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Re: Gore Mountain Ski Center Classification Comments

On behalf of the Adirondack Mountain Club, I am providing comments on the proposal to reclassify 38.7 acres of the Gore Mountain Intensive Use Area to the Siamese Ponds Wilderness and 29.0 acres of the Vanderwhacker Mountain Wild Forest to Intensive Use, and adopt the proposed management actions **described in DEC's draft amendment to the Gore Mountain Intensive Use Area UMP (Map 3)**. This proposal is Alternative 3 and is the Preferred Alternative.

The Preferred Alternative reflects the minimum reclassification of acreage from Wild Forest to Intensive Use needed to reasonably accommodate the proposed uses described in the draft UMP amendment. Like Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative allows for achievement of recreational connections to the North Creek Ski Bowl, but it avoids the potential for significant adverse impacts to Rabbit Pond raised by Alternative 2. Like Alternative 2, the Preferred Alternative also includes the proposed reclassification of potential Bicknell Thrush habitat from Intensive Use to the Siamese Ponds Wilderness, providing important protection for that habitat.

The Olympic Regional Development Authority argues that through the proposed connections to the Town of Johnsburg Ski Bowl, the Preferred Alternative advances the APSLMP management guideline of modernizing the Gore Mountain ski center **"to the extent physical and biological resources allow."** The proposed reclassification of 29.0 acres from Wild Forest to Intensive Use, accompanied by the draft UMP amendment

describes how the proposed lift and trails would be constructed and managed in conformance with APSLMP Intensive Use guidelines, appears to comply with APSLMP classification and management guidelines for protecting resources by limiting the acreage transferred to the minimum needed to achieve the project objective.

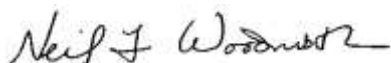
By limiting the lands proposed for reclassification from Wild Forest to Intensive Use to those needed only for the proposed lift and trails described in the draft UMP amendment, the Preferred Alternative minimizes the potential for adverse environmental impacts to sensitive resources like Rabbit Pond. As discussed in the Environmental Setting section of the DSEIS and in the draft UMP, the lands on which the proposed uses would occur should be able to withstand the potential resource impacts. Any impacts that do occur should be further mitigated by strict adherence to the construction and management measures described in the draft UMP amendment.

Alternative 3 would avoid potential impacts to Rabbit Pond, as compared to Alternative 2, and would provide additional resource protection for potential Bicknell Thrush habitat on the top of Gore Mountain. The Rabbit Pond trail needs to be relocated outside of the 29 acres to avoid having this foot trail coincide with alpine ski trails.

The Adirondack Mountain Club strongly asserts that hikers and back country skiers using Forest Preserve trails on Gore Mountain such as the Rabbit Pond and the Schaefer trails should not have to purchase a ski area pass if they are not utilizing a lift.

Thank you for considering the viewpoint of the Adirondack Mountain Club on this re-classification proposal.

Respectfully,



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