

2.10 Recreational Opportunities

The Catskill Park is a mountainous region of public and private lands in Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan counties. The natural and cultural heritage of the Catskill region is inextricably linked to the unique high quality streams that course through its mountains and valleys and play a defining role in the character of its landscape. Recreation in and around these Catskill streams provides residents and visitors with a myriad of opportunities to reconnect with the natural world.

Catskill Forest Preserve

Fifty-three percent of the Schoharie Creek watershed is located within the Catskill Park “blue line” (Figure 2.10.1). Only 18% of the watershed is actually protected within the Catskill Park’s forest preserves and other state owned parks. A 100 ft. riparian corridor along the Schoharie Creek mainstem lies almost entirely outside any protected preserves.

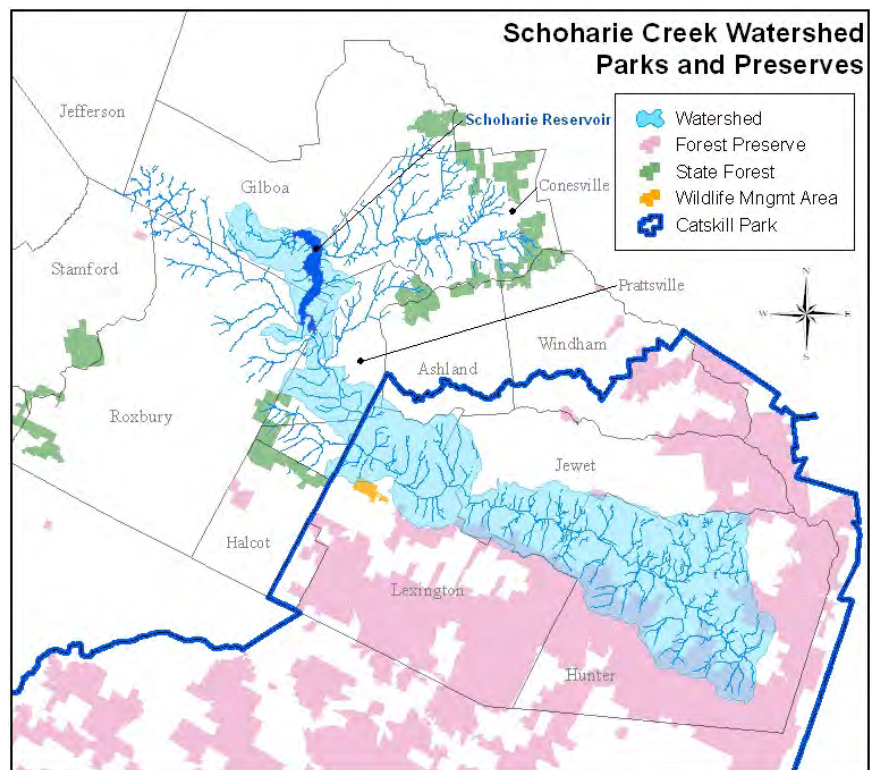


Fig 2.10.1 Schoharie Creek Watershed Parks and Preserves

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) manages lands in the forest preserve according to its classification in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (NYSDEC, 1985). Management recommendations are based on specific land characteristics and its capacity to withstand certain uses. These public uses include Wild Forest, Wilderness, Intensive Use and Administrative Use. DEC’s *Catskill Forest Preserve Map and Guide* graphically depicts the locations of these different management areas and

provides general background information about the Catskill Park and Preserve. This information can be obtained at DEC's regional offices. Locations of their offices are listed on DEC's website: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/about/abtrull3.html>. There is also an interactive map on DEC's website called Environmental Navigator. This map shows the entire state of New York and can be magnified to specific locations, showing recreational attributes such as trails and parking facilities. This map service can be accessed through the following web address: <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/cfm/xtapps/statelands/index.cfm>.

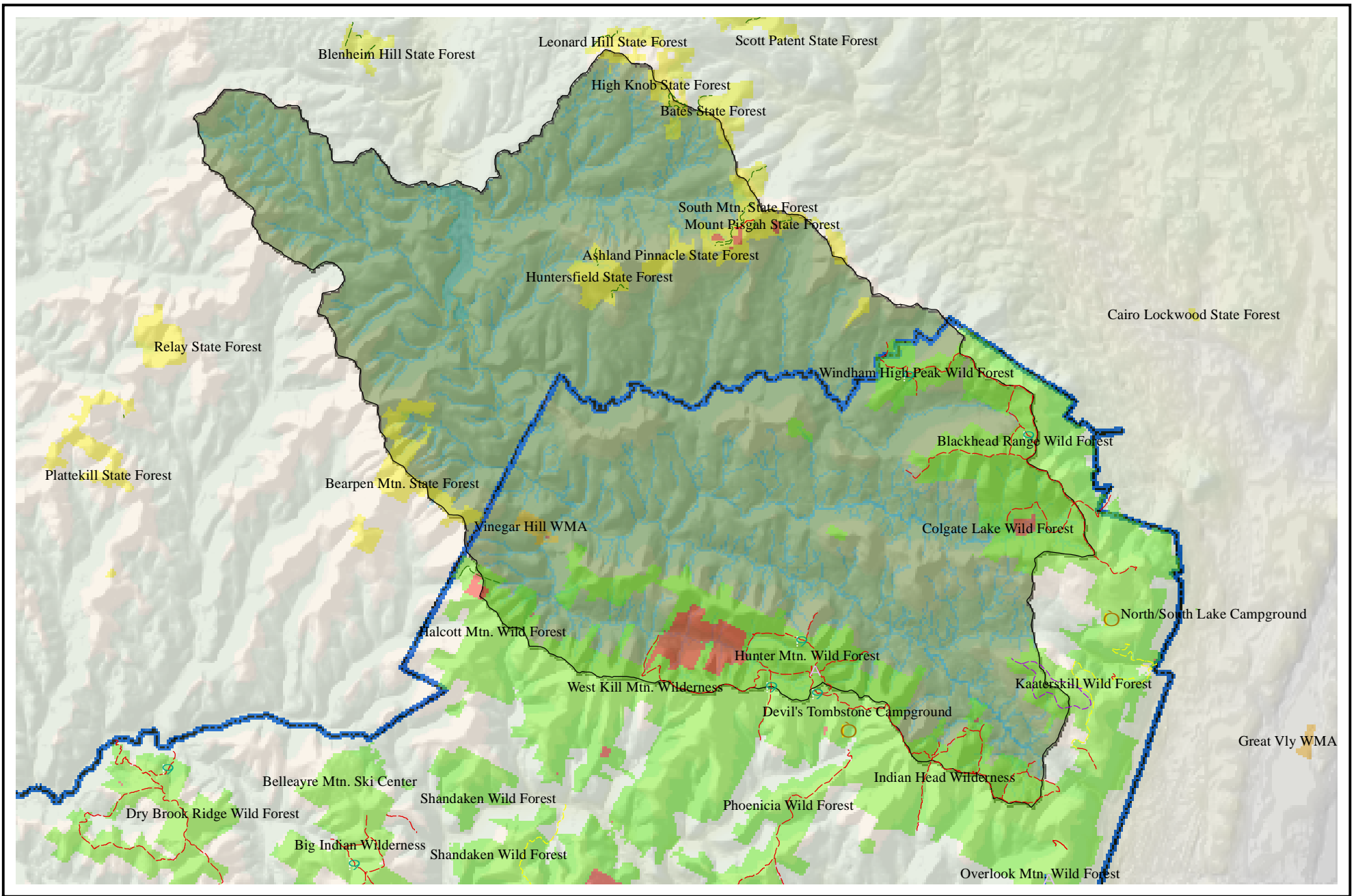


Hunter Mountain Fire Tower

The Schoharie Creek watershed encompasses many regional parks and preserves (Figure 2.10.2). Surrounding its headwaters on the southwest side is Hunter Mountain Wild Forest and Indian Head Wilderness. Hunter Mountain is a popular hiking destination. At the summit is a fire tower offering an excellent view, used in the past to keep an eye out for fires. In the winter Hunter Mountain is

famous for its ski slopes, with Hunter Mountain Ski Bowl attracting many skiers each year. South of Hunter Mountain summit (outside the Schoharie Creek watershed,) is Devils Tombstone State Campground. Several other preserves are located just south of the Schoharie Creek watershed, in some cases lying partially within the watershed basin or sharing borders with the watershed preserves. Such preserves include Halcott Mountain Wild Forest, Phoenicia Wild Forest, Westkill Mountain Wilderness, Shandaken Wild Forest, and Overlook Mountain Wild Forest.

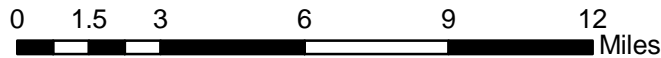
On the northeast side of the Schoharie Creek's headwater region is Kaaterskill Wild Forest. This preserve lies only partially within the Schoharie Creek basin. It contains North/South Lake Campground, a popular destination for hiking, boating, fishing, swimming and camping. Continuing north is Colgate Lake Wild Forest and Blackhead Range Wild Forest, followed by Windham High Peak Wild Forest. Windham Mountain is another popular ski resort.



NYS DEC Forest Preserve Land

- Legend**
- Forest Preserve
 - State Forest
 - Wildlife Management
 - Private Inholding
 - Foot Trail
 - Snowmobile Trail
 - Multi-Purpose Trail
 - Access Trail (unmarked)
 - Fire Tower
 - Lean-to
 - Campground
 - Schoharie Creek Basin
 - Catskill Park

Schoharie Creek Basin
Fig 2.10.2



There are several smaller preserves located near the bottom of the Schoharie Creek where it flows into the Schoharie Reservoir. On the west side of this region there is Bearpen Mountain State Forest. Further west there is Plattekill State Forest and Relay State Forest. On the east side of this region, where tributaries flow directly into the Schoharie Reservoir, there are a cluster of State Preserves. These include Huntersfield, Ashland Pinnacle, Manorkill, Mount Pisgah, Bates, and High Knob State Forests. Leonard Hill State Forest, a non-DEC preserve, is also located in this region.

All the preserves mentioned in this lower region are located outside the Catskill Park. Table 2.10.1 displays the different types of NYS preserves and trails (both DEC and non-DEC) located within the Schoharie Creek watershed and the area they encompass.

<u>Preserve Type</u>	<u>Area/Distance</u>
Forest Preserve	8934.9 acres
State Preserve	9.8 acres
Wildlife Management Area	50.1 acres
Foot Trail	15.7 miles
Snowmobile Trail	0.6 miles

Table 2.10.1 NYS preserves and trails in the Schoharie Creek watershed.

There is ample lodging and restaurants in and around many of these locations as they are some of the most frequently visited destinations in the Catskill Park. Hiking is permitted on all lands held by NYS. A good website for information on various hikes is www.localhikes.com. Hunting is allowed subject to required NYS licenses and regulations.

The Long Path

A trail called the Long Path passes through the Schoharie Creek watershed. The Long Path is a 326 mile hiking trail that stretches from the George Washington Bridge in New Jersey to White Face Mountain in the Adirondacks. On its way through the Schoharie Creek watershed it passes through both New York State and New York City owned land. It enters the Schoharie Creek watershed in the Blackhead Range Wild Forest, meanders through such preserves as Windham High Peak Wild Forest, before reaching a northeastern piece of the Schoharie Reservoir and exiting the watershed. Roughly 35 miles of the Long Path lie within the Schoharie Creek basin. The Catskill Trails Committee manages sections of the trail within the Catskill Park, and the Long Path North Committee manages those which are north of the park. The Long Path North Committee is currently trying to bypass

road paths, taking the trail into more wooded areas in hopes of sparking greater interest and use of the trail. They wish to do this in the small State Preserves located in the northeastern region of the Schoharie Creek watershed, namely Huntersfield State Forest. For more information on the Long Path visit: <http://www.nynjtc.org/trails/longpath/>.

NYCDEP Recreation Land

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) manages land within the Schoharie Creek watershed basin. This is part of an effort to protect and improve the quality of NYC drinking water through natural filtration. As of August 2006, DEP owned approximately 8,920 acres within the Schoharie Creek basin, 5,811 acres of which is available for public recreation. The types of recreation that are permitted on these lands include hunting, fishing, and hiking. All three of these recreational activities have specific guidelines and designated areas at which they can be pursued.

In general, areas with signs that state “Public Area” can be accessed without a permit. In order to access most city lands, DEP requires that an Access Permit is obtained. Permits are free of charge and are valid for 5 years, at which point they can be updated for free. These permits can be applied for online at the following web address:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrecreation.html#here>.

Table 2.10.2 shows a list of city-owned recreational areas within the Schoharie Creek basin where hunting is allowed and what types of other activities are permitted. In order to hunt on city lands a Hunt Tag must be obtained from DEP in addition to an Access Permit. Hunt Tag application forms can be downloaded at the following web address:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrechunt.html#hunttag>. For the 2006-2007 season a pilot program for hunting small game, turkey and bear has been launched. This is the first time this type of hunting will be allowed on city land. The program restricts this particular hunting to specified areas (Table 2.10.2). Hunters must also have a valid NYS hunting license and follow all other NYS hunting laws and regulations while hunting on city land. Further information pertaining to specially designated hunting areas and specific rules and regulations can be found at the following web address:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrechunt.html>

As of August 2006, approximately 5,661 of city land in the Schoharie basin was open for hiking. Hiking is not permitted on all recreational areas, only at designated areas (Table

2.10.2) and “Public Areas.” Hiking includes skiing, snowshoeing, bird watching, nature observation and photography. Hiking is not permitted on or around any NYC reservoirs. More information can be found through DEPs “Rules for the Recreational Use of Water Supply Lands and Waters” which can be accessed at the following web address:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrecales.html>. Maps of the individual

recreational areas can be downloaded at the following web address:

<http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrecmaps.html>. Only those possessing an

Access Permit can view these maps. Many common questions about accessing city lands are answered on the FAQ page: <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/accessfaq.html>.

Management Unit	Location (Road(s), Town)	Hunting	Small Game, Turkey, Bear	Fishing	Hiking
McGregor Mountain	Charcoal Rd. and Rt. 23, Roxbury and Gilboa	X			X
West Schoharie	William Lutz Rd, Roxbury	X			X
Road Seven	NYC Rd 7, Gilboa	X			
Bull Hill	Bull Hill Rd, Conesville	X		X	X
Hubbard Hill South	East Conesville Rd, Conesville	X	X		X
Bearkill	Bearkill Rd, Conesville	X			X
Manorkill	Potter Mountain Rd, Conesville	X			X
West Conesville	Bull Hill Rd, Conesville	X	X		X
Macumber Road	Macumber Rd, Conesville and Prattsville	X			X
Bluebird Road	South Mountain and Bluebird Rd, Conesville	X	X		X
Huntersfield Creek	Cty Rt 10 and Stanley Slater Rd, Prattsville	X		X	X
West Ashland	West Settlement Rd, Ashland	X			X
West Hollow	Sutton Hollow Rd, Ashland	X	X		X
Mount Hayden	Bagley and Narvoo Rd, Windham	X	X		X
Maplecrest	Rt 40, Windham	X			X
Beech Ridge	Beech Ridge Rd, Lexington	X			X
Westkill	Rt 42, Lexington	X		X	X
Balsam Mountain	Spruceton Rd, Lexington	X	X	X	X
Roundtop Mountain	Gillespie Rd, Hunter	X			
Patterson Ridge	Route 23, Ashland			X	X
Spruceton	Route 42, Lexington			X	X
McGregor Mountain North	Route 23, Gilboa			X	X

Table 2.10.2 NYCDEP recreation lands; permitted activities with an Access Permit

Fishing

The Schoharie Creek and its tributaries are renowned for their fishing, especially trout fishing. Locations between Prattsville and the Schoharie Reservoir (as well as locations below the reservoir) are also notorious for largemouth, smallmouth, and rock bass. Numerous public access fishing sites have been created along these creeks by DEC (Figure 2.10.3). The Schoharie Reservoir is also accessible for fishing for mostly warm-water species such as largemouth bass. The Schoharie Creek and several of its tributaries are stocked with trout by DEC. Trout fishing season in New York is open from April 1 through October 15, and bass season is open from the 3rd Saturday in June to November 30th. To view more information on the fishing season for these and other species of fish in New York State, see the Freshwater Fishing Guide at <http://www.dec.state.ny.us/website/dfwmr/fish/fishregs/fishregsguide0608.pdf>. Persons over the age of 16 must obtain a fishing license to fish the freshwaters of New York State.

Fishing is permitted on all NYC reservoirs, including the Schoharie Reservoir, providing the person has obtained an Access Permit. Row boats are allowed for fishing on the reservoir. Boats must be registered with a Boat Tag, steam cleaned by DEP, and stored in designated areas on the reservoir, all of which is free of charge. However, ice fishing is not permitted on the Schoharie Reservoir. To view locations where ice fishing is allowed, go to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrecrules.html>. All NYS laws also apply when fishing on city lands. For further information go to <http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/watershed/html/wsrecfish.html> or call the Schoharie Reservoir Land Management Office at (607) 588-6231. Fishing is also allowed on all ponds within hiking areas.

References

NYSDEC. 1985. Catskill Park State Land Master Plan. New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), Albany, NY.