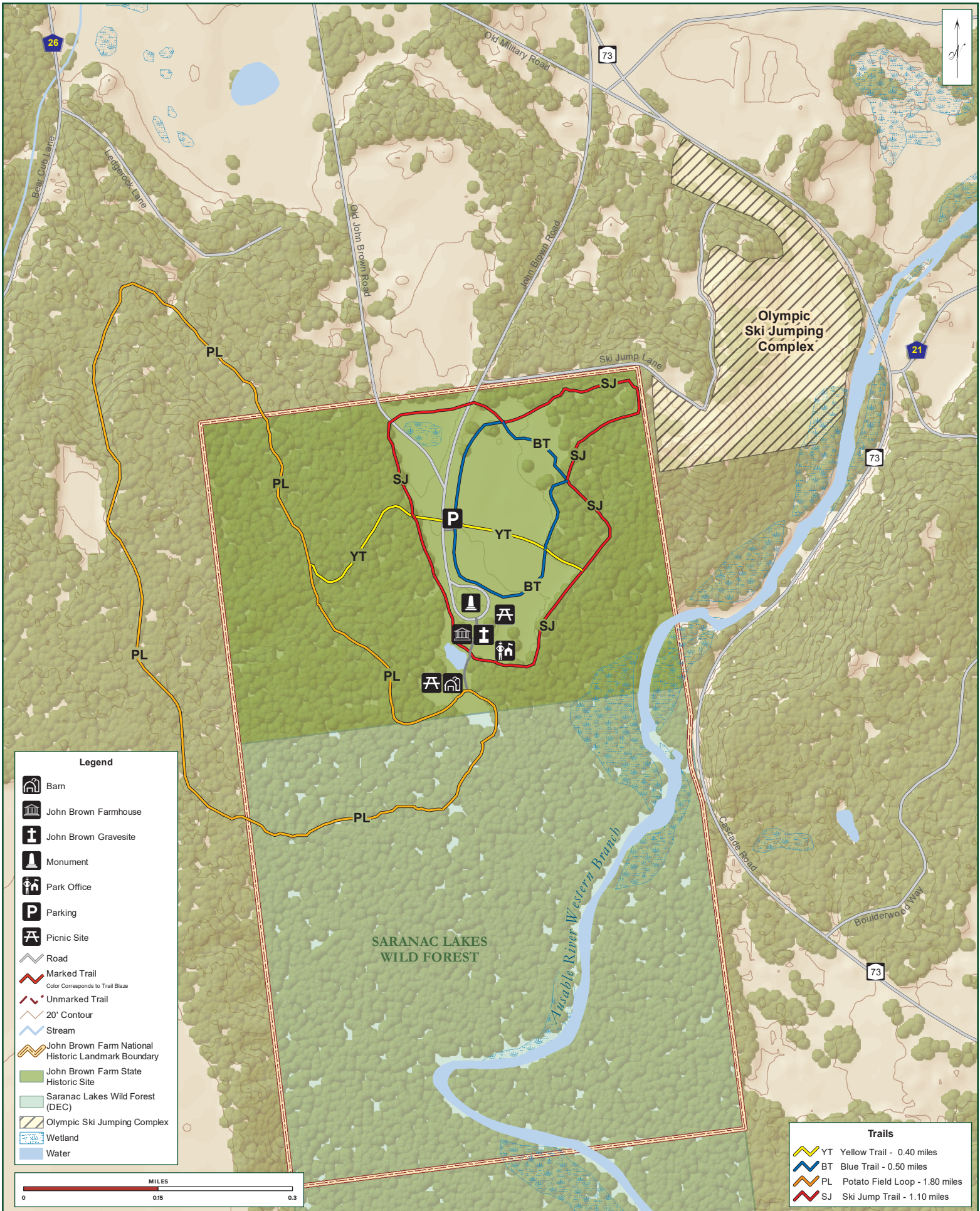


**John Brown Farm State Historic Site**  
**Virtual Public Information Meeting Packet**  
**Draft Unit Management Plan & Draft Environmental Impact Statement**  
 February 8 and 9, 2023



# Site Overview

# John Bown Farm State Historic Site

---

## Public Information Meeting Agenda

1. Introductions and Welcoming Remarks
2. Overview of the Planning Process
3. Overview of John Brown Farm State Historic Site
4. Q&A and Public Comment
5. Next Steps

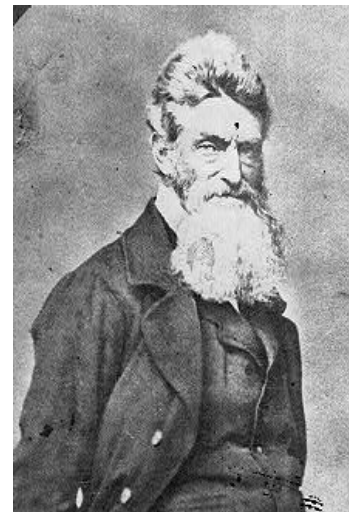
### ***Introduction***

High in the Adirondack Mountains, in North Elba, New York, is the home and final resting place of radical abolitionist John Brown. While Brown is best known for his doomed but daring raid on the United States Armory and Arsenal at Harpers Ferry on October 16, 1859, that singular incident does not capture the full impact of his life. Today, Brown's upstate homestead is open to the public as the John Brown Farm State Historic Site. The Historic Site honors Brown—one of America's most complex and controversial activists—his family, and the broader community of like-minded individuals around them.

Donated to New York State in 1896, the 213-acre Historic Site is administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), Saratoga-Capital Region, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). The memorandum establishes a mutually agreeable division of administrative responsibility over the operation, maintenance, and improvement of the unit. While DEC is the ultimate decision maker with respect to the property's management, OPRHP's expertise in historic site operations and interpretation is essential to ensure proper stewardship of the Historic Site. The site is protected as "forever wild" by Article XIV of the New York State Constitution.

In order to synthesize the Historic Site's management into a single reference document, the OPRHP and DEC will jointly prepare a Unit Management Plan (UMP). The creation of a UMP will allow for the highest level of protection of the Historic Site's cultural, historic, and natural resources and better facilitate public use, education, and enjoyment of the area for generations to come.

The Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP) lists nine possible land classifications for state lands in the Adirondack Park. The lands of John Brown Farm are classified as Historic. The New York State Adirondack Park Agency (APA) is responsible for ensuring the UMP is in conformance with the guidelines and criteria set forth in the APSLMP.



***John Brown***

---

### **Agency Mission Statements**

The mission of the OPRHP is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic, and cultural resources.

The mission of the DEC is to conserve, improve and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being.

The mission of the APA is to protect the public and private resources of the Adirondack Park through the exercise of the powers and duties provided by law. This mission is rooted in three statutes administered by APA in the Park: the Adirondack Park Agency Act; the New York State Freshwater Wetlands Act; and the New York State Wild, Scenic, and Recreational Rivers System Act.

### **Purpose of the Public Information Meeting**

The purpose of this meeting is to invite active public participation and involvement in the UMP planning process from an early stage. Public participation and comment will help OPRHP, DEC, and APA in identifying issues, concerns, and management alternatives at the Historic Site. It will also help determine the extent to which each topic is analyzed within the Draft UMP and its associated Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS).

Meeting participants and all members of the public are encouraged to provide input on how we can best steward, honor, and celebrate John Brown Farm State Historic Site and plan for its future. Comments, suggestions, or concerns will be accepted during the Q&A portion of the Public Information Meetings and through correspondence until **Monday, March 13, 2023**.

To comment electronically:

*JohnBrownFarm.Plan@parks.ny.gov*

To comment by post:

*Paige Barnum, Senior Planner  
OPRHP Planning Bureau  
625 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12207*

Additional opportunities to participate in the development of the UMP will be announced in the future. To join the project mailing list, please e-mail *JohnBrownFarm.Plan@parks.ny.gov*

---

### ***Next Steps***

- The suggestions, issues, concerns, and alternatives identified at the Public Information Meetings and in written comments submitted by March 13, 2023, will be summarized and made publicly available. The Draft UMP/Draft EIS will address these issues.
- Public review of the Draft UMP will include a public meeting and public comment/review period. Comments made during this time will be considered in the preparation of the Final UMP/Final EIS.
- After issuance of the Final UMP and a public consideration period, a Findings Statement will be issued along with the DEC and OPRHP Commissioners decisions regarding adoption of the final plan.

### ***Tentative Unit Management Plan Timeline***

- Virtual Public Information Meetings – February 8 and 9, 2023
- Additional Public Engagement Opportunities – Spring/Fall 2023
- Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) Scoping – Fall 2023/Winter 2024
- Draft UMP & DEIS Released to Public for Comment – Spring/Summer 2024
- Final UMP/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – Summer/Fall 2024
- Proposed Final Draft to APA for “First” & “Second Reading” – Fall/Winter 2024
- APA Resolution of APSLMP Compliance – Fall/Winter 2024
- Findings and Adoption – Early Winter 2025



## **General Site Overview and History**

In 1849, John Brown purchased 270 acres of land in North Elba, New York. Brown was drawn to the remote area to assist free Black New York families who settled "Timbuctoo." An initiative devised by Central New York philanthropist and abolitionist Gerrit Smith in 1846 provided these families with title to 40-acre lots to help circumvent a discriminatory New York State law requiring Black men to own \$250 worth property to vote. In 1855, Brown left his family on the North Elba farm to join the anti-slavery campaign in the Kansas Territory. This campaign and other national events led Brown to believe that slavery in the United States could only be eliminated with force. From October 16-18, 1859, Brown led an armed raid on the U.S. Arsenal at Harpers Ferry in hopes of initiating a revolt of enslaved persons in Southern states. However, Brown was captured on the morning of the 19<sup>th</sup> and later found guilty of treason, murder, and conspiring with enslaved peoples to rebel, at a grand jury trial. He was executed on December 2. As Brown wished, his body was returned to North Elba and buried in front of his home on December 8. Mary Brown, John's wife, and their surviving children resided at the farm until 1863 when the family relocated to California. Mary sold the farm in 1866.

Under private ownership, the original Brown family farmhouse underwent numerous architectural alterations. In 1870, the property was purchased by a group of private citizens who then gifted it to the State of New York in 1896. A commemorative statue and historic markers were installed by the John Brown Memorial Association to honor the Brown family and the men who fought with him in Harpers Ferry. To support public visitation and education, the state built a caretaker's cottage (1922) and garage (1922-23), constructed a visitor parking area, designed various hiking trails, and relocated and enhanced the family's original barn to function as an exhibit center.

---

Today, 213 acres of the original Brown family homestead are jointly managed by OPRHP and DEC as the John Brown Farm State Historic Site. The remaining historic acreage is part of the Saranac Lakes Wild Forest unit, managed by the DEC.



***Guided tour at the John Brown family burial plot***

The original farmstead in its entirety (270 acres) was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on June 19, 1972 and designated a National Historic Landmark on August 6, 1998.

The grounds of the Historic Site are open to the public year-round, free of charge. The farmhouse and outbuildings are open seasonally, early May through the end of October. Admission to the historic farmhouse is free. The site welcomes more than 60,000 visitors annually.

### ***Interpretation and Education***

On the Historic Site's grounds, patrons may engage with interpretive signage that helps to instill an appreciation for the story of the John Brown family. On permanent display in the Upper Barn is the "Dreaming of Timbuctoo" exhibit, which tells the story of Black New York families who settled in the region as part of a voting rights and agricultural uplift strategy which inspired Brown to move there with his family. Throughout the summer, guided tours of the homestead and gravesite help visitors to learn about Brown's mission to abolish the practice of slavery and his enduring legacy.

Year-round, John Brown Farm supports an active interpretive and educational program strengthened by the work of its official Friends Group, John Brown Lives! (JBL). The Historic Site and JBL regularly coordinate and collaborate to host events and special programs. Signature programs and events at the Historic Site include I Love My Park Day, John Brown Day, and Blues at Timbuctoo.

### ***Historic and Cultural Resources***

Principal historic features at the site include the Brown family farmhouse and outbuildings, the gravesite of John Brown and eleven of his followers, and the John Brown memorial statue. The historic buildings and memorials are well preserved but subject to the harsh winter conditions of upstate New York. Since the state took ownership of the property, it restored the farmhouse to its original design, and restructured the site for increased visitor attendance while honoring and preserving the family cemetery.

---

### **Recreational Resources**

The site provides year-round passive recreational opportunities popular with local residents and visitors. There are approximately 3.8 miles of multiuse recreational trails at the unit. The grounds and trails support activities such as walking, running, photography, birding, dog-walking, and, in the winter, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. There are no overnight recreational opportunities.



**First Day Hike**

### **Topography and Soils**

The site sits at 1,850 feet (564 meters) above sea level. The site is generally flat, with moderately sloped hills on the east and west sides of the site. On the eastern side of the site there is a relatively steep drop to the AuSable River. Soils at the site can be grouped into four broad categories: glacial tills, glacial outwash, organically derived, and hardpan. The well-draining Monadnock soil series predominates the unit.

### **Water and Watershed**

John Brown Farm is within the Upper West Branch AuSable River sub-watershed, which is part of the AuSable River Watershed. Approximately 470 feet of the West Branch of the AuSable River pass through the Historic Site. A review of wetlands mapping information from the Adirondack Park Agency shows that wetlands cover approximately 4.2 acres of the site.

### **Land Cover, Flora, and Fauna**

Much of the Brown homestead was open for pasture and cultivation during the Brown Family's tenancy. Today, most of the land has been reclaimed by wild forest. The existing rustic nature of the site and its structures allows the area to be both historic and consistent with the wild forest character of the surrounding lands.



**Mink (*Mustela vison*)**

The site is suitable habitat for numerous mammals, birds, reptiles, and amphibians common to the Adirondacks. Some of the more common mammals include black bear, mink, snowshoe hare, and red squirrel. Some of the more common birds include Ruffed Grouse, Black-capped Chickadee, and Wood Thrush. Common reptiles and amphibians include common garter snake, eastern American toad, eastern newt, and wood frog. There are no significant natural communities or natural resources, and no rare or endangered species at the Site.



---

## **Additional Contact Information**

For more information on the environmental setting of John Brown Farm State Historic Site or information on the UMP planning process, please contact OPRHP at:

JohnBrownFarm.Plan@parks.ny.gov

*or*

OPRHP Planning Bureau  
625 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Albany, New York 12207  
518-474-0409

Saratoga - Capital State Park Region  
19 Roosevelt Drive  
Saratoga Springs, New York 12866  
518-584-2000