



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ERIK KULLESEID  
Commissioner

**AGENCY DECISION  
AND  
STATEMENT OF FINDINGS**

**Adoption of a Master Plan for Sampson State Park**

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has prepared and released a Final Master Plan and Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS), dated March 3, 2021, for Sampson State Park.

By the authority vested in me in State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation Law, I do hereby adopt the Final Master Plan for Sampson State Park.

My 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.

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Erik Kulleseid  
Commissioner  
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and  
Historic Preservation

4.1.21

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

# State Environmental Quality Review FINDINGS STATEMENT Sampson State Park

March 15, 2021

**SEQR CLASSIFICATION:** TYPE I  
*Under 6 NYCRR Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review) of the Environmental Conservation Law.*

**LOCATION OF ACTION:** Romulus, New York

**LEAD AGENCY:** New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP)  
Division of Environmental Stewardship & Planning  
625 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12238

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**DESCRIPTION OF ACTION:** The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation has prepared a Final Master Plan/FEIS for Sampson State Park. The adoption and implementation of a Master Plan for Sampson State Park presents a series of preferred alternatives for the future development and operation of the Park. The Final Plan provides direction for resource protection and for recreational use including continued rehabilitation and maintenance of the park's existing facilities as well as construction of some new park facilities. Rehabilitation or improvements are proposed for the existing campground, fishing pier, park office/recreation building, court games, comfort stations, circulation and entry for the museum and adjacent grounds, and replacement of the park water system. New infrastructure will include additional campsites and cabins with associated amenities, pavilion, four-bay dump station, solar panel array, internet connectivity, and improved access to park amenities and recreational programs for people of all abilities. A Stewardship Plan and Invasive Species Management Plan will be developed to help protect park resources. Future assessment and planning will guide development of a Vehicular/Pedestrian/ Trails Plan.

**State Environmental Quality Review  
FINDINGS STATEMENT  
Sampson State Park Final Master Plan/FEIS**

**March 15, 2021**

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), as lead agency, makes the following findings:

**Title of the Action:**

Adoption and Implementation of a Master Plan for Sampson State Park.

**Location:**

Sampson State Park is located at 6040-6144 NY-96A, Romulus, NY 14541, in the Town of Romulus, Seneca County, New York.

**Description of the Action:**

The Master Plan for Sampson State Park provides long term guidance for the development and management of the Park and protection of its resources as summarized below.

**Date of Completion of the Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS):** March 3, 2021

These findings consider the relevant environmental impacts, facts, and conclusions disclosed in the Final EIS; weigh and balance relevant environmental impacts with social, economic, and other considerations; provide a rationale for the Agency’s decision; certify that the requirements of 6 NYCRR Part 617 have been met; and certify that consistent with social, economic, and other essential considerations from among the reasonable alternatives available, the action is one which avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that included within the Plan are those mitigation measures that will avoid or minimize adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable.

**Findings:**

1. The Final Plan was subject to a complete Environmental Impact Statement process including public information meetings. A public hearing on the initial Draft Master Plan/DEIS was held in October 2015. A public meeting on the Revised Draft Master Plan/Revised DEIS was conducted in August 2020.
2. The Final EIS contains a chapter on responses to comments on the Revised Draft EIS, “Chapter 5 - Comments and Responses.” This chapter contains clarification of issues raised during the review of the Revised Draft EIS. It also provides information that has been used in the preparation of the Final Plan.
3. Sampson State Park consists of 2,070 acres and is located on the eastern shore of Seneca Lake, in the Village of Ovid. The park lies entirely in the Town of Romulus, Seneca County, NY. Sampson is one of the largest state parks in the Finger Lakes Region.
4. Sampson State Park was established in 1960 on land purchased from the United States Air Force. Before transitioning into a state park, the site was used as a U.S. Naval training center, a college for returning veterans, and a U.S. Air Force base. The naval training facility was active until after World War II, when a portion of the grounds became Sampson State College, which educated returning servicemen from 1946 to 1949. From 1950 to 1956, during the Korean War, the site served as an Air Force base.

After the purchase of the facility by New York State, the facility was transformed from a military base to a public recreational facility. Many existing structures were removed; some were retained and repurposed for park use. Vacant, unused buildings remain in some parts of the park.

5. The park's military history is displayed in an on-site museum, housed in a former Navy brig. The Sampson Navy and Air Force Veteran's Museum was created by World War II veterans who trained at the Sampson Naval Training Center, and Korean War veterans who trained at Sampson Air Force Base.
6. Sampson State Park has several historic and cultural resources. Within Park boundaries is the site of a Seneca village, Kendaia, from the early 1700s. A historic sign along Route 96B marks the general location. European settlers populated this area between 1790 to 1850. There is a historic cemetery in the park, now commonly known as the Pioneer Cemetery.
7. The park's built features were surveyed and assessed by OPRHP's Division for Historic Preservation (DHP) for eligibility for listing on the State and National Register of Historic Places (S/NRHP) in 2020. Eligibility for S/NRHP requires that a resource be fifty years old or older; therefore, many structures at Sampson have now reached an age where further analysis is required. Although previously classified as not eligible for listing on the S/NRHP, Sampson's status has been changed to "undetermined," pending additional analysis. The park's S/NRHP eligibility will be clarified as the statewide survey of the state park and historic system continues.
8. Many areas of the park show signs of past practices conducted when the land was being developed for a naval base. Trees and other vegetation were cleared to make space for infrastructure. Today, many of these areas are in a successional forest stage or are reverting old fields with shrubs. A few forested areas support some old-growth trees, and the park's ravine areas are mature forests that have remained intact through previous and current land uses. There are 14 distinct ecological community types in the park. None of the natural communities in the park is considered significant from a statewide perspective, but the maple-basswood rich mesic forests located in the Park's ravines and the intact cobble shoreline are of regional importance. Four rare species have been documented in the park.
9. The park is in the Oswego River/Finger Lakes Watershed, within the Seneca Lake Watershed. The waters of Seneca Lake are a source of drinking water and suitable for trout spawning. Water resources in the park include Seneca Lake, several streams, and several small federally mapped wetland complexes.
10. In 2018, OPRHP entered a long-term contract (40-year lease) with a concessionaire to redevelop a portion of the park (approximately 150 acres) including the marina, waterfront, and adjacent upland areas with additional camping, recreation activities, and services.
11. Sampson State Park is primarily used for long-term visitation. There are some amenities for day use, but the primary recreation resource at the park is camping. Campsites accommodate tents, pop-up trailers and recreational vehicles (RVs). The park also has cottages and cabins. The Park has a marina on Seneca Lake with boat slips for seasonal rental. The park has a recreation building with various indoor games. Outdoor recreation amenities include ball fields, tennis courts, mini golf, horseshoes, basketball and volleyball courts, fishing, guarded swim amenity, walking trails and a playground. The Park's roadway system is used by bicyclists and walkers. Seasonal hunting is allowed at designated times of the year in specified sections of the park.
12. Seneca Lake is the premier scenic resource of the park. The forested ravines in the park, which are characteristic of the region, are also very scenic.

13. The Master Plan identifies a vision statement and goals to further the vision for Sampson State Park. The vision statement is Sampson State Park will be the extended-stay waterfront destination of the Finger Lakes, providing a variety of recreational opportunities that are compatible with and make the best use of the natural and cultural resources of the park. The goals will ensure continued protection and enhancement of the Park's historic, cultural, and natural resources while providing a variety of recreational opportunities.
14. The Plan presents a series of "Preferred Alternatives" for future development and operations at Sampson State Park. "Status quo" alternatives were evaluated for each element of the Plan. The Status Quo alternative consists of the current facilities, programs, and practices. The selected alternatives for each element were combined to create a single Preferred Alternative that best met the vision of the Park. This alternative represents the Final Master Plan.
15. The Plan considers the historic, cultural, natural and recreational resources of the Park and responds to the needs and safety of visitors through the protection and enhancement of historic, cultural, scenic and natural resources and principles of sustainability. The plan also prioritizes actions for implementation and recognizes that implementation will be determined by the availability of funding, which is a function of the size of OPRHP's annual capital budgets and the need to balance investments throughout the park system.
16. The Master Plan calls for protection of the Park's existing natural resources and enhances sustainability, including:
  - Developing a comprehensive stewardship plan that includes invasive species management strategies, including early detection and rapid response.
  - Implementing wildlife habitat management strategies that follow recommendations of OPRHP and DEC staff and partner organization wildlife biologists will be included in the stewardship plan.
  - Maintaining current firewood procedures in accordance with OPRHP and DEC Firewood Regulations to protect the park's natural resources.
17. The Master Plan calls for protection of the Park's existing historic and cultural resources, including:
  - Identifying and documenting cultural/historic resources at the park and providing for the protection, stewardship, and preservation of both designed structures and landscape elements.
  - Developing a document library/annotated bibliography on original documents on resources related to historical elements at the park.
  - Developing an updated interpretation program that tells the story of the site's native inhabitants.
  - Identifying gaps and/or missing information on key periods in the site's military history and developing relevant programming/materials.
18. The Master Plan improves and expands the Park's existing recreational resources, including:
  - Upgrading existing campsite loops in the park with improved electric and water service.
  - Improving accessibility for the guarded swim amenity.
  - Upgrading the existing fishing pier.
  - Providing a new pavilion.
  - Providing an accessible picnic area.
  - Improving and expanding opportunities within the existing recreation building.
  - Improving existing tennis courts and basketball court; providing outdoor bocce ball and Pickleball courts.



- Improving the trail system through development of a comprehensive circulation plan, to address vehicle/pedestrian/trail circulation at the park in the future.
  - Developing connector paths near camping loops.
19. OPRHP's contract with the concessionaire includes proposals for additional camping facilities, recreation amenities, and services. Under the Master Plan, in a full build-out scenario, the following facilities will be provided:
- New full-service RV camping sites east (uphill) of the marina and RV sites installed in the open mowed field area;
  - Additional cabins to the south of this area, on the south side of the park road;
  - Full-service RV camping sites and cabins in the successional shrubland areas in the southern third of the lease area;
  - Associated amenities including playgrounds, pools, picnic areas, comfort stations, open areas for events/gatherings, gazebos, a small band shell, and pedestrian pathways/trails; and
  - A hotel and event center with associated parking.
20. Park operations, maintenance, and infrastructure will be improved under the Master Plan by:
- Providing a new electrical substation.
  - Adding solar energy infrastructure to the park.
  - Providing Internet and Wi-Fi coverage in the park.
  - Modernizing existing comfort stations at camping loops.
  - Providing a new four-bay dump station.
  - Improving existing park office building.
  - Replacing core water system infrastructure in the park.
  - Developing a uniquely designed park road system plan to connect existing and new facilities, improving roads that are retained and removing unneeded roads.
  - Implementing an improved circulation and entry plan for the Navy and Air Force Veterans Museum and adjacent grounds.
  - Removing an existing water tower and accessory building.
  - Maintaining the Firing Range for occasional use by Park Police; installing signage and a gate.
  - Exploring and incorporating new green infrastructure and sustainable practices at the facility.
21. Impacts associated with the implementation of the Plan and corresponding mitigation measures identified are as follows:
- The plan will result in some physical change to the land where new recreation facilities will be constructed or where existing facilities will receive rehabilitation. The majority of the planned improvements are located in previously-disturbed open, mowed areas; along park roads, and in successional shrubland habitat, which had been cleared and utilized for the air force base in the 1950s. Development of these facilities will require soil disturbance during site work and construction. New RV camping facilities, cabins, and buildings will include electric, water, and sewer lines. To minimize disturbance in new areas and to keep utility infrastructure easily accessible, when possible, upgraded or new underground utilities will be aligned in existing utility trenches and/or along existing roads or other corridors.

- There will be permanent changes to landforms for the creation of new parking areas, roads, walkways, campsite pads, and buildings. Existing infrastructure, such as roads and utilities, will be utilized to the extent practicable. The majority of the proposed areas for new development are generally flat, requiring only minor grading. Any buildings and pools will likely require some excavation.
- With the new 40-year concessionaire lease area, through the planning and analysis process, modifications were made to proposed new facility locations and design parameters for future development to avoid, minimize and mitigate potential adverse environmental impacts. Some of these modifications were: reducing the overall footprint for improvements; using existing infrastructure (i.e. roads) to the extent practicable; maintaining vegetated buffer areas along the ravines/streams; and maintaining a vegetated buffer along the lake shoreline.
- Some trees and shrubland vegetation would need to be removed for new facilities. New development will result in an increase of impervious surfaces related to asphalt parking areas, new road connections, RV pads (may be gravel), any paved pathways, and buildings (roofs). Cabins will likely be placed on concrete pads. Impervious surfaces will be minimized to the extent practicable. The use of green infrastructure (e.g., permeable surfaces, bioswales and other infiltrating practices) to manage stormwater will be considered when practicable. Erosion control and storm water management techniques will be incorporated into site specific designs for all construction projects that will disturb soils.
- Implementation of the Master Plan is not expected to have significant adverse impacts on water resources. Potential impacts can come from construction activities and from the installation of new impervious surfaces. Projects proposed within the Master Plan with the potential to impact water quality include: new RV campsites and cabins; new comfort stations; small pools; gazebos; a small band shell; pedestrian pathways/trails; hotel and event center with associated parking; new pavilion; solar installation; new dump station; museum parking/pathways, and changes to the road system. When feasible, green design will be used to minimize the effects of stormwater runoff. Porous pavement, vegetated drainage swales, and proper drainage design will be used where applicable to help mitigate water quality impacts from runoff following storm events.
- All construction activities will incorporate mitigation in the form of appropriate sediment and erosion control Best Management Practices (BMPs) to minimize impacts to water quality from runoff. Vegetated buffers between any new construction and water resources, including the streams in the ravines and the lake shoreline, will be retained to protect these sensitive areas and maintain water quality. Additional buffer areas will be planted with native plants as needed.
- No impacts to groundwater or wetlands are anticipated from projects within the master plan. Any new development proposed near wetlands or other sensitive areas in the future will be done in consultation with regional natural resource stewardship biologists and staff from New York Natural Heritage Program to avoid or minimize any potential impacts.
- Impacts to air quality are expected to be minor. Full implementation of the master plan will result in increased use of the park. Increased travel to the park to use the camping facilities, waterfront, or new park amenities will have minor impacts on overall air quality. There is potential for an impact on local air quality on a seasonal basis due to the

increased use of campfires in the expanded camping area. Short-term, temporary air quality impacts may occur during construction. These effects will be temporary and localized and will occur periodically over several years as the Plan is implemented.

- Master Plan implementation will result in impacts to some of the natural resources in the park. To reduce the need and impacts of removing vegetation, projects have been sited primarily in areas with previous and recent development and general accessibility to, and use of, existing infrastructure and structures. The main exception is the proposed new camping facilities in the southern portion of the concessionaire lease area, which may include additional RV camping sites and cabins, with associated amenities. The proposed development area is mostly successional shrubland with remnant paved roads and is bounded by successional southern hardwood forest and ravines. Through conceptual design and planning discussions, the footprint of the original proposal was reduced for new development to remain within some of the existing park road boundaries to help maintain a wider vegetative buffer for sensitive ravine areas. Additionally, the existing road infrastructure will be used to the extent practicable to reduce the area of new disturbance. A forested buffer area along the lake shoreline will be maintained to help protect the shoreline habitat.
- Protection of sensitive ravine areas will be attained by careful placement and design of new park facilities and implementing additional protection measures, such as, enhancing vegetative buffers, installing signage and identifying priorities for invasive species management to abate key threats to native flora and fauna. Protection of the cobble shoreline will involve maintaining an upland forested buffer where it currently exists and limiting vehicle use, grading and raking to clear trash and wrack along the beach, except at the guarded swimming amenity.
- Implementation of the master plan will have some minor impacts on the fauna of the park due to some habitat loss. The southern portion of the lease area is the most notable change for habitat and potential impacts to fauna. This area is proposed for RV camping and cabins. Most of this area is mapped as successional shrubland which may be used by a variety of fauna. Although there may be a loss of up to 30 acres of shrubland, there are many more acres of successional shrubland habitat located throughout the park that will experience no adverse impacts from implementation of the master plan. Management of the remaining successional shrubland and grassland habitat, as well as, other natural communities in the park, will be implemented according to a stewardship plan.
- There will be temporary disruptions to wildlife during construction. The timing of construction activities will be planned to minimize impacts to specific wildlife species, particularly bat species and ground nesting birds, and will be conducted in accordance with current agency guidance. Newly developed mowing regimes will be scheduled to help protect grassland bird species.
- An invasive species management plan with a focused approach to management will be developed for the Park. Education of park patrons, BMPs, proper material disposal and equipment sanitizing methods will be used to limit the potential of invasives to establish in new locations within and beyond the park.
- The Master Plan recognizes the important historic and archeological resources within the Park. To assure protection of historic resources, any project or activity proposed in the Master Plan that may impact historic resources or includes ground disturbance at the park will undergo Section 14.09 review by OPRHP's Division for Historic Preservation



(DHP), in accordance with the State Historic Preservation Act. Any routine operation or maintenance that requires ground disturbance also requires further review by DHP.

- Implementation of the Master Plan may result in minor adverse impacts on scenic resources in the park. All new development along or visible from the lakeshore will be designed to complement the surroundings and not be visually intrusive. The proposed RV camping and cabins are consistent with existing recreational uses at the park and are not in sharp contrast to the land use patterns in the park. RV campsites will be open seasonally so for a portion of the year RVs will not be present. Additional landscaping in the form of tree and other vegetation plantings will enhance the park like atmosphere in the new camping areas. Visual impacts from proposed solar array, where practicable, will be minimized by using existing topography and vegetation to screen their view from other areas of the park. The removal of the unused and outdated water tower and associated building will enhance the aesthetics in this area of the park and along Route 96A.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will result in significant beneficial impacts on existing recreational facilities and providing new recreational facilities and opportunities. The park complex provides a significant open space that will continue to be protected under the master plan.
- Implementation of the Master Plan will result in some circulation improvements but does not call for any significant changes to traffic patterns or changes in access to the Park. With proposed expansion of camping facilities, there is an anticipated increase in RV and car traffic to the park during the summer months. With further assessment, the park will enhance the vehicle and pedestrian circulation to meet this future expected increase. A comprehensive vehicle/pedestrian/trails circulation plan will improve the flow of traffic and pedestrians throughout the park. The museum's proposed parking area and exterior walks will improve circulation, including ADA-compliant parking spots, and improved signage.
- Public health and safety are important elements in park operations. New or substantially rehabilitated facilities will be designed and constructed to meet all applicable health and safety codes including compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Design and rehabilitation of infrastructure systems such as electric, water, and sewer where needed will ensure public health protection.
- The expansion of camping in the lease area of the park will necessarily increase the potential for incidents affecting public health and safety. An increased presence of staff and park police or rangers will be needed to ensure compliance with park rules and protect public safety, especially at night. To assure patron safety, signage and a gate will be installed at the firing range; fencing may be installed. Removal of the water tower and associated building will also improve patron safety.
- Sustainability principles and energy efficiency will be incorporated into the design of all proposed construction. Master Plan implementation may result in some minor temporary increases in noise and vehicle exhaust (odor) during construction projects. Construction is generally scheduled for periods of low park use to minimize impacts to park visitors. The expansion of camping in the park may result in increased noise at night from campers. No significant adverse impacts to the local community are anticipated as the proposed location of camping is a considerable distance away from neighboring

residences. Standard park rules and regulations with respect to quiet times will be applied and enforced in all camping and cabin areas.

- Implementation of the master plan will result in some unavoidable adverse impacts. There will be some minor permanent loss of pervious soil surface and vegetative cover as a consequence of the construction of new camping facilities and associated amenities, hotel and event center and parking, new pavilion, new connector pathways, solar installation, new dump station, and any changes to the road system. This will be monitored by park staff and action will be taken, if necessary, to prevent any significant impacts from occurring.

22. The Plan describes the process for supplemental environmental review. The Plan also provides 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:

- Any new development proposed by the concessionaire
- Any new actions not addressed within this EIS that do not meet the Type II categories identified in part 617
- Any change from the preferred alternatives for natural resource protection, recreational and facility development (including trails) or other elements of the plan that would result in significant environmental impacts
- Any leases, easements, memoranda of understanding, or other agreements between OPRHP and private entities or other agencies that affect resources in a manner that is not sufficiently addressed in this plan
- Any project determined through review to have the potential for an adverse impact on resources at the Park.

The following actions may require additional review if, upon final planning and design, potential impacts were not adequately addressed in this EIS:

- Hotel, event center and associated parking
- Vehicular/pedestrian/trails plan
- Solar installation

**Certification To Approve/Fund/Undertake:**

Having considered the Draft, Revised Draft and Final Generic 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 one that avoids or minimizes adverse environmental impacts to the maximum extent practicable, and that adverse environmental 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; and
- 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.

Erik Kulleseid

Print or Type Name of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

Commissioner

Title of Responsible Officer



Signature of Responsible Officer in Lead Agency

4.1.21

Date