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GUIDE

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THE GREAT OUTDOORS IN THE CATSKILLS

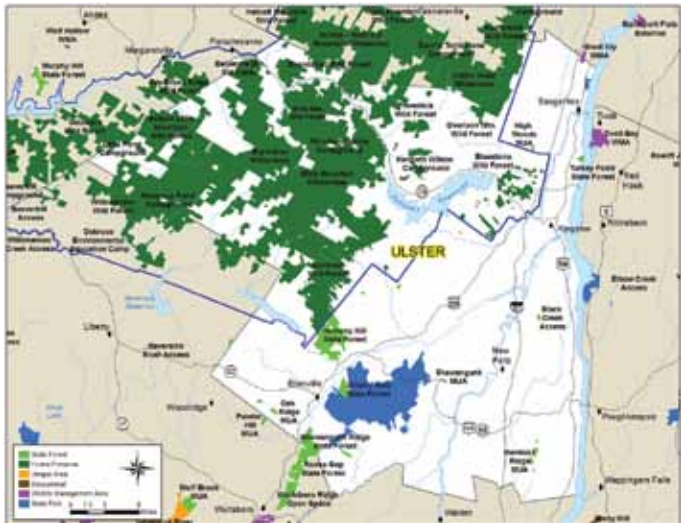
By Jeff Senterman

What a winter we have had! Skiers and snowshoers have had the opportunity to explore the Catskill Mountains in a way that has been unavailable for a number of winter seasons. I hope everyone has had a great winter season.

For me, my thoughts are drifting to the busy upcoming summer work season in the Catskill Mountains. We have trail projects reaching completion and we have a number of new and exciting opportunities for those who loves the trails and open space of the Catskill Park. In addition, I can't help but think how a tragedy from last season reminds us all to be vigilant for our safety and the safety of our pets who may be hiking with us.

Forest Preserve Classification of 2011 Catskill Park Big Indian Acquisition Announced: Will Increase Access and Recreational Opportunities

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced that the lands of the 2011 Big Indian Acquisition had be classified by the DEC and portions of the acquisition would be managed as parts of the Big Indian Wilderness Area, the Shandaken Wild Forest and the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center Intensive Use Area. Lands under this new classification include:



Units of Forest Preserve in Catskill Park in Ulster County. Map courtesy of the DEC

- 630 acres on the eastern ridge of Belleayre Mountain, including all lands acquired east of Giggle Hollow Brook and north of the Belleayre Ridge, will be classified as Wild Forest and added to the Shandaken Wild Forest. The Wild Forest classification will allow several existing wood roads in that area to accommodate recreational activities such as bicycling. In addition, the Wild Forest classification will allow the development and grooming of improved cross-country ski trails on the property, which is in close proximity to the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center. Grooming will be limited to the use of a snowmobile with a drag.

- Approximately 300 acres in Lost Clove, including the Lost Clove Trail, will be classified as Wilderness and added to the Big Indian Wilderness Area. This classification will protect important natural resources and the character of these lands, while providing non-motorized or mechanized recreational use such as hiking and hunting.

- As part of a draft revision of the Belleayre Mountain Ski Center's UMP, which DEC released in May of 2013, DEC also proposed to classify 270 acres of the Big Indian Acquisition as intensive use and add these lands to the Ski Center. Also under the draft UMP, 150 acres would be reclassified from intensive use to wilderness and added to the adjoining Big Indian Wilderness. These proposed revisions are still being reviewed.

DEC is responsible for managing the constitutionally protected Forest Preserve in the Catskill Park under the auspices of the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (Master Plan). The Master Plan applies a classification system that ranges from wilderness to wild forest to intensive use and provides guidelines for the management of those lands. Classifications are based on the physical character of the lands and their capacity to accommodate human use, including recreational activities. The Master Plan also designates management units and directs DEC to develop individual unit management plans that guide management activities and public use of those units, while also ensuring the protection of natural resources

Now that the classification of these lands has been completed, the next step will be to undertake an amendment or revision of the Shandaken Wild Forest Unit Management Plan to reflect the addition of the newly added lands to this unit, and to make management proposal such as the development of trails on the property. The DEC hopes to begin that process later this year. The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference (Trail Conference), together with regional partners will work with the DEC to ensure the development of access areas and sustainable trail networks in the area. In addition, the Trail Conference is looking forward to the opportunity to provide stewardship and maintenance for any new proposed trails as part of their Catskills Trails Program.

Poisoned Bait in Forest Claims Unintended Victim

People who have hiked with Alan Via in the Catskills are too many to name. But one companion stands out, his Lab Bookah.

In his book *The Catskill 67: A Hiker's Guide to the Catskill 100 Highest Peaks under 3500'*, Via writes: "I watched her grow up in the woods and become one of the best bushwhackers of



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them all. Wherever I am in the woods she is either right next to me or orbiting within sight. Her trust allowed me to become comfortable removing porcupine quills from dogs in the woods. Boo has her own 3500 Club certificate and is the first canine and second 'female' to complete the Catskill 67, probably having climbed them all three or more times."

Sadly, a March 1 report in Albany's *Times Union* newspaper revealed that Bookah died while hiking in the Catskills with Via, the victim of strychnine-laced meat that someone had placed deep in the woods.

Reporter Chris Churchill writes, "Via has come to believe the meat was left by a hunter hoping to protect the deer population by killing a coyote. There's no way to prove that, of course, but there aren't many plausible reasons for why strychnine would be placed so deeply in the woods. Via hopes publicizing Bookah's death can prevent a repeat of his experience."

Via shares this story as a caution to dog owners and to those who use poisoned bait in the woods for any reason. To the latter: poisoned bait is not only illegal, but is a reckless and inhumane endangerment of all creatures. Please stop and use your better sense.



*Alan Via and Bookah on the trail.
Photo by Joanne Hihn*



Volunteers working on the Long Path. Photo by Jeff Senterman

Spring Brings New Opportunities for Volunteers in the Catskills

You can help sustain, build and maintain hundreds of miles of Catskills trails! The Trail Conference is looking for motivated volunteers to join trail crews, adopt trails for maintenance and to supervise trail maintainers. The Catskills are home to a number of trail crews, including trail maintenance crews that work throughout the region, crews that work on building new trails and crews that work on rehabilitating lean-tos. Trail maintainers adopt about a mile of trail and make regular trips to their trails to cut back brush and weeds to make sure the trail is passable. Trail Supervisors help recruit, train, and supervise a team of trail maintainers in the Catskills. No experience is necessary, as training is provided as part of the Trail Conference's work in the region. If you have any interest, they need you, as the hundreds of volunteers working throughout the Catskill Park are what makes are a big part of what makes our trails, lean-tos and recreational

resources available to all. If you're interested in any opportunity, let them know by emailing the Trail Conference at catskills@nynjtc.org.

Trail News and Events

Trail Conditions in the Catskill Mountains

Conditions can change quickly in the Catskills. A warm spring or summer hike can suddenly turn dangerous when it starts raining and temperatures drop. In the fall, winter conditions often come early to the mountains and in the winter months, the mountains can be unforgiving with low temperatures, high winds and deep snowpacks. For more detailed information on the condition and status of trails and trailheads in the Catskills, the Trail Conference offers a page on their website with regularly updated conditions: www.nynjtc.org/content/catskill-trails-updates.

Fly Fishing 101

On Saturday, April 26 Kenco Outfitters in Kingston will be hosting a Fly Fishing 101 with Tom Zemianek from the Orvis Company. You will be able to learn the basics of fly fishing, how to improve your cast and other new techniques or just get some great fishing advice from one of the best in the business. Two sessions are available: 12-2 and 2-4 pm. Please call 845 340 0552 or email randy@atkenco.com to reserve your space at this workshop!

Trailfest 2014

Saturday, May 10 is Kenco Outfitters' annual trail festival at their Kingston location. Trailfest is one of the Catskills' best, most comprehensive demo days featuring the latest in hiking and camping gear: tents, packs, sleeping bags, footwear and clothing. You will be able to talk to the representatives from gear manufacturers, local hiking clubs, Scouts and other regional organizations like the Trail Conference who engage in and promote outdoor activities, stewardship and conservancy here in the Catskills. Free seminars on a number of different topics will be available as well! More details will be posted at www.atkenco.com/events.asp.

Give back to Catskills Trails with a Service Vacation this June

The Trail Conference, as part of its work to build 9.5 miles of new backcountry trail between the Village of Phoenicia and the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area, will be offering a weeklong backcountry service vacation between May 31 and June 7. On this extended backcountry service trip the crew will be working on the section of new trail that traverses Cross Mountain between Wittenburg and Mount Pleasant. This will be a week long work trip in the backcountry of the Catskill Mountains. The crew will be camping each night on the mountain at a basecamp and work will include clearing trees and vegetation, and tread construction such as raking, side-hilling, waterbars and stone steps. In addition to volunteering for the crew, the Trail Conference will be leading several hikes to the worksite and the basecamp to resupply the crew and volunteers are needed to carry up and down supplies



One of the vistas along a trail opening this June. Photo by Jeff Senterman

and tools. If you are interested in either opportunity, please e-mail the Trail Conference at catskills@nynjtc.org.

Mark your calendars now for National Trails Day

Saturday, June 7, 2014

Planned celebrations include the grand opening of the new section of Long Path between the Village of Phoenicia and the Burroughs Range Trail in the Slide Mountain Wilderness and a new trail on Palmer Hill in the western Catskills.

Take a Hike!

If you are looking to get out on the trails, but would like to go on a guided group hike to help you get your bearings on Catskill Mountain trails, the region has several different groups that lead guided hikes. The Catskill Mountain Club (CMC) offers members and non-members the opportunity to go hiking, paddling, biking and skiing throughout the Catskills with a majority of the trips in the western Catskills (www.catskillmountainclub.org). The Catskill 3500 Club leads hikes up the 35 peaks in the Catskills that reach above 3500 feet in elevation (www.catskill-3500-club.org). The Rip Van Winkle Hikers also lead hikes throughout the region and you can find out more information about their activities at www.newyorkheritage.com/rvw.

All three of these organizations are member clubs of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and in addition to leading

hikes, work through the Trail Conference's agreement with the DEC to maintain trails and lean-tos in the Catskill Mountains. The organization all offer unique opportunities to explore the Catskill Mountain Region, meet new friends and find hiking buddies.

Getting Connected & Getting Involved

If you are interested in learning more about hiking the Catskill Mountains, getting the latest news and updates about trails, joining a trail crew, adopting a trail for maintenance, or just finding out more information about stewardship of our recreational facilities in the Catskill Mountain Region, please contact the Trail Conference's Catskills office at 518 628 4243 or via e-mail at catskills@nynjtc.org.

Jeff Senterman was formerly an Assistant Forest Ranger for the DEC in Greene County, graduated with a degree in Environmental Science from Lyndon State College, has worked in the Environmental Planning field, is currently the Senior Program Coordinator for the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference and is a member of the Board of Directors for the Catskill Mountain Club and the Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference partners with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of 2,000 miles of public trails,

including 29 lean-tos and over 200 miles of trails in the Catskill Mountain region. We offer volunteer opportunities for people who love the outdoors, as well as publishing detailed hiking maps for the Catskill Mountain Region, along with a number of other regions. For more information on our maps and our Catskill Community Trails program please visit us on the web at www.nynjtc.org/catskills and follow us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/NYNJTC.Catskill-Region.



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