Thousand Islands Regional Assessment Project Stakeholders

Municipalities:

Town of Hammond
Town of Cape Vincent
Village of Cape Vincent
Town of Clayton
Village of Clayton
Town of Morristown
Village of Morristown
Town of Alexandria Bay
Village of Alexandria Bay
Town of Orleans

Town and Village Planning Board Members
Town and Village Historians

Counties:

St Lawrence County Planning Office
Jefferson County Planning Office
St Lawrence County Legislature
Jefferson County Legislature

Organizations:

Antique Boat Museum
Thousand Island Land Trust
Save the River
Singer Castle
North Country Chamber of Commerce
St Lawrence County Chamber of Commerce
Alexandria Bay Chamber of Commerce
Thousand Islands Tourism Council
Seaway Trail

I. Executive Summary:

Many of us take for granted the scenic beauty of the Thousand Islands and the economy that it helps support. And many of us assume that the region will always be the way it is today. But it won't. Change is inevitable. The question is: will change hurt the scenery and economy of the region or can change be managed to ensure that our children and grandchildren enjoy the landscape beauty we appreciate today.

Scenic Landscapes: One purpose for this project is to recognize and document what makes the region scenic and to use currently available tools to ensure that future large scale development projects are located and designed in a way that minimizes damage to the region's scenic character and its economy. If scenic views are destroyed, if large towers and tall buildings are built in inappropriate places, if wildlife habitat is destroyed and the environment is degraded, the region's tourist-based economy will suffer. Who will want to travel for hours to visit a formerly scenic region marred by inappropriate development? Who will want to go fishing or birding in a place whose habitats have been compromised? Who will want to invest in businesses or real estate in a region that has lost its historic architecture, homes that sit lightly on islands and undeveloped natural areas? A lot is at stake. New York State's Scenic Areas of State Wide Significance Program can help.

Promotion of Tourism and Marketing of the Region: Another important purpose for the project is the promotion of tourism and the marketing of the region to the rest of the state, the country and internationally. Identifying the Thousand Islands as one of the most scenic coastal areas in New York State will more emphatically put the region on the map, attracting visitors and boosting its tourist-based economy. Promoting the region based on sustainable development practices will create a unique image for the Thousand Islands as a beautiful, carefully managed area that values its scenery and environmental quality…a place that hasn't been spoiled yet and won't be in the future.

Identification and Promotion of Lesser Known Scenic Areas: While the iconic Thousand Islands landscapes of castles on rocky islands, sweeping water views, and craggy, unspoiled shorelines shape the public perception of the region, many lesser known, less spectacular scenic areas have great potential for marketing and careful stewardship. These less well known scenic areas include portions of the river with fewer islands, tributary streams and their associated marshlands, bluffs and hills with distant views of the Saint Lawrence, rolling woodlands dotted with small farms, sweeping expanses of open farmland extending inland from the river, and historic waterfront villages and boathouses with classic Thousand Islands architecture. These areas have great potential to blend existing land uses with future tourist activities.

Grants and Funding: Another reason we're doing this project is to improve opportunities for grants related to economic development, natural and scenic resource

protection. Designation as a Scenic Area of State Wide Significance greatly increases a region's ability to obtain public grants and private foundation support for a range of projects. Grants including economic development, tourism promotion, land conservation, environmental restoration, historic preservation, downtown revitalization and sustainable transportation are among the many potential sources of funding that will be enhanced by state-wide recognition. Private investment in residential and commercial real estate, businesses, and infrastructure will also be encouraged by the fact that the region has been officially recognized as a unique and valuable asset to the entire state.

New York State's Vision: The New York State Legislature summed up compelling reasons to complete projects like this when they enacted NYS Executive Law 42 in the early 1980's, stating that their goal was to "achieve a balance between economic development and preservation that will permit the beneficial use of coastal resources while preventing the loss of living marine resources and wildlife, diminution of open space areas or public access to the waterfront, shoreline erosion, impairment of scenic beauty, or permanent damage to ecological systems."

A Tradition of Conservation: The Thousand Islands have long been recognized as an area of exceptional scenic beauty. Appreciated for centuries by local residents, the region began to attract wealthy vacationers as early as the mid-Nineteenth Century. These early visitors built spectacular homes and castles on the islands and along the shoreline of the river. The care and creativity used by these early visitors in locating and designing homes and structures that fit in with the landscape created a tradition of land stewardship and creative design that continues today. The blending of nature and culture in the Thousand Islands is unique and can be a guiding force as the region takes steps to promote and manage its scenic landscapes in the future.

We all know that the Thousands Islands Region is a beautiful place. But a lot of people don't …. and should. The scenery of the Thousand Islands is special: for those who live here, summer here, visit or plan to visit. Our beautiful river and its many islands are an important part of our quality of life and of our economy. People live here, visit, invest because the Thousand Islands are such a scenic, unspoiled place. How do we make sure the beauty of our region's landscapes is still there for our children and grandchildren?

Towns, villages, counties businesses and interest groups in the Thousand Islands have decided to partner with the New York Department of State's Coastal Management Program (DOS) to evaluate, promote and protect the region's unique scenic resources. The spectacular scenery of the Thousand Islands is central to our quality of life, many of our businesses and to our economy. Protecting this resource for future generations and promoting the economy of the region is a central goal of the project, called the "Thousand Islands Regional Assessment".

Dodson & Flinker, a firm of landscape architects and regional planners has been hired to work with the project team and local communities to inventory and assess the region's

scenic landscapes. This will be done using a method developed by DOS for use in the State's coastal areas and already implemented in the Hudson River Valley and in the Town of East Hampton on Long Island. The process consists of three steps:

- **Inventory:** With the help of local residents, divide the region into separate areas based on their visual characteristics. This step does not involve rating the scenic quality of the areas. It is an objective process to inventory the different types of visual features that distinguish one area from another.

- **Evaluation:** After the inventory stage is complete, the region's landscapes are evaluated for their level of scenic quality. The evaluation is based on state criteria and on local opinion. The state criteria rate scenery based on natural features such as terrain, water and vegetation; on cultural features such as villages, historic sites, farms and estates; and on other criteria such as recognition, views, visibility and lack of discordant features. Local opinion is gauged by asking meeting attendees and visitors to this web site to rank images of a variety of Thousand Islands landscapes. The results of this poll are combined with the state criteria to create a system to rank each landscape. The highest ranked landscapes are eligible for designation as "Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance" (SASS). The next highest are eligible for designation as "Scenic Landscapes of Local Significance".

- **SASS Implementation:** Proposed SASS areas are described in detail and submitted for review and approval at the local, regional and state levels. After public hearings and a final review at the state level, the SASS are officially designated under federal and state laws relating to management of the New York coastline. Any project requiring federal or state permits and/or federal or state funding will be legally required to ensure that adverse impacts to scenic quality are avoided. Specific recommendations for avoiding scenic impacts are included in the SASS report.

- **Local Scenic Areas Implementation:** Proposed Scenic Areas of Local Significance can be implemented by towns and villages through revisions to local policies, land use ordinances, infrastructure plans and conservation programs. Jackie Hakes, a planner from MJ Engineering will provide preliminary guidance to local communities on ways that they can help preserve and promote both Local as well as Statewide Areas of Scenic Significance. Implementation measures that local communities may want to consider include guidelines for minimizing the visual impacts of small scale residential and commercial impacts in scenic areas, preservation of open space along the river, preservation of undeveloped islands, promoting access to scenic areas and assisting the state in promotion of well managed scenery as a foundation of the region's tourism industry.

- **Promotion:** For decades a central focus of promotional efforts in the Thousand Islands has been the region's scenic beauty. Books, brochures, marketing campaigns and ads for businesses almost always feature striking photos of the area's scenic vistas. If the Thousand Islands are designated one of the state's top scenic destinations promotion of the region's tourist trade and economy will be greatly enhanced. People

and businesses will want to come to an area that has received a major scenic designation after a rigorous review and analysis process. And visitors, investors, new businesses and new residents will be reassured to know that measures have been taken to preserve and enhance the scenery for future generations.

II. Background

Towns, villages, businesses and community groups in the Thousand Islands have partnered with the New York Department of State's Coastal Management Program (DOS) to evaluate, promote and protect the region's unique scenic resources. The spectacular scenery of the Thousand Islands is central to the region's quality of life, and to its economy. Protecting this resource for future generations and promoting the economy of the region is a central goal of the project, called the "Thousand Islands Regional Assessment".

With technical and financial support from the New York State Department of State (DOS), Division of Coastal Resources, the Town and the Village organized a public participation process, adapted State scenic evaluation methodology to local conditions and conducted a thorough visual inventory and assessment process using Geographic Information System (GIS) computer technology. The inventory and assessment process is based on standards and criteria developed by the New York Division of Coastal Resources. Landscapes of local, regional and State-wide significance are identified through a simple, straight-forward process based on local participation and State scenic assessment standards.

More than 100 separate visual landscapes were analyzed using evaluation criteria based on the results of a scenic landscapes survey of more than 700 residents and visitors. The scenic evaluation process incorporates natural factors, cultural factors, views and visual perception factors in a methodology based on State coastal scenic assessment standards. The study identified 10 areas with potential for designation as Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance (SASS) under New York's Coastal Management Program. The SASS program protects scenic landscapes through the review of projects requiring State or federal actions including direct actions, permits or funding. Detailed descriptions of the potential SASS's were prepared, along with design and management guidelines for reducing future visual impacts in these areas.

An additional 5 areas with potential for designation as Scenic Areas of Local Significance were identified in the study. Scenic Areas of Local Significance would be protected through local or county measures or through other State programs. Recommendations for local and county implementation of the scenic protection plan

were also developed as part of the study.

The visual assessment process emphasizes both natural and cultural factors in the landscape. In historic coastal landscapes, such as Thousand Islands's, human activities over the centuries have modified and often enhanced the scenic character of the land. The methodology includes local public participation in the visual assessment process. Incorporating local residents' perceptions of scenery in the evaluation process is as important as meeting State-wide scenic assessment standards. Understanding and documenting historical and cultural traditions helps in assessing scenic character, especially in a community with a long tradition of art, painting, photography, architecture and landscape architecture. And finally, developing a simple, straight-forward assessment method based on solid data as well as on public participation ensures that the plan is practical, comprehensible and usable by both experts and the general public.

State Initiatives: These early efforts set a high standard for protecting and managing the aesthetic character of the landscape that has continued to return dividends over the years. Early conservation efforts, motivated in significant part by a desire to protect the Thousand Islands' scenic beauty, have resulted in the acquisition of significant areas of public park and conservation land, providing the region with one of the highest concentrations of park land in the State.

The State New York State also has long recognized the importance of scenic resources. The first broad based movement to recognize American scenic landscapes occurred in the mid-century through the work of the Hudson River School of painters. The American Romantic Landscape Movement which expressed itself in the arts, music and literature also developed in New York State before spreading to the rest of the nation. The Castles and stately homes of the Guilded Age that grace the Thousand Islands are an outgrowth of this movement that emphasized the harmonious blending of nature and culture.

In 1981, the New York State Legislature established the Division of Coastal Resources to "achieve a balance between economic development and preservation that will permit the beneficial use of coastal resources while preventing the loss of living marine resources and wildlife, diminution of open space areas or public access to the waterfront, shoreline erosion, impairment of scenic beauty, or permanent damage to ecological systems." (Article 42, s. 912). The State Legislature included scenic character as a key coastal resource protected by law. The law's Policy #24 encourages the protection of Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance and discourages the modification or destruction of geological forms, vegetation and structures that contribute to scenic quality. The policy

also discourages the location of inappropriate structures in scenic areas. Policy #25 encourages the protection, enhancement or restoration of scenic areas outside of SASS that contribute to local scenic character.

Federal Support: The Federal Coastal Zone Management Act also recognizes the importance of aesthetic values in managing coastal resources. The Federal Act States that it is national policy "to encourage and assist the States to…achieve wise use of the land and water resources of the coastal zone, giving full consideration to ecological, cultural, historic and aesthetic values….". (16 U.S.C. s. 1452[2]) Federal policy therefore requires the State to protect and manage scenic resources as a vital component of the nation's coastal resources. The Federal Coastal Zone Management agency has supported New York State's work in protecting and promoting coastal scenic resources.

Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs have been established in a number of Thousand Islands communities including Morristown, Clayton and Alexandria Bay. Scenic protection and promotion are an important element of the LWRP's and have laid the groundwork for the current study.

III. Landscape Inventory

The goal of the inventory phase of the project was to gather information on the location and objective characteristics of the Thousand Islands visual environment. The visual inventory consists of observing and documenting the relatively objective visual, physical and cultural characteristics of the landscape. These characteristics include physical character, cultural character, views, landscape composition and public accessibility.

A. Organization

Project Advisory Committee: Initial discussions between local communities and DOS resulted in the formation of a project advisory committee. The committee included representatives from a variety of backgrounds and interests in project decision-making. Led by Valerie Johnson, the committee has coordinated the project, reached out to involve others and has organized meetings and special events to promote the work. Over 60 people serve on the Advisory Committee and have played a critical role as project volunteers taking photos, providing historic information and advice on the project.

Advisory Committee members include planning officials, local historians, members of

recreational clubs, artists, business owners and others with an interest in local planning and scenic preservation. Representatives from the DOS also attended several Advisory Committee meetings. The Advisory Committee meets frequently during the course of the project to discuss public participation, scenic assessment and implementation. Advisory Committee members also volunteered their time to assist with field work, data collection, historical research and public events. Numerous people and organizations have lent their support and expertise to the project including the ten municipalities, St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties, local businesses and numerous non-profit organizations.

Volunteers: Many people signed up as volunteers on the project full time residents, seasonal residents, representatives from business, local and county officials, tourism groups and non-profit organizations. The volunteers recorded over ten hours of aerial footage of the region, attended workshops and meetings, provided information on the area and assisted the consultant team in a number of ways. Volunteers also participated in a day-long workshop in May to record valuable information on the Thousand Islands on maps of the study area. Volunteers have also helped manage and organize the project, providing important leadership and coordination. Volunteers will continue to play an important role as the project gets implemented in the future. Their work will include the promotion of the Thousand Islands, assistance with the implementation of the SASS and work on local implementation of visual management measures.

Research and Data Collection: The Project Advisory Committee provided numerous reports and data for the project including comprehensive plans, zoning and subdivision regulations and open space plans. The Counties and the 1000 Islands Land Trust provided GIS information on resources, protected lands and sensitive habitats. The Local Waterfront Revitalization Programs, which address scenic resource issues, were also very useful. The Department of State provided information on its scenic assessment process and copies of the 1993 Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance document for the Hudson River Valley.

The consultants also used recent (2010) ESRI world imagery orthophotos in project base maps. Digital versions of the 7.5 minute USGS topographic quad sheets for the Town and the Villages, and a Digital Elevation Model from the NYS GIS Clearinghouse was also obtained for the project area. This allowed the planimetric data in the USGS quad sheets and Digital Elevation Model to be overlain on and compared to the photographic data in the aerial orthophotos. Marine navigation charts and land use data from various local programs was also obtained.

With the help of the Advisory Committee, the consultants compiled a library of relevant

publications, historic photographs, local guidebooks and histories. The Thousand Islands Trails Preservation Society prepared a report entitled Scenic Views as Seen from the Thousand Islands Trails System that provided excellent documentation on scenic quality in the more remote areas of Town accessible only by foot.

B. Landscape Inventory

After extensive field work, research and data acquisition the visual inventory was completed in the office by identifying the scenic components present in each scenic area subunit.

Base Maps: The consultants developed digital base maps of the study area using both USGS topo quad sheets and aerial photographs. The coastal area boundary, and other important features such as parks, conservation areas, scenic roads, historic districts and other features were identified on the maps. The base maps were used for field work, presentations and the compilation of final scenic assessment maps.

Field Work/Photography: In order to fully document the landscapes of the Thousand Islands, Dodson & Flinker conducted field work throughout the region in March, May and August of 2014. The purpose of the field trips was to gather data and information about the visual characteristics of the landscape. The consultants took extensive field notes and photographs of their observations using the visual landscape categories described in the Table of Scenic Components and the Visual Evaluation Form. Field notes also identified the date, climatic conditions and other pertinent data relating to the field work.

Air Photos: A team of local volunteers took over ten hours of high resolution digital video of the entire region, providing the consultant team with an invaluable photographic archive of the region. A continuous series of photos of the shoreline as well as interior sections of the Town and Village were taken from an altitude of approximately 200-‘ to 1,500’. Photos were overlapped to ensure a continuous photographic record of the landscape. The photos have been provided to the Town and Village in digital format. Dodson & Flinker also made extensive use of on-line aerial photo sources such as Bing Maps and Google Maps which provide high resolution aerial oblique photo coverage of the region.

Car: The consultants traversed the entire coastal and interior areas of the region by car, stopping as necessary to photograph specific sites. Roads leading to the water as well as elevated areas providing views of the coast were carefully investigated and photographed.

Major highways as well as minor local roads were traveled to gain a complete understanding and visual record of the landscape as seen from roadways. All of the major and most of the minor roads from Cape Vincent to Morristown were travelled and documented over the course of three days of continuous driving.

Boat: The consultant's research vessel, the *Wally D.* was trailered to Thousand Islands in May and August to conduct a visual survey of the coastline from the water. The entire coastline of the river was visited and photographed from Cape Vincent to Morristown at a distance of one quarter to one half mile from shore. The Wally D. made two complete transits of the river and Lake Ontario shoreline with frequent side trips to visit clusters of islands and major river tributaries. Field evaluators took overlapping, water level photographs of the coastline, including navigable bays and estuaries.

Hiking: The evaluators covered certain areas on foot including state park and conservation lands, public hiking trails and accessible locations on some of the islands. Hiking provided a close-up view of the landscape not available from the boat, car or aircraft.

Identification of Visual Districts: Based on the preliminary site visits, Advisory Committee meetings and research, the Thousand Islands landscape was inventoried and divided into 15 Visual Districts: large areas showing a consistent visual character. Some visual districts were based on prominent natural features such as Chippewa Bay, Grindstone Island or Lake Ontario. Others were shaped by a blend of cultural and natural features such as areas of farm and forest land. Creating large visual districts based on consistent character allowed the landscape to be divided into manageable areas for further field investigation and evaluation. The visual districts were identified on working field maps and in the GIS data base. Adjustments to the districts were made as a result of additional field work and the comments of the Advisory Committee.

The visual districts include the Following:

1. Lake Ontario
2. Carleton Island
3. Cape Vincent Farm and Forest Land
4. Grindstone Island
5. French Creek
6. Clayton/Orleans Farm and Forest Land
7. Wellesley Island
8. American Narrows

9. Alexandria Farm and Forest Land
10. Chippewa Bay
11. Crooked Creek
12. Hammond Farm and Forest Land
13. Chippewa Creek
14. American Island
15. Morristown Farm and Forest Land

Identification of Visual Subunits: The 15 visual districts were further subdivided into 109 Visual Subunits: smaller areas of consistent visual character. The process to determine subunits is similar to the process to determine visual districts, but occurs on a much smaller, more detailed scale. The landscape was surveyed from the air, the water, by car and on foot to identify areas sharing common visual characteristics. No value judgments were used during this process - only the objective visual characteristics of each area were considered. The individual elements that make up the visual landscape, called scenic components, were identified and described in the inventory stage of work. These components include water, vegetation, topography, buildings and other natural and cultural features that shape the visual environment. The Table of Scenic Components developed by the DOS for state-wide use was used as a basis for identifying scenic components in Thousand Islands, but modified to address unique local conditions.

Inventory notes were compiled in Microsoft Excel. The districts and subunits were mapped as shapefiles in ESRI's ArcGIS, a geographic information system. Inventory notes and evaluation values, tabulated in Excel, were then joined to these shapefiles.

Identification of the Study Area Boundary: The New York Coastal Management Program defines the coastal boundary for the entire New York State coastline. This boundary varies in width, depending on terrain, hydrology, land use and other jurisdiction factors. In the Thousand Islands the coastal boundary is often located in close proximity to the river. This is due to the fact that much of the river's shoreline consists of steep bluffs which limit views of inland areas. But because tall buildings or structures can be visible from considerable distances from the shoreline, a decision was made to move the study area boundary further inland. The study area boundary was located from one to three miles inland from the shores of the river and Lake Ontario for this reason. Adjustments to the official Coastal Area Boundary map will be made during the SASS designation process to reflect this modification.

Coastal Viewshed: The coastal viewshed is defined as the area of the coastline visible from coastal waterbodies such as the ocean, the sound, bays and estuaries. Conversely,

the coastal viewshed includes areas of the coastline from which coastal waterbodies are visible as well as the waterbodies themselves. Viewsheds were calculated in ArcMap using the the ArcGIS 3-D Analyst Visibility toolset.

Two types of viewsheds were calculated: the primary viewshed and the secondary viewshed. The primary viewshed map shows areas that are visible from the river and its major tributaries today, not taking into account vegetation and buildings. Vegetation and buildings can be removed which is why the viewshed boundary does not include them. The secondary viewshed map shows areas in which tall structures up to 100' in height would be visible from the river. This secondary viewshed extends in a number of areas well back from the shore of the river.

The principal program used to determine the coastal viewshed was ArcGIS 3D Analyst Visibility Toolset (Visibility Tool). The program details include:

Input (elevation data): Began with a digital elevation model smoothed to 40x40 meter resolution. This coarser DEM increased computation time and created a result that was meaningful at the relatively coarse scale of site analysis without adding unnecessary detail. Assumed viewer height of 1.7 meters. Input data spatial reference system: NAD 1927 UTM Zone 18N

Input (viewpoints): Created a shape file with 87 points distributed throughout the area of open river. Points were distributed for even coverage and to allow views into major bays and tributaries.

Analysis: Viewshed (no trees)*:* Used "visibility" toolset with default settings unless otherwise noted above. The input DEM had x ,y, z resolution in meters so no multiplier was used to scale Z values.

Viewshed (100' structure*):* Created a "height above" analysis map in parallel with creation of the viewshed (no trees) dataset. This maps the minimum height that would need to be added to the elevation of a particular pixel for that pixel to be viewed from the viewpoints input. Classified "height above" values with a breakpoint at 30 meters (approximately 100').

Important Viewpoints: Four different types of viewpoints were identified: key water views, minor water views, views from boats and views of upland areas. Viewpoints are frequently visited locations open to the public that provide exceptional, extensive views of the coastal region. Examples include parks, estates, bridges and sections of roads skirting the coastline or providing views from high elevations. Viewpoints on water

include areas covered by excursion boats and other areas accessible by smaller boats. Key viewpoints can either be specific points or linear segments of roads, paths and river channels. Key viewpoints were first identified with the help of local residents at a workshop held in May 2014 in Clayton. The workshop provided excellent guidance to the evaluators conducting the inventory of view points in the field. Determining the location and extent of views involved ground level field work supplemented by analysis of topographic maps and aerial photos. Additional field checking and input from Advisory Committee members provided supplemental information. Key viewpoints were added to the GIS database, including information on the direction, extent and character of the views.

Visually Prominent Structures: Visually prominent structures include both structures and landscapes radically altered by human activity visible over a wide area. They include tall buildings, transmission lines, wind turbines, bridges, communications towers, large highways, road cuts and large areas transformed by human activity, such as landfills and very large paved areas. Visually prominent features and landscapes were added to the GIS database, including information on the extent and character of their prominence. The positive or negative impacts of these features were not taken into consideration at this point in the study: only their location and objective visual characteristics (height, color, material, form) were inventoried.

IV. Scenic Landscapes Survey

A. Summary:

In order to be accurate and legally defensible, visual assessment must be based on the values and perceptions of local residents. While a remarkable continuity of visual values exists from region to region, important local variations also exist and need to be incorporated in visual assessment methods. A major public participation process was therefore organized to ensure that the Thousand Islands scenic assessment process was based on solid foundations. This process consisted of a web-based visual preference survey as well as a day-long brainstorming session with a diverse range of stakeholders.

The goal of the image survey was to incorporate the preferences of local residents in the scenic assessment process. The results of the survey were analyzed to determine the specific visual elements that contribute to positive or negative perceptions of the landscape.

The Survey: Over 700 Thousand Islands residents participated in the web-based visual preference survey in the summer of 2014. (Please see Appendix ____ for detailed information on the survey and its results). The survey was divided into three sections. In the first section participants rated images of typical Thousand Islands landscapes on a scale of +3 to –3, registering their likes and dislikes. Images included a variety of landscape types ranging from natural landscapes to historic sites to contemporary residential development and to strip commercial development along highways.

The results of the survey are one of several factors used to determine which Thousand Islands landscapes will be rated as highly scenic. Participants voted their "gut reaction" to each image. Respondents also submitted written comments about their preferences and concerns which have been summarized in the Appendices of this report.

The results of the first section of the scenic landscapes survey have been analyzed by breaking each image down into its individual scenic components that are described in the state-wide evaluation methodology. These include natural features (landform, vegetation, water), cultural features (historic, landscape, architecture, discordant, ephemeral, settlement pattern and symbolism), views, landscape composition and public value. Breaking the survey down into specific scenic components allowed the results of the survey to be incorporated into the final scenic evaluation.

The second section of the survey included 10 sets of three images that participants ranked 1 (least scenic) to 3 (most scenic). Together with comments solicited after the poll, this section provided a more controlled and direct way of comparing our interpretation of the state value system to respondents values. For example, one item in the state Table of Scenic Components is shoreline. In the state system, more varied shoreline geometries are considered more distinctive, while simpler shoreline geometries are considered less distinctive. The consultants selected three images of shorelines, taken from a similar distance from shore, on the same partly cloudy day with slight chop in the water. One image showed a highly varied shoreline—what we would consider a distinctive shoreline based on the state system, another image showed a shoreline with a little less variation—what we would consider a noteworthy shoreline, and a final image showed a straight shoreline—a common landscape. The consultants found that though some people had different opinions, the overwhelming majority of participants ranked the photos in a manner consistent with the state system.

The third section of the survey asked participants to rank the most scenic images from section two. This section provides an additional, more controlled process to support the kind of conclusions the consultant team drew from section one of the poll. Together with section one, the results of this section provides insight into what scenic components respondents feel play larger and smaller roles in scenic quality.

V. Image Poll and Local Involvement in the Assessment Process

A. Modification of the Table of Scenic Components Based on Survey Results.

The Table of Scenic Components was modified based on the results of the image poll. Variations in visual perception occur in the different coastal landscapes throughout New York State. Determining these differences is accomplished by polling local residents through an on-line visual preference survey. For example, residents in East Hampton rated recent development in rural areas at the bottom of the scale, whereas respondents in the Thousand Islands showed a greater tolerance for development in rural areas. In addition, the physical characteristics of the landscape vary from region to region, requiring a modification of the Table of Scenic Components to match the features of a particular region. For example, on Long Island beaches and sand dunes play a major role in the visual landscape. In the Thousand Islands these features are of minimal important or are non-existent.

B. Image Poll Results

A Preference for Blended Natural/Cultural Landscapes: A striking feature of the survey results is the overwhelming preference for images that include both natural and cultural landscapes. In other scenic areas across the state, natural landscapes have tended to outweigh cultural landscapes. The difference in the 1000 islands may be due to the sensitive – even artistic way that buildings are integrated into the riverscape as well as due to the very high if at times quirky character of the Guilded Age architecture that dominates the most scenic areas of the river.

The most highly ranked image of the Rock Island light house is typical of the region's preference for combinations of nature and culture, artistically interwoven. Seven of the top 10 images feature combinations of natural waterscapes with historic, carefully sited structures that respect rather than overwhelm their natural setting. Interestingly, none of the structures are contemporary and all hark from the Guilded Age era and before. The respondents clearly appreciate buildings carefully sited in the landscape which has interesting implications for the design guidelines and local implementation sections of this report.

Former grazing and pasture land, active farming, historic parks and greens, historic main streets, tree-lined residential streets, trails, swimming beaches, estate gardens all factored

within the top 50 images. Clearly human alteration of the landscape can have a positive effect on scenery, especially in a community as rich in landscape history as Thousand Islands. Cultural landscape factors include land use, historic character, architecture, landscape character, discordant features ("eyesores"), settlement patterns, ephemeral (temporary or transient) characteristics, and symbolic meaning. Respondents overwhelmingly preferred conservation, recreation or traditional land uses such as parks, conservation areas, farms, forests, working waterfronts and historic centers and neighborhoods. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Historic character of both landscapes and buildings had a strongly positive influence on the rating of the images. Elements such as historic farming, historic parks and commons, historic landmarks, streets and neighborhoods featured prominently in the highly rated images.

A Preference for Waterscapes: Natural features that factored in the survey include, above all water. Out of the top 20 images, all but two feature water landscapes. In surveys conducted throughout the world, water is almost always the most highly-rated natural scenic factor. Humans usually like views of water, our most basic life-sustaining element. The Thousand Islands region is no exception. Views of water - the river, Lake Ontario, the tributary streams, marshes and lakes - predominated in the top-ranked images. The top-ranked image is a view of the Rock Island Light House with water surrounding the Canadian Shield rocks and shoals. The first image without water is #14, a view of an historic limestone house with a towering American Elm. The presence of water is almost always an important factor in raising the overall score of an image.

NATE - NEED MORE ON WATER HERE

Land Use: By an overwhelming margin, the preferred land use in the survey consisted of small amounts of residential, especially historic residential development carefully sited in unspoiled natural settings. This reflects a strong preference for blending natural landscapes with limited amounts of development as long as the underlying scenic character of nature is preserved by the siting and design of structures. This type land use and the siting and design principles that shape it could become a foundation of future development guidelines and standards in the region. Surprisingly, working waterfronts did not score well, the majority occurring in the bottom half of the ratings. The Thousand Islands' working water-related industries are obviously an important economic and cultural element of the community, but are often not perceived as highly scenic with the exception of some historic working waterfronts.

The lowest ranked images feature contemporary automotive landscapes consisting of billboards and roadside commercial strips. Development created by automobile oriented lifestyles is clearly the least scenic land use for survey participants. It is interesting to note that advertisements for cars almost always feature individual cars set in scenic landscapes and almost never feature groups of cars, especially cars stuck in traffic. This is a highly negative image probably may be due to the side effects of our vehicular lifestyle such as wide paved roads, parking lots, sprawling land use patterns, air pollution, road rage and accidents. The remaining 20 lowest-ranked images consisted of mobile home parks on the waterfront, wind turbines, suburban sprawl in farmlands, boat storage, transmission towers and poorly maintained older structures. This wide range of uses was generally united by poor site planning, poor architecture, excessive paving, lack of landscape planting and lack of relationship to the surroundings and historic context. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Landform: Survey respondents showed a strong preference for hilly, varied terrain with rounded islands and shoreline hills. Of the top ten images, 8 include rolling terrain with moderate relief. Since the Thousand Islands region lacks dramatic topography, moderate terrain is proportionally more significant. Flat terrain, while occasionally included in highly-rated images, tended to predominate in the lower rankings. Of the bottom 10 images, 7 included flat terrain. Of the remaining 3 bottom-ranked images had only low or moderately rolling relief. Because of the relatively modest landforms in the Thousand Islands, moderate hills and bluffs received higher rankings and greater importance in the region compared to areas such as the Hudson River. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Terrain and Geology: Respondents showed a strong preference for the hilly terrain characteristic of Canadian Shield geology, especially islands with pronounced relief as well as for bluff along shorelines of the river and its tributaries. Hilly to rolling terrain created by Canadian Shield rock formations typified most of the highest rated images. Outcrops of the igneous and metamorphic Canadian Shield rocks also scored very high in the poll. Areas underlain by limestone tend to be flat to moderately rolling, resulting in lower scores in the image preference poll.

The foundation of the visual character of the Thousand Islands has been created by the interaction of Canadian Shield geography with the waters of the Saint Lawrence River. The Shield covers almost half of Canada, including almost all of Quebec and Nunavut, and most of Ontario and Manitoba. It is Pre-Cambrian rock, some of the oldest geology

in the world. Canadian Shield rock is typically rolling with a rounded profile and a thin coating of soil and pockets of vegetation. It's only connection with the United States occurs in the Thousand Islands where it extends to form the Adirondacks, bringing the rugged, sculpted visual character of the north to the sedimentary terrain of the region. This is why the Thousand Islands are geologically and visually unique. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Vegetation: Vegetation featuring mature forests, open meadows or fields, seashore vegetation and mature street trees was rated very highly by poll respondents. Evergreen trees bent towards the east by the strong westerly winter winds sweeping off Lake Ontario were particularly highly rated. Open marshes along tributary streams scored very high as well. Low scrub vegetation, successional fields and areas of uniformly dense second growth vegetation scored lower in the poll results. Mixed mature deciduous/evergreen forests received very high scores. The highest-scoring vegetation in the survey featured islands or shorelines covered with dense, mature vegetation often with a preponderance of mature evergreen trees, including wend-swept pines. Houses, castles or garden structures were often tucked into the forest with trees framing or partially screening the structures. Of the top 10 images, 9 contain mature trees on islands or along the shoreline, 6 of which screen or frame buildings tucked into the woodland. This symbiosis of buildings and trees is a strong tradition in the Thousand Islands extending back to the Guilded Age era of design and construction. These historic design principles can be applied today and could become guiding principles for future development in the region. The image poll results in the Thousand Islands were consistent with results in other areas of the New York State coastline. The state-wide Table of Scenic Components did not have to be modified in this category.

The lowest-ranked images are notable for their general lack of vegetation. Highways, parking lots, median strips, lawns and weedy shrubs are the predominant type of vegetation in these images. Of bottom ten images, 5 lack vegetation or have vegetation of a scrubby or scattered character. Where mature trees are present they are often partially obscured by development occurring in the foreground of the view.

Discordant Features: Many of the man-made "visually prominent features" described above were rated very low in the image poll. The exceptions to this low ranking were historic bridges, castles, passing ships and historic decorative towers and monuments. The lowest rated land uses were tall structures such as wind turbines or extensive areas of pavement such as wide highways lined by strip commercial development. Of the bottom 10 images, all but two contain visually prominent, man-made features such as

wind turbines, industrial style boat storage buildings, billboards and highway commercial strips. Again, a unique aspect of visual character in the Thousand Islands is the fact that prominent, man-made features can either be viewed as eyesores (highway strips, billboards) or attractive accents to the natural landscape (castles, historic bridges). The reasons for this dramatic contrast lies in the type of prominent feature and the siting and design of development and construction. Again, this offers lessons from the past that may be useful in guiding development in the future. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Cultural: As described above, cultural factors are strikingly present from the top rated images. This is in marked contrast to the East Hampton SASS where they were strikingly absent. Farming landscapes play an important role in the top rated images: pasture land, potato fields, hay fields, meadows and woodlots figure prominently in the highest-ranked views. The role of history and traditional architectural and landscape principles figures prominently in the region's high esteem for cultural landscapes. Some of positive influence of cultural landscapes is based on very old historic traditions such as the limestone houses, traditional post-and-beam homes and the historic light houses that line the river channels. A second and even more dominant influence was created by the architects, landscape architects and their wealthy clients who brought a unique way of locating and designing buildings in harmony with the dramatic landscape of the Thousand Islands. These influences have shaped development in the intervening years and continue in some new development today. Unfortunately in many new residences and developments, these principles seem to have been forgotten as the clear cutting of vegetation and the construction of high density development on small islands and sensitive shorelines has taken precedence in some areas. The state-wide table of scenic components was modified to reflect this unique regional perception.

Architecture: The top-ranked images included buildings tucked into the natural landscape. Some highly prominent buildings such as the Boldt Castle which dominate the surrounding landscape were also highly rated. Respondents showed a very strong preference for traditional Thousand Islands architecture and a moderate dislike of modern or contemporary architecture. But Thousand Islands respondents showed a greater affinity for recent development than residents of other areas of New York State. This may be due to the relatively low amounts of development in the region compared to Long Island or the Hudson River. All but two of the buildings included in the top-ranked 50 slides featured traditional Thousand Islands architecture. The two exceptions were a very carefully designed and sited modernist home and a recently built residence above a boat house. In contrast, 9 structures built within the last fifty years were featured in the

lowest ranked second half of the survey.

Preferred architectural styles include residential, commercial and waterfront structures dating from before the industrial revolution. The top-rated 8 buildings are all designed in traditional architectural styles (Colonial, Victorian, Classical, Eclectic Castle or carefully designed Traditional Revival styles). The architecture of the Guilded Age including castles, Edwardian era mansions, substantial summer homes and early limestone cottages were all highly rated in the poll. The region's famous limestone farm houses were especially highly rated and frequently mentioned in workshops and meetings. Early to mid Nineteenth Century wood frame houses as well as stone waterfront warehouse and commercial buildings also received high ratings.

The iconic castles and large estate buildings typical of the Guilded Age in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries were the most highly rated as well as the most visually prominent of all the architectural styles in the region. Less imposing and less flamboyant and eccentric estates and large summer homes dating from the early Twentieth Century in Edwardian, Queen Anne, Edwardian and Colonial Revival styles were also highly ranked, especially when set in carefully designed landscapes. Architectural components of estate landscapes including park buildings, follies, stairways and courtyards were also highly rated.

The first modern or contemporary building to be rated occurs in image #23, showing a very carefully designed modern house tucked into a shoreline. Eight of the bottom 10 images featured buildings and structures built after World War II, including residencers, industrial or storage buildings, roadway commercial buildings, wind turbines and communication towers. This builds a strong case for some measure of architectural siting and design controls, especially in historic areas and visually sensitive landscapes such as shorelines and open farmland. It also builds a strong case for the review and modification of large utility, road or large scale industrial projects that fall within the jurisdiction of the SASS program. The image poll results in the Thousand Islands were consistent with results in other areas of the New York State coastline. The state-wide Table of Scenic Components did not have to be modified in this category.

Ephemeral Characteristics: Ephemeral characteristics are transient features or events in the landscape that are temporary, intermittent yet repetitive. These features have a direct impact on the perception of beauty in the landscape. The Thousand Islands are rich in ephemera due to the Saint Lawrence Seaway, extensive wildlife habitats, varied climate, the nearby presence of one of the Great Lakes, the presence of many farms and the extensive viewpoints created by the many islands and promontories in the river. The

importance of ephemeral features was emphasized in meetings and workshops held in the region. Wildlife, sunsets and shipping were cited as important contributors to the region's scenic quality. Shipping in particular was mentioned as a unique feature of the landscape, unique nationally and worldwide. It is highly unusual to have ocean going ships navigating such a narrow and scenic waterway. Sailors on the ships repeatedly mention how uniquely beautiful the Thousand Islands are compared to most waterways they navigate.

State of Upkeep/Environmental Quality: Run down, poorly maintained and shabby buildings and landscapes were rated poorly in the image poll, especially if the the poor condition of the structures also implied the presence of pollution or trash. On the other hand, ruins of historic architectural styles can have an element of the picturesque that can be viewed as a positive scenic element. Section two of the image poll compared three degrees of upkeep and environmental quality. The results of the ratings for these upkeep images showed a clear preference for well maintained, environmentally clean landscapes and buildings.

Views: A large majority of the top-scoring images consist of mid range views over water towards islands and varied shorelines. Of the top ranked 25 views only three consist of long range views of open water or expansive areas of farmland. The remainder are mid range views. This is in part due to the smaller visual scale in many parts of the region and in part due to the visual preferences of respondents. The Table of Scenic Components has been revised to reflect the regional preference for mid range views with an emphasis on composition and variety over length and breadth. Coastal views also predominate in the top-ranked images. Of the 25 top-ranked images, all but 21 include views of water. Clearly, the presence of the Saint Lawrence River and its major tributaries are an important scenic element in Thousand Islands.

Composition of Views: The composition of views including framing, arrangement of visual elements and the juxtaposition of form, line, color and texture play an important role in the perception of scenery. The multitude of islands in the region creates numerous opportunities for a wide range of visual compositions to occur. Perhaps as a result composition played a very strong role in the image poll results. Of the top 10 images, 8 showed strong composition with a variety of subjects in the near, middle and background areas of the image. Compositional factors in the landscape can be enhanced or reduced through the skill of the photographer. This survey attempts to avoid excessively composed, highly artistic images but no photograph can be completely neutral. The focus of this analysis is on compositional elements such as vegetation, contrasting forms and lines, structures and other graphic elements that predominate in a given landscape,

not in the lens of the photographer.

Background of Views: Background elements in a view have an important effect on the image's overall rating. Positively ranked backgrounds include water bodies, woodlands, fields and meadows and historic structures. Negative background elements include many types of contemporary development, transmission towers, prominent structures, roads and billboards. In rating scenic quality, the presence of a nearby positive or negative background feature can play an important role. Important positive background elements in the Thousand Islands include the Interstate 81 bridge, shoreline bluffs, wooded hills and Lake Ontario. Negative background elements include the Wolfe Island wind turbine complex, the Brockville high rise, water and communications towers.

F**ocal Points of Views:** Focal points, while similar to background views, tend to be more prominent objects or objects located in a more focused position in the landscape. The most highly rated focal points include prominent natural features such as small wooded islands, historic architecture, unique geology and major wind swept trees. Water frequently serves as a focal point, especially when framed or highlighted by other landscape features. Buildings and structures rate highly in the survey almost on an equal footing with natural focal points. Prominent landmarks such as the historic lighthouses, the castles, bridges, notable mansions and estate grounds received consistently high rankings. Negative focal points include utility lines, transmission towers, high-rise buildings, contemporary buildings and shoreline development.

Other Factors Sited in the Legislation: Specific, tangible factors such as topography, vegetation and architecture obviously have an important role in shaping scenic quality. But more abstract factors such as variety, unity, contrast and uniqueness also play an important role. Consideration of these factors is specifically mandated in New York State's coastal scenic preservation legislation.

Variety can be an important contributing factor to the creation of scenic quality. Images consisting of a wide range of positive visual elements will often be perceived as more scenic than images with few components, though this is not always the case. The highest-ranked image is an example of rich visual variety: it includes water, sky, diverse vegetation, unique cultural and architectural features as well as a wide range of colors, lines, textures and patterns. Other high ranked images have similar amounts of visual variety either in terms of subject matter or visual variety. Of the top 10 images, 8 show a high degree of visual variety. Variety in and of itself is not always positive: variety of negative visual elements can create low scenic ratings. Image 48, for example shows a high degree of visual variety but received a very low rating. This is due to the negative

character of the varied elements of the image: industrial buildings, overhead utilities, parked cars and trucks, pavement and a single street tree.

Unity refers to the visual cohesion and consistency of an image. A highly unified image contains elements that fit well together as a scene. Unity exists both in form (unity of shapes, lines, colors, textures and composition) as well as in content (unity of land uses, cultural factors, lack of discordant features, management). Of the top 20 images, 12 are highly unified and 8 are unified; none have low unity. Image #1 is highly unified both in form and in content. The shapes, textures and lines of its visual composition weave the varied elements of the scene together in a cohesive visual scene. The content of the view is unified because it is a completely undisturbed natural scene whose individual components (sky, water, trees, wetlands) are compatible with each other and have a strong interrelationship. Of the lowest 20 images, 12 have low unity and 13 have negative unity (strong discordant factors). Image #48 is a classic example of an image with low unity. The visual forms in the image conflict with each other, producing a jarring pattern of forms, lines and textures. While the content of the image: a highway commercial strip, is unified as a work of engineering, it is highly fragmented from an environmental, architectural land use and landscape perspective.

Contrast, like variety, can be either beneficial or detrimental to visual quality, depending on the nature of the contrasting elements. Positive contrast creates a strong visual dynamic in an image by creating a dynamic juxtaposition of forms, lines and colors. Negative contrast pits conflicting and incompatible elements against each other to create visual discord. Of the top 20 images, 14 have high or very high positive contrast. Image #2 is a good example of strong positive contrast: the multiple small islands covered with dark evergreen trees contrast with the light tones of the water and the sky. On the opposite end of the spectrum, image #37 shows a lack of contrast between the various elements of the scene: the fields, woodlands and road merge together in a uniform scene..

Uniqueness refers to the relative scarcity or special qualities of a landscape or visual feature. Highly unique landscapes are rare with few similar examples in the surrounding area. Uniqueness is usually a positive feature, but uniquely negative images also exist. Of the top 20 images, 16 are unique or highly unique based on the statewide table of scenic components. Of the lowest 20 images, 14 show either low or moderate uniqueness (common) or negative uniqueness. Images # (wind turbine complex) and #42 (rural hamlet in disrepair) are good examples of negative uniqueness: both images feature very unusual structures that received very low scenic ratings.

Public Value: The extent to which a landscape is recognized by the public and the

frequency with which it is viewed have important indirect impacts on scenic quality and on the preservation and management of scenic landscapes. Public recognition of landscapes was determined by analyzing historic records, travel and tourism publications and discussions with advisory committee members and others. Visibility of landscapes was determined by the frequency of viewing: very high for heavily traveled roads, high for other roads and frequently used pedestrian and marine areas, moderate for infrequently traveled roads, trails or marine channels, and low for areas requiring extensive hiking, boating, off-road driving or flight to view. Highly recognized, highly visible landscapes and landscape features can receive higher levels of designation and protection than less recognized, less visible landscapes.

Photo Conditions: Perception of a landscape can be influenced by the conditions that exist at the time of viewing. The time of year, time of day, weather, aspect and atmospheric conditions need to be taken into account in evaluating a given view. The most favorable conditions include clear, sunny mornings and afternoons in the late spring, summer or early fall. Least favorable conditions include cloudy, hazy, rainy weather in flat (midday) or dark light. Ephemeral effects such as sunsets, sunrises, wildlife, people or cars also need to be taken into account in evaluating an image. Every attempt was made to take all photos for the survey under similar, positive conditions (sunny summer weather). Unfortunately, this was not always possible. Compensation will be provided for overly enhancing or overly detracting environmental conditions. Most of the photos of the Thousand Islands were taken during clear, sunny conditions. Some were taken in hazy sunshine and a limited number were taken in overcast conditions. Photos of Cape Vincent were taken in hazy and overcast conditions resulting in unduly negative ratings. A third visit to the site at a later date benefited from clear, sunny conditions revealing the hidden beauty of this portion of the Thousand Islands.

The results of the survey show that photo conditions were not a major factor in the results. Of the top 25 images, 15 were taken in bright summer sunshine, 6 were taken in haze and 4 were taken in overcast weather. Of the lowest ranked 25 images, 17 were taken in bright sunshine, 5 in haze and 3 in overcast or cloudy weather.

VI. Landscape Assessment: Evaluating Scenic Quality

The inventory phase of the project determined where specific types of scenery are located and what they consist of. The public participation phase gaged how public perception of landscapes varied from statewide norms. And in the assessment phase, this information was evaluated in order to rate the quality of various landscape types based on a system of

scenic values. The methodology is based on local public opinion, standards established by the DOS and professional visual assessment standards applied by the consultants.

A. Refine Table of Scenic Components: The results of the Thousand Islands Scenic Landscapes Survey were analyzed and incorporated into the scenic landscape evaluation method developed by the DOS for use in New York State's coastal zone. A cornerstone of this method is the Table of Scenic Components, a description of scenic features (such as vegetation, terrain, land use, views, water, cultural features, etc.) that together create the visual character of the landscape. Each of the scenic features is defined according to three levels of scenic quality: distinctive (scenery of national or statewide significance), noteworthy (scenery of regional or local significance) and common (not considered scenic).

Developed by DOS for use on the entire New York coastline and tested in the Hudson River Valley, the Table of Scenic Components is fine tuned to suit the unique conditions and perceptions of each region of the coast. In the Thousand Islands, the Table was modified based on the results of the image survey using multipliers reflecting the results of the survey. This ensured that the evaluation method reflected the preferences of local Thousand Islands residents.

The DOS Table of Scenic Components was modified to reflect Thousand Islands local preferences as follows:

- High scenic quality often created by the interplay of natural and cultural features
- Ephemeral characteristics were seen as an important part of the visual experience.
- Historic architecture is seen as especially important in enhancing the scenery.
- Recent residential development along shorelines found not as objectionable as in other regions.
- Landform and terrain is appreciated on a more subtle level than hilly regions such as the Hudson River Valley
- Residents of the area are highly attuned to the scenic beauty of their region.
- Water plays and even greater role in the perception of scenic quality in the region.
- Not surprisingly, islands play a dominant role in the appreciation of scenery.
- The architectural extravagance of the Guilded Age contrasts with the more challenging economic times of the present day, enhancing the symbolic value of expensive historic buildings and landscapes.
- Playfulness in architecture and landscape is an important scenic feature as seen in the high ratings received by extravagant castles, whimsical towers and garden follies.

- A tolerance for recent waterfront development on islands and the mainland.
- A preference for waterfront as opposed to inland farm and forest landscapes.
- An awareness of the stark geological contrasts that underlie the visual landscape.
- A muted appreciation of the visual character of certain farm landscapes.
- A strong awareness of iconic landscape features such as seaway ships, light houses and limestone farm houses.

Please see Appendix ____ for the revised Table of Scenic Components.

B. Visual Assessment: With the completion of the inventory of the visual landscape and the determination of the public's perception of scenic values, the actual scenic assessment process begins. The process is based on statewide assessment criteria development by DOS as modified by the results of local perceptions as expressed in the image poll. Using the modified Table of Scenic Components, evaluators filled out the Visual Evaluation Form. The Form consists of a spread sheet listing all the visual elements of the Table of Scenic Components. The Visual Evaluation Form includes categories for natural and cultural features as well as the visual criteria from the New York State SASS legislation.

The scenic components identified in each subunit are rated based on the values described in the modified Table of Scenic components on a scale ranging from highest scenic quality ("Distinctive"), moderate scenic quality ("Noteworthy") and low scenic quality ("Common"). A composite score for each subunit was determined by adding the individual scores for each scenic component found in the subunit. The basic premise of the method is to base the scenic rating system on the results of the public participation process and the state-wide evaluation methodology.

The assessment of the subunits was completed in ArcView, a geographic information system program that links data to maps and aerial photographs. A data table for each of the 109 subunits was created in ArcView (see the Table of Scenic Components in Appendix C). The following scenic components, described in detail in the Table of Scenic Components, were rated on a scale of +1 to +3 in the data table:

Natural Features	Cultural Features	Views	Complex Features
Landform	Land Use	Coastal Viewshed	Ephemeral Character
Relative Relief	Forestry	View Length	Symbolic Value
Geology	Parks/Open Space	View Width	State of Upkeep
Farmland	Estate Landscapes	View Background	Discordant Features

Bluffs	Estates	View Composition	Variety
Environmental Quality	Exurban	View Focal Points	Unity
Lakes	Resorts	Contrast	
Streams	Suburbs	Uniqueness	
Ponds	Villages	Public Recognition	
Beaches	Town Centers	Visibility	
Vegetation	Industry		
Shoreline Configuration	Mining		
Water Features	Transportation		
Ocean	Prominent Features		
Wetlands	Harbors		
Wilderness	Historic Character		
	Architecture		
	Designed Landscapes		

The GIS data table for each subunit also includes a subunit identification number, a brief description of the landscape and information on the visual absorbtiveness and visual vulnerability of the subunit (see Appendix C). If a particular scenic component was not present in a given subunit, it received a neutral rating. This ensures that landscapes containing only a few, spectacular scenic features will not be overshadowed by landscapes containing many mediocre components.

Because water is such a major element in the visual landscape, both in the statewide methodology as well as in the regional image poll, a multiplier of 2 was applied to subunit scores in areas where water predominates the visual environment and where shoreline configuration is a factor. This includes the Saint Lawrence River and its major tributaries.

A data analysis was conducted on the completed ArcView Data Table to determine the total scenic rating (score) for each subunit. Scores for each scenic component were added up and divided by the number of rated characteristics.

C. Determining Scenic Areas: After each subunit was evaluated and given a scenic score, overall patterns of scenic quality began to emerge. While isolated pockets of scenery in individual subunits do exist, more typically larger scenic areas consisting of several subunits tend to become apparent. Using the data analysis capabilities of the GIS system, groupings of subunits with similar scenic scores can be created by aggregating similar scores. For example, all subunits scoring between 3 and 5 can be grouped, revealing larger areas of similar scenic character. For purposes of establishing larger scenic districts for this document, the following score groupings were created:

Based on this analysis, the highest-scoring subunits could be eligible as Scenic Areas of

Statewide Significance under the Coastal Management Program. These subunits meet stringent State criteria for scenic quality in the coastal zone. The next level of scenic scores are appropriate for designation as scenic areas of local concern. These areas could be given a measure of recognition and protection through local action of the Village or Town (zoning, subdivision regulations, special districts or other measures) or though County or other State and federal programs.

In deciding the ultimate boundaries of the SASS and local scenic areas, difficult decisions need to be made concerning areas to include and exclude. A strict numeric interpretation is not undertaken because some less scenic areas may need to be included within designated scenic districts to ensure contiguous boundaries, continuity or unity of the scenic district. Likewise, small areas of scenic quality may not be included in designated scenic districts because of their isolation, small size or local context. The following guidelines are used:

- SASS need to be relatively large (generally greater than 1 square mile) areas of consistently high, but not necessarily uniform, scenic quality meeting statewide criteria.

- Boundaries need to be logical and consistent.

- The scale of visual analysis must be regional in nature and focus on larger landscape districts, not specific individual views or scenic sites. Small areas of low scenic quality will, therefore, be included in larger scenic districts and small areas of high scenic quality may be left out of scenic districts.

- More detailed future studies should identify and include smaller scenic areas or focus on a much more fine-grained scale of inquiry.

A detailed description of each of the 9 proposed SASS is included in the following chapter of the report. The descriptions detail the location, extent, character and individual scenic components of each SASS. They also will allow the scenic resources data base to continue to grow and evolve over the years. As conditions change, new information is made available and future studies are conducted at greater levels of detail, this new information can be added to the existing data base. Scenic data can be compared with other types of information such as property ownership, zoning districts, utility districts, and conservation land.

VII: Promotion

The promotion of the Thousand Islands economy and tourism industry is based in many ways on the character and beauty of the region's landscapes. Preserving and promoting the scenery of the Thousand Islands go hand in hand.

The Importance of Official Designation: Designating Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance in the Thousand Islands will reinforce the fame of the region as a uniquely beautiful part of the state's coastline. Creating a rigorous evaluation process based on statewide criteria and procedures will create a benchmark of the state of the area's scenery ensuring that its beauty is based on objective criteria, not just boosterism.

Access to Grants: Official recognition of the scenic landscapes through the SASS program will enhance the region's ability to secure state, federal, non-profit and private foundation grants for tourism, education and other projects. Many grant making authorities rely on official recognitions in the decision making process used to select successful grant applicants. Some state and federal coastal program grants actually require official designations or vetting to allow regions to be eligible for grants. And the fact that the region has gone through a rigorous review process provides additional credibility to grant applications.

Promotional Campaigns: Scenery has long been a part of promotional efforts on the part of both the public and private sector. SASS designation will provide additional material for specific promotional campaigns and will enhance the credibility of these efforts. Promotional campaigns can make use of the photographs, maps, diagrams and narratives created by the SASS project. Interpretive programs, exhibits and tours can be based on the information generated during the study. For example, tours could focus on specific scenic areas identified in the SASS report.

The Seal of Approval: Official state recognition of the scenic beauty of the Thousand Islands can play a major role in future promotional campaigns. Local residents, summer home owners and visitors have known about the beauty of the region for over a century. But many in New York State and throughout the northeast as well as the US and Canada may not be aware of the unique beauty of the region. The state and federal recognition of the area – a seal of approval – can become part of the marketing of the Thousand Islands beyond groups and region's targeted for promotion in past campaigns. An entirely new target audience for tourism and economic marketing campaigns can be accessed as result of the state's recognition.

Quality of Life: The appeal of the Thousand Islands for current and future residents, visitors, summer home owners and businesses is based in large part on the region's liveability and quality of life. The fact that the area is relatively unspoiled by poorly planned development and has retained its natural beauty and richness is a key promotional advantage that should be highlighted in future campaigns. Being surrounded by beautiful scenery is a key element of this quality of life that can attract visitors and investors interested in escaping other areas that have been spoiled by poorly planned development. This phenomenon has existed in the Thousand Islands since the Guilded Age in the late Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries, applies tody and will continue to be a driving force of the local economy well into the future. People are looking for a better way of life to escape to on vacation, to move to and to invest in.

Emphasizing the quality of life advantages of the region, including its striking scenery will boost the area's economy by encouraging investment and relocation. Thanks to computer and communication technology workers have much greater flexibility on where they work. Many "telecommute" from remote locations only returning to corporate headquarters for key meetings. This means that workers have greater flexibility to select their place of work on a range of factors. And a key factor in workplace or corporate relocation decisions is quality of life. A trait that the Thousand Islands region has in abundance.

Guarantee of Wise Stewardship: The fact that the region values and protects one of its key resources provides reassurance to visitors, investors and new businesses that the area's key attributes will be well managed and preserved well into the future. This will enhance investment since businesses and property owners will have confidence that one of the main reasons for their decision to move and invest in the area is protected by a sense of wise stewardship that ensures stability and permanence. Not only is it nice in the Thousand Islands; it will continue to be that way well into the future due to the care that the region takes in managing its key natural, cultural and life-style resources.

VIII: Implementation

After revisions are made to this draft report and final report is prepared, DOS will begin the formal designation process for the Thousand Islands Scenic Area of Statewide Significance. This process involves preparing narratives of each SASS including siting and design requirements in order to minimize or eliminate the visual impacts of large scale projects. Additional public hearings will be held to ensure that the communities

and the public are informed of and support the SASS designations.

Local implementation measures can also be undertaken by communities willing to explore this approach. Jackie Hakes of MJ Engineering will have prepared outline recommendations for participating communities as a part of this report. Further implementation of local protections could include the drafting of specific local landuse policies and regulations to ensure that small scale development will not cause incremental degradation of the scenic character of the region.

On-going coordination with local authorities and departments will ensure that scenic issues are taken into account on both local and regional projects ranging from highway improvements to health codes to infrastructure improvements. One possibility would be to transform the volunteers and administrators who have made this project a success into a permanent advocate for the scenic character of the region. This "friends of river scenery" group could become an advocate for the promotion and protection of the region's beauty and could speak on behalf of the river's landscapes and the economy that they help support.

VIII. Potential Scenic Areas of Statewide Significance Narratives

(to be completed at a later date under separate contract)

1. Lake Ontario Scenic Potential Area of Statewide Significance

2. Carleton Island Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

4. Grindstone Island Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

5. French Creek Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

7. Wellesley Island Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

8. American Narrows Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

10. Chippewa Bay Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

11. Crooked Creek Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

13. Chippewa Creek Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

14. American Island Potential Scenic Area of Statewide Significance

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