

# **Lows Lake Primitive Area**

## **Visitor Study**

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April 8, 2008

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Site Description .....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RESEARCH METHODS.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>RESULTS AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Distribution of visitor use.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>General paddling experience of LLPA visitors.....</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>LLPA visitor assessments of potential situations.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>LLPA visitor responses to four management situations .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>LITERATURE CITED .....</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>APPENDIX A: MAIL SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE .....</b>	<b>24</b>

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Groups size registered at entry access points for the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 through October 24, 2007.....	5
Table 2. Length of stay for groups registered at entry access points for the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 through October 24, 2007.....	5
Table 3. Number of years that 2007 visitors to the LLPA have been paddling a canoe or kayak (n=311).....	6
Table 4. Average number of days per year that 2007 visitors to the LLPA paddle a canoe or kayak at any location (n=310). ....	6
Table 5. Average number of overnight paddling-camping trips per year that 2007 visitors to the LLPA paddle a canoe or kayak at any location (n=295). ....	6
Table 6. Number of previous paddling trips that 2007 visitors have taken in the LLPA (n=310). ....	7
Table 7. Number of previous years that you have taken paddling trips in the LLPA (n=309).....	7
Table 8. Percent of paddlers who report detracting situations in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=302).....	8
Table 9. Percent of paddlers who report how appropriate or inappropriate it is for cars to be parked along both sides of the Lower Dam access Road in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312).....	10
Table 10. Percent of paddlers who report how much of a problem the parking is at the Lower Dam launch area in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=314). ....	10
Table 11. Percent of paddlers who feel the DEC should respond to parking issues at the Lower Dam in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=307).....	10
Table 12. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for private land owners to use float planes on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315). ....	11
Table 13. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for private land owners to use motorboats on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315). ....	12
Table 14. Percent of paddlers who feel it would detract from their experience if they saw private land owners using motorboats on Lows Lake while they were padding in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315). ....	12
Table 15. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for groups larger than nine people to stay in one campsite on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).....	13
Table 16. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for one group to occupy a site longer than three nights on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=310). ....	14
Table 17. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate to see groups larger than nine people while paddling on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).. ..	14
Table 18. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage the group size of day-trip paddlers on Lows Lake recognizing that management changes might affect their future opportunities to visit in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311). ....	15
Table 19. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage the group size of overnight camping paddlers on Lows Lake recognizing that management changes might affect their future opportunities to visit in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).....	15
Table 20. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage length of time one party can stay in a campsite on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312).....	16

Table 21. Percent of paddlers who feel that float planes are appropriate to transport public campers/paddlers to Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=313). ..... 18

Table 22. Percent of paddlers who feel seeing or hearing float planes landing on Lows Lake would detract from their experience in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=310). ..... 18

Table 23. Percent of paddlers who feel DEC should manage public float plane access to Lows Lake that is provided by commercial outfitters in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312). ..... 18

Table 24. Number of paddlers who wrote in a statement in their own words about Lows Lake and the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=316). ..... 19

## **INTRODUCTION**

The Lows Lake Primitive Area (LLPA) is an important component of the Lows Lake-Bog River-Oswegatchie wilderness canoe route and provides access to the Five Ponds Wilderness. Visitors come to the LLPA in the Adirondack Park to canoe and kayak on day and overnight trips and to fish, swim, and hike. The LLPA is managed as a primitive area with the intention of adding it to the Five Ponds Wilderness when private inholdings are acquired by the state (APSLMP, 2001).

In New York State, the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (SLMP) requires the development of Unit Management Plans (UMPs) on New York State Forest Preserve lands with the Adirondack Park. The Adirondack Park Agency (APA) sets the policy for UMP development and public lands in the Adirondack Park via the SLMP. The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) is in charge of developing and implementing UMPs for the Adirondack Park. The Adirondack Park SLMP requires UMP planning and development management to include three types of information related to visitor use.

### **Site Description**

Lows Lake Primitive Area (LLPA) is located in the Town of Colton in St. Lawrence County and is bounded on the east by the road to Lows upper dam, on the south by Bog River Flow, and on the west and north by private land. The LLPA is part of the Lows Lake - Bog River - Oswegatchie wilderness canoe route, and continues the canoe access to the western portion of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area from the Hitchins Pond Primitive Area on the Bog River. The area is classified as primitive due to its small size at 1,042 acres of land and 61 acres of water area, but especially due to the impact of inholdings of private land and a deeded road on the north shore that separates the LLPA from the Five Ponds Wilderness. If private inholdings were acquired by the State and the road closed, and non-conforming uses (motorboat and airplane) removed, then this primitive area could become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. (APSLMP, 2001)

### **RESEARCH METHODS**

A mail questionnaire was developed to obtain information on experiences of visitors who used the LLPA in the summer and fall of 2007. The information that was collected with this LLPA mail survey (appendix A) included: (1) a profile of the general paddling experience of LLPA

visitors; (2) LLPA visitor assessments of potential situations that may have negatively affected their trip experiences; and (3) LLPA visitor responses to four management situations faced by DEC – parking issues at the Lower dam on the Bog River, private land owner access to Lows Lake, visitor group size and length of stay, and public float plane access in the LLPA. The questionnaire was reviewed by DEC staff. Previous mail survey processes were followed parallel to other visitor studies conducted in the Adirondack Park (Dawson et al., 2005a and 2005b; Dawson et al., 2006; Watson et al., 2000).

The name and address of the visitors who registered at the upper and lower dams on the Bog River were collected for the period May 4 through October 24, 2007 as means to send out a mail survey about their trip related experiences in the LLPA. These two registration sites were chosen as being the best readily available source of visitor contact information and with the knowledge that some visitors would not be boating or would not have traveled from the lower dam all the way to the Lows Lake area. The survey pointed out that the area of study was upstream on the Bog River in the Lows Lake area so that visitors who had been to the area would be the only respondents considered in this study. Furthermore, a previous study of visitors in 2003 (Dawson et al. 2005a) reported that 82% of visitors to this Bog River Management Unit registered for their trips at these two DEC kiosks.

This sampling approach fit with the purpose of the study to “understand how the public visitors who paddle into the Lows Lake area were affected by motorized access during their experiences”. Other types of visitors, such as visitors arriving by commercial guide service on a float plane and private landowners with inholdings, were intentionally not included as part of the study as they did not fit the above stated purpose of this study.

Fifty-nine percent of those registered provided a complete and legible name and mailing address or one was located via the internet based on the information provided in the trailhead registration. Questionnaires were mailed to those individuals in November 2007 and up to two reminders (one letter and one postcard) were sent to nonrespondents over the course of November and December to encourage everyone’s participation in the study.

All data was entered into an Excel spreadsheet and then the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software package to assist in the analysis.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

 total of 486 names and addresses were compiled from the trail head registrations at the upper and lower dam sites on the Bog River; 829 groups were registered but names and address were incomplete or not legible for 41%. Forty-four names and addresses proved to be non-deliverable and 15 people responded that they only hiked or did not paddle a boat in the LLPA. Of the 427 usable names and addresses, 316 completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 74%.

This section is divided into four main subsections: (1) distribution of visitor registrations during May 4 through October 24, 2007 based on trailhead registrations; (2) a profile of the general paddling experience of LLPA visitors based on the mail survey; (3) LLPA visitor assessments of potential situations that may have negatively affected their trip experiences based on the mail survey; and (4) LLPA visitor responses to four management situations faced by DEC based on the mail survey.

### **Distribution of visitor use**

Public access to the LLPA comes mainly through the upper and lower dam public access sites in the Bog River Management Area. Thus, the temporal distribution of use in the LLPA and Bog River Management Area can be seen by graphing the number of visitors who register at the two main entry points to these two DEC management areas during May 4 to October 24, 2007 (figure 1). The x-axis represents each day and the y-axis represents the number of visitors registering per day. Weekends received higher levels of use than that of weekdays. During the period from August 22 to September 9, 2007, no visitor registration sheets were available for analysis. A total of 829 groups including 2,543 visitors registered at Upper and Lower Dam access points in the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 to August 21 and from September 10 to October 24, 2007.

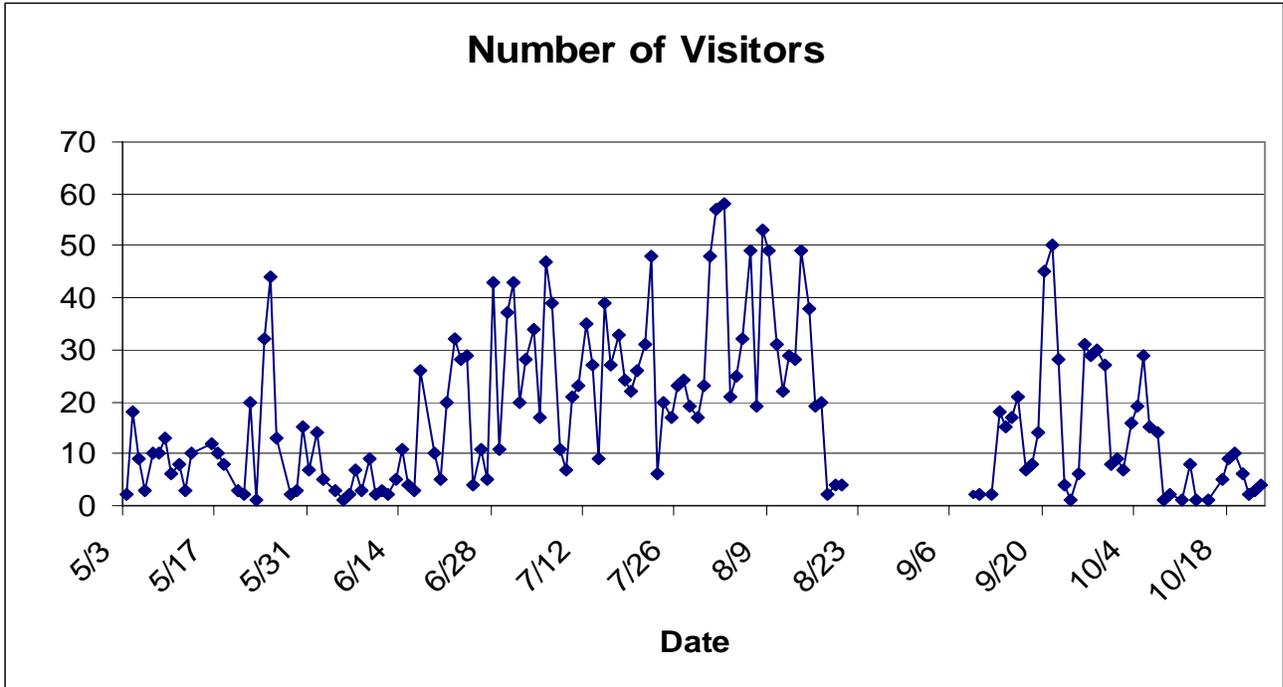


Figure 1. The number of visitors registering at the Upper and Lower Dam access points for the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 through October 24, 2007.

The greatest percentage (80%) of visiting groups going into the LLPA and Bog River Management Area entered at Lower Dam on the Bog River for recreation experiences and the remainder (20%) entered at the Upper Dam on the Bog River.

Fourteen percent of visiting groups were individuals in the LLPA and Bog River Management Area in the summer and fall of 2007 (table 1). The greatest percentage (70%) of visiting groups entered the LLPA and Bog River Management Area was between 2 and 4 people in size during the study period.

Table 1. Groups size registered at entry access points for the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 through October 24, 2007.

<b>Group size</b>	<b>Percent of groups</b>
1	14
2	46
3	11
4	13
5	5
6	4
7	2
8	2
9	2
10 or more	<u>1</u>
<b>Total</b>	100%

Only one-third of visitor groups to the LLPA and Bog River Management Area were day users (table 2). Length of stay for those who camped in the LLPA ranged between 2 and 5 days per trip.

Table 2. Length of stay for groups registered at entry access points for the LLPA and Bog River Management Area during May 4 through October 24, 2007.

<b>Length of stay (days)</b>	<b>Percent of groups</b>
1	34
2	17
3	25
4	15
5	6
6	2
7 or more	<u>1</u>
<b>Total</b>	100%



### General paddling experience of LLPA visitors

Based on the respondents to the mail survey, the majority of LLPA paddlers reported that they were very experienced with more than nine years of experience (76.5%) (table 3), paddle more than 10 days per year on average (65.8%) (table 4), and take one or more overnight paddling-camping trips each year on average (table 5).

Table 3. Number of years that 2007 visitors to the LLPA have been paddling a canoe or kayak (n=311).

Number of Years	Percent
2007 was my first time	3.2
2 to 3 years	6.4
4 to 5 years	6.1
6 to 7 years	4.5
8 to 9 years	3.2
More than 9 years	<u>76.5</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 4. Average number of days per year that 2007 visitors to the LLPA paddle a canoe or kayak at any location (n=310).

Categories	Percent
1 to 5 days	11.9
6 to 10 days	22.6
11 to 15 days	21.0
16 to 20 days	15.8
21 to 25 days	8.4
More than 25 days	<u>20.3</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 5. Average number of overnight paddling-camping trips per year that 2007 visitors to the LLPA paddle a canoe or kayak at any location (n=295).

Categories	Percent
1 to 2 trips	59.1
3 to 4 trips	23.7
5 to 6 trips	11.9
7 to 8 trips	2.4
9 to 10 trips	1.0
More than 10 trips	<u>2.0</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

The majority of paddlers (63.2%) reported that they had been in the LLPA two or more times before their 2007 trip and 37% reported that the 2007 trip was their first time in the LLPA (table 6). Similarly, the majority of paddlers (63.5%) reported that they had been in the LLPA two or more years before their 2007 trip and 36.5% reported that the 2007 trip was their first time in the LLPA (table 7). One out of five paddlers reported having boated in the LLPA for 9 or more years.

Table 6. Number of previous paddling trips that 2007 visitors have taken in the LLPA (n=310).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
2007 was my first time	36.8
2 to 3 times	22.3
4 to 5 times	13.2
6 to 7 times	10.3
8 to 9 times	3.2
More than 9 times	<u>14.2</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 7. Number of previous years that you have taken paddling trips in the LLPA (n=309).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
2007 was my first time	36.5
2 to 3 years	17.8
4 to 5 years	12.3
6 to 7 years	8.4
8 to 9 years	4.9
More than 9 years	<u>20.1</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

### **LLPA visitor assessments of potential situations**

The questionnaire asked LLPA paddlers to respond to 15 potential detracting situations based on their trip experiences in 2007. Response categories were: did not experience the situation and did experience the situation. For those who did experience the situation, they then rated if it was a problem on their trip with five response categories from not a problem (0) to a serious (4) problem. The 15 potential detracting situations were organized for this report into a rank ordered list of respondents by the percentage who reported a problem (table 8).

Ten situations were reported as having been experienced in the LLPA by more than 50% of the respondents and the most frequently mentioned experience (83%) was difficulty parking at

the launch site (table 8). Of those who experienced a situation, more than 70% of respondents reported four situations as being a slight to a serious problem: seeing private motor boats on the lake (79.4 %); hearing, but not seeing motorboats on the lake (79.0%); seeing or hearing float planes land on the lake (72.4 %); and difficulty parking at the launch (72.4 %) (table 8). These four situations also represented the situations for which the largest group of respondents experiencing those situations rated them as a serious problem (11.4 to 23.6%).

Table 8. Percent of paddlers reporting detracting situations in the LLPA, summer of 2007 (n=302).

Detracting Situations	Did not experience	Experienced situation	Experienced Situation				
			Not a problem	Slight Problem			Serious Problem
			0	1	2	3	4
Difficulty parking at the launch	17.0	83.0	27.6	15.4	30.7	15.0	11.4
Difficulty managing gear and loading my boat at the launch area	21.3	78.7	69.2	12.2	14.3	3.0	1.3
Condition of campsites (Litter, erosion, etc.)	22.9	77.1	58.6	22.4	12.5	3.4	3.0
Too many people on the water	25.2	74.8	68.6	18.1	9.7	2.2	1.3
Difficulty finding an unoccupied campsite	31.6	68.4	44.2	21.6	17.8	12.0	4.3
Designated sites too close together	32.0	68.0	81.9	12.3	2.5	2.0	1.5
Interaction with DEC Rangers	32.5	67.5	97.1	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.5
Confusing rules/regulations	43.8	56.2	79.0	9.0	10.2	0.6	1.2
Rules/regulations not adequately enforced	44.6	55.4	74.4	9.1	8.5	4.3	3.7
Seeing groups larger than nine people	48.7	51.3	57.4	18.1	14.8	3.2	6.5
Inappropriate behavior of other visitors	56.3	43.7	56.1	20.5	8.3	9.1	6.1
Seeing or hearing float planes land on the lake	57.9	42.1	27.6	17.3	20.5	11.0	23.6
Seeing private motor boats on the lake	64.6	35.4	20.6	21.5	22.4	19.6	15.9
Hearing, but not seeing motorboats on the lake	66.7	33.3	21.0	24.0	22.0	19.0	14.0
Seeing DEC motorboats on the lake	83.2	16.8	58.8	23.5	3.8	5.9	7.8

## **LLPA visitor responses to four management situations**

The first management situation presented in the questionnaire involved parking at the Lower dam on the Bog River which is the main access point to travel up the Bog River and into Lows Lake. The management situation is described as:

### **Management Issue #1**

#### **Parking at the Lower Dam Put-In**

There is room for about ten cars to park at the Lower Dam put-in on the Bog River. However, it is not uncommon to see 40 cars and trailers parked along both sides of the road leading to the put-in. On holiday weekends there have been more than 50 cars along the road. Too many vehicles in the area may cause safety issues associated with emergency vehicle access, accidents, and damage to personal property. Parking along the road also impacts the natural resource. Please answer the following questions concerning parking issues at the Lower Dam.

Respondents were asked to record their opinion on the appropriateness of the current parking situation along both sides of the road, the degree that parking is a problem, and what they thought DEC should do as a management action. Nearly half of respondents (48.8%) thought parking was inappropriate or very inappropriate along the road (table 9). More than nine out of ten respondents (91.7%) thought parking was a slight to a serious problem (table 10). Over half of the respondents (53.8%) responded favorably to the idea that: “The DEC should designate a staging and turnaround area at the Lower Dam, restrict all road-side parking, and construct a designated 40 car parking area at the Lower Dam; acknowledging that the nearest viable location area may require a 2,500 foot walk back to the put-in/staging area” (table 11).

Table 9. Percent of paddlers who report how appropriate or inappropriate it is for cars to be parked along both sides of the Lower Dam access Road in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	15.1
Inappropriate	33.7
Neutral	28.8
Appropriate	15.4
Very Appropriate	<u>7.1</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 10. Percent of paddlers who report how much of a problem the parking is at the Lower Dam launch area in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=314).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not a problem	8.3
Slight problem	19.1
Slight-moderate problem	12.7
Moderate problem	30.6
Moderate to serious problem	15.9
Serious problem	<u>13.4</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 11. Percent of paddlers who feel the DEC should respond to parking issues at the Lower Dam in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=307).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There is <u>no parking problem</u> at the Lower Dam, the DEC does not need to respond	7.5
There is no parking problem now, but the DEC should <u>take action in the future</u> when overuse occurs	16.6
The DEC should <u>take action to maintain</u> the parking situation as it is	22.1
The DEC should designate a staging and turnaround area at the Lower Dam, restrict all road-side parking, and construct a <u>designated 40 car parking area</u> at the Lower Dam; acknowledging that the nearest viable location area may require a 2,500 foot walk back to the put-in/staging area	<u>53.8</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

The second management situation presented in the questionnaire involved motorized access by private land owners to their land on the shores of Lows Lake. The management situation is described as:

**Management Issue #2**

**Private Land Owner (and Guest) Access to Lows Lake**

There are four private land owners who have motor vehicle access via private road right-of-way to the shore of Lows Lake. These private landowners (and their guests) use these roads to bring motorboats to the lake. Private landowners also have the right to utilize float planes to access the lake. Please answer the following questions concerning private land owner motorized vehicle use on Lows Lake

Respondents were asked to record their opinion on the appropriateness of private landowners using float planes and motorboats to access their lands on Lows Lake and whether seeing private landowner use of motorboats on Lows Lake detracted from their experiences. Over half of respondents (55.6%) thought private landowners using float planes to access their lands on Lows Lake was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 12). Almost two-thirds (63.8%) of respondents thought private landowners using motorboats on Lows Lake was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 13). The majority of respondents (86.3%) responded that seeing private landowner use motorboats on Lows Lake detracted from their experiences (table 14).

Table 12. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for private land owners to use float planes on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315).

Categories	Percent
Very Inappropriate	30.2
Inappropriate	25.4
Neutral	24.4
Appropriate	13.7
Very Appropriate	<u>6.3</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 13. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for private land owners to use motorboats on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	33.6
Inappropriate	30.2
Neutral	18.1
Appropriate	13.3
Very Appropriate	4.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 14. Percent of paddlers who feel it would detract from their experience if they saw private land owners using motorboats on Lows Lake while they were padding in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=315).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not a problem	13.7
Slight problem	11.7
Slight-moderate problem	10.2
Moderate problem	16.5
Moderate to serious problem	21.0
Serious problem	26.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The third management situation presented in the questionnaire involved the allowable group size and length of stay within the LLPA. The management situation is described as:

**Management Issue #3**

**Group Size and Length of Stay**

The maximum allowable group size on Lows Lake is nine people for both day and overnight trips. A permit can be obtained for groups larger than nine to use the area. One group may stay in a campsite for a maximum of three nights; a permit can be obtained from the DEC for longer stays. Please answer the following questions concerning group size and length of stay on Lows Lake

Respondents were asked to record their opinion on the appropriateness of groups larger than nine people staying in one campsite, one group occupying a site longer than three nights, and seeing groups larger than nine people while paddling on Lows Lake. Over two-thirds (68.8%) of respondents thought groups larger than nine people staying in one campsite was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 15). Over one-half (54.5%) of respondents thought one group occupying a site longer than three nights was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 16). Only one-third (34.1%) of respondents thought seeing groups larger than nine people while paddling on Lows Lake was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 17).

Table 15. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for groups larger than nine people to stay in one campsite on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	37.3
Inappropriate	31.5
Neutral	19.3
Appropriate	8.0
Very Appropriate	3.9
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 16. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate for one group to occupy a site longer than three nights on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=310).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	19.4
Inappropriate	35.1
Neutral	22.9
Appropriate	16.5
Very Appropriate	<u>6.1</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 17. Percent of paddlers who feel it is appropriate or inappropriate to see groups larger than nine people while paddling on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	12.9
Inappropriate	21.2
Neutral	43.1
Appropriate	16.7
Very Appropriate	<u>6.1</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Respondents were asked to report their opinion on what they thought DEC should do as a management response to the group size for day-trip paddlers and overnight camping paddlers, and length of stay in a campsite. Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.6%) responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable for day-trip paddlers (table 18). Two-thirds of respondents (67.8%) responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable for overnight camping paddlers (table 19).

The current management plan states that the maximum length of stay in a campsite is three nights. A special use permit can be obtained for stays up to 14 days. More than three-quarters (78.3%) of respondents responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a three night maximum and special use permits should be maintained (table 20).

Table 18. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage the group size of day-trip paddlers on Lows Lake recognizing that management changes might affect their future opportunities to visit in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There should <u>never</u> be a <u>group size limit</u> on day-trip paddlers	10.9
<u>No limit is needed now</u> , but one should be imposed on day-trip paddlers in the future when overuse occurs	13.5
The <u>current system</u> of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable	64.6
The DEC should <u>LOWER</u> the nine person <u>limit</u> for day-trip paddlers	8.7
The DEC should <u>INCREASE</u> the nine person <u>limit</u> for day-trip paddlers	<u>2.3</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 19. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage the group size of overnight camping paddlers on Lows Lake recognizing that management changes might affect their future opportunities to visit in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=311).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There should <u>never</u> be a <u>group size limit</u> on overnight paddlers	2.3
<u>No limit is needed now</u> , but one should be imposed on overnight paddlers in the future when overuse occurs	7.4
The <u>current system</u> of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable	67.8
The DEC should <u>LOWER</u> the nine person <u>limit</u> for overnight paddlers	20.9
The DEC should <u>INCREASE</u> the nine person <u>limit</u> for overnight paddlers	<u>1.6</u>
<b>Total</b>	100.0

Table 20. Percent of paddlers who feel that DEC should manage length of time one party can stay in a campsite on Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
There should be <u>no length of stay limit</u> on camping on Lows Lake	1.9
<u>No limit is needed now</u> , but one should be imposed in the future when camping related overuse occurs	5.4
The <u>current system</u> of a three night maximum and special use permits should be maintained	78.3
The limit should be more than three nights, but <u>I cannot state the number</u> of nights it should be	2.6
The limit should be more than three nights; and <u>I think the limit should be _____</u> nights	9.6
The DEC should <u>LOWER the limit</u> to two nights in a campsite	<u>2.2</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

The fourth management situation presented in the questionnaire involved the float plane trips by commercial outfitters into the LLPA. The management situation is described as:

**Management Issue #4**

**Public Float plane Access**

Commercial float plane operators bring people to Lows Lake for bass fishing, hunting, and other paddling/camping trips. The only public motorized access to Lows Lake is via float planes operated by commercial outfitters. Currently, there are no DEC regulations restricting how often or when planes can land on Lows Lake. Please answer the following questions concerning public access provided by commercial outfitter float planes on Lows Lake.

Respondents were asked to record their opinion on the appropriateness of float planes transporting public campers and paddlers into Lows Lake. Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents thought float planes transporting public campers and paddlers into Lows Lake was inappropriate or very inappropriate (table 21). The majority (85.5%) responded that seeing or hearing float planes landing on Lows Lake would detract from their experience in the LLPA (table 22).

Paddlers were asked how DEC should manage float plane access to Lows Lake that is provided by commercial outfitters and they responded to five statement categories (table 23). These responses can be considered in three different ways:

1. While 38.5% of respondents support an immediate phase out of public plane access to Lows lake (statement #5), another 61.5% of the respondents favor either a less restrictive management response (59.6% in statements #2, 3, and 4) or no management of float planes at all (1.9% in statement #1).
2. A total of 72.5% of the respondents support prohibiting float planes now (statement #5) or in the future (statement #4).
3. A total of 50.0% of the respondents support a mandatory permit system now (statement #4) or in the future (statement #3).

Table 21. Percent of paddlers who feel that float planes are appropriate to transport public campers/paddlers to Lows Lake in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=313).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very Inappropriate	43.1
Inappropriate	24.9
Neutral	19.5
Appropriate	8.3
Very Appropriate	<u>4.2</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 22. Percent of paddlers who feel seeing or hearing float planes landing on Lows Lake would detract from their experience in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=310).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Not a problem	14.5
Slight problem	21.0
Slight-moderate problem	3.9
Moderate problem	13.5
Moderate to serious problem	12.6
Serious problem	<u>34.5</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Table 23. Percent of paddlers in the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=312) who indicate how DEC should manage public float plane access to Lows Lake that is provided by commercial outfitters.

<b>Statements</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1. There should <u>never be a limit</u> on the number of public float planes landing on Lows Lake	1.9
2. The DEC should enact <u>voluntary guidelines</u> on the frequency, time, and location of float planes landing on Lows Lake; acknowledging that the DEC will not have a mechanism for enforcing “voluntary guidelines”	9.6
3. No limit is needed now, but a <u>future mandatory permit system</u> regulating the frequency, time, and location of public float plane landings on Lows Lake should be imposed	16.0
4. The DEC should enact a <u>mandatory permit system now</u> regulating the frequency, time, and location of public float plane access on Lows Lake; <u>and prohibit planes in the future</u> if New York State can acquire private in-holding property and designate Lows Lake as Wilderness	34.0
5. The DEC should <u>immediately phase out</u> public float plane access on Lows Lake	<u>38.5</u>
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Respondents were invited to add any written statement, at the end of the questionnaire, on their opinion regarding the situations in the LLPA and the management of the LLPA. Up to three responses for each respondent were recorded into 16 categories of responses. The top three concerns expressed were: the need to limit or prohibit motorboats in the LLPA, negative statements about float planes operating in the LLPA, and negative statements about the parking situation at the access points into the LLPA (table 24).

Table 24. Number of paddlers who wrote in a statement in their own words about Lows Lake and the LLPA in the summer of 2007 (n=316).

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Frequency</b>
Limit or prohibit motorboats in the LLPA	53
Negative statement on float planes in the LLPA	50
Negative statement on parking situation	49
Positive statement about LLPA conditions	42
Positive statement on DEC management	41
Positive statement on trip experience	26
Positive statement about conducting visitor survey	18
Positive statement about wilderness protection and/or trip experience	18
Negative statement about large groups	13
Negative statement about campsite conditions or availability	12
Negative statement regarding DEC management	11
Need for out houses	10
Negative statement about boy scout access or use	8
Crowded conditions	5
Positive statement about float planes	3
Positive about campsite conditions or availability	3



## **SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION**

On average, LLPA paddlers are highly experienced, take numerous trips each year, and return to the LLPA frequently. Only about one-third of LLPA paddlers were taking their first trip in the LLPA in 2007. Respondents experiencing different situations in the LLPA reported four situations as being a slight to a serious problem in the LLPA: seeing private motor boats on the lake; hearing, but not seeing motorboats on the lake; seeing or hearing float planes land on the lake; and difficulty parking at the launch. Their experiences and perceptions of various issues in the LLPA were reflected in their responses to the four management scenarios presented in the survey.

### **Management Issue #1 -- Parking at the Lower Dam Put-In**

- The two most often mentioned detracting situations were difficulty parking at the launch (83%) and difficulty managing gear and loading my boat at the launch area (78.7%).
- More than nine out of ten respondents (91.7%) thought parking was a slight to a serious problem.
- Over half of the respondents (53.8%) responded favorably to the idea that: “The DEC should designate a staging and turnaround area at the Lower Dam, restrict all road-side parking, and construct a designated 40 car parking area at the Lower Dam; acknowledging that the nearest viable location area may require a 2,500 foot walk back to the put-in/staging area”

### **Management Issue #2 -- Private Land Owner (and Guest) Access to Lows Lake**

- The majority of respondents thought motorized access by private land owners using float planes (55.6%) or motorboats (63.8%) were inappropriate in the LLPA.
- About one-third of visitors (35.4%) reported seeing private motor boats on Lows Lake and the majority of respondents (86.3%) reported that seeing private landowners using motorboats on Lows Lake detracted from their experiences.

### **Management Issue #3 -- Group Size and Length of Stay**

- One-half of the respondents (51.3%) reported seeing groups with nine or more people while on their trip in the LLPA and 42.6% of those who experienced that situation reported it was a slight to serious problem.

- Nearly two-thirds of respondents (64.6%) responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable for day-trip paddlers.
- Two-thirds of respondents (67.8%) responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable for overnight camping paddlers.
- More than three-quarters (78.3%) of respondents responded favorably to the idea that the current system of a three night maximum and special use permits should be maintained.

#### **Management Issue #4 -- Public Float plane Access**

- Over two-thirds (68%) of respondents thought float planes transporting public campers and paddlers into Lows Lake was inappropriate or very inappropriate.
- The majority (85.5%) responded that seeing or hearing float planes landing on Lows Lake would detract from their experience in the LLPA, if the situation had occurred.
- During their trips on Lows Lake, 42.1% of respondents experienced seeing or hearing float planes on the lake.
- Of the 42.1% of respondents who experienced seeing or hearing float planes on the lake, 72.4% reported that situation as being a slight to a serious problem.
- All paddlers were asked how DEC should manage float plane access to Lows Lake that is provided by commercial outfitters and they responded to five statement categories (refer to table 23). These responses can be considered in three different ways:
  1. While 38.5% of respondents support an immediate phase out of public plane access to Lows lake (statement #5), another 61.5% of the respondents favor either a less restrictive management response (59.6% in statements #2, 3, and 4) or no management of float planes at all (1.9% in statement #1).
  2. A total of 72.5% of the respondents support prohibiting float planes now (statement # 5) or in the future (statement #4).

3. A total of 50.0% of the respondents support a mandatory permit system now (statement # 4) or in the future (statement #3).

The sampling approach used in this survey process was to collect the names and addresses of those who had registered to enter the LLPA and the Bog River via two public access points because the purpose of the study was to “understand how the public visitors who paddle into the Lows Lake area were affected by motorized access during their experiences”. Other types of visitors, such as visitors arriving by commercial guide service on a float plane and private landowners with inholdings, were intentionally not included as part of the study as they did not fit the above stated purpose of this study. See pages 1 through 3 for a more complete description of the mail survey process for this study.

 data collected for this study are beneficial to the Adirondack Park Agency and the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Unit Management Plan planners. The baseline information collected emphasizes that the visitors to the LLPA are currently experiencing some detracting situations and that visitors have provided some opinions on which alternative management approaches they favor or do not favor regarding those problems. This visitor information is one type of input to the DEC planning and management efforts in the LLPA.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

We would like to thank our DEC colleagues for their insights about the management issues in the LLPA. This project was made possible through funding from DEC. We would like to thank Kim Foster Terran for mailing list research and development and mail survey implementation.

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# 2007 Lows Lake Management Survey



**State University of New York  
College of Environmental Science and Forestry**



In Cooperation With

**New York State**

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Please take a few minutes to answer this short questionnaire and return it in the pre-paid envelope that has been provided. Your responses are completely anonymous. This information will be used exclusively to improve management of Lows Lake and your individual information will not be shared.

Your assistance is greatly appreciated!

## Lows Lake Primitive Area Background Information

Please read before completing the survey!

Article XIV of the New York State Constitution allows the DEC to designate Adirondack land as *State Wilderness*. Land designated as *Wilderness* cannot be used for purposes such as timber harvesting, commercial development, or road building. Land can also be designated as *Primitive* which has fewer restrictions concerning use and development.

According to the DEC Unit Management Plan for Lows Lake, the area is an integral part of the *proposed* Lows Lake - Bog River - Oswegatchie Wilderness canoe route, and shares numerous important wildlife habitats with the Five Ponds Wilderness Area. Lows Lake is classified as a *Primitive Area* (and not *Wilderness*) due to in-holdings of private land, an access road to private property, and questions concerning other motorized access.

The current management plan states that preservation of the wild character of this canoe route without motorboat or airplane usage is the primary management goal for this Primitive Area. Lows Lake will become part of the Five Ponds Wilderness Area if this in-holding should be acquired by the State and an appropriate level of motorized access can be identified.

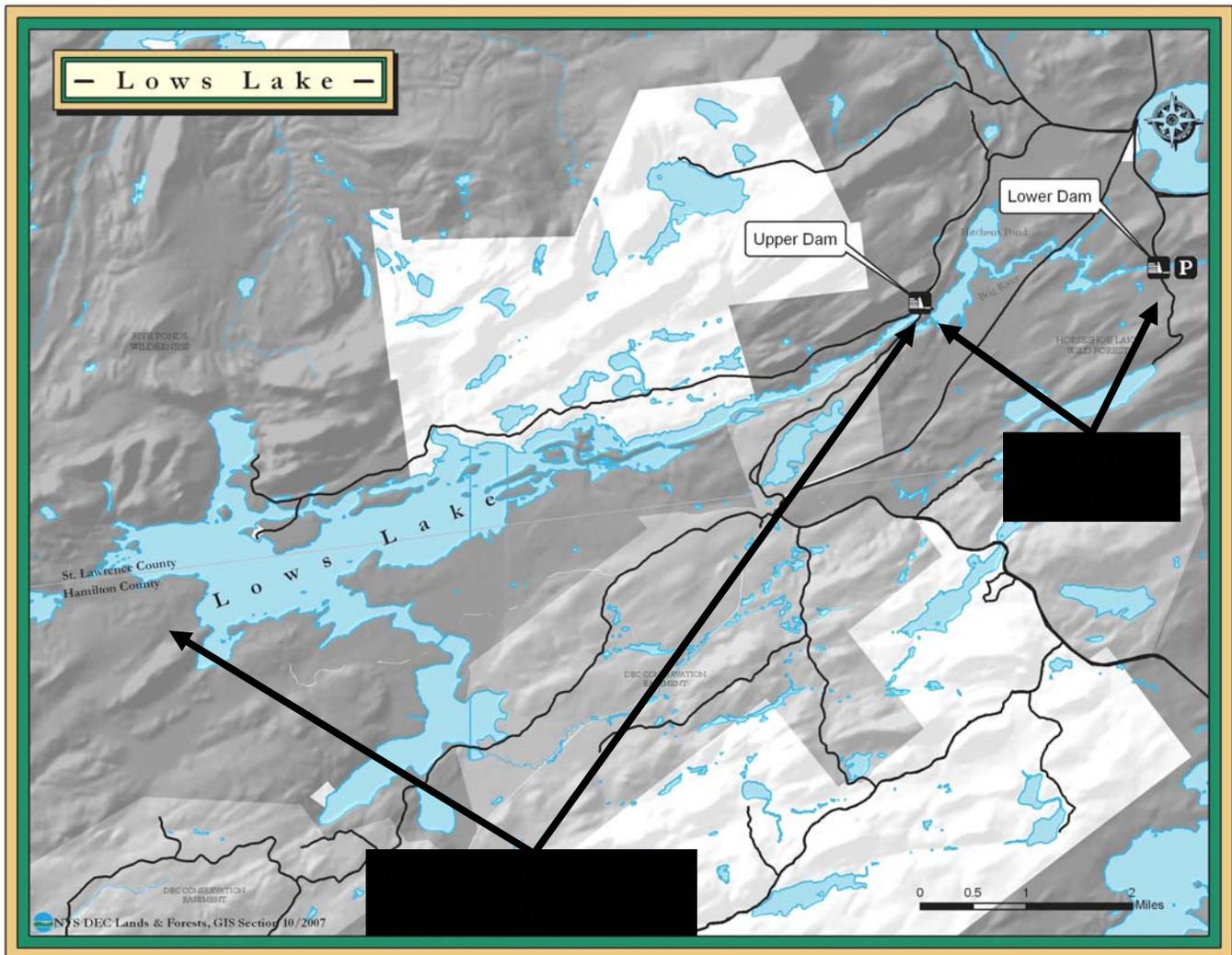
In order to make management decisions concerning Lows Lake, the NYSDEC needs your feedback concerning:

- 1) Private land in-holdings;
- 2) Motorized access; &
- 3) Current recreation experience quality on Lows Lake.

### Area of Interest

Most people begin their paddle from the Lower Dam, head through the Bog River and enter the Lows Lake area at the Upper Dam. The Bog River area between the Lower and Upper Dams is considered a separate management area from the Lows Lake area.

The Lows Lake area extends from the Upper Dam on the Bog River to the western end of Lows Lake in the Five Ponds Wilderness.



### **The next three questions ask about your general paddling experience**

How many YEARS have you been paddling a canoe or kayak? *Please check one response below.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2007 was my first time | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 7 years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 years           | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 to 9 years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 5 years           | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 9 years |

In an average year how many days do you spend paddling? *Please check one response below.*

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 5 days   | <input type="checkbox"/> 16 to 20 days     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 10 days  | <input type="checkbox"/> 21 to 25 days     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 11 to 15 days | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 25 days |

In an average year how many overnight paddling-camping trips do you go on? *Please check one response below.*

- |                                       |   |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 to 2 trips | <input type="checkbox"/> 7 to 8 trips       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 3 to 4 trips | <input type="checkbox"/> 9 to 10 trips      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 5 to 6 trips | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 10 trips |

### **The next two questions ask about your paddling experience on Lows Lake**

How many times have you paddled on Lows Lake? *Please check one response below.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2007 was my first time | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 7 times      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 times           | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 to 9 times      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 5 times           | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 9 times |

How many YEARS have you been paddling on Lows Lake? *Please check one response below.*

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2007 was my first time | <input type="checkbox"/> 6 to 7 years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 to 3 years           | <input type="checkbox"/> 8 to 9 years      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 4 to 5 years           | <input type="checkbox"/> More than 9 years |

**This section asks questions about your actual trip to Lows Lake during the summer of 2007**

Listed below are situations that might have detracted from your actual experience **while paddling on Lows Lake during the summer of 2007.**

- ⇒ *If you did not encounter a given situation then check the “Did Not Experience” box.*
- ⇒ *If you did experience the situation, rank how much of a problem it was by circling the appropriate number.*

Situations	DID NOT EXPERIENCE	I experienced the situation in 2007 and it was:				
		Not A Problem	→	Moderate Problem	→	Serious Problem
Seeing Private Motorboats on the Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Seeing DEC Motorboats on the Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Hearing, but not seeing motorboats on the Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Seeing or hearing float planes land on the Lake	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Interaction with DEC Rangers	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Confusing rules/regulations	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Difficulty parking at the launch	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Rules/regulations not adequately enforced	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Difficulty finding an unoccupied campsite	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Condition of campsites (Litter, erosion, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Difficulty managing gear and loading my boat at the launch area	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Designated sites too close together	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Too many people on the water	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Seeing groups larger than nine people	<input type="checkbox"/>	0	1	2	3	4
Inappropriate behavior of other visitors	<input type="checkbox"/>	1	2	3	4	5

**In the following pages, four different management situations faced by the DEC are presented. A series of questions concerning the impact and possible management responses to the situation are presented. Please read the situation and answer the questions.**

**Management Issue #1  
Parking at the Lower Dam Put-In**

There is room for about ten cars to park at the Lower Dam put-in on the Bog River. However, it is not uncommon to see 40 cars and trailers parked along both sides of the road leading to the put-in. On holiday weekends there have been more than 50 cars along the road. Too many vehicles in the area may cause safety issues associated with emergency vehicle access, accidents, and damage to personal property. Parking along the road also impacts the natural resource. Please answer the following questions concerning parking issues at the Lower Dam.

---

How appropriate is it for cars to be parked along both sides of the Lower Dam access Road?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How much of a problem is the parking situation at the Lower Dam launch area?

---

Not a problem	Slight Problem	→	Moderate Problem	→	Serious Problem
0	1	2	3	4	5

---

How do you feel the DEC should respond to parking issues at the Lower Dam?

*Please choose **one option** below*

- There is no parking problem at the Lower Dam, the DEC does not need to respond
- There is no parking problem now, but the DEC should take action in the future when overuse occurs
- The DEC should take action to maintain the parking situation as it is
- The DEC should designate a staging and turnaround area at the Lower Dam, restrict all road-side parking, and construct a designated 40 car parking area at the Lower Dam; acknowledging that the nearest viable location area may require a 2,500 foot walk back to the put-in/staging area

**Management Issue #2**

**Private Land Owner (and Guest) Access to Lows Lake**

There are four private land owners who have motor vehicle access via private road right-of-way to the shore of Lows Lake. These private landowners (and their guests) use these roads to bring motorboats to the lake. Private landowners also have the right to utilize float planes to access the lake. Please answer the following questions concerning private land owner motorized vehicle use on Lows Lake

---

How *appropriate* is it for private land owners to use Float planes on Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How *appropriate* is it for private land owners to use Motorboats on Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How much would it *detract from your experience* if you see private land owners using Motorboats on Lows Lake while you were paddling?

---

Not a problem	Slight Problem	→	Moderate Problem	→	Serious Problem
0	1		2		3
					4
					5

---

**Management Issue #3**  
**Group Size and Length of Stay**

The maximum allowable group size on Lows Lake is nine people for both day and overnight trips. A permit can be obtained for groups larger than nine to use the area. One group may stay in a campsite for a maximum of three nights; a permit can be obtained from the DEC for longer stays. Please answer the following questions concerning group size and length of stay on Lows Lake

---

How appropriate is it for groups larger than nine people to stay in one campsite on Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How appropriate is it for one group to occupy a site longer than three nights on Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How appropriate is it to see groups larger than nine people while paddling on Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---

How should the DEC manage the group size of **day-trip paddlers** on Lows Lake; recognizing that management changes might affect your future opportunities to visit?

*Please choose **one option** below*

- There should never be a group size limit on day-trip paddlers
- No limit is needed now, but one should be imposed on day-trip paddlers in the future when overuse occurs
- The current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable
- The DEC should LOWER the nine person limit for day-trip paddlers
- The DEC should INCREASE the nine person limit for day-trip paddlers

How should the DEC manage the group size of **overnight camping paddlers** on Lows Lake; recognizing that management changes might affect your future opportunities to visit?

*Please choose **one option** below*

- There should never be a group size limit on overnight paddlers
- No limit is needed now, but one should be imposed on overnight paddlers in the future when overuse occurs
- The current system of a nine person maximum and permits for parties larger than nine is acceptable
- The DEC should LOWER the nine person limit for overnight paddlers
- The DEC should INCREASE the nine person limit for overnight paddlers

How should the DEC manage the length of time one party can stay in a campsite on Lows Lake? The current management plan states that the **maximum length of stay** in a campsite is three nights. A special use permit can be obtained for stays up to 14 days. *Please choose **one option** below*

- There should be no length of stay limit on camping on Lows Lake
- No limit is needed now, but one should be imposed in the future when camping related overuse occurs
- The current system of a three night maximum and special use permits should be maintained
- The limit should be more than three nights, but I cannot state the number of nights it should be
- The limit should be more than three nights; and I think the limit should be:  

*(fill in number)* \_\_\_\_\_ Nights
- The DEC should LOWER the limit to two nights in a campsite

**Management Issue #4  
Public Float plane Access**

Commercial float plane operators bring people to Lows Lake for bass fishing, hunting, and other paddling/camping trips. The only public motorized access to Lows Lake is via float planes operated by commercial outfitters. Currently, there are no DEC regulations restricting how often or when planes can land on Lows Lake. Please answer the following questions concerning public access provided by commercial outfitter float planes on Lows Lake

---

How appropriate is it for Float planes to transport public campers/paddlers to Lows Lake?

---

Very <u>In</u> appropriate	Inappropriate	Neutral	Appropriate	Very Appropriate
-2	-1	0	1	2

---



---

How much would it *detract from your experience* if you see or hear float planes landing on Lows Lake?

---

Not a problem	Slight Problem	→	Moderate Problem	→	Serious Problem
0	1	2	3	4	5

---

How should the DEC manage public float plane access to Lows Lake provided by commercial outfitters? *Please choose **one** option below*

- There should never be a limit on the number of public float planes landing on Lows Lake

---

- The DEC should enact voluntary guidelines on the frequency, time, and location of float planes landing on Lows Lake; acknowledging that the DEC will not have a mechanism for enforcing “voluntary guidelines”

---

- No limit is needed now, but a future mandatory permit system regulating the frequency, time, and location of public float plane landings on Lows Lake should be imposed

---

- The DEC should enact a mandatory permit system now regulating the frequency, time, and location of public float plane access on Lows Lake; and prohibit planes in the future if New York State can acquire private in-holding property and designate Lows Lake as Wilderness

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- The DEC should immediately phase out public float plane access on Lows Lake



Thank you for your help in completing this survey. Please return your completed survey in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

If you have questions concerning the survey contact Drs. Rudy Schuster or Chad Dawson at the address below	
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