

Forest Preserve Work Plan
for
Construction of New Facilities and Expansion or
Modification of Existing Facilities
Fiscal Year 2023

Project # Click to enter Project Number (leave blank if not applicable)

<u>Region</u>	<u>Project Title</u>
4	Escarpment Trail Maintenance and Repairs

<u>Project Type</u>	<u>Town(s)</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Management Unit</u>
Expansion of Existing Facility	Hunter	Greene	Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness

Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project:

This work plan outlines maintenance and repair work planned for a section of the Escarpment Trail in the Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness. The Escarpment Trail is approximately 24 miles long and crosses four management units and many popular hiking destinations. The section covered by this work plan is a wilderness foot trail used by hikers travelling to North Point from North South Lake Campground and by hikers traversing the Escarpment Trail more generally. This particular section of the Escarpment Trail receives a higher level of foot traffic than other sections of the trail due to its proximity to North South Lake Campground and the sweeping views of the Catskills and Hudson Valley available at North Point.

This section of the Escarpment Trail is located in a rocky area with a sparse understory. Without a very well-defined trail corridor, this setting can make it difficult to discern where the trail corridor is and easy to unintentionally wander off-trail. The lack of underbrush also helps to facilitate taking shortcuts around switchbacks where the next stretch of trail is visible from above or below. These factors have led to erosion, trail widening and braiding, and the development of informal, user-created trails devoid of leaf-litter, woody debris, and vegetation on an approximately 800 foot section of trail. Stone stairs were installed to reduce the trail grade and to help keep hikers on the trail. Those stairs have since shifted out of place making them difficult to identify and use. In addition, erosion is occurring on the trail before and after the stairs where the trail grade is still too steep. This project aims to rehabilitate the existing stone stairs, install new stone stairs, constrict and better define the trail corridor, and eliminate user-created trails.

In alignment with Article XIV of the NYS Constitution and the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, the desired conditions for the Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness are to maintain the wild character of the Forest Preserve and to provide a quality recreational experience. Recreational uses must be appropriate for wilderness areas and restricted to primitive, non-motorized activities such as hiking and snowshoeing. More specifically, this project aims to meet the following desired conditions:

- 1) Natural Resources - The physical and biological resources of the area are largely untouched and protected. There is an undesirable level of impact occurring to the natural resources in the project area both within and outside of the trail corridor. Within the trail corridor, erosion is occurring where the trail grade is too steep and the trail tread is unstable. Outside the trail corridor, braiding is occurring and herd paths are developing. In these places, erosion, soil compaction, and loss of vegetation, leaf-litter, and woody debris are all concerns. This project will resolve these issues to help meet the desired condition for natural resources and prevent future impacts from occurring.

- 2) Visitor Experience – Visitors have a quality recreational experience for hiking and snowshoeing, are able to experience a sense of remoteness, and are able to experience the natural beauty of the area. The impacts described above are all visually apparent and a constant reminder of human impact on the area. This detracts from the visitor experience by lessening the sense of remoteness and the natural beauty of the area. By addressing erosion on the trail and eliminating herd paths and trail braiding, the visual impact will be confined to the trail corridor rather than spread across the area.

- 3) Facilities – On site management is minimal and only done to the extent necessary to ensure resource protection,

public safety, and minimal user conflict. Structures are designed to not be visually obtrusive by incorporating natural materials and subdued colors.

Structures installed on this trail have been and will continue to be unobtrusive visually and will continue to incorporate natural materials.

Description of Project Specifications:

Work will take place on and adjacent to an approximately 800 foot section of foot trail. The trail will be rehabilitated to specifications for a Class 3, single-lane wilderness foot trail as outlined in the USFS trail design parameters handout. The maximum trail width will be 18" to 24" with exceptions for steep side slopes where trail width can be up to 48".

Structures, including stone stairs, will have a minimum width of 18". The trail surface will consist of native materials, with some onsite borrow or imported material where needed for stabilization and occasional grading.

Stone Stairs – Five sets of stone stairs will be rehabilitated. Stones will be moved back into place. Some components including gargoyle stones will be replaced with larger stone where necessary to hold the structure in place and define the edge of the trail. New stone steps will be installed to extend the existing staircases around switchbacks. This will reduce the trail grade, prevent further erosion, and help guide hikers through switchbacks. Stones may need to be quarried. In addition, stone splitting may be necessary. By splitting larger stones located on the ground surface, it will reduce the overall impact of digging out and transporting many smaller stones.

Stone Turnpiking- Approximately, 200 feet of stone turnpiking will be created along flatter sections of the trail. In these areas, trail braiding is significant. The creation of these turnpikes will help guide hikers and improve footing.

Herd Paths and Trail Braiding – To eliminate herd paths, flat stones that give the illusion of a trail will be moved and adjusted to create a surface that is less appealing for walking. Brush will be placed in these paths to further discourage hikers from using them. To constrict sections of braided trail, a single lane will be re-established and scree will be placed adjacent to the trail to keep foot traffic within the desired trail corridor.

Description of Measures Taken to Avoid, Mitigate and Minimize Impacts to Natural Resources:

A.) Trees to be removed: None

B.) Earthwork and Disturbance, Including Identification of Work Outside the Project Footprint: Stone will be harvested on site. Any borrow pits will be blended with the surrounding environment. Where stone steps are being installed, the existing trail bed will be excavated to prepare the site and create a level surface. To close off informal trails, flat stones that give the illusion of a walkway will be removed and scattered so that the forest floor looks more rugged and natural.

C.) Describe how the project will avoid or minimize Impacts to Streams, Waterbodies, and Wetlands: This project does not take place in or adjacent to any streams, waterbodies, or wetlands. In order to minimize any impacts to water quality, earth work will not be conducted during times of heavy rain when the potential for runoff is high. Overall, the trail repairs taking place should create a more stable trail surface that will be resistant to erosion. The project will also prevent continued off-trail erosion by limiting off-trail foot traffic.

D.) Identification of Rare, Threatened or Endangered Species: There are no known occurrences of RT&E species within ¼ mile of the project area.

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives: An alternate option would be to reroute this section of trail. This is not the preferred option. Repairing the existing trail can be done with no tree cutting and with a relatively small amount of earthwork. Rerouting the trail would likely require tree cutting and a more significant amount of earth work.

Description of Use of Motorized Equipment and/or Motor Vehicles, if any: No motorized equipment or motor vehicles will be used to complete this project.

Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities: This project falls under Architectural Barriers Act Section 1019, Conditions for Exemptions in compliance with accessibility standards. This project is located in a wilderness area, more than 1 mile from a trailhead and covers rugged and occasionally steep terrain. Significant terrain modifications along the trails used to access the project location would be necessary to provide an accessible facility and is ultimately beyond the scope of this project.

Other Relevant Considerations: Click to enter other relevant considerations.

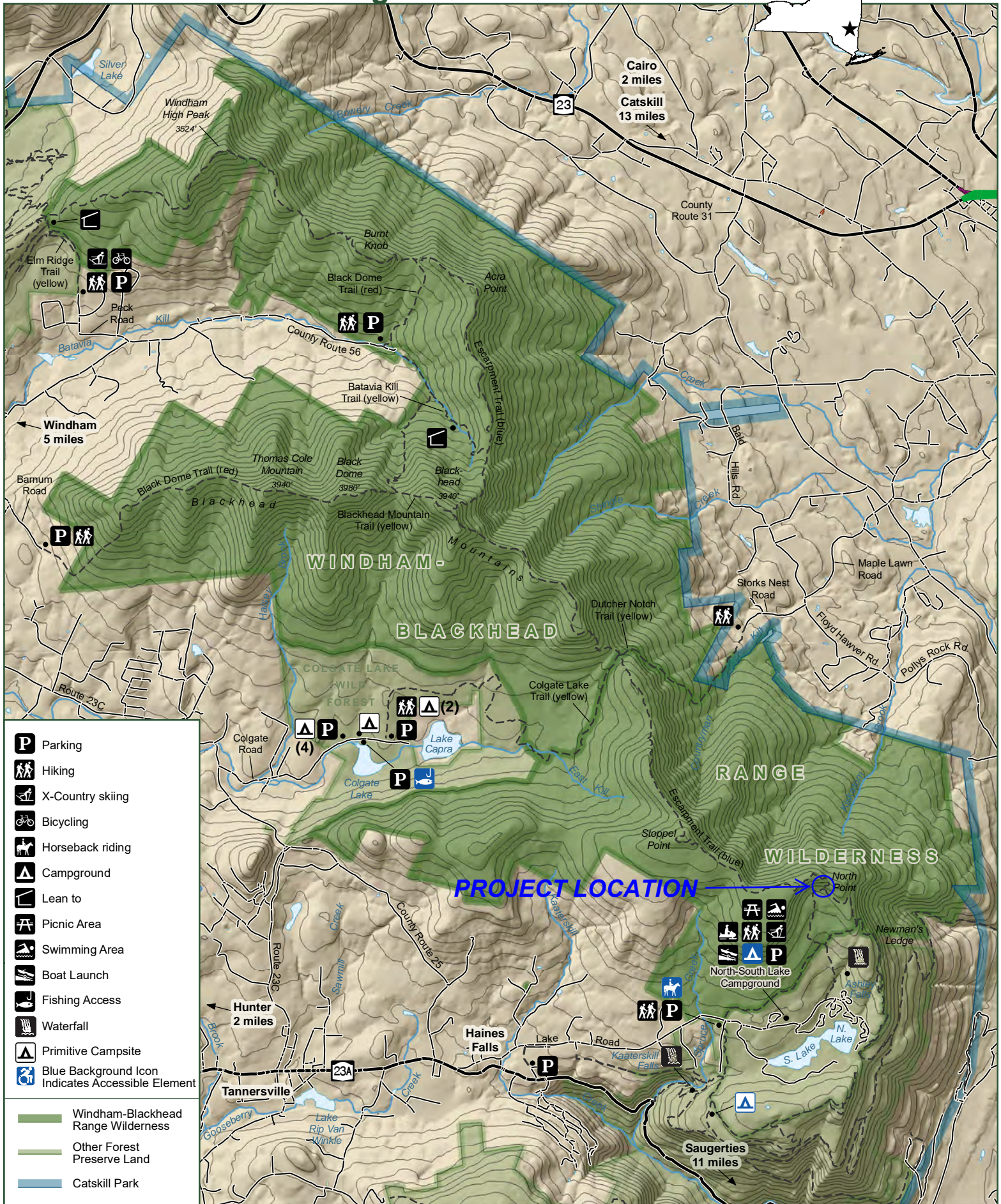
Prepared by (Name & Title): Alicia Sullivan

Date: 6/10/2022

REGULATORY CLEARANCE CHECKLIST – STATE LANDS and CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECTS

PROGRAM	PERMIT	REQUIRED		SECURED BY	COMMENTS
		YES	NO	(NAME)	
Air Resources	Restricted Burning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Mineral Resources	Mining	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Materials Management	Solid Waste Mgt. Fac.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Water	Dam Safety Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Const. in Flood Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Public Water Supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	SPDES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Spills Management	Petro. Bulk Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Lands and Forests	Unit Management Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Tree Cutting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Protected Native Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Historic Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Fish and Wildlife	Freshwater Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	EAF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Negative Declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Env. Impact Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Water Quality Cert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
DEC (other)	CP-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Commissioner (aircraft, motorized equipment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Flight Request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Contract Clearance Sh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	DOB Exemption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Other Agencies	APA MOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Corps. of Engineers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Building Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Local Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Easements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Highway Enter DOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Wastewater Disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		

Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness



- Parking
- Hiking
- X-Country skiing
- Bicycling
- Horseback riding
- Campground
- Lean to
- Picnic Area
- Swimming Area
- Boat Launch
- Fishing Access
- Waterfall
- Primitive Campsite
- Blue Background Icon Indicates Accessible Element

- Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness
- Other Forest Preserve Land
- Catskill Park

Mary's Glen Trail Preliminary Assessment
Prepared by Andrew Hamlin, Trail Specialist, Tahawus Trails LLC



Map of Priority Area..



Start of work area



Lowermost staircase: Re-set steps. .Extend staircase below and above. Scree needs to be re-established



Middle staircase: Original trail alignment shown in red. Re-align staircase below birch and tighten corridor with heavy scree.







Uppermost Staircase: Should be completely rebuilt and extended



Herd path shown in red; Trail in blue. Brush in and move stones to close shortcut.