

## Catskill Park Advisory Committee

### Meeting Notes

June 21, 2023 at 2:30pm

Meeting held at Catskill Watershed Corporation (CWC) Conference Room  
and via Zoom

The Chair (Jeff Senterman) welcomed all present. He went over a few housekeeping and technical details for the hybrid in-person/zoom meeting. Members present at the CWC introduced themselves and those online introduced themselves through the Zoom chat function.

**FPAC Updates:** Jeff noted that the last FPAC meeting in April included a site visit to the Peekamoose Blue Hole and a meeting at the Catskills Visitor Center's pavilion. FPAC members were able to walk throughout the Blue Hole area and received a report from DEC on the work that was proposed in the recent Unit Management Plan (UMP) update.

**Catskill Advisory Group:** Jeff noted that the [CAG has released their final report](#), which makes a series of recommendations on how to address high use in the Catskill Park and better manage the park cohesively. He noted that the DEC will be making regular updates on the progress of implementation at future meetings.

**NYSDEC Central Office:** Sean Reynolds noted that Peter Frank has been promoted to the Assistant Director of the Division of Lands and Forests.

**Formerly Trailless Peaks Management:** Pine Roehrs noted that the DEC is working on a Visitor Use Management (VUM) plan for the Formerly Trailless Peaks of the Catskills (formerly peaks above 3500' in elevation seeing increased use and establishment of social paths). This effort is different from the VUM effort at Kaaterskill Clove and in the High Peaks of the Adirondacks, as this is a DEC led effort. Mapping is currently ongoing and an RFP has been put out seeking additional support. Bird monitoring is ongoing on mountain peaks. The expected outcome of this effort would be the establishment of special management zones with desired conditions that would be actively managed to meet conditions. Those actions could involve a variety of items including the establishment of new trails and/or the identification of existing social paths that could be utilized as a single route to the summit.

**NYSDEC Region 3:** Ian noted that:

- [DEC has released the UMP Amendment for the Sundown Wild Forest](#) that includes improvements to the Peekamoose Blue Hole area.
- Trail building is ongoing in the Shandaken Wild Forest.
- Neversink River bridge repaired on the Peekamoose-Table Trail.
- A new roof has been installed on the Beaver Meadow Lean-to
- Work has been done on the Table and Terrace Mountain Lean-tos.
- The Bruderhof is currently working on a replacement lean-to for Echo Lake
- Special regulations for the Neversink River Corridor were finalized on March 22, 2023 and cover the Camp Pine Parcel with fishing access that has turned into a popular swimming area.

**NYSDEC Region 4:** Sean Reynolds noted:

- All parking in Kaaterskill Clove has been closed and there is a zero tolerance enforcement of those parking restrictions.
- Tahawus trail work on the Escarpment Trail and Kaaterskill Fall Trails.
- The DEC operations crew has made spring trail sweeps
- Trail Conference trail crew has worked on the Mary's Glen Trail and the Huckleberry Loop.
- SUNY ESF is working on a project to document trail conditions

**NYSDEC Rangers:** There was no one present to give a report.

**NYCDEP:** Tom Davidock noted:

- The Recreational Boating Program on the reservoirs began on May 1st.
- DEP is working with the DEC on the hunting program.
- The Rondout Tunnel Shutdown Project is ongoing and there may be potential changes to normal reservoir levels moving forward. He suggested checking the DEP website for details.
- Jeff Graff noted that negotiations are ongoing for the next DEC Water Supply Permit (which allows DEP to acquire land in the watershed) and that the DEP is looking at conservation easement language with the DEC.

**NYSDOT:** Peter Dunleavy noted:

- One of his staff members is out on parental leave through the end of the year, leaving his office short staffed for the time being.
- Hiring efforts are ongoing to staff the Forest Preserve position

- The Catskill Park Transportation Working Group is back to meeting regularly to discuss transportation issues in depth.
- Working to better include byways in the CPTWG meetings.
- The grants to the federal government to support scenic byways were not successful
- Working to get various Forest Preserve projects on the capital plan
- Spotted lantern fly tracking ongoing.

**ORDA:** Kathy Nolan noted that Mike Pratt, the CEO of the Olympic Redevelopment Authority (ORDA), is retiring this fall.

**CATS:** Efforts are ongoing to get together the Tourism Working Group called for in the CAG's Final Report. In Greene County work is ongoing to support Kaaterskill Clove efforts such as the new trolley running between Tannersville and Palenville.

**Catskill Mountain Club:** Peter Manning noted that the DEC should publish hours of operation for the Fire Towers. A discussion ensued about whether Tower cabs should be left open all of the time to allow hikers to climb to the top, even when a Volunteer or Catskill Center Steward isn't present. Mount Tremper's fire tower has been left unlocked without any problems over the last year. The general consensus was more access was better. Peter also said that the condition of some of the towers and cabins have deteriorated. A discussion ensued with DEC noting that repair work needs to be done and is being programmed into work plans.

The CMC is working on creating a map/guide to help guide volunteers to areas that are not maintained well. They are also looking for hike leaders and will be holding a fundraiser on June 30th.

**Catskill Mountainkeeper:** Kathy Nolan noted that CMK has hired their new Catskill Stewards for the season and that there is also work on the O&W Corridor occurring for walking trails.

**Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower:** Wendell George reported that there have been challenges with the Town of Delhi approving the DEP's Land Use Permit for the installation of the Fire Tower on Bramley Mountain. Wendell noted that the FoBMFT are now working with the County to move forward on the project.

**Catskill Scenic Byways:** It was noted that the management plan for the Catskill Mountain Scenic Byway is being amended to include Hurley and Roxbury in the Byway.

**NYNJ Trail Conference:** The Summit stewards are out and working. The Huckleberry Loop has been adopted by the TC. The Catskill Trail Crew will be working on Slide Mountain in July and the Lean-to Crew will be working on the Trout Pond and Kelly Hollow Lean-tos this summer.

**NYSFFLA:** The group is concerned about the condition of the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower and the Observer's Cabin. Ian from DEC said that they are working to get to the windows as quickly as possible. There was concern that the conditions could lead to a closure of the tower, especially in light of the fact that the cabin is already closed due to problems with the foundation.

**Woodstock Land Conservancy:** It was noted that the Ashokan Rail Trail is open and usage numbers are at about 200,000 visitors a year. There is some progress on the expansion of the Ashokan Rail Trail, which is moving slowly. Currently planning and engineering work is being done.

#### **Seasonal Job Links:**

NYNJTC: <https://www.nynjtc.org/corps-positions>

Catskill Center: <https://catskillcenter.org/opportunities>

NYSDEC: <https://www.dec.ny.gov/about/38596.html>

## Catskill Park Advisory Committee Agenda

Wednesday, June 21, 2023 -- 2:30pm

Catskill Watershed Corporation Meeting Room

### ***NYSDOT Report*** - Peter Dunleavy,

#### Contacts and Staffing

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**Alexandra von Bieberstein, RLA** Senior Landscape Architect *(on Maternity Leave through 2023)*

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Landscape Architecture Bureau  
Office of Environment  
New York State Department of Transportation  
50 Wolf Rd, POD 4-1, Albany, NY 12232

- LAB has hired one Summer Intern (Tim Baker, a Le Moyne Student, also with us last summer.
- We have also promoted one LA to a Senior LA (Jianxin Dai)
- In the process of hiring another Associate Landscape Architect and possibly more staff.
- New Director of Environmental Science Bureau – Stephanie Delano

#### Regrouping of Transportation Working Group

- Meeting in May, 2023- first since March 26, 2020
- Opportunity to shape this group into whatever is most useful for all involved.
- Summary of ideas for future meetings:
  - Both byways should report out on activities
  - All NYSDOT Regions should continue to report, preferably including maps
  - Bi-annual is a good target
  - Zoom is preferred by CPAC members
  - Perhaps longer than 1 hour- esp given added byway reportouts
  - Group wants to learn how to contact the right person at DOT – LAB will prepare a detailed list of Main Office and Regional contacts by topic (Ed Frantz did this too)

#### Annual Reporting

- **Adirondack & Catskill Park Travel Corridor Reporting & Work Planning**
  - Tracking of ongoing and planned projects and activities.
    - Format is a comprehensive reporting/planning spreadsheet accompanied by portfolio pages highlighting specific projects and activities.
  - 2022 report completed, posted to NYSDOT external website:

<https://www.dot.ny.gov/divisions/engineering/environmental-analysis/adirondack-park-forest-preserve>

### NYS Scenic Byways Program Updates

- The 2021-22 FHWA NSBP Grant and Technical Assistance grant funding awards have been announced. Unfortunately, NYSDOT was not awarded funding for the two proposals we entered. \$350,0000 was awarded to the Palisades Interstate Parkway Commission for upgrades to their welcome center
- Latest Appropriations bill (2023) was passed and includes \$20 Million dollars for the NSBP Program (across the country). The NOFO for that grant is expected later this year.
- NYSDOT attends monthly Central Catskill Collaborative Meetings. At the CCC's request, several attendees will join today's meeting to discuss "How to get projects on the Capital Program":
  - Chris Colley, Scenic Byways Program Manager
  - Andrew Stiles, Regional Program and Project Manager, R9
  - Scott Nowalk, Resident Engineer, Schoharie and Delaware Counties
- CCC Meetings are focusing on Corridor Management Plan Revisions.
- Also continuing collaboration on Revised Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway CMP.

### Invasive Species- Spotted Lanternfly

- Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) working group: focus on trapping & control BMPs.
- **Trapping:** By the end of the current season, NYSDOT will have placed 258 traps at our facilities near known infestations. Each is monitored and part of a statewide database
  - Anticipate a total of 11 in Catskill Park counties: Sullivan (6); Green (1); Delaware (4)
    - NYSDOT staff have not reported any SLF findings to date in Catskill Park
- **Equipment:** Agriculture and Markets have supplied 3 backpack sprayers, a vacuum and scraper poles for NYSDOT Operations in critical areas
- **Inspections:** NYSDOT's maintenance crews have performed annual search of vehicles, equipment, materials, and facilities for egg masses.
- **Design guidance and specifications** for SLF and Tree of Heaven Control. Drafts of both undergoing internal Clearance Review prior to issuance.
- **eDNA research Project** with Rutgers University is informing the work of the MAC group and of nationwide interest.

### Statewide Vegetation Management Guidelines- issued Spring 2023

- Includes best practices for pollinator habitat and integrated vegetation management practices, altered mowing, employs a zone approach to ROW management.

### Maps & Apps:

- OOE wrote a proposal to develop a new Catskill Park Viewer for NYSDOT staff use, similar to the existing Adirondack Park Viewer. Viewers make GIS information accessible to internal staff and are used to screen project and activity locations for coordination. Development pending funding and consultant availability.

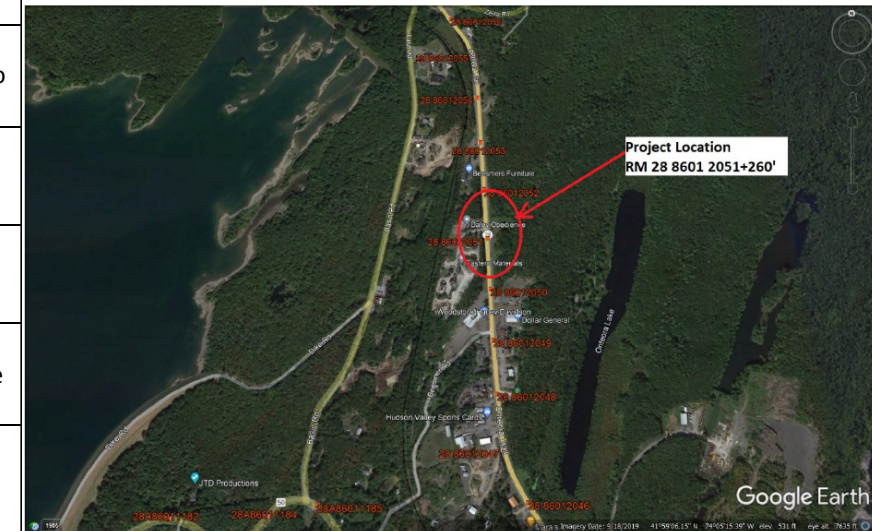
### Wildlife Passage/ Landscape Permeability

- Statewide effort building on TCUMP working group
- Products in progress: Environmental Manual Section, Bridge Details and Guidance, BMPs and Specifications, Review of other State's details
- Coordinating with other states and the Nature Conservancy Stay Connected Initiative (SCI)
- [International Conference on Ecology and Transportation \(ICOET\)](#) –June 5-8 in Burlington, VT. Several MO and Regional Staff attended and presented posters and talks. All NYSDOT regions also had virtual attendees.

**Regional Projects:** Sharing same update from May Transportation Working Group meeting

# CPAC NYSDOT Report-out 6-21-23 - REGIONAL INVOLVEMENTS ATTACHMENT

Region	Travel Corridor #	Project/Activity	PIN	Summary
R1	42	<b>Culvert Repair/Replacement SFY 22</b>	1810.88	Planned for 2023 season: Replacement of several culverts according to Corps of Engineers standards to increase resilience, and enhance aquatic and terrestrial connectivity. Two in Lexington on Route 42 and one in Hunter on Route 23A. Habitat connectivity will be taken into account for terrestrial and aquatic connectivity.
R9	30	<b>Hazard Tree Removal</b>	N/A	<b>Route 30, roughly Miller Hollow Road to Beech Hill Road:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Removing ash trees impacted by EAB and other hazardous trees along the roadside using the Statewide Hazardous Tree Removal Contract with funds budgeted for hazardous tree removals. Residency (9-4) had received several requests from NYCDEP to address the hazardous ash tree conditions along this corridor.</li> <li>All work is occurring within NYSDOT ROW. Anticipate completion by approximately 3/17/2023.</li> </ul> Additional work to remove hazardous trees along the Route 30 corridor from the intersection of NYS Route 30/Beech Hill Road to NYS Route 28/30 intersection is anticipated in FY23/24 depending on available funds.
R1	23A	<b>Pollinator Garden, Route 23A; Jewett</b>		Habitat promotion for pollinators, namely the American bumble bee – Green County, NY. Project is a partnership w/ Greene County SWCD & DEC. Prepared and planted in 2022 with native wildflower mix. Conservation mowing planned for every two years in late fall.
R8	28	<b>Pollinator Garden, Route 28, Mount Tremper</b>		Established 100' by 100' pollinator garden at the entrance to the Mount Tremper subresidency. In 2023, monitoring.
R1	23A	<b>Pollinator Garden, Route 23A, Prattsville</b>		2023- tentative approval for additional pollinator plantings at pull offs on 23A. Building off the momentum of the Jewett Pollinator garden established in 2022.
R8	209	<b>Reduced Mowing Route 209 Town of Ulster</b>		Following reduced mowing of the Route 209 median from Route 28 interchange to Sawkill Road in the Town of Ulster. In 2022, milkweed seeds were collected for use in future projects. Seeds are stored and are going to be planted in maintenance pollinator gardens in 2023. Once germinated, milkweed will be incorporated into gardens around the region.
R8	28	<b>Rock Scaling</b>		Rockfall, Rt 28 - ROUTE 28, 28 8601 2051+260', Beesmer Road, Ulster County. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work order is in place with our maintenance forces to clear the rock fall and perform some scaling of the ledge in an effort to make this safer and re-establish a ditch line that would better protect the highway from future rockfalls that may occur.</li> <li>Work will likely occur sometime this spring and it is not anticipated that any additional protections (fencing, netting, rock</li> </ul>
R9		<b>906780 Rt 17 over Willowemoc &amp; Debruce Scour Repair</b>	906780	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction started in late summer 2022. Scour protection included a roughened bottom design (grouted riprap) to retain natural streambed material. Included a plunge pool on the downstream side for fish habitat. Existing terrestrial passage maintained. Completed per plan.</li> <li>11,539 SF treatment of invasives was done under Construction contract. Tree planting and wildflower seeding mix planned for pollinator habitat post-construction, along with mowing limits markers. In-house monitoring planned.</li> <li>Contractor is using nearby fishing access point parking area during construction. Kiosk protected with temporary plastic fencing.</li> </ul>
R9		<b>9ADA20 ADA Block</b>		9ADA20 will address 9 non-compliant curb ramp in the Hamlet of Arkville and 2 in the Village of Margaretville. Construction planned for 2023.
R8	42	<b>Bridge Painting</b>	8813.56	Maintenance painting of two bridges along Route 42 over the Bushnellville Creek. Two bridges are complete as of June & July 2022. To be inspected again at some point before September 30th 2023 for any additional touch-up painting or repairs.
R8		<b>Bridge Washing/Deck Sealing</b>	8813.66	Bridge Washing and Deck Sealing of various bridges, including some bridges within the Catskill Park. PS&E scheduled for November 2023. Current candidate list (which is subject to change up until PS&E) includes the following bridges in the Catskill Park: 1019680, 1019700, 1019730, 1027080, 1091321, and 1091322.
R8	28	<b>Esopus Creek Bridge</b>	8018.46	Project substantially completed in 2021. Final inspection was 1/5/23, contract is complete but has UWA for turf and other items.
R1		<b>Herbicide Training</b>		Planned for Spring 2023, 4.5 hr course.
R8	28	<b>Rustic Rail Replacement Contract</b>	8815.31	Replacement of rustic Corten guiderail with galvanized guiderail. Multiple locations including in the Park including Route 28. Confirmed no scenic byway involvement. Project is in construction until the end of 2023.



location map



## CPAC NYSDOT Report-out 6-21-23 - REGIONAL INVOLVEMENTS ATTACHMENT

Region	Travel Corridor #	Project/Activity	PIN	Summary
R8	28	<b>Resurfacing Route 28: Hurley Mountain Road to Waughkonk Road</b>	8018.48	Resurfacing Route 28 between Hurley Mountain Road and Waughkonk Road. Letting planned for June 2023.
R8	212	<b>Route 212 Main Street Woodstock</b>	8122.20	Route 212 Main Street Bridge and Sidewalk Replacement, Woodstock, Ulster County. Project identified an eligible historic district. Design Approval anticipated in June 2023. Confirmed no scenic byway involvement.
R8	28	<b>Route 28 Shared Use Path</b>	8018.47	Letting on 2/16/23, project awarded 3/8/2023, on track for 2023 construction season. Confirmed no scenic byway involvement.



## Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

### Catskill Park Advisory Committee Update For June 21, 2022 Meeting

**Catskill Stewards Program:** See attached report.

**Catskills Visitor Center:** The Catskill Center is open 7 days a week from 9:30-4 between April and October. We are seeing higher visitation numbers than last year. We continue to see part time help. [Applications are available on our website](#) and we welcome all applicants.

**Catskill Center Request for Proposals:** The Catskill Center is seeking proposals for professional grant writing services. [The full RFP is available on our website](#) and we urge all eligible individuals and companies to submit a proposal.

**Catskill Park Coalition:** 2023-24 State budget included Coalition priorities including \$200k for Catskills Visitor Center, \$100k for Catskill Science Collaborative, and \$8m for the Forest Preserve (both Catskills and Adirondacks). Work has begun for the next budget year, with advocacy work for Catskill Park priorities ongoing.

**Forest Preserve Coalition:** A Forest Preserve summit will be held in August to review our work in the past year and begin the advocacy push for continued Forest Preserve funding in the 2024-25 budget.

**Catskill Fire Tower Project:** The Catskill Center is supporting the NYSDEC at the Balsam Lake Mountain Fire Tower, as they work to determine the best steps forward to repair the observer's cabin and replace the broken window in the tower cab. This work is the responsibility of DEC and we stand ready to assist.



**Catskill Fire Tower Project  
Catskill Park Advisory Committee Meeting (CPAC), June 21st 2023**

The Catskill Fire Tower Project (CFTP) has had a successful start to the field season, with a substantial volunteer effort that will enable the Fire Towers to be staffed and open for visitors from Memorial Day to Indigenous Peoples Day (formally known as Columbus Day). This year the Catskill Center was awarded funding from the NYS Department of Conservation to employ Fire Tower Stewards to staff the Fire Towers during weekdays to account for the high demand due to the Catskills Fire Tower Challenge. The Steward schedule is as follows:

<b>May</b>	<b>June</b>	<b>July</b>	<b>August</b>	<b>September</b>
Mt. Tremper Balsam Lake	Mt. Tremper Overlook	Red Hill Hunter	Red Hill Overlook	Mt. Tremper Balsam Lake

Though the CFTP has had many successes in terms of volunteer and staff effort, there are also some challenges the program is overcoming. Due to safety concerns, the NYS DEC has decided to close the Observers Cabin at Balsam Lake Fire Tower until further notice. The Catskill Center has been working closely with the DEC to conduct repairs in a timely manner, and a flight plan has been submitted to transport the necessary materials to the site. This project should be completed by 2025. The lack of the Observers Cabin poses an issue for volunteers who typically stay overnight at the summit, and who also store outreach materials in the building. However, the Balsam Lake Fire Tower Volunteers have been able to adapt and overcome these obstacles, and with the Catskill Centers' continued support we will have a successful volunteer season. Further, Balsam Lake Fire Tower is in need of window replacements in the Top Cab. The Catskill Center, NYS DEC, and Fire Tower Volunteers are working closely to complete this project before the 2024 Fire Tower season.

Other notable updates on the Fire Towers include a break-in at both the Hunter Fire Tower and Overlook Tower. Both break-ins have been addressed and locks have been replaced. Also at Overlook, maintenance vehicles drove on the trail and crushed

multiple culverts. NYS DEC is working on repairing the issue with the maintenance crew who used the access road.

Looking towards the remainder of the season, the NYS DEC toured Overlook and Mt Tremper fire towers and cabins with NYS Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Services. These 2 inspections came back with no issues. Balsam Lake and Red Hill will have their inspections the week of June 18th. Lastly, Catskill Center staff and volunteers are excited to be helping to host the Tenth Annual Lighting of the Catskills Fire Towers. All of the 5 historic Catskills Fire Towers are planning to light up their top cabs for half an hour on Saturday of Labor Day weekend, September 2nd. People who are in the nearby towns look up at the towers from 9 to 9:30pm, and those viewing locations will be posted on the Catskills Visitor Center's website closer to the date of the lighting. The event is in honor of the men and women who worked in the Catskill Park on the fire towers and helped protect the forest from fires.



## Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership Updates

6/21/23

During New York Invasive Species Awareness Week, CRISP led five in-person trainings and pulls and one webinar on Beech Leaf Disease and Spotted Lanternfly. We produced three fantastic videos about invasive species including [Hydrilla](#). Unfortunately, we had to cancel two in-person events due to smoke pollution.

Our Terrestrial and Aquatic Strike Teams are out surveying for and removing invasives. We've worked on water chestnut, European frogbit, giant hogweed, mile-a-minute and others. We will be releasing the swallowwort biocontrol, *Hypena opulenta*, in an enclosure at one site. The larvae will be monitored for growth and effectiveness of the insects over the summer. We will also have 20 traps out for spotted lanternfly that will be monitored by staff, partners, and volunteers.

We've contracted with Sullivan County to develop an invasive species management plan for Callicoon Riverside Park, along the Delaware River. The park includes one Tier 2 invasive species, winter creeper, and a number of more established invasives. We will be mapping invasive species and developing a comprehensive invasive species management plan for the site. In addition, we are leading trainings for Friends of the Upper Delaware River and the Upper Delaware River Conservation Corps and leading volunteer workdays at the park this summer.

At our last Partners Meeting we discussed criteria for Invasive Species Prevention Zones and we are identifying high value ecosystems using Natural Heritage Program rare species and communities, first growth forests, large unfragmented forest blocks, state regulated wetlands, protected areas, and easements and comparing those areas to invasive species infestations identified from iMapInvasives and iNaturalist.

We've gotten new reports of beech leaf disease in Sullivan and Ulster County and ask that people report new findings through [iMapInvasives](#) and enter negative data if they are not finding beech leaf disease on beech trees.

Our next CRISP Partners meeting is August 18 at 1pm at the Catskill Visitors Center. Details on upcoming events are [here](#).



## Catskills Visitor Center Catskill Park Advisory Committee Report

The Catskills Visitor Center is ready for the busy tourist season. By the second week in June, we had assisted 3,621 visitors compared to 3,109 for the same time frame in 2022. The fact that the CVC was only open Friday-Monday during Jan, Feb, and March leads staff to believe it is going to be a record-setting year.

The new indoor exhibits continue to receive lots of compliments. Staff are in the process of determining new exhibits for the Catskill Culture and Catskill Ecology vitrines.

A recent donation to the CVC will bring some welcome updates to our outside exhibits. The “wild” bed next to the CVC will become a pollinator garden with interpretive signs and programming. The panels along the Interpretive Loop were redesigned during COVID and this donation will make it possible to print and install the new signs. Look for these changes to take place through 2023.

Catskill Park Trail Information and Conditions are posted weekly at:  
<https://catskillsvisitorcenter.org/hiking-and-camping/trail-conditions/>

## Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower Report

The Friends are working with Delaware County to take over from the Town of Delhi to work with us on restoring the fire Tower.



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## Catskills Park Advisory Committee Update

June 6, 2023

### Volunteer Activities

In addition to routine maintenance across the Catskills Forest Preserve, New York - New Jersey Trail Conference volunteers have completed the following projects this season with support from staff and NYSDEC:

#### General Volunteer:

- Volunteer Leader, Andy Garrison, in coordination with DEC Region 3 through a Temporary Revocable Permit (TRP) has worked on clearing blowdowns on the Mongaup-Hardenberg Trail, Oliverea-Mapledale Trail, and other areas in the Big Indian Wilderness Area in late May/early June.
- The Local Trails Committee for the Catskills trails has taken on maintenance of the Huckleberry Loop Trail in the Dry Brook Ridge Wild Forest.

#### Catskills Lean-to Crew:

- Volunteer Crew Leader, Eric Friedman, led three work trips over the course of three weekends in early spring to the Terrace Mt. Lean-to to rebuild/stain a new privy, stain the lean-to, install oakum in cracks covered with saplings, remediate the floor/wall boards, and complete other minor site improvements.
- The crew has begun prefabrication work for a project at the Trout Pond Lean-tos for later this year to rebuild the two privies and make other site improvements.
- The crew is anticipating additional projects this year at the Quick Lake Lean-to and Kelly Hollow Lean-to.

#### Catskills Trail Crew:

- Volunteer Crew Leader, Matt Smith, led a work trip to help with the maintenance/blowdown removal on the Huckleberry Loop Trail. The crew will be back at the trail on June 24<sup>th</sup> to finish work on this trail.
- The crew also continued work at the mudhole located 1.5 miles south of the Lane St. Trailhead for the Long Path to allow for water drainage and reduce trail widening.
- The crew plans to be at the Slide Mountain Trail out of the Rt. 47 Trailhead in July to clean out water bars and remove loose stones from the treadway.

Please direct any interest in volunteering with the initiatives listed above to [volunteer@nynjtc.org](mailto:volunteer@nynjtc.org).





**Forest Fire Lookout Association  
New York State Chapter  
CPAC Meeting Report  
June 21, 2023**

The NYS Chapter of the FFLA cares for numerous towers in NYS through Volunteer Service Agreements. These agreements include restoration and maintenance work as well as stewardship programs. We support the work of many other towers as well. In the Catskills we have supported the work of several local groups and the CFTP and have a VSA application submitted for another.

We have many concerns regarding Balsam Lake Mt Fire Tower and Observer's cabin. At the tower the deteriorating condition of windows is cause for concern both due to falling debris, and for hikers who will grasp the broken window frame as they enter and exit the tower cab and perhaps have it fall off in their hand (see photo). Additionally due to this broken window frame and another that is held in place with duct tape (see photo), the tools the steward program generally utilizes in their work are no longer in place; ie the map, alidade, binoculars, and panoramics. All are in the closed Observer's cabin and if available it would not be wise to have them in the cab where windows may fail and expose them to the elements. Windows were purchased several years ago have not yet been taken to the summit. NYS Forest Rangers and Balsam Lake Volunteers are happy to transport and then carry the windows to the summit. However once there, without access to the Observer's cabin the windows would have to be left outside and subject to being broken until Operations Crew installed them. An empty and potentially unsafe tower cab is not the type of visitor experience one would hope to provide.



What happens at one fire tower affects what happens at other fire towers. If one person is injured on a fire tower it would be devastating to that person and a detriment to all fire towers programs state wide.

The Observers cabin has been closed. There are no plans in place to address the safety issue there, which is the floor supports. There are sufficient resources in the Catskill Fire Tower Project account to make the repairs and to hire a contractor to make the necessary repairs. Meanwhile, the visitor experience here is greatly reduced as the visitors no longer have access to the museum and the historical displays there. The children's experience is greatly reduced without the museum being available.

The Balsam Lake Fire Tower is supported by a great group of 34 volunteers who now have no place to get out of the weather should a rain storm or thunder storm roll through during the stewarding day or if temperatures, wind, and fog are such that hypothermic conditions are created. We are concerned that the same thing will happen at Balsam Lake that happened at Mt Tremper when they no longer had volunteers for many of the same reasons, no place available to get out of the elements. The visitor experience is greatly reduced without a knowledgeable steward to greet visitors. The areas surrounding the fire towers have been kept quite pristine due to the work and diligence of the fire tower stewards despite tens of thousands of visitors.

We conducted a school program and subsequent field trip and hike to Utsayantha Fire Tower last month, involving 27 third graders. Lots of historical information was shared along with information on Leave No Trace for children, Smokey Bear Fire Prevention and how the fire towers were part of a system of fire towers in their communities. All who wanted, enjoyed the views from the tower and a picnic lunch at the summit park. Feedback from students and teachers alike let us know that they would like to do this program again next year.

Along the same Delaware River Corridor:

The Rock Rift project led by Town of Tompkins Supervisor Layton is still working with NYCDEP for access for restoration materials and is feeling very positive that work will be able to move forward this year.

Friends of Bramley Mt Fire Tower are working with Delaware County to move their project forward.

In neighboring Schoharie County we continue to await an engineers report that was requested in September of 2018 for the Leonard Hill Fire Tower to be restored.

September 2<sup>nd</sup> will be the date for the 10<sup>th</sup> Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower event. Registration opens in July.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director  
New York State Chapter  
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# OSI Protects Land Adjacent to Catskill Park's Sundown Wild Forest

Image Credit: Greg Miller

'South Mountain' acquisition helps protect source of clean water for New York City, and increases public access to local peaks

OLIVE, NY (March 18, 2019) — The Open Space Institute (OSI) today announced the acquisition of land adjacent to the Catskill Park's Sundown Wild Forest. Permanent protection of the "South Mountain" property, located within the Ashokan Reservoir watershed, will help provide long-term access to clean water for millions of New Yorkers for generations to come.

Located two minutes away from Route 28A in West Shokan, the newly conserved property consists of forested land along the east side of South Mountain, including a portion of the mountain's summit. The property has the potential to serve as a new, eastern access point to South Mountain from High Point Mountain Road.

"Conserved land serves as a natural filter for cleaning and storing water. That is why strategic land conservation goes hand-in-hand with providing safe, reliable drinking water," said Kim Elliman, president and CEO of OSI. "By protecting land in the Ashokan Reservoir watershed, we are securing an incredibly important water source for millions of New Yorkers."

"With today's announcement, Dr. Sam and Delia Adams have once again demonstrated their outstanding commitment to environmental stewardship and connecting people to the unique history and natural heritage of the Catskills," said New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos. "DEC congratulates the Open Space Institute on this critically important acquisition that protects critical drinking water sources for millions of New Yorkers and builds upon the state's efforts to increase public access to the recreational opportunities within the Catskill Forest Preserve."

The 261-acre South Mountain property is located in the Town of Olive, Ulster County and was purchased by OSI for \$665,000 from Delia and Sam Adams.

"Thank you to OSI for ensuring that this property, which has been owned by my family since the Hardenberg Patent of the 1700s, will be preserved in perpetuity," said Delia Adams. "My father's foresight in protecting this property and my husband's support guaranteed that the land will be inherited by future generations and enjoyed by everyone who loves the outdoors."

The South Mountain property connects to other lands conserved by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to protect water quality.

More than 90 percent of New York City's water supply comes from the Catskill and Delaware watershed, located more than 100 miles north of the city. Water is naturally filtered and cleaned by the land surrounding the Ashokan Reservoir before collecting in this basin, which has the capacity to hold 123 billion gallons.

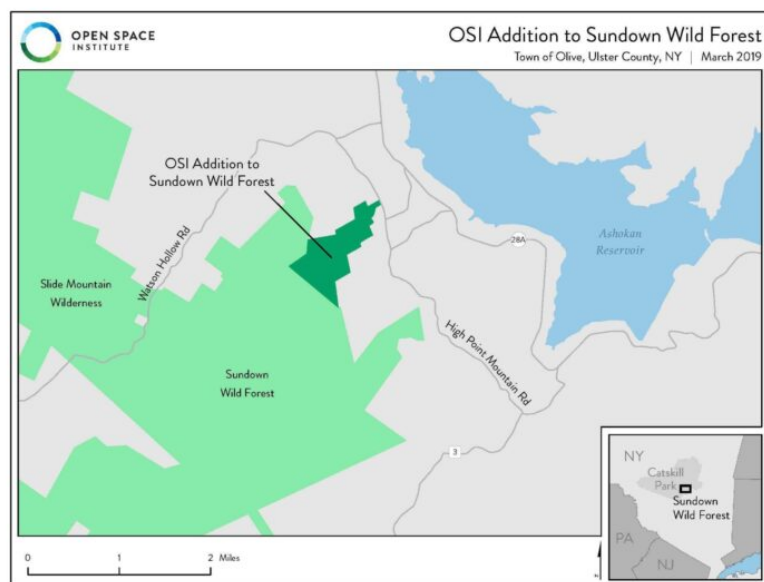
OSI's conservation of the South Mountain property will advance the efforts made by DEP to protect this critical water source. The protection of the land also lays the groundwork to create public access to two popular hiking destinations from a public road.

South Mountain rises 2,190 feet high near the west shore of the Ashokan Reservoir and is connected to the 3,091-foot Ashokan High Point Mountain by a ridgeline. The protection of South Mountain will not only create new access to these hikes, but will also open up additional wild areas to better welcome and disperse outdoors enthusiasts visiting from near and far.

The South Mountain addition figures largely in OSI's strategic land conservation efforts to consolidate significant portions of the Catskill Park while also helping to relieve pressure on wildly popular trailheads and important summits.

In 2017, OSI protected 214-acres on the north side of South Mountain. OSI also funded the engineering and feasibility study for the Ashokan Rail Trail, a new multi-use trail which is currently being built on the north side of the Ashokan Reservoir by Ulster County.

Looking ahead, OSI intends to work with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) on transferring the land as an addition to the Catskill Park's Sundown Wild Forest.



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