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DRAFT_Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study - Historic Context and Nationally Important Themes

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Topic Question 1: Comments on the DRAFT Finger Lakes National Heritage Area Feasibility Study - Historic Context and Nationally Important Themes

June 1, 2021 Submitted by George Adams, Chair, Issues Committee, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network Hilary Lambert, Executive Director, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network On behalf of the Board of Directors and Issues Committee, Cayuga Lake Watershed Network

Introduction The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network (CLWN) is a nonprofit organization founded in 1998 as a grassroots membership group to educate about and help protect the 870 square mile Cayuga Lake watershed, central to the Finger Lakes region. We have a staff of two, Board of Directors, and about 500 active members, with a wide reach via publications and social media.

Today CLWN is focused on water quality issues including invasive species like hydrilla, Hemlock Wooly Adelgid, and water chestnut; polluted runoff, Embrace the Lake cleanups, and Harmful Algal Blooms, in cooperation with other groups and agencies.

It is a constant challenge working to unify action and attitudes across a 48 municipality, six county watershed.

We look to the 2017 Cayuga Lake Watershed Restoration & Protection Plan and other documents for guidance. Our Board of Directors recently approved a 2021-24 Strategic Plan, focused on educating and preparing watershed residents and visitors about the impacts of climate change. More information about these documents, our programs, publications and outreach are available at our website www.cayugalake.org

Comments from Staff, Board of Directors & Issues Committee Members

Hilary Lambert, Executive Director: The proposed Finger Lakes NHA would add a central element to the four waterbody-focused NHAs already established in New York State featuring the lordly Hudson River, the Chaplain Valley, the Erie Canal, and Niagara Falls. While many people conflate New York State with New York City, the state is better defined by its major drainage basins, which helped shaped human history here, both anciently and into the present day.

By writing this Draft Feasibility Study, including Historic Context and Nationally Important Themes, the National Park Service has given us an invaluable gift, pulling together these regional threads of history and human occupancy through time and across space.

Comments: The late geographer Donald W. Meinig (University of Syracuse) carried out related work on a larger canvas with his series of books on the Shaping of America, notably volumes I - III, Atlantic America 1492 - 1800, Continental America 1800 - 1867, and Transcontinental America 1850 ï 1915 (Yale University Press). The actions and movement of Native and European peoples into and across New York State are

essential to the history of our country as a whole, for good and bad. That is a nationally important theme in itself.

Deb Grantham, Chair, CLWN Board of Directors: The Finger Lakes region has far more to offer and to be protected and cherished than history and tourism opportunities. This region is rich in water, agricultural lands, and natural areas. Water resources are all the more important as climate change progresses and weather, including flood and drought, becomes more extreme. Our wealth of water will become more and more valuable, and we will need to work on conserving and protecting it, for quality as well as to handle drought conditions. Natural areas are critical for protecting water resources and to some extent buffering against climate change, as well as for human health. More and more studies are showing the critical need for humans to be in the outdoor world to maintain mental health. As climate change advances, agriculture in some areas of the country and the world may become less viable, making agriculture in regions such as the Finger Lakes much more important to our food system.

Across the region drinking water for hundreds of thousands of people is supplied directly from the lakes and tributaries, and from groundwater found in fractured bedrock and valley fill aquifers. In the past ten years, rising concern about threats to these essential drinking water sources from Harmful Algal Blooms is driving a lot of monitoring and research, and has led to the establishment of a special Finger Lakes Hub office by NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Therefore, as part of the themes suggested for this region, it is very important to educate about and advocate for protection and enhancement of the water resources, natural areas, and agricultural lands.

George Adams, Chair, CLWN Issues Committee: Over all, this feasibility study is a fascinating recap of how the Finger Lakes came to be the vibrant and attractive environment we enjoy today. I think the description of how the roots of our region's special endowments reach back to the Devonian is a wonderful grounding, connecting what we value now to the sweep of nature's workings. To educate about that profound and ancient source of what is special about the proposed NHA, I see that Museum of the Earth run by the Paleontological Research Institute in Ithaca might play a role in teaching visitors just how those workings have operated over geologic time.

Putting the lesser known movements and communities based on progressive social and religious ideas, which this study describes, together with the women's suffrage movement is a powerful theme and one unique to this region. With the establishment of a Finger Lakes NHA, I would hope a large museum or set of smaller ones might some day be funded to curate these amazing stories of social innovation that found roots in the Finger Lakes.

But there are particular parts of this study which omit developments that seriously affected or now affect life in the Finger Lakes:

pg 11 , §3: Does not mention that the advent of the plow and the extensive clearing of old growth forests by the new settlers began a period of severe erosion that has

led to the loss from the hilltops of the very soil fertility that had attracted farmers in the first place. That erosion combined with the opening of land in the Midwest began a migration of farming from the Finger Lakes that culminated in the 1930s with denuded and abandoned farmland that had to be rescued by state-funded plantation of red pine to hold the remaining soils.

pg 21, §2: Were there waters that were over-fished and in need of restocking by 1864 if there was enough demand to support a hatchery?

pg 24, "Tourism", §4 documents how the quality of the water and the beauty of the lake shores drew the wealthy to locate on those shores, building everything from cabins to communities. These very buildings have produced nutrients that leach into the lakes and contribute to the unsightly and unsafe Harmful Algae Blooms. This is a rapidly growing problem for which neither industry, farming nor residential development are effectively held responsible. These sporadic growths of toxic bacteria are occurring more often and have spread to several of the Finger Lakes. If the wonders of our regional history and its natural beauty are only to be found in museums but no longer seen at the shores, who would visit here?

The growth of pollution in our waters is inherently a regional problem because the water, once loaded with nutrients will flow across many town lines, flow from one end of a lake to the other crossing county lines as it goes. To halt the loss of the water quality that supported fishing and attracted tourism, we need a regional agency that can coordinate the discovery of sources of pollution and address them before the ill effects become irreversible. The NYS DEC presently pursues this issue as if each lake were an isolated case, and with state wide responsibility it cannot focus only on the Finger Lakes.

Climate change will accelerate the degradation of the region's lakes. In Cornell and the agricultural research station in Geneva and in the Finger Lakes Institute at Hobart and William Smith College, our region has the scientific expertise and institutional apparatus to find best solutions to these looming problems. The Cayuga Lake Watershed Network, the Cayuga Lake Watershed Intermunicipal Organization and the Finger Lakes Regional Watershed Alliance. allies with other stewards of the lakes, will bring understanding of the ways the lake environments are interconnected and administered. These organizations should be part of the team that advises the administration of a Finger Lakes NHA.

Unlike the NHAs that focus largely on the industrial history of their respective regions, it is the abundance of clean lakes and rivers, the natural resources themselves, that are the star of attraction to the Finger Lakes more than the artifacts of the farming and industry that were drawn to the region. To the extent that the NHA designation serves to protect and promote attractive characteristics on a regional scale, a Finger Lakes NHA should be founded to preserve the conditions of the land and water itself as a key part of its objectives. It should be noted that active campaigns to ban "fracking" and reject the dangerous storage of pressurized methane in old salt mines were vigorously supported across the breadth of the Finger Lakes and carried the day in NY state government. This bit of recent

regional history should be understood as evidence that more residents of the Finger Lakes value their clear waters and green hillsides than will have responded to this excellent proposal for an NHA designation.

Chapter 3 Theme Ideas: All of the themes presented are good. I think the "Social Ideals...Movements" is the most unique of all the region's characteristics and history. The fact that New York State has banned fracking, based on the Finger Lakes-based social and environmental movement (2008-2014), points to the continued vibrancy today of the Social Ideals theme.

Farming traditions, Recreation and Transportation are linked themes because what is grown must reach markets or the buyers must be able to travel to a place to recreate there.

A suggestion for a theme: "A history of abundance, an abundance of history": The idea is that valuable natural resources and benign climate have so steadily repaid hard work with prosperity that the development of ideas, institutions and industries were inevitable in the Finger Lakes. It takes a general level of prosperity to support innovations, be they in industry or social movements. The Finger Lakes region had that prosperity. This could be an overarching theme tying several of those suggested into one.

- proofreading, typos etc: /corrections to feasibility study/ pg 3, §3, grounded ==> ground pg 5, §5, pollical ==> political pg 9, §2, divisive ==> decisive pg 19, join §2 and §3 pg22, join §2 and §3 pg23, §5, required to offered ==> required to offer

Ed Currier, CLWN Board member: The real essence of heritage is that of a sustainable ecosystem. We should focus on the natural systems in our unique region, which should be top priority. Recognizing and preserving those areas through regional planning will be key to conservation as well as tourism.

John Abel, CLWN Board member: I have two broad categories of comments on the FL NHA. Land Acknowledgement The draft "Historic Context and Nationally Important Themes" document, although still subject to revision of content to be received from the indigenous Nations (p. 5), seems rather complete in tracing the early inhabitants, relating the gradual ethnic replacement, and mentioning the historical debt that the USA owes to the Haudenosaunee Confederacy "for their demonstration of enlightened, democratic principles of Government and their example of a free association of independent Indian nations.òNevertheless, the documents and especially the maps fail to make a clear land acknowledgment. A way to accomplish this is not only in wording but also in overlaying presenting a map of the approximate extent of the native lands as shown, for example, in https://native-land.ca/ as focused on New York, United States. Boundaries of the Area The boundaries of the Area in the map are purely based on the rather artificial use of existing county lines that may serve a political purpose, but do not in fact capture the essence of the Finger Lakes region as a sub-watershed of the Great Lakes, specifically Lake Ontario. And the opportunity to draw a new set of boundaries in the Feasibility Study does not have sufficient definition of topography

and detail to suggest a new boundary based on watersheds. But I suggest that the outer boundaries of the Area should be determined by the outer boundaries of the watersheds of all of the lakes in the area, including their downstream extents to Lake Ontario, i.e., the Area should be defined by the natural features of the land that define the Finger Lakes sub-watershed of Lake Ontario. Although this would exclude the southern regions of the presently proposed Area that are actually in the Susquehanna watershed, this would more closely define the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area as natural area worthy of conservation as well as tourism. Finally, we understand that the mapping of the Cayuga Nation's current lands in the existing map is being re-examined, and we emphasize strongly the need to do this corrected mapping. I very much favor the basic concept of establishing the FL NHA.

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Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the proposed establishment of the Finger Lakes National Heritage Area, which we support. The CLWN Board, Staff and Issues Committee look forward to the next steps in this process and are happy to provide information and assistance as needed.

Comments:

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