

Rock Slides in the Finger Lakes

The Finger Lakes region in New York State is known for massive rock slides. Sedimentary rock which forms large gorge areas and makes up the bulk of the rock walls in the Finger Lakes is soft and fractures easily. The danger posed to human life cannot be underestimated by the risk posed by potential rock falls. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preserve take measures to protect people by maintaining barriers to areas that are dangerous. Rock falls are often caused by fractures which have formed as a result of swelling, separation of rock layers or geological shift. Natural fractures can run perpendicular to each other which may create an entire block that can fall or be knocked off. Although it does not commonly happen, these large sections of rock may fall as a result of rain saturated porous limestone, shale or sandstone that adds weight to the already weakened section of rock resulting in gravity forcing it downward. Other causes of rock falls can be ice expansion or plant growth in the fractures of rock. Rock falls could also be caused by extreme drying of the rock.

