

Chapter 8 - Comments and Responses

Introduction

This section contains the responses to the comments received by OPRHP/PIPC on the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) for Minnewaska State Park Preserve. The Draft Master Plan/DEIS was issued September 30, 2009. A Public Hearing was held October 22, 2009 in the Lecture Center, Room 100 on the SUNY campus in New Paltz, New York. The comment period ended on November 13, 2009.

During the public hearing, 47 people spoke, out of approximately 80 attendees, and their comments were recorded. During the comment period for the Draft Master Plan/DEIS, the agency received almost 300 written comment letters and email comments. A list of persons providing comments is included at the end of this chapter.

The types of comments received included document editing suggestions, requests for clarification of information presented in the document, comments related to specific aspects of the plan and comments in support of the plan and specific aspects of the plan. All comments were reviewed, summarized and organized by categories. Responses to these comments are found in this chapter and were considered in revisions made to this Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS).

OPRHP/PIPC received many comments in support of or in opposition to the plan or parts of the plan. This chapter of the plan focuses on substantive comments and OPRHP/PIPC's responses to those comments. Comments of basic support or opposition are not summarized and/or listed in this chapter. OPRHP/PIPC appreciate the time, effort and interest of all those individuals or organizations that provided comment on the draft plan and draft environmental impact statement and their participation in the public hearing.

Response to Comments

This section is organized by category. Following each category heading, there is a summary of the comments received. Following each summarized comment are OPRHP/PIPC's responses.

Plan and Process

Comment: Land Acquisition

The master plan should have a comprehensive description for each major land acquisition identifying acreage, date of purchase, purchase price and any conservation easements.

Response:

This is not considered part of the master plan and will not be included.

Comment: Legislation

Article 20 and Article 9 should be included in full as appendices to the plan.

Response:

Copies of both laws, Article 20 (New York State Park Preserve System) and Article 9 (Palisades Interstate Park Commission), have been added to the appendices.

Comment: User Demographics

The plan and its alternatives failed to take into account the changes in the demographics of users and resource management that has happened in the last few decades.

Response:

The master planning process included a public information meeting and 30-day comment and review period providing a broad based look at what current users would like to see. Additionally, survey data collected in 2007 was used in the planning process. Resource management strategies are continuously evolving within OPRHP/PIPC as information is collected. Resource management strategies are implemented as time, funding and policy allow.

Comment: Stream Name Corrections

References in the plan that the Palmaghatt Kill flows in to the Wallkill should be corrected. The Palmaghatt flows into the Shawangunk Kill.

Response:

This has been corrected in the text of the plan.

Implementation

Comment: Climbing Management Plan

The 2010 update of the climbing management plan for Peter's Kill should be identified as a Priority 1 item in the implementation table.

Response:

While the 2010 update of the climbing management plan for the Peter's Kill is important, other priorities rank higher within the scope of planning for the entire Preserve. The implementation table provides general direction and guidance as stated in the introduction. Dependent upon time and the availability of labor, the update may take place as a Priority 1 item.

Comment: Identify Priorities

Implementation priorities should be outlined more specifically within the plan.

Response:

The implementation of the master plan is directly related to funding and other OPRHP/PIPC priorities. The implementation priorities are outlined as such to provide both guidance and flexibility.

Comment: Funding

Where is the money for the park? How is this plan going to be implemented?

Response:

The master plan has both short term and long term priorities which will be implemented as studies are completed and funding becomes available.

Comment: Carriage Road Restoration

Make the restoration of the carriage road network a top priority within the master plan.

Response:

The carriage road network offers multiple functions within the Preserve including opportunity for various recreational activities, protection of sensitive resources, search and rescue operations, maintenance, and forest fire management. The availability of adequate funding for labor, materials, and equipment determines the efficiency of carriage road restoration. The restoration and annual maintenance of the historic carriage road network within the Preserve will continue to be a very high priority.

Development

Comment: Lake Minnewaska Parking

- The new parking lots at the top of the hill should not be built as they impact a fragile environment.
- Paving around Lake Minnewaska will give the visual impression of a park, rather than a preserve.
- The existing parking lot should be moved further away from Lake Minnewaska.

Response:

The Master Plan team acknowledges the Preserve's unique qualities and sensitive natural habitats in the analysis of varying alternatives. It was determined that the preferred alternative will best represent the balancing of resource protection and patron use.

In terms of providing parking opportunities, it was deemed essential that proposed parking facilities utilize previously disturbed areas to the maximum degree possible, as well as placing them within relatively close proximity to the associated activity. It is important that the design of these lots be sensitive to the "perceived scale" within the natural environment. Traditional open space parking lot design has been replaced with a singular parking bay design that includes treed and vegetated islands. This design provides screening of parked cars from activity areas and integrates parking areas with the natural landscape.

While unpaved surfaces may be a preferred design feature in perpetuating the natural character of the Preserve, it was determined, that maintenance needs and costs are prohibitive in areas of heavy vehicular use. Therefore, the planning team has determined that all primary parking areas and associated roadways will be paved in asphalt in an attempt to reduce the expenditure of time and materials required for maintenance.

The existing parking lot up on the top of the hill overlooking Lake Minnewaska will be removed and restored to a natural permeable surface and provide passive picnicking opportunities. The proposed new parking areas are further away from Lake Minnewaska.

Comment: Peter's Kill Parking

The Peter's Kill parking lot should be expanded by more than 20 spaces.

Response:

The 1993 Master Plan contained studies regarding the carrying capacity of the Preserve and a recommendation for an appropriate number of parking spaces. The planning team determined that the parking levels proposed in the 1993 plan are still valid and recommended that this plan follow those same guidelines. Overall parking is not being expanded within the Preserve; rather parking areas that were previously designated to a particular area were reassigned to areas that demonstrate a need for additional parking spaces. With this plan, we were able to shift 20 spaces originally assigned to the Jenny Lane area in the 1993 plan over to the Peter's Kill area, in anticipation of increased usage in this area given expanded rock climbing opportunities

Comment: Awosting Falls Parking

Allow handicapped parking at the Awosting Falls.

Response:

ADA access to the Awosting Falls was discussed during the master planning process. Alternatives considered included a parking location off Highway 44/55 and a trail along an old access road. After assessing sight line distances along the curve of the highway and vehicular speeds, it was determined that providing any vehicular access or parking in that area would create a safety risk for both patrons and highway traffic. In special circumstances, ADA access to the Awosting Falls should be coordinated with the park manager. There is an existing designated accessible parking area on the east shoulder of the main entrance road, approximately 500 feet from the Awosting Falls trailhead, which has space for two vehicles. Improved accessible parking is also included in the design improvements to the park preserve entrance.

Comment: Satellite Parking Areas

The plan proposes to increase parking at Fordmore Road in the Mine Hollow area (now called the Mine Hole area) and along Berme Road. The total increase in parking is not enough. The Fordmore Road location would be an ideal location to provide additional parking to what you have proposed.

Response:

The demand for the area will continue to be evaluated and should proposed parking prove to be insufficient, additional expansion may be warranted.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Parking

The Awosting parking lot should not be paved, and should be made of gravel or shale. The striping of parking spaces can be made with the gravel or shale.

Response:

See response above to "Lake Minnewaska Parking" regarding paved vs. unpaved surfaces.

Comment: Parking Capacity

The proposed parking capacity increase of about 50% including a 70% increase around Lake Minnewaska will impact the visitor experience and overextend the carrying capacity.

Response:

See response above to "Peter's Kill Parking" regarding Preserve parking and carrying capacity.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trailhead Parking

The Awosting Reserve trailhead parking area is too small and will encourage people to park on the side of the road when it is full.

Response:

The Awosting Reserve Trailhead parking will be designed to allow for 20 vehicles. Three or four spaces will be positioned and sized to accommodate horse trailers. Trail users have additional access to the Awosting Reserve from within the Preserve. Unauthorized parking alongside adjacent town roads is subject to local law enforcement policy.

Comment: Jenny Lane Parking:

The old Jenny Lane parking lot should be opened back up to hikers. The current location is inadequate and near fast moving, noisy traffic. Jenny Lane parking should be open from sunrise on, year round.

Response:

The Master Plan team readily acknowledges the need for hiker parking availability at or near the Jenny lane area, and has determined that this area should be expanded to a ten-space parking area for hikers. The designated parking area will remain at its current location.

Comment: Sanitary Facilities

Do not provide flush toilets in the park. Consider installing more composting toilets.

Response:

As part of OPRHP/PIPC's on-going efforts to implement sustainable practices, two self composting toilets have been recently installed (during the Winter/Spring of 2009); one being located at the Awosting parking lot, and the other placed at the Lake Minnewaska beach area.

In response to significant public demand, as well as operational issues involving composting toilets, conventional sanitary facilities with running water will be installed within the primary activity area(s) on top of the hill (inside the proposed Visitor Center and also within a small comfort station adjacent to the future picnic grove) where nearby Preserve utilities (water, electric, etc.) allow their installation to be sensitively integrated within the landscape.

Comment: Building Standards

OPRHP should observe LEEDS certified green building standards in all construction.

Response:

OPRHP, as a state agency, has taken on the challenge of reducing its impact upon the environment, while also striving toward becoming more carbon neutral via adoption of greater sustainability practices in park development, operations, and maintenance. It is anticipated that green standards involving building and site development will be thoroughly integrated within the design processes of any/all facilities proposed within the Preserve.

Comment: Buildings

The residential structure near the main parking lot should be removed.

Response:

The existing two story residential structure on top of the ridge near Lake Minnewaska remains under private ownership, according to a 99-year leasehold established between the owner and OPRHP during the initial purchase of the Preserve.

Preserve management and associated entities shall review and develop determinations regarding this structure upon expiration of this agreement.

Comment: Phillips House Building

The former Phillips house should only be used as a visitor center in the interim, if at all. A new visitor center farther away from the lake should be constructed and the Phillips house removed.

Response:

OPRHP has a strong commitment towards sustainable practices. The conversion of the former Phillips house into a visitor center is one such practice. The size of the structures has been assessed and determined to meet the needed space requirements of a visitor center. The location, within a high use area, is another reason the site is well suited for a visitor center. The protection of the lake will remain a very high priority with the reuse of this structure.

Comment: Priority of Campground Development

- The construction of the Shawangunk Gateway Campground should be a priority 1 objective. The current plan calls only for completion of design in the first 5 – 10 years.
- The Shawangunk Gateway Campground construction should be moved to priority 1 implementation because partial funding is currently available.

Response:

The Samuel F. Pryor III Shawangunk Gateway Campground proposal has recently been adjusted to become a priority 1 project, and at this time has contract documents being prepared for construction. Construction is anticipated to begin sometime during the next two-year period. At that time it is anticipated that funding will be secured for the project.

Comment: Do Not Develop a Campground

- The Shawangunk Gateway Campground should not be constructed as it will take away from local camping business and bring more people to the preserve.
- The construction of the campground will take money away from local community.

Response:

The Samuel F. Pryor III Shawangunk Gateway Campground has been designed to provide only 50 total campsites; 26 of which will be drive-in sites, and 24 designed as walk-in only sites. The primitive nature of the campsite program dictates that all sites are restricted to tent camping only, with very simple and basic camp amenities provided. Given its primitive nature, combined with its close proximity to Mohonk lands, it is envisioned that a fair amount of the campground's users will be rock climbers.

Consequently, many nearby businesses should seek to gain rather than lose business from these overnight campers since many will seek food and supplies during their stay in the area.

It is anticipated that after this campground has been constructed and opened, the nearby DEC campground will be closed. It is expected that the net impact upon camping opportunities in the region will be negligible.

Comment: Campground Management

- The campground will create a need for a different level of management and be costly to provide. The campground should be reconsidered or assigned to the private sector.
- The American Alpine Club should be identified as one of the groups, which will be co-managing the Shawangunk Gateway Campground with the Mohonk Preserve.

Response:

During 2006, OPRHP (via PIPC), The Mohonk Preserve, and The American Alpine Club signed a three party Cooperative Agreement regarding the campground proposal, agreeing together to plan, design, develop, and manage this newly proposed facility. As PIPC currently remains the primary entity responsible in the design and construction of the campground, it is anticipated that The Mohonk Preserve and The American Alpine Club will operate and run the facility once construction has been completed.

Comment: Campground Location

The east side of the ridge is not a good location for a campground as it is being quickly developed. The user experience will be impacted as the ridge is developed.

Response:

Throughout the past decade, the site selected for the campground was identified and endorsed by a group consisting of OPRHP/PIPC, The Mohonk Preserve, and The American Alpine Club. Its function is to provide a very basic, primitive camping experience that intends to complement and further enhance the environmental experience. The campground is designed to lie lightly upon the landscape of this primarily undeveloped and forested region.

With only 50 primitive campsites sensitively positioned within this 45-acre site, the significantly treed vegetative buffer encompassing and surrounding the site will remain entirely untouched. This preserved vegetative buffer will only further enhance the seclusion and passive nature of the camping experience within this campground.

Comment: Utilities/Infrastructure Development

Please describe OPRHP's authority to license or permit utility easements on public parkland under Section 13.06 of Parks Law and include a policy statement that recognizes that while this authority may suffice for siting small distribution lines in the park, applications for siting larger utility facilities such as high voltage or gas lines will trigger alienation of parkland procedures. This policy would mirror the advice that OPRHP provides on its webpage.

Response

New York Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (PRHPL) § 13.06 - *Consents to public utilities; licenses and easements* states:

“Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no railroad, bus line, telephone or telegraph company, gas, power or light company, pipe line company or other public utility shall have the right to pass over, through or under any property acquired by

the office or other state agency for park, recreational or historic preservation purposes, except by written consent, in the form of a license or easement, granted by the commissioner, or such state agency, and then only under such regulations and restrictions as the commissioner or such state agency shall deem proper. The commissioner or other state agency shall have the right to grant to any person or the federal government a license or an easement for any public purpose or to construct or maintain sewers, water, petroleum products, gas lines and electric transmission facilities within, under or across such property, upon such terms and conditions and under such regulations and restrictions as the commissioner or such state agency shall deem just and proper.”

This section of the PRHPL gives the Commissioner the discretion, but not obligation, to grant a public utility an easement across parkland under the jurisdiction of OPRHP. Applications for larger facilities such as electric transmission or gas lines would also undergo an in-depth review pursuant to Article VII of the Public Service Law.

The principles of parkland alienation apply to municipally owned parkland. The PRHPL and other New York State Laws, such as the Public Lands Law, apply to lands under the jurisdiction of OPRHP.

Open Space/Natural Resource Preservation

Comment: Park Size

How do you calculate the number of acres stated in the master plan as the size of the park?

Response:

Within the past fifteen years, the Preserve has expanded by 9,448.35 acres, nearly doubling its size. GIS (Geographic Information System) estimates the acreage of Minnewaska is 21,131.52 acres. This acreage is an estimate based upon the projection of the original size of the Preserve (prior to 1995) and the tax parcel data for additions from 1995 to the present. The current acreage figure includes over 3,000 acres of land managed by The Nature Conservancy

Comment: Open Space Acquisition

Is there an acquisition plan for Minnewaska? Sources of funding should be briefly discussed for this plan and the continuation of third party assistance with acquisitions.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC are dedicated to protecting the resources within the Preserve and are open to acquiring land from willing sellers to buffer those resources as identified in the New York State Open Space Conservation Plan..

Comment: Land Ownership

Information about park ownership in the master plan text, maps and kiosk near the main lot is incorrect or missing. PIPC owns the preserve. No land in the preserve is owned by OPRHP. OPRHP does not own land anywhere in the state. The State of New York owns the land except where PIPC owns the land. Maps and text should reflect this. The plan should further identify the ownership and management agreements and how they came about.

Response:

OPRHP did acquire the new Preserve lands and, as stipulated in the law, PIPC is the titled owner of the lands in OPRHP's Region 8 – Palisades. These lands are managed and administered jointly by OPRHP/PIPC. Maps and text within the master plan now reflect PIPC ownership.

Designations

Comment: Preserve Designation

Minnewaska should have the entire park designated as a preserve.

Response:

All land within Minnewaska State Park Preserve will be designated as preserve.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Designation

The Awosting Reserve property should not be included as part of the preserve designation.

Response:

The Awosting Reserve area will be included within the preserve designation. The land provides habitat for wildlife, creates a buffer to sensitive species, and will only include passive trail activities.

Comment: Scenic Byway Designation

The section of highway 44/55 that goes through Minnewaska is designated as a NYS Scenic Byway and the scenic resources along the highway should be considered when reconfiguring the entrance and parking lot.

Response:

It is recognized that 44/55 is part of the regional scenic byway. Preserve management will continue to support the scenic byway efforts. The design standards described in the master plan are designed to compliment the environment and will ultimately enhance the scenic byway. Additional reference to the scenic byway has been placed in the text of the master plan (Chapter 3 – Environmental Setting.)

Preserve Character

Comment: Use of the Preserve

Much of the park should remain off limits to all visitors, except scientists and park employees. Stick to passive and more sustainable activities within the preserve. Remember that it is a preserve. Minnewaska should balance recreation and preservation.

Response:

Patrons will continue to have access to the Preserve. OPRHP rules and regulations state that all users must stay on established paths, trails and roadways. The access goal identified in Chapter 4, Vision and Goals, states the following:

“Provide appropriate access to the Preserve and its natural, recreational and cultural resources in a manner that ensures the safety and security of Preserve patrons and its resources.”

Comment: Density of Users and User Experience

The smaller parking lots proposed in the more remote areas will bring more people to those areas impacting those users who enjoy the remoteness and low density of people. These parking lots should not be constructed.

Response:

The smaller parking lots are existing, informal access points which will be formalized as entrance points around the perimeter of the Park Preserve. The capacity of these parking areas will limit the amount of use at any one parking area and disperse visitor use throughout the Park Preserve, thereby minimizing impact to specific areas. Formalizing entrance points will provide the opportunity to create improved trail head signage, which will enhance visitor orientation, notification of rules and regulations and appropriate user ethics.

Comment: Picnic Area is not consistent with a Preserve

The increased picnic area size will give a stronger impression of a “park” and is not consistent in maintaining the uninhabited nature of the preserve.

Response:

The Wildmere picnic area plan is consistent with the proposal of the 1993 plan; removes the existing parking area, visible from vistas around Lake Minnewaska; and restores this area to a more natural state. The picnic areas will not have permanent fixed grills and dispersing the existing picnic area sites over a larger area will minimize the visual impact to the overall area. Picnicking is a designated activity that is permitted; appropriately designed areas need to be created for this user group.

Comment: Leave Preserve in its Natural State

Any new development such as benches or summerhouses will take away from the uninhabited nature of the preserve. The preserve needs to be left in its natural state with no new man-made structures.

Response:

The summerhouses are part of the cultural history of the Preserve. The master plan team was extremely conscious of preserving the natural beauty of the Preserve, suggesting the addition of man-made structures only in the outer reaches of the Preserve, if or when they might aid in defining a natural experience opportunity. A wooden bench or a wooden replicated summerhouse, strategically positioned at historically known vista points, will afford today’s viewers with scenic vistas of the natural resources of the Preserve. In all instances, the built element will be designed to blend in harmoniously with the surrounding site without subtracting from the natural experience of the location.

Comment: Eliminate Development from Preserve

OPRHP should get rid of man’s footprint at Minnewaska and return the landscape back to its natural condition as much as possible.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC provide a balance of both resource protection and passive activities within the Preserve. Minimal development is provided for patrons for convenience and enjoyment, resource

protection and education. Ninety-six percent of the Preserve land is undeveloped forest land and is in its natural condition.

Comment: Development will Impact the Preserve

I do not believe that the park should have newly constructed trails, roads, parking lot or other paved areas because this will impact the Preserve.

Response:

In terms of Minnewaska's proposed development, this Master Plan remains very consistent with the overall design objectives of the 1993 plan, which recommended that proposed development remain at extremely basic levels. This Master Plan in many ways suggests a less disturbed footprint, which is in keeping with OPRHP/PIPC's agenda for sustainable development. Utilizing and retrofitting existing structures for major uses, rather than removing them and building new structures as the previous plan had proposed, meets OPRHP/PIPC's new sustainability goals.

An overriding emphasis of this plan is to repair and improve existing facilities and natural surrounds within the Preserve, with new (or mostly relocated) facilities proposed where they will enhance or preserve the natural experience. A prime example of this theme is the relocation of the current parking lot that exists on the bluff of Lake Minnewaska, which currently tarnishes the viewer's natural experience as they traverse the top of the cliffs in this area.

This plan recommends that the parking lot be relocated to a lower elevation away from the lake's edge, with treed islands and berms to screen its appearance within the natural landscape. Once installed, the existing lot on the bluff will be excavated and completely removed, and this area will be replanted and restored to a natural landscape for all users to enjoy.

This proposal is but one example of how the Master Plan envisions the Preserve will be improved and enhanced, with this same theme being followed throughout all other developmental activities proposed under this plan.

Comment: Too Many Climbers Change the Experience

If climbing were allowed throughout the Preserve there would be a sense that it had been overrun and taken over by climbers, and many of those seeking a simpler, contemplative experience would end up being turned away at the door. The climbing opportunities as stated in the master plan are enough.

Response:

A climbing management plan will be developed for the Preserve. The experience of the other types of users will be considered in this planning process.

Environmental Impacts

Comment: Impacts to Air Quality

If you increase parking and add camping, you will increase traffic on the ridge. Exhaust coming from cars is polluting the farms on either side of the road to the park.

Response:

Parking quantities are within the carrying capacity of the Preserve and consistent with the 1993 master plan totals. The modification and expansion of the existing parking areas will generally

accommodate visitors that are currently being turned away when parking capacities are reached on busy days. The camping area is not expected to cause increased traffic to the area.

A recommendation in the Minnewaska State Park Preserve Trails Plan (Appendix B of the Master Plan) is to explore the opportunity with Ulster County Area Transit to develop a bus stop at the main entrance along Route 44/55 to provide public transport between New Paltz and the Preserve, thereby reducing the number of vehicles using this access route.

Comment: Impacts to Water Quality in the Lakes

- The plan does not take into account the increased biodiversity in the lakes as the acidity decreases. It has been quite wonderful to watch the proliferation of frogs and salamanders.
- The draft master plan does not mention specific water quality issues and impacts, such as pH levels of the sky lakes and the resulting affect on wildlife species. We feel this is an important element in Preserve wilderness quality and should be incorporated into this plan.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC and the ridge partners have been monitoring the water quality of the Preserve lakes for many years and share the concern over the rising pH level of the lakes. The lakes and streams are very important elements of the Preserve's natural character and the agency will continue to support monitoring and research on water quality issues. OPRHP/PIPC will work with the SRBP, in particular the Mohonk Preserve, to identify impacts to water quality and possible solutions. While biodiversity is important, the protection of the unique lake habitat found within Lake Minnewaska and Lake Awosting is important and should be protected. Additional information has been added about this subject to Chapter 7-Environmental Impacts and Mitigation.

Comment: Water Quality and Wastewater Treatment

If an above-ground septic system is constructed it will fail as two others have done in the past. The supposed solution of an off site added 10K holding tank has also failed, taking and leaching ground water since its installation even after major repairs.

Additionally, the bathing beach area restroom unit (Clivus systems) sits above a fault which conducts lake water leaking westerly to the spring below flowing into the Peterskill near the parking lot. Consideration should be given to the installation of a monitoring device.

The unique sub-surface life in the lake must remain in your attention. The impact of the presence of the non-native golden shiner on Lake Minnewaska and the conservation of the salamander population in the same lake need to be addressed. One would hope you would encourage reporting of sightings from your divers at least for verification by qualified personnel of this alarming observation.

Recommendations were provided regarding alternative designs for wastewater treatment as well as contact persons who can assist in such designs.

The state is encouraged to continue stewardship of the area including the five lakes within the Park by monitoring and recording data concerning water quality.

Response:

OPRHP is committed to protecting Lake Minnewaska's water quality and its unique habitat. Proposed wastewater treatment designs will meet all applicable regulations and take into account issues associated with previous treatment systems.

The wastewater generated is well within the capacity of the existing Clivus system. Moreover, the design and operation of the Clivus system meets all applicable standards. Therefore, at this time, a monitoring device is not planned for installation on the Lake Minnewaska beach area restroom.

Water quality of all the lakes in the Preserve is of particular concern to the OPRHP. The agency has conducted limnological monitoring of the lakes and is working with Mohonk scientists and DEC staff regarding the non- native shiner species recently observed in Lake Minnewaska. Observations by divers under permit by the agency are welcome and provisions are provided for their recording. The OPRHP will however provide additional outreach to divers for information on observations made on natural resources within the lakes.

Comment: Recreation Expansion

All expansions of recreational access should be tied to resource-based impact assessment/monitoring protocols.

Response:

Recreational access is limited to passive activities compatible with the vision and goals of the Preserve. Recreational activities will be assessed and monitored for impacts.

Comment: Recreation Impacts

There should be a table in the Environmental Impacts section with all the recreation types allowed or proposed and their environmental impacts, similar to tables in the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership Guidelines.

Response:

The master plan proposed only expanding existing recreational uses; no new uses are being added. Impacts of expanded recreational use are addressed in the impacts chapter. OPRHP will continue to work with “Ridge Partners” on addressing potential impacts of recreation activities on the significant natural resources of the Shawangunk Ridge.

Comment: Forest Health

The proposed Master Plan does not address the significant environmental impact of increased tourism. Most urgently, the dwarf and standard pines are dying at an alarming rate. The pines are sick and dying. No one at the DEC or Parks Department, Nature Conservancy, etc., has addressed this situation! Unless the DEC and Parks Department invest time and funding to determine the cause of the death of the pines (pine beetle? other causes?), the infestation will continue, increasing as well the chance of out-of-control forest fires (as have devastated the area in recent years).

Response:

The plan was carefully developed with the utmost attention towards minimizing environmental impacts and received the input of biologists, ecologists, planners, and engineers towards meeting this goal. The Design Standards incorporated into the plan (Appendix D) will provide direction for environmentally sensitive design and construction of new and renovated facilities.

Forest trees are susceptible to a range of native and invasive insect pests and pathogens. Over the past several years, an insect outbreak has caused significant dieback of Pitch Pines in Minnewaska State Park and adjacent lands. Working with entomologists from Cornell University, Nature Conservancy staff have identified the primary culprit to be the Pine Needleminer (*Exoteleia pinifoliella*), a native species that uses Pitch Pine as a host. Since native forest pest outbreaks are

often cyclical, the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership is tracking the outbreak and will explore control options if it does not subside on its own.

Comment: Fragmentation

The proposed carriage road from the Awosting parking lot to the Awosting Falls fragments habitat and should be moved beside the roadway. A guardrail should be placed between the road and the carriage road.

Response:

All road maintenance and construction activities will follow the Design Standards (Appendix D) to minimize adverse impacts to wildlife.

Comment: Construction Impacts on Wildlife

The Preserve needs to consider setting “ecological traps” during construction to keep wildlife away from freshly disturbed soil or gravel piles where they may lay eggs.

Response:

All construction activities will follow the Design Standards (Appendix D) to minimize adverse impacts to wildlife. The use of soil and gravel piles by reptiles for egg laying is largely restricted to spring and early summer and will be mitigated by reducing the number of potentially attractive piles during those times.

Comment: Wildlife

A survey of the shale pits should be conducted at the right time of year to determine if they are basking sites for snakes and skinks. Reactivating the shale pits removes this essential habitat and is an environmental impact.

Response:

Surveys will be undertaken as part of any decision to reopen the inactive shale pits. The agency will also consult with DEC and take habitat, breeding season and overwintering issues into consideration. Mining is regulated by DEC when more than 750 tons would be mined annually. The decision to reopen shale pits will have supplemental environmental review. These shale pits were used to construct the original historic carriage road network.

Comment: Vernal Pools and Wetlands

The plan should make buffer recommendations for around vernal pools and wetlands. It should be noted in the plan that pool-breeding amphibians migrate long distances from their breeding pools and forage and hibernate in the surrounding forest during the non-breeding season.

Response:

It is not anticipated that the plan will have adverse environmental impacts on intermittent woodland pools, wetlands, or associated wildlife populations such as pool-breeding amphibians. Proposed new development and restoration has been sited to minimize impacts to these and other sensitive environmental resources. The carriage road system is currently undergoing a thorough conditions assessment and analysis, and improvements will follow design standards aimed at avoiding adverse impacts. The Trail plan will undergo a similar assessment and design process.

Comment: Cumulative Impacts

The cumulative impact of all environmental impacts needs serious consideration in the plan, especially around Lake Minnewaska.

Response:

The master plan does take into consideration the cumulative impacts of the plan recommendations on the Preserve's resources. For the Lake Minnewaska area in particular, the master plan proposes a similar, but smaller, scale of development than what was proposed in the 1993 master plan. The 1993 plan was also subject to a thorough EIS review process.

Comment: Recreation Impacts on Ecosystems

The plan should be reviewed by several ecologists to provide more detail on how impacts to the ecosystems will be balanced with recreation.

Response:

The plan has received input from several biologists including OPRHP's regional biologists on staff and partners in the SRBP. In addition, OPRHP/PIPC received input from the NY Natural Heritage Program ecologist and botanist working directly with OPRHP throughout the development of the plan.

Comment: Ecological Community Management

Table 9 Comparison of the Status Quo and the Preferred Alternative Summary Topic in Chapter 5 should include developing and implementing ecological management plans for the largest and most threatened significant ecological communities in the Preserve.

Response:

The development of management plans for significant ecological communities is something that would be very worthwhile. OPRHP/PIPC is committed to working with partners within the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership on developing such plans on a ridge-wide basis.

Comment: Recreation Spreads Invasive Species

Recreation encourages the spread of invasive species and should be limited within the Preserve.

Response:

Recreation opportunities at the Preserve are limited to trails, carriage roads, beaches and climbing areas. These areas are continually monitored for the presence/absence of invasive species as described in the Minnewaska State Park Preserve Invasive Species Management Plan.

Comment: Climbing Introduces Invasive Species

Evidence suggests that climbers specifically are introducing Snakeroot to the crag zones at Peter's Kill. The park should conduct a professional in-depth cliff side invasive species survey of this area and others.

Response:

Recreation opportunities at the Preserve are limited to trails, carriage roads, beaches and climbing areas. These areas are continually monitored for the presence/absence of invasive species as

described in the Minnewaska State Park Preserve Invasive Species Management Plan. The presence of the native White Snakeroot (*Eupatorium rugosum*) is expanding but believed to be attributed mostly to this species not being preferred by deer. Over and under cliff surveys are regularly conducted in all climbing areas and cliffs to monitor and detect invasive species.

Comment: Methods of Control

The Preserve should employ DEC's use of sheep and goats to control invasive species and problem flora

Response:

The Minnewaska State Park Preserve Invasive Species Management Plan is an integrated and adaptive plan that calls for the use of all allowable and feasible control methods. Cultural controls, in the form of grazing, is included in these methods and will be employed in the future once potential species and plots are delineated and the efficacy impacts as a result are fully studied.

Comment: Natural Resources

- The Preserve needs to employ systematic, repeated controlled burns to facilitate field and understory. Burn areas should then be protected from deer over-browsing and flora proliferation with enclosures.
- Before any recreation is expanded, the park has the responsibility to manage for deer over-browsing, fire suppression, invasive species and flora proliferation to protect the Preserve's ecology.
- Minnewaska needs to reduce the white tail herd to an ecologically sustainable number.

Response:

The Preserve is currently working with the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership (SRBP) to improve deer management, fire management and invasive species management across the Shawangunk Ridge. These three management issues have been recognized as the top threats to biodiversity. Protection of the Preserve's ecology is very important and will continue to be a primary focus.

Comment: Noise Pollution

OPRHP should strongly express its concerns to the FAA and Stewart Airport management concerning the impacts of commercial air traffic over preserve land.

Response:

This is a federally regulated activity outside the jurisdiction of OPRHP/PIPC. Current noise levels at the Preserve are not sufficient to trigger a federal action. The Federal Interagency Committee on Aviation Noise (FICAN) has determined that once the noise level reaches 65 decibels it creates an annoyance subject to regulation. OPRHP/PIPC will continue to monitor changes in flight patterns that would trigger formal reviews by the appropriate federal agencies.

Comment: Deer Management

- Implementation of deer management strategies should begin by opening up land adjacent to Sam's Point to hunting.

- The park should employ predator surrogates – human volunteers or border collies to mimic predation pressure.
- Minnewaska ought to be shut down for recreation entirely until successful measures to control problem flora and facilitate understory regeneration above the deer browse-line are implemented. A cycle of rotating closures, allowing recreationists to access less disturbed habitat while targeted areas are recovering, remains a workable alternative.
- Areas of the park need to be fenced off to limit the impacts on the baby trees from the deer so that the forest can replenish itself instead of dying off. The deer population needs to be controlled either by predators or by contraception.

Response:

Deer management has been identified as one of the top three threats to preservation of biodiversity throughout the Shawangunk ridge. Currently, the Preserve is working with the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership to develop a deer management strategy. We expect to open lands but the master plan is not specific in defining deer management in order to allow flexibility to address impact related needs as they evolve.

Comment: Trails Introduce Invasive Species

Do not create any new trails as they create corridors for the intrusion of invasive plants and pest species. They also define edge habitats, which reduce deep woods habitat for already stressed migrant birds such as the wood thrush.

Response:

Recreation opportunities at the Preserve are limited to trails, carriage roads, beaches and climbing areas. These areas are continually monitored for the presence/absence of invasive species as described in the Minnewaska State Park Preserve Invasive Species Management Plan. Concerning area-sensitive bird species such as the wood thrush, single-track hiking trails do not appear to alter or fragment habitat sufficiently to discourage use of the surrounding habitat by forest interior birds. Proposed trail routes are surveyed by ecologists to ensure that new trails do not impact sensitive natural resources. Depending on the possible conflicts identified, the proposed trail may be re-routed or even prohibited from certain areas.

Mapping

Comment: Map Symbols

Vernal pools should be marked with a symbol instead of a polygon.

Response:

The ecological community map provided in the master plan is included in the plan to reference information used within the process. Changing the base map to replace the vernal pool polygon with a symbol is not a simple process and is not able to be done for this plan.

Comment: Park Boundary

The park boundary should be darker on the maps.

Response:

Boundaries have been modified on maps within the master plan.

Comment: Wetlands Mapping

A map that separates the wetlands in the ecological communities map from the rest of the ecological communities would be more useful and detailed than the DEC or NWI maps.

Response:

The ecological community inventory and mapping process of the NY Natural Heritage Program (NHP) is not intended to replace the regulatory maps developed by DEC or the NWI maps. The NHP inventories all ecological communities, not just wetlands, and the classification of communities is based on the statewide classification system found in Ecological Communities of New York State (Edinger et al. 2002). This is the primary source for natural community classification in New York and is not directly tied to the inventory criteria used to map DEC or NWI wetlands.

Scenic Vistas

Comment: Hamilton and Castle Point Carriage Road Vistas

Both Hamilton Point and Castle Point carriage roads have gotten so overgrown that they are a bore to hike. It's quite different from when I first started hiking those roads 25 years ago. Consider opening up long stretches the way it once was.

Response:

A significant effort by Preserve staff and the Student Conservation Corps went into trimming and removal of brush adjacent to and overhead of, Hamilton Point carriage road in the summer of 2009. The carriage roads will be maintained, as funding and resources allow, providing the appropriate shoulder vegetation opening. This provides appropriate drainage and improves firebreak capability of the carriage roads while improving the visibility for various user groups on the carriage roads. This maintenance is required on an annual basis for all carriage roads and every effort is being put forth to continue to improve the condition and experience of the carriage road network.

Comment: Scenic Vistas

The plan should clearly identify the location of scenic vista points to reopen.

Response

The plan has identified the existing historic scenic vistas that mostly do not require any thinning due to the topography and vegetation. Other historic vistas will be evaluated to determine which need further investigation. Please refer to Figure 14 - Scenic Resources

Recreational Activities

Comment: Health and Physical Activity

With health care currently high on the national agenda, now is a great time to try to do everything possible to advance healthful physical activities in recreational opportunities. One easy and terrific means to do this is to make more of our riches in outdoor recreational land, attractive and available to exercise intensive activity.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC support healthful, physical recreational opportunities. The Preserve included many physical, health-promoting activities. It will continue to do so as part of the master plan in conjunction with protecting the resources of the Preserve.

Comment: General Recreation

The master plan should focus more on increasing responsible recreational use of this incredible resource. The plan seems to prefer keeping the park pristine rather than attracting visitors who value this resource. This plan is an extremely restrictive as it relates to recreation and ignores your mission statement.

Response

The vision and goals remain consistent since the previous master plan and continue to uphold the preservation, recreation and environmental education values of the Preserve and OPRHP/PIPC. The various goal categories of the master plan in fact support OPRHP's mission statement and strive to provide an appropriate balance between natural, cultural, and physical resources while providing recreational opportunities.

Comment: Recreation and the Local Economy

The local economy depends greatly on the draw of all recreational uses at the Preserve. Recreation elements within the plan should be expanded to assist local communities.

Response:

The expansion of recreational opportunities within the Preserve is proposed while balancing both the Preserve's resources and the visitor's experience.

Comment: Climbing Management Plan to Increase Climbing Opportunities

- Develop a climbing management plan for the entire Preserve that would significantly increase available climbing opportunities. There are many areas in the Preserve with years of climbing history. These areas should be reopened for use by visitors.
- OPRHP should compare the recent comprehensive data collected through GIS to identify additional climbing zones.
- Analyzing Minnewaska's potential for passive climbing opportunities fits Master Plan goals to "continue cooperative research and data collection partnerships, monitor the impact of recreation on natural resource preservation goals, and provide a coordinated approach to inventory, monitoring and research that facilitates data exchange. This approach should be taken within the master plan as it relates to climbing.
- All areas of the Park should be opened for climbing pending the development of the new Climbing Management Plan. These areas can then be evaluated on a case-by-case basis for suitability of long-term operation as a climbing area before inclusion or exclusion from the final plan.
- The successful Peter's Kill model should be applied to additional areas in the park, as contemplated by the initial master plan, in a way that provides New York climbers with an appreciable increase in access.

Response:

A climbing management plan will be developed for the Preserve to determine suitable locations for climbing. OPRHP will utilize Geographic Information System (GIS) data and ecological studies to determine suitable climbing zones as part of this climbing management plan. Monitoring of impacts of climbing on Preserve resources will be addressed within the climbing management plan. No additional climbing areas will be open until all of the appropriate preliminary studies are conducted in detail. The Peter's Kill Climbing Management Plan and other resources will be used to help guide the completion of a climbing management plan for the Preserve.

Comment: Assistance with Climbing Management Planning

Many offers to assist OPRHP/PIPC in developing a comprehensive climbing management plan were made.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC will use the climbing community and other local volunteers as a resource in the development of a climbing management plan.

Comment: Zone Climbing Areas

Instead of a blanket ban throughout the park, the New York Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation should use this current master plan to authorize a future climbing management plan, developed with park staff and local climbers that analyzes potential climbing areas in the park on a zone-by-zone basis to determine whether climbing and sensitive resources can coexist. Once zones are cleared this climbing management plan could allow for managed climbing access. Incremental access authorized zone-by-zone has been planned for and implemented at state parks elsewhere in the US, and there is no reason that similar adaptive management techniques could not be used at Minnewaska.

Response:

The Master Plan recommends that a climbing management plan for the Preserve be developed. The following areas as previously stated in the 1993 master plan will not be considered for expansion of climbing opportunities, as they are sensitive habitats and of potentially high cultural sensitivity: the cliffs surrounding Lake Minnewaska, the Palmaghatt Ravine and Spruce Glen. Based upon additional information and ecological studies, additional areas for exclusion may be identified.

Comment: Allow Climbing based on Resource Information

Can Minnewaska State Park Preserve allow climbing in the park at locations where there exist no specific resource-based justification to restrict it?

Response:

A climbing management plan will determine suitable areas for climbing and where it should be restricted. The following areas as previously stated in the 1993 master plan will not be considered for expansion of climbing opportunities, as they are sensitive habitats and of potentially high cultural sensitivity: the cliffs surrounding Lake Minnewaska, the Palmaghatt Ravine and Spruce Glen. Based upon additional information and ecological studies, additional areas for exclusion may be identified.

Comment: More Detail on Climbing Decision

Please provide more detailed specific reasons why climbing was not allowed within other areas of the Preserve.

Response:

Climbing was only expanded to the Dickie Barre area for operational and safety/rescue reasons and its proximity to the Peter's Kill office. The future climbing management plan will further evaluate options and concerns as a component to the planning process.

Comment: No Rock Climbing Allowed in entire Preserve

Rock climbers should not be allowed access to the entire Preserve otherwise they will fill up the parking lots before most hikers and families. Non-climbers would then have no legal place to park.

Response:

A climbing management plan will be developed. Parking considerations will be a component of that planning process. Parking within the Preserve is on a first come, first serve basis for all patrons and will remain as such to provide equal opportunity for all patrons.

Comment: Do Not Open New Climbing Areas

It would be a big mistake to open new areas in the park (other than what you have proposed) to climbers for the following reasons:

- 1) It would be a logistical nightmare trying to monitor what is going on in the remote cliffs with rescues, bolting, noise pollution, etc
- 2) It would be very damaging to the fragile cliff ecosystems and greatly impact the surrounding access and egress points. The Preserve has so many marked trails to climb which prevents extensive erosion. They have trails that have recently been greatly enhanced under their cliff system.
- 3) Climbers have so much available to them in the Trapps and Near Trapps and at Millbrook (and very few climbers make the effort to go the distance to that cliff). They hardly use many areas in the sections that are open to them since the better climbers only want to work on very hard climbs.
- 4) They would go to the newly open sections once and that is it; many climbers only want to say they have climbed in the Palmaghatt, etc.
- 5) The climbers who want to go to the remote areas are already climbing there very infrequently, so why open areas and have to monitor them for a handful of adventurous climbers?
- 6) Cliffs are habitats for birds, small mammals, snakes, etc. and they should have some undisturbed habitat. Climbing is a significant impact on cliff ecosystems.

Response:

A climbing management plan will be developed which will take into account the resource and operational concerns identified above. Areas will be identified where climbing may be considered, where it won't be considered, and the reasons why.

Comment: Review Peter's Kill Climbing Plan/Expand Climbing Based on Science

The Peter's Kill climbing management plan should be reviewed to provide the public with more detailed rationale regarding the need to protect sensitive resources prior to making decisions about the expansion of climbing areas. The expansion of climbing should be based on science and look at the impacts of climbers on the area as the Peter's Kill plan has done. Use it as the framework to expand climbing in other areas of the Preserve.

Response:

A climbing management plan will be developed and will be based on science, impacts and operational issues. The Peter's Kill Climbing Management Plan will be used to develop a plan for the Preserve.

Comment: Outline Process to Analyze Potential Climbing Areas

When managed correctly, climbing is a passive activity compatible with the long-term protection of the Preserve's resources. The plan provides no process to analyze additional passive recreational opportunities such as climbing. The master plan should authorize a future process to identify climbing locations and compare that information with biological data. The Preserve should analyze a more balanced approach within the climbing alternatives that would allow climbing throughout Minnewaska in areas where there are no conflicts with the values for which the Preserve was established.

Response:

The 1993 master plan states that climbing is appropriate within designated areas (Peter's Kill). Additional opportunities may be considered through a climbing management plan for the Preserve. This change will be reflected in the final master plan.

Comment: Climbing Brings in Revenue for the Preserve

From its second year after opening, the Peter's Kill area was generating more than 50% of its gross income from rock climbing. From its gross earnings from rock climbing in 1997 of \$6,200, to its high point in 2007 of \$40,000, there is no doubt that climbers support Minnewaska. From a financial standpoint, the park should open up more climbing areas so that the state and park will benefit.

Response:

Although the above figures are incorrect for 1997 (in 1997, the earnings for rock climbing permits made up only 40% of the total permit sales for the year at the Peter's Kill Area; Vehicle Use Permits made up 60% of the remaining permit sales), it does hold true that since 1999 over 50% of the total permit sales have been for rock climbing at the Peter's Kill Area. The Peter's Kill Area is only one of the three entry points to the Preserve where fees are collected. Climbing related revenue is only 10% of the parks overall annual revenue. Revenue is only one factor considered in operations; the balance of recreational opportunities with the protection of sensitive resources is vital.

Comment: Climbing and Injury/Accident Reports

Climbing should be considered just as much of a risk as daily mainstream activities. Of the 376 accidents reported at the park since its opening, only 17 were rock climbing related. Climbing should be treated accordingly.

Response:

Climbing accidents are proportionate to total accidents. As climber attendance is only 2% of overall attendance, it is expected that climbing accidents would be in this range based on climber attendance. If climbing areas were expanded, it is reasonable to expect that reported climbing related accidents would increase proportionately.

Comment: Climbing in Sam's Point

OPRHP/PIPC should allow climbing in the Sam's Point area managed by The Nature Conservancy.

Response:

The management of Sam's Point Preserve is subject to a management agreement with The Nature Conservancy. The management of this land is addressed within the Sam's Point Preserve master plan and separate from this master plan.

Comment: Climbing Proposal and Consistency with Plan Goals

The limited expansion of climbing opportunities as outlined in the Draft Master Plan fails to fulfill the mandate of New York's Article 20 and ignores the stated planning goals of the master plan.

Response:

The master plan recommends the creation of a climbing management plan for the Preserve, which will assist in reaching some of the goals outlined in Chapter 4 – Vision and Goals.

Comment: Follow New Jersey Climbing Permit System as Model

The climbing waiver system in use in New Jersey clearly shows that a permitting process need not restrict climbing to specific areas. Similarly, New Jersey allows climbing in all State Parks, without significant impact from safety and rescue operations. Resource managers across the country routinely deal with management obligations related to search and rescue, management oversight, and resource protection. These management challenges should not serve as an excuse to simply prohibit public access to public lands. Minnewaska State Park Preserve should acknowledge the best management practices used across the country and develop policies that serve the needs of local taxpayers who seek responsible use of public lands while also protecting these special places. Consider using New Jersey State Parks as a model for Minnewaska.

Response:

Climbing opportunities in New Jersey's parks are very different from Minnewaska State Park Preserve and present different resource protection concerns. Additionally, the statutory liability issues are different in New Jersey and New York State. PIPC has not adopted a similar climbing policy for its park land in New Jersey due to safety issues and liability concerns by the New Jersey Attorney Generals Office.

Comment: Climbing Rescue

The Hudson Valley Mountain Rescue does technical rock and ice climbing training for forest rangers. We are a whole crew of fully equipped and trained people willing to assist the park and local rescue services.

Response:

Preserve management staff may utilize this potential resource.

Comment: Update Existing Climbing Management Plan

A suggestion was made to update the existing Climbing Management Plan (CMP) versus developing a new Climbing Management Plan. This plan was developed in collaboration with climbers and other climbing land managers and serves as an excellent existing model

Response:

The Peter's Kill climbing management plan will be updated to include Dickie Barre. A climbing management plan for the Preserve will be developed using what has been learned from the Peter's Kill plan. Based upon additional information and ecological studies, additional areas for expansion may be identified.

Comment: Consider Ice Climbing in a New Management Plan

Ice climbing should be considered within certain areas of the park and a management plan written for it.

The park should allow ice climbing. In the new draft, it states, "*Ice climbing is not a regulated activity within OPRHP. Due to safety and operational concerns, it is not included as a regulated activity within Minnewaska State Park Preserve.*" This approach should not dictate policy and there are no real different operating concerns or safety concerns from rock climbing to ice climbing. While ice climbing may sound like a very different sport from rock climbing, it is very similar and with the exception of it being on ice and requiring the addition of ice tools and crampons, all of the techniques are the same (rope skills, anchoring, etc). In addition to this, the impact on the environment is a lot less. The climbing that would take place would be on frozen water and access is in winter when there is snow covering the plant life, protecting it. In the spring, the ice melts and there are no visible signs left of any traffic. Also, access to areas like Stony Kill Falls and Awosting falls are only minutes away from the road and parking. If any assistance were needed, it would be quick to access.

Response:

It has been determined that ice climbing will be a prohibited activity, due to safety and operational concerns. This is particularly the case with regard to the capacity of the park to respond to any potential emergency associated with ice climbing.

Comment: Hiking is missing as a Recreational Activity in the Plan

The absence of hiking as a recreational activity consistent with the vision and goals of the Preserve is a shocking oversight. Yes, Appendix B: Trails Plan deals extensively with various alternatives, but this should certainly be summarized in Chapter 5 for those who do not read the appendices.

Response:

A hiking alternatives table has been included within Chapter 5 – Analysis and Alternatives. Hiking was summarized in text form within the final master plan as an activity that is allowed on all designated trails and carriage roads.

Comment: Short Term Trails System

Trails 1 and 2 offer an excellent hiking experience and are proposed to be closed to the public. We oppose the proposal to close these woods roads in the Awosting Reserve. These roads, though overgrown and eroded in places, are very passable for hikers after minor repairs, clipping and blazing. In our estimation, Trails 1 and 2 provide the best walk in this new section of the Preserve. We strongly urge OPRHP to allow the volunteers to restore and maintain Trails 1 and 2 to an excellent single track hiking experience from the Awosting Access Trail to the Mud Pond Access Trail.

Response:

The short-term trail system includes the upgrade of wood roads for both multi-use trails and access for emergency vehicles to the central portion of this parcel. Trails 1 and 2 (as noted above) have sections that run along the fall line, are eroded and/or overgrown and run near the property boundary. They were not considered necessary for emergency vehicle access to that area. Sustainable and scenic portions of these old wood roads may be included in the final design of the trail system within the Awosting Reserve.

Comment: Hiking

The foot-use only Mud Pond Connector should become an extension of the “Short Term Trail 1 and 2” hiking-only trail and closed to access from the single track bike trail, reducing the possibility of restricted use on the Scenic Trail/Long Path and other hiking only trails.

Response:

The Mud Pond Connector Trail will be a hiking only trail. Appropriate signage will be installed to inform various user groups of hiking only use.

Comment: Jacobs Ladder and Tombstone Trails

The Jacobs Ladder and Tombstone trails should be restored and designated as hiking trails in the plan.

Response:

The Jacobs Ladder Trail runs through a sensitive ecological area. The Long Path reroute was not recommended to pass through this area partially for this reason. The Tombstone Trail was assessed and found to be very overgrown and hard to distinguish. Potential restoration and designation of this trail may be considered in the future.

Comment: Mud Pond Footpath

The reroute of the Mud Pond footpath should be made a priority 1 project.

Response:

The trail network is currently under evaluation. Improvements to existing trails will be a priority prior to creation of any new trails. Specific trails are not included in the priority project schedule as this schedule refers mostly to capital improvement projects. Preserve management will continue to work with volunteers and staff to develop work plans and prioritize trail needs on an annual basis.

Comment: Winter Hiking

Winter hiking without the use of snowshoes should be banned on any groomed carriage roads.

Response:

Access to the trail system without using groomed carriage roads is provided. Winter hiking is not permitted on any groomed carriage roads. Snowshoeing is permitted in a number of areas within the Preserve including the Lower Awosting, Awosting Falls Lake Awosting and Beacon Hill carriage roads and the following footpaths: Beacon Hill, Mossy Glen, Jenny Lane Path, Old Minnewaska Trail, High Peter's Kill, Scenic Trail, Blueberry Run, Bull Wheel Trail, Red Loop and Yellow Connector.

Comment: Trail Access for Maintenance

The Trail Conference asked to be allowed to work before open hours but after sunrise. The restrictions were oppressive: we were not allowed on property without staff present; we had to notify the office a day in advance; we had to sign in and sign out; in short, we were not allowed to manage ourselves. We felt a lack of partnership and respect, which created inefficiencies, and impeded initiative and motivation. The State secured management control of the Trail Conference volunteer force but it lost the many advantages of partnership. I believe it will be to the Preserve's advantage to grant the Trail Conference trail-maintainer volunteers a large measure of autonomy.

Response

Preserve management greatly appreciates the Trail Conference support and dedication to maintaining the footpaths in the Preserve. Cooperation, coordination, and management of volunteers are necessary to ensure desired goals and priorities are being met. It is necessary to have staff present in the event of emergencies. The Preserve looks forward to working with the Trail Conference for many years to come, with coordination through the trail chair and trail director.

Comment: Hiking or Snowshoeing Fees

The state should not be in the business of collecting money for hiking or snowshoeing.

Response

OPRHP has a set schedule of fees, updated annually, which is followed at Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

Comment: Bike Trail Maintenance

Please stop putting down the ¾" clean rock on the carriage roads. It is dangerous for biking.

Response

The historic carriage road network is in need of major restoration, and it is necessary to raise the road surface in order to reestablish the crown to improve drainage. The ¾" stone is a midcourse and will be capped with crushed shale or a more sustainable material mix.

Comment: Biking Carriage Roads in Sam's Point

The Park should open existing carriage roads in Sam's Point to bicycles including the Smiley Road and those in other areas of the Preserve. Opening existing carriage roads would be of great benefit to cycling in the area and could reduce the number of people on Minnewaska carriage roads. We would

like the Park to consider opening lesser-used trails such as the Stony Kill Carriage Road to bikes, which are currently only open to hikers.

Response

The carriage roads within the Sam's Point Preserve are subject to management of The Nature Conservancy and Sam's Point Preserve master plan. The historic carriage road network is currently in the first phase of a carriage road restoration plan in partnership with the Mohonk Preserve. When carriage roads are restored to an acceptable, safe condition for multiple uses, they may be opened to biking and horseback riding. This will be dependent on the availability of funding and other resources.

Comment: Biking (Multi-use Trails)

The success of the multi-use trails in the Awosting Reserve should be evaluated. Upon a successful evaluation, other existing trails should be considered and assessed for mountain bike access. Currently all single track trail is closed to bikes.

Response

The existing single track trails within the Preserve were designed and constructed as hiking-only trails. There are features along these footpaths that make them unsuitable/unsafe for mountain biking, such as stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks. The higher volume of users on the existing trails will result in an increased impact to both the trail tread of steep trails and the sensitive resources. Single track trails designed for mountain biking will only be developed in the Awosting Reserve area.

Comment: Bike Trail Construction

When is the planning of the trails scheduled to begin, and when are the trails going to be marked and built? Offers to provide volunteers to assist the agency build and mark trails were made. Will mountain bikers be involved with the planning and construction of multiuse trails in Awosting Reserve?

Response

The existing trail network is currently under evaluation. Improvements to existing trails will be a priority prior to creation of any new trails. Preserve management will continue to work with volunteers and park staff to prioritize trail needs on an annual basis to develop work plans. The creation of any new trails will be largely dependent on the availability of volunteers from the various user groups and input will be sought from experienced user groups to develop an appropriate sustainable mountain bike trail when the time comes.

Comment: Mountain Bike Only Trails

If biking must be allowed at Minnewaska then they should construct their mountain bike only trail system in the Awosting Reserve to the same standards and oversight as footpaths. Trail construction should take place below 1,700 feet and that part of Minnewaska should not be included in the Preserve lands because mountain bikes and Preserve lands are incompatible uses.

Response:

The contours of the Awosting Reserve do not level out until above 1,700 feet and any trail construction will be designed to be a sustainable trail network, so the trail will not be restricted to

below 1,700 feet. Any trail construction will conform to the outlined standards in the Trails Plan (Appendix B).

The Awosting Reserve will be designated as Park Preserve lands.

Comment: Impacts of Mountain Biking

The environmental impact of mountain bikes on a trail would be unacceptable in a park preserve such as Minnewaska. The potential for erosion and destruction of habitat should in itself be sufficient to reject the trail.

Response:

Current studies indicate that mountain biking has similar impacts to the environment as hiking. A single track trail network for mountain biking and the use of existing woods roads for hiking and equestrian use will take place within the Awosting Reserve. This area has seen disruption by previous landowners from construction equipment, logging activity and road construction. While this area has less sensitive vegetation, there will be more detailed ecological studies prior to detailed site designs. The new trails will be designed and constructed to current sustainable standards, which will reduce water flow and user impacts. Potential trail impacts will be monitored.

Comment: Single Track Mountain Bike Trails in “Main Area”

The Minnewaska main area has been a destination for mountain bicyclists for many years and would be a perfect place to have a small shared beginner to intermediate single-track loop in an area that can be deemed appropriate for mountain bicycle use. This should be an addition to the plan. If it is not included, please elaborate as to why.

Response:

The main area near Lake Minnewaska is a very high use area. The density of trails in this area is considered sufficient. Additional trail development (with the exception of the Witch’s Cave Trail connection for visitor circulation) or adding uses to existing footpaths in this area is not considered appropriate. Multiple uses will remain on the wider carriage roads in the main area of the Preserve.

Comment: Scientific Research to Support Segregation of Mountain Biking

Please let me know if there is specific scientific research you are using to segregate mountain bicyclists out of this area and off of the single-track trails. Also, what if any scientific researches have you used to determine that mountain bicyclists and hikers cannot share trails in areas that are appropriate for mountain bicycling on sustainable single-track trails?

Response:

Research shows that biking has similar impacts to trail surfaces as those of hiking; however, the existing single track trails within the Preserve were constructed with hiking as the designed use. There are features along these footpaths that make them unsuitable/unsafe for mountain biking, such as stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks. Single track trails designed for mountain biking will be developed in the Awosting Reserve area.

Comment: Exclusive use of Single Track Mountain Bike Trails

I noticed there are many “foot trail” specific single-track trails in the main area of Minnewaska but no mountain bicycle specific single track trails. A hiking club builds and maintains a trail on public

parkland and they are allowed the exclusive use of the trail. If a mountain bicycle club is allowed to build and maintain a trail on public parkland, are they allowed exclusive use of it or are they forced to share it with hikers and possibly equestrians?

Response:

Hiking/walking remains the most popular recreational activity at Minnewaska State Park Preserve. No trails in the Preserve were built by hiking clubs for their exclusive use. PIPC does have an agreement with the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference, a volunteer-directed public service organization, to maintain hiking only single track trails. All of the officially designated trails are open to hiking; biking and equestrian use are only allowed on trails designated as multi-use. A mountain biking single track trail will be developed within the Awosting Reserve area.

Comment: Definition of Single Track Trails

Why is there no mention of single use mountain bicycle single-track trails? What is the definition of single-track mountain bicycle trails? What is the definition of single-track foot trails?

Response:

It was not considered appropriate at Minnewaska State Park Preserve to develop separate single-use trail networks for hiking, biking and equestrian use with the exception of the Awosting Reserve area. The existing footpaths at Minnewaska were developed with hiking as the designed use and include features that make them unsuitable/unsafe for mountain biking and equestrian use, such as stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks. The OPRHP trail development standards for mountain biking will be followed during the development of new single track trails in the Awosting Reserve area.

Comment: SCORP Data is out Dated (Biking)

- Why are you using the old SCORP? Did you know there is a new version out? NY's SCORP has the recommendations for mountain bike trails in chapter 5 and by definition, does not include fire roads but in fact shows single track trails for all levels except beginners.
- On page 44, you are using outdated info on trail guidelines from the 2003 SCORP. Please use the newly updated version. A lot of work went into creating that document. Additionally, are you using SCORP to guide the planning of trails in the Preserve, particularly as it relates to mountain biking?

Response:

The Trail Development Guidelines table has been updated. Only recreational trail uses allowed at the Preserve are shown in the Trails Plan table. SCORP was used as a resource for the development of the Trails Plan.

Comment: Trail Signage and Markers

Ample positive signage (communicating exactly what uses are allowed rather than what are not) must be installed at intersections of different use trails to reduce conflicts and legal liability. Education and trail signage will encourage appropriate behavior amongst all trail users.

Response:

Additional trail signage and education will be components of upgrading the trail system.

Comment: Bike Trail Design

The Park should involve local bicycle riders, other trail users, park rangers and residents from the local community in trail repair, maintenance and clean up. Trails designed and built by mountain bicyclists in partnership with the park managers are the most successful in developing a passionate community of caretakers for the trails.

Response:

Preserve management will work with multiple groups in the expansion of the trail system in the Awesting Reserve area.

Comment: Bike Trail Signage/Abilities

The park should develop a tiered riding system to target different levels of skill and fitness based on the different areas of the park. Trails should be marked according to skills levels using IMBA's guidelines (green circle, blue square and black diamond) so users can choose a trail that matches their ability level.

Response:

According to the Trail Signage Guidelines for the NY State Park System (currently in draft form), information on all trailhead signs should include details such as trail name, allowable uses, total trail length, trailhead elevation along with maximum and minimum trail elevations, surface type, firmness and stability, and known trail hazards. This information is provided to allow users to determine whether the trail is appropriate for their abilities. At Minnewaska, the existing trail system does not lend itself to difficulty ratings for mountain biking. Additional trailhead signage should address this issue.

Comment: Mountain Biking Impacts are Minimal

- The impacts of mountain bikes on sustainable trails are similar to foot traffic and scientific studies reinforce this. There are no studies to my knowledge that prove otherwise. Do you have scientific research that shows bicycling have more of an impact than hiking?
- Why are mountain bikes treated differently than other user groups (such as hikers) in NY State Parks? Is Park management aware of studies that show mountain bikes and hikers create equal wear on trails? (http://www.imba.com/resources/science/trail_shock.html). Additionally, there are no scientific studies that show biking has any more impact to sensitive vegetation at higher elevation levels than hiking.

Response:

OPRHP is aware that scientific research shows comparable impacts from hikers and mountain bikers on trails. Each user group is considered for their activity needs in conjunction with public demand, the conditions, operations and management of parks and in conjunction with the natural and cultural resources of parks. Efforts are made to accommodate multiple user groups while considering the preservation of the Preserve resources.

Comment: Biking Trail Approval/Construction Timeframe

What is the actual length of time for the trail approval process outlined in the plan? Is it months or years? For instance, when other trail groups wishes to build a new trail, what was the length of time for their most recent projects approvals?

Response:

There is no allotted timing for the trail approval process. Each trail project is reviewed on a case-by-case basis as outlined in Chart 1 in the Trails Plan (Appendix B) Chapter 5 - Standards.

Comment: Single Track Bike Trail Design

In the Sterling Forest trails plan the hiking club was allowed to create single-track trails that paralleled fire roads, towards the same destination, regardless of the fragmentation that might occur. Will the mountain bicyclist receive the same treatment?

Response:

Each trail project is considered on a case-by-case basis with appropriate reviews outlined in Chart 1 in the Trails Plan (Appendix B) Chapter 5 - Standards. Mountain bike groups will be a part of the development of single track trails in the Awosting Reserve area, which will be reviewed appropriately per the Trails Plan.

Comment: Mountain Biking & Risk Management

Safety will be a concern with any new activity, The Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists (CLIMB) and the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) are willing to share risk management plans with park officials. Please look at the book: MANAGING MOUNTAIN BIKING by IMBA for risk management strategies.

Response:

This book is currently used as a resource for trails planning and will continue to be used as one of many resources when addressing such issues.

Comment: One Way Mountain Bike Trails

Sometimes in specific high use areas, one-way trails are recommended for loop trails that minimize conflicts or the perception of congestion. This should be discussed for bike trails at Minnewaska.

Response:

Based on the amount of use and need, one-way trails may be considered in the single track trail system in the Awosting Reserve area.

Comment: Mountain Biking Regulations

Who is making the decisions regarding the regulation of bicycling? Is it an impartial panel that includes avid bicyclists? Clearly the decisions on safety of sharing trails with bicyclists are based on antiquated or prejudiced views.

Response:

Preserve management and regional staff along with other staff make decisions regarding the uses allowed on trails through an alternatives and analysis process, which includes public input. OPRHP/PIPC are making an effort to provide single track trails at Minnewaska State Park Preserve that are properly designed for mountain biking. The existing footpath trail system was developed with hiking as the designed use. OPRHP/PIPC understands that multiple user groups can share trails when they are designed appropriately for those uses. The single track trail system in the Awosting Reserve will provide an opportunity not currently offered elsewhere in the Preserve.

Comment: Diversification of Trail Use

Is NY State serious about diversification on its trails? Is the attitude still held by State Park's officials today towards mountain bicyclists as an undesirable element? If not, please provide examples of recently completed singletrack mountain bicycle trail projects within NY State Parks. I read the SCORP and according to this lengthy document, state parks are supposed to be encouraging recreation and not discouraging it.

Response:

The Trails Plan includes mountain biking as a use on maintained carriage roads in the Preserve. In addition, the plan includes mountain biking as a use on the short term and long term trail systems to be developed in the Awosting Reserve area. Grafton Lakes SP and Green Lakes SP, both working in conjunction with local mountain biking groups, have some existing single track trails. A number of state parks are currently considering the addition of single track trails with mountain biking as a use through the master planning process.

Comment: Trail Use Conflicts (Biking – Running)

Cross-County Runners travel approximately the same speed as mountain bicyclists; in fact, runners have passed me on the trail quite frequently. Will cross-country running be allowed on foot trails? If so, why not allow mountain bicycling as well? What is the difference in safety, regarding runners and bicyclists?

Response:

Running is considered as the same user type as walking/hiking for this plan. Runners are able to maneuver the sections of existing footpaths that are considered unsuitable/unsafe for mountain bikers, such as, stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks.

Comment: Mountain Biking Trail Standards in SCORP

SCORP shows that 15 miles is the minimum amount of trails needed to satisfy the average mountain bicyclist. Why are bikers only getting the minimum?

Response:

Mountain biking is allowed on all maintained carriage roads in the Preserve consisting of approximately 20 miles of trails. In addition, future designated trails in the Awosting Reserve area will allow mountain biking as a use and will consist of many more miles of available trails.

Comment: Reduce Congestion Open Single Track Trails to Biking

Opening up biking on single track trails will reduce congestion on the carriage roads and spread out the users.

Response:

The existing footpaths in the Preserve were developed with hiking as the designed use and include features that make them unsuitable/unsafe for mountain biking, such as stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks. The proposed single track trails in the Awosting Reserve area will provide bikers with the single track opportunity and help to spread out users.

Comment: Ski Trail Grooming

The grooming has been spotty. There's a lot of grooming that can be done with a snowmobile with the right tools. The Master Plan should call for a substantial increase in the quality and quantity of trail grooming, restoring the Preserve's former emphasis on a high-quality cross-country skiing experience. Please consider putting more of the park resources into cross country ski trail grooming.

The grooming of cross country ski trails in the Preserve has been poor. Poorly maintained trails discourage users and they go elsewhere. Improved and consistent grooming would increase attendance and revenues in the Preserve. The plan does not explain how skiing opportunities will be improved and/or increased.

Response:

Grooming is an operational issue and will not be addressed within the master plan. The Preserve is moving towards an all snowmobile grooming operation and has acquired several small attachments to aid in the grooming efforts. Continued improvements to the carriage road network ultimately improve cross country ski conditions. Adequate funding, staffing, equipment and resources is required for winter operations, and every attempt will be made to provide for a high quality cross-country ski experience.

Comment: Skiing – Connections to Mohonk Preserve

The park should maintain a connection to the Mohonk Preserve's ski trails, which would create an opportunity to make the ridge the premier destination for cross-country skiing and snowshoeing in the Northeast.

Response:

There is a carriage road connection between Minnewaska State Park Preserve and Mohonk Preserve, where Minnewaska State Park Preserve's Awosting Falls Carriage Road and Mohonk Preserve's Trapps Carriage Road meet, at our respective boundaries. Neither land manager grooms those carriage roads for skiing because they are open for hiking, snowshoeing, or skiing during winter months. Minnewaska State Park Preserve does not groom the Awosting Falls Carriage Road because it would be very difficult for current equipment to climb the steep grade of the carriage road. Additionally, there are periods that require that carriage road to be closed to all users due to long sections being covered in thick ice. This would present a serious safety hazard to grooming equipment operators and skiers.

Comment: No Foot Traffic on Ski/Snowshoe Trails

As part of a renewed emphasis on cross-country skiing, during periods of good snow cover the Preserve should consider denying access to those without skis or snowshoes, since the resulting damage to the snow surface can ruin ski trails. If foot traffic and pets are to be allowed into Minnewaska during such periods, they should at least be kept off the ski trails.

Response:

It is the current policy of the Preserve that, when there is good snow cover and carriage roads have been groomed for cross-country skiing, no hiking, snowshoeing or pets are not permitted on those carriage roads. This policy has been in place every winter that the Preserve has groomed and charged a fee for cross-country skiing.

Comment: Skiing on Un-groomed Trails

Cross-country skiing should be a permitted use on non-groomed footpaths and especially on non-groomed carriage roads. The plan does not mention if skiing is allowed on ungroomed trails and carriage roads. Is it allowed?

Response:

Cross-country skiing is allowed on the carriage roads that are not groomed. The 1993 master plan indicates that cross country skiing is not allowed on footpaths, this will continue to be restricted due to the conditions that exist along those trails. The footpaths are narrow, steep in sections, adjacent to drop-offs, crevices, cliffs and travel through remote areas that would be difficult to access by emergency responders.

Comment: Ski Lodge or Building

When one wants a break from skiing, for example to eat lunch, there is no decent shelter to get out of the wind. A real lodge or building will enhance Lake Minnewaska people coming to ski for the day.

Response:

There is a warming hut near the Wildmere parking area. It has been in place for almost ten years and has been available each winter as a place for skiers to change into their ski equipment, warm up, have lunch, etc. It is a yurt, which is a round canvass sided tent, which is insulated and heated with electric baseboard heaters. It is open during the normal park operating hours. The proposed visitor center will provide an opportunity to include a new warming area.

Comment: Advertise/Market Skiing

The Preserve should advertise what skiing trails you have to offer so people know how great it can be.

Response:

An improved effort was undertaken to promote cross-country skiing during the 2009/10 winter operations. Conditions were posted regularly on the Minnewaska State Park Preserve page of the OPRHP website (www.nysparks.com) and regular condition updates were faxed/emailed to relevant local businesses. Various free internet sites and forums were also used to post information about cross-country skiing at the Preserve. Future expansion in marketing winter operations may be considered.

Comment: Multiple Use of Winter Trails

- When there is snow on the ground I have been refused entrance to the main part of the park, atop the ridge, and been told that the trails there are exclusively for the use of cross-country skiers. Snowshoers and hikers were told use only the steep, rocky trails at the Peter's Kill area and one very short section of trail in the lower elevation of the main part of the park. Snowshoers and hikers have no difficulty sharing space with skiers: the wide carriage roads in the park are particularly suitable for sharing. The many miles of parallel carriage roads in the main part of the park would make it fairly easy to reserve some for skiing and some for snowshoeing and hiking. This solution could reduce winter maintenance costs in the park and it might increase revenues, in the form of the additional parking fees that snowshoers and hikers would pay if they had access to the trails.

- The plan calls for keeping walkers and snowshoers off the groomed trails. This should be reconsidered and all users should be allowed to use the trails as they do in other states.
- Snowshoers should have access to all trails, trail heads and carriage roads.

Response:

Snowshoeing is permitted on all single track trails, all the woods roads within the Awosting Reserve section of the Preserve and some carriage roads. The carriage roads, which are groomed for cross country skiing, constitute a small portion, approximately 10 miles, of the more than 65 total miles of available trails. Groomed carriage roads are not open to snowshoeing and hiking for the following reasons: it requires a significant amount of time and labor to properly groom snow for cross country skiing, snowshoeing and hiking on groomed trails quickly deteriorates the quality of the grooming (especially for skate skiers), and skiers pay a per person trail fee to access the groomed trails. Additionally, the act of snow grooming makes it so that snowshoes are not necessary on those trails. Snowshoes are meant to be worn as an aid for travelling through deep unpacked snow and the snow on groomed trails is packed with snow rollers.

As previously noted, it is the current policy of the Preserve that, when there is good snow cover and carriage roads have been groomed for cross country skiing, hiking, snowshoeing and pets are not permitted on those carriage roads. This policy has been in place every winter that the Preserve has groomed and charged a fee for cross country skiing. Recreational opportunities are available for hikers and snowshoers on a number of other ungroomed trails within the trail network in the Preserve. Significant effort is put forth to establish groomed cross-country ski trails and walkers and snowshoers can have a substantial impact to the groomed surface.

Comment: Winter Hiking

Hikers should not be allowed on snow-covered trails without snowshoes.

Response:

Hikers are not allowed on groomed carriage roads. Hiking and snowshoeing opportunities will remain an allowed activity on all ungroomed hiking trails and carriage roads.

Comment: Accessible Winter Trails

Some people are physically unable to ski or are disabled. Allowing snowshoeing and hiking, as well as skiing, on the more-or-less level carriage roads in the main part of the park allows many people winter exercise and outdoor recreation.

Response:

The most level carriage road is Lower Awosting from the Awosting Parking Lot to the causeway, which is open for hiking and snowshoeing when conditions permit. This trail offers three miles of hiking and snowshoeing readily accessible from a parking area.

Comment: Open Swimming

- It seems that you go through the motions of listening to us only to say unilaterally “no” with no explanation. I want to know why the real improvements we ask for are not in the plan and I would like a response explaining the reasons for saying no to open swimming.
- The current size of the swimming areas in the Preserve is inadequate. All lakes in the Preserve should be open to swimming under a swim at your own risk policy.

- You are the public stewards of this land and this is what the people want. Please don't act from fear, banning any possibly dangerous activities and do as other states do, not restrict our freedom to exercise our birthright and our human heritage to swim in water on a hot summer day.

I wholeheartedly believe that the state of New York should protect itself from frivolous lawsuits and I assume that must be the underlying reason for restricting a citizen's rights and that those restriction aren't done with malicious intent but I also know it must be possible to protect the state while respecting swimmers freedom because I have seen first hand across the United States federal and state parks that prudently warn patrons of the dangers involved, state that no lifeguard is present, and that they are therefore swimming at their own risk.

If other states such as Florida, Texas, Utah, Vermont, and Massachusetts can protect themselves from lawsuits and allow unregulated swimming then who can say the great state of New York is incapable of doing the same in the name of giving their citizens the simple pleasure of swimming in a mountain lake or stream on a beautiful hot day?

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC cannot allow unsupervised swimming in State Parks under New York State law. State health regulations require lifeguard supervision, marker lines with buoys and other specified equipment and facilities at any beach at all times when swimming is allowed, and declare unsupervised swimming at a bathing beach to be a public health hazard. Swimming is a regulated activity under OPRHP/PIPC regulations and is forbidden in State Parks except where and when specifically authorized, that is, in designated bathing areas that comply with state health regulations.

Comment: Size of Swimming Area

In recent years the swimming area at Lake Awosting was cut to about 1/2 its earlier size. It should be restored to its earlier larger size extending to the end of the "beach" on both sides.

Response:

The swimming area at Lake Awosting must comply with OPRHP/PIPC's water safety guidelines. The buoy lines for the swimming area are set at the maximum permitted size that can be guarded by one lifeguard.

Comment: Swimming At Tillson Lake

Was swimming at Tillson Lake considered? It historically was a major recreational area.

Response:

Swimming at Tillson Lake was not considered as a viable alternative within the plan. The public information period did now show significant demand for swimming opportunities at Tillson Lake. Swimming opportunities continue to be provided within the most heavily visited areas of the Preserve to accommodate the demand.

Comment: Distance Swimming

The Distance Swimming Program should be allowed to operate without a lifeguard on duty. The lifeguards are too far away to be of assistance in an emergency, and the MDSA has proven that it can manage its beach to keep unaffiliated swimmers out of the water. With the ubiquity of cell phones (and service) at the park, help is now adequately available by phone should it ever become

necessary. The distance swimming hours should be restored to the originally negotiated hours. To restore our original swimming hours would not endanger either the general public or the MDSA membership.

Response:

The master plan will not address this issue. The arrangement with the MDSA organization is detailed in a specific agreement with OPRHP and MDSA, which has the requirement that the organization operate while a lifeguard is on duty at the Lake Minnewaska beach. This agreement would need to be revised in order to consider any changes to the current language.

Comment: Distance Swimming at Awosting

A distance swimming program at Awosting should be developed

Response:

Distance swimming at Lake Awosting is not recommended due to the difficulty in providing timely emergency access to the area along the carriage roads. Distance swimming opportunities will remain within Lake Minnewaska.

Comment: Distance Swimming Buoys

The distance swimming buoys are an eyesore and should be removed. The agreement with the distance swimming group should be reconsidered and abrogated.

Response:

These are a requirement according to the MDSA agreement and are there for safety purposes. The colors of the end buoys can be adjusted.

Trails

Comment: Carriage Road Restoration

The carriage road system restoration should be a top priority due to their importance for fire management, recreation, and stewardship.

Response:

The carriage road system is a top priority, and significant improvements have been made in recent years. The restoration and maintenance of the historic carriage road network will continue to be the top priority for Preserve staff. The availability of adequate funding, materials, supplies, staff and equipment greatly influence the efficiency in which carriage road repairs can be accomplished.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trail System

The woods roads should all be retained for hiking in the Awosting Reserve.

Response:

A good portion of the wood roads system will be part of the short term plan to develop multi-use trail opportunities in this area while maintaining emergency access to the parcel. The wood roads system will be maintained for emergency access once the single track system is developed.

Comment: Additional Parking for Awosting Reserve Trail

As part of the Awosting Reserve Conceptual Trail System, the plan should consider an additional parking area within the Park at the end of Campfire Road to serve the hiking only route into the park.

Response:

The trails plan indicates there are no trails and no designated parking area considered in this vicinity. Significant disturbance to natural areas would be required to install a parking area on Preserve property. The expansion of access via Aumick Road is expected to prove sufficient for the demand the area will receive. This access is in very close proximity to Campfire Road and the duplication of access points is not warranted.

Comment: Retain Woods Roads in Awosting Reserve Trail System

In addition to ample single track, single use mountain bike and equestrian trails, we strongly urge OPRHP to retain substantial elements of the double track, woods road based, multi-use Short Term Trail System, as well as a hiking only route via Trails 1 and 2 to the Mud Pond area.

The woods roads should all be retained for hiking in the Awosting Reserve.

Response:

A good portion of the wood roads system will be used to develop multi-use trail opportunities (hiking, biking, and equestrian) in this area for the short-term while maintaining emergency access to the parcel. In the longterm, the wood road trail system will remain open to hiking and equestrian use, while biking will be allowed on a newly developed single-track trail system. The Mud Pond Access Trail will be designated for hiking only.

Comment: Mountain Bikers Participation in Planning Awosting Reserve Trails

- Will mountain bikers be involved with the planning, building and maintenance of multi-use trails in the Awosting Reserve? The “flow” of the trail is important to bikers and sustainability and their input is needed.
- Will the Park permit local volunteers to help with planning, building and maintenance of multi-use trails in the Awosting Reserve? If so, can local bike clubs and other groups set up a working group with the Park to develop a schedule?

Response:

Upgrades of existing trails and the wood roads network to be designated will occur before development of new trails. Preserve staff will manage the development of trails in conjunction with other OPRHP/PIPC resource staff and volunteers as time and resources permit. Preserve staff will work directly with volunteers of multiple user groups, including mountain bikers, to plan and construct the new mountain bike trails and the upgrades to the wood roads.

Comment: Trails to the Crevices

The coolest place in the park is missing and that is the crevices. The trails to the crevices have been obliterated. Some attempts have been made to reopen the trail but it appears as though management has been trying to obliterate efforts to reopen that trail. The bridges, ladders and trail should be restored to make it the wonderful destination it once was.

Response:

The crevice trail was a trail that existed during the hotel era; this area is unsafe and will not be a designated trail. Sufficient trails exist in this vicinity. Attempts to restore or open trails need to be coordinated and approved by preserve management and be consistent with the Trails Plan.

Comment: Trails in the Mine Hole Area

It appears appropriate to include a loop trail in the Mine Hole area.

Response:

The plan states that further assessment and analysis are needed to determine appropriate development and/or designation of trails in this area. A loop trail may be considered during this process.

Comment: Trail Monitoring Program

The suggestion was made to use the Mohonk Preserve's Trails Impact Measurement Protocol to monitor condition of existing trails. A protocol was developed that measures trail impacts such as tread width, corridor width, and incision. This protocol has been implemented at Mohonk Preserve and Sam's Point Preserve. The MSPP should adopt this monitoring methodology to compare with its neighbors and measure impact change over time with changing recreational use.

Response:

The trails plan has defined protocols for assessing footpaths, which are consistent with statewide practices. The above mentioned impact measurement protocol will be researched and, should this prove to be a useful tool, it may be used in combination with the protocols defined in the trails plan.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trail Connections

The trails in the Awosting Reserve should be connected to the carriage road system and other trails.

Response:

The trails in the Awosting Reserve are currently informally connected to the carriage road system. The Trails Plan provides details to designate connections with the carriage road system and other trails.

Comment: Multiuse/Biking Trails in Preserve

The plan to build a multi-use trail in the former Awosting Reserve contradicts the intent of the land being a preserve. If a multi use trail that allows biking is created, it should not be include within the Preserve designation.

Response:

Mountain biking is a compatible use within the Preserve.

Comment: Shared Single Track Trails

Is the Park aware that bikes and hikers share thousands of miles of single-track in every state without conflict?

Response:

Yes, OPRHP/PIPC are aware of this. In this case, a single track biking only trail system will be developed to provide a type of experience not currently allowed in the Preserve and to accommodate a large user group of the Preserve.

Comment: Shuttle Bus to Awosting Reserve Trails

The park should run a small bus once an hour to the top of the Awosting Reserve providing easy hiking access up higher into the Awosting Reserve. A reservation and fee system could be set in place to make this system work.

Response:

Shuttle bus operation within the Preserve for recreational use is not consistent with the Park Preservation designation.

Comment: Multiple Use/Single Use Trail Intersections

OPRHP should avoid allowing multiple use trails to dead end at a single use trail, as occurs with both the Awosting Loop Access and Awosting Loop Connector trails. When multiple-use trails dead end at a single use trail, the single use trail will become, in fact, multiuse.

Response:

These trails will not dead end into a single use trail once trails are upgraded. In both cases, short segments of the Scenic Trail will be converted to multi-use trails. These will connect to the Wolf Jaw and Spruce Glen Trails which will be upgraded back to carriage road standards per the Trails Plan.

Comment: Impacts of Awosting Reserve Trails

To prevent the Scenic Trail from becoming a multiuse trail, the Awosting Loop Access and Awosting Loop Connector should be designated as hiking only until the Spruce Glen and Wolf Jaw trail are converted to multi-use after being “brought up to multi-use standards.”

Response:

Additional trail uses will not be designated or signed until the trails have been upgraded to the multi-use standards.

Comment: Single Track Multiuse Trail

- A “single-track, multiuse trail” is a misnomer because single-track trails open to bike use become bike-dominated trails and are a recipe for conflict and legal liability. We have no objection to proposed single track bike trails but it should not be expected to fulfill a multi-use function.
- A single-track trail to be shared by hikers, bikers and horse riders is not appropriate. The potential for accidents and injuries is simply too great to permit the creation of such a trail.

Response:

There are hundreds to thousands of miles of multi-use single track trails throughout the United States. With proper design, signage and management, these trails provide different user groups with a close to nature experience with minimal conflict. In this case, the plan has been revised and a

single track biking only trail system will be developed to provide a type of experience not currently allowed in the Preserve and to accommodate a large user group of the Preserve. The wood roads will be designated as multi-use trails.

Comment: Open other Single Track Trails to Biking

Will the Park consider opening other single track trails within the Park to mountain bikes? If so, when? If not, why?

Response:

The existing single track trails within the Preserve were developed with hiking as the designed use and will remain as such. There are features along the footpaths that make them unsuitable/unsafe for mountain biking, such as stone steps, narrow rock cuts, steep climbs, and sharp switchbacks. Single track trails designed for mountain biking will be developed in the Awosting Reserve area. Additional uses of existing trails will cause higher impacts to both the trail tread and potentially sensitive resources. If that new single track trail system is well received and successful, it would be an example to be cited when considering future trail installations and use designations.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trail System

We oppose building an extreme biking trail in Awosting Reserve. Why not make do with the already existing trails and roads instead?

Response:

There is no extreme biking trail proposed to be built in the Awosting Reserve area. The Trails Plan calls for the existing wood roads to be upgraded and used by hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, in the interim, while a single track system is designed and constructed. The single track trails will be developed following OPRHP trail standards and sustainable trail building techniques.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trail Use

I would urgently like to suggest that all the neighbors who are immediately adjacent to the Awosting Reserve entrance be consulted concerning the multi-use trail. None of us will want see this road become a magnet for bikers. I believe they will disturb the peace on public and park roads that are very close to residences.

Response:

Biking has been a recreational activity in Minnewaska State Park Preserve for over 20 years and is consistent with the master plan vision and goals. Over the last 20 years, the Preserve has added miles of hiking-only trails, expanded swimming opportunities, added rock climbing as a regulated activity, but biking opportunities have diminished. The Awosting Reserve trails will provide bikers, a major user group of the Preserve, an enhanced riding experience, while also making trails available to hikers and equestrians.

Comment: Awosting Reserve Trail Design

Will the Awosting Reserve trail be a single-track loop without the necessity for fire road or carriage road travel? We would prefer a completely single-track loop.

Response:

The single track trail system in the Awosting Reserve area exists only in conceptual form currently. Figure 4 of the Trails Plan shows the conceptual trail design but it is subject to change with on-the-ground design work. It can be expected that parts of the single track trail system will co-align with the existing wood roads system and that those sections will remain double track. These connections will allow for access to multiple points of the trail system by Preserve and/or emergency personnel.

Comment: Spruce Glen Trail

Spruce Glen should be left as it is and only allow for hiking. Do not reconstruct the carriage road which was once there.

Response:

Spruce Glen and Wolf Jaw will be restored to carriage road standards and developed as multi-use (hiking, biking, equestrian) main connector corridors to provide access into the Awosting Reserve area as the trail system is developed. Hiking only access to the Awosting Reserve will be maintained via the Scenic Trail near Mud Pond.

Comment: Witch's Cave Trail

The historic route following the base of the cliff (alternative A) is much better than the proposed new trail (alternative B.) Alternative A is a very scenic and interesting trail and far nicer than the alternative. In addition, it would be much easier to put in and, contrary to what is stated in the plan, does not need even need one stream crossing built, so long as it begins on the access road approx 100 yards above the current vehicular bridge over the Peter's Kill. There is only one difficult scramble on the historic trail, and there is already a social trail less adventurous hikers can take around this point. Those hikers who want an easier way up to Minnewaska always have the option of Sunset Path. While I would like to see Alternative A adopted (restore Witch's Cave trail at the base of the cliff), I should note that an excellent alternative exists for providing a hiking trail from the Awosting parking up to the Lake Minnewaska area that was not even considered in the plan. This is the Orchard to Dallas Pool Trail(or simply Dallas Pool trail).

Response:

Locating the trail head of the proposed Witch's Cave Trail 100 yards above the existing vehicular bridge over the Peter's Kill would not be in line with the rationale for re-opening this trail, which is to establish a foot-traffic-only connection from the Lower Awosting parking lot to the Lake Minnewaska area. This trail is expected to be a highly used trail. The selection of Alternative B for the trail route was based on the safety concerns of using the route along the narrow and steep trail (Alternative A) along the base of the cliff line. To provide a sustainable and safe option and accommodate the high use by the general public, Alternative B was chosen.

Dallas Pool Trail is not proposed to be reopened. It would be a parallel trail to Witch's Cave and Blueberry Run.

Carriage Roads

Comment: Smiley Carriage Road

- Many locals are willing to assist with the opening up of the Smiley Road.

- Smiley Carriage Road and Stony Kill Carriage Road are currently off limits to mountain bicycles and horses. I understand the need to balance public access with public safety and the liabilities that attach to Park management on this issue. At current staffing levels, the Park cannot adequately manage and maintain these remote areas, but this could be mitigated by greater use of local town resources and user groups. Opening this trail resource is important to spread the load of users over a greater area of the Preserve's wilderness and to the economies of local towns on the Northern border of the park. The quality of the wilderness experience is unique on these roads and should no longer be denied to horsemen and cyclists. At the very least, organized groups should be permitted to traverse these carriage roads by special permit or signage mentioning the status of the roadway.
- Will the Park consider opening these legacy roads to mountain bikes? If so, when. If not, why?

Response:

Smiley Carriage road is part of the historic carriage road restoration plan, which is currently in the first phase and will include an assessment and recommendations for existing conditions. The study will help identify the needs of various carriage roads. Improvements will be largely dependent on the availability of adequate funding and resources. A large portion of work requires equipment to restore the drainage, road base, and surface which cannot be accomplished by volunteers. The Preserve is always looking to work with volunteers keep carriage roads and trails open. Carriage roads open to multiply users, including biking, horseback riding and hiking, need to be in appropriately safe condition prior to permitting these uses.

Comment: Hamilton Point Carriage Road

- With better signage about speed limits and proper trail etiquette, the Hamilton Point Carriage Road could be re-opened to bikes. If accidents and user conflict are concerns, Hamilton Point Carriage Road could at least be opened to uphill bicycle traffic.
- The plan identifies this as an unimproved trail suitable for hiking only. This trail was once opened to mountain biking but has been closed to biking for years. Please consider restoring this trail and reopen it to mountain biking.

Response:

A significant effort was undertaken this past year to clear and cut back the shoulders of the carriage road, which were very overgrown. With that phase complete, much work remains to restore base and surface layers of the carriage road and install proper drainage. When the conditions of the Hamilton Point Carriage Road are improved, re-opening to bicycles will be considered.

Comment: Mud Lake/Verkeerder Kill Falls Sign

- Mud Lake/Verkeerder Kill Falls - This trail was accessed from the carriageway which loops around Lake Awosting. There was a sign on the carriageway indicating the trail. Please re-sign this junction. Also, re-mark this reroute. When I have been around Lake Awosting, I have not seen any indication of this trail.
- Please re-sign the route to Mud Lake/Verkeerder Kill Falls from Lake Awosting. There is no indication of this trail.

Response:

The access point to the Scenic Trail, which leads to Mud Lake (Pond) and onto Verkeerder Kill Falls, still exists on the southwest side of the Lake Awosting Carriage Road. The sign at that

junction is missing, but will be replaced. The trail is currently marked with paint blazes, in keeping with the marking method for all footpaths.

Camping

Comment: Backpack Camping

Why wasn't backpack camping considered within the master plan? There should be a few primitive spots identified for backpackers since primitive camping is considered compatible with the Preserve classification. SCORP identifies the need for camping within Ulster County.

Response:

It is OPRHP policy that camping/overnight stays take place in designated areas. Primitive camping opportunities are proposed outside of the Preserve boundaries at the Shawangunk Gateway Campground. It is felt that this new facility will address the need for camping within proximity to the Preserve and Ulster County.

Relationship to other plans and partners

Comment: Partnership

Berne Road Park is owned by the Town of Ellenville not the Agency; however some effort at a partnership could have been added to this plan.

Response:

Berne Road Park has been identified as an entry point to Minnewaska. The agency will work with Ellenville to promote Berne Road Park as an entrance to the Preserve. Chapter 4 – Vision and Goals includes communication and partnership goals that call for promoting regional tourism and the creation of new partnership opportunities.

Comment: Use Partnerships with Local User Groups

The park will need to be more creative and develop partnerships with local communities to raise money, support and volunteers to build trails and create more access.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC are interested in continuing the existing partnerships and developing new ones with local communities and volunteer groups. The master plan recommends the creation of a Friends Group to coordinate all interested groups wishing to support the Preserve.

Comment: Partner with Climbing Clubs/Organizations

- The Access Fund and the Gunks Climbers Coalition are in the best position to represent my interests and assist your Agency in the development of the Plan and would ask they be included in your decision making process.
- The GCC would like to expand their partnership with the park to include any new areas identified for climbing access.
- The GCC and Access Fund should be involved with climbing management decisions to the greatest extent possible.

Response:

OPRHP/PIPC will involve the Access Fund and the Gunks Climbers Coalition with the development of a climbing management plan.

Safety and Security

Comment: Risks

It should be noted that a walk in Minnewaska State Park is not like a walk or hike in Central Park in New York City. There are several inherent risks in hiking or walking at Minnewaska.

Response:

Signage within the Preserve identifies steep drop offs and other inherent risks associated with the usage of a park. Precautions, as well as emergency contact phone numbers, are provided at kiosks for patron use and included on maps/information distributed at gatehouses.

Comment: Park Map/Trail Marking

Trail maps need to be designed with intersections numbered and trails marked clearly both for ease of following the trails as well as notifying your location if lost or injured.

Response:

Preserve management will work with local emergency personnel to determine any additional appropriate methods of communication for emergency purposes. The Trail Signage Guidelines for the NY State Park System (currently in draft form) state that trail intersections should be well-labeled using different symbols or text (on markers or signs) to signify different trails. Trail intersection signage will be included in upgrades to the trail system and will aid in the case of emergencies and notification of location.

Comment: Risk Management Plan

The park should create a risk management plan to maximize safety and user enjoyment as well as emergency response.

Response:

The Preserve currently has an Emergency Action Plan (EAP) which is updated periodically. Risk management is considered part of the EAP.

Comment: Emergency Services

There is no contingency in the plan for proper staffing or support for local emergency service people such as fire, rescue and police.

Response:

A comprehensive EAP is in place that includes procedures to be followed during various incidents. Chapter 3 - Environmental Setting includes a section on emergency plans and services and the emergency response system. The park will continue its coordination with local emergency services.

Comment: Ridge wide policing

Park Police enforcement should be shared by other Shawangunk Ridge partners to further resource protection.

Response:

The NYS Park Police provide law enforcement services for the Preserve and works cooperatively with other area law enforcement agencies on matters of mutual concern.

Access and Entrance

Comment: Traffic Impact Study at Minnewaska Entrance

It has been noted in the Master Plan that vehicular traffic backs up onto State Route 44/55 during periods of high visitation. A Traffic Impact Study (TIS) should be done to determine the severity of the backups and possible mitigation (right and left turn lanes, shoulder widening etc.)

Response:

It has long been recognized that traffic concerns occur at the vehicular entrance point to Minnewaska State Park Preserve during peak visitation days. Both the 1993 plan, as well as this plan, acknowledged this concern, and both plans proposed internal park circulatory adjustments to address this issue. The current plan has the vehicular entranceway and toll booths adjusted and relocated accordingly to allow for 50 vehicles (2 lanes of 25 cars) to be stacked up off of Highway Route 44/55 in an effort to mitigate some of these back-up problems. While it is uncertain if this adjustment will solve every back-up situation, it is anticipated that it should have a very positive benefit. OPRHP and park management will continue to monitor this concern, while keeping DOT apprised of issues that may develop both at current times and after implementation of this proposal, so that they may also investigate options to address traffic concerns at this park entry point.

Comment: Congestion on 44/45

The preferred entrance alternative is said to reduce congestion on highway 44/55. The congestion should be eliminated. Safety has to be first and the infrastructure has to be in place first before any of the other things in the plan should begin. Please make this a priority.

Response:

The design of the entrance area will reduce congestion significantly on Highway 44/55 and is a priority. A traffic study was completed by a consultant as part of the 1993 plan, which proposed 25 additional parking spaces to “stack” cars while they wait to pay the vehicle access fee. The 2010 master plan proposes to add an additional lane onto the previous design creating enough stacking room for up to 50 cars on a busy day, getting them off the highway and allowing through traffic to pass by. The rate of vehicle turnover from the parking lots is a variable that can only be estimated. By doubling the stacking room and increasing the parking from what is currently available (and keeping with the 1993 parking lot totals), it is expected to reduce highway congestion greatly with the hope that it will be eliminated.

Comment: Scenic Quality of 44/45

Highway 44/55 through Minnewaska is part of the Shawangunk Mountain Scenic Byway. Any plans for the Preserve entrance should consider the protection of the Byway's viewshed and scenic resources through design considerations such as screening of paved areas.

Response:

Viewshed protection from Highway 44/55 is considered within the plan and will be considered within the design phase as well.

Comment: Access to the Smiley Residence

A clear diagram of road access by or thru the proposed enlarged picnic area to the Smiley residence and the lake swim cove as soon as available will be appreciated.

Response:

Figure 2, page 135 – Lake Minnewaska Area Design identifies vehicular access to the Smiley residence along a carriage road. Opportunities for access are also available from the lower parking lot and will be discussed with the leaseholder upon the development of detailed design documents.

Operations

Comment: Earlier Park Preserve Open Time

I was wondering if the park could open earlier than 9 AM. I like to run in the early morning, and the park is a beautiful place to go, but the current opening time is too late. Could an automatic system be put in place that would open the gates after swiping an Empire Passport? Due to the budget cuts/restraints, I realize that having someone in the booth early morning is probably not a possibility, but an automatic system of sort might work out. The park needs to open its doors earlier two days each week. The current 9:00 AM opening on weekdays precludes hundreds of users the opportunity to run, bike, hike, ski, climb or bird watch in the morning.

Response:

Opening the Preserve before 9 AM, without any staff present, is not compatible with our mission of providing safe and enjoyable recreation opportunities. The remote setting and inherent dangers that exist within the Preserve require that trained staff should be available when the Preserve is open to the public. The Preserve did try an earlier opening time in 2006, but the attendance figures did not support the extra staff required. There are certain guided programs that happen before 9 AM and are open to the public, such as our bird watching programs. In addition, parallel opportunities exist on nearby properties, such as the Mohonk Preserve, Rail Trail, etc. for early morning activities.

Comment: Entrance Redesign is High Priority

We are encouraged that redesign of the main park entrance is listed in the first phase. However, we would like it moved to the top of the list due to the public safety concerns.

Response:

The projects within each phase are not listed in any priority. As funding becomes available, projects will be progressed.

Comment: Electronic Passes

I would like to suggest that the plan examine the cost of using electronic means of access to the Preserve. E-Z Pass technology may now be viable for this location and may dramatically improve the speed of processing guests through the main entrance. Electronic access for Empire Pass holders might be another option to speed guests through the entrance.

Response:

The infrastructure and technology is not currently available. Scanners for Empire Pass holders may be considered in the future.

Comment: Variable Message Sign at Exit 18

Electronic signs at the NYS Thruway Exit in New Paltz should also be examined as a way to deter guests when the park is at capacity. If the technology for these items is too expensive or not yet ready, I suggest you build the infrastructure into the new planned entrance.

Response:

The Preserve's policy, once parking areas have filled, is to monitor the parking areas and as vehicles leave, allow an equal number of vehicles to enter. Notifying potential visitors at the NYS Thruway exit in New Paltz, that the Minnewaska parking areas are full would not accurately describe the availability of parking because parking spots may have become available in the time it takes to travel to Minnewaska from the Thruway. Once at the Minnewaska parking areas, if no parking is available, visitors can be directed to adjacent properties or attractions through the distribution of local area guides and other information.

Comment: Traffic Backups During Busy Times

You need to do something about the traffic that backs up 299 and Spring Town Rd every weekend during the busy season, slowing travel to nearly a standstill so that it takes 40 minutes to go half a mile while the park is already filled to capacity.

Response:

This is an issue beyond the control of OPRHP/PIPC.

Comment: Entrance Signage

You need to promote other entrances to the park and redirect traffic during busy periods.

Response:

Once satellite parking areas have been formally adopted, each entry point will have appropriate signage regarding user ethics, visitor orientation, and rules and regulations. Various signage on state, county and town roads will be investigated to better direct users to these satellite parking areas. OPRHP is currently developing a statewide signage guide to develop consistent signage throughout the properties it administers.

Comment: Public Transportation

Provide public transportation from the park-n-rides on 32 and 299 at the Thruway, and let people know about the traffic problems.

Response:

County transportation is currently not designed to come to the Preserve, nor is the entrance designed to have a bus stop. The Preserve can coordinate with the County to explore the possibility of a bus route in the future, which may deter congestion and promote sustainable transportation options.

Comment: Sam's Point Preserve Access

The park should allow greater access to the land now usurped by Sam's Point/TNC.

Response:

Sam's Point Preserve is managed by The Nature Conservancy and subject to the master plan for Sam's Point Preserve. Preserve management and staff consistently coordinate with Nature Conservancy staff.

Comment: Preserve Manager's Other Parks

The two other parks the park superintendent manages should have some other arrangement. They should not be managed by Minnewaska staff.

Response:

There is one other park under the direction of the Park Manager, which is Bristol Beach State Park. Bristol Beach is an undeveloped, unfunded park property, so minimal park resources are dedicated to its operation. Currently, a caretaker resides on the property, who handles the majority of maintenance and operational needs.

Historic Resources

Comment: Power House

The plan recommends keeping the long defunct power house on the Peter's Kill. The power house has no historic value, it is empty, a prospective nuisance and there is no reason to keep it. To do so would be inconsistent with wild land management. The power house should be removed.

Response:

The power house remains are National Register Eligible and are a significant cultural feature within the Preserve that shows how power was generated for the past resorts. The structure will remain as an interpretive feature and an access trail developed to it from the Peter's Kill office.

Comment: Mine Hollow Area

The historically correct name for "Mine Hollow" is "Mine Hole" and should be changed in the plan.

Response:

Mine Hollow has been changed to Mine Hole within the plan.

Comment: Lake House

The house at Lake Awosting provides no purpose within the plan. Keeping it is not consistent with wild land management. It provides no historic value and should be removed.

Response:

Structures that remain in the park were inventoried by SHPO. Specific recommendations regarding the use or demolition of structures were made after an evaluation by SHPO and the agency.

Comment: Archeological Resources

Archeological resources should be identified on maps as areas to be protected.

Response:

Site specific locations are not provided on master plan maps as a method to protect the resources. A general archeological sensitivity map has been provided within the plan as a means to educate and guide development.

Comment: Historic District

On November 2, 2000 the “Trapps Mountain Hamlet Historic District” was added to the National Register of Historic Places. It is comprised of 4,330 acres, 6 buildings and 24 structures. The last house remaining is the Van Leuven Cabin built by Eli Van Leuven in 1889 and restored by the Mohonk Preserve in 1998. The Historic District is located on Minnewaska State Park and Mohonk Preserve lands straddling NYS 44/55 in the vicinity of Clove Road and Coxing Kill. See National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form OMB No. 10024-0018. This should be reflected in the Plan.

Response:

The Trapps Mountain Historic District has been identified on Figure 13 - Sensitive Archeological Areas and Cultural Resources map, and within Chapter 3 – Environmental Setting under “Cultural Resources”.

Carrying Capacity

Comment: Carrying Capacity

You should seriously consider the real carrying capacity of a fragile ecosystem and not cave in to the advocates for tourist dollars.

Response:

Carrying capacity studies have been conducted for Minnewaska and are described in the 1993 plan. The capacity of the Preserve is not being approached. The master plan calls for no net increase and is consistent with the previous plan.

Motorized Vehicles

Comment: Snowmobiling

Please consider this request to include Snowmobiling during the winter season as an acceptable use on the extensive carriage trail system. We avid snowmobilers are finding ourselves ever more

limited in places to enjoy this winter family activity. We understand the sensitive environmental nature of the ridge and the lakes; however, it seems reasonable that some carriage trails could be designated for snowmobile use. Your own agency has a snowmobile unit and is well aware that the impact of snowmobiles on the physical land is nil. You continue to choose to ignore this fact, perhaps due to pressure by certain groups who are socially opposed to snowmobiling. The fact that snowmobilers provide a badly needed winter revenue stream, and pump nearly a billion dollars into the economy of this state each year, is also ignored in favor of accommodating tourists from nearby New York City. The roads in the Awosting Reserve were constructed to meet vehicle standards. Snowmobiles should be allowed on them.

Response:

The Preserve designation (See Appendix H - Article 20) does not permit the use of motorized vehicles for recreational purposes within a preserve. The Preserve focuses on the preservation of natural and cultural resources and allows only passive activities. Snowmobiling will not be a permitted use within the Preserve.

Ellenville/Gardiner Access

Comment: Ellenville

- It is imperative that the Ellenville area be included in the park system as a means to improve and increase tourism as an economic engine for the Ellenville area. Incorporating our portion of the Palisades Park system into the Minnewaska master plan can be a tremendous help in our continuing efforts.
- An Ellenville entrance to the park should be considered in the plan. It would help to realize the goal of the Shawangunk Mountain Scenic Byway Plan to redistribute tourism from New Paltz.
- Parks should work with the Department of Transportation to provide signage to the park through Ellenville for hiking and biking access to the Smiley Road.

Response:

The master plan does include the Berme Park Road Park as a municipally owned access point to the Preserve via Smiley Carriage Road (see Chapter 3 – Environmental Setting under “Access Points and Parking”). Since this facility is not owned by the Park it has not been directly incorporated as part of the master plan. OPRHP/PIPC are willing to work with the town in discussing their interests on how the Berme Road Park can provide greater access to the Preserve. OPRHP/PIPC are also willing to work with DOT regarding development of consistent signage.

Comment: Berme Road Park

An official entrance should be provided at Berme Road Park. The Smiley Road should be restored to encourage access.

Response:

Berme Road Park has been identified as an entry point to the Preserve. OPRHP/PIPC will work with Ellenville to promote Berme Road Park as an entrance. Currently, a carriage road restoration plan is being developed for the Preserve which assesses the existing conditions and makes recommendations for their improvement. The restoration of Smiley Road to carriage road status is a

significant task and will require a large amount of funds to accomplish. A large portion of the carriage road requires equipment to restore the drainage, road base, and surface which cannot be accomplished by traditional volunteer labor. While the restoration of this carriage road is a project OPRHP/PIPC are certainly interested in, funding, maintenance and the prioritization of other projects does not warrant the restoration of this carriage road in the foreseeable future.

Comment: Gardiner Entrance

A major entrance to the park should be provided from Gardiner to help its economy and reduce the current congestion.

Response:

The main entrance to the park is along 44/45. A satellite entrance in Gardiner exists to the Awosting Reserve area and is proposed to be expanded. A new, main entrance to the Preserve would have significant impact to the resources and will not be included in the plan.

Comment: Access to DEC and Mohonk

Access opportunities from Minnewaska to the DEC property, Witches Hole, and the Mohonk Preserve should be provided in the master plan identifying allowable uses, as you have done for Sam's Point.

Response:

PIPC owns a portion of the Sam's Point property whereas the other properties are owned by other entities. Access through the Witches Hole and to the Mohonk Preserve is identified in the Trails Plan. The master plan provides guidance and direction for Minnewaska State Park Preserve and shows connections to adjoining properties. It is not intended to identify all uses within adjoining properties.

Other Comments

Comment: Bird Conservation Area Management Guidance Summary

The Plan and BCA Management Guidance Summary should make reference to guidelines that were developed for Peregrine Falcons, Common Ravens and other cliff-nesting birds by the Shawangunk Ridge Biodiversity Partnership (SRBP).

Response:

The BCA Management Guidance Summary recommends protection strategies for cliff-nesting birds that are consistent with those outlined in the SRBP document. In addition, the Management Guidance Summary has incorporated outreach and education strategies, focused on minimizing conflict over site closures that are suggested by the SRBP.

Comment: Climbing Safety and Education Programs

We recommend implementing the protocols developed by Mohonk Preserve (MP) and SRBP and adopting education programs for climber education/sensitivity that have been piloted at Mohonk Preserve with support from the Access Fund.

Response:

The protocols developed by MP and the SRBP for climber education/sensitivity will be considered within the planning process for the climbing management plan..

Comment: Old Growth Forest

The plan states, “the Palmaghatt Kill Ravine is the only officially documented example of old growth in southeastern New York State.” It is important to protect this area. In addition, it is also important to recognize and protect the hemlock-hardwood swamps of Spruce Glen and Murray Hill Swamp. These areas should be included as sensitive old growth forest and deserve special protection. Spruce Glen supports some of the oldest trees in the state; many of these trees grow close to the historic carriage road.

Response:

The Palmaghatt Kill Ravine does not have any designated trails or access and will continue to be protected as a significant ecological resource. Any trail work performed within the Preserve will minimize impacts to natural resources including any old trees.

Comment: Fishing

Will you require a regional fishing permit at Tillson Lake and will it only be issued from the regional Bear Mountain office?

Response:

A valid New York State fishing license is required to fish on Tillson Lake. A regional fishing permit is not required to fish at Tillson Lake. Boats with electric trolling motors are allowed on Tillson Lake and require a permit.

Persons/Organizations Who Provided Comments

Last Name	First Name	Title	Organization
	Levi	Resident	Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists – CLIMB
Aaron	Steve	Resident	
Abate	Catherine	Resident	
Adams	John	Resident	
Alicandi	Hank	Head Ranger/ Director of Stewardship	Mohonk Preserve
Alt	Aya Kristen	Resident	
Annibell	Tess	Resident	
Apollo	Wilson	Resident	
Archer	Chris	Resident	
Armstrong	John	Resident	
Babulski	Julie	Resident	
Baird	Bill	Resident	
Banks	Pamela	Resident	
Beaupre	Jason	Marketing Director/ Guide	High Exposure Adventures Inc.
Bernstein	Jana	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Bernstein	Jason	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Bird	David C.	Resident	Mountain Biking
Bird	Stephen	Resident	
Blackman	Angela	Resident	
Blake	Tom	Resident	
Blakeley	Fred	Resident	
Bonner	Nick	Resident	
Boos	Jeff	Resident	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club
Bouchard	Myriam	NYS Certified Guide	American Mountain Guide Association
Boyce	Kevin A.	Resident	
Braun	Larry	Chair	NY-NJ Trail Conference
Brownstein	David	Resident	
Bruce-Robertson	Lawrence	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Burns	Julia Corey	Resident	
Burns	Kathy	Director of GUMBA	All use of trails
Byrko	Marina	Resident	
Canike	Anthony	Resident	
Carano	Tom	Resident	

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Carfora	Eugene	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Casale	Steven	Writer/Editor	The New Paltz Oracle
Castillo	Tony	Resident	
Cetton	Gregory	Resident	
Chen	Nina	Resident	
Chervenak	Thomas	Resident	
Chilas	Christopher	Resident	
Cilenti	Ottoviano	Deputy Supervisor	Town of Rochester
Clune	Russ	Resident	
Cochran	Tim	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Cook	Thomas	Resident	Climber Interests
Copelin	Craig	Resident	
Cranston	Linda	Resident	Thendara member, Harriman Park trail maintainer & tax payer
Crefeld	Jon	Resident	
Crowe	Jonathan	Resident	
Curri	Neil	Resident	
Daniels	Edwin	Resident	
Delao	Daniel R.	Resident	
Dellett	Brian	Resident	
Deppen	Jamie	Resident	
Donnelly	Robert	Resident	
Donoghue	Terrence	N.Y. Department of Transportation	
Doucette	Peter	Resident	
Dreier	Joseph	Resident	
Driscoll	Kerri	Resident	
Duvallet	Felix	Resident	
Dye	Charlene	Resident	
Echenagucia	Richard	Resident	
Ecker	Susan Margot	Resident	
Edwards	Ron	Resident	
Eisenberger	Andreas W.	Resident	
Ellenbogen	Wayne	Resident	
Fagan	Lin	President	John Burroughs Natural History Society
Ferguson	Doug	GCC Board Owner Mtn Skills	GCC, Mtn Skills Climbing Guides
Fracchia	Christian	Resident	
Franke	Jakob	Chair Long Path South Committee	NY-NJ Trail Conference
Freer	Beth H.	RN, Nurse Administrator, Retired	Tax Payers for Reason

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Freer	James A.	Resident	Gardiner Residents
Friberg	Paul	Resident	
Fried	Marc B.	Resident	
Fuchs	Elinor	Resident	
Gagnon	Stephanie Berlin	Resident	
Genter	Keith	Resident	
Gibson	David	Executive Director	Protect the Adirondacks
Giffuni	Christopher	CPA	Giffuni & Young CPA, P.C.
Giffuni	Justin	Resident	
Goetz	Tim	Resident	
Goodell	Edward	Executive Director	New York-New Jersey Trails Conference
Gorman	Margaret	Resident	
Gosling	Chris	Resident	
Gottlieb	Richard	President	Rock and Snow
Grant	King	Resident	
Graver	Robert	Chairman	Mountaineering Section, Potomac Appalachian Trail Club
Grehl	Mary	Resident	
Guarino	Christine	Resident	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club
Guenther	Ann	Resident	
Haas, PhD	Julie	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition
Hahn	Mark	Resident	GUMBA, Fats in the Cats
Harrison	Jay	Resident	
Hart	John	Ulster Director	NY Snowmobile Association
Heenan	Walter	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition
Henry	Chris	Resident	
Heyman	Mark	Resident	
Hildenbrand	Frank	Resident	Fats in the Cats, international Mountain Bicycling Association
Hoagland	Glenn	Executive Director	Mohonk Preserve
Hobby	David	Resident	
Holets	Will	Resident	
Hughes	Emily	Resident	
Itin	Boris	Staff Scientist	
Janeway	William C.	Regional Director	New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Joseph	Michael	Resident	
Juhl	Peter M.	Resident	
Kalal	Angela	Resident	
Kane	Nathaniel	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition

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Kaplan	Jefferey	Mayor	Village of Ellenville
Karl	Jason	Resident	
Keith	Jason	Policy Director	Access Fund
Kern	Janet	Resident	
Khrichtchatyi	Jenya	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Khrichtchatyi	Michael	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Kleeger	Tim	Resident	
Knapp	Kyle	Resident	
Knowlton	Steven	Resident	
Knutson	Michael R.	Resident	
Kosofsky	Larry	Resident	
Kover	Elihu	Resident	
Kucar	Dorothy	Resident	
LaBodde	Keith	Resident	
LaFera	Thomas	Resident	
Lagodka	Rachel	Co-Chair	Village of New Paltz Environmental Conservation Commiss.
Langton	Samantha	Resident	LUNA Chix, Fats in the Cats
Lannamann	Tom	Resident	
LaRocque	Nancy	Resident	
Lawler	Julianne	Resident	
Lee	Cara	Director	Shawangunk Ridge Program - The Nature Conservancy
Leffler	Brian	Resident	
Lent	Courtney M	Resident	
Lent	Travis	Resident	
Lerner	Jean	Resident	
Lewis	Dan	Resident	
Lewis	Philip	Resident	Wheel & Heel Bicycles
Lewis	Susan	Resident	
Lillis	Julie Seyfert	Resident	
Littleton	Jesse	Resident	
Loeb	Harvey	Resident	
Lucander	David	Resident	
Mabee	Carleton	Historian	Town of Gardiner
MacElhiney	Michael	Resident	
Madden	Lisa	Resident	
Mage	Judy	Coordinator	Minnewaska Distance Swimmers Association
Magnus	Leonard	Resident	Thendara Mtn Club

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Marcoe	Terrie	Resident	Climbers
Mardiney	Annie	Resident	
Marks	Alex	Resident	
Marks	Evan	President	Gunks, Inc.
Martin	Todd	Resident	
Mattessich	Adam R	Resident	
Matthews	Elaine	Resident	
McCabe	Jim	Resident	
McCarthy	Thomas	Resident	
Medley	Paula	President	Basha Kill Area Association Inc.
Menk	France	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition
Migliore	Michael J.	Chairman	Town of Gardiner Environmental Conservation Commission
Miller	Janet	Resident	American Alpine Club
Minde	Peter	Resident	
Molitoris	Martin M.	Director	American Mountain Guide Association
Murray	John	Resident	
Musgrave	Glen	Resident	
Nel	Johan	Resident	
Nemeth	Richard	Registered Architect	
Nergui	Dolgio	Resident	
Nimmer	Peter	Resident	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club, GUMBA
Nitchman	Kim	Resident	
Novak	Betsy	Executive Director	American Mountain Guides Association
Nozkowski	Thomas	Vice-President	Friends of Shawangunks
O'Brien	Evan	Resident	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club
O'Brien	Sean	Resident	
O'Dell	Anne M.	Member	Shawangunk Snowmobile & Rescue Club
O'Neill	Anne	Resident	
Olsen	Bret	Resident	
Owen	Les	Resident	
Ozminkowski	Timothy	Resident	
Paddock	Gary	Resident	
Pallor	Gerald	Resident	
Parikh	Jiren	Resident	
Parmalee	Patty Lee	Coordinator	Save the Ridge
Pavelchek	Edward	Resident	
Pazer	Jannette Wing	Secretary	Gunks Climber's Coalition

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Perkins	Scott	Resident	
Peterson	Chris	Resident	
Picard	Evan	Resident	
Pickering	Amy	Resident	
Pinnavaia	Marc	Resident	
Pisaneschi	David	Conservation Chair	Albany Chapter – ADK
Platt	Frances	Resident	
Polvere	Fred	Resident	
Powers	Phil	Executive Director	The American Alpine Club
Purcell	Colin	Resident	
Quadrino	James	Resident	
Randall	Lawrence	Resident	
Rawdon	Mike	Climber	
Reed	Jon	Resident	
Reis	Charil	Resident	
Ricardo	Don	Resident	
Rice	Steve	Resident	Town of Rochester Environmental Conservation Committee
Richichi	Vin	Resident	
Robinson	Brady	Resident	
Ronan, RN, MHA	Kathleen	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Rosenblum	Daniel	Resident	
Rosenstein	David	Resident	Access Fund
Rosenthal	Irwin	Resident	
Roth	Will	Resident	
Ruch	Christopher	Resident	
Rueff	Mark	Resident	Cross Country Skiers
Rufner	Christian	Resident	
Ruoff	Eugene	Resident	
Ryan	Richard	Resident	
Samaras	Arthur	Resident	
Santilli	Elizabeth	Resident	
Schochat	Kevin	Resident	
Schultz	Élan	Resident	Quilvest USA, Inc.
Schwabe	Luise	Resident	
Sealfon	Brad	Environmental Advocate	
Segal	Robert	Resident	
Seward	John D.	Resident	

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Sharma	Rick K.	Resident	
Shashaty	Bill	Resident	
Sherman	Mara	Resident	
Shineleva	Yekaterina	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Shipp	Ryan	Resident	
Shodai	Takayuki	Resident	
Shultz	Paul	Resident	GCC, Access Fund, American Mountain Guide Association
Shute	Lyle	Resident	
Simon	John	Resident	
Singh	Kirat	Resident	
Smiley	Alfred	Resident	
Smith	Catherine K.	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Sofer	Ken	Resident	Blockheads – Burritos brought to life
Solomon	Joseph	Resident	
Spain	Mark	Resident	
Spatz	Christopher	Resident	
Sprance	Jill	Resident	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club
Stegen	Arthur	Coach	
Stern	Jon	Coach	Section 9 Ski
Strickler	Dawes	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition
Strouse	Miriam	Resident	
Stycos	Marek	Resident	
Sullivan	BT	Resident	
Svenningsen	Lynne & John	Residents	
Teitelbaum	Robert	Resident	
Thorpe	Russell	President	Fats in the Cats Bicycle Club
Travers	Richard A.	President	Rondout Valley Business Association
Troiano	William	Resident	NorStar Investigations
Trumbore	Martin	Resident & Owner	Barra & Trumbore Stone Fabricators
Vadasz	George	Resident	
Valinsky	Jeannie	Resident	
Vassallo	Christina	Resident	
Verher	Serge	Resident	
Vinokur	Vadim	Resident	
Vitti	Michael	President	Concerned Long Island Mountain Bicyclists – CLIMB
Vogel	Kenneth J.	Resident	
Vultaggio	Chris	Resident	

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Walker	Reed	Resident	
Waltermaurer	Ezra	Resident	
Warren	Seth	Resident	
Watts	Brian	Resident	
Wegener	Al	Executive Director	The Shawangunk Mountains Regional Partnership
Wegner	Susan	Resident	
Weir	Georgette	Communications Specialist	New York-New Jersey Trail Conference
Wheelock	Larry	Special Projects Mgr	NY-NJ Trail Conference
White	George	Resident	
White	Sandra	Resident	
Widmann	Theresa	Resident	
Wightman	Jeff	Resident	
Willemsen	Ryan	Resident	Gunks Climber's Coalition, Access Fund
Wood	James	Resident	C4 Development
Woodward	John C	Resident	John C Woodward
Wysocki	Linda	Resident	
Yoshida	Martha	Resident	
Yukoweic	Michael	Resident	
Zimmerman	H. Neil	Resident	

