, and such partnerships will be further developed and expanded.

While youth camp experiences will be encouraged and supported, continued efforts will be made to make these facilities more cost effective. Financial and operational support of user groups is encouraged. It is also important that an environmental education component of youth camp programs be provided to promote an awareness of the value of natural, cultural and recreational resources and to minimize adverse effects on those resources by the users.

The strategy to encourage various forms of organized athletic competition recognizes the success and importance of such programs as the Empire State Games to many segments of the State's population. In addition, the Empire State Senior Games and Games for the Physically Challenged have widened participation in organized competitions which instill pride and a sense of accomplishment to those involved. Various other athletic competitions are held in State Parks or are cosponsored by OPRHP, such as marathons, golf tournaments and the New York State Special Olympics. The impacts of these special events are usually of a temporary nature, and sites chosen are particularly well suited for gathering of large groups of people (e.g., well developed, few resource limitations). Site selection must continue to be sensitive to limitations of park facilities and resources, and to potential impacts on neighboring communities in terms of traffic, security, noise and other considerations. Early communication and coordination with communities is an absolute necessity.

There are other important considerations in the provision of interpretive and recreational programs. These programs must be geared towards availability to all potential users: the disabled, underprivileged and other underserved populations. Without properly qualified and trained personnel, recreational and interpretive programs may

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be inappropriate and ineffective. OPRHP must also take the lead in assisting other agencies to enhance recreational and interpretive programs. It must be noted that all of these actions necessitate a commitment of funds and personnel to interpretation and recreation.

OPRHP and DEC continue to provide important interpretive opportunities, and interpretation of significant natural and cultural resources will be encouraged at a statewide level. As indicated previously, opportunities for natural and cultural resource observation, interpretation, and education are essential to provide users with an awareness of the value of those resources. This, in turn, creates new generations with a greater appreciation of the need to preserve our resources.

Identifying and encouraging the creation and preservation of greenway systems connecting significant habitat areas also promotes uses compatible with those resources, provided that connectivity, as discussed in Chapter 5, is preserved in providing recreational uses of the greenway systems.

Interpretive programs, opportunities for observation, and educational uses are relatively passive uses and usually require limited capital construction, thereby further ensuring resource protection. In certain cases, investments in interpretive centers may be warranted. Where interpretive structures are needed, priority is given to sensitive adaptive reuse of existing structures, if available, to limit the need for new construction. Providing direct access for interpretive purposes may affect the very resources to be interpreted. Where access to resources such as wetlands is necessary, design of trails must be cognizant of environmental protection.

Another strategy new to the 2008 SCORP is to reconnect people with nature through education and interpretive programs, which will empower the public with a greater role in, and

involvement in, environmental protection and sustainability. This is critical as discussed in the beginning of this policy discussion. Losing touch with nature around us makes us forget its value and dampens the desire to protect it. Connection to nature among the young, and new connections or reconnections among adults, will increase not only awareness but prompt action on the part of citizens to protect the environment and promote sustainable actions.

Also new to this SCORP is to establish a comprehensive education and outreach effort regarding invasive species. This comprehensive plan was recommended by the ISTF as a critical component of a strategy for controlling invasive species. This plan will be developed jointly by the Department of Agriculture and Markets and DEC, as cochairs of the ISC, and with full participation by all member agencies as well as the Invasive Species Advisory Committee to be formed by the ISC as described in Chapter 7.

The action strategy regarding the New York State Museum's system of interactive computer kiosks has been expanded to include other exhibits and to provide information on important natural and cultural resource issues. Since the Museum houses the BRI, the Museum is the perfect venue for promoting an understanding of biodiversity. As an example of an exhibit focusing on important resource issues, the Museum is developing a major invasive species exhibit for 2008-09 that will explain invasive species, their impacts on biodiversity, and provide real world examples that people can relate to.

Compatible recreation and interpretive programs generally do not adversely impact coastal areas and are thus consistent with coastal policies. Such actions as interpretive programs promote recreation policies and recreational use of fish and wildlife resources. Site specific review should be conducted as applicable to assure that

the manner in which recreation and interpretive programs are provided will be consistent with coastal policies.

Creating Connections beyond the Parks

Policy: Develop comprehensive recreationway, greenway and heritage trail systems.

Greenways combine open space initiatives with recreationway and trails programs. These efforts are described in Chapter 5.

It is appropriate that emphasis be given to metropolitan areas and water and other corridors, since these are the areas of the greatest activity and interest. Trail and greenway systems can be expanded through conventional means like acquisition, but emphasis should also be given to managing existing corridors to take advantage of use potential, as well as encouraging involvement of municipal governments such as through grants programs.

An interconnecting system of trails, recreationways and greenways will increase trail opportunities and accessibility.

Developing and maintaining trails will require partnerships between federal, state and local governments, not-for-profit organizations, trail groups and private landowners. Various SCORP action strategies previously discussed, particularly with regard to implementation of the Open Space Conservation Plan and use of fee and non-fee acquisition techniques, as well as communication and coordination discussed later in this section, relate to the strategy to encourage partnerships in development and maintenance of trails. Such partnerships should include all potential trail users.

The Canal Recreationway System seeks to preserve a system of existing linear open space corridors, and

encourages passive uses, environmental education, and historic interpretation.

The use of transportation and utility corridors to extend trail systems can be beneficial to the multiple-use concept. Such corridors lend themselves naturally to the development of trails; they are nearly ready-made facilities with little need for additional development. Where these corridors are still in use for their primary purposes, recreational use must not conflict with those purposes. Examination of potential health and safety risks of high voltage lines must be included in evaluation of utility corridors for recreational purposes. DOT's programs to enhance transportation corridors with such facilities as trails and bikeways were described in Chapter 7, and are promoting energy efficiency and health in addition to recreational opportunities.

Chapter 5 described the importance of volunteers in the development and maintenance of trailways. Volunteer participation must continue to be encouraged to provide the greatest possible service with limited dollars.

As described in Chapter 5, state and federal agencies provide technical assistance in a variety of ways. Planning assistance is provided by various state agencies and programs such as the LWRP process. Coordination is provided through the New York State Trails Council which has been expanded.

Protection and maintenance of biodiversity was discussed elsewhere in this chapter. The resource base provided by trail corridors was discussed in Chapter 5. Greenway systems thus contribute to biodiversity, and their importance in connecting significant habitat areas should be taken into consideration in system plans.

As described in Chapter 7, the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers System is designed to preserve rivers in free-flowing condition, and to protect their

environs for future generations. The program recognizes the outstanding resource values, including natural, scenic and recreational, possessed by many river areas in the State. The regulations provide for the management, protection, enhancement and control of land use and development in designated river areas. The interests of landowners in the enjoyment and use of their properties is protected and enhanced to help insure that recreation and other uses are consistent with preservation of the designated rivers. Additional segments can be proposed for inclusion on the list.

Trails have the ability to promote the heritage of the State through interpretation. These Heritage Trails can be linked by motorized and non-motorized trails. In many cases, the story that needs to be told occurs over an extended area that can only be linked by a trail. Heritage Areas are implemented through management plans developed at the local level with technical assistance from the State. The SEQR process is one of the tools used in providing public input and agency coordination in planning and project implementation.

The policy to develop comprehensive trail systems is consistent with, and advances coastal policies. Such systems assist in protecting and increasing the levels and types of access to public water-related recreation resources and facilities. The greenway concept promotes water dependent and water enhanced recreation, as well as preservation of historic and cultural resources (through such programs as Heritage Trails). This is accomplished while providing primarily passive uses and minimizing effects related to intensive development. Recreationways along shorelines promote coastal policies with regard to development, scenic quality, public access, and recreation.

Policy: Protect natural connections between parks and open space areas

This is a new policy to the 2008 SCORP, and it reflects the importance of natural connections to the maintenance and enhancement of biodiversity. We must ensure that landscapes and buffer lands that surround our parks are protected from encroaching development and incompatible land uses. We should foster the development of "connections" of protected lands, greenways, and trails so that people and wildlife can move across New York's landscapes. In order to protect these natural connectors, it is important first to inventory and identify the ecosystems that should be connected, and then to encourage the protection and/or acquisition of critical connectors. One way in which this policy will be promoted is through a BRI grant to identify and prioritize land parcels adjacent to State Park land suitable for acquisition based upon their potential to protect and enhance biodiversity. Refer to "hot spots" discussion under "Preserve and protect natural and cultural resources."

This policy furthers coastal policies regarding protection of fish and wildlife resources. Also, through careful balancing of protection and use of these corridors as discussed in Chapter 5, recreation and public access policies can be advanced as well.

Policy: Improve cooperation and coordination between all levels of government and the private sector in providing recreational opportunities and in enhancing natural and cultural resource stewardship.

Since promoting the policy of cooperation and coordination is integral to the success of implementing other policies, implementation of this policy must take place in all SCORP programs.

Communication and coordination among recreation providers needs to be constantly improved in order to minimize duplication of effort. This in turn will maximize recreational facilities

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and services provided, while lowering overall costs of providing recreation at various levels of government and by the private sector. OPRHP and other agencies include coordination with other recreation providers in planning for recreational facilities and programs at public recreation sites.

Facilitating citizen participation in planning and development activities is integral to such efforts as facility planning, which must involve contributions from the general public, interest groups and other agencies. This should include such strategies as public meetings, scoping and hearings as needed to provide input on issues that will affect the public. Technological advances such as teleconferencing and webcasts should be used whenever possible to increase the effectiveness of public involvement efforts. Regional Advisory Committees (RACs) established under the open space planning process provide an example of continuing public involvement in major issues. Such citizen participation efforts, and those relating to projects of a smaller scope, have resulted in better plans, programs and projects which are more easily implemented by virtue of more thorough, up-front planning and general consensus on what is to be carried out.

The policy of improving recreation for underserved populations is an important function of OPRHP as the agency primarily responsible for guiding the provision of recreation in the State. This also relates closely to the action strategy to improve communication and coordination among recreation providers.

The next strategy reflects opportunities to develop partnerships between recreational, historic and cultural facilities with colleges, universities and other educational institutions. These efforts can respond to the needs of each cooperator. Both the facility and the educational institution benefit

through products developed under the partnerships.

There are many State Parks and Historic Sites that could be utilized more fully if information on them were more readily available. Many people do not realize that some of these facilities even exist. Likewise, support for dissemination of information on available programs is needed for this strategy to be effective.

Support of urban recreation initiatives is a SCORP strategy which responds to the needs of urban areas. In order to provide new opportunities in urban areas, creative use must be made of existing school, community, and park facilities. Outreach, encouragement of public transportation to distant parks, facilitation of pedestrian access and coordination with community groups are all necessities for successful urban recreation programs. Through environmental interpretation and other programs, better use can also be made of urban open space to create an awareness of important natural resources even within the confines of urban areas. Urban recreation programs such as concerts, sports clinics, etc. are generally cost effective, involving limited new facility needs, and promote energy conservation.

The idea of developing a public constituency for parks and recreation continues to grow. This constituency results in increased support for parks and recreation and improved relations with the public.

The State is committed to encouraging innovative partnerships in protection, stewardship, and provision of natural, cultural and recreational resources. Cooperative agreements provide an excellent mechanism for coordination of effort. Coordination among agencies on all governmental levels is necessary, as well as with private organizations involved in providing recreational and open space opportunities.

Effective zoning, such as waterfront zoning discussed under water-oriented recreation, and through such programs as LWRPs or historic districts, is a useful tool for resource protection and enhancement. Support for technical assistance is necessary to assure that such zoning is not only effective, but carried out so as to protect the rights of landowners.

Consistency among programs at various levels of government is important to assure protection of resources, and also relates to the first action strategy under this policy.

Encouragement of private sector involvement is important for continuance and enhancement of recreation and preservation which might not otherwise be possible. OPRHP guidelines for public/private partnerships are provided in Chapter 9. These guidelines were developed in the context of the Agency's mission and were thus designed for consistency with the stewardship aspect of the mission. As discussed in that section, the guidelines could be adapted by other agencies. Proper guidance can be given by working closely with private sector providers. Involvement of outside organizations can help agencies address conservation and habitat management issues, thus serving other action strategies.

Conservation and youth service corps such as the Student Conservation Association (SCA) program continue to enhance the preservation of recreational, natural and cultural areas. The SCA has partnered with DEC and OPRHP for a number of years to enhance open space and parklands, particularly within the Hudson River Estuary area, as well as to provide meaningful experiences for corps members.

Two strategies under this policy have been added to SCORP 2008. Facilitating regional coordination and cooperation to address complex resource issues which cross political and jurisdictional

boundaries will enhance ecosystem-based management and promote the ability of New York State to respond to regional or global issues such as climate change. Supporting the functions of grass-roots partnerships around the State to ensure prevention and rapid response to new invasive species is a specific example of a complex issue crossing jurisdictional boundaries. The PRISMs discussed in Chapter 7 bring together all the involved entities while pulling in volunteers and increasing understanding of invasive species.

The Natural Heritage Trust and legislative initiatives provide excellent mechanisms for local governments, not-for-profit organizations, as well as state agencies in providing preservation and recreation functions which also otherwise might not be possible.

Nontraditional providers of community recreation, such as schools and developers of residential or commercial facilities, can help fill local gaps in terms of recreational deficiencies. Cooperation and coordination with such potential providers is therefore of great importance in carrying out SCORP.

At all levels of government, volunteer organizations assist in maintenance of such recreational facilities as trails, group camps and athletic fields. Continued and increased assistance by volunteers should be encouraged to help maintain and expand recreation delivery where possible. Proper supervision and guidance of volunteers by regular park staff is absolutely necessary, however, to assure consistent maintenance standards and protection of natural and cultural resources.

All of the cooperation and coordination strategies are supportive of coastal policies. LWRPs and Historic Maritime are examples of the types of cooperative efforts undertaken in the coastal area. Other cooperative programs already discussed, such as trail efforts

and PRISMs can also promote coastal policies.

Sustainability

Policy: Employ ecosystem-based management to ensure healthy, productive and resilient ecosystems which deliver the resources people want and need.

New to SCORP 2008, this policy responds to the initiative of the Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act, but also broadens it to apply statewide within the SCORP umbrella. This policy recognizes that ecosystems do not recognize man-made boundaries. Ecosystem-based management was explained in Chapter 4 under Stewardship and the governing principles of coastal ecosystems listed in Chapter 7 (DOS). Ecological health and integrity relates to sustainability, discussed under the next policy. It is imperative that decisions be informed by sound science that recognizes ecosystems and their interconnections between land, air and water. When risks to ecosystems are uncertain, caution is essential. Understanding of coastal systems as well as ecosystem-based management should be promoted. This links back to interpretive programs discussed earlier, and is needed for agencies and the public to be empowered to protect ecosystems.

This policy promotes coastal policies as well as the intent and requirements of the Ocean and Great Lakes Ecosystem Conservation Act. The policy is the first step in incorporating ecosystem-based management into programs and activities of not only OPRHP, but of recreation providers throughout the state.

Policy: Improve and expand the statewide commitment toward environmental sustainability in all parks, recreation and historic sites and support facilities.

Another new policy in 2008, this reflects a commitment for State Parks to be a leader in demonstrating "green technologies." An agency-wide sustainability initiative to adopt energy efficient technologies, green building design, fuel efficient vehicles, and green products procurement will provide a framework for similar efforts by other recreational providers. Seventeen action strategies to promote this policy have been identified. These strategies are relatively self-explanatory within the context of the concepts discussed in Chapter 6. While all of these strategies are important to promoting sustainability, the one that reaches beyond OPRHP is the strategy to incorporate criteria into recreational grant/project rating systems that provide additional credits/points for incorporating the use of sustainable design and green technologies.

Trends, Issues and Needs

The goal of measuring the supply of recreation in the State, estimating the needs of the citizenry and projecting this information in the future is met through the processes described in Chapter 3. The results provide an objective framework for the evaluation of future impacts upon the recreation system, as well as provide guidelines for the allocation of recreation resources. By continuing to improve communication and coordination among public and private recreation providers, an action strategy within this SCORP discussed earlier, the information network on recreation supply can continue to improve. Inventories and analyses will be furthered by ongoing uses of GIS and other technologies.

While information is generated on supply and demand, it can also be used in evaluating the impact of recreational use on the environment, particularly whether a facility is being used within its capacity or exceeding proper use levels.

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As described in Chapter 3, three primary surveys are used in estimating recreational demand which provide the means for input by the general public, park professionals and park visitors. In some cases, balance is needed between professional judgment of recreational needs and actual desires of the public for additional facilities. Park professionals may be biased by such aspects as maintenance concerns for swimming facilities, whereas park visitors and the general public may not recognize such maintenance costs or possibly environmental costs associated with new intensive recreational facilities.

As in the past, this SCORP recognizes that urban recreation needs are a major component of the State's total recreational need. While urban areas still have the greatest need for active recreation, there will be greater need in or near urban areas for more nature-based recreation such as camping, hiking and winter sports. Changing populations and ethnic diversity are also recognized. As indicated in Chapter 2 due to demographic changes, activities with high entry costs, such as golf and downhill skiing, will decrease in total participation. Such activities also have a greater tendency to cause adverse environmental impacts compared to other activities such as trail uses. There will also be an increase in trail uses such as biking, and for cultural activities such as historic sites and museums. There will be a need for non-fuel activities due to pressures on energy supplies. Generally, there will be a trend towards recreational uses that will have less intensive impacts. Providing recreational opportunities at the local level will be subject to local review processes, including SEQR if applicable.

Camping may include resource-intensive development, especially due to an increased demand for recreational vehicle (RV) camping facilities which usually require paving and higher capacity water and sewer (or pump-out) facilities. Even tent camping can result

in impacts due to overuse and compaction of soil. There is a need for additional research on campground impacts and development of alternative development methodologies to minimize the adverse impacts of campground development.

Winter activities involve a range of impacts, from low-intensive snow shoeing to more intensive downhill skiing and snow boarding. The latter activities will continue to be provided primarily by the private sector, with a likely emphasis on expansion or redevelopment of existing facilities due to costs and approval processes. Provision for comfort stations and warm-up facilities for lower intensive outdoor activities such as skating is important; such facilities must be provided in an environmentally sensitive manner.

Trail activities include some winter sports such as cross-country skiing. An emphasis should be placed on small, localized facilities to minimize the extent of development required and to best meet the needs of users who are seeking areas close to home. Walking and hiking are also popular trail activities. These generally involve low intensity development, and are usually provided on public lands. Cross-country ski areas can be adapted for summer trail use, or vice versa. Registered snowmobiles have been on the decline. It is expected that energy pressures will continue to decrease the use of snowmobiles unless greater fuel is developed within the industry. ATVs and other off-road vehicles are used by a small percentage of the population and most trails are on private lands. Biking is a favorite of many, young and old, and is expected to increase. Bike trails can be provided in association with improvements in transportation corridors as well as with other trail facilities. Mountain biking can cause conflicts both with other users (such as horseback riders) and with resources when bikers ride off trails. Communication and cooperation among all types of trail users and providers is

necessary, as well as research to enhance resource protection in providing and using trails. These are both identified as strategies in Chapter 2 and were discussed earlier in this section.

Land Conservation and Resource Stewardship

The Open Space Conservation Plan included a GEIS which assessed the impacts of recommendations of the plan. Recreation and open space provide numerous benefits to society, direct and indirect, short-term and long-term. There are both tangible and intrinsic values associated with recreation. These can be characterized as tourism and visitor expenditures, environmental protection, quality of life and reduction in public service requirements. Tourism and economic development programs must take into account the important contribution of natural and cultural resources to these programs.

Adverse impacts identified in the GEIS for the Open Space Conservation Plan were those primarily associated with the development and use of resources acquired for enhanced public access and/or use. Measures to minimize any adverse impacts were identified, such as appropriate design and construction techniques, preparation of master plans or unit management plans based on resource inventories, and a commitment to provide sufficient resources for adequate stewardship. Economic benefits include the anticipated increase in value of adjacent lands and in tourism. Cumulative benefits are associated with the implementation of a comprehensive, coordinated, system approach to the conservation of the State's resources.

The Open Space Conservation Plan included New York's Coastal and Estuarine Land Conservation Program (CELCP) which was established to protect important coastal and estuarine

areas, and discussion of consistency with coastal policies was also included in the plan.

Stewardship of the state's natural, cultural and recreational resources is essential to protect them. Through stewardship programs as described in Chapter 4 as well as in other chapters of SCORP, potential adverse impacts of recreational development and use are minimized and consistency with coastal policies is assured.

Creating Connections Beyond Parks and Open Spaces

Chapter 5 discussed the need to protect biodiversity connections between natural areas and ways in which to promote these connections. Programs to enhance biological connectivity will minimize adverse environmental impacts of development of connections. There is a need, as discussed, to balance resource protection and use through such strategies as environmental planning and education. The critical junction between human activity and natural environment includes our urban parks, greenways, and open spaces. It is in these natural settings that people, during their recreational pursuits, can fully experience – see, smell, touch, taste and hear – and learn about nature. And, it is from these personal and high quality recreational experiences that people will nurture a sense of reverence, connectedness, and stewardship for the natural environment – and thus develop their own environmental ethic.

The focus of the Trails section is to provide statewide direction in the State's network of trails. As discussed in Chapter 5, an update underway to update the Statewide Trails Plan will provide statewide framework for trails and greenways. Such issues as overuse, illegal use, and conflict among user groups and landowners will be considered in development of the plan and

will and promote proper stewardship of trails and associated natural and cultural resources. The goals and actions identified encourage trails that are better designed, more compatible with the natural and cultural resources and more accessible to the public. The goals are considered in the evaluation process for trail grant programs. Site specific environmental reviews are conducted for projects and generic environmental reviews are conducted for statewide plans.

The Greenways section discussed specific greenway programs that are also subject to public review processes and are designed to both promote and protect greenway resources.

Many of the connections discussed in Chapter 5 are coastal resources and are fully integrated with or are part of the coastal program, thus promoting coastal policies related to public access, recreation, historic and scenic resources, as well as natural resources such as fish, wildlife and water.

Sustainability

Sustainability, as described in Chapter 6, strives to create a balance with nature and thus promoting sustainable practices and ecosystem-based management limits adverse impacts on the environment. By incorporating sustainability policies in SCORP, recreation can be provided in a manner that is in harmony with the environment, and coastal policies can be promoted, as previously discussed.

Statewide Programs

Chapter 7 describes numerous programs that provide recreation and protect natural and cultural resources within the state. These programs are subject to environmental review processes and balancing of policies as described earlier in this chapter. This GEIS is not designed to evaluate the impacts of each of these programs. Where

adverse environmental impacts may be significant, the programs are subject to SEQR. Many of the programs described in Chapter 7 are themselves designed to protect resources, such as Heritage Programs, wetlands, fish and wildlife, biodiversity, and coastal programs. Following is a further discussion of the latter and its relationship to SCORP.

The State's Coastal Management and Inland Waterways programs, administered by the Department of State (DOS), are carried out in partnership with local governments and state and federal agencies. These programs are designed to better manage coastal resources and advance revitalization of waterfront communities.

New York State developed a Coastal Management Program (CMP) and enacted implementing legislation (Waterfront Revitalization and Coastal Resources Act) in 1981. The CMP is based on a set of 44 coastal policies that guide coastal management actions at all levels of government in the State and ensure the appropriate use and protection of coasts and waterways. The coastal policies are grouped into the following categories:

- Development Policies
- Fish and Wildlife Policies
- Flooding and Erosion Hazards Policies
- General Safeguards
- Public Access Policies
- Recreation Policies
- Historic and Scenic Resources Policies
- Agricultural Lands Policy
- Energy and Ice Management Policies
- Water and Air Resources Policies

The full text of the coastal policies can be found at: http://nyswaterfronts.com/consistency_coastalpolicies.asp

Decision-making standards and procedures known as "consistency provisions" ensure coordination of governmental decision-making that

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affects the achievement of the State's coastal policies. Consistency review is the decision-making process through which proposed actions and activities are determined to be consistent or inconsistent with the coastal policies of the CMP or approved LWRPs. State agencies are also required to follow certain consistency review procedures for direct or funding actions and for any action, including permits, for which they are an involved or lead agency pursuant to the SEQR and for which an EIS may be necessary.

The CMP was developed in cooperation and with assistance from OPRHP and DEC, and promotes SCORP policies. Consistency of SCORP policies with the CMP is discussed in this chapter under the discussion of the Policy Framework.

State Outdoor Recreation System

As described in Chapter 8, some of the State's most significant natural and cultural assets are contained in State Parks, Forest Preserves, and other lands under OPRHP and DEC jurisdiction. Further, the State provides natural, cultural and recreational opportunities on lands administered by numerous other state agencies and provides environmental and recreation programs in areas beyond the boundaries of state lands. Clearly, stewardship of state lands and continued provision of services to the public are extremely important to the overall provision of open space and recreational opportunities to the public, as well as to the protection of natural and cultural resources in the State.

Nearly 80% of the State Park System is in natural areas with a wide range of geological features, ecological habitats and plant and animal species. The benefits of the system are not only derived by the park visitor but through intrinsic value, knowing the resources exist and are protected. As discussed earlier, there are multiple benefits for the citizens in

protecting natural and cultural resources. Likewise, the resources themselves benefit through public ownership and protection.

Similar to State Parks, the Forest Preserve, State Nature and Historical Preserve and State Forests provide extensive recreational and open space benefits. The Unit Management Planning process addresses resource issues regarding DEC lands and provides specific guidance for wise management. Criteria are set forth whereby additional recreational access can be provided within the limitations of the resources to support such use.

OGS promotes preservation and use of State lands for recreational use by facilitating land transfers to municipalities for such purposes. The lands are perpetually protected by requiring reversion to the State if the specific purpose is no longer pursued. OGS also provides communities with access rights in lands underwater to promote coastal uses. Submerged cultural resource protection is also promoted by OGS in cooperation with other agencies.

Numerous other state agencies that enhance open space and recreation opportunities were also discussed in Chapter 7. Together, state agencies provide a wide range of such opportunities and resources open the public.

Resource Planning for the State Park System

SCORP provides the basis for recreation planning in the State; OPRHP and DEC use it in other planning efforts to provide a unified system. The planning processes of both OPRHP and DEC include land classification systems and facility planning. Successive levels of planning ensue, to specific facility plans and budget planning. These specific plans analyze natural, cultural and recreation resources and evaluate alternative management strategies. Environmental review, as described earlier in this

Chapter, is an important component of the planning process. Individual project planning also incorporates environmental review requirements.

During the 1970s, OPRHP undertook studies and gathered data on a variety of environmental and management factors for each park. This information was the basis for development of a classification system for lands in the State Park System. The concept of this classification system was to identify the capability of parkland to support various park functions, and thus provide guidance for land use and management practices.

Under the New York State Park Land Classification System, (OPRHP, 1980), parks and other recreational facilities within the jurisdiction of OPRHP were grouped together into clusters giving a general indication of those facilities which shared certain types of characteristics. These clusters were then depicted along a scale showing intensive development at one end, and primitive development limits on the opposite end. Metropark, Marine Park, Historic Site, Parkway and Linear Park were all included at the highest development end of the scale. At the opposite end were Park Preserve, Cartop Boat and Fisherman Access, Historic Preserve and Primitive Trailway.

The classification system in the Plan has been updated to reflect changes in classification philosophy. The classification framework shown in Figure 4.8 is a refined matrix from that in the 1980 classification report, and includes DEC classifications to provide a more complete picture of major state recreational facilities. In addition, Environmental Education and Underwater Sites were added as categories. Consideration of the Underwater Historic Preserve category was to accommodate concerns with respect to preservation of shipwrecks and other underwater archeological sites. The addition of an Underwater Reserve category provides for creation of reserves for

significant natural aquatic communities. The components of the classification system (Figure 4.8 and Table 4.1) have been included in past SCORPs and are considered the adopted framework for evaluating the classifications of all State Park facilities contained in the 1980 report. The criteria established in SCORP are used in evaluating classifications for all State Park units.

As new information becomes available or through the master planning process a classification for a facility can also be reevaluated and changed on an individual basis, if appropriate.

The section on OPRHP master planning in Chapter 8 provides a discussion of the need for, and content of, master plans and resource or interim management guides. Adequate staff, time and financial resources are required for proper planning. Facility development decisions cannot be made without all the information needed to make wise decisions benefiting the public while preserving resources. Integral to the decision-making process is review under SEQR which provides a planning framework and mechanism for public input in planning.

The Adirondack and Catskill SLMPs for both the established land classification systems are based on land unit characteristics and their capacity to withstand use. These plans serve to protect and preserve resources by defining conforming and nonconforming uses and providing for removal of nonconforming uses. Similar planning processes for DEC lands outside the Forest Preserve are also subject to public review and involvement.

A Resource Management Group (RMG) in OPRHP, comprised of the technical bureau directors, provides a multidisciplinary and statewide approach to review of capital and other projects affecting agency facilities, programs and policies. RMG provides

recommendations on significant proposals (such as the adoption of a State Park Master Plan) to Executive staff. The group meets every two weeks to coordinate and facilitate the review process.

Through the framework of SEQR, EMB provides guidance regarding mitigation measures in undertaking projects, such as providing erosion and sediment controls or protecting rare plants or animals nearby. Guidance is also provided regarding restoration of disturbed areas. Advice is given concerning the desirability of planting species indigenous to the area (refer also to discussion on invasive plants under Biodiversity in Chapter 4).

Implementation

To fully implement the policy and assessment process, specific and programmatic actions have been outlined in each chapter. The policies and action strategies in Chapter 2 represent one of the cornerstones of the implementation process, translating policies into the delivery of recreation services and protection of natural and cultural resources.

Implementation vehicles such as state and federal funding were listed and discussed in Chapter 9. These programs also help fund actions which implement SCORP policies. Chapter 9 also discusses the allocation of state and federal funds for recreation and open space projects. The policies, needs assessment and program initiatives are translated into criteria for evaluating projects in an objective manner. The system is utilized for various grant programs and other programs under the SCORP umbrella. SCORP guides allocation of funds to areas in greatest need, along with the extent to which they further SCORP policy directions. The rating system is revised on an annual basis to reflect changing priorities and initiatives within the context of the most recent SCORP policies and actions.

The SCORP priority system assures that consideration is given to an appropriate balance of SCORP policies when evaluating and ranking applications for federal and state assistance in acquiring or developing recreation or open space resources. Projects which directly relate or contribute to SCORP or other state programs receive a relatively high priority, and those identified in adopted regional or local plans also receive priority. Protection of ecological, historical and open space resources is another important factor. Negative impacts on these resources would result in a lower rating. Through continuous agency review and input from providers and the public, evaluation assures that a proper balance of policies and fair distribution of monies is achieved.

Chapter 9 also provides a discussion of the types of partnerships which can be utilized in implementation of SCORP policies. Such partnerships and programs play an increasingly important role in providing quality recreation and assuring resource protection. The partnership philosophy is supported throughout SCORP, particularly under the policy to improve cooperation and coordination in providing recreational opportunities and in enhancing natural and cultural resource stewardship between all levels of government and the private sector.

Environmental justice must be an overarching goal in providing recreational facilities and services. Environmental justice, described under DEC programs in Chapter 7, responds to the need to reach underserved communities.

Implementation strategies advance numerous coastal policies, including those related to development, public access and recreation.

Cumulative Impacts

The primary effect of the 2008 SCORP is to promote the policies identified in Chapter 2. These relate to such aspects as increasing coordination; preserving resources, expanding water recreation, recreationways and interpretive programs; and improving maintenance, operation, research and management.

Chapter 3 identifies major recreational needs in all counties of the State). As may be expected the greatest level of need exists within the metropolitan areas of the State, especially in the New York City metropolitan area. Activity maps in Chapter 3 provide an indication of where the highest levels of need exist within the State. Rehabilitation of existing facilities and the acquisition and development of new facilities is required to satisfy this demand. Regional and statewide approaches need to be considered, as well as innovative approaches to make the facilities more accessible. Accomplishing this will have cost and environmental implications. Some of the types of needed recreation facilities will have greater impacts on the environment than others. Trails and informal picnic areas will have less of an impact than swimming pools and ball fields. However, for some sites, such as brownfields, any recreation development will be an environmental improvement. Public health and safety considerations must be incorporated into planning for recreational opportunities.

The cumulative effects of applying the policies and objectives of the 2003 SCORP in a systematic manner will be substantially beneficial. Existing recreational services to the public will be maintained while at the same time protection of natural and cultural resources will be ensured.

Perhaps one of the most important cumulative effects of SCORP is also the least tangible. The implementation of recreational and resource protection programs through the SCORP policies substantially enhances the physical and psychological well being - the quality of life - of the residents of the State.

The furthering of the quality and quantity of recreational services and programs has substantial beneficial effects on economic activity, as well as preservation and recreation opportunities, within affected communities. Implementation of efficiently designed plans for recreational facilities often contributes to the attractiveness of a municipality for investment by businesses. Thus, the facilities and programs flowing from SCORP are an important adjunct to factors leading to economic recovery and development. Growth usually occurs in the State where there is already a sufficient base of tourism, transportation and support services. These existing and recognized centers generally stabilize existing investments and services. Identification of the need for recreational services and facilities is based primarily on existing population and on growth projections. While recreational development in the past occurred on a large scale, such efforts are unlikely to happen again in the foreseeable future. Where new parks are developed in otherwise relatively low developed areas, additional growth may be induced. Most projected recreational development will occur in response to growth.

Application of the goals and policies of SCORP to the development of recreation proposals requires commitment of planning resources. Resources are committed through programs or projects identified within state or federal legislative action or through gifts to the State. SCORP helps determine the priority for use of these committed resources. Implementation of the programs which are guided by SCORP will result in irreversible and irretrievable commitments

of time, funds, and energy resources, but overall the benefits of preservation, stewardship and providing recreation outweigh these commitments.

The policies stated in SCORP will not result in any significant increase in energy consumption associated with recreation activities. On the contrary, several of the policies and action strategies (e.g., emphasis on open space near metropolitan areas and sustainability) will promote reduction in energy consumption by recreation providers and users. These policies should offset increased energy use which would be associated with extension of activity seasons through enclosure of outdoor recreational facilities.

Since SCORP is a general plan, identification of program-specific or site-specific adverse impacts, including those which are unavoidable, will be accomplished during future planning and environmental review of programs and projects. Although specific adverse impacts associated with the application of SCORP policies cannot be identified, adverse impacts may arise when one or a group of SCORP policies are given more emphasis over other policies. Also, while implementation of SCORP policies and objectives will generally promote coastal policies, overemphasis of particular SCORP policies can in turn create potential conflicts with coastal policies. Minimizing the chance of SCORP and other applicable policies conflicting with one another is accomplished through planning, environmental review, public participation and priority rating systems. Adequate resource inventories and master plans are needed, however, to be most effective in planning and environmental review of recreational programs and facilities.

New policies and initiatives within this SCORP, including additional planning, ecosystem-based management and sustainability, will facilitate proper balancing of the SCORP policies and advance environmentally sensitive recreational development and use.