

Catskill Park Advisory Committee Meeting Notes
February 13, 2020
MTC Conference Room, 61 Academy Street, Margaretville, NY

The meeting was called to order at 1:13 pm

Jeff Senterman welcomed all present and initiated introductions

Presentations

The main presentation of the day and the majority of the meeting was designed to focus on the presentation and discussion of the Draft Greater Catskill Region Comprehensive Recreation Plan.

Bill Rudge provided background through a PowerPoint presentation:

- Funded by Aid to Localities funding (grant), and administered by the Catskill Watershed Corporation
- Area included Catskill Park plus DEP lands
- The goals included increasing/improving access
- After approximately 1 year, Alta Planning (the consultants) and the steering committee partners parted ways, despite Alta not being quite finished with the plan.

Not a DEC, DEP, CWC, or Catskill Center plan, but any implementation would be via lead agency if decision is to go forward with a specific recommendation.

The purpose of today's presentation is to provide overview of plan.

Comments today welcome but comments in writing are urged. Public comments period ends 3/31/20.

Initial questions:

Will there be additional public meetings? No, this is it.

Charlie Lutomski asked who is the steering committee: Steering Committee is comprised of DEP CWC, DEC and Catskill Center

Will the power point presentation be available online? Yes

This plan was intended to build off of and update the Forest Preserve Access Plan of 1999, created by DEC. This is pre DEP's opening of lands and availability of recreation on DEP land, and linkages between DEC and DEP lands.

Kevin Smith (WLC) asked about rating system. Is rate system just for hiking? No, all trails.

Roger Wall asked: is there a specific interpretation of the plan in terms of sustainability? How did consultants address sustainability?

Bill Rudge answered that DEC was hoping for more sustainability issues to be included and addressed.

Kevin Smith asked: seeing the possible reduction in use of automobiles, but struck by the lack of infrastructure resources recommended, e.g. bike wash, repair station, showers, bathrooms, etc. Bill said the trail town concept embraces that concept and would provide those resources. Some of these resources could be provided on public lands but many would be welcomed on private lands.

Peter Manning: will comments be added and answered in an appendix? Yes. Still Pete: Do you see areas that should have been suggested but consultants did not address? Yes: More DEC-DEP cooperation and working together. More partnerships between DEP and DEC.

Barbara CWC: maps online are not updated. New maps will be in the final plan. Some are currently inaccurate.

Nick Bove (WARF):

What is the real reason for this?

Has errors and omissions. Worried that plan will harm his grant writing abilities.

Also worried that cycling group is underrepresented. Feels that trail town concept leaves out cycling. Feels it's hiking trail centric.

Jeff S. reminded /urged Nick to make specific comments in writing. Steering committee wants comments. More details provided in writing the better.

Bill R. reiterated – comments welcomed.

Jeff Rider commented: remember that this plan is a birds eye view. It is Not intended as a replacement for UMP process. Any change would go through regular UMP process.

Nick Bove: feels like it was authored by DEP. Feels like DEP restrictions are being imposed on DEC lands.

Maria Bedo-Calhoun (Catskill 3500 Club): Time frame – after comments, when will plan be released?

Late spring early summer

Josh Howard (NYNJTC): resources allocation for plan? Are resources available to implement plan?

Jeff Senterman provided background regarding funding for the plan and for its implementation. Plan itself was funded via Senator Amadore and Seward's Aid to Localities funding. It was the hope that following this plan, the Catskill Park Coalition and other Park advocates could then point to the document as an advocacy tool. If important, funding could come from future advocacy.

Bill: any implementation would go through normal UMP process and budgeting process. NY Works and other governor initiatives may be used as well. Also support for the environmental bond act would be helpful.

Kevin commented: keep the big picture in mind. Plan has really improved from one year or so ago.

Kathy Nolan: mapping was an issue but this does codify what was said at multiple meetings. Can we have the outtakes included? The “impossible” options – the weird suggestions. Bill Rudge said yes.

Heather Bagshaw: for communities to have game plan they need more than 30 days. She said “when you go to the communities for money they won’t support you.”

Tim Luby: regarding the identification of trouble spots/hot spots. Tim was disappointed not to see specific areas noted and what would be done to improve them. Bill responded: that wasn’t what the consultants were charged with.
Tim: take care of what we have. Don’t build new trails without being able to care for and protect what we have.

Jeff responded: if we need resources, advocate in Albany

Moe: trail towns. I’d love to see Pine Hill become a Trail Town as described in the plan. Compared to Damascus Virginia.

Jeff: put it in writing.

Nick: re inclusiveness re mountain biking UMPs. Issues with Mount Hayden and Colgate not being in the UMP list. Greene county and northern Cats being ignored.

Dave Kukle: Mayors and supervisors meet once a month. The comment period is too short. Is the deadline cast in stone? Feels locals need to be schmoozed.

Jeanine Pascarella: have copies at local libraries. Have more links on social media.

Barbara Puglisi: we need to finish within the deadline for the grant.

Dave Kukle: feels that no one in local governments will prioritize reading and commenting on the plan.

Jeff: invited more sharing/dissemination of plan

Michelle Yost: hard copies of draft to key locations would be helpful

Jeff: please send me the locations. Jeff will facilitate that happening.

Perhaps post a copy without the maps? Slow download due to maps. It was pointed out that the current maps are out of date.

Paul Lenz: DEP goal give clarity to how city land can be used, be more involved in planning. Wants to put proposals for land use in a regional context. Requests that DEP is engaged early in the planning process.

Bill: summary/overview – think concepts, not panic to get Your trail in the plan. That's not the purpose of the plan.

Nick reiterated previous concept.

Bill: this plan is not the venue for getting DEP to change their minds about mountain biking.

Question about Tahawus trails. Morphed into question about Alta consulting. Jeff S. and Jeff R. explained why hiring Alta. Specifically sought “outsiders” with new perspectives and thinking outside the Catskills box. Jeff R. reiterated – seeking to make a cohesive unit out of the region; disseminate folks away from hot spots. Promote recreation. Promote diversity in outdoor rec.

The plan is not the place to argue about underlying policies.

More back and forth with Nick.

Jeff reiterated that there are places to discuss this. Bill reiterated this.

Jeff made sure everyone who wishes to speak had the opportunity.

Trailless Peak Study

Pine Rohrs reported on the study of impacts from hikers and herd paths on trailless peaks in the Catskills.

Sign up sheet circulated to sign up for email of study. Large file will not be mass emailed.

Master Plan indicates that department must assess for eventual trail development.

Questions and discussion ensued.

Bill reminded that if/when management decisions need to be made, there will be options for management. Goal is to preserve the trailless experience as best as possible for as long as possible.

DEC updates by Peter Frank

DEC wants to do a transportation study around higher used areas. Want to use the same group that does the national parks. Likely to do ADKs first. Looking to define the scope of the study.

Governor's budget includes \$\$ For sustainable trails. Exploring getting trails bonded. Making the argument that since the trails are sustainable, they should be bondable. Josh Howard suggests comparing to Bear Mountain to see an example of a trail that is sustainable and lasting well.

Looking at sustainability and visitor flow.

DEC Region 3 updates

- Sundown Vernoooy Kill plan is approved.
 - Long Path reroute off the roads
 - Reroute AHP loop,
 - New PA and new connector trail to Blue Hole
 - Expanding the Kanape PA
- Commending DEP on partnerships, including the Jessup Road access and the Peck Road area and Red Hill access (just submitting land use application for PA).
- Treating Hemlocks in Peekamoose valley (plan for this year).
- Also partnership with Bruderhof, NYNJTC, and 3500 club to replace Lean tos on Terrace and Table. Hoping to replace this year.
- Amendment to Bluestone Wild forest UMP – should be out shortly.
- Shandaken Wild Forest UMP revision needs polishing and then be sent out. This amendment includes expanded mountain biking connection to Belleayre.

DEC Region 4 Updates

Mount Hayden and Colgate Lake UMPs should be out for public comment and review later this summer.

Two bridge replacements scheduled. Both on old highway... technically put in as vehicle bridges.

Overall, trying to keep up with maintenance.

NYS DEC Ranger updates:

8 forest preserve rangers in region 3

Lots of new staff – new Lt, new captain, lots of transfers.

Expecting 3 AFRs this summer in region 4

DEP updates

Limited staff at this time

Changes in recreational boating this year – earlier start date
Wrapped up deer hunting program 18% success rate. Targeted to forest regeneration.
Thanked for partnerships with other groups for trail building.

Member Updates

Fire Tower Project

Fire Tower: numbers for 2019 are in. Increases noted across the board. Laurie Rankin has attributed to the fire tower challenge. Volunteer hours also reported. Red Hill will celebrate 100th anniversary this year.

Catskill Mountain Club

Bramley Mountain Fire Tower Friends group is incorporating. Started fund raising. Trail opening in the spring: Acorn Hill. 20 car PA. 2 mile trail.

Mountainkeeper

Working for a moratorium on neonicotinoid insecticides. Also working on bio controls for invasive species.

Catskill Park Day

“Best Yet” 70 volunteers, 10 teams. 8th year doing it.

CRISP

2/19/20 Doing a presentation – part of Cornell Cooperative Ext,
2/26 invasive species stakeholder meeting in Olive re: invasives on the Ashoka Rail Trail

Michelle Yost Greene County Soil and Water:

Doing a corridor management plan

Catskill Science Collaborative:

Trail use report from last meeting still in progress
5 proposals received for his year's studies.

Catskill 3500 Club:

Thanks to Ian Dunn, DEC Land manager region 3 for help re: Table mountain lean to project
Currently working with the new caretaker on DT and Graham
SAR team assisted on a recovery in Suffern, NY

Hunter area trails:

Restoration plan for the stone carvings at Pratt Rock
Looking at creating a connection to Huntersfield
DEP connection to DEC up by Condon Road in memory of Bonnie Blader

NYNJTC

Hiring for the Americorps program

Working to fill in volunteers

WLC

Training for volunteer steward program

Had 65 stewards last year

Sat 3/28, 10 am to 1 pm

Email Maxanne Resnick for sign up

Proposed concrete plant update: Kingston planning board laid out the new process. Revised/appended environmental impact plan. At some point in the future there will be a public hearing. Seeking donations.

Meeting adjourned 4:27 pm