



Catskill Park Coalition

2020 BUDGET PRIORITIES

SUPPORTING THE COMMUNITIES, FORESTS, WATER, AND LAND THAT SUSTAIN US

Our priorities lie in those policies, programs, and funding sources that enable our Catskills communities, Park, and Forest Preserve to thrive. In addition to the Catskills-specific funding outlined below, we call on the Governor and Legislature to support:

- **\$350 million** for the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)
- At least **\$70 million of New York Works** funding for the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)
- Continued investment in, and prioritization of, **Adventure NY**

PUBLIC SAFETY & PARK MANAGEMENT

\$500,000 for new staff at the DEC's Division of Lands and Forest in Region 3 and Region 4 to better **manage the Catskill Park and its more than 1.7 million visitors**

\$750,000 to continue annual **Forest Ranger Academies** to provide a **safe experience** for all visitors to the Catskills

\$500,000 in **Aid to Localities funding** to the Catskill Watershed Corporation for **shovel-ready access and stewardship projects** across the Catskill Park

\$500,000 to help meet New York's **greenhouse gas emission reduction** mandates, like electric vehicle charging stations, and solar panel installations at campgrounds, the Visitor Center and elsewhere

\$1.5 million for **lyme disease and tick research** across New York State

\$10 million in **Stewardship funding** to support Catskill Park education, improvements, and infrastructure maintenance

EPF PROGRAMS TO ENHANCE & PROTECT THE CATSKILLS

\$150,000 line in the Municipal Parks category for the **Catskills Visitor Center's** management, operations, and facilities to maintain a world-class experience for visitors

\$750,000 for Cornell University's "Save the Hemlocks" initiative to **fight the invasive Hemlock Woolly Adelgid**, a voracious bug that is decimating hemlock trees--the Catskills' keystone tree species

\$150,000 to support the Catskill Science Collaborative's **research on topics of importance** in the Catskills

SUPPORT CATSKILLS COMMUNITIES

\$250,000 in NYSDOT funding directed to **Catskill Mountains Scenic Byways** for regional byway coordination, expansion, and management efforts

\$50,000 to fund a feasibility study for a **swimming area at Kenneth Wilson State Campground**

\$250,000 to implement the **mountain biking plan** in Shandaken Wild Forest

\$300,000 for **Smart Growth Grants** to help Catskill communities and nonprofits plan and grow sustainably

\$1 million for continued upgrades and improvements at the state-owned/managed **Belleayre Ski Center**

THE CATSKILLS: A NEW YORK STATE TREASURE

The Catskill Park, Forest Preserve, and Region are New York State gems. The Forest Preserve encompasses **287,000 beautiful acres of pristine wildlife habitat, vital waterways, and unique communities**. The Region serves both as a place for wild land recreation and as the watershed for New York City, offering New Yorkers an unparalleled opportunity to recreate in nature while affording city residents some of the purest water in the country.

The Catskill Park and Forest Preserve are also unique because they are **managed differently from other state parks, and receive none of the Parks 2020 funding**.

As a Forest Preserve, the Catskills' **state lands and amenities are managed by the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC)**, while lands protected for the New York City watershed are managed by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. This unique and complicated arrangement provides great opportunities along with significant challenges.

To preserve and enhance the Catskill Region for its **more than 2.7 million visitors** and for future generations, serious investment must be made in the Catskill Park, Forest Preserve, and broader region.



The Catskill Park Coalition is an alliance of like-minded organizations working to broaden public appreciation for the Catskill Park and region. We seek the resources needed to preserve, enhance, and maintain the extraordinary opportunities the Park and its surroundings have to offer.

PUBLIC SAFETY & PARK MANAGEMENT

It's no small feat to balance the needs of the Catskill Park and Forest Preserve along with the needs of the more than 1.7 visitors who flock there each year. Maintaining a 21st century park on a 20th century budget makes that work even harder.

Forest Rangers are critical to keeping visitors safe. They're the first line of defense in search and rescue missions, when hikers or hunters are missing or injured. For many visitors, the Rangers are the state's representatives--the people who help on the trails and in the wild. The Catskills Park and Forest Preserve encompass 287,000 acres of land, yet are served by **only 18 rangers**.

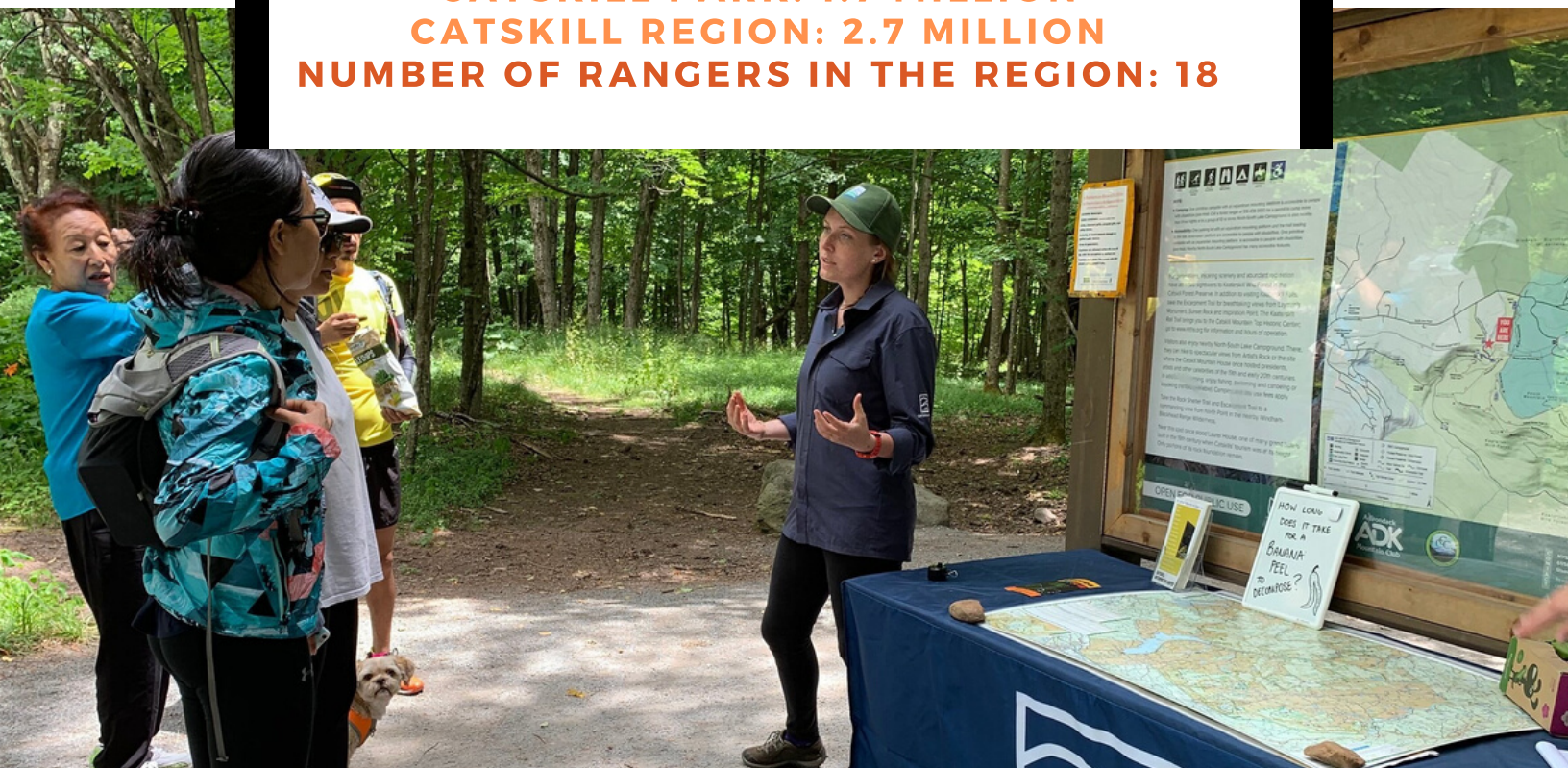
A healthy and well managed Park and Forest Preserve requires **foresters, land planners and other critical staff** to do the essential work of updating and implementing **forest and unit management plans**--the underpinning for all forest protection and designating allowable activities within the Park and Forest Preserve.

Right now, there is not nearly enough staff capacity to do this essential work, and the NYSDEC needs funding to bring more of team members on board.

Growing tick populations, the climate crisis, and forest fragmentation are all expected to contribute to the continued spread of **Lyme disease**. In the Northeast, the blacklegged ticks that infect people with Lyme disease can also transmit babesiosis, anaplasmosis, and *Borrelia miyamotoi*. Co-infections are not uncommon, and these diseases can be life threatening.

There is no human vaccine for Lyme disease. Prevention is our only and best option, and it hinges on reducing encounters with infected ticks, which relies on a deep understanding of the disease. **The Cary Institute** hosts the world's longest running, 25-year study on the ecology of Lyme disease. Now, they are applying this knowledge to a groundbreaking intervention that has the potential to **reduce Lyme disease** and other tick-borne illnesses.

**ANNUAL VISITORS:
CATSKILL PARK: 1.7 MILLION
CATSKILL REGION: 2.7 MILLION
NUMBER OF RANGERS IN THE REGION: 18**





ENHANCING & PROTECTING THE CATSKILLS

THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION FUND

The New York State Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) invests in projects that conserve critical resources for future generations while combating climate change, creating jobs, and making our communities more resilient. The Catskill Park Coalition stands with the Friends of New York's Environment in calling for **a \$350 million EPF** in this year's budget.

In the Catskills, the EPF investment is protecting our forests and providing a world-class experience for visitors. EPF funding supports research and action to beat back **the Hemlock Woolly Adelgid**--an voracious insect that is attacking hemlock stands and threatening the entire Catskills ecosystem, including our world-class fisheries.

The EPF also facilitates a top-notch visitor experience by supporting the **Catskills Visitor Center** in Mount Tremper. From exhibits to nature trails, an 80-foot fire tower to community events - there's something for everyone at the Catskills Visitor Center, and visitors and residents alike will find new ways to connect with extraordinary natural resources, history and culture that make this region so unique and worthy of protection.



SUPPORTING CATSKILLS COMMUNITIES

FROM LIBERTY TO
WOODSTOCK, FROM ROSCOE
TO WINDHAM-- CATSKILLS
COMMUNITIES COME IN ALL
SHAPES AND SIZES

In recent years, Aid to Localities Funding has been directed to the Catskill Watershed Corporation to complete shovel-ready infrastructure projects including new parking areas, trails, and access improvements. The funding has also been used to complete a mountain biking study for the Shandaken Wild Forest and a comprehensive recreation plan for the entire Catskill region.

These robust investments helped spur the extraordinary Catskills revival we're witnessing today. In 2019, **Lonely Planet named the Catskills one of the Top 10 Best Regions for Travel**. In order to continue keep attracting visitors and uplifting residents, New York must continue to invest in our Catskills communities.

With additional Aid to Locality monies, partners will be able to implement the plan for mountain biking in the Shandaken Wild Forest, support best practices for our communities' growth, move forward with reopening a swimming beach at the Kenneth Wilson State Campground, and invest in the Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway--a major draw to our region, and the gateway to the Central Catskills.