



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Our methods

We assessed and scored the physical, biological and intangible attributes of the Boreas Ponds tract to determine the value of the characteristics that influence policymaker decisions on classification of Forest Preserve lands in the Adirondack Park. Then, each value was assessed for its impact on the tract's ecological integrity, wild character and recreational constraints, as guided by the Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan (APSLMP, 2013).

In each case, several characteristics were assessed to ensure a thorough examination of physical, biological and intangible attributes. For example, some of the physical characteristics assessed included geology, topography and the presence of water/wetlands. Biological characteristics included an assessment of wildlife habitat for birds, fish and sensitive plants, plus habitat connectivity and presence of rare species. Intangible characteristics include – among other things – aesthetic beauty, solitude and relative noise levels created by human activities.

The scores are, in general, conservative. Where there was evidence of a characteristic worth protecting, but too little information to fully assess its impact, we assigned a low score rather than leave it unassessed. With more information on large mammals and rare species, for example, we could have assigned a higher overall biological integrity score.

## What this tells us

This analysis allows policymakers and citizens to review the land characteristics that influence the ability of the Boreas Ponds tract to withstand public recreational use. This includes the ability to maintain its ecological integrity, retain its wild character and support recreational activities. Each parameter of the analysis and its referenced result contributes to an overall score. Higher scores reflect a higher level of sensitivity and the need for a more protective classification. Some parameters are more influential than others and were weighted to have a larger effect on the overall score.

# Results

The Boreas Ponds tract scores high in all three categories. For ecological integrity, it scored 220 points out of a possible 270, or **81 percent**. For wild character, it scored 112 point out of a possible 142, or **79 percent**. For recreational constraints, it scored **91 points** out of 134, or 68 percent.

## PHYSICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**1:** Geology was the most significant physical characteristic when considering human influence on the capacity of Boreas Ponds to withstand use, especially with regard to ecological integrity and recreational constraints, each of which scored 100 percent. The tract is composed of wetland soils, erodible soils and high elevations.

**2:** Topography is varied. Some areas within the Boreas Ponds tract lie above 2,500 feet. Further, the tract’s impressive topography and mountain views influence the tract’s wild character.

**3:** Water has a large influence on the tract’s capacity to withstand use, although we lacked some of the information needed to assign a score above 50 percent.

## BIOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS:

**1:** Birds, wetlands and fisheries were the three most influential factors in enumerating the tract’s ecological capacity to withstand use. The wetland habitat provides habitat for many sensitive plants and birds. The birds, including boreal species such as the common loon, have both ecological and intangible values in that they represent biological diversity and also attract visitors who are eager to see them.

**2:** Fisheries and forest connectivity are important factors that affect an area’s, or a waterbody’s, ability to withstand use. High scores for these parameters highlight the impact of human activity on wildlife. Fisheries scored 83 percent in terms of ecological integrity and recreational constraints. Birds scored 100 percent for ecological integrity and wild character, but did not influence the site’s intangible qualities. Wetlands scored 100 percent for ecological integrity. Further analysis on large mammals, such as moose, would likely increase the biological scores.

**3:** Rare species were apparent in our analysis. Additional information would likely increase the biological scores.

## INTANGIBLE CHARACTERISTICS:

**1:** Geological features had the largest influence on this score, as might be expected. The tract’s outstanding mountain views over water were the main variable contributing to a high score. Their influence on wild character is 100 percent. The influence of motorized public recreation on this tract’s ability to retain its wild character remains a concern. Information on historic motorized use is limited. There has been no motorized public access. The lands have been off limits to the public for more than a century, well before automobiles, snowmobiles or all-terrain vehicles were widely used. Only a limited number of leaseholders and guests have had access since then.

# Conclusions

Overall, the Boreas Ponds tract is an excellent candidate for classification as a Wilderness tract. It scores high for ecological integrity, wild character and recreational constraints. It is situated adjacent to two existing Wilderness areas (High Peaks and Dix Mountain) and is quite remote.

# Scoring

Characteristic	Ecological Integrity		
	score	max	Percent
<b>Physical characteristics</b>			
Geology	30	30	100%
Topography	5	10	50%
Water	5	10	50%
<b>Biological characteristics</b>			
Amphibians	5	10	50%
Birds	45	45	100%
Fisheries	25	30	83%
Forest connectivity	35	45	78%
Plants	10	15	67%
Rare species	25	35	71%
Wetlands	40	40	100%
<b>Intangible characteristics</b>			
Geological features	---	---	---
Wilderness character	5	10	50%

Characteristic	Wild Character		
	score	max	Percent
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5	10	50%	
5	15	33%	
<b>Biological characteristics</b>			
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37	37	100%	
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<b>Intangible characteristics</b>			
35	35	100%	
30	45	67%	

Characteristic	Recreational Constraints		
	score	max	Percent
20	20	100%	
10	20	50%	
20	40	50%	
<b>Biological characteristics</b>			
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---	---	---	
25	30	83%	
10	10	100%	
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<b>Intangible characteristics</b>			
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1	4	25%	