

State of Vermont**Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation**

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Lowell Lake State Park Master Planning Update

April 1, 2019

Springfield – The Department of Forests, Parks & Recreation (FPR) has developed a Communication Plan for Master Planning work happening at Lowell Lake State Park. FPR will be providing regular updates on planning work underway to improve timeliness and consistency in information releases, improve accuracy and make planning work clearer.

Lowell Lake State Park was established in 1977 when the former Lowell Lake Lodge property was acquired by the State for access to Lowell Lake. Additional property (the White parcel) was acquired in 1996 with the assistance of the Vermont Land Trust after a private home development on the western shore of the lake received Act 250 permitting but failed to be constructed. Following this acquisition, a two-year long-range planning process was undertaken to complete a General Management Plan, which was adopted in 1999 and included 14 public meetings. Lowell Lake State Park presently encompasses 356 acres and provides opportunities for fishing, picnicking, hiking, swimming and nature observation.

FPR updated the Lowell Lake State Park Long Range Management Plan in 2018 after a two-year process to re-evaluate goals of the original plan and add additional detail. This work included more natural resource inventory, analysis and management actions; and it examined the potential for improvements to infrastructure. As a result of comments received in the long-range planning process, FPR reduced the scope of timber management and engaged in a Master Planning process for the developed area of the park to more thoroughly investigate the feasibility and impacts of day and potential overnight uses. Master planning goals are to thoroughly study current levels of recreational use and existing infrastructure conditions while identifying economically responsible and environmentally sustainable changes and improvements.

FPR contracted with the SE Group of Burlington, Vermont, to conduct the Master Plan beginning in October, 2018. The first in a series of planned public meetings was held in December, 2018 to outline the Master Planning process. Investigative work such as more comprehensive structural and architectural analyses; boater carrying capacity; examination of current day use levels; reviews of the Londonderry Town Plan and zoning ordinance; and life safety and accessibility code, have all been completed. Market analysis for overnight use, life cycle cost analysis and other work is underway. Drafts of working concept plans are in development and will be reviewed soon by the Agency of Natural Resources' (ANR) Springfield Stewardship Team (a group of natural resource professionals from the Departments of FPR, Fish & Wildlife and Environmental Conservation that manage ANR lands) along with members of the DEC Lakes & Ponds program, DEC Wetlands program, Natural Resources Board (Act 250), and additional Fish and Wildlife biologists. The review will be a chance for staff from across ANR and NRB to evaluate concepts for programmatic cohesion and concern which will then be used to finalize the concepts before presenting them to the public.

FPR will present concept plans at a public meeting to be scheduled in early summer. Following the meeting, a lengthy public feedback process will commence using online tools to capture feedback from local, regional and statewide stakeholders, residents and visitors. Three public meetings and a focus group session have been conducted since 2016 on long range and master planning efforts.

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