

West Mountain State Forest

Final Interim Access Plan

The West Mountain State Forest consists of approximately 830 acres of land located in the Towns of Dover, Beekman, and Union Vale in Dutchess County, New York. This parcel of land was acquired by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) through gift in 1999 and is managed by the Division of Lands and Forests as a state reforestation area.

Since acquisition, management of the area has consisted of both forest management and public recreation. Forest management has consisted of the collection of forest inventory data, providing for a limited local firewood sales program, the awarding of a small contract for the collection of maple sap and a limited amount of surveying of the parcel. Public recreation of the property was encouraged and enhanced with the construction and installation of information boards and a facility identification sign at the end of Gardner Hollow Road. The remaining management of the parcel consisted of the removal of refuse found in several locations.

Public use of the West Mountain State Forest has been limited, mainly due to the lack of adequate public access points. The Department has drafted this Interim Access Plan (IAP) to discuss both current existing access points as well as describe public access improvements proposed for the property which are designed to facilitate public use and enjoyment of this state forest.

A public meeting to discuss the IAP was held on September 10th, 2014. Public comment on the plan was accepted until September 30th, 2014. As a result of public comment and more extensive field investigations, one modification to the plan has been made. Original access improvement proposal 1 has been modified to provide pedestrian access from a 6 car parking lot to be built on the end of Blueberry Drive. The original proposal for this northern access to the property involved extensive work to improve an existing right of way to accommodate vehicular access to a remote parking area located nearly ¼ mile from the end of Blueberry Drive. NYSDEC will now focus all efforts to provide motor vehicular access to the property on the parking lot to be built at the end of Gardiner Hollow Road located on the southern portion of the property.

Current Access:

Access on the north side of this parcel is through a 50 foot deeded right-of-way beginning from the cul-de-sac on Blueberry Drive (Town of Union Vale) through to the old farm lane, a dirt road which leads to the interior portion of the parcel. There is no improved parking at this location and thus, limited pedestrian access to the northern section of the property currently exists.

Access on the south side of the parcel is obtained through the parking area located at the end of Gardner Hollow Road. The single lane dirt surface access road which leads to this parking area is not currently maintained by either the Towns of Beekman or Dover.

Interior access consists of an extensive interconnected trail system which was present at the time of acquisition. Since acquisition, some of these trails have grown over. Many are still serviceable and adequate to accommodate public recreational use which may include activities such as hiking, hunting, mountain biking, horseback riding and wildlife viewing. Approximately 4.5 miles of existing trails have been determined to be suitable for marking and maintaining as part of an official multiple use trail system and are described in proposal 3 listed below.

Access Improvement Proposals:

- 1) Improve public access on the north side of the parcel by utilizing the deeded right-of-way off Blueberry Drive for pedestrian access only. An easement will be acquired to construct a small six (6) car parking lot off the end of Blueberry Drive. This parking lot will contain a kiosk and facility identification sign. 12 white spruce will be planted in the deeded right of way to provide screening for adjacent private properties. An official trail will be marked from the new parking area through the deeded right of way to the northern portion of the State Forest. The improvement and marking of public access points will provide the public with clear access to the forest, reducing the chance of trespass onto adjacent private lands.
- 2) Improve access on the south side of the parcel by resurfacing Gardner Hollow Road, beginning just beyond the last resident driveway on the right, up to and including the parking area. This resurfacing will include the addition and grading of appropriate materials such as gravel. The parking area will be expanded to allow up to six (6) vehicles, including a maximum of two (2) vehicles with horse trailers in tow.
- 3) Approximately 4.5 miles of existing trails have been determined to be suitable for marking and maintaining as part of an official multiple use trail system. These trails are shown on the attached map and are proposed to be officially marked and designated by Department staff with the assistance of volunteers.
- 4) Install wayfinding signage to insure public access is clearly marked.

The estimated cost for the above listed proposals is \$45,000

Recreation opportunities:

The access improvement proposals listed above will significantly increase recreational opportunities found on the West Mountain State Forest. The improvement and marking of public access points will provide the public with clear access to the forest, reducing the chance of trespass onto adjacent private lands. The marking and maintaining of an official recreational trail system will allow members of the public the opportunity to easily access the interior portions of the state forest to pursue recreational activities including: hiking, hunting, wildlife viewing, trapping, fishing, mountain bike riding, snowshoeing, horseback riding, and back country camping.

State Environmental Quality Review:

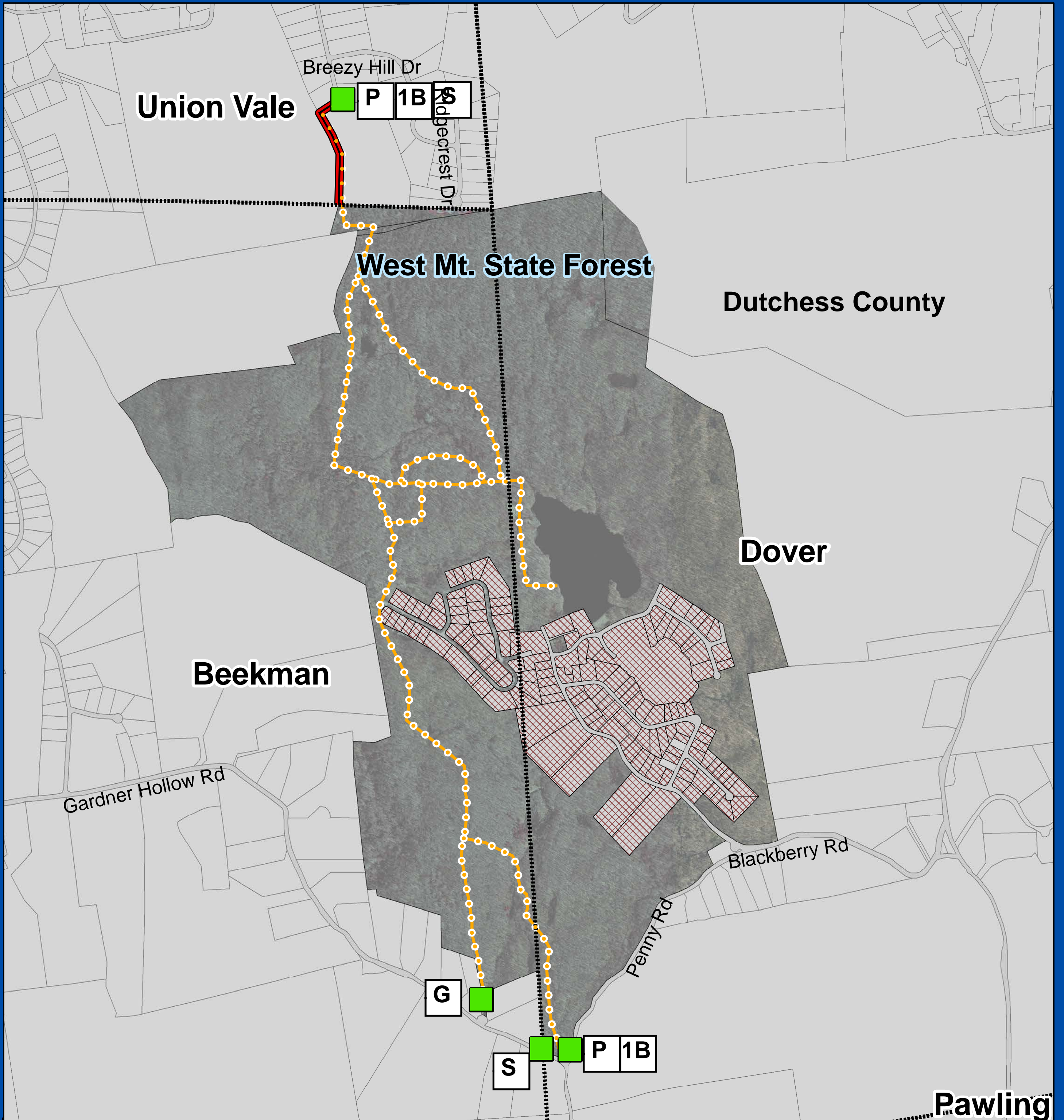
The access projects proposed for West Mountain State Forest are consistent with NYSDEC's Strategic Plan for State Forest Management. The Strategic Plan included a Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS) for specific State Forest management actions. The Strategic Plan addresses many of the most common issues pertaining to management actions on State Forest lands. An extensive public participation process was utilized during the development of this plan. Management actions were evaluated for potential environmental impacts and the Strategic Plan established thresholds for management actions that would require further SEQR review. The Strategic Plan provides a foundation for development of individual UMPS and establishes management guidelines, best management practices and protective measures for a variety of management actions that may occur on State Forest lands. The Interim Access Plan for the West Mountain State Forest does not propose any activities or other management actions that would exceed the thresholds established in this GEIS, therefore, the Department has determined that the proposed plan will not result in any significant environmental impacts, and a site specific SEQR review is not required.

Once adopted, the final Interim Access Plan for West Mountain State Forest will be incorporated into the Department's East-of-Hudson Unit Management Plan (UMP). The East-of-Hudson UMP will include all NYS DEC owned state forest areas located on the east side of the Hudson River in Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester Counties. This plan is currently being drafted and will be available for public review once the draft is determined to be complete.

East-of-Hudson Counties

Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester New York

Proposed Infrastructure West Mt. State Forest



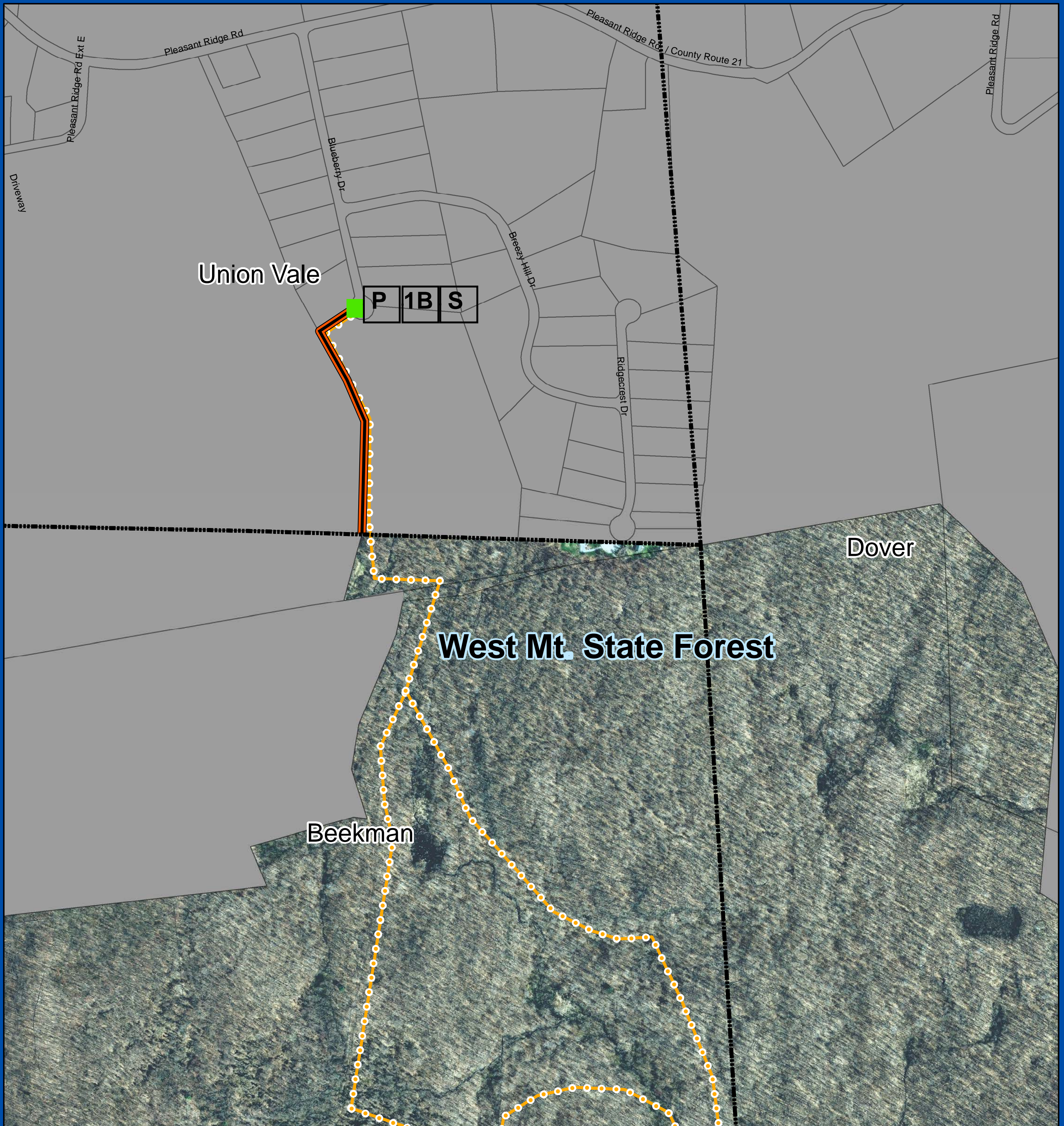
- | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---------------------|
| G | Gate | Town Line |
| P | Parking | Right Of Way Access |
| 1B | Small Information Board | West Mt. Trails |
| S | Facility ID Sign | No Trespass |


1,000 500 0 1,000 Feet

GIS is approximate and should not be considered a substitute for on-site inspection or survey.


East-of-Hudson Counties Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester New York

Proposed Infrastructure West Mt. State Forest



- | | | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| P | Parking |  | Town Line |
| 1B | Small Information Board |  | Right of Way Access |
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500 250 0 500 Feet



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