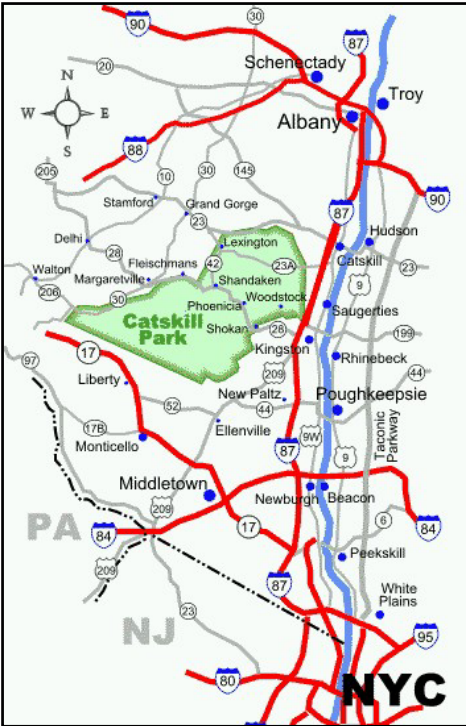


Catskill Park



The Catskill Park is a mountainous region of public and private lands in Ulster, Green, Delaware and Sullivan Counties. 98 peaks over 3,000 feet form an impressive skyline. Its blend of public and private lands is typical of large parks in Europe, where people and unique lands have coexisted for centuries. This special and often remote mountain landscape was only occasionally used by native Americans. Later it was settled and heavily exploited by the Dutch, English, Irish and Germans. Its rich history includes logging, blue stone quarrying, leather tanning, wintergreen and blueberry harvesting, trapping, fishing, mountain house tourism, railroads, and even World War II pilot training. Over 60% of the lands in the Catskill Park are privately owned, the home of about 50,000 year round residents; the rest is publicly-owned " forest preserved. " The people of New York State and the Catskill region are very fortunate to have benefited from over a century of public land acquisition by the State government. Our open space resources and outdoor recreation opportunities are greatly enhanced by the thousands of acres which have been protected and are open to the public.

State public lands fall into several categories and are managed by the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation and the NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in a variety of ways. State land designations include State Parks, State Forest Preserve, Wildlife Management Areas, Reforestation Areas, Unique Areas, Special Use Areas, Public Fishing Access locations, and State Historic Areas. This diversity of management categories allows the State to provide for a variety of open space values, including public recreation, wilderness preservation, historic preservation, and long term maintenance of wildlife habitat and natural resources.



In 1885 a law was passed by the NY State Congress which established the Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserve. From the beginning this land was protected by the State constitution as 'Forever Wild' land, never to be subjected to development or extraction of natural resources. In 1904 the Catskill Park was designated, which established a boundary, or 'blue line' around the Forest Preserve, and private land as well. Over the years the Forest Preserve and the Catskill Park grew, with the Catskill Park now comprising approximately 700,000 acres, about half of which is public Forest Preserve.

The Catskill and Adirondack Parks are nationally unique because they are a checkerboard of public and private land; a grand experiment in how nature, even wilderness, and human society can coexist in a landscape.

Catskill Park



Hiking opportunities abound in the Catskill Park. There are approximately 300 miles of marked, maintained hiking trails on public Forest Preserve land. Stewardship and development of these trails is shared by the New York State Forest Rangers and local chapters of hiking clubs such as the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference and the Adirondack Mountain Club. There are 35 Catskill peaks boasting heights greater than 3500ft elevation, and people who hike to the summits of each of these peaks earn membership in the Catskill 3500 Club.

Five Catskill peaks, Hunter, Overlook, Tremper, Balsam Lake, and Red Hill, have fire towers on their summits; remnants of an era gone by. The Catskill Fire Tower Restoration Project restored these towers, making them safe so that the excellent views and educational aspects of the towers can now be enjoyed by the public.



Geology

The gray sandstone of the area formed some 360-400 million years ago when the Catskill region was a shallow sea filling up with clay and silt washing off the high mountains to the east. The sandstone have now been up lifted high above sea level, but the layers formed in a shallow sea are still visible. Streams have eroded valleys into this high plateau, forming the Catskill Mountains. Continental and valley glaciers have also left their mark, repeatedly covering the Catskills from two million to 10,000 years ago.