



**New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Albany, New York 12238
www.nysparks.com

Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor
Rose Harvey
Commissioner

AGENCY DECISION

AND

STATEMENT OF FINDINGS

Adoption of a Master Plan for Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach, and Haverstraw Beach State Parks

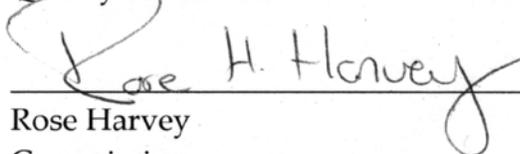
Designation of a Bird Conservation Area

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission have prepared a Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) and Final Master Plan, dated July 10, 2013 for Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach, and Haverstraw Beach State Parks.

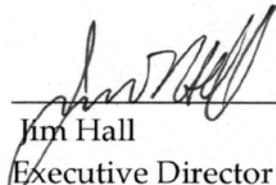
By the authority vested in us in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, we do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan and also designate portions of the parks, as detailed in the Master Plan, a Bird Conservation Area.

Our decision is based on the attached Findings Statement and the content of the FEIS, which have been prepared according to the provisions of Part 617, the regulations implementing Article 8 of Environmental Conservation Law - the State Environmental

Quality Review Act.



Rose Harvey
Commissioner
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and
Historic Preservation



Jim Hall
Executive Director
Palisades Interstate Park Commission

9/24/13

Date

9/16/13

Date

SEQR FINDINGS STATEMENT
Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach, and Haverstraw Beach State Parks
Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS)

September 11, 2013

Pursuant to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act – SEQRA) of the Environmental Conservation Law and 6 NYCRR Part 617, the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), and the Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) as co-lead agencies, have prepared this Findings Statement. These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts and conclusions disclosed in the FEIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic and other considerations and provide a rationale for the agency’s decision.

Title of the Action:

Adoption and Implementation of a Final Master Plan/ FEIS for Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach, and Haverstraw Beach State Parks (Rockland Lake Park Complex or park complex.)

Location:

The Rockland Lake Park Complex is located in the Town of Clarkstown, Rockland County, NY.

Description of the Action:

The Final Master Plan for the Rockland Lake Park Complex (available at <http://nysparks.com/inside-our-agency/master-plans.aspx>) provides long term guidance for the development and management of the parks and protection of its resources as summarized below.

Date of Completion of the FEIS: July 10, 2013

Findings:

1. The Final Master Plan/FEIS was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including a public information meeting and a public hearing.
2. Chapter 5 of the FEIS contains the agency’s responses to comments received on the Draft Plan/DEIS. This chapter also includes clarification of issues raised during the review of the Draft Plan/DEIS and also provides information that has been used in the preparation of the Final Master Plan/FEIS. Through a mailing error comments from the Rockland County Planning Department were received after the close of the comment period. The Final Master Plan/FEIS has been revised to include responses to these comments which were primarily related to improvements and clarifications to the text and a recommendation that OPRHP join the Rockland County Storm Water Management Consortium. A comment letter was received during the Final Plan/FEIS consideration period from the NY Hudson River Valley Greenway. These comments were also incorporated into the revised Comments and Responses chapter. A comment letter was also received from the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation after the Final Plan/FEIS consideration period. These comments primarily concerned clarification of text regarding endangered species and wetlands and outlined state permit requirements related to implementation of the plan. Several relatively

minor changes were made to the plan to address these clarifications and can be found on the aforementioned website.

3. Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach, and Haverstraw Beach State Parks are four physically contiguous state parks that are managed as a complex. Together they encompass 1,943 acres along the western Hudson River shoreline in Rockland County. Additional information on the parks may be found in the plan on the OPRHP website page given above.
4. The vision for the park complex identified in the master plan is that Rockland Lake, Hook Mountain, Nyack Beach and Haverstraw Beach State Parks will continue to provide diverse recreation and education opportunities, and proper stewardship of its natural and cultural resources, while seeking to reconnect park visitors to the Hudson River and the unique history of the riverside parks. These parks will be revitalized by providing new and updated day use facilities in the upland areas, improved access and interpretative opportunities along the riverfront and enhanced stewardship and interpretation of its unique history and natural resources.
5. The plan presents a series of “preferred alternatives” for future development and operation of the Rockland Lake Park Complex. Status quo alternatives were also evaluated for each element of the plan as well as other feasible alternatives. The various preferred alternatives were combined to create a single preferred alternative that best met the long-term vision for the rehabilitation and enhancement of public use facilities and the protection and preservation of cultural and natural resources. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan.
6. The Final Master Plan considers the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the parks and responds to the needs and safety of park patrons, protection of natural, cultural and scenic resources and the principles of sustainability. It also details designations, recreation and stewardship elements. The plan also prioritizes implementation actions and recognizes that implementation will be dependent on the level of public and private funding available to OPRHP in future years.
7. The park complex supports a diverse array of bird life. Following an evaluation of bird data, it was determined that the parks meet six criteria to be designated a Bird Conservation Area. The Bird Conservation Areas (BCA) program is established in Environmental Conservation Law Section 11-2001, and authorizes the designation of BCAs in order to integrate bird conservation into agency planning and management. Under the Master Plan a BCA will be designated within a portion of the Rockland Lake Park Complex. The designation provides recognition on a statewide level relative to other state parks and sites. The BCA designation itself does not preclude existing or future recreation uses or park operations.
8. The Final Master Plan includes natural resource protection and management strategies for water resources, invasive species, scenic vistas and wildlife management. OPRHP will work with the Rockland County Storm Water Management Consortium on storm water management mitigation efforts.
9. The plan calls for the following improvements to recreation and cultural resources:
 - The South Pool Area, parking lot and recreational field area will be expanded and reconfigured into a court and field recreation complex. The entrance area will be redesigned and the parking lot will be paved using porous asphalt and reconfigured to

improve the spacing and sizing of recreational fields and parking lot access. Recreational fields will remain open and available for all allowed uses. The former bathhouse will be converted to a facility which meets the needs of the court and field users, spectators and other day users.

- The North Pool will be rehabilitated. The bathhouse will be redesigned to provide improved services and convenience to park patrons. As part of this redesign, the Program Room and Park Office will be updated to meet current standards. To further improve safety, security and increase enforcement of park policies, the Park Police will have an office in the building.
 - Both the Executive and the Championship Golf Courses irrigation systems will be improved using current design standards to improve irrigation efficiency and reduce the labor and maintenance associated with the current system. Drainage issues will be addressed as needed during construction. Landscaping will be improved where appropriate to improve play.
 - To improve the picnicking in Picnic Area 5, additional shade trees will be planted on the southern portion of that area. Picnic Area 3 will be converted to a reservable picnic area and a covered shelter/pavilion will be constructed for large group use. The South Recreational Area will include additional picnicking including three covered shelters/pavilions and a tree-shaded picnic area.
 - The Final Master Plan calls for the preparation of a cultural resource survey, in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office to provide guidance for the future management and protection of historic structures/ruins. Based on existing information, strategies will be developed in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Office to preserve and stabilize structures that have been determined to be National Register Eligible. The plan also recommends conversion of the current park manager's residence into a Cultural Resource Center and comfort station. Additional interpretive opportunities to provide park visitors with more information about the park's history will be developed.
 - The Master Plan also includes improvements to trails: Storm damaged sections of trails will continue to be assessed and restored; the Rockland Lake Trail will be improved to reduce user conflict and increase safety; the Landing Road Trail will be constructed as a paved multi-use trail connecting Parking Lot 2 to the Long Path; additional signage and blazing will be installed following Trail Signage Guidelines for the New York State (NYS) Park System.
 - The plan also calls for the following additional projects: expansion of the Nature Center and repair of the wetland boardwalk; expansion of the north maintenance area to improve year round operations; aesthetic improvements to storage areas; additional interpretive signage and improvements to park signage; resurfacing roadways; improvements to parking areas, and modernization of utilities.
10. The plan recognizes that implementation of all of the actions will require substantial investment of state funds, along with additional funding from other public and private sources. The implementation of the Master Plan is divided into three priority phases. The

initiation and completion of these priority phases will depend upon funding and demand and will be balanced with the need to make ongoing capital improvements to maintain and rehabilitate the park's roads, bridges, utilities, buildings and infrastructure.

11. The following environmental impacts and mitigation measures associated with the implementation of the plan were identified in the FEIS as follows:

- The plan will result in some physical change and disturbance to land where new construction is proposed, such as the new Landing Road parking area, the South Pool complex reconstruction and golf course irrigation system improvements. Some new projects will be constructed in areas with soil or slope limitations for development, and in these cases special considerations will be given in their design. All projects which involve ground disturbance, whether new or within an existing developed area, will minimize sedimentation and erosion impacts through the use of Best Management Practices.
- The Master Plan calls for improvements to the trail system which are not expected to have negative impacts on land. The goal of all trail work is to have trails that provide access to the resource without adversely affecting it. Sections of existing trails that are currently experiencing erosion will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis and stabilized or realigned to a more sustainable route.
- The Master Plan implementation is expected to have minimal impact to water resources. Several of the natural resource management strategies provide guidance for the future management and protection of Rockland Lake and the park's wetlands, streams and the Hudson River as well. Projects that require permits, such as the new fishing dock at the South Recreational Area or the boardwalk rehabilitation will follow all permit requirements regarding mitigation of potential water quality impacts. Construction involving ground disturbance will use Best Management Practices to mitigate impacts from storm water runoff. Also development near water resources will incorporate buffer areas and features such as bio-swales or pervious pavement to minimize impacts from storm water runoff.
- Limited new development is proposed and therefore direct impacts to biological resources are expected to be minimal. Projects have generally been sited in areas with previous development, limited environmental sensitivity and which generally possess accessibility to and use of existing infrastructure.
- The design for areas that will require vegetative restoration following construction (e.g. Landing Road, North and South Pool Areas) will incorporate native species.
- The designation of a Bird Conservation Area (BCA) will provide added recognition of the importance of the facility for bird habitat, particularly as a migratory concentration site and for species at risk. The plan's natural resource management strategies call for additional protection of important wildlife habitats such as Rockland Lake, wetlands and shoreline areas.
- Control of nuisance Canada geese around heavily used recreation areas has been successful and controls such as egg treatment and hazing will continue. Deer population

levels are adversely affecting the vegetation at the park through over browsing and these impacts will be further examined to allow for informed decision making with regards to future management options or strategies.

- The Master Plan calls for a focused approach to invasive species control to prioritize control efforts so that it can be undertaken in the most effective manner from both ecological and economic perspectives.
- The scenic character of the park complex is a very significant resource of the Hudson Valley and implementation of the Master Plan will result in continued maintenance of the existing scenic vistas. New construction or renovations to existing structures will be designed to complement their surroundings and will not be visually intrusive.
- The Master Plan will have significant beneficial impacts on the many significant cultural resources within the park complex. A Cultural Resource Plan will be prepared to develop strategies to address how to document and protect cultural resources throughout the parks. The adaptive reuse of the park manager's residence as a Cultural Interpretation Center will provide new opportunities for cultural interpretation.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will result in substantial improvements to virtually every aspect of the parks' existing recreational facilities including the rehabilitation/reconstruction of the North Pool and bathhouse, the nature center, picnic areas, the South Recreational Area (formerly the South Pool Area) and golf courses.
- The 1,943 acres of public parkland in the park complex on the Hudson River are an important piece of the region's open space system. The park complex provides significant open space that will continue to be protected under the Master Plan and OPRHP will evaluate and consider acquisition of adjacent open space areas as they become available. It will also monitor any development proposals that may affect the quality of its scenic and open space resources.
- Traffic patterns for the North and South lots will be reconfigured to improve access and circulation patterns and will include permeable overflow parking areas, and improved signage. Additional stacking areas will be provided for vehicles waiting to enter the park to reduce traffic impacts along park roadways and along Route 9W. Overall, the quantity of parking spaces will remain the same. During peak capacity, cars will be directed to park on grass overflow parking areas.
- It is anticipated that implementation of the Master Plan will result in increased use of the park complex. This increased use will be managed to maintain the quality of the natural, scenic and historic resources. The increase is expected to result in positive economic impacts to surrounding communities.
- Health and safety of patrons and staff will continue to be a priority. Sustainability principles and energy efficiency will be incorporated into the design of all proposed construction. Master Plan implementation may result in some temporary increases in noise during construction. Construction is generally scheduled for periods of low park use to minimize impacts to park visitors.

12. As this facility is located within New York's coastal area, the Master Plan was reviewed for consistency with the NY Coastal policies. Based on review of applicable policies, it is OPRHP's determination that the plan will not substantially hinder the achievement of any of the State's coastal policies.
13. The plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review and provides for guidance as to when additional environmental review may be required and identifies the types of actions that are likely to require additional review. These include new actions not addressed with the Final Master Plan/FEIS that are not Type II actions within Part 617, any change from the preferred alternative for recreational and facility elements of the plan that may result in significant adverse environmental impacts and any leases, easements or other agreements between OPRHP and other entities that would affect resources in a manner that is not adequately addressed in the Final Master Plan/FEIS.

Certification To Approve/Fund/Undertake :

Having considered the Draft and Final Environmental Impact Statement and having considered the preceding written facts and conclusions relied on to meet the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617.11, this Statement of Findings certifies that:

- The requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and
- Consistent with social, economic and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is the one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse impacts will be avoided or minimized to the maximum extent practicable by incorporating as conditions to the decision those mitigative measures that were identified as practicable.
- Consistent with the applicable policies of Article 42 of the Executive Law, as implemented by 19 NYCRR Part 600.5, this action will achieve a balance between the protection of the environment and the need to accommodate social and economic considerations.

Cc: Alexander Gromack, Town of Clarkstown
Thomas B. Vanderbeek P.E., Commissioner of Planning, Rockland County
Scott Keller, Hudson River Greenway
Rebecca Crist, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation – Region 3