

2.10 Recreational Opportunities on the Upper Rondout Creek

The Rondout Creek watershed is a diverse landscape offering many opportunities for outdoor recreation. The natural and cultural heritage of this region is inextricably linked to the unique high quality streams that course through its mountains and valleys. These resources play a defining role in the character of its landscape. Recreation in and around these streams provides visitors and residents with many opportunities to reconnect with the natural world.

Catskill Forest Preserve

The Catskill Park is a mosaic of mountainous public and private lands in Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan counties. The upper Rondout Creek watershed falls entirely within the “Blue Line” of the Catskill Park and is protected within the New York State Land which makes up the Catskill Forest Preserve. This land is managed primarily by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) according to its classification in the 2008 Catskill Park State Land Master Plan. In addition to the Catskill Forest Preserve, Vernoooy Kill State Forest and Sundown Wild Forest also lie within the upper Rondout Creek basin. The locations of various management areas, as well as general background information can be found in DEC’s *Catskill Forest Preserve Map and Guide*. This information can be obtained at DEC’s regional offices; locations are listed on DEC’s website: <http://www.dec.state.us>.

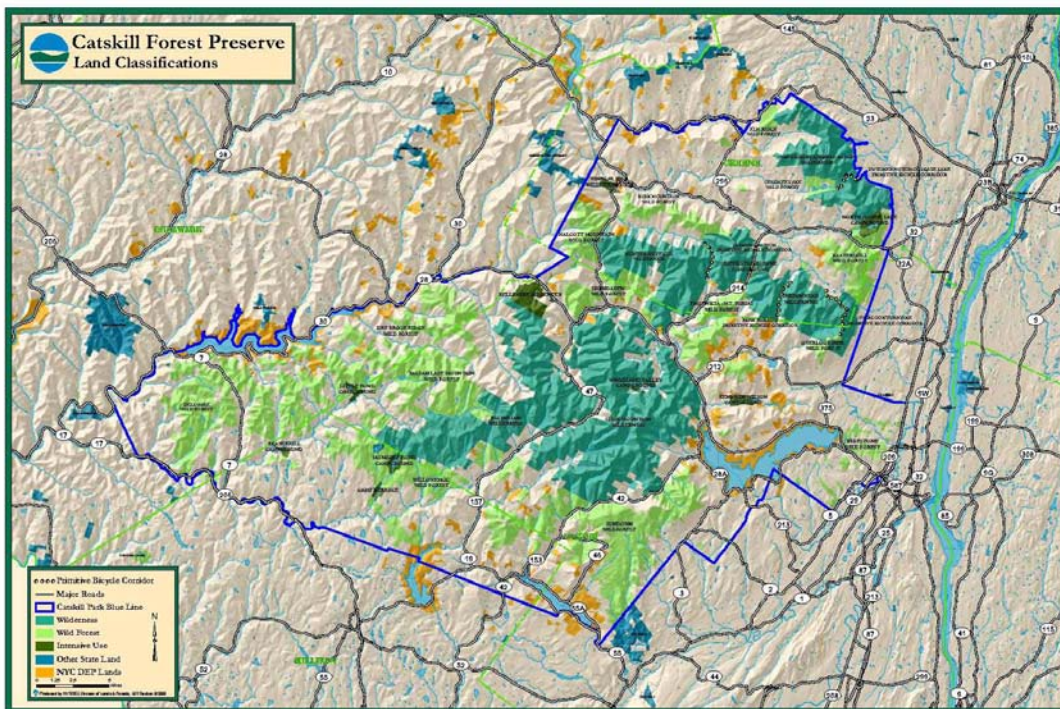


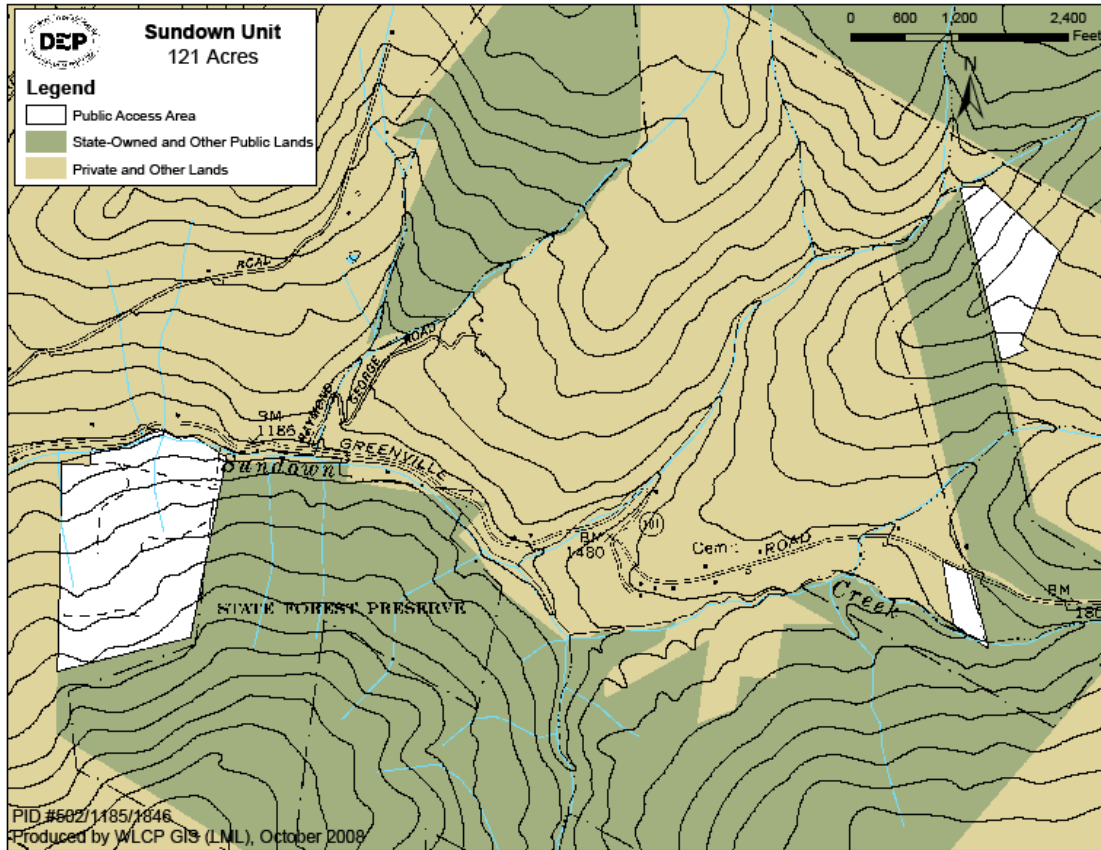
Figure 1 DEC map illustrating Forest Preserve Areas in the Catskill Forest Preserve

**NYC
DEP
Land**

In addition to recreational opportunities on State Land, property owners

d by NYC DEP offers fishing, hiking, hunting, and trapping. Some parcels require an Access Permit in order to legally use the property, but as of May 2009 DEP updated its recreation rules

to incorporate Public Access Areas where permits are not required. The map below represents one such unit within the upper Rondout Creek watershed. Visit: http://www.nyc.gov/html/dep/html/watershed_protection/index.shtml and look for recreation links in the box on the right hand side of the page to find other Public Access Areas, apply for a permit or read additional information about using DEP property.



Hiking

Several excellent hiking options available in the upper Rondout Creek watershed due

Figure 2 Map of Sundown Unit public access area, NYC DEP-owned

to this large acreage of publicly-owned land. A couple specific descriptions follow, courtesy of the Catskill Mountain Club website:

Table and Peekamoose Mountains

(strenuous) - Start in from the end of Denning Road, for a hike of 3.9 miles one-way to the summit of Table Mountain (elevation gain 1,700'), and another 0.85-mile brings you to the summit of Peekamoose. Alternate approach is 3.9 miles one-way to summit of Peekamoose Mountain, from Peekamoose Road (Ulster Co. Rt. 42), (elevation gain 2,640'). Enjoy the magic kingdom of the spruce-fir forest that crowns our highest Catskill peaks.

Red Hill Fire Tower (easy) - A 1.35-mile hike through a pleasant forest, uphill but not too steep, leads



Photo X. The renovated Red Hill Tower that stands 60' above the forest floor. (Aaron Bennett)

you to the Red Hill Fire Tower. Thanks to volunteer efforts, the tower is now completely restored and open to the public, with 360-degree views of the mountains. The old ranger cabin, open on most weekends in summer, now has old photographs and other interpretive material about the days when the tower was used by the State for spotting forest fires.

<http://www.catskillcenter.org/towers/redhill.html>

Fishing

NYSDEC has numerous public access fishing sites along the upper Rondout Creek. Steep headwater streams like the upper Rondout are renowned for supporting healthy fish populations of native trout. The portion of the stream running through Denning is stocked annually with brook trout by the NYSDEC. The fishing season is April 1 – October 15. A New York State Fishing License is required. The basic state catch limit of five trout is applied in the upper Rondout; and as elsewhere, the practice of Catch and Release is voluntary.

Camping

The Peekamoose Valley campground, managed by NYS DEC, is a well known tourist location in the Catskills for outdoor enthusiasts. Situated just off County Rt.42 and next to the Rondout Creek, these campsites provide the perfect location for enjoying a hike, a swim and a campfire. This campground also boasts universally accessible features, including path to streamside picnic area, picnic tables, and fishing pier. <http://www.dec.ny.gov/outdoor/45241.html>

The Catskill Mountain Club is an excellent resource for outdoor recreationists. This group coordinates and leads several group outings per year and the member base provides a wealth of experience and knowledge about recreational opportunities throughout the Catskills. Visit www.catskillmountainclub.org for a listing of activities, suggestions about where to go, links to state land regulations and weather and trail reports.