



Catskill Park Coalition  
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January 23, 2025

**Coalition Members**

Co-Chairs  
Catskill Center  
Catskill Mountainkeeper

Adirondack Mountain Club  
Catskill 3500 Club  
Catskill Association for Tourism

**Services**

Catskill Heritage Alliance  
Catskill Mountain Club  
Catskill Mountain Foundation  
Catskill Recreation Center  
Central Catskills Chamber of

**Commerce**

Central Catskills Revitalization

**Corporation**

Community Greenways Collaborative  
Delaware Highlands Conservancy  
Friends of the Upper Delaware River  
Hudson Valley Hikers  
Hunter Foundation  
Natural Resources Defense Council  
New York New Jersey Trail Conference  
Open Space Institute  
Parks and Trails New York  
Rip Van Winkle Hikers  
Riverkeeper  
Shandaken Art Studio Tour  
Theodore Gordon Flyfishers  
Trout Unlimited  
Woodchuck Lodge  
Woodstock Land Conservancy  
Zen Mountain Monastery

Dear Senate Finance Chair:

Thank you for your ongoing leadership in bringing critical resources to the Catskill Park to continue important projects and initiatives that protect natural resources, while improving outdoor recreation and assisting communities within the Park.

We look forward to your continued commitment to ensuring the conservation of the Catskill Park for future generations, all while encouraging economic development and supporting our communities.

Your commitment to this funding affirms tourism opportunities, natural resource protections, clean water, public health protections, climate resilience, recreational access, job creation, and quality of life for residents of and visitors to the Catskill Park.

We write to you today to respectfully request your **support of the Catskill Park in SFY 2025-26, per the priorities listed below.**

- **Public Safety and Catskill Park Management -- The NYSDEC must be adequately staffed, including new staff in the Division of Lands and Forests and annual Forest Ranger Academies.**
- **Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) -- Fund the Environmental Protection Fund at \$500 million. Within the EPF, maintain existing funding lines for the Catskills including: \$12 million Forest Preserve line; \$250,000 line for the Catskills Visitor Center; \$200,000 line for Catskill Science Collaborative; \$500,000 for the “Save the Hemlocks” initiative; and \$400,000 in dedicated annual Catskills funding for Smart Growth Grants.**
- **Supporting Local Economies -- Support Catskills communities by investing in projects with direct community benefits, improve cellular service, expand affordable housing in and around the Catskill Park, implement community benefits recommendations of CAG Final Report, implement Catskill Park Gateway Signage, support community trails, support Catskill Stewards Program, and implement VUMs for Kaaterskill Clove and the Formerly Trailless Peaks.**

Our organizations appreciate partnering with New York State, local governments, and other stakeholders to implement critical Catskill Park programs to conserve open space, steward our existing recreational resources, protect and improve water quality,



promote responsible forest stewardship, build community resilience, and create new trails and public access. Investments in the Catskill Park support important jobs for our region across a broad spectrum of industries, and provide drinking water protection for millions of New Yorkers.

### **Detail on Catskill Park Coalition Priorities for the SFY 2025-26:**

**Public Safety and Catskill Park Management** -- *Given the ongoing growth in the number of visitors, there is an increasing need for NYSDEC staff to properly address public safety and the Catskill Park's infrastructure and natural resources. As such, the Catskill Park Coalition calls for:*

- **Staffing critical positions at the NYSDEC's Division of Lands and Forests in Regions 3 and 4** to better manage the Catskill Park and its more than 1.7 million annual visitors; and
- **Continuing to run an annual Forest Ranger Academy to counteract retirements and attrition and increase overall Ranger staff** to provide a safe experience for all who visit the Catskill Park and the Adirondack Park.

**Environmental Protection Fund Priorities to Enhance and Protect the Catskills** -- *Critical funding for the Catskill Park is provided within the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF). The Environmental Protection Fund should be increased to \$500 million to adequately protect New York's environment and specifically for the responsible protection and management of natural and recreational resources in the Catskill Park. Within the EPF, the Catskill Park Coalition calls for the following:*

- **\$12 million Forest Preserve line** to support Catskill and Adirondack Parks in addressing increasing visitor use, natural resource protection, and trail and facility maintenance and construction;
- **\$250,000 line, directed to the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development for the Congressman Maurice D. Hinchey Catskills Visitor Center** for operations, staffing, and programming of the Visitor Center;
- **\$200,000 line, directed to the Cary Institute for Ecosystem Studies for the Catskill Science Collaborative**, which directs research on topics of importance in the Catskills;
- **\$500,000 line directed to Cornell University for the "Save the Hemlocks" initiative** to fight the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid with effective biocontrols;
- **At least \$400,000 for Smart Growth Grants** annually dedicated to help Catskill communities and nonprofits sustainably improve the Park; and
- Continued inclusion of funding for upgrades and improvements to the state-owned Belleayre Mountain Ski Center.

**Supporting Local Economies** -- *Supporting towns, villages, and hamlets within the Catskill Park by investing in projects with direct community benefits while addressing increasing*



visitor pressures is key to supporting local economies and protecting natural resources. Therefore, the Catskill Park Coalition calls for:

- **Improving cellular service across the Catskill Park** – The lack of service across large portions of the Park is a public safety concern and a competitive disadvantage for local communities and businesses that cannot be discovered by visitors;
- **Expanding availability of affordable housing** within and adjacent to the Catskill Park is critical to maintaining community viability and supporting the local workforce;
- **Implement “Benefits to Catskill Park Communities” recommendations of the Catskill Strategic Advisory Group’s Final Report;**
- **Implement Catskill Park Entryway Signage** where major roadways enter the Catskill Park to educate visitors to the area that they are entering the Catskill Park;
- **Supporting and Funding Community Trails, Rail Trails, and Accessibility projects** to provide visitors and residents of all abilities equitable access to the outdoors and provide communities with direct access to public lands and open spaces to support economic development;
- **Supporting Catskill Stewards Program** to ensure visitors to the Park are greeted and directed to both additional recreational resources and community resources with continued \$100,000 Aid to Localities funding split evenly between Catskill Mountainkeeper and Catskill Center; and
- **Implement Visitor Use Management Framework** for the Kaaterskill Clove area and the Formerly Trailless Peaks. The successful implementation of the VUM in both areas is imperative to improve conditions and protect natural resources.

In addition to EPF funding, the Catskill Park Coalition looks forward to working with you on the implementation of the Environmental Bond Act in the Catskill Park and the greater Catskills region. This funding will provide additional resources to construct new and maintain existing Park and community infrastructure.

However, the EPF funding identified above is **critical to the ongoing management of the Catskill Park and must be maintained within the EPF.**

Thank you for your leadership on Catskill Park funding, and your understanding of the important economic, public health, and natural resource benefits of environmental investments in the Catskill Park for our communities, and for all New Yorkers. We look forward to continuing our work with you and your administration to celebrate continued stewardship of the Catskill Park.

Sincerely yours,



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff P. Senterman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeffrey Senterman  
Executive Director, Catskill Center

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ramsay Adams", written in a cursive style.

Ramsay Adams  
Executive Director, Catskill Mountainkeeper