

## **Stakeholder Reports from the October 20, 2021 Catskill Park Advisory Committee Meeting**

FYI, no meeting notes taken during meeting.



## October 20, 2021 CPAC Update

- The Club just finished the pilot year of the Adopt a Trailhead program under the umbrella of the NYS DEC. It is an all-volunteer program which had 2-3 stewards at Slide Mountain Trailhead every weekend from Memorial Day and went through Columbus Day. The response was very positive from hikers and the DEC. Data was collected as well to help with usage analysis.
- We were finally able to hold our annual meeting this summer in July where new bylaws and other governance documents were ratified. This clears the way to the club filing for 501c3 status – currently it is a 501c7 (social club).
- The Club Search and Rescue team (CMSAR) now has 18 Mission Ready members and is continuing intensive training. Members have been working on technical rope skills and training monthly with multi-state agencies including NPS, Fire services and Mountain Rescue Association (MRA) accredited SAR teams.
  - In September, they were called out for the following:
    - 9/1: SARCNJ requested ground resources for subject 22 yo male Trevon Davis in Tabernacle, NJ.
    - 9/3: SARCNJ requested ground searchers on standby for multiple drowning victims due to the storm for the week of 9/4 to 9/12.
    - 9/4: DEC Ranger Howard Kreft contacted Bill Winterbottom for resources for a carry out on Wittenberg. Ranger Kreft advised CMSAR was backup for litter transport out if helicopter evacuation was unsuccessful. Helicopter evac was successful and we were released from standby after Rangers debriefed us on the rescue.
    - 9/16: NJ State Police SAR Coordinator Bryan Enberg requested CMSAR on behalf of the National Park Service (NPS) for a search in Lehman, Pennsylvania.
    - 9/21: DEC Ranger Howard Kreft again contacted CMSAR for an injured hiker on Wittenberg. Again, we were backup for a possible carryout.
- The Club continues to support organizations in the Catskills doing valuable work with the generous donations from members. Donations in the past several months include:
  - ADK for advocacy in the Catskills
  - Catskill Mountainkeeper
  - Friends of the Bramley Fire Tower Project
  - Friends of the Feathered and Furry Wildlife Center
  - Team Wilderness
  - Student Conservation Association
  - Michael Kudish Natural History Preserve
  - Save Bluestone Forest
  - Margaretville Department
  - Big Indian/Oliveria Fire District

The **Catskills Lark in the Park** for 2021 was held from October 2 – 11. We were able to resume in-person guided events after having none in 2020 due to the covid pandemic. We successfully limited the number of participants and enforced a number of safety protocols. We also limited the number of in-person events we offered to about a dozen.

We also offered a number of self-guided tours, including the new podcast version of Views from the Watershed, and featured the new exhibits at the Catskill Visitors Center.

We hope to return to a full schedule next year.

The Lark in the Park is organized by a partnership including the Catskill Center, the NY/NJ Trail Conference and the NYSDEC. The CMC coordinates the effort.

The CMC has resumed offering in-person guided outdoor recreation events to the public, including hiking and paddling events.

The **Views from the Watershed** program, which is designed and led by CMC board member Lize Mogel, has evolved from a bus tour to a self guided podcast tour of the NYC watershed. Bus tours may resume next year, if possible. The podcast features interviews with a number of guests who talk about the history of the watershed, about its management and about how it has impacted Catskills communities. The 15 segments are associated with sites of interest in the Catskills and can be streamed or downloaded (which is recommended if taking the driving tour). Eight segments are currently available.

VftW can be found at <https://www.walkingthewatershed.com/podcasttour/index.html>.

The CMC sponsored a new program this year in partnership with several other area organizations. Designed and led by CMC board member Michael Drillinger, **Speak to the Earth** is a series of hikes near urban areas designed to introduce people to the wonders and benefits of hiking. While the program specifically reaches out to members of communities of color, anyone is welcome to participate. This year the program was focused on the Kingston area and hikes were held on nearby rail trails and front country trails. Free transportation was provided by the City of Kingston.

These past two years have presented problems for us in completing the design work for the **Morris Hill Trail**, to be built on the DEP parcel in Arkville. We hope to finish the layout this fall and do the construction work in 2022. We have obtained grants to help pay for some infrastructure.

We received grants from two sources to pay for new trail infrastructure, including registration boxes, kiosks and improved signage.

Use of the trails built by the CMC rose tremendously last year, up about 47% overall, not including the addition of the Ashokan Quarry Trail which draws significantly more visitors than any other trail. Usage this year, while still much higher than in pre-covid years, has dropped off by an average of about 7% from 2020.



## **Catskills Visitor Center Catskill Park Advisory Committee Report**

The Catskills Visitor Center building reopened to the public on September 3. The new indoor interpretive exhibits have been well received. The Catskill Center and our contractor, Partners & Partners, are completing final installations and fine tuning. The building is open every day 9:30-4pm. Starting November 1, the building will be closed on Tuesdays. All visitors are required to wear masks in the building, regardless of vaccination status.

Visitation has been steady and September visitor numbers were over 1,100 people. This is equal to pre-COVID numbers. October numbers are on track to also match pre-COVID visitation numbers and we are experiencing our annual influx of leaf-peepers.

The CVC has hosted several outdoor events throughout the summer and fall including: bird walks, NYC teen outdoor group, Bennett Elementary field trip, exercise classes, local area economic development meetings, the start of two Car Rallies and a few other events.

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



### **Updates 10/12/2021**

The Catskill Center has received a letter of intent to be awarded a 5 year contract to continue the Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP) and has begun the contracting process with DEC.

This was the third and final year of the Catskills Strike Team grant and the team has finished their surveys and control efforts for the season. CRISP staff and the Strike Team surveyed a total of 539 acres this year and controlled 12 acres of invasive species including surveying 57 acres for Tier 2 Early Detection species and removal of 5.4 acres of Tier 2 species. The Strike Team also continued to maintain two restoration areas.

CRISP submitted a \$20,000 proposal to DEP to collaborate with DEP on strategic planning for invasive species management and to help support management of volunteers to perform invasive species management at the Ashokan Rail Trail.

Two highly impactful invasive species have continued to spread in surrounding regions. Spotted lanternfly first infested the Port Jervis area in 2020 and has now been observed in Broome County, eastern Ulster County and in the lower Hudson Valley Please volunteer to survey for lanternfly at your favorite trailhead: <https://www.nyimapinvasives.org/slf>. Northern snakehead was observed in the Bashakill for the first time this year. Snakehead was first observed in the Upper Delaware River in 2020, so it has now spread to at least one tributary. In addition, we have a new Mile-A-Minute infestation, the first in Delaware County. This is a large population covering over 3.6 acres. More information is available here: <https://catskillcenter.org/mileaminute>

CRISP is working with three Catskill Science Collaborative 2021 Fellows on research projects: Hanny Mendoza, Binghamton University, “Modeling the Susceptibility of Catskill Waterbodies to Invasive Plants and Animals;” Marissa Kordal, SUNY Cortland, “Understanding the Single and Combined Effects of Co-occurring Stressors: White-tailed deer, Invasive Earthworms and Invasive Plants,” and Kelsey Parker, CUNY, “Mapping and Monitoring the Distribution of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and Related Hemlock Decline in the Catskills Mountain Region of New York Using Freely-available Multispectral Satellite Remote Sensing.” John Thompson collaborated with Andy Reinmann and Kelsey Parker (CUNY), published an article in the journal Remote Sensing, entitled, “Crossing the Great Divide: Bridging the Researcher-Practitioner Gap to Maximize the Utility of Remote Sensing for Invasive Species Monitoring and Management.”

CRISP Watershed Stewards interacted with 13,299 boaters at 16 boat launches and inspected 7,220 watercraft this season. A total of 481 aquatic invasive species were intercepted. Additionally, Watershed Stewards interacted with 791 anglers. The Canadarago Lake Improvement Association made three instructional videos about Clean, Drain, Dry and Treat.

The 'Clean, Drain, Dry & Treat' videos are available at this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4YDPyOi68puRK3IK9yqSJO>

CRISP held its first in-person volunteer day, in nearly two years, on June 12th. CRISP participated in three in-person tabling events this year. • So far this year, we have delivered 17 programs for 512 people.

NYS DOT Region 9 Jobs in the Catskill Park  
October 2021 Update

Region 9 Projects

- 906780 – Rt. 17 Bridges 1013521 & 1013522 over DeBruce Rd. & Willowemoc Creek, Livingston Manor – Construction anticipated in 2022
- 906778 – Rt 17 Resurfacing Livingston Manor to Parksville – Currently under construction.
- 9ADA20 – Upgrade of curb ramps (Margaretville: 2, Arkville: 9) – Construction anticipated in 2022
- Routine bridge washing and/or painting



**Forest Fire Lookout Association  
New York State Chapter Report  
Catskill Park Advisory Committee Meeting  
10-20-21 1-3pm**

The FFLA has had a very busy spring and summer season across New York State. With 9 VSA's and 2 applications pending, our work has been diverse and plentiful! We have built new trails, maintained trails, restored Observer's cabins, rehabbed fire towers, removed tons of graffiti, seen 2 fire towers reopen following long closures (Berry Hill in Chenango County and Swede in Warren County), and begun new steward programs. Locally in the Catskills we have been continuing to support the work of the Town of Tompkins for the Rock Rift fire tower and the Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower. We had a very successful lighting of the fire tower event in September.

The Town of Tompkins continues to develop their work plan and address access concerns for the Rock Rift Fire Tower.

The Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower are actively continuing their fund raising efforts and have reached the \$50,000 mark!

The Lighting of the Fire Tower Event on Labor Day weekend had 24 fire towers participating state wide! Many opportunities present themselves to provide education about the history of fire towers through this event. Numerous press events, dinners, lectures, and viewings occur that provide the public with opportunities to consider the work of Fire Tower Observer's who manned the towers. The Observer's role in protecting not only the surrounding forests, but also the local communities was vital. As the use of fire towers has changed over time, it is also an opportunity to expand on the important role the Fire Tower Observers had in public relations. Today's Fire Tower Stewards are often volunteers who provide information on Leave No Trace and hikeSafe principles as well as fire tower history. Through this event, many people come forward with their memories of visits to fire towers and the Observer's who served in them. You can see numerous photos from the event on our web page: <http://nysffla.org/light2021.html>

Late fall and winter of 2021 will be a time to wrap up all of the necessary documents for the season and begin planning for a busy 2022.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director  
New York State Chapter  
Forest Fire Lookout Association  
[www.nysffla.org](http://www.nysffla.org)



**FOBMFT Report**

We passed the \$50,000 fundraising milestone

We have applied for a large NYS grant – the decision will be made in December

We are also applying for a few more grants and continuing community fundraising

Our Land Use Permit Application is still in process at the DEP

Wendell will be, or has already, sent the CMC report.