



CatskillParkCoalition.org
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Coalition Members

Catskill Center
Catskill Mountainkeeper
Catskill Heritage Alliance
Catskill Mountain Club
Natural Resources Defense Council
Catskill 3500 Club
Adirondack Mountain Club
Catskill Association for Tourism Services
Catskill Mountain Foundation
Central Catskills Chamber of Commerce
Central Catskills Revitalization Corporation
Community Greenways Collaborative
Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center
Friends of the Upper Delaware River
Hudson Valley Hikers
Hunter Foundation
New York New Jersey Trail Conference
Open Space Institute
Parks and Trails New York
Rip Van Winkle Hikers
Riverkeeper
Shandaken Art Studio Tour
Theodore Gordon Flyfishers
Trout Unlimited
Woodchuck Lodge
Woodstock Land Conservancy
Zen Mountain Monastery

December 9, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo,

On behalf of the members of the Catskill Park Coalition we write to you today to share our priority requests for Catskill Park in the next New York State budget, in advance of our annual Catskill Park Awareness Day event in Albany, to be held on Tuesday, February 7th, 2017.

In years past, thanks to support from your administration and the State Legislature, our beloved Catskill region has seen strong growth in the marketing and promotion of our region, providing a boost to our recreational tourism-based economy. Programs like the Catskills Challenge that you created have drastically raised awareness and the profile of the Catskills as a region. We've also seen expanded support for our local tourism efforts, as well as the opening of the Maurice D. Hinckley Catskill Interpretive Center, a visitor center for the Catskill Park.

We would now like to see a commitment to build on this collaborative success by establishing a regular annual "Catskills Package" that would support projects to improve our regional economy by supporting both enhanced access to, and stewardship of, our public lands, ultimately providing a world-class experience for visitors and residents alike, that strengthens the economy on Main Street and our natural environment by spurring the development of permanent sustainable jobs. We believe that funding for this package can come from two distinct funding streams, the Environmental Protection Fund and New York Works funding.

The Catskill Park Coalition unanimously agrees that the following projects are to be priorities for the Catskills. These are all projects that the diverse members of the Coalition, a group representing regional enterprise, conservation groups, land trusts, environmental advocates, sportsman's groups, religious groups and recreational users, believe will continue to improve our public lands to benefit all stakeholders in the future.

These projects were developed with input from members of the Catskill Park Coalition, as well advice on project needs identified by the Catskill Park Advisory Committee, which represents diverse stakeholders from across the Catskill Park. Together we will continue to expand the positive economic benefit of public lands in the Catskills, growing a sustainable economy that protects our ecosystems while maintaining vibrant main streets and communities.

The Catskills Package - \$10,000,000

1. Continue the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation Aid to Localities line recurring annually at \$500,000 for Catskill Park access improvements and add an additional \$50,000 in annual recurring support for staffing and operations at the Maurice D. Hinckley Catskill Interpretive Center - **\$550,000**
2. Additional Environmental Protection Fund and New York Works funding towards stewardship and maintenance activities in the Catskill Park - **\$4,000,000**

- a. Remove the cap on Line 3 of land stewardship money to allow for additional spending within the Catskill Park's Forest Preserve
 - b. Fund contracts for the Catskill Conservation Corps, Summit/Trail Stewards and Professional Trail Crews in the Catskills, create new stewardship opportunities, and increase overall stewardship efforts to match growth in users realized by regional tourism marketing and promotion
 - c. Develop a greater equity between stewardship funding at the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP), which needs to result in more resources for the DEC to manage and maintain the Forest Preserve and Catskill Park
3. Support the "Save the Hemlocks" project to reduce the impact of Hemlock Woolly Adelgid by developing effective biocontrol (*Laricobius nigrinus*) administered by Catskill Regional Invasive Species Partnership (CRISP)/Partnerships for Regional Invasive Species Management (PRISM) through Cornell University, DEC and DEP efforts - **\$2,000,000**
 4. Increased support for Catskill Area Tourism Services (CATS) to improve regional marketing efforts, direct visitors to the Catskill Interpretive Center as a welcoming center, and provide better connections between the Catskill Park and its communities - **\$2,000,000**
 5. Increase the budget and staffing for the DEC Lands and Forests Division to better manage Catskill Park lands. Continue annual Forest Ranger academies to maintain and grow the Ranger force to maintain public safety within the Catskill Park and Forest Preserve - **\$1,000,000**
 6. Complete a comprehensive economic study for the Catskills building on prior Catskill Park Coalition study, to act as snapshot of the region's economy before the Sullivan County Casino development - **\$450,000**

Thank you for continued support of the Catskills region. We look forward to working with you to continue to improve the Catskill Park and its communities for the benefit of all.

Sincerely,



Jeff Senterman
Executive Director
Catskill Center
Co-Chair, Catskill Park Coalition

Ramsay Adams
Executive Director
Catskill Mountaineer
Co-Chair, Catskill Park Coalition

cc: Kate Dineen, Assistant Secretary for the Environment
Basil Seggos, Commissioner, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation