

Catskill Park Advisory Committee

Meeting Notes

August 24, 2022 at 1:00pm

Meeting held via Zoom

The Chair (Jeff Senterman) welcomed all present and thanked everyone for taking part virtually. He went over a few housekeeping and technical details for the zoom meeting and urged everyone to introduce themselves through the chat function.

Jeff noted that some members of the CPAC haven't been receiving the emails from the CPAC and that the Catskill Center is in the process of upgrading its bulk email systems. He suggested checking spam folders and adding the email address to your list of safe senders. If you are still having trouble receiving emails after that, please contact Jeff at jsenterman@catskillcenter.org.

FPAC Updates: Jeff noted that at the last meeting of the Forest Preserve Advisory Committee (FPAC), the committee elected a new Chair and Vice Chair to begin service in January of 2022. Bill Farber was elected Chair and Jeff Senterman was elected Vice Chair.

CAG Updates: It was noted that the Catskill Strategic Planning Advisory Group (CAG) has almost finished their work and are currently finalizing their final report for release this fall. [The work of the CAG is discussed on the DEC website here.](#)

NYSDEC Central Office Updates: McCrea reported that a new Lands and Forest Division Director has not yet been hired and the search is ongoing. He noted that bids have been received for the Visitor Use Management (VUM) Request For Bids that DEC had released earlier this year. The contract will establish a VUM framework in two hot spots, one in the Adirondacks and one in the Catskills. In the Catskills, the VUM will focus on the Kaaterskill Clove area. The Division of Lands and Forests is currently working on a new vision statement for the Department. The DEC is working on finalizing emergency regulations for the Peekamoose Riparian Corridor.

NYSDEC Region 3 Updates: Ian noted that the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the Peekamoose Valley area will be available soon for public comment. He noted that the SCA Backcountry Steward season is now over and a lot of work was done in terms of trail maintenance and stewardship activities. Ian said that a Catskill Science Collaborative (CSC) fellow has been working with the DEC to do trail surveys and that

the data gathering has been completed. A report on those findings will be available when the fellow is done. Ian noted that the study will look into visitor perception of risk at trailheads.

Ian said that the DEC has reduced the available parking at the fishing access area in Claryville that was becoming a popular swimming spot. This was done to help reduce use and reduce natural resource impacts in the area. Kathy Nolan noted that folks in Claryville appreciate the DEC's work on this and said that locals are interested in having parking that's available for their use.

Ian noted that the NYNJTC has worked with the DEC to put a new roof on the Baldwin Memorial Lean-to and a new privy at the Fox Hollow Lean-to. The Beaver Meadow Lean-to is being stabilized by the DEC and Catskill Mountainkeeper Stewards this fall. Ian said that the DEC really appreciated the good collaboration with all of the partners in the Park.

Shannon Ryan asked Ian about the fishing access on the Esopus Creek by the new Route 28 bridge in Mount Tremper. He said that he and others have concerns about the increasing amount of use in that area and the damage to grass and other natural resources that could harm water quality. Kathy Nolan noted that these are DEP and Town of Shandaken lands and that there has been an effort to push the Ashokan Watershed Stream Management Program (AWSMP) to manage the area. Robert Drake noted that it's his understanding that the NYSDOT is still doing work on the site and that the Town is ready to do work when they get the okay from NYSDOT. Carol O'Beirne noted that it is important that the concerns of the scenic byway are addressed during this process. DEP noted that they will investigate the site and follow up as necessary, including with a potential joint meeting in the future for all the parties involved.

Pine Roehrs reported that the 2022 field work is done for the continuing study of the trailless peaks in the Catskills. She said that initial results show more eroded conditions on informal trails and considerable expansion of use into previously unused areas. Areas seeing increased use include Eagle from Burnham Hollow, Fir and South Doubletop Mountains, use from the Slide-Wittenberg-Cornell Trail to the Catskill 4, new use over Samuel's Point, routes between Table and Van Wyck, Roundtop to Kaaterskill High Peak, Sleeping Lion from Halcott, and new informal paths to SW Hunter. Pine noted that 2023 research needs are being identified, including more research on rare species. This research will inform the development of a VUM to manage the trailless peaks. The DEC and several partners are working on a nomination for the trailless peaks to be one of Leave No Trace's hotspots in 2023. In

addition, [a webinar is being held on October 19th to discuss informal trails in the Catskills.](#)

NYSDEC Region 4 Updates: Alicia said that the Tahawus Trail Crew under contract with DEC has been doing a lot of work around the region, including a reroute of the Devil's Path near Orchard Point on Plateau, continued work on the Kaaterskill Falls Trail, work on the Elm Ridge Trails and Escarpment Trail in that area, and bridge repair in the Colgate Lake area. She also thanked the NYNJTC volunteers for their work across the region.

NYCDEP Updates: Tom Davidock noted that the DEP's recreational boating program on the reservoirs has been going well and that the final numbers and the final report should be ready this fall after the season wraps up. He noted that the new trailhead in Boiceville for the Ashokan Rail Trail is starting to take shape as the bridge project on Route 28A continues to move forward. Tom said that there will be a boat auction in October and that multiple rec projects are being worked on across the watershed. He noted that there is a new waiver form for certain types of uses on watershed lands that should make it easier for applicants to use. Tom said that Jeff Graff is the new Section Chief for City Land Stewardship.

NYSDOT Updates: Peter reported on staffing updates at the NYSDOT, along with travel corridor planning efforts. He noted that wayfinding signage from the CWC has been installed marking the locations of towns lost during the building of the reservoirs. He said that the NYSDOT is working on efforts to improve wildlife passage statewide, working with NYSDAM on Spotted Lantern Fly issues, and is working to schedule the next Catskill Park Transportation Working Group meeting.

Catskill Mountain Club: Wendell noted that the CMC has received a grant to hire an Executive Director and that the job posting is on their website.

Catskill Mountainkeeper: Kathy reminded everyone that there is a Draft UMP open for improvements to the Belleayre Ski Center from ORDA and that comments are due.

CRISP: John noted the detection of Beech Leaf Disease in the region, along with Spotted Lantern Fly.

Scenic Byways: Carol reported that work continues on both the Mountain Cloves and Catskill Mountain scenic byways.

Catskill Watershed Corporation: Lynne reported that the boating season has been going well.

FFLA NY Chapter: Laurie noted that the Fire Towers will be lit by volunteers statewide as part of the annual celebration.

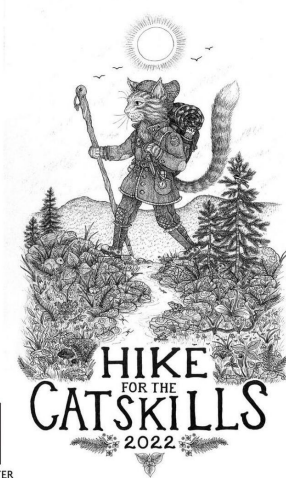
DEC Accessibility Advisory Committee: Rabia provided an overview of what the Advisory Committee works on and how it does its work. She noted that there would be a meeting with DEC in the Catskills on October 4th and invited stakeholders to take part if they so wished.



Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

Catskill Park Advisory Committee Update For August 24, 2022 Meeting

Catskill Stewards Program: The Catskill Stewards Program has had a busy 2022 season with more than 20,000 quality visitor interactions so far. Full time stewards and Ridgerunner work closely with DEC at Peekamoose Blue Hole, Kaaterskill Falls, Platte Clove Preserve, and the Devil's Path. The stewards greet visitors, remove litter, rehabilitate illegal campsites, protect stream quality, educate visitors to encourage responsible recreation and Leave No Trace Principles. The Catskill Center has [produced a video highlighting the work of the Catskill Stewards.](#)



Hike For The Catskills: More than 40 individuals are hiking for the Catskills to raise funds for Catskill Center programs as part of the second annual [Hike for the Catskills](#) event. There's still time to [register and get involved](#). Those who raise more than \$250 will receive a t-shirt featuring the unique "hiking cat" artwork from Thorneater Comics.

Catskill Park Coalition: Work has begun for the next budget year, with a coalition meeting scheduled for the end of August. That will kick off the 2023 budget season advocacy process. Want

to get involved? Email Christina Ricciardelli at cricciardelli@catskillcenter.org.

Catskills Great Outdoor Expo: The Outdoor Expo returned this year at the Catskills Visitor Center! Despite a two year hiatus because of COVID and the new location, turnout for both vendors and visitors was very good.

Fall Benefit: Join us for the [annual Fall Benefit](#) on Saturday, October 8, 2022, at the Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey Catskills Visitor Center from 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm.

catskillcenter.org | catskillsvisitorcenter.org | 845-586-2611 ccd@catskillcenter.org



Updates 8/24/2022

CRISP is finishing its first summer with both an Aquatic and a Terrestrial Strike Team. Both strike teams have been surveying for and removing invasive plants throughout the 7 county CRISP region. Our teams have surveyed over 1,623 acres of uplands and waterbodies. Hardy kiwi (*Actinidia arguta*), an aggressively invasive vine, was found for the first time in CRISP, in the Town of Hamden. We also found new infestations of the following species: Quagga mussel (*Dreissena rostriformis*), European frogbit (*Hydrocharis morsus-ranae*), Japanese tree lilac (*Syringa reticulata*), Japanese hops (*Humulus japonicus*) and mile-a-minute (*Persicaria perfoliate*). No aquatic invasive species were found at 6 waterbodies surveyed.

CRISP has led 29 outreach programs this year for 671 people. That programming includes 16 volunteer trainings for 118 people. Those 118 volunteers have contributed 283 hours on invasive species surveys and removals.

CRISP collaborated with Ulster County and New York City Department of Environmental Protection to hold 7 volunteer workdays at the Ashokan Rail Trail (ART). During each workday, volunteers were taught how to identify each of the invasive species in the vistas and how to best manage each invasive species. Volunteers downloaded iMapInvasives and were trained how to collect data in the field. As a result of this project, volunteers have removed 9 invasive shrubs and vines from 15 identified vistas along the ART.

As part of our strategic planning, the CRISP Steering Committee is prioritizing the near- and long-term management goals for CRISP from the Group Concept Mapping stakeholder surveys that were collected over the winter.

Upcoming programs

iMapInvasive training on Saturday 8/27 at 10 am at the Olive Free Library. We'd like people to look for and report spotted lanternfly and beech leaf disease and will be showing how to identify and report those and other invasive species.

Ashokan Rail Trail Invasive Species Removal on Saturday 9/10 at 9am at the Boiceville Trailhead.

Register for both events here: <https://www.catskillinvasives.com/events>



August 24, 2022 CPAC Update

- The Club is in the midst of the second year of the Adopt a Trailhead program under the umbrella of the NYS DEC. Like the Club, it is an all volunteer program with the goal of 2-3 stewards at Slide Mountain Trailhead every weekend. The program started with Memorial Day and will go through Columbus Day. More information is here: <http://catskill-3500-club.org/adopt-a-trailhead.php>. As with all the volunteer programs, finding volunteers has not been as easy as last year and we will work on improving that for 2023.
- Our Wilderness First Aid Class returns in the fall for both hike leaders and members. This time, because of the advanced training of our Search and Rescue team members, they can be taught by Club SAR officers who are doing valuable work with generous donations from members.
- Our biggest news is organizational in that we were just given 501c3 status by the IRS. It was not something known by most members until recently but the Club has a 501c7 designation which is most appropriate for social clubs. With the increased stewardship the Club now does, changing the status was appropriate. It took over two years to accomplish but it will now allow us to raise more funds for initiatives in the Catskills.
- The Club worked with the NYNJTC to help fund the build a new privy at the Fox Hollow lean-to. This is an example of the kind of projects we want to be more involved in in the future.



Catskills Visitor Center Catskill Park Advisory Committee Report

The Catskills Visitor Center's new indoor exhibit has received a positive response from visitors. The Listening Booth has been quite popular with visitors of all ages. It is a pay phone that provides several excerpts from the Catskill Center's audio folklife recordings. Visitation has been steadily increasing and we are starting to surpass pre-COVID visitor numbers. In June/July 2019 the CVC had 2,382 visitors. During the same time in 2022, we assisted 2,694 visitors.

The Catskill Stewards have had a busy season:

- Currently there are CCCD stewards at Blue Hole, Kaaterskill Falls, The Devils Path, and Platte Clove Preserve.
- The Catskill Stewards have talked to over 21,989 visitors this season so far.
- They have cleaned over 80 bags of garbage, disassembled 11 illegal fire rings, broken apart 82 rock stacks, and taken apart 16 rock dams.
- The Catskill Stewards have provided directions on and off the trail to over 565 visitors and hikers.
- The Fire Tower Steward is on location at Hunter, Overlook, Upper Esopus, and Mt. Tremper. They have talked to over 535 visitors so far this season.

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



**Catskill Fire Tower Project
Catskill Advisory Committee Meeting (CPAC), August 24th 2022**

The Catskill Fire Tower Project (CFTP) has had good volunteer turnout so far this year on most of the backcountry fire towers, enabling most of the towers to be open to the top cabs on weekends and holiday Mondays from May through October. This year the Catskill Center received funding to hire a seasonal fire tower steward who has opened Hunter Fire Tower's top cab on Tuesdays, Overlook Fire Tower's top cab on Thursdays, and the Upper Esopus Fire Tower at the Catskills Visitor Center on Fridays and Saturdays. He has filled in on a weekend at Tremper and Hunter. He has helped with measuring a replacement window in Hunter's observer's cabin as well as helped to move a privy on Balsam Lake Mountain. His season will be wrapping up on August 20th.

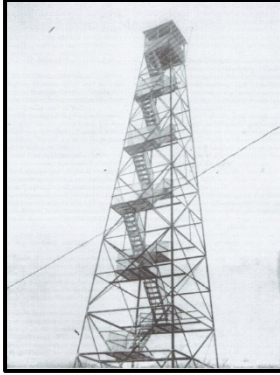
The CFTP has had a few maintenance accomplishments this year so far with the help of its volunteers and with the NYSDEC. Catskill Center staff and volunteers are looking forward to helping to accomplish more before the end of the season.

On Red Hill, the seats on 2 picnic tables were replaced with new wood, some tower steps were replaced or restored, and 2 new windows were installed in the top cab.

On Mount Tremper, DEC Region 3 operations have made considerable improvements in 2022. Brand new windows were installed in the top cab, the floor in the top cab was replaced, and new steps and landings were put in.

On Balsam Lake Mountain, DEC SCA interns, Region 3 Forester Ian Dunn, the Catskill Stewards, and the Catskill Fire Tower Steward worked to cover the old privy that was full, and to build a base for a new privy. They moved the privy to its new location just off the summit on the red-blazed trail that leads to Beaverkill Road.

Looking forward, staff of the CFTP are hoping to find more regular volunteer help opening Mount Tremper Fire Tower on weekends and to help with more maintenance projects on two of the towers. Staff and volunteers are excited to be helping to host the Ninth Annual Lighting of the Catskills Fire Towers. All of the 5 historic Catskills Fire Towers are planning to light up their top cabs for a half an hour on Saturday of Labor Day weekend, September 3rd. 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.



**Friends of
Bramley Mountain
Fire Tower, Inc.**
PO Box 63
Delhi, NY 13753



August 24, 2022

Friends of Bramley Mountain Fire Tower Report

We are working with the Town of Delhi on the Building Permit process. The tower is being galvanized right now in anticipation of reconstruction next summer. We are very close to our fundraising goal with just about \$20,000 still needed

Recognition of the significant historic, economic and health impacts of the project on local and regional Catskills communities is growing. The excitement generated by the Catskills fire towers is evidence of what the restored fire tower will bring to the region – we look forward to being part of the Catskill Fire Tower Challenge in the future.



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Catskills Park Advisory Committee Update August 24th, 2022

Attn: Jeff Senterman, Executive Director, Catskill Center

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference is a volunteer-powered organization that builds, maintains, and protects public trails. Together with our partners, we strive to ensure that the trails and natural areas we share are sustainable and accessible for all to enjoy for generations to come.

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:

Lean-to Projects:

- Volunteer Crew Leader, Eric Friedman, led two work trips to the Devil's Acre Lean-to in the Hunter-West Kill Mountain Wilderness to relocate the privy, rebuild the privy, and replace the floorboards using primarily existing materials. The Crew intends to visit the lean-to again in Fall 2022 to re-stain the privy and lean-to where needed.
- Eric Friedman, with support from the Catskills 3500 Club, led two work trips to the Fox Hollow Lean-to in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area to relocate the location of the thunderbox and build an entirely new privy. Additionally, the Crew also rebuilt the firepit, made improvements to the spring, and insulated the lean-to.
- Eric Friedman, with support from the Trail Conference Conservation Corps Trail Stewards, led a 5-day work trip to the Baldwin Memorial Lean-to in Phoenicia Mt. Tobias Wild Forest to install new roofing following damage from a fallen tree. hope to replace sections of the roof at the Baldwin Memorial Lean-to in Phoenicia Mt. Tobias Wild Forest following damage from a recent blowdown.

Catskills Trail Crew:

- Repaired a swampy muddy area of trail with rock crush and stepping-stones on Mary's Glen trail near the N-S Lake Campground Road. This project was led by Cal Johnson.
- Repaired a wet and muddy area with poor drainage on the Long Path/Phoenicia East Branch Trail one mile south of Lane St, again with crush, stepping-stones and improved drainage. This project was led by Andy Garrison.
- Repaired a perpetually wet section of the Long Path in the Platte Clove Preserve by improving water bars and drainage ditches, and building trail with crush around roots. This project was led by Don Cohen.
- A crew led by Matt Smith addressed areas with poor drainage and giant mudholes using crush and stepping-stones on the Huckleberry Point Trail.

- Andy Garrison continued to work on a very wet section of the Long Path just north of Warner Creek, with the assistance of the Catskills Trail Stewards.
- Additionally, Andy Garrison removed 297 blowdowns in the Slide Mountain and Big Indian Wilderness areas in Region 3 with a TRP. He has another TRP to return to these areas this fall.

Blowdown Brigade:

- April: Removed 8 blowdowns on the Overlook Mtn trail. 6 people working 5 hrs.
- May: Removed approximately 60 blowdowns the length of the Devil's Path, 12 people working over a single weekend.
- May/June: Removed smaller blowdowns on the Dry Brook Ridge Trail and 2 miles of the Pine Hill West Branch trail north from Biscuit Brook trailhead.

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Report information collected and prepared by:

Melissa Cascini, NY Program Coordinator

Zachary Cole, Long-Distance Trails Program Coordinator

Please direct any interest in volunteering with the initiatives listed above to volunteer@nynjtc.org.



**Forest Fire Lookout Association
New York State Chapter
CPAC Meeting Report
August 12th for meeting on August 24, 2022**

Fire Danger: Summer 2022 continues to be very dry. As of this writing nearly all of New York State is under High Fire Danger with some areas having experienced a few red flag days. Water levels are dangerously low with many springs and streams having gone dry. If a fire were to begin, it would likely spread quickly and be difficult to get under control with fewer water resources available to fight it.

9th Annual Lighting of the Fire Towers Event: As of this writing, 18 fire towers across NYS will be participating in the 9th Annual Lighting of the Fire Tower Event! This event, begun by Red Hill Volunteer Coordinator, Doug Hamilton was developed to provide a way to honor the men and women who served in the towers for so many years; protecting peoples homes, businesses and communities as well as the surrounding forests. To date, only Balsam Lake Mt Fire Tower will be participating in the Catskills. This is not a hiking event. To see the light come on at 9 pm, one could be on either Todd Mt Rd or Cabin Hill Rd or the CMC Palmer Hill trailhead parking area. Nearby Utsayantha Fire Tower will also be participating. For additional information or an updated list of registered towers visit www.nysffla.org

Current Projects: Projects continue to move forward at Bramley Mt and Rock Rift Fire Towers. A new Fire Tower has been erected in the Village of Speculator, illustrating that projects such as these continue to be successful around NYS. The total standing towers in NYS is currently 77.

Leonard Hill Fire Tower: The VSA Application for restoration work at the Leonard Hill Fire Tower continues to be stalled while we await the engineering report that was requested in September of 2018. Once that is completed, development of the work plan can move forward and the VSA can be approved. Another alternative is to move the tower back to Gilbert Lake State Park where it had originally come from. This tower and area could be made accessible at its current location, a usage that Schoharie County desperately needs with only one other accessible location in the entire county (Looking Glass Pond in Burnt Rossman Hills State Forest).

Visitor Usage: Visitor numbers continue to be robust at most fire tower locations. Numbers are only captured on the days when volunteer stewards are on duty at the towers, but many days 100 plus visitors are seen.

Tower Closures: Mt Tremper fire tower cab remains closed to the public. Balsam Lake Observer's Cabin remains closed to the public.

Respectfully submitted,

Laurie Rankin, Director
NYS Chapter/Forest Fire Lookout Association
www.nysffla.org