



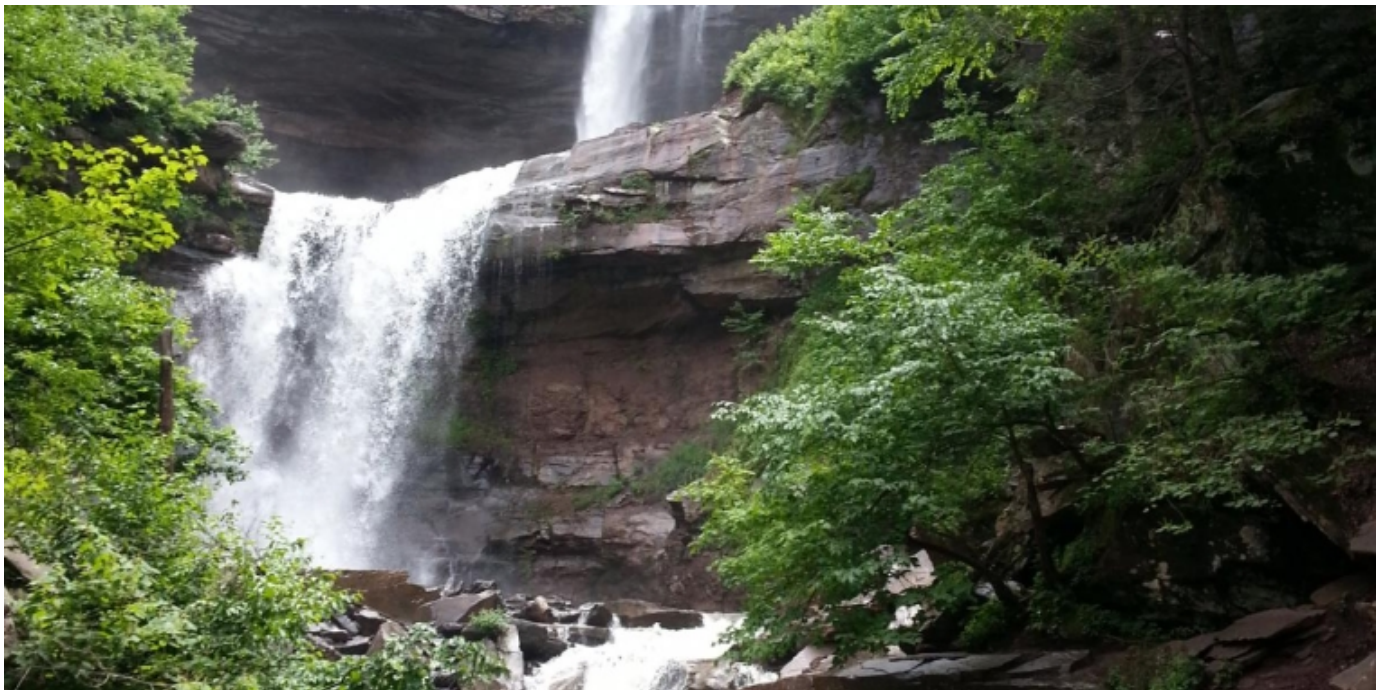
NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Michelle Hinchey

## Senator Michelle Hinchey Applauds Historic DEC Decision to Create Catskill Parks Coordinator Role

MICHELLE HINCHEY November 29, 2021

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**ALBANY, NY (November 29, 2021)** – Today, **State Senator Michelle Hinchey (SD-46)** issued the **following statement** after the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) announced that they have created the new role of Catskill Parks Coordinator, a position championed by Senator Hinchey through legislation ([S.6421](#)) she authored and secured the unanimous passage of in the 2021 session. McCrea Burnham, a former staffer from DEC's Division of Lands and Forests, will serve as New York's first Catskill Park Coordinator — a

central connector between all of the Park's stakeholders to ensure continued interaction to address natural resource and public access concerns throughout the Catskill ecosystem and develop community-based tourism strategies to promote the regional economy.

“As a Catskills Senator, I feel a great sense of duty and responsibility to protect our home, to deliver the level of investment and attention that these lands deserve, and to ensure that this irreplaceable resource will be preserved and accessible for generations to come,” **said Senator Michelle Hinchey**. “The DEC made a historic decision today to create the first-ever Catskill Park Coordinator in New York State — a position I was incredibly proud to advocate for in the 2021 session. The role of Catskill Park Coordinator is greatly needed to protect our natural resources, and we are so pleased to now have someone who will focus solely on issues pertaining to these lands and who will become that central connector, grounding communications and strategy efforts among all of the Park's critical stakeholders. I cannot thank the DEC enough for prioritizing the Catskills Park and creating this position, and I look forward to continuing to work with Commissioner Seggos, and now McCrea Burnham, to better protect the Catskills Region.”

A leading issue for Senator Hinchey during the 2021 State Budget process was to establish parity between the Catskills and the Adirondacks, two incredibly important natural landscapes in New York. Because of Hinchey's advocacy, the Catskill Park now features on the same stewardship funding line typically reserved for the Adirondack Park alongside a new stream of funding (\$100,000) designated for the Catskill Center and Catskill Mountainkeeper to hire, train, and deploy more Catskill Stewards who will help to improve the protection of the Park's natural resources and visitor management solutions in high-use hot spots across the Catskills.

The 705,500 acre Catskill Park and 287,500 acre Catskill Forest Preserve cover an area that is home to much of the New York City Watershed, overseen by DEP, as well as represented by two DEC Regions, three Department of Transportation Regions, three Regional Economic Development Councils, four counties, 26 towns, and dozens of nonprofit entities. The Catskill Park and its public lands bring in over 2.7 million people, thousands of jobs, and more than \$170 million annually to the Catskills region and its communities — important environmentally, culturally, and as an economic driver, especially for the communities located in Senator Hinchey’s district, which include all of Greene County and portions of Ulster County.

*Senator Michelle Hinchey represents the 46th Senate District, which includes Greene and Montgomery Counties and parts of Albany, Schenectady, and Ulster Counties. Senator Hinchey serves as Chair of the Agriculture Committee and sits on the Alcoholism and Substance Abuse, Commerce, Economic Development and Small Business, Cultural Affairs, Tourism, Parks and Recreation, Energy and Telecommunications, Environmental Conservation, and Local Government Committees.*

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