



KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

March 1987

KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST

UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

New York State / Department of Environmental Conservation

Mario Cuomo
Governor

Henry G. Williams
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM FROM
HENRY G. WILLIAMS, *Commissioner*
New York State
Department of Environmental Conservation

MAR 17 1987

TO: The Record

FROM: Hank Williams 

SUBJECT: Unit Management Plan
Kaaterskill Wild Forest

The final Unit Management Plan for the Kaaterskill Wild Forest, is consistent with guidelines and criteria of the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, involved citizens participation, is consistent with the State Constitution, Environmental Conservation Law, rules, regulations and policy, and projects stated management objectives of such area for a five-year period, accordingly is hereby approved and adopted.

cc: L. Marsh

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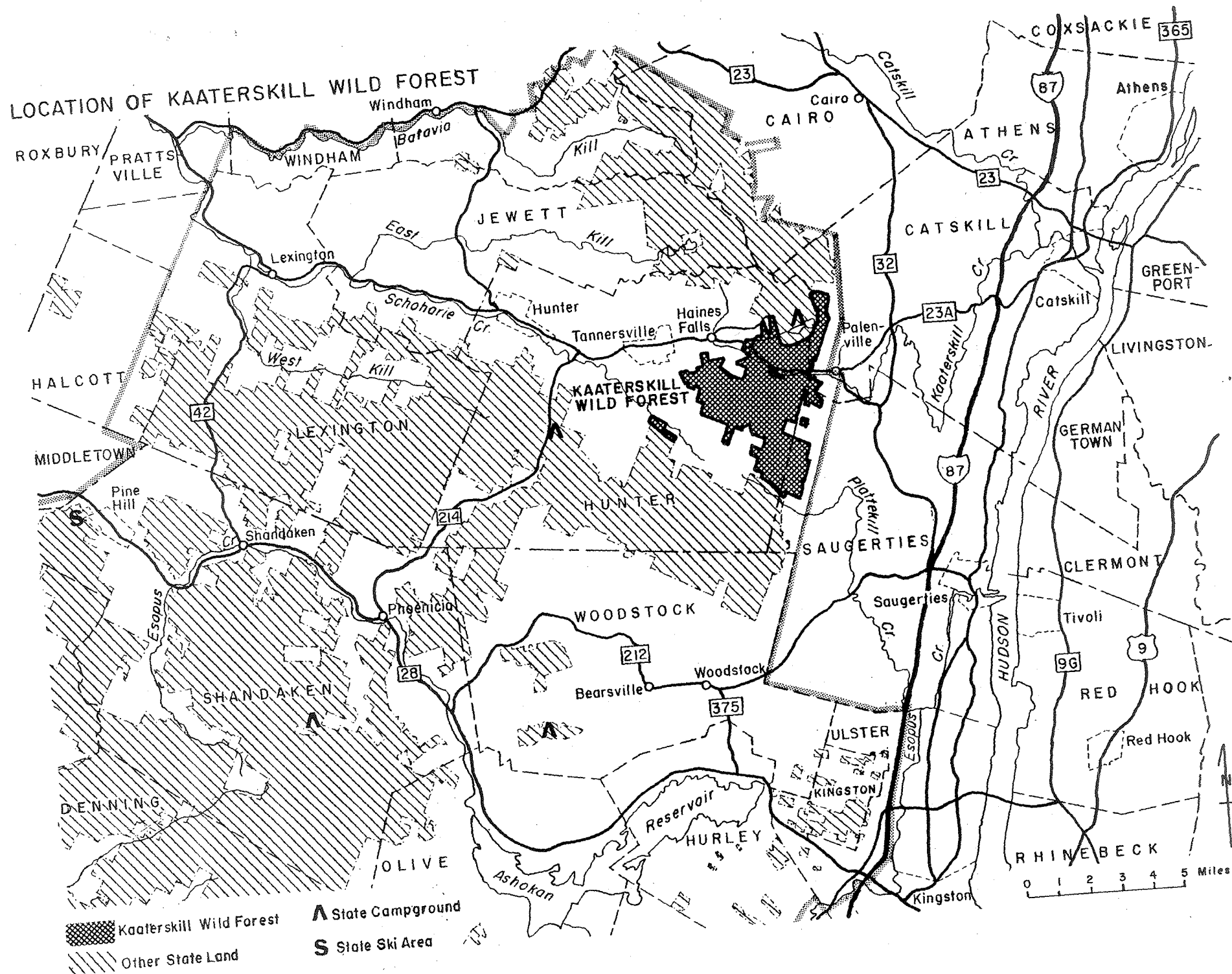
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LOCATION OF KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST



I. UNIT LOCATION AND DESCRIPTION

A. Location

The Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit is located at the northeast rim of the Catskill Mountains in Greene and Ulster Counties. It lies east and south of the North Lake - South Lake Intensive Use Area and extends south to the Platte Clove Road (Hunter Town Road 9, an eastward extension of Greene County Highway 16).

The Unit consists of 7,620 acres in parts of two counties and three towns.

Greene County

Town of Hunter	-	6,040 acres
Town of Catskill	-	650 acres

Ulster County

Town of Saugerties	-	930 acres
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The Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit is extraordinarily scenic, with extremely rugged topography and considerable elevation differential. It is, however, readily accessible by public roads and recreational trails. The Platte Clove Road borders the Unit on the south, County Highway 18 (North Lake Road) borders it on the north and NYS Highway 23A cuts east-west through the Kaaterskill Clove in the northern third of the Unit.

This Unit includes all of the Forest Preserve lands south of the North Lake Road and the North-

South Lake Intensive Use Area and north of the Platte Clove Road. In addition, a small separate parcel called Roaring Kill is located north of Elka Park Road (Town Highway 8) in the Town of Hunter. This parcel was named for a tributary of Schoharie Creek.

B. Description

1. General

The Unit is so diverse in topography, elevation, vegetation and in the intensity of human use that it defies description in general terms.

This natural diversity is the foundation for its attractiveness and fascination to users. The extraordinary variety and beauty of its parts give a unique quality to the whole. The

Kaaterskill Clove or the Kaaterskill Falls cannot be separated from South Mountain to the north or from Kaaterskill High Peak and Roundtop to the south; they are of one landscape. In his book, The Catskill Mountain House, Roland

VanZandt refers to this landscape: "The combination of topographical features found within a four-mile radius (of the Pine Orchard, site of the Catskill Mountain House) - of precipitous cloves, high mountain peaks, lakes and waterfalls, secluded dales and panoramic views - are characteristic of the Catskills as a

whole; but nowhere else can they be found in such concentrated grandeur and so conveniently located to the Town of Catskill." It is wild, forested mountain land easily accessible to the greatest population center of the East.

2. Wildlife

The Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit lies within the Catskill Peaks ecozone. The extensive northern hardwood forestlands of the area provide habitat for a variety of wildlife species, specifically those that favor mature to old growth forest stages.

There has never been a formal inventory of animal life for this area. Chambers, in his handbook, Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management, 1983, (available at either the Department's Region 4 offices in Stamford or Schenectady) compiled an extensive listing of wildlife presumed to reside within the Catskill Peaks ecozone and further qualified his listing by categorizing species by forest type, forest stage and special habitat needs. Based on Chambers' criteria, 43 species of mammals, 65 species of birds, and 32 species of reptiles and amphibians likely inhabit the Kaaterskill Wild Forest area. Records compiled for the Breeding Bird Atlas (DEC in cooperation with the

Federation of N.Y.S. Bird Clubs) indicated that as of the end of 1983, 27 species of birds were recorded as confirmed breeders, 16 species as probable breeders and 62 species as possible breeders in the Kaaterskill area. Appendix B contains status and occurrence lists of mammals, breeding birds, reptiles and amphibians.

Several species of wildlife are of specific interest and concern. White-tailed deer are present in modest numbers. Based on five years of deer hunting information in the Town of Hunter, it is known that 1.47 bucks per square mile were harvested. Extrapolating from this information and assuming that the deer population is uniformly distributed, the average pre-hunting season deer population is approximately 130 for the Unit.

The Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit is within the occupied portion of the Northern Catskill Black Bear Range. Bears have been harvested by hunters in the area. Other recreationists, especially hikers, occasionally observe them. Recent DEC studies have focused on the relationship between bears and humans in the Catskills, particularly conflicts with homeowners, recreationists and beekeepers.

Fishers were transferred into the Catskills

throughout a five year (1976-80) trap and transfer program with the goal of establishing a self-perpetuating fisher population. There have been several sightings of fisher in the Town of Hunter and it is likely that fisher presently inhabit the Kaaterskill Wild Forest area.

3. Fisheries

The area is drained by four tributary systems including three in the Hudson River watershed and one in the Mohawk River drainage. The approximately 8.5 miles of Hudson River tributaries within the area of concern are generally located in rugged terrain with rocky substrates which cause wide fluctuations in stream flow. About three miles may be dry in late summer. The 0.8 miles of Upper Schoharie Creek, in the Mohawk drainage, differ greatly from the Hudson River tributaries and are generally slower flowing with higher water temperatures.

The fishes indigenous to this part of the state and normally found in similar habitats are present in the area. Survey data from the extreme headwaters of some of the tributaries are sketchy or absent but data are available for portions of each watershed and are assumed to represent those portions of the stream within the area. Schoharie Creek appears to have the

most diverse fish fauna of any water in the area and survey records indicate the presence of brook and brown trout as game species.

Other fish species include white sucker, black nose dace, creek chub, common shiner, tessellated darter and slimy sculpin. The section within this Unit is part of a 4.5 mile stretch of the creek which is stocked with 400 brown trout yearlings in the spring of each year.

The limited fish fauna present in Kaaterskill Creek in the area include self-sustaining populations of rainbow trout, white sucker and black nose dace in addition to brown trout stocked as spring yearlings. Rainbow trout are more successful than the brown trout at spawning in the flow and gradient of the upper Kaaterskill Creek drainage.

No fish data exist for the headwaters of the Lucas Kill within the Unit and the terrain of that area suggests an intermittent condition. No data are available for the fishes of the area tributaries to Plattekill Creek. These tributaries are of small size, appear to be somewhat isolated due to extreme gradient, and may be dry during some summers.

Fish populations in the area are limited due to the unstable condition of most fish

habitat in the 9.3 miles of stream. High gradients result in flashy runoff from rain and snow melt. In addition, natural barriers prevent the movement of trout and suckers which generally move upstream to spawn.

The following are the mileages of streams within the Unit. The streams are indicated on the facilities map in the Appendix.

Kaaterskill Creek	-	6.85 miles
Lucas Kill	-	0.45 miles
Plattekill Creek	-	1.20 miles
Schoharie Creek	-	<u>0.80 miles</u>
TOTAL		9.30 miles

4. Forests

The Unit is entirely forested with a wide diversity of plant species determined by soils and topography. The elevation differential of 3000 feet from Palenville to Kaaterskill High Peak, in a distance of three miles, partially explains this diversity. The oak forests of the Hudson Valley and the dry east and south slopes eventually blend with the maple-beech-birch of the northern hardwoods at higher elevations. Higher still are remnants of spruce-fir forest. Moist cloves and ravines harbor mixtures of hemlock and northern hardwoods. The thin soils of ledges and mountain peaks support little or no

forest vegetation. These are the areas where visitors encounter the many dramatic scenic vistas. Mountain laurel and pinksters inhabit some of the dry flats with thin soils in the vicinity of ledges. Except in rare instances (explained in Part III under "Unique Ecosystems") all of the forest was altered through logging, forest fire, barking of hemlock for the tanning industry and clearing for vistas and agriculture. The forest came back through a combination of public land protection, revegetation of marginal agricultural land and reduced logging activity. The tree species present in the forest of the early 19th century are quite similar to those of today.

C. History

The great "eastern wall" of the Catskills, ranging in elevation of 560' at Palenville to 3655' at the summit of Kaaterskill High Peak, confined the farmer-settler of the 1600's to the Hudson River Valley and adjoining terraces. No significant impact on the area was left by the occasional trapper, hunter, native American or mineral prospector.

The narrow, precipitous stream-cut gorges known as the Kaaterskill Clove and, to the south, the Platte Clove, were finally traversed by roads in the

late 18th Century to tie the lands of Schoharie Creek and the west to the Hudson Valley. Logging, sawmilling, leather tanning, stone quarrying and some agriculture were the first uses of the area to leave a significant impact on the natural resources. But the discovery of the other natural resource - the unique aesthetic resource - was made by those involved in the romantic period of art and literature beginning in the early 19th century.

This small section of the Catskills contains some of the most spectacular scenery in the eastern United States and its assets were documented and romanticized in word, sketch and painting by the artists of the period. The mass recreational use of the same aesthetic resource, in the form of the grand hotels of the 19th and early 20th centuries coincided with the literary and artistic interest. The Mountain Turnpike, now an administrative road, snowmobile trail, foot-trail and horse trail, was owned by the Catskill Mountain House. The Harding Road and South Mountain Road, now horse and foot-trails, led to the Hotel Kaaterskill on South Mountain. The Laurel House was located near the top of Kaaterskill Falls. These grand hotels took great advantage of the scenic resource for their patrons who came to the Catskills to enjoy a primitive natural environment in a comfortable and cultured

setting.

The grand hotels disappeared with the increased mobility of the American population, but the artist and the seeker of solitude remained. In the last two decades, the growth of the outdoor recreational movement has generated a population of users of this scenic resource that now surpasses the visitors accommodated by the grand hotels. It is the large number of users attracted to this popular area and their collective impact on the resources that necessitates a plan of management for this Unit to ensure the availability of the resources for future generations.

It is not necessary or desirable to attempt to include a more detailed history of the area in this plan. Historic documentation is better done - and has already been well done - in books and other publications, some of which are listed as references in this plan's bibliography.

II. INVENTORY OF FACILITIES

A. Barriers (4)

1. Road (4)

- a. a gate on the Mountain Turnpike at the northeast corner of the Unit.
- b. a gate at the base of the Laurel House Road.
- c. a gate at the entrance to South Mountain Road at the Schutt Road parking area.
- d. a permanent barricade on an abandoned railroad bed going east to North Lake at the base of Schutt Road.

2. Trail - no barriers.

B. Trail Heads (5)

1. With Maintained Parking (3)

- a. Bogart Road at the beginning of the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail.
- b. Schutt Road at the beginning of the horse and foot trails.
- c. NY Route 23-A at the Molly Smith parking area above the horseshoe bend.

2. Without Maintained Parking (1)

- a. Platte Clove Road at the entrance to the Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail.
- b. NY Rte. 23-A at the entrance to the Old Harding Road just west of the hamlet of Palenville.

C. Bridges (5)

1. Foot (1)

- a. on yellow trail between Schutt Road parking area and Kaaterskill Falls.

2. Road (2)

- a. two on the Mountain Turnpike, actually built for horses and for administrative use access.

3. Snowmobile (2)

- a. two on the High Peak Snowmobile Trail, one and one-half miles in from Platte Clove Road.

D. Fireplaces (3)

- 1. on horse trail in the vicinity of the Mountain Turnpike Road barrier at the northeast corner of the Unit.
- 2. on horse trail at the vista overlooking Palenville.
- 3. on horse trail on the Old Harding Road, 0.85 mile from Palenville.

E. Trails (±27.75 miles)

- 1. Foot - 6.25 miles of Kaaterskill Falls and South Mountain trails. The "Long Path" of the New York - New Jersey Trail Conference traverses a portion of the foot trail and horse trail systems in this vicinity.
- 2. Horse - 11 miles of the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail System.

3. Snowmobile - two trails:

- a. The 10.5 mile Kaaterskill High Peak Trail; a 3 mile section must be back-tracked, giving a total ride of 13.5 miles.
- b. The 7.75 mile trail from the North Lake Road, around South Lake and down the Mountain Turnpike. Three (3) miles of this trail are within the North-South Lake Intensive Use Area, another 1 mile segment is on a Town road outside the Unit, with a remainder of 3.75 miles within the Unit.

4. Cross-Country Skiing - 3.25 miles, all of which coincide with foot trails in the vicinity of South Mountain and Boulder Rock. This sector of cross-country ski trails is joined with that sector in the adjacent North-South Lakes Intensive Use Area. The main ski trail, the Old Hotel Kaaterskill carriage road is the boundary between the two Areas (Kaaterskill Wild Forest and North-South Lakes).

F. Roads

1. The Mountain Turnpike - A 1.5 mile section is closed except for administrative use.

G. State Truck Trail

1. The South Mountain Road - The total 1-mile section is closed except for infrequent administrative use. Administratively essential

as access to search for lost hikers from the nearby campsite.

H. Public Roads

1. The Mountain Turnpike - an unmaintained Town of Catskill Road. 1.25 mile length.
2. New York Route 23-A - travels 3 miles through Kaaterskill Clove.
3. County Route 18 (North Lake Road) - which borders the north edge of the Unit for .25 mile.
4. Laurel House Road - a maintained Town of Hunter road, runs from County Route 18 south to the gate at the parking areas. Its length is 0.4 miles.
5. Schutt Road - a maintained Town of Hunter road, runs from County Route 18 south to the Lake Creek. Its length is 0.33 mile.
6. Elka Park Road - a maintained Town of Hunter road, near the Roaring Kill, is 1.15 miles long.
7. Platte Clove Road - a maintained Town of Hunter road, at the southeast extreme of the Unit, is the boundary for 1.0 mile.

I. Telephone and Electric Lines

1. A telephone line in Kaaterskill Clove parallels the Kaaterskill Creek and NY 23-A for 2.25 miles.
2. An electric line occupies a 0.4 mile segment of the old route of the Otis Elevating Railroad.

3. A telephone line and an electric line run between Schutt Road and Laurel House Road, parallel to the old railroad bed. The telephone line continues westerly along the old railroad bed.

J. Picnic Tables (2)

1. On the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail System. One is located where the Mountain Turnpike enters the Forest Preserve and another where the trail overlooks Palenville.

K. Historic Locations, Memorials and Plaques

1. Layman's Monument - A marble slab in a stone cairn marks the spot where Frank D. Layman lost his life August 10, 1900, while fighting a forest fire. The monument was erected by the people of Twilight Park when this land was privately owned. It is situated at a vista point 0.5 miles east and south of the Kaaterskill Falls on the blue Escarpment Trail.
2. Unmarked sites of two "grand hotels", the Hotel Kaaterskill and the Laurel House - The huge Hotel Kaaterskill was located on the summit of South Mountain; it contained 1200 rooms and could accomodate 900 guests. It was built in 1881 and burned to the ground in 1924. The Laurel House site was at the end of Schutt Road. Its property included the Kaaterskill Falls

itself, the House's prime asset. It began as a boarding house in 1852 and expanded to a great 250 person capacity in 1882. After 1900, it remained as a less than lucrative hotel until purchased in 1966 by the NYS Conservation Department which burned the structure in 1967. The nearby Catskill Mountain House, the original of the local "grand hotels" is not within this Unit but its influence in the history and development of the area is significant.

3. Williamson Tannery site in Kaaterskill Clove -

This is situated on the Old Turnpike Road at the floor of the Clove adjacent to the Kaaterskill Creek. Known as East Hunter in the heyday of the tanning industry, it boasted 200 people, a tannery, and a post office in 1842 (Beers, History of Greene County, 1884). The community disappeared in 1848 when the tannery company dissolved. Stone foundations remain. The ruins are considered important as a relatively undisturbed 19th Century industrial archaeological site.

4. The Hunter Turnpike - This is the original, private, toll road built in 1824 from Palenville to the New York Tannery in Hunter. It is located in approximately the same place as the

present NY 23-A from Palenville to More's Bridge, the first stream crossing west of Entenmann's Bridge at Palenville. From there the Old Turnpike leaves 23-A and follows the stream level until just before the hamlet of Haines Falls. Bridge abutments still stand near where Lake Creek joins Kaaterskill Creek. Most of the abandoned portion of this turnpike is still discernible on the ground.

5. Site of the Otis Elevating Railway - This is the site of a former seven-thousand-foot long railway. The tram ran on rails and was towed by cable hoists powered by steam. It ran from the ledges just east of North Lake to Bogart Road at the base and connected the Catskill Mountain House with the Catskill Mountain Railroad, the Village of Catskill, and thus the passenger boats of the Hudson River. It hoisted hotel patrons up a steep ascent of 1600 feet in elevation. Begun in 1892, it died in 1918, a victim of economic recession and of changing times symbolized by the automobile. The site of the line can still be seen since it is presently used as a maintained right-of-way for an electric line (see Plan Parts II - I, 1 and 2).
6. Railroad sites - The 1800's saw penetration of the Catskills by the railroads to take advantage

of tourism. Transporting travellers to the many resorts and hotels was the objective.

Competition between hotels was keen and expensive. The Kaaterskill Railroad, an extension of the Stony Clove Railroad from Phoenicia, was built easterly from Hunter through Tannersville and Haines Falls, to the west end of South Lake in 1883. The nearby Hotel Kaaterskill encouraged this extension as competition to the nearby Catskill Mountain House. In 1899, the 5½ mile Catskill and Tannersville Railroad connected the Otis Elevating Railway with Tannersville - the Catskill Mountain House's answer to the Hotel Kaaterskill railroad competition.

These two railroads closely parallel each other from South Lake to Haines Falls. The track beds are long abandoned; the Kaaterskill Railroad, then the Ulster and Delaware, stopped service in 1940 and the Catskill and Tannersville Railroad was discontinued in 1919. Both trackbeds are recognizable as they pass through 0.75 miles of this Unit. Abutments still stand at stream crossings and wooden ties are still evident.

7. The Mountain Turnpike - Better known as the Mountain House Road and at one time variously as the Toll Road, the Old Stage Road, and the Old Mountain Road. This road led from the Hudson

Valley to the Catskill Mountain House near North Lake. It traverses the northeast part of the Unit for 1.25 miles. Its construction date is unknown but it preceded the road through Kaaterskill Clove and was used as a stagecoach road as early as 1823. The railroad alternative, the nearby Otis Elevating Railway, replaced stagecoach travel in 1892. The road was infrequently used by automobiles before it became generally impassable. Today it is a pleasant and scenic foot trail, horse trail, snowmobile trail and administrative road.

8. Harding Road - This road connected Palenville at the east end of Kaaterskill Clove with George Harding's Hotel Kaaterskill on the summit of South Mountain. It was built in 1881, the same year the Hotel was constructed. Beers (1884), calling the road "The Kaaterskill Park Turnpike", described it as "the most wonderful example of turnpike engineering to be seen within the county. Its route was laid by mountain men after the project had been pronounced an impossibility by railroad engineers." The 2.25 mile road segment through this Unit climbs the steep north side of Kaaterskill Clove.

L. Scenic Vistas

(See facilities map in the Appendix for trails information)

1. Forest Preserve Access parking lot on NY 23-A - in Kaaterskill Clove.
2. Top of Kaaterskill Falls.
3. Layman's Monument - on blue trail $\frac{1}{2}$ mile south and east of Kaaterskill Falls.
4. A ledge 0.75 miles east on blue trail.
5. Sunset Rock - 1 mile east on blue trail.
6. Inspiration Point - 1.5 miles east on blue trail.
7. Boulder Rock - 2.5 miles east on blue trail.
8. Overlook from the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail - by the gate barrier on the Mountain House Road.
9. Lookout on the Harding Road - now the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail, 0.75 miles above Palenville.
10. Palenville Overlook - on the Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail System at the end of the Old Quarry Road.
11. Overlook to the south and east from Platte Clove Road - 0.75 miles down the Clove from the top of the ravine (end of the County Road).
12. Huckleberry Point - at edge of escarpment southeast of Kaaterskill High Peak. Site is on an unmarked trail.

M. Trail Signs

(See appendix for list of signs for foot, horse and snowmobile trails).

N. Horse Corrals

1. At Schutt Road parking area.

O. Hitching Rails

1. At Bogart Road parking area.
2. Mountain House Road at bridge over Dwaskill.
3. At Palenville Overlook on horse trail.
4. Harding Road on horse trail in 0.75 mile from Palenville.
5. Schutt Road parking area.

P. Parking Areas (no trailhead)

1. Laurel House Road at dead end.

Q. Trail Registers

1. Escarpment Trail near intersection with yellow trail to Schutt Road.
2. South Mountain Road at intersection of yellow foot - horse trail.
3. Mountain Turnpike at bridge over Dwaskill.
4. Harding Road, below overlook.
5. Schutt Road parking lot.

III. SPECIAL CONSTRAINTS AND ISSUES AFFECTING THE PLANNING AREA

A. General Constraints

1. Legal - This unit management plan has been developed within the constraints set forth by Article XIV of the State Constitution, Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law, Title 6 of the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, and established policies for the administration of the lands involved.
2. Rugged topography - overall is a constraint to the development or extension of allowable uses within the Unit.
3. Wildlife - The "forever wild forest lands" clause of Article XIV of the New York State Constitution imposes a passive management scheme which ultimately results in mature to old growth forest conditions. On other State-owned lands controlled by the Department of Environmental Conservation, it is legally possible to devise and conduct habitat modification to favor specific wildlife species (most frequently game animals). The forest vegetation of Forest Preserve lands progresses through natural plant succession toward an eventual old-growth forest stage. Game populations may not be large under these conditions. The Forest Preserve concept provides a strategy of land management that does not favor any

particular wildlife species or group of species, but rather places emphasis on the protection of natural processes.

Deer Management is not specific to the area, but is governed by the objectives of the State (ECL 11-0907) and present Deer Management Units (DMU's) 58 and 59 (ECL 11-0913, 6 NYCRR 1.21). Objectives for these DMU's are to sustain stable deer populations that do not exceed the limited food sources that are available. These two present deer management units, particularly the land within the Kaaterskill Wild Forest, do not provide an abundance of adequate natural nutrition, especially during the critical winter period.

Management requires holding deer at moderate (DMU 58) to moderate-low (DMU 59) populations, thereby reducing winter mortality due to starvation and maintaining deer in good health and physical condition. This is accomplished through annual fall deer herd reduction (hunting) with the harvest of does and fawns in addition to antlered bucks.

4. Fisheries - All waters of the Kaaterskill Wild Forest are regulated by statewide seasons, size and creel limits specified in 6NYCRR 10 as authorized by 11-1303-7 of the Environmental Conservation Law of New York.

B. Special Issues

1. Rugged topography - restricts use to limited areas of the unit. In turn, the most easily accessible parts of these limited areas are most intensely used. This gives rise to concentration of erosion, soil compaction, vegetative disturbance, noise, sanitation problems, safety and general vandalism in relatively small, heavily used areas. Law enforcement and educational efforts are concentrated in these limited areas. The same rugged topography has a reverse effect on the majority of the area in the Unit keeping human use to a minimum; the Kaaterskill High Peak-Roundtop area and part of the Kaaterskill Clove are examples. There is no such thing as "average use" in the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit.
2. Kaaterskill Falls - is the major attraction of this Unit. Illegal camping in the Falls area has been brought under control through road barriers, tree planting and law enforcement but is still a daily law-enforcement problem. Due to a lack of common sense of some users, visitor safety is the primary problem. Unauthorized paths and other entrances to the head of the Falls and two lower levels of the Falls have been posted with signs by the Department to deter unsafe use, yet a considerable segment of users ignore such constraints to

their jeopardy. The result is statistically documented through public accident reports. Since the Department has acquired the property, there have been three human deaths, one animal death and over a dozen major injuries, all from falls. Although nearly all injuries and deaths were the result of human error, a practical solution to reduce injury and death has not yet been found.

3. General misuse - negatively impacts on the recreational experience and aesthetic sense of the majority of users. Camping too close to waterways and trails, indiscriminate littering, and sanitation violations cannot be entirely eliminated, but careful planning and budgeting can significantly reduce them. Regular inspections and law enforcement are needed to keep former heavily abused areas from developing into problems again. Kaaterskill Clove along NY Rte. 23A is second only to the Kaaterskill Falls area as an issue of general misuse.

4. The "Long Path" - The concept of connecting the metropolitan New York City area and the Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserves by a trail system across private and public lands has been actively pursued for years by the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference made up of 46 member organizations and affiliated with the Appalachian Trail Conference.

Except for some minor gaps across the Catskills, the trail extends to the northern edge of the Forest Preserve in Greene County. One gap in the trail exists within the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit. No trail connects Platte Clove with Kaaterskill Clove. A trail connection from the Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail to the vicinity of Red Gravel Hill Road south of Palenville has been proposed and tentatively laid out on the ground. Much of the proposed 4.5 mile route is along existing old footpaths and former quarry roads. Minimal tree cutting would be required. Completion of the trail entirely over Forest Preserve land will require State acquisition of a 50 acre private parcel. The parcel is already an active acquisition proposal with a willing seller.

5. Land acquisition - Key, preselected parcels are desirable and necessary to provide better access, parking for users and, in one case, consolidation. Access is needed at the extreme west end of the Unit west of Roundtop Mountain. Parking is needed at the snowmobile entrance at Platte Clove. Access and parking are needed at the Palenville end of Kaaterskill Clove. One undeveloped private parcel is situated in the midsection of Kaaterskill Clove and is the only such in-holding. Public access

rights along Harding Road must be recognized and purchased if non-existing.

C. Non-Conforming Uses

The 10.5 mile Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail is situated above the 2700 foot elevation State Land Master Plan limitation for conforming use. Built in 1975, its construction preceded the Department policy of not constructing such trails over 2700 feet in elevation. The trail was built to fill a need of snowmobile access and use on compatible topography and with a minimal environmental impact. Topography necessitates the present non-conforming location because of steeper gradients, soil fragility and potential soil erosion on alternative sites at a lower elevation.

D. Critical Habitats

1. Plant

There are known endangered and/or threatened plant species within the Unit.

Sedum rosea (roseroot) - listed as threatened by Mitchell (1986) and ranked as G5S1 (Globally secure but critically imperiled in NYS) by the New York Natural Heritage Program (Clemants 1986) has been recently verified from this management unit (Kaaterskill Wild Forest).

Dryopteris fragrans (fragrant cliff fern) - listed as rare by Mitchell (1986) and ranked as G5S1 by the New York Natural Heritage Program (Clemants 1986) has been

recently verified from this management unit.

Woodsia glabella (smooth woodsia) - listed as threatened by Mitchell (1986) and ranked as G5S1 by the New York Natural Heritage Program (Clemants 1986) is reported from near this management unit and it is likely that it occurs within this unit.

Before any major work is initiated (new trail, dispersed camping site, etc.) it will be policy to investigate the proposed site location for such plant species to ensure no inadvertent destruction of that plant. Locations of endangered or threatened species will not be shown in order to protect those species from collectors and the general public.

2. Animal

None of the currently listed "Endangered or Threatened Wildlife" species (ECL 6NYCRRL82.5) are known to reside in the area. However, the timber rattlesnake (threatened) and the eastern woodrat (threatened) are possible residents, while the peregrine falcon (endangered), bald eagle (endangered), and red-shouldered hawk (threatened) may pass over the area during migration.

The eastern bluebird, a species of special concern, has been documented as a "confirmed" breeder either on or adjacent to the Kaaterskill Wild Forest. Other "Special Concern" species, the Jefferson salamander, blue-spotted salamander

and spotted salamander may reside within the area's boundary. The National Audubon Society's Blue List (indicating species for which there appear to be non-cyclical population declines or range contractions) includes the hairy woodpecker, a species which is a confirmed breeder in or adjacent to the area.

a. Deer Winter Concentration Areas

No deer wintering concentration areas have been located in the Kaaterskill Wild Forest. However, one nearby wintering site has been identified just north of the hamlet of Platte Clove. The rugged topography, lack of coniferous cover and absence of young hardwood regeneration combine to make the Kaaterskill Wild Forest unsuitable for winter concentration. During times of severe winter weather, deer move out of the Kaaterskill area to suitable locations generally in the Hudson Valley east of the Unit.

b. Wetlands

The New York State Wetlands Inventory maps locate three small wetlands within the area, each less than four acres in size. Cover typing for these wetlands designate each as "open water". They are located on the eastern escarpment of Kaaterskill High Peak below the

1400 foot elevation.

E. Unique Ecosystems

1. Virgin Timber Stands

Four small areas of virgin stands of trees have been documented. One is a small grove of hemlock along the foot trail between Bastion Falls and Kaaterskill Falls. A second stand of mixed hardwoods and hemlock is at Buttermilk Falls, high on the south slope of the Kaaterskill Clove. And near the tops of Roundtop and Kaaterskill High Peak, at an elevation of 3000 to 3200 feet, there is evidence of a mixed conifer-hardwood forest neither logged nor burned.

2. Waterfalls

This Unit has numerous waterfalls. The Kaaterskill Falls is the most famous, popular and dramatic with a two-tiered fall of 250 to 260 feet the highest in New York State.

Also dramatic, but dwarfed by the Kaaterskill Falls, are the Buttermilk Falls, Wildcat Falls and the Viola Falls at Hillyer Ravine, all on the steep south side of the Kaaterskill Clove. The Clove boasts many smaller falls of great beauty: Bastion Falls, Fawn's Leap, The Chasm, LaBelle Falls, Ferndale Falls and Niobe Falls.

Nearby private lands and other adjacent Forest Preserve lands (Platte Clove) are also endowed with

fine waterfalls.

3. Cliffs and Escarpments

Numerous vistas along trails are noted on the Unit map and documented in the Inventory (Part II of this Plan). The hiker willing to bushwhack or travel "cross-lot" enjoys innumerable cliffs and escarpments all along the Eastern Escarpment and Clove hillsides.

F. Primary Public Use

The primary public use is recreation. The Unit's high scenic quality and its proximity to the North Lake-South Lake Intensive Use Area (campsite) are the major factors drawing thousands of visitors annually.

All the trails on the north and east of the Unit are accessible from the campsite area; the easier trails get especially heavy use by day-users and campers from the North Lake-South Lake Unit. The local resort area and good highway access add to the numbers of users. This all leads to a concentration of use - and misuse - in a small area requiring constant policing and maintenance.

In contrast, the Kaaterskill High Peak and Roundtop Mountain area toward the south of the Unit receives much less use and offers the user a "wilder" recreation experience. The present snowmobile trail is not listed as a foot trail and most hikers

have no knowledge of its existence.

G. Land Use Impacts

1. Private lands adjacent to the Kaaterskill Unit have generally become desirable properties because of their relative privacy and solitude. Public lands offer a "backyard" of open space on which no maintenance costs or taxes need be paid yet offers access to the bordering private owner.

The State pays full property taxes based on bare land value.

Occasional negative impacts do exist where the adjacent public lands are utilized as hiking or snowmobile trail heads and parking areas. Trespass, littering, and noise pollution are annoyances that can occur.

2. Fully developed and/or incompatible private development adjacent to public lands may have a negative impact on these public lands. Problems of littering, trespass, boundary disputes, conflicts with public users, and dilution of recreational experience are all potential negative impacts.

H. Economic Impact

Visitors are attracted to this area for a variety of recreational and cultural uses and have a positive impact on hotels, motels, campgrounds,

groceries, service stations, restaurants, and sporting goods stores. The many Greene County resorts utilize the mountain background indirectly as a passive setting for their recreational enterprises. Private campgrounds and resorts adjacent to public lands also utilize directly the facilities provided by these public lands.

IV. IDENTIFICATION OF MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Broad goals of management are determined by law, precedent and existing natural environmental factors.

Goals for the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit are:

- 1 - Protect the natural setting of the Wild Forest as defined by the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan.
- 2 - Accommodate and provide for the broadest spectrum of public uses compatible with wild forest land-use criteria and in keeping with recognized legal and environmental constraints.
- 3 - Identify and actively protect the special unique and fragile areas within the Unit. This includes critical or unique plant and animal habitat, highly scenic areas, historic sites, special geologic formations, etc.

Objectives of management of the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit are to:

- 1 - Provide the public with relatively safe access to view the Kaaterskill Falls.
 - Discourage unsafe access to, misuse of and vandalism in the vicinity of Kaaterskill Falls.
- 2 - Control and redistribute public use in greatly overused areas in the vicinity of Kaaterskill Falls and Kaaterskill Clove.

- 3 - Provide additional and improved foot trail access through the Unit using techniques of minimal vegetative and soil disturbance in keeping with the wild forest atmosphere.
- 4 - Prevent and alleviate soil erosion and vegetative loss through proper and planned trail improvement, trail relocation and regular annual maintenance.
- 5 - Maintain all native wildlife species at levels compatible with their natural environment.
- 6 - Perpetuate fish as part of the wild forest environment and balance this with the sport-angling opportunity within the unit.
- 7 - Control adverse and illegal uses through enforcement of the Environmental Conservation Law and Department rules and regulations.
- 8 - Maintain and improve the water quality of streams emanating from the Unit.
- 9 - Adequately protect the Wild Forest Unit from wildfire.
- 10 - Pursue an active boundary line maintenance program to maintain the integrity of public land ownership and to discourage trespass.
- 11 - Selectively acquire lands that will enhance recreational opportunity and minimize

administrative problems.

- 12 - Educate users to the appreciation, value, enjoyment and management of the public land and scenic and unique resources.
- 13 - Identify critical habitat for rare or endangered species of plants and animals. Resulting records will be used for scientific purposes only and not for distribution to the general public.
- 14 - Prior to site disturbance, examine all areas on which expansion of any recreational opportunity is planned for critical plant and animal habitat.
- 15 - Maintain the Kaaterskill High Peak snow-mobile trail. (see Plan, Part III C)
- 16 - Maintain hunting, trapping and fishing as valid recreational activities.

V. IDENTIFICATION OF NEEDS IN RESPONSE TO
OBJECTIVES, PUBLIC USE AND SENSITIVE ISSUES

To meet the selected management objectives in this 5-year unit plan, there is a need to:

- A. Provide safe access to Kaaterskill Falls by eliminating the through trail, providing observation points at the top and base of the Falls and improving the existing trail.
- B. Discourage overuse and abuse at the Kaaterskill Falls by foot trail elimination, foot trail rehabilitation, providing easy access to selected observation points and educating users.
- C. Redistribute public use in the Kaaterskill Falls and Clove area by eliminating a through trail, improving the condition of the Falls trail, relocating the terminus of the blue Escarpment Trail, providing a trail and observation platform near the top of the Falls, establishing a seasonal caretaker position and educating users.
- D. Provide additional access through the Unit by relocating part of the Escarpment Trail, designating part of the snowmobile trail and portions of the horse trail as foot trails, developing a new Long Path trail down into the Clove, with proper planning for minimal disturbance of soil.
- E. Prevent and alleviate soil erosion through proper trail design, trail segment relocations, and

continuous annual maintenance and inspection on all trails in the Unit.

- F. Alleviate and contain illegal use in the Falls and Clove area by the use of a seasonal employee, special rules and regulations, and increasing law enforcement capability.
- G. Protect critical animal and plant species and habitat by identification of such prior to expansion or relocation of any recreational use.
- H. Develop a system of field identification of critical animal and plant habitat and rare and endangered species.
- I. Educate the public in the proper use of the Unit, particularly the unique sites. Instill interest through historical, geological and cultural aspects of these sites. Provide this through interpretive signs, use of a seasonal employee or caretaker, special rules and regulations, rescheduling of assistant forest ranger assignments and development of educational brochures.
- J. Manage and protect wildlife and fish species through enforcement of the Environmental Conservation Law and pertinent rules and regulations.
- K. Schedule maintenance of property boundaries by painting and signing at least 5 miles per year and 25 miles over the five-year plan.

L. Selectively acquire five parcels of private land to meet four specific management objectives.

VI. PROPOSED MANAGEMENT ACTIONS

A. Kaaterskill Falls Vicinity Improvements

Several separate improvements are proposed to solve or alleviate the myriad severe problems in this location. Each of these is designed to alleviate one or more facets of the overall problem but none of these improvements alone can do justice to the overall situation. The improvements are all linked together toward common objectives.

1. Foot Trail Elimination

Eliminate part of the blue Escarpment Trail from the base of the Kaaterskill Falls (junction with the yellow spur trail) to the junction with the yellow trail at the top of the slope southeast of the top of the Falls near the trail register box.

(Trails and trail color designations are illustrated on the map entitled "Trails in the vicinity of North Lake Campground" in the appendix.) The trail is steep, severely eroded, difficult to maintain and unsafe for the casual hiker or "walker".

The trail, along with several unauthorized paths in the vicinity, will have to be obliterated.

"Obliteration" will consist of natural barriers, unobtrusive man-made barriers, erosion control devices (diversions, etc.), judicious planting of vegetation, and reseeding. Unfortunately, an effect of elimination

of this trail segment is the relocation of the southern terminus of the blue Escarpment Trail. On the positive side, the resulting dead-end trail from NY 23A highway to the Falls will limit foot traffic to local use only. The trail color designation will be changed to yellow.

Project Cost Estimate	\$1,350
Trail (s) obliteration	\$1,200
Signing	\$ 150

2. Foot Trail Improvement

Improve drainage, alleviate erosion and stabilize trail tread for the 0.4 mile length of the trail between NY 23A and the base of Kaaterskill Falls. Construct a wood-frame observation deck at the base of the Falls near where the yellow trail now ends. At the junction where the existing trail enters the boulder-strewn dry creekbed, a wood ramp with railings will safely channel users the last ± 30 feet to the observation deck.

A sign at the observation deck will describe the cultural, geologic, historic and scenic importance of the Falls and immediate vicinity. At the entrance to the ramp a small, specially-worded sign can be placed to describe the reason for the observation deck and protection of the site.

Project Cost Estimate	\$10,000
Trail upgrade	\$2,000

Observation deck & ramp \$7,500

Signs \$ 500

The popularity of this heavily used trail, safety of the user public and protection of the environmental integrity of the stream valley and the Falls vicinity, require special expenditures.

After review, this is considered an acceptable proposal but with modification. Trail improvement is the higher priority. The observation deck will not be built until construction cost, maintenance cost and use history of the upper Falls observation deck can be evaluated.

When the "Horseshoe Bend" Bridge is being replaced by NYS Department of Transportation (1989, 1990?), it is our plan to close the trail and remove signing temporarily, to do special, intensive trail work and attempt revegetation.

3. Escarpment Trail Relocation

The relocation of the southern terminus of the Escarpment Trail is a necessary facet of the overall Kaaterskill Falls management scheme. In addition, parking for the present trailhead is limited and is one-quarter mile (along NY 23-A highway) from the trail entrance. Removing the "through-traffic" from the Kaaterskill Falls trail will help alleviate overuse on the trail, but will also sever the Escarpment Trail connection from NY 23-A.

There are three separate proposals to address the relocation dilemma.

One proposal is to place a trailhead on the north side of NY 23A in the vicinity of the end of the last climbing-lane segment approximately 0.75 miles to the east of the present trailhead and the horseshoe bend. There is a flat area immediately adjacent to the highway where a 10 to 15 car parking facility could be constructed with easy and safe access to and from the highway. The new trail would make a ± 650 foot ascent to the vicinity of the Layman Monument on the existing blue Escarpment Trail.

Project Cost Estimate	\$8,500
New Trail	\$3,500
Parking area construction	\$5,000

A second alternative would be to have the southern terminus of the Escarpment Trail begin at the Schutt Road parking lot. Positive considerations include: the removal of the trail head from NY Rte. 23A, saving the funds necessary to build a new trail and parking area, and beginning the trail at a higher elevation. The primary negative considerations are: The Schutt Road parking area cannot easily be expanded because of topographical limitations, the existing parking area is a horse trailhead which accomodates horse trailers, and the

possibility of encouraging yet another easy access to the head of Kaaterskill Falls.

Cost unknown.

A third alternative would be to construct a new Schutt Road parking lot upslope and near the road's intersection with the North Lake Road. A new location means: a larger horse corral and trailhead can be built to accommodate users, the small end-of-road parking lot could be eliminated, one easy access to the Kaaterskill Falls can be eliminated and an existing conflict of public use/private solitude can be reduced. A new 0.55. mile trail will be needed to connect this trailhead with the existing Escarpment Trail and horse trail at the south Mountain Road (State truck trail); the new trail will not traverse Schutt Road. After public comment and in-house review, the third alternative has been accepted as the preferred proposal. The new parking area and trail are planned for the '87 - '88 fiscal year.

Project Cost Estimate	\$8,500
Parking Area Construction	\$5,000
New Trail	\$1,500
Close Existing Parking	\$2,000

4. Laurel House Site Improvements

This site is the easiest entrance to the head of Kaaterskill Falls and is the area with the most overuse, abuse, vandalism and accidents. There are several parts to the solution that alleviates

this situation.

- a. Parking improvement. The area used for parking at the south end of the Laurel House Road should be redesigned. This present "wide spot" in the road must be designed with definite boundaries, barriers and better signing. An alternative is to construct a small parking area on State land beyond the Town Road right-of-way.
- b. Signing. The reconstructed parking area should have attractive, well-constructed and well-worded signs (i.e., not stock signs) that will: direct people to a new proposed observation point, away from the top of the Falls, direct people to the NY 23A location of the trail to the base of the Falls, regulate use of the immediate area and describe the cultural, geological and historical aspects of the Falls and the locale.
- c. Observation deck and trail. Most visitors come to see Kaaterskill Falls. This is impossible to do from the top of the Falls. An observation deck would provide a safe view of the entire Falls and distract the sightseer from the Laurel House site and the top of the Falls. A short trail can be constructed from the end of maintenance of Laurel House Road to an observation point northwest of the Falls,

thereby inviting sightseers away from the head of the Falls. A wood-frame observation deck and short ramp would offer a safer view. This area has many unauthorized paths, and has been the scene of a number of accidents. The proposed trail gradient is such that it is compatible for handicapped access; no similar opportunity exists in the vicinity due to the extremely rugged topography.

- d. Seasonal employee as caretaker. Present patrol and law enforcement in the area is by the forest ranger force. However, due to the large size of the area, only infrequent patrols of this site can be made. Patrols are usually done at peak use times on weekends. This has given some semblance of control.

Assistant forest rangers (wilderness rangers) also assist by patrolling the area, being seen and trying to educate the public in the proper use of the area. The assistant forest ranger positions are temporary for five to six months duration.

Recommended is a seasonal position (Memorial Day through Labor Day or Columbus Day) for an individual who can assist in controlling the use of the Lake Creek drainage and the Kaaterskill Clove each weekend (Friday

through Monday). The individual would serve as caretaker and educator, in a law enforcement capacity through direct radio contact with rangers or conservation officers, and be a constant visible presence. The person would also have other duties which are beyond the scope of this discussion.

- e. Special rules and regulations. This proposal is to adopt much stricter rules and regulations for this unit than those presently in force elsewhere in the Forest Preserve.. The same proposal was suggested a few years after the Department purchased the land in 1965. Examples of items that could be regulated are alcohol use, open drinking containers, picnicking, camping, noise, size of groups, bathing etc.

After public comment and in-house review, it was determined that existing rules and regulations of DEC are stringent enough to control misuse and rowdyism if properly enforced. Incorporation of the other proposals of this section will help to alleviate present problems.

Project Cost Estimate	\$16,000
Parking improvement	\$2,500
Signs	\$1,000
Observation deck & ramp;	\$12,500

including handicapped access

(handicapped access funds may
be available to defray costs)

Special rules and regulations
formulation 0

Seasonal employee \$9,000 (annual
temporary service)

B. Foot Trail Addition - "Long Path"

Permit the addition of a 4.5 mile segment of new trail to the Unit's foot trail system. This segment is needed to connect the southern to the northern half of the Unit which is divided by the Kaaterskill Clove. The trail would descend the Clove from the Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail and end on the abandoned Red Gravel Hill Road near Palenville at the base of the Clove. A proposed property acquisition will eventually place the trailhead on public land. The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference also needs this connection for the continuation of their "Long Path" that has been actively pursued for many years. This trail location is the best of many alternatives investigated over several years by both the Conference and the Department. The Conference has agreed to do the trail brushing and general maintenance. (See Part III B.4)

Project Cost Estimate	\$900
General supervision and signing	\$900
Acquisition Cost	unknown

C. Redesignation Of Trails

Redesignate two trails now utilized for special uses as foot-trails also. These are: 1) the 3.7 mile portion of the Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail that is to be included in the "Long Path" and 2) the segments of the Sleepy Hollow horse trail system now designated four-legged use only. This would serve to redistribute use of hikers to other parts of the Unit. Both trails, although used annually for their respective snowmobile and horse use, go under-utilized several months of the year. They are not shown as trails on the NYS hiking trails map.

Project Cost Estimate	\$700
Altering trails brochures (updated annually)	0
Posting and signing	400
Upgrade to foot-trail status	300

D. Non-Conforming Use

Continue the use of the Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail, even though it is a non-conforming use because of elevation. Explanation is found in this UMP, Part III-C, and in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan III-B, 2, a, 2.) Forest Preserve lands in Greene County do not lend themselves to snowmobile trail development because of topographic limitations. This small trail is the only such trail in Greene County (except for the even shorter Mountain Turnpike Trail in Catskill and the Elm Ridge Trail in Windham).

Relocation to a lower elevation on steep side hills would greatly increase environmental disturbance.

Project Cost Estimate

none

E. Land Acquisition

Acquire by fee title available parcels of private land that will help fulfill management objectives.

Frivolous acquisitions that fit no objectives of unit management should be avoided. Maintain records in priority order of needed acquisitions to serve definite objectives.

There are immediate acquisition needs which serve priority management objectives. These should be purchased within the first five years of the plan:

1. Access to the southwest part of the Unit.
Vicinity of Gillespie Road or Cortina Valley Ski Area.
2. Access and parking at the base of Kaaterskill Clove in the vicinity of Entenmann's Bridge.
3. Parking area in Platte Clove on Platte Clove Road near the entrance to the snowmobile trail. This would also serve as parking for access to the Indian Head-Plateau Mountain Wilderness Area.
4. Large interior parcel in Kaaterskill Clove. The last remaining major private segment.
5. Right of general public access to the Harding Road if determined not presently existing.

Project Cost Estimate \$130,000

(For five projects
described above)

F. Law Enforcement

Planning for an increase in law enforcement capability is beyond the scope of this plan, but indicating the need as a proposed management action is not. In the long run, additional law enforcement personnel will be needed to enforce rules and regulations and the Environmental Conservation Law. In the short run, judicious patrol assignment is the only way to maintain the status quo.

One facet of the law enforcement problem that is on a serious increase is the illegal use of motorized vehicles, especially all-terrain-vehicles (3 and 4 wheeled) and trail bikes. A statewide plan of control is needed.

Project Cost Estimate	none
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G. Field Education

Continue and expand the use of seasonal assistant forest rangers. Use them more frequently in the Kaaterskill Falls and Clove area at times of critical peak use.

In the Kaaterskill Falls and Clove area, use a seasonal employee for public education in Preserve use and area significance.

Develop an educational brochure (leaflet) describing the significance (geologically, historically, culturally, etc.) of the Falls and Clove area. This should be developed with the input and guidance of

knowledgeable local historians.

Project Cost Estimate	\$1,000
Assistant Forest Ranger (patrol & personnel increase)	0
Seasonal Employee See VI, A, 4, D	0
Signing See VI, A, 4, B	0
Brochure Printing, graphics	1,000

H. **Boundary Line Maintenance**

Boundary lines must be maintained to reduce or eliminate boundary disputes and to continue the integrity of legal ownership. The Unit has a total of 39.8 miles of boundary lines: 34.1 miles of exterior line and 5.7 miles of interior lines. Maintenance by the Catskill workforce is presently on a 8-year cycle. Present cost is roughly \$100 per mile for labor, materials, tools and transportation (forest ranger staff maintenance figures).

Project Cost Estimate (5 years at 5 miles/year)	\$2,600
Boundary line maintenance, painting and posting on a 8-year rotation (first 5 years)	2,000
Resurvey, estimate	600

I. **Trail And Facilities Maintenance**

Continue annual maintenance on all trails within the Unit: horse, foot, snowmobile, and Nordic. Provide continuous administrative inspection. Use experienced trail work crews when and if necessary for special

projects. Maintain integrity of barriers, trail registers, bridges, fireplaces, signs, vistas, etc. Expanding winter uses require snow plowing of selected parking lots; the relocated Schutt Road parking lot is the only one on this Unit where plowing would be needed. Present trail maintenance is funded through the Operations Regional Maintenance State Purpose Budget. No specific budget funds are allocated for trail maintenance.

J. Budget Summary

1. Recurring Annual Maintenance Costs

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Litter maintenance	800	Annual
Sign replacement	625	Annual
Foot trail maintenance	1300	Annual
Horse trail maintenance	1250	Annual
Snowmobile trail maintenance	330	Annual
Ski trail maintenance	330	Annual
Parking lot maintenance	700	Annual
Trail bridge maintenance	550	Annual
Barrier maintenance	150	Annual
Administrative road maintenance	300	Annual
Horse corral, hitching maintenance	350	Annual
Fireplace maintenance	300	Annual
Boundary line maintenance	500	Annual

2. Estimated Costs To Implement UMP

<u>ITEM</u>	<u>COST</u>	<u>FREQUENCY</u>
Foot trail elimination	1350	One time year 1-2
Trail improvement	2000	One time year 1-5
-Kaaterskill Falls Trail		
Observation deck & ramp	7500	One time year 1-5
-Kaaterskill Falls, lower basin		
Escarpment Trail relocation	1500	One time year 1
Parking lot construction	5000	One time year 1
Parking lot removal	2000	One time year 1
Seasonal personnel	9000	Annual
Parking lot improvement	2500	One time year 2-3
-Laurel House Road		
Observation deck, ramp & trail	12500	One time year 2-3
-Kaaterskill Falls, upper level		
Land acquisition	130000	One time year 1-5
-5 projects (EQBA Funding)		
Field education	1000	One time year 3
-brochure		
Boundary line maintenance	2600	Total
		All 5 years
Signs, new	2850	Year 1-5

3. Cost Summary

a. Maintenance - Annual Cost	7,485
Total 5 years	37,425
b. Plan Project Costs -	
Total 5 years	49,800

VII. FINAL ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT

FOREWORD

This is a final environmental impact statement (FEIS) for a portion of the Catskill Forest Preserve administered by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation and further designated as the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Unit in Greene and Ulster Counties. The management plan for this Unit provides the policy, guidelines and specific actions for the protection and management of the Kaaterskill Wild Forest.

A. Introduction And Summary

1. Introduction

The environmental impacts associated with proposed activities in the management plan for the Kaaterskill Wild Forest are addressed in this final environmental impact statement (FEIS). Further public input on the plan and draft EIS added and subtracted activities. Final proposals are addressed in this FEIS.

2. FEIS Summary

The activities in the plan are proposed to protect and restore specific resources and to allow for the positive development of public use on this Forest Preserve Unit. These activities include foot trail closure, new foot trail construction, redesignation of use of certain trails, rehabilitation of trails,

construction of two observation platforms, parking lot construction and reconstruction, public use controls, acquisition of key private parcels, boundary line maintenance and development of a public information scheme.

B. Proposed Action

The proposed action is to draw a plan of management for use of the Unit which is consistent with legal constraints. The plan will provide a means of uniform and consistent management of the Unit for the uses allowed in a wild forest as described in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan.

The primary guideline of the plan is to protect the natural forest setting and provide the kind of outdoor passive recreation that will not impair the wild forest atmosphere or change its character.

For further reference, see Plan Section VI, "Proposed Management Actions".

C. Environmental Setting

1. Description

The Kaaterskill Wild Forest is a 7,600 acre, forested, mountainous section of the Catskill Forest Preserve located on the northeast rim of the Catskill Mountains in Greene and Ulster counties. The Unit is extraordinarily scenic, with extremely rugged topography and considerable elevation differential. It is, however, readily accessible

by public roads and recreational trails.

The Unit lies within the Catskill Peaks ecozone.

The extensive northern hardwood forest of the area provides habitat for a variety of wildlife species, that favor mature to old growth forest stages.

The area is drained by four tributary systems for a total of 9.3 miles of streams. Three are in rocky and rugged terrain and fishery data is generally sketchy or absent. The fourth, a part of the Schoharie Creek headwaters, has a more diverse fish fauna than the other tributaries. Overall, fish populations are limited due to little water, unstable habitat conditions and natural barriers to movement of species.

The Unit is entirely forested with a wide variety of plant species determined by soils and topography. The elevation differential of 3000 feet from Palenville to Kaaterskill High Peak, in a distance of three miles, partly explains this diversity. Lower elevations and exposed sites, especially in the south and east are oak forest. Protected slopes and north aspects are primarily northern hardwood forest. Remnants of spruce-fir forest inhabit the vicinity of Kaaterskill High Peak and Roundtop. For further detail, see Plan Section I, "Unit Location and Description".

2. Inventory

There are many facilities associated with this

Unit:

Barriers (4)

Trail Heads (5)

- with parking (3)

Bridges (5)

foot (1) horse and foot (2), snowmobile
(2)

Trails - 27.75 miles total

- foot (6.25 miles)

- horse, partially foot and snowmobile (11
miles)

- snowmobile, partially foot and horse
(14.25 miles)

- Nordic ski, partially foot and horse (3.25
miles)

Roads (2)

- administrative use for 2.5 miles

Public Roads (7)

- total of 7.3 miles, includes one NYS
highway, one County of Greene road and 5
Town of Hunter roads.

Telephone and Electric Lines (4)

Picnic Tables (2)

Historic Locations, Memorials and Plaques (9)

Scenic Vistas (12)

Trail Signs - numerous

- See Appendix

Horse Corrals (1)

Hitching Rails (5)

(For more detail, see Plan, Part II, "Inventory
of Facilities" and the Facilities Map).

3. Constraints and Issues

a. General Constraints

- Article XIV of the NYS Constitution, Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law, Title 6 of the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the SNY, the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan and established policies for the administration of the lands involved.
- Rugged Topography.

b. Special Issues

- Uneven distribution of public use leading to overuse in some areas.
- Kaaterskill Falls, a scenic area, is easily accessible and suffers the most overuse and abuse. Several severe accidents and some deaths have occurred here.
- General overuse and illegal use negatively impacts on the resource and on the recreational experience and aesthetic sense of the majority of users.
- The "Long Path" section proposed to connect the Kaaterskill High Peak Trail to the base of Kaaterskill Clove.
- acquisition of key private parcels to meet management objectives of public use.

c. Non Conforming Uses

- Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail.

4. Critical Habitats

- No known endangered or threatened animal species live within the Unit. A method of identification and documentation is needed.
- No deer wintering concentration areas exist in the Unit.
- Three wetlands of less than four acres in size are recorded.
- There are two threatened and one rare plant recently verified as existing in the Unit. These are: roseroot, smooth woodsia and fragrant cliff fern.

5. Unique Ecosystems

- Four small areas of virgin forest are reported.
- Waterfalls are common in the Unit, with the ±260 foot Kaaterskill Falls the most spectacular and the most popular.
- There are numerous on-and-off trail panoramic vistas.

6. Primary Public Use

- Hiking, snowmobiling, horseback trail riding, cross-country skiing, sightseeing, hunting, trapping and and fishing.

(For more detail, see Plan, Part III, "Special Constraints and Issues Affecting the Planning Area")

D. Significant Environmental Impacts

All environmental impacts of any significance resulting from adoption of this plan will be in the plan's

influence over public use of the area. The principal influence over plan development will be public input within the existing management constraints.

The most significant environmental impact would occur if no plan was prepared and if no management activities were implemented. The resulting haphazard use of the area by the public and the lack of facilities maintenance would result in incidences of trespass and vandalism, deterioration of roads and trails, littering, indiscriminate camping with increased sanitation problems and a general deterioration of quality user experience.

Of the presently proposed actions, the following may have significant environmental impacts:

1. Foot trail elimination and rerouting

The proposal consists of eliminating a 0.25 mile section of trail that is beyond repair and is potentially unsafe and the construction of a 0.55 mile trail section to reroute traffic as a result of the trail to be eliminated.

The section to be eliminated connects the base of the Kaaterskill Falls with the 26-mile Escarpment Trail near the top of the Falls. The 0.25 mile segment is very steep and impossible to maintain. The many users of the accessible area have made so many alternate routes up the shaley slope that the slope is devoid of leaf litter or vegetation except for trees; soil surface erosion is everywhere. The

trail signs will be removed, all unauthorized trails in the area will be blocked using natural on-site materials and revegetation will be attempted.

The closure will be offset by the relocation of this section of the Escarpment Trail so that its traffic will be removed from the Kaaterskill Falls trail. The Falls trail will then be dead-end. This proposal is a positive way to solve the overuse and safety problems. The positive environmental impacts are the reduction of hikers on one trail by rerouting through-hikers to another trail, the closure of a seriously eroded trail and the revegetation of that trail and several unauthorized ones in the vicinity. No negative environmental impacts are foreseen. A socially negative impact is the removal of the Escarpment Trail trailhead from NY Route 23-A to a new location.

2. Relocation of Schutt Road parking lot and trailhead

The severed Escarpment Trail will begin at a relocated Schutt Road parking lot, thereby eliminating the need for a NY Route 23-A trailhead location with a new associated parking area. However, this will deviate from the usual Department policy, which is to begin and end major trails at principal State Highways.

The action consists of building a parking area and horse corral at a location on the west side of Schutt Road about 200' south of the North Lake Road. The new

horse/foot trail will cross Schutt Road and travel southerly parallel to, but out of sight of, Schutt Road to a point in the State truck trail (the South Mountain Road) east of the end of Schutt Road. The parking area will also serve the nearby trail that travels north of North Lake Road opposite the Schutt Road intersection.

The Town of Hunter has recently instituted a no parking regulation on Schutt Road and is contemplating parking restrictions (seasonal, at least) on North Lake Road. Such municipal action will ease parking congestion in the area and accentuates the importance of relocating the horse corral and Escarpment Trail trailhead. The existing end-of-the-road parking area and horse corral will be removed and revegetated; the municipally-owned part will revert to a dead-end turnaround.

The construction of a new horse/foot trail east of, and parallel to, Schutt Road for 0.55 miles is necessitated by: 1) closure of a portion of the Escarpment Trail at Kaaterskill Falls and 2) the moving of the parking area to accommodate the user public and local private landowners negatively impacted by present parking conditions.

Negative environmental impacts are those involved in construction. These are: removal of vegetation, temporary soil erosion and movement of people into a previously undisturbed location. On the other hand, the existing parking area at the end of Schutt Road will be

closed; all man-made facilities will be removed and the area planted to vegetation to preclude parking re-use.

No greater use is anticipated from this action other than that which accrues from a general population increase and renewed (but cyclical) interest in the general area. The action is intended to accommodate hiking trails and horse trails. The action assists in alleviating overuse at Kaaterskill Falls by eliminating a nearby parking access point.

3. Construction of observation decks, handicapped trail

This two-part proposal calls for the construction of two wood-frame observation decks in the vicinity of Kaaterskill Falls and the construction of a short handicapped access trail to the observation deck viewing the upper Falls. The objectives are: a) to channel hikers and sight-seers to a safe view of the Falls, thereby reducing some overuse in the Falls area and provide for the safety of the viewers and, b) to provide handicapped access to view a significantly beautiful scenic spot safely.

One observation deck will be located northwest of the Falls at some distance. Its access will be from the Department's barrier gate at the end of Laurel House Road maintenance. An access trail will have to be constructed. The site for this trail has been tentatively laid out; a low gradient can be met to

accommodate the handicapped. The access trail will travel west, then south, from the Laurel House Road to deliberately lead the public away from the old road and herd paths to the stream and top of the Falls.

A second observation deck is to be located at the base of the Falls at the point where the yellow trail, an extension of the Falls trail from NY 23-A, now ends. Its objective is also to channel use away from the eroded side hills and to provide safe viewing for hikers and sightseers.

The positive environmental impacts will be to reduce overuse and abuse at the Laurel House site and Kaaterskill Falls area and to provide safe viewing of the Falls for the hiker and viewer of scenery.

One negative environmental impact is the disturbance attributable to new trail construction, which will be mitigated by proper location, building and maintenance. The major negative impact is the imposition of man-made structures in a wild forest atmosphere. But the construction of the observation decks are necessitated for control of use of the area, protection of the resource and the users' safety. Impact can be moderated by blending-in the structures with the surroundings so they are as unobtrusive as possible, by the use of natural materials and color and by sensible selection of exact location. Furthermore, the decks will not be built at the same time and neither will their funding be

requested in the same budget. The intent is to build the upper observation deck and then, over time, evaluate its construction, its use, its acceptability and its costs before obligating the Department to the lower deck.

4. Construction of a new trail - Long Path Connector Segment

To connect the southern to the northern half of the Unit, the plan proposes a new 4.5 mile addition to the foot-trail system. There is presently no trail connection between the area south of Kaaterskill Clove and the area to the north. No other location than that proposed is suitable; a location in Haines Falls would necessitate travelling about two miles of private lands and public roads, while a mid-Clove location on Forest Preserve land is topographically improbable and environmentally unacceptable. The proposal would use a combination of old carriage roads, existing foot paths and the bed of an abandoned roadway; no more than 0.5 miles would be new construction.

The negative environmental impact is that commonly associated with new trail construction: cutting of vegetation, soil compaction, some soil erosion and the opening of a previously relatively undisturbed area. Careful construction will minimize any disturbance. The trail is not expected to encourage a large influx of hikers because of the

length of the area's trail system and the trail's steep ascent. On the positive side, hikers will be able to move from the northern terminus of this trail, at the base of the Kaaterskill Clove, a short distance to the Harding Road which ascends the north side of the Clove.

5. Parking modification

The modification of an area used for parking at the end of Laurel House Road could help to more efficiently accommodate vehicles; this is more a "dressing up" than construction. The proposal is not designed to increase use of the area.

This proposal is made to safely and more efficiently accommodate users and their vehicles for the proposed upper observation deck and related trail and by redesign and location, to channel use away from overused and abused areas. Any negative impact would consist of some soil disturbance and compaction and removal of vegetation (if parking is moved onto State land). Such impact would be slight.

6. Public Use Controls/Law Enforcement/Education

The plan proposals are: a new seasonal employee position with caretaker and educational duties at the Kaaterskill Falls and Clove area, scheduling of forest rangers or assistant forest rangers (seasonal) to cover the known heavily used areas on weekends, and development of educational brochures and

signs to help explain the significance of the area and the reason for its management.

These proposals will help reduce the overuse and general deterioration of the area, protect the scenic areas and allow the passive recreational users a higher-quality experience. The negative impacts will be economic (increased personnel and reassignment of personnel) and public restriction (greater restriction on movement and use for all users, not just the abusers).

7. Land Acquisition

Acquisition of parcels of private land is an integral part of the Plan. But the proposed Management Actions (Plan Part VI) specify such acquisitions only to fulfill specific management objectives. The idea is to use the acquisition option sparingly and to direct it to meet predetermined objectives. Negative impact would be the removal of these lands from the "highest and best use" consideration of potential housing or commercial development. This impact would be reduced considerably because of the rough topography and limited access to much of the area.

Land acquisition has previously been addressed in a programmatic environmental impact statement, "Acquisition of Forest Preserve Lands under the 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act." dated March 30,

1981.

8. Continuance of a Non-Conforming Use.

The Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail is, in part, above the maximum elevation for such use in a wild forest. A study of the use (and abuse) of the trail at its present location was made in the 1970's in response to a request to remove it to a lower elevation. The winter and spring study showed little adverse environmental effect at the present location but a truly negative effect if situated at a lower elevation on steep slopes. The Catskill Park State Land Master Plan mentions the exception to wild forest guidelines in III B, 2., a., 2).

E. Adverse Environmental Impacts That Cannot Be Avoided If The Project Is Implemented

There are no adverse impacts that cannot be avoided that result from the activities proposed in the Plan or discussed in this FEIS.

F. Irreversible and Irretrievable Commitments of Resources

There are no irreversible and irretrievable commitments of resources resulting from the activities proposed in the Plan.

G. Growth-Inducing Aspects

Generally, use patterns will not change greatly except for a general population increase and public interest in wild land. Proposals in the Plan are aimed at accommodating and redistributing present and future use.

In addition, it is anticipated that the Plan will not

significantly affect the growth or character of other lands in the area.

H. Effects on the Use and Conservation of Energy Resources

There will be no effect on energy resources as a result of the UMP or FEIS.

I. Mitigation Measures To Minimize Environmental Impact

There are in effect many legal constraints (see Plan Section III) that aid in eliminating or reducing environmental impact. In addition there are many other policy constraints. Management of the Unit will be guided by all of these including those identified in this FEIS.

1. Foot trail elimination and rerouting

The present policy governing foot trail establishment and maintenance is contained in organization and delegation memorandum #84-06. All projects involving the cutting, removal or destruction of trees must have approval from the Director of the Division of Lands and Forests.

Siting, construction and maintenance of an approved trail will be guided by the Division of Lands and Forests trails handbook and the Appalachian Mountain Club's trails handbook. Siting will be compatible with topography, soil and drainage. Maintenance will prevent soil erosion.

2. Construction of observation decks and a handicapped trail

The present policy governing construction of new facilities and the expansion or modification of existing facilities is contained in the organization and delegation memorandum #84-06. Tree cutting requires the approval of the Director of the Division of Lands and Forests. Construction of new facilities requires the approval of the Regional Forester under this memo and the related Policies and Procedures Manual. This specific proposal requires further mitigation because: 1) the trail is also to be handicapped-accessible and, 2) the observation decks are different from the usual man-made interior facilities.

Handicapped access to trails will be guided by New York State and Federal law pertaining to such access improvements. Guidance for construction of the facilities, especially the safety features, will be requested from those with the necessary expertise.

The observation platforms will be formally designed by appropriate Department staff that are knowledgeable about such design and construction. Construction will be strictly supervised by the designer and responsible managerial staff. Natural materials (i.e. wood) will be used where possible. Size and siting of the decks will be reviewed by the Regional Forester and other staff responsible for

Forest Preserve administration so that negative visual effects will be minimized. The decks will not be a major visual imposition in a wild forest landscape.

3. Construction of a new trail

This addition is the connecting section of the "Long Path". Although it will be constructed by volunteers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, the Department's policies and procedures, including organization and delegation memorandum #84-06, and handbook references apply to this project as to any Department-constructed or-maintained trail. A memorandum of understanding will be formulated between DEC Region 4 and the Trail Conference. Trail siting and construction is further mitigated by the accepted location which utilizes old carriage roads, existing foot paths and an abandoned roadway for over eighty-five percent of its length.

4. Parking lot construction

The Department's existing policy for construction of new facilities or the expansion of old facilities will direct these two projects. The reconstruction of the existing parking area will not disturb the vegetation. This project will incorporate storm water control and siltation measures that do not exist at present.

Construction of a new parking facility will require Division and Regional approval. Such approval mandates a description of: the location and number of trees to be cut, a listing of protected plant species within 300 feet of the area to be disturbed and a description of specific mitigation measures to be addressed for the area impacted.

5. Public Use Controls/Law Enforcement/Education

The proposal itself is a positive, moderating influence over the human factor that is causing adverse environmental conditions. Each part of the proposal is meant to have a positive effect.

A seasonal employee to monitor use and educate users can significantly reduce site abuse and unsafe use during the summer season. Such presence is expected to improve the management and supervision of the area. Since the employee will have no law enforcement authority, there must be frequent coordination with the Forest Ranger Staff. Signs and brochures will have only a positive effect on user experience.

6. Land Acquisition

Land acquisition mitigation is addressed in a programmatic environmental impact statement, "Acquisition of Forest Preserve Lands under the 1972 Environmental Quality Bond Act," dated March 30, 1981.

7. Continuance of a Non-Conforming Use

The Kaaterskill High Peak snowmobile trail construction preceded the maximum elevation policy for public facilities in the Forest Preserve. The trail's continuance is desirable and had been specifically addressed in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan on page 35.

J. Alternatives

There are no alternatives to preparing a unit management plan for the Kaaterskill Wild Forest. The Catskill Park State Land Master Plan requires the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to prepare unit plans for all DEC administered land units within the Park. The Master Plan further requires that unit management plans conform to the comprehensive guidelines enumerated in the Master Plan. These guidelines are specific to various land classifications set forth in the Master Plan (Section IIIB. for Wild Forest). See Appendix G and H.

After thorough evaluation of needs and siting alternatives, specific management actions have been developed so as to reflect public input and user preference while complying with the Master Plan guidelines and Environmental Conservation Law. All planned actions are the result of perceived need for the protection of the natural resources or the users, and/or the enhancement of the public's experience in

the unit.

The proposed projects, based on stated management needs, provide alternatives to the present management system. These projects, or alternatives, seem the most practical of all those solicited from within and outside the Department. Additional plan review by the public and by DEC led to changes in the original actions and alternatives.

K. Substantive Comments Received on DEIS:

Comments on the DEIS for the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Draft UMP were received from only one party, the Environmental Defense Fund (EDF). The EDF also commented on the Plan's proposed management actions and offered additional insight; these comments are included, along with substantive comments on the plan, from other organizations and individuals, in a separate paper.

"The Environmental Defense Fund recommends several changes to the Kaaterskill Forest Unit Management Plan that would maximize the quality of the unit for its users, increase appreciation for the natural areas of the site, and enable handicapped persons to experience the wild and scenic Kaaterskill Falls. EDF's alternative plan is likely to be less expensive than the actions proposed in the draft plan and would result in fewer adverse environmental impacts.

The Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) which accompanies the proposed management plan is incomplete. Additional research is required in order to properly analyze

the impacts of the proposed plan. Furthermore, the EIS should explore the impacts of more benign alternatives to the proposed plan. EDF's recommendations, for instance, would result in a smaller impact to the forest at a lower economic impact to the region.

The Environmental Defense Fund is a nationwide non-profit organization dedicated to preserving the environment. EDF promotes the proper management of natural resources, particularly in areas of importance to the region such as the Kaaterskill Wild Forest. Conserving our parks and forests is not only essential to certain wildlife and flora, but it also helps to build a larger human constituency interested in enjoying nature.

As we have stated above, there are significant long term environmental impacts associated with improving access to the Kaaterskill Falls area, even if the additional users are required to stay along predetermined trails and observation decks. The Draft EIS inadequately describes those long term impacts, and fails to assess alternative management schemes that would result in a smaller overall environmental impact.

For example, the construction of a parking lot on route 23A with virtually direct access to Kaaterskill Falls is bound to induce additional persons to use the area. Such increased use will impact the trails on which those persons will hike, as well as the Kaaterskill Falls. These impacts will be long-term and irreparable.

The construction of an observation deck above and below the Falls will permanently blight the scenery in the vicinity of the Falls. The deck will ruin the image of the area, as well as create a point at which people will congregate and engage in disruptive behavior. In the case of the observation deck above the Falls, this adverse impact may be unavoidable in order to meet the needs of the handicapped. However, the proposed lower deck has far fewer positive benefits compared to its adverse financial, aesthetic and environmental impacts.

The Draft EIS does not adequately analyze the growth-inducing cumulative impacts of the management plan, even though it admits that there will be a general user population increase due to the implementation of the plan. The Final EIS should assess the extent to which user growth will occur as the result of the plan, and assess the damage on the Kaaterskill Falls ecosystem as a result of such growth.

Under the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA) the Final EIS must assess alternatives which would reduce the impacts of a particular action on the environment. Unfortunately, the Draft EIS does not examine alternative management schemes which would minimize the impact of this action. Moreover, it does not assess the cost savings which may be realized if alternative management approaches, such as those outlined above, were to be implemented. We expect the Final EIS to include a

comprehensive analysis of the impacts of the proposed management scheme compared to such alternatives."

L. Response to Comments on DEIS:

A. On Increasing Use.

The basic argument of the EDF, on which its general comments on activities and DEIS are based, is that the Plan's intent is to increase the use and intensify the overuse of the Kaaterskill Falls area - a sort of promotion of the scenic attributes of the area.

The Plan is sympathetic to EDF's concerns and there is nothing in the Plan that is intended to increase use. The Plan does recognize, however, that this area of the Catskill Park is tourist-oriented and part of this specific Unit is accessible to a large population center; that the DEC-operated North-South Lakes Intensive Use Area is adjacent to the Unit; that three public roads (one State, two Town) intrude to a close proximity of the Kaaterskill Falls and that parts of the Unit are thus heavily impacted by visitors. Users are here and, with an increasing population, even more future users can be anticipated. These major factors, among others, have great influence on any management actions in the Unit and the Unit cannot be viewed as an exclusive piece of wild forest but must instead, be viewed in relation to the outside influences which, in this case, are significant. Thus the Plan's primary effort is toward protection of the resource and the users by accommodating but controlling present and

anticipated use.

B. On Plan Alternatives.

The only alternative to the Plan is "no Plan". As stated on page 60 of the UMP, this alternative would result in haphazard use by the public and possible limitation or inconsistency in facility maintenance and law enforcement inevitably leading to deterioration of significant resources and of quality user experiences. It seems that there is no dispute of the need for a Plan, but only concern over what that Plan does or does not include.

C. On Plan Objective.

EDF feels the objective of the Plan should be to "protect the natural setting of the Wild Forest." The Plan agrees but adds "...as defined by the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan." And this is only one of three goals for the Plan. Two other goals from page 33 of the Plan are important in first recognizing and then interpreting the problems of the Unit so that a realistic Plan can be offered. These goals are: "to accommodate and provide for the broadest spectrum of public uses compatible with wild forest land-use criteria and in keeping with recognized legal and environmental constraints; and to identify and actively protect the special unique and fragile areas within the Unit." These three goals for the Plan serve as the guide for the objectives of management on which the management needs and subsequent actions are based (Part IV).

D. On Major Proposals of the Plan.

Concerns with the proposal for a new parking lot and trail on NY Route 23-A in the Kaaterskill Clove and the proximity of observation decks to "blight the scenery in the vicinity of the Falls" can be answered as follows: The parking lot and trail proposal has been removed from the Plan but, since the problem still must be addressed, a new proposal for a trailhead parking lot off North Lake Road is offered (Part VI, A, 3). The planned observation decks are moved back from the Falls and have been further explained in Part VI, A, 4, C and Part VII, D, 3.

E. On Growth as the Result of the Plan

The Plan is requested to address the extent to which user growth will occur as the result of the Plan. The Plan will not, and does not intend to, encourage the public to visit the overused areas of the Unit. The users are here, the users may increase with an expanded population and the users must be accommodated to protect the resource and the users themselves. But no growth as the result of the Plan is anticipated. This is not a plan to develop recreational use.

* * * * *

The DEIS has been considerably revised and reworded by the authors as a result of public and in-house input. Many changes have been made to reflect this input as well as the realities of management and the law.

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APPENDIX A

TRAIL SIGNS
KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST UNIT

FOOT TRAILS

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
(63)	R&L	B	ESCARPMENT TRAIL Kaaterskill Falls N. Lake Campsite North Point Route #23 at E. Windham	.40 4.67 7.13 23.19	Jct. #23A and Kaaterskill Creek
64	L	Y	Lower Basin Kaaterskill Falls	.05	Jct. of Blue and Yellow Trails near lower basin of falls
65	R	B	Laymans Monument Boulder Rock North Lake Campsite	.80 3.62 4.29	Same
66	L	B	Route 23A	.38	Same
67	L	Y	Scutt Road Parking Lot North Lake Road	.20 .70	Jct. of Blue Trail & Yellow Trail to Parking Lot Horse Corral
68	R	B	Laymans Monument Inspiration Point North Lake Campsite Route #23 E. Windham	.52 1.24 3.99 22.51	Same
69	R	B	Kaaterskill Falls Jct. Route #23A	.10 .68	Same
70	R	B	North Lake Road Scutt Road Parking Lot	1.22 .72	At Laymans Monument

2.

(FOOT TRAILS)

TRAIL SIGNS

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
71	L	Y	North Lake Road Scutt Road Parking Lot	1.14 .64	Jct. of Blue Trail & Yellow Trail to N. Lake Rd. below Horse Trail on overlook of Clove
71A	R	Y	Inspiration Pt. Laymans Monument Kaaterskill Falls North Lake	.37 .54 1.01 3.33	Where Yellow cross over trail leaves Horse Trail going to Blue Trail (See #82)
72	R	B	Laymans Monument Kaaterskill Falls	.44 .96	Same
73	L	B	Inspiration Point Boulder Rock North Lake Campsite	.27 2.45 3.23	Same
74	R&L	-	South Mt. Trails	-	Used at Scutt Rd. & Overflow Parking Lot N. Lake
75	L&R	R	Trail to Kaaterskill Falls Laymans Monument Boulder Rock	.90 1.22 4.01	Scutt Rd. east of Spruce Creek & Haines Falls, N. Lake Road
76	L	R	Sunset Rock Inspiration Point Boulder Rock	.85 .91 3.50	Beginning of South Mt. Trail at Scutt Rd. Parking Lot
77	R	R	North Lake Road	.50	Same
78	R	Y	Laymans Monument Jct. Blue Trail Kaaterskill Falls Route 23A	.72 .20 .40 .88	Same
79	R	Y	Sunset Rock Inspiration Point Boulder Rock	.65 .71 2.99	Where foot trail leaves truck trail above gate follows old road & Horse Trail
80	L	R	North Lake Rd.	.75	Same
81	R	R	Kaaterskill Mt. House Site Boulder Rock North Lake Campsite	1.32 2.24 2.92	Same
82	R	Y	Sunset Rock (S. Mt. Trail)	.20	Jct. of Spur Trail to Sunset Rock where it leaves Horse Trail. (See #71A)

(FOOT TRAILS)

TRAIL SIGNS CATSKILL

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
83	L	B	Boulder Rock	1.39	End of road where Horse Trail & Blue Trail split; Blue Trail turns left. Rd. goes on to Palenville
			North Lake Campsite	2.07	
84	R	B	Inspiration Point	.74	Same
			Laymans Monument	1.45	
			Kaaterskill Falls	1.97	
			Route #23A	2.65	
85	R	B	Boulder Rock	.92	Intersection of Blue Trail & Red Trail to N. Lake Rd. by Kaaterskill House Site
			Catskill Mt. House Site	1.38	
			North Lake	1.60	
86	L	B	Inspiration Point	1.19	Same
			Kaaterskill Falls	2.40	
			Jct. Rte. #23A	3.10	
87	L	R	Scutt Road Parking Lot	1.10	Same
			Haines Falls Road	1.65	
88	R	B	Boulder Rock	.20	Intersection of Blue Trail & Red Trail; 2nd intersection coming from Mt. House
			N. Lake Campsite	.89	
89	L	B	Inspiration Point	1.86	Same
			Laymans Monument	2.57	
			Scutt Parking Lot	3.29	
			North Lake Road	3.84	
90	R	R	Catskill Mt. House Site	.66	Same
			North Lake Campsite	.88	
91	L	B	Boulder Rock	.10	At Blue & Red Jct. 1st one coming from Mt. House Site.
92	R	B	North Lake Campsite	.90	Same
			North Point	3.75	
93	R	R	Jct. of Blue Trail	.20	Same
			Inspiration Point	1.85	
			Haines Falls Road	2.50	

(HORSE TRAILS)

SLEEPY HOLLOW HORSE TRAIL SYSTEM

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
H-1	R&L	----	Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail Parking	0	Bogart Road Parking Lot & can be used at Scutt Rd. Parking Lot
H-2	R&L	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral Route 23A (Palenville)	8.7 12.4	Bogart Road Parking Lot
H-3	L	Horse Trl.	Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail	0	Bogart Road & Mt. Turnpike
H-4	L	Horse Trl.	Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail	0	At point where trail enters woods at end of Mt. Turnpike
H-5	-	-----	Rip Van Winkle House Site	0	At site of Old "Rip Van Winkle" House
H-6	L	Horse Trl.	Halfway House Lookout	.51	At point where trail to Lookout leaves horse trail
H-7	R	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral	1.91	Same
H-8	L	Horse Trl.	Rip Van Winkle Hollow Mountain Turnpike Bogart Road Parking Lot	2.60 3.70 5.00	Same
H-9	-	-----	Halfway House Lookout	----	Halfway House Lookout & rest area
H-10	L	Horse Trl.	Kaaterskill Clove Lookout Route 23 A	3.00 4.35	Scutt Road Corral
H-11	R	Horse Trl.	Kaaterskill Clove Lookout Route 23 A	1.52 2.96	Jct. of Horse Trails near Kaaterskill House Site
H-12	R	Horse Trl.	Halfway House Lookout Rip Van Winkle Hollow Rest Area	1.52 3.38	Same
H-13	R	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral	1.39	Same
H-14	L	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral via Escarpment	1.6	Same
H-15	R	Horse Trl.	Kaaterskill Clove Lookout Route 23 A	1.42 3.35	Where horse trail across South Mt. leaves Kaaterskill Turnpike

5.

(HORSE TRAILS)

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
H-16	L	Horse Trl.	Halfway House Lookout Rip Van Winkle Hollow Rest Area	1.29 3.47	Same
H-17	L	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral via Old Road	1.15	Same
(H-18)	L&R	Horse Trl.	Scutt Road Corral Bogart Road Parking Lot (via Trail)	4.35 12.40	Harding Road Palen- ville Route 23 A, Craven Lot Attached to bottom of Sleepy Hollow Horse Trail Parking

SNOWMOBILE TRAILS

KAATERSKILL HIGH PEAK TRAIL

Sign No.	Arrow	Marker	Legend	Miles	Location
S-1	L	Snowmobile	Trail beginning via Steenburg Road Jct. with Loop Trail	1.23 3.61	Platte Clove Rd.
S-2	R	Snowmobile	Around loop and return to this point	7.64	Trail junction with loop
S-3	L	Snowmobile	Around loop and return to this point	7.64	Same
S-4	R	Snowmobile	Steenburgh Road Platte Clove Road	2.38 3.61	Same

MOUNTAIN TURNPIKE TRAIL

S-5	L&R	Snowmobile	Jct. of Mt. Turnpike End of Trail	4.75	Where trail leaves North Lake Campsite Road
S-6	L	Snowmobile	Jct. of North Lake Road End of Trail	4.75	On Mt. Turnpike where trail enters woods
S-7	---	-----	Snowmobiles Must Stay on Marked Trails	----	-----

Appendix B. Status and occurrence of New York mammals in the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>
Masked Shrew		Red Fox	Hunted/Trapped
Smoky Shrew		Gray Fox	Hunted/Trapped
Longtail Shrew		Bobcat	Hunted/Trapped
Northern Water Shrew		Woodchuck	Hunted
Least Shrew		Eastern Chipmunk	
Shorttail Shrew		Gray Squirrel	Hunted
Starnose Mole		Red Squirrel	
Hairytail Mole		Southern Flying Squirrel	
Little Brown Myotis		Northern Flying Squirrel	
Keen Myotis		Beaver	
Indiana Myotis	Endangered	Deer Mouse	
Small-footed Myotis	Special Concern	White-footed Mouse	
Silver-haired Bat		Eastern Woodrat	Threatened
Eastern Pipistrelle		Southern Bog Lemming	
Big Brown Bat		Boreal Red-backed Vole	
Red Bat		Meadow Vole	
Hoary Bat		Yellownose Vole	
Black Bear	Hunted	Pine Vole	
Raccoon	Hunted/Trapped	Muskrat	Trapped
Fisher	Trapped	Meadow Jumping Mouse	
Shorttail Weasel	Trapped	Woodland Jumping Mouse	
Longtail Weasel	Trapped	Porcupine	
Mink	Trapped	Showshoe Hare	Hunted
River Otter	Trapped	Eastern Cottontail	Hunted
Striped Skunk	Hunted/Trapped	White-tailed Deer	Hunted
Coyote	Hunted/Trapped		

*Status = Status in New York State

Appendix B. Status and occurrence of New York breeding birds in the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>
Green Heron		Great Crested Flycatcher	
Mallard	Hunted	Eastern Phoebe	
American Black Duck	Hunted	Willow Flycatcher	
Wood Duck	Hunted	Alder Flycatcher	
Northern Goshawk		Least Flycatcher	
Sharp-Shinned Hawk	Blue List	Eastern Pewee	
Cooper's Hawk	Special Concern	Tree Swallow	
Red-Tailed Hawk		Bank Swallow	
Red-Shouldered Hawk	Threatened	Rough-Winged Swallow	
Broad-Winged Hawk		Barn Swallow	
Peregrine Falcon	Endangered	Cliff Swallow	
American Kestrel		Purple Martin	
Ruffed Grouse	Hunted	Blue Jay	
Wild Turkey	Hunted	American Crow	Hunted
American Woodcock	Hunted	Black-Capped Chickadee	
Common Snipe	Hunted	Tufted Titmouse	
Mourning Dove		White-Breasted Nuthatch	
Yellow-Billed Cuckoo		Red-Breasted Nuthatch	
Black-Billed Cuckoo		Brown Creeper	
Common Screech Owl		House Wren	
Great Horned Owl		Winter Wren	
Barred Owl		Gray Catbird	
Whip-Poor-Will		Brown Thrasher	
Common Nighthawk	Special Concern	American Robin	
Chimney Swift		Wood Thrush	
Ruby-Throated Hummingbird	Blue List	Hermit Thrush	
Belted Kingfisher		Swainson's Thrush	
Common flicker		Gray-Cheeked Thrush	
Pileated Woodpecker		Veery	
Yellow-Bellied Sapsucker		Eastern Bluebird	Special Concern
Hairy Woodpecker	Blue List	Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher	
Downy Woodpecker		Golden-Crowned Kinglet	
Eastern Kingbird		Cedar Waxwing	

Appendix B. Status and occurrence of New York breeding birds in the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>
Yellow-Throated Vireo		Hooded Warbler	
Solitary Vireo		Canada Warbler	
Red-Eyed Vireo		American Redstart	
Warbling Vireo		Red-Winged Blackbird	
Black & White Warbler		Northern Oriole	
Worm-Eating Warbler		Common Grackle	
Golden-Winged Warbler	Blue List	Brown-Headed Cowbird	
Nashville Warbler		Scarlet Tanager	
Yellow Warbler	Blue List	Northern Cardinal	
Magnolia Warbler		Rose-Breasted Grosbeak	
Black-Throated Blue Warbler		Indigo Bunting	
Yellow-Rumped Warbler		Purple Finch	
Black-Throated Green Warbler		American Goldfinch	
Cerulean Warbler		Rufous-Sided Towhee	
Blackburnian Warbler		Savannah Sparrow	
Chestnut-Sided Warbler		Vesper Sparrow	Special Concern
Blackpoll Warbler		Northern Junco	
Ovenbird		Chipping Sparrow	
Northern Waterthrush		Field Sparrow	
Louisiana Waterthrush		White-Throated Sparrow	
Mourning Warbler		Swamp Sparrow	
Common Yellow throat		Song Sparrow	
Yellow Breasted Chat			

*Status = Status in New York State

Appendix B . Status and occurrence of New York reptiles in the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>
Common Snapping Turtle		Eastern Ribbon Snake	
Stinkpot		Eastern Hognose Snake	
Spotted Turtle	Special Concern	Northern Ringneck Snake	
Wood Turtle	Special Concern	Northern Black Racer	
Eastern Painted Turtle		Eastern Smooth Green Snake	
Northern Water Snake		Black Rat Snake	
Northern Brown Snake		Eastern Milk Snake	
Northern Redbelly Snake		Northern Copperhead	
Eastern Garter Snake		Timber Rattlesnake	Threatened

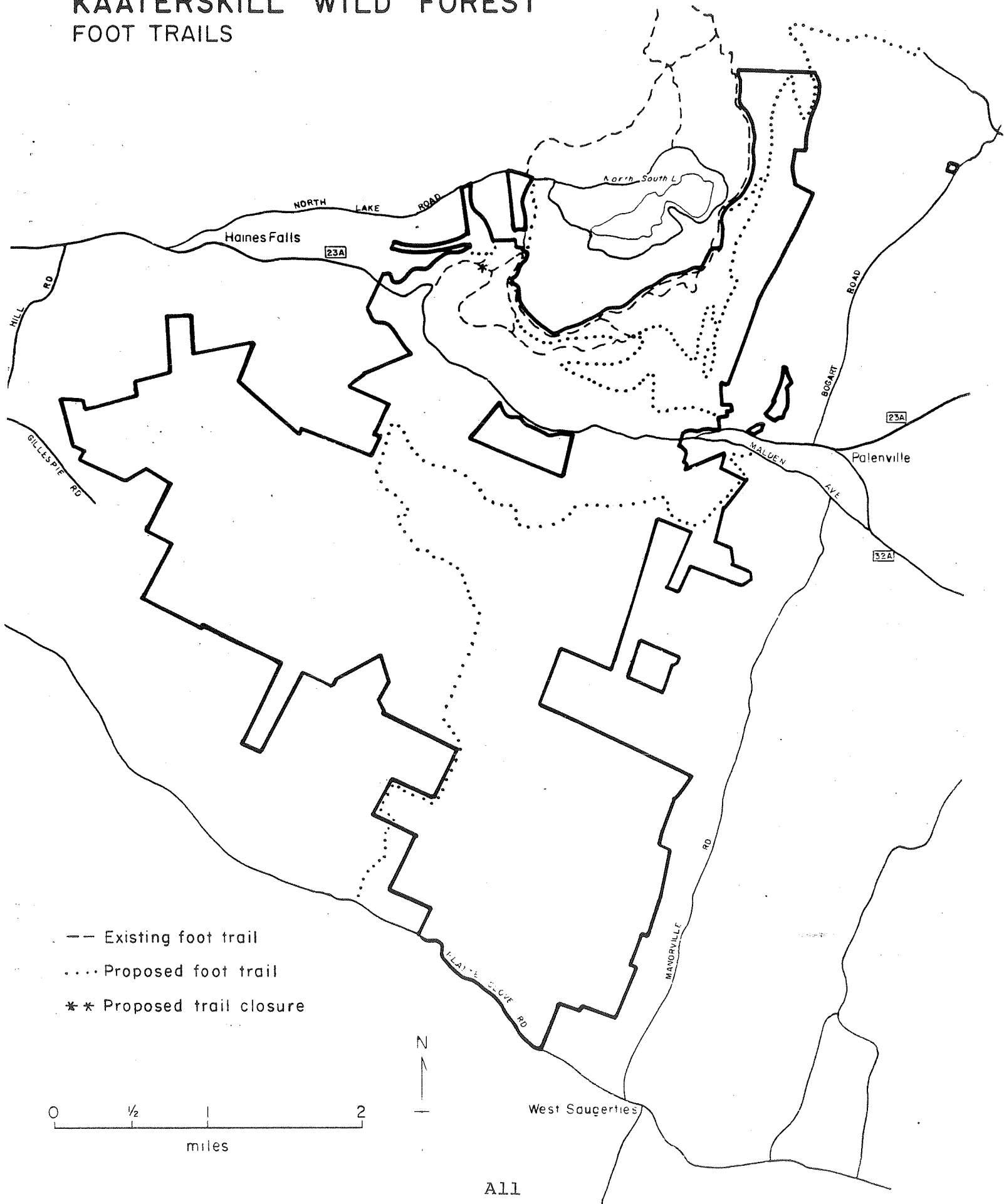
*Status = Status in New York State

Appendix B . Status and occurrence of New York amphibians in the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>	<u>SPECIES</u>	<u>STATUS*</u>
Jefferson Salamander	Special Concern	Northern Two-lined Salamander	
Blue-spotted Salamander	Special Concern	Longtail Salamander	
Spotted Salamander	Special Concern	American Toad	
Red-spotted Newt		Fowler's Road	
Northern Dusky Salamander		Northern Spring Peeper	
Mountain Dusky Salamander		Gray Treefrog	
Redback Salamander		Bullfrog	Hunted
Slimy Salamander		Green Frog	
Four-toed Salamander		Wood Frog	
Northern Spring Salamander		Pickerel Frog	
Northern Red Salamander			

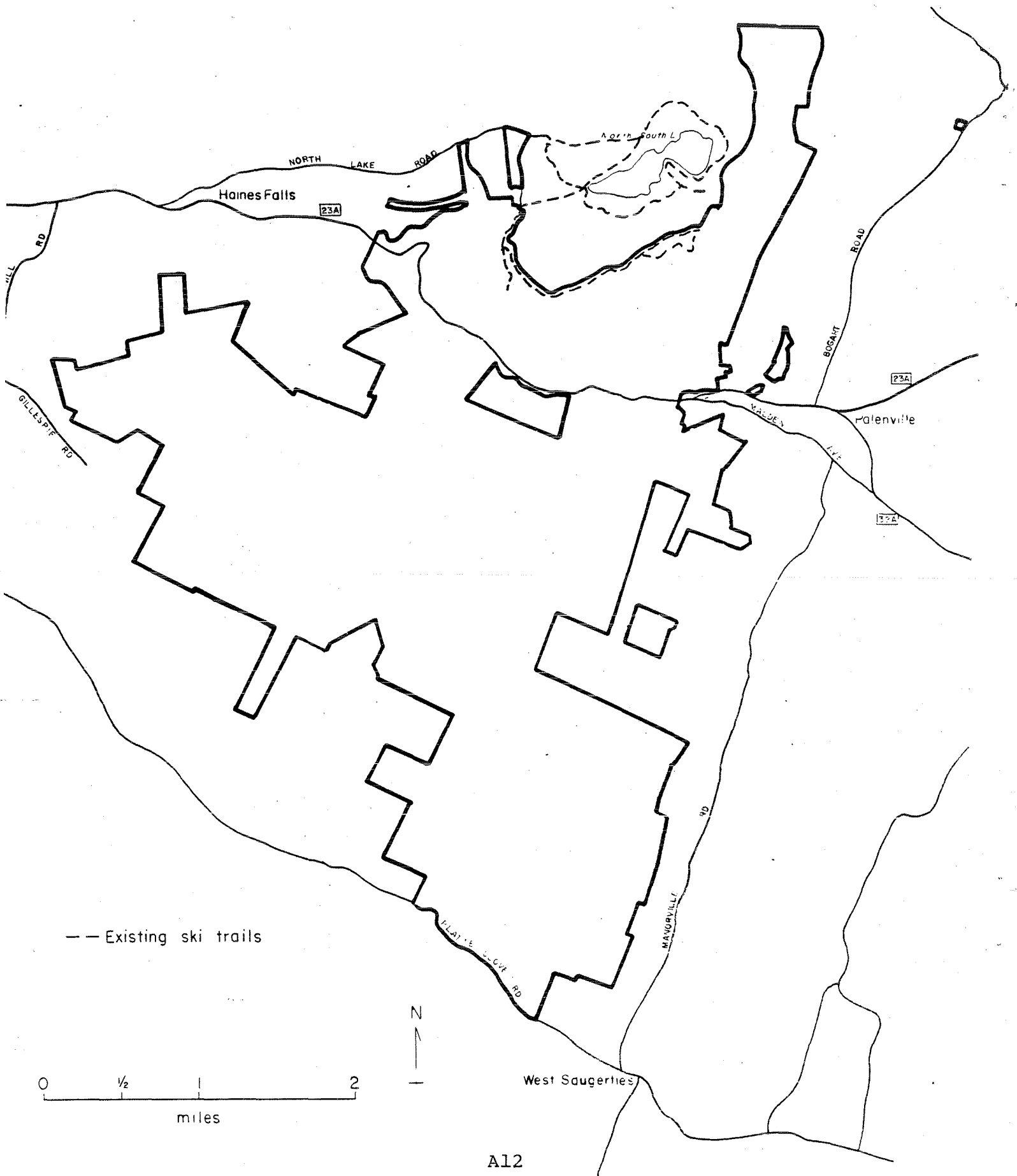
*Status = Status in New York State

KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST FOOT TRAILS

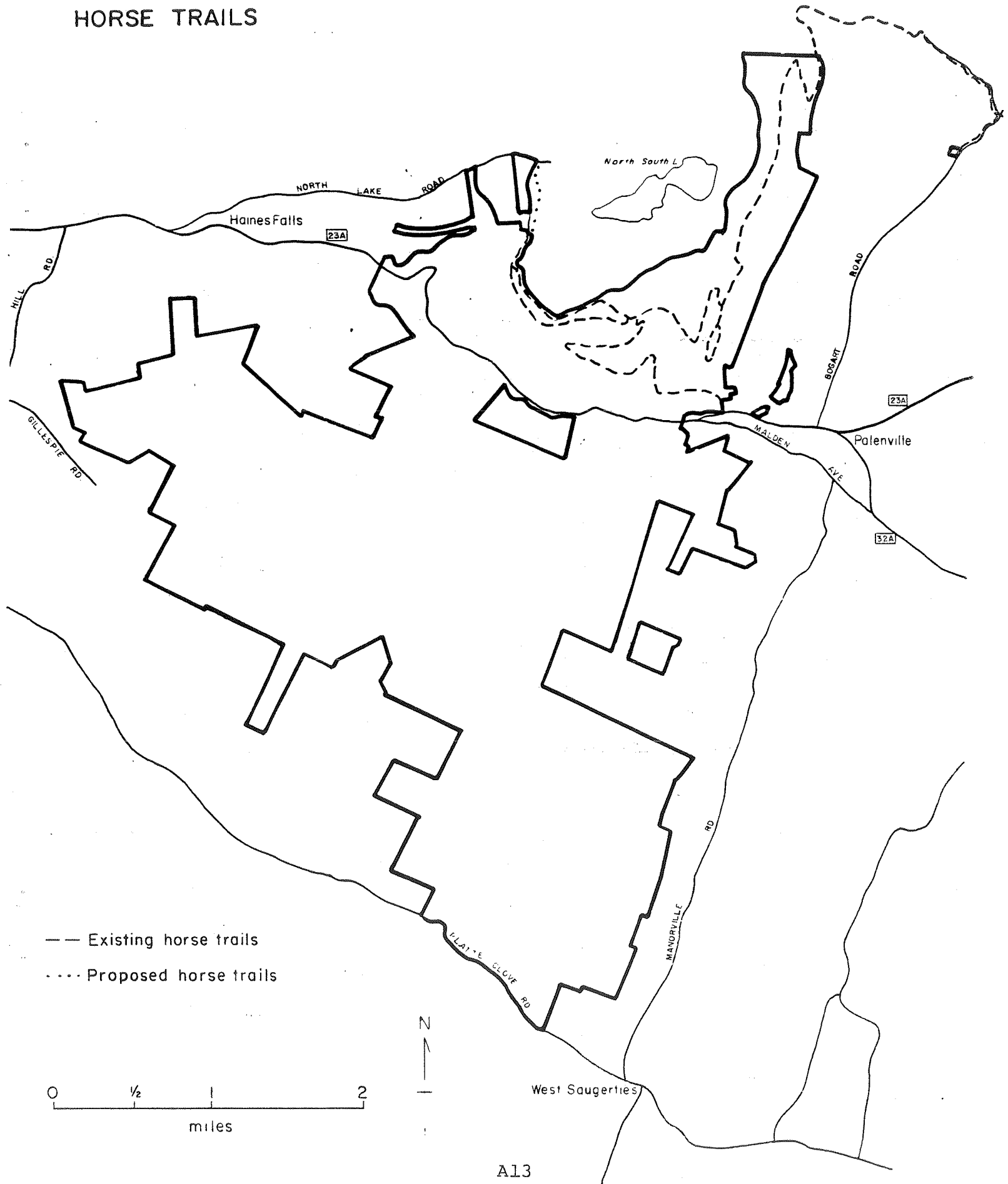


KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST

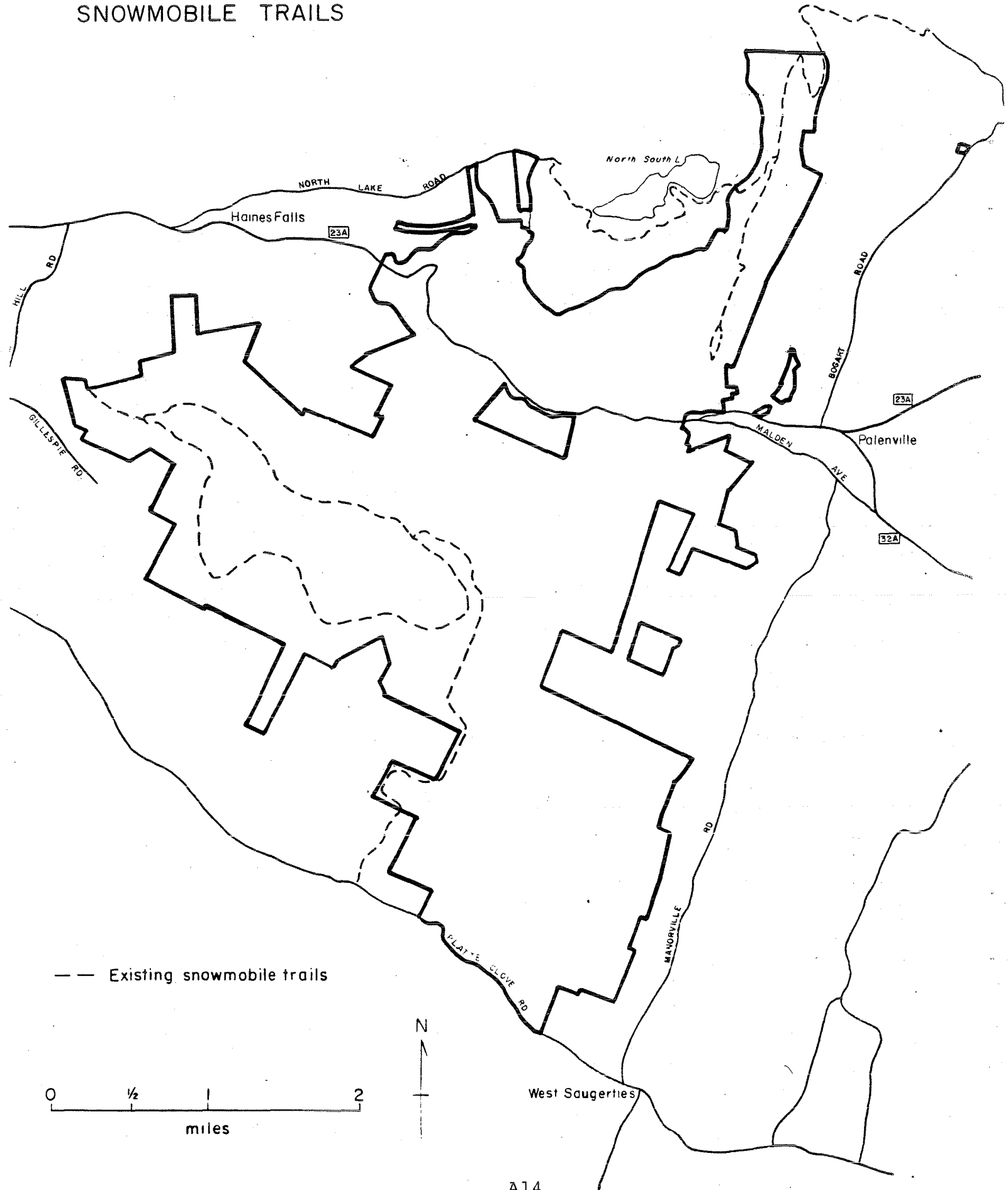
SKI TRAILS



KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST HORSE TRAILS

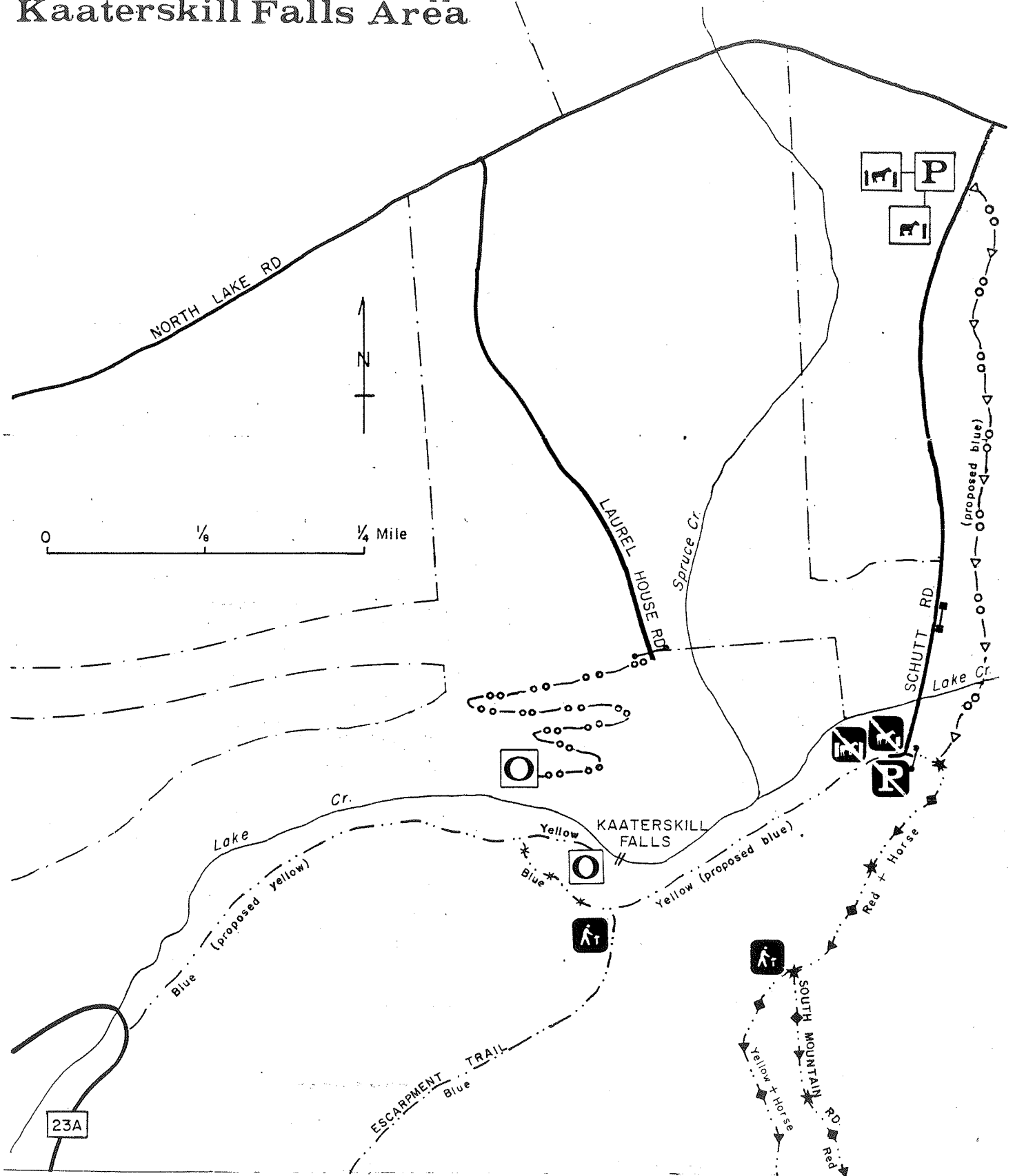


KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST SNOWMOBILE TRAILS



Kaaterskill Falls Area

Appendix C5



EXISTING FACILITIES

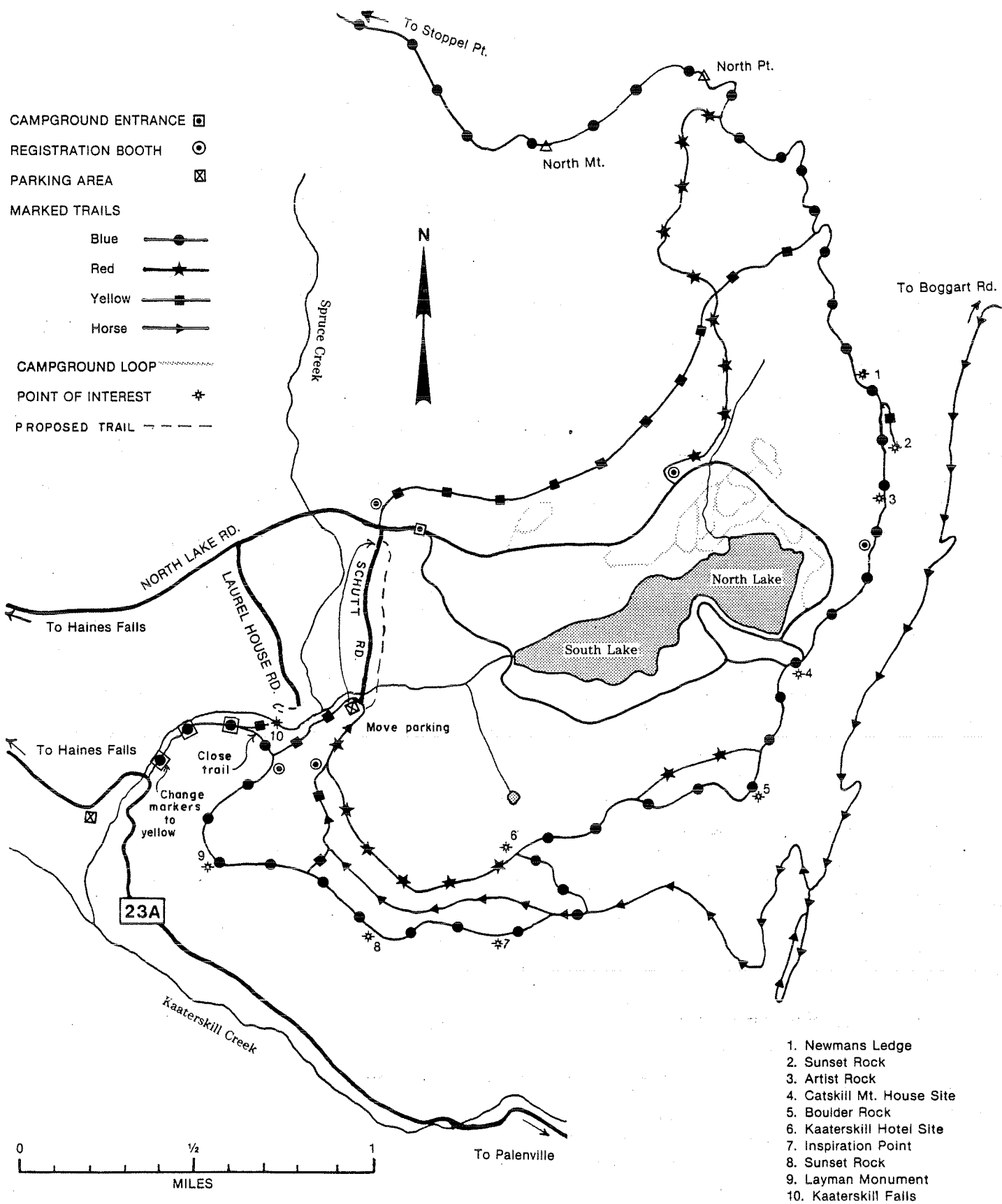
- Public Road
- ★ ★ Truck Trail
- ▶ ▶ Horse Trail
- ◆ ◆ Ski Trail
- Foot Trail
- Trail Register
- Barricade
- Gate

PROPOSED REMOVALS

- Corral
- Parking Area
- Hitching Rail
- * * * Close Foot Trail

PROPOSED NEW FACILITIES

- Corral
- Hitching Rail
- ▶ ▶ New Horse Trail
- Parking Area
- Observation Deck
- New Foot Trail



TRAILS IN THE VICINITY OF NORTH LAKE CAMPGROUND

KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST PROPOSED ACQUISITIONS



Appendix E

Protected Native Plants

Effective September 1, 1974, no one may knowingly pick, pluck, sever, remove or carry away, without the consent of the owner thereof, any protected plant. Violations of the law are punishable by fines of up to \$25 each (Environmental Conservation Law § 9-1503). The following are native plants which shall be protected pursuant to the above law and state regulation (NYCRR § 193.3). Such list shall apply statewide.

COMMON NAME*	SCIENTIFIC NAME	COMMON NAME*	SCIENTIFIC NAME
Green-dragon (Dragonroot)	<i>Arisaema dracontium</i>	American Bee-balm; Oswego Tea (Indian-heads; Scarlet Bee-balm)	<i>Monarda didyma</i>
Butterfly-weed (Chigger-flower; Orange Milkweed; Pleurisy-root)	<i>Asclepias tuberosa</i>	Bayberry (Candleberry)	<i>Myrica pensilvanica</i>
Bluebell-of-Scotland (Harebell)	<i>Campanula rotundifolia</i>	Lotus (Lotus Lily; Nelumbo; Pond-nuts; Water Chinquapin; Wonkapin; Yellow Lotus)	<i>Nelumbo-lutea</i>
American Bittersweet (Waxwork)	<i>Celastrus scandens</i>	Prickly Pear (Wild Cactus; Indian Fig)	<i>Opuntia humifusa</i> (<i>O. compressa</i> , p.p.)
Pipsissewa (Prince's-pine; Wax- flower) Spotted Evergreen (Spotted Wintergreen)	<i>Chimaphila</i> spp.	All Native Orchids, including: Adder's-mouth (Malaxis); Are- thusa (Dragon's-mouth; Swamp- pink); Bog-candle (Scent-bottle); Calopogon (Grass-pink; Swamp- pink); Calypso (Fairy-slipper); Coral-root; Cypripedium (Lady's- slipper; Moccasin-flower; nerve root); Goodyera (Lattice-leaf; Rattlesnake-plantain); Kittle-pink; Ladies'-tresses (Pearl-twist; Screw-auger); Orange-plume; Orchis; Pogonia (Beard-flower; Snake-mouth); Putty-root (Adam- and-Eve); Soldier's-plume; Three- birds; Twayblade; Whipporwill- shoe	<i>Orchidaceae</i>
Flowering Dogwood	<i>Cornus florida</i>	Golden-club	<i>Orontium aquaticum</i>
Sundew (Daily-dew; Dewthread)	<i>Drosera</i> spp.	Ginseng (Sang)	<i>Banax quinquefolius</i>
Trailing Arbutus (Ground Laurel; Mayflower)	<i>Epigaea repens</i>	Wild Crabapple	<i>Pyrus coronaria</i>
Burning-bush (Wahoo) Strawberry- bush (Bursting-heart)	<i>Euonymus</i> spp. (Native)	Azalea; Great Laurel (White Laurel); Honeysuckle; Pinxter (Election-pink; Pinxter-bloom); Rhododendron (Rosebay); Rhodora	<i>Rhododendron</i> spp. (Native)
All ferns, including: Adder's-tongue, Azolla, Buckhorn, Cliff Brake, Curly-grass, Fiddleheads, Hart's- tongue, Maidenhair, Moonwort, Polypody, Rock Brake, Salvinia, Spleenwort, Walking-leaf, Wall-rue, Water-spangle, Woodsia. But excluding Bracken (<i>Pteridium</i> <i>aquilinum</i>); Hay-scented Fern (<i>Denns- taedtia punctilobula</i>); Sensitive Fern (<i>Onoclea sensibilis</i>), which are not protected.	<i>Filices</i> (Filicinae; <i>Ophioglossales</i> and <i>Filicales</i>) (Native)	Bitterbloom (Marsh-pink; Rose-pink; Sabatia; Sea-pink)	<i>Sabatia</i> spp.
Ague-weed, Blue-bottles, Gentian (Gall-of-the-earth)	<i>Gentiana</i> spp.	Bloodroot (Puccoon-root; Red Puccoon)	<i>Sanguinaria</i>
Golden Seal (Orange-root; Yellow Puccoon)	<i>Hydrastis canadensis</i>	Pitcher-plant (Huntsman's-cup; Sidesaddle-flower)	<i>Sarracenia purpurea</i>
Holly (Hulver); Inkberry (Bitter Galberry); Winterberry (Black Alder)	<i>Ilex</i> spp. (Native)	Wild Pink	<i>Silene caroliniana</i>
Laurel, Spoonwood (Calico-bush) Wicky (Lambkill)	<i>Kalmia</i> spp.	Bethroot (Birthroot; Squawroot; Stinking Benjamin; Wake-robin); Toadshade, Trillium	<i>Trillium</i> spp.
Lily, Turk's-cap	<i>Lilium</i> spp. (Native)	Globe-flower (Trollius)	<i>Trollius laxus</i>
Cardinal-flower (Red Lobelia)	<i>Lobelia cardinalis</i>	Bird's-foot Violet	<i>Viola pedata</i>
All Clubmosses, including: Bear's- bed (Christmas-green, Running Evergreen; (Trailing Evergreen; Ground Pine); Bunch Evergreen; Festoon Pine (Coral Evergreen; Buckhorn; Staghorn Evergreen; Wolf's-claws); Ground Cedar (Creeping Jenny); Ground Fir; Heath Cypress	<i>Lycopodium</i> spp.		
Bluebell (Roanoke-bells; Tree Lungwort; Virginia Bluebell; Virginia Lungwort; Virginia Cowslip)	<i>Mertensia virginica</i>		

*NOTE: In this list above, common names are not included if they repeat the generic common name with a modifier (e.g., "Trillium" is understood to include "Painted Trillium," "White Trillium", "Nodding Trillium" and all others.) Names appearing within parentheses are less familiar synonyms for the principal common names of each species listed.

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

SUBJECT: KAAT WF AREA

SEQR
Positive Declaration
Notice of Intent to Prepare a Draft EIS
Determination of Significance

Identifying # PM-09

Project # _____

Date MAY 31st, 1984

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review) of the Environmental Conservation Law.

The Department of Environmental Conservation, as lead agency, has determined that the proposed action described below may have a significant effect on the environment and that a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will be prepared.

Title of Action:

KAATERSKILL WILD FOREST UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

SEQR Status: Type I ☒
 Unlisted ☐

Description of Action:

The Kaaterskill Wild Forest is comprised of 7600 acres of Forest Preserve lands in the Towns of Hunter and Catskill in Greene County, and the Town of Saugerties in Ulster County. Management activities planned for this Unit include: boundary line maintenance and marking, trail construction, trail modification and maintenance, fire suppression, search and rescue operations, fish stocking, regulation of deer populations, research activities, patrolling and surveillance activities, public information and education, and public use control systems. This Unit Management Plan will direct all management activities within the Kaaterskill Wild Forest Area for a period of five years from the date of final adoption.

Location: (Include the name of the county and town. A location map of appropriate scale is also recommended)

Towns of Hunter and Catskill, Greene County
Town of Saugerties, Ulster County

III. CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM AND GUIDELINES

Basis and Purpose of Classification

Today, the Catskill Forest Preserve contains lands with varying degrees of wildness ranging from somewhat remote and trail-less mountain peaks and picturesque streams to intensively used camping areas and trails. The Preserve is composed of a variety of terrain, soil and forest cover types with differing capacities to sustain and recover from recreational use.

Legal restrictions on the use of the Forest Preserve do not specifically consider the varying characteristics of the land. Through the classification of the lands of the Catskill Forest Preserve according to their characteristics and capacity to withstand use and the preparation of management guidelines for each classification, comprehensive unit management plans for the future administration of the Catskill Forest Preserve will be developed.

To avoid confusion and provide for consistent management of Forest Preserve land, classifications and guidelines will, where feasible, follow patterns established for the Adirondack Forest Preserve. Some variations are needed to apply those standards to the Catskill Forest Preserve.

Classifications will be established finally when unit management plans are developed. Lands have been tentatively classified in the Master Plan. Wilderness classifications and boundaries are essentially the same as those recommended by the

Temporary State Commission to Study the Catskills in its report dated 1975. Classification of future acquisitions will be done on an annual basis.

A fundamental determinant of land classification is the physical characteristics of the land or water, which have a direct bearing upon the capacity of the land to accept human use. Soil, slope, elevation and water are the primary elements of these physical characteristics and they are found in widely varied associations. For example, the fertility, erosiveness and depth of soil, the severity of slopes, the elevational characteristics reflected in microclimates, the temperature, chemistry, volume and turnover rate of streams or lakes, all affect the carrying capacity of the land or water both from the standpoint of the construction of facilities and the amount of human use the land or water itself can absorb. By and large, these factors highlight the essential fragility of significant portions of the State lands within the Park. These fragile areas are generally located at elevations above 2,500 feet in altitude, as well as low-lying areas such as swamps, marshes and other wetlands. In addition, rivers, streams, lakes and ponds and their environs often present special environmental concerns.

Biological considerations also play an important role in the structuring of the classification system. Many of these are associated with the physical limitations just described, for

instance many plants at high altitudes are less able to withstand trampling than species associated with lower elevation life zones. Wetland ecosystems frequently are finely balanced and incapable of absorbing material changes resulting from construction or intensive human use. In addition, wildlife values and wildlife habitats are relevant to the characteristics of the land and sometimes determine whether a particular kind of human use should be encouraged or prohibited, for example the impact of snowmobiles on deer wintering yards, the effect of numbers of hikers or campers near the nesting habitat of rare, threatened or endangered species like the bald eagle or the problems associated with motorized access to bodies of water with wild strains of native trout.

In addition, another significant determinant of land classification involves certain intangible considerations that have an inevitable impact on the character of land. Some of these are social or psychological - such as the sense of remoteness and degree of wildness available to users of a particular area, which may result from the size of an area, the type or density of its forest cover, the ruggedness of the terrain or merely the views over other areas of the Park obtainable from some vantage point. Without these elements an area should not be classified as wilderness, even though the physical and biological factors would dictate that the limitations of wilderness management are essential.

Finally, the classification system takes into account the established facilities on the land, the uses now being made by the public and the policies followed by the Department. Many of these factors are self-evident: the presence of an existing campground or ski area requires the classification of intensive use. The extent of existing facilities and uses which might make it impractical to attempt to recreate a wilderness or wild forest atmosphere is also a consideration. This is not to imply that when present uses or facilities are degrading the resource they should be continued, but their presence cannot be ignored. The unique mixture of public and private land within the Park also requires that account be taken of facilities and uses being made on contiguous or nearby private lands. Thus a large private inholding subject to or threatened by some form of intensive use might prevent the designation of an otherwise suitable tract of State land as wilderness.

The above described factors are obviously complex and their application is, in certain instances, subjective, since the value of resource quality or character cannot be precisely evaluated or measured. Nonetheless, the Department of Environmental Conservation believes that the classification system described below reflects the character and capacity to withstand use of all Department-administered State lands within the Park.

Four basic categories result from this classification:

Wilderness

Wild Forest

Intensive Use

Administrative

If there is a unifying theme to the classification system, it is that the protection and preservation of the natural resources of the Department-administered State lands within the Park must be paramount. Human use and enjoyment of those lands should be permitted and encouraged, so long as the resources in their physical and biological context and their social or psychological aspects are not degraded.

Guidelines for the lands falling within each major classification and various special management guidelines for unique resources within these major classifications are set forth in the remaining portions of this section. Insofar as Forest Preserve lands are concerned, no structures, improvements or uses not now established on the Forest Preserve are permitted by these guidelines and in many cases more restrictive management is provided for. Obviously, these guidelines are subject to any future legal rulings further restricting uses of the Forest Preserve and they are not to be considered as attempts to make determinations as to the constitutional appropriateness of any such structures, improvements or uses. From a constitutional perspective this Master Plan should be regarded as

constitutionally neutral in character.

In addition, the designation of administrative areas in the present Master Plan should not be taken as lending weight to the constitutional appropriateness of the general treatment of these lands by the State, either legislatively or administratively, as non-Forest Preserve. These classifications seek only to reflect, in terms of land use, what has long existed in the Park irrespective of constitutional questions.

Nothing in the guidelines for lands falling within each major classification shall be deemed to prevent the Department from providing for more restrictive management where necessary to comply with constitutional requirements or to protect the natural resources of such lands.

Terminology with specific reference to this document is defined at Appendix C.

B. Wild Forest

The largest component of the Catskill Park Forest Preserve lands is classified wild forest. The management objective for wild forest is to accommodate present and future public recreation needs in a manner consistent with Article XIV of the State Constitution. Within the bounds of many wild forest areas are smaller parcels where fragile resources or other factors require the same degree of protection as wilderness areas. Generally these areas are located at higher elevations and can be adequately provided for by proper planning.

1. Definition

A wild forest area is a section of Forest Preserve where the resource can sustain a somewhat higher degree of human use than a wilderness area. It may contain, within its bounds, smaller areas of land or water that are essentially wilderness in character, where the fragility of the resource or other factors require wilderness management. A wild forest area is further defined as an area which lacks the sense of remoteness of wilderness areas and which permits a wider variety of outdoor recreation.

2. Guidelines for Management and Use

a. Basic Guidelines

The primary wild forest management guideline will be to protect the natural wild forest setting and to provide those types of outdoor recreation that the public

can enjoy without impairing the wild forest atmosphere or changing the character of fragile areas within wild forest boundaries.

In wild forest areas, wilderness guidelines will apply to all lands and waters over 2700 feet in elevation unless specified otherwise in the following guidelines.

In wild forest areas:

- 1) no additions or expansion of existing nonconforming uses will be permitted and
- 2) existing nonconforming uses will be phased out as rapidly as possible by the Department and in all cases within three years of adoption of this plan. An exception is the High Peak-Roundtop snowmobile trail. While portions of this trail are above the 2700 foot elevation, the local terrain places the fragile and critical area above the trail.

No new nonconforming uses will be permitted in any designated wild forest area.

Public use of motor vehicles will not be encouraged and there will not be any increase in the number or length of roads and trails open to motorized use.

Incompatible uses such as snowmobiling and ski touring or horseback riding will be located in separate areas.

When public access to and enjoyment of wild forest areas is inadequate, appropriate steps to improve access will be taken to encourage public use consistent with the wild forest character.

b. Structures and Improvements

All structures and improvements permitted under the guidelines covering wilderness areas will be allowed in wild forest areas. In addition, the maintenance, rehabilitation and construction of the structures and improvements listed below will be allowed:

- existing nonconforming structures of a permanent nature located above 2700 feet in elevation that are deemed necessary for administrative purposes by the Department such as fire towers and appurtenances. These may be maintained for as long as needed for protection of the forest resource or recreational, educational and informational purposes.
- existing lean-tos on mountain tops above 2700 feet in elevation or elsewhere above 3500 feet in elevation may be maintained until major rehabilitation or replacement is necessary
- small groupings of Adirondack type lean-tos and individual tent sites with fire rings, below 2700 feet in elevation
- nature and interpretive trails
- Nordic ski trails

- trailhead construction and related parking facilities adjacent to public highways or public access lanes, including fisherman parking near streams.
- cartop boat access sites adjacent to public highways
- communication systems necessary for administrative purposes of the Department of Environmental Conservation
- rustic buildings necessary for administrative purposes below 2700 feet in elevation
- motor vehicles, motorized equipment and aircraft as set forth below;
- roads and State truck trails as set forth below .
- snowmobile trails as set forth below
- horse trails as set forth below.

c. Motor Vehicles, Motorized Equipment and Aircraft

All uses of motor vehicles, motorized equipment and aircraft permitted under wilderness guidelines will also be permitted in wild forest areas.

In addition, the use of motor vehicles, motorized equipment and aircraft will be allowed as follows:

- 1) by administrative personnel where necessary to reach, maintain and construct permitted structures and improvements, for rescues, or for other appropriate

law enforcement and general supervision of public use

2) by the general public, subject to basic guidelines set forth above, but only on;

- existing public roads, maintained by the State

Department of Transportation or local governments

- designated roads now open to the public at the discretion of the Department of Environmental Conservation.

- rivers, lakes and ponds now or hereafter designated by the Department as suitable for such motorized uses

3) by snowmobiles on trails designated by the Department in accordance with the guidelines for such trails specified below.

d. Road and State Truck Trails

1) Continued use of existing roads, and State truck trails by administrative personnel will be permitted, as necessary to reach, maintain and construct permitted structures and improvements and conduct approved fish and wildlife research and management projects.

Existing roads officially open to the public may remain open for motor vehicle use, compatible with the wild forest character of the area, at the discretion of the Department.

2) No new roads will be constructed. No new State truck trails will be constructed unless such construction is absolutely essential to protect or administer an area

and there will be no material adverse effect on the wild forest character of the area by the proposed construction.

e. Snowmobile Trails

Snowmobile trails and appurtenances should be designed and located in a manner which will not adversely affect adjoining private landowners or the wild forest environment. In particular:

- existing snowmobile trails located above 2,700 feet in elevation will be closed to snowmobile use with the exception of the High Peak-Roundtop Trail as previously noted in a.2) of this section.
- any existing mileage of snowmobile trail or open roadway lost in the designation of wilderness or lost due to elevation limitations may be replaced in wild forest areas utilizing abandoned woods roads. New trail cutting may occur where necessary to create desired loops. Such cutting will be in accordance with Department organization and delegation memorandum 84-06 and Division of Lands and Forests policy statement LF-84-2 Cutting and Removal of Trees in the Forest Preserve.
- appropriate opportunities to improve or expand the snowmobile trail system may be pursued below 2700 feet in elevation where the impact on the wild forest environment will be minimized. Examples of such opportunities include:

- (i) placing snowmobile trails adjacent to but screened from public highways within the Park to aid access between communities where alternative routes are not available,
 - (ii) combining snowmobile and horse trails or in some instances, foot trails, provided such combining is safe and does not require additional cutting of trees.
- trails will not run through deer wintering yards and other important areas of ecological significance, such as the habitats of endangered species.
 - appurtenances to snowmobile trails such as bridges will be constructed of natural materials.

f. Horse Trails

Horse trails and appurtenances will be designed and located in a manner which will not adversely affect the wild forest environment. In particular:

- appropriate opportunities to improve and expand the horse trail system will be pursued where the impact on the wild forest environment will be minimized, such as, (i) designating suitable abandoned woods roads as horse trails (ii) designating suitable existing snowmobile trails as horse trails (iii) occasional cutting of new trails to establish the desired loops for new trails in accordance with Department organization and delegation memorandum 84-06 and Division of Lands and Forests policy statement LF-84-2, Cutting and Removal of Trees in the Forest Preserve.

-appurtenances to horse trails such as bridges and hitching rails will be constructed of natural materials.

-adequate parking for vehicles with horse trailers will be provided near the trail head.

g. Flora and Fauna

Wilderness area guidelines will apply, although exceptions may be made in accordance with sound biological management practices, particularly where such practices will enhance resident fish and wildlife resources.

h. Recreational Use and Over-Use

All types of recreational uses considered appropriate for wilderness areas are compatible with wild forest. In addition, limited and regulated snowmobiling, motorboating and travel by other vehicles are permitted if they will not materially increase existing motorized uses and will not adversely affect the essentially wild character of the land.

Certain wild forest areas offer better opportunities for a more extensive horse trail system than wilderness areas. Horse trails and associated facilities in these areas will be considered where appropriate.

Although the nature of most wild forest areas indicates that they are not as sensitive to recreational over-use as wilderness areas, care must nonetheless be taken to avoid over-use. The relatively greater intensity of use allowed by the wild forest guidelines should not be interpreted as permitting or encouraging unlimited or unrestrained use of wild forest areas.

3. Designation of Wild Forest Areas

The application of the wild forest definition and criteria described above results in the initial designation under the Master Plan of about 155,000 acres of wild forest land, comprising approximately 60 percent of the Forest Preserve within the Catskill Park. A wide variety of terrain and ecosystems is represented in these areas.

Wild forest areas are listed and described in section IV AREA DESCRIPTIONS AND DELINEATIONS.