

Catskill Park Advisory Committee
June 28, 2019 Meeting
Minutes

Welcome and introductions

CPAC Chair Jeff Senterman welcomed everyone to the meeting and announced that CPAC has a new volunteer secretary: Heather Rolland. Jeff cited transparency and efficient sharing of information among all members of CPAC as reasons for creating the role, which had been under discussion for some time. Minutes with relevant attachments will be distributed to all on the CPAC mailing list.

Jeff thanked Moe Lemire, Executive Director of the Pine Hill Community Center, for use of the space for today's meeting.

Presentation By Catskill Center on Stewardship Activities

Andy Mossey, the Catskill Center's Advocacy & Stewardship Coordinator presented a detailed report on stewardship activities at Kaaterskill Falls. The Catskill Stewards Program was created by the Catskill Center last year at the Blue Hole. This year in addition to Blue Hole, stewards are present at Kaaterskill Falls Friday through Monday inclusive, and at the Platte Clove Preserve on weekends, providing education to visitors and litter picking. Andy notes that the program is enjoying greater enthusiasm from the public at Kaaterskill Falls compared to Blue Hole.

Andy provided some statistics regarding visitation: more than 4400 visitors were counted in May 2019 (with a start date of 5/19/19). More than 1300 in depth conversations (interactions lasting longer than 5 minutes) were logged for the same time period. In June 2019, numbers increased to over 5000 visitors counted, but two days worth of data have not yet been tallied. More than 1500 in depth conversations reported. The visitors counted all originated from Laurel House Road Parking Area or the Mountaintop Historical Society parking area. Visitors were asked if they attempted to park at Molly Smith Parking Area, and if they hiked up from Molly Smith PA.

Moe Lemire provided a report regarding the use of Mountain Top Historical Society for overflow parking for Kaaterskill Falls visitors. Moe reported that over Memorial Day weekend, 210 cars and over 600 people were counted at that location.

Heather Bagshaw from Greene County Tourism reported that traffic congestion and flow issues continue to be at the forefront of the county's perspective re: visitorship at Kaaterskill Falls. Heather informed the group that the county tourism office is directing visitors to use North/South Lake or Scutt Road for parking.

A question was asked - "Who are the visitors to Kaaterskill Falls?" Andy Mossey replied: 1) there is a wide variety in terms of demographics 2) a lot of families with children 3) a surprising number of experienced hikers. He noted that

overwhelmingly, the visitors are friendly and eager to interact with the stewards. They seem to be hungry for information and maps.

Jeff made several summary remarks regarding Kaaterskill Falls and the work of the Kaaterskill Clove Working Group:

- Easy to read maps of the area are being prepared and will soon be available
- Remember to read the notes (attached) from the Kaaterskill Falls Working Group
- One idea regarding sharing information for visitors regarding Kaaterskill Falls was to provide an FM radio station broadcasting updates and relevant information. This is being explored.
- A message board for the highway providing timely or urgent messages (such as full parking lots) was discussed
- The county and town both continue to explore ways to ease traffic congestion and address issues
- If you'd like to join the Kaaterskill Falls Working Group, email Jeff Senterman. Next meeting will be scheduled this summer.
- Google map issues were noted, as the falls doesn't exactly have a street address.
- The Catskill Center Steward Program will create a year-end report

Presentation by Woodstock Land Conservancy Re: Manufacturing Plant Adjacent to Bluestone Wild Forest

Maxanne Resnick, Executive Director of the Woodstock Land Conservancy, presented a detailed report regarding a manufacturing project to be located in the Town of Kingston, adjacent to the Bluestone Wild Forest. Precast concrete and steel would be manufactured at the site in two 120,000 square foot buildings that would be constructed. The town planning board made a negative SEQR declaration. Woodstock Land Conservancy and other stakeholders (Fats in the Cats, Open Space Institute, and others) have requested that the planning board rescind the negative declaration and reopen the process due to insufficient research into environmental impacts (noise and water, among other impacts). At this time the WLC is not voicing formal opposition to the project but requesting additional studies be completed before making a negative declaration re: the SEQR process. Kevin Smith shared additional natural history and geology and hydrology details regarding the property in question. Additions materials will be circulated for those interested. Town of Kingston Planning Board is accepting written comments through July 1, 2019. A public meeting is being held on July 15, 2019.

A formal letter from CPAC was discussed. DEC and CWC both expressed some reticence about having CPAC become actively engaged in advocacy on this issue. The chair recommended that member groups of CPAC discuss this project internally and submit a letter to the planning board if they see fit.

FPAC Updates

Bill Rudge presented some updates from FPAC, including a brief discussion of pending legislation on “e-bikes.” If the legislation is signed into law, this topic will be on the agenda at the next CPAC meeting. Land bank issues were also discussed.

DEC Region 4 Updates

Staffing: Bryan Ellis, former Forest Preserve Forester for Region 4 Forest Preserve, has transferred to central. Vicki Cross, Supervising Forester, is currently holding covering those responsibilities with assistance from Ian Dunn (Region 3 Forest Preserve Forester) and Pine Roehrs, Region 3 Senior Planner. The Region 4 Forest Preserve Forester position is being considered a “critical fill” so there is hope that a new forester will be hired soon.

Additionally in Region 4, it was reported that Kaaterskill Falls has kept Forest Ranger and Assistant Forest Ranger staff busy.

Region 4 Natural Resources Director Jeff Rider reported that he led a tour of DEC staff attorneys and law students at Kaaterskill Falls. He described the experience as a “good primer on real world environmental law” and is hopeful that some of the students will be interested in pursuing such a career upon graduation. The tour participants found the area and the legal issues extremely compelling.

Regarding the Mount Hayden UMP amendment and the Colgate Lake new UMP: Jeff thanked and recognized Pine Roehrs for her work on these documents and admitted that he is personally responsible for the current delay in moving these processes forward.

Jeff recognized Region 3 Forester Ian Dunn’s and Region 4 Supervising Forester Vicki Cross’s efforts in managing the SCA steward program.

Jeff mentioned that the VMS boards for Kaaterskill Falls are still pending.

Jeff reviewed the public response to the special regulations in place at Kaaterskill Falls. He noted that the responses are mixed, but felt that overall the special regs are helpful. Jeff noted the heavy burden these regs place upon the rangers: daily presence and enforcement has been critical.

David Kukle, a member of the Town of Hunter Board asked about communicating the special regulations for Kaaterskill Falls in other locations. Jeff Senterman suggested working with DOT on that. The Town of Hunter and the Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway will pursue additional signage regarding the regulations. It was also suggested that signage regarding the regulations be placed in kiosks at parking areas such as Molly Smith, Mountain Top Historical Society, and Platte Clove, among others. Jeff suggested adding this topic to the agenda of the KFWG next meeting, and also

reminded the group that the Catskills Visitor Center could be another place to share information about the regulations.

DEC Region 3 Updates

Staffing: Regional Director Kelly Turturro was promoted to Acting Executive Deputy Commissioner. Joh Petronella is Acting Regional Director. Welcome to new Wildlife Manager, Nathan Ermer.

Region 3 Forest Preserve Forester Ian Dunn announced that the expansion of the Upper Cherrytown Parking Area should be completed in 2 - 3 weeks. This parking lot expansion was paid for by the Aid to Localities funds (part of the funding Senators Seward and Amedore obtained for the Catskill Park). At some point in the future, the Long Path will be rerouted through this area, and an increase in visitorship is expected. This new parking area expansion will accommodate increased hiker parking as well as snowmobile trailers.

Tahawus Trails is currently working in Bluestone Wild Forest, making trail connections, some reroutes, and creating new trails. Ian referred to this summer as the "Summer of Stewardship" as the department works with stewards at Kaaterskill Falls, SCA backcountry stewards, and NYNJTC summit stewards, as well as the Catskill Center's stewards previously described.

The new fire tower at the Catskills Visitor Center is under construction. It is hoped it will be completed by mid to late August. Please note that the DEC is working with the Visitor Center to ensure safety. There will be no access to the tower when the center is closed, and center staff will monitor access to the tower to maintain safety. The center is currently working to create policies and procedures around this.

Working with Ranger Slade, a few designated campsites were added in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area: one is off the Curtis-Ormsbee trail and another is closer to the Slide summit. These will be added to the maps. All signage in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area is new. Vista maintenance on Slide Mountain has been completed. Thanks and acknowledgement of trail work to Andy Garrison for his team's efforts in the Slide area. Additional thanks and kudos to Ranger Brand for his assistance.

Pine Roehrs, reported that the Sundown Wild Forest UMP has cleared another hurdle and is headed to DEC executive for final approval.

Alex Rice, graduate Student, was introduced. Alex will be working with Pine to create a baseline assessment of the trailless peaks using Strava heat maps. Pine and Alex report that so far they are seeing a direct correlation between the Strava heat maps and the published tracks (published on Catskill Mountaineer website).

Regarding the Recreation Plan for the Catskill Park, Bill Rudge noted that there have been some challenges to overcome but that the draft should be available late summer – early fall. The contract with the consultants ends in August and an extension has been requested.

Update from DEC's Albany Office

McCrea Burnham reported that the Smart Growth Grants are in, that DEC staff are working with DOT on signage, and that trail counters have been placed on certain high use trails to be used for data collection. Several different types of counters will be placed. The locations of these trail counters has not been published.

Jeff suggested that member groups share information about all these efforts to help keep stakeholders aware of the situation and lower chance of vandalism on tools like trail counters.

The professional trail crew working in the Catskills this season is Tahawus Trails. They will be working for 10 weeks in regions 3 and 4 on trail issues on Blackhead, Sugarloaf, and around Kaaterskill Falls.

Ranger Updates – the Ranger Academy is currently in session and there are 16 new recruits.

Region 4: Ranger Captain Steve Preston reported that the region is currently down one ranger in Schoharie County. Captain Preston introduced Lieutenant Dave Pachan. He reported that Kaaterskill Falls has been busy but that it has been somewhat better regarding injuries. He noted that Rangers have been trying to be soft-handed and rely upon education when addressing issues rather than going straight to enforcement.

Region 3: Captain Craig Tirrell introduced himself. He reported that the region is down two rangers and reiterated the need for increased staffing. He mentioned that the Blue Hole has been a drain upon resources, credits the permit system and stewardship efforts for improving the situation.

Cary Institute Updates:

Jamie Deppen reported that an ESF intern has partnered with the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies to complete a research project measuring sign in rate at various trail heads. She noted that hikers are also surveyed as they leave trails. A report will be made available by the end of the summer.

Jamie also said that four research projects are underway as part of work under the Catskill Science Collaborative: 1) rattlesnake data 2) trail head sign in data and 2 additional researchers working on stream restoration and Hemlock Woolly Adelgid barriers to treatment. Recognition of these efforts was received from NYS Senator Jenn Metzger. Researchers are also working with Dr. Mike Kudish on getting his data digitized.

Upcoming events: Science Pub Night 7/30 at the Roscoe Brewery. Come drink beer with a scientist. 7 pm. Fish theme.

DEP Updates:

DEP Recreation Manager, Tom Davidock announced that the DEP's updated recreation rules are in place. He distributed a short summary of the changes and updates, and noted that some barriers have been removed.

The recreational boating program was reviewed. Numbers are comparable to last year. DEP recognizes the assistance of the CWC for their help with this program. Pepacton Reservoir had the highest numbers with approximately 300 tags, 66% of them seasonal. Kayaks were the most common, then canoes, and finally rowboats.

Ashokan Rail trail construction is underway. The completed sections will be opened this fall. Please see the DEP's, or Ulster County's Facebook page for photos. The entire trail being constructed is 11.3 miles; approximately 10 miles will be opened with the remaining section to be opened shortly thereafter.

The annual reservoir clean up date has not been set yet but it will be held in mid September.

Rail Trail connections and details were discussed. Connections to the Quarry Trail (under construction) were discussed.

DOT Updates

Peter Manning announced a Local government transportation conference will be taking place in Greene County on October 18. The keynote address will be the DOT's Vision for the Catskills. He noted that there will be a panel discussion at this conference on the concept and realities of offering shuttle service.

CATS Updates:

Heather Bagshaw of Greene County Tourism and CATS reported no current update from CATS.

Traffic issues at Kaaterskill Falls continue to be a major area of focus for the County.

Catskill Center Updates:

Blue Hole Steward Program: a great team has been hired and received extensive training. There is a full time presence. A real need for education is seen. It is felt that the permit system needs more outreach and press coverage as many visitors still don't know about the permit requirement. Permit numbers have been increased to 50 per day. There continues to be a large number of visitors showing up without a permit. Permits are fully subscribed on Saturdays; 50 to 75% subscribed on Sundays.

Catskill Fire Tower Project Updates:

Laurie Rankin from the NYS FFLA reported that the NY chapter of FFLA hosted a conference. She reported that the Catskills Fire Tower project is in its 23rd year and boasts over 100 volunteers, with fire towers staffed from 10 am to 4 pm Memorial Day weekend through Columbus Day weekend. She notes that numbers appear to be on the rise this year.

This year Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower celebrates its 100 year anniversary, with presentations in local schools and a field trip that was planned but rained out. The main events commemorating the BLMFT anniversary will be held August 2 - 4, including an open house at Morgan Outdoors and children's events at the tower on Saturday. Please note these events will be canceled in the event of rain.

Catskill Mountain Club Updates:

Catskill Mountain Club Executive Director Wendell George reported that the CMC will be finishing up the Quarry Trail soon. The CMC received a grant from the CWC to create a full day bus tour (one scheduled for July and one in August) exploring the theme of impacts upon the water supply. Different speakers present talks on watershed issues.

In addition, Wendell announced the creation of the All Trails Challenge Facebook Group.

Catskill Mountainkeeper Updates:

Executive Director Ramsay Adams announced that Mountainkeeper will be collaborating with several organizations on an economic impact study. They expect a draft of this study to be released soon.

Ramsay also announced that Mountainkeeper had been informed of a new glamping operation with over 100 sites planned inside the Catskill Park. Mountainkeeper was asked to participate in the discussion exploring the impact of this glamping resort and ultimately the project was rejected by the planning board due to water/sewage issues. Regulations and issues surrounding glamping and Tentrr were discussed briefly.

Catskill Park Coalition Updates:

No updates but save the date, the first Tuesday of February will be Catskill Park Day.

Wayfinding Signage Project Updates:

Peter Manning reported that they are at the stage where they are just tying up loose ends. He noted that the Catskill Watershed Corporation's assistance has been key. Peter noted that the sign directing would be campers to Devil's Tombstone from route 23A will not be installed this year. Jeff Senterman reminded the committee of the history of the wayfinding signage issue, noting that it was one of the first issues raised by the nascent committee and is now all but completed. The signage project

was financed via a 50/50 split between the CWC and the DEP for a total cost of \$100,000.

Ramsay Adams asked about the “welcome to the Southern Tier” sign at a route 17 exit in Sullivan County. Issues regarding this nomenclature were discussed.

CRISP Updates:

The Catskill Center received a grant that creates a Strike Team to remove invasive species throughout the CRISP region. Current activities include Giant Hogweed control and Mile a Minute weed control, and sampling reservoirs. CRISP is also involved in NY Invasive Species Awareness Week, July 7 – 13 with an event at the Catskill Center on 7/10. CRISP also recently rebuilt their website: catskillinvasives.com

Scenic Byways Update:

The brochure is available. The brochure advertises a contest that by entering captures visitor data. Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway is finishing up their audio tour and have begun a 5th kiosk. Signage and speed limits through the Devil’s Tombstone was mentioned as a concern and discussed.

CWC Updates:

October 18 is Local Government Day in Hunter, NY, at the Catskill Mountain Foundation. Keynote addresses and panel discussions focusing on the Catskills, and presentations all day.

Diane Galusha is retiring.

Catskill 3500 Club Updates:

New president Maria Bedo-Calhoun introduced herself. New funding legislation and the possibility of making donations directly to the DEC was mentioned. Bill Rudge clarified the law and provided additional information. Maria mentioned the club’s donation to support the NYNJTC Summit Steward Program, and that the club is exploring ways to work with private landowners in the Moon Haw area to address trespassing and vandalism. Maria also mentioned that the club is working with others in the areas to promote carpooling to trailheads.

Catskills Visitors Center Updates:

A new rack card has been created. The visitors center’s director, Sarah McGinnis is current out on maternity leave and Katie Palm is filling in as the Acting Director.

Hunter Area Trails Coalition Updates:

The group received a \$160,000 grant for the bridge in Stony Clove. They continue to focus on their work of connecting trails in the area.

Lark in the Park Updates:

Dates for 2019 are 10/5 – 10/14. The call for proposals for events has been made. Last year over 30 organizations participated, conducting over 50 events.

NYNJTC Updates:

Josh Howard, Chief Operating Officer, announced that Ed Goddell is no longer with the NYNJTC. Josh noted that there is no Catskills program coordinator at this time. He reported that Andy Garrison has taken on a role coordinating volunteers in the region.

Trout Unlimited Updates:

(NAME?) a good year so far with a surprising number of holdover fish. At Green Lake in Leeds, a 25 inch trout was caught. Greene County Sportsmen stocked brook trout at old camp Harriman lake (near Colgate Lake).

New Business:

the Catskill Center submitted a SMART growth grant addressing issues of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). Ian Dunn added that these grants sometimes include justice and as such are referred to as the JEDI grants.