

Chapter 1 - Introduction

Planning and Environmental Review

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) planning process adheres to three basic principles:

- **Planning must be coordinated and provide for public participation:** Cooperation among appropriate governmental organizations, the public at large, special interest groups and the private sector is not only desirable but necessary.
- **Planning is a continuing process:** Assumptions for the classification and management of Preserve resources must be constantly reevaluated in light of new information, changing needs and priorities, and resource character.
- **Planning must be comprehensive:** The information base, and pertinent additional research, should support the planning process and should encompass relevant social, economic and physical factors relating to the management and operation of the Preserve and its resources.

The environmental review of proposed master plans for State Park facilities is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). OPRHP fully integrates the planning and environmental review processes. This document serves as both the Master Plan and the Environmental Impact Statement for Minnewaska State Park Preserve.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a philosophy on how to improve, operate and maintain State Parks and Historic Sites, while at the same time, minimizing or reducing the impacts of State Parks and Historic Sites have on the natural environment.

Sustainability looks at the whole rather than the individual parts to maximize energy efficiency and minimize environmental impact; reduce use of fossil fuels; reduce or eliminate hazardous substances; protect biodiversity and ecosystems; and use resources carefully, respectfully and efficiently to meet current needs without compromising the needs of other living creatures and the use of those resources by future generations.

OPRHP is committed to reducing its impact on the environment and to becoming more carbon neutral by adopting more sustainable practices in Park development, improvement, operation and maintenance. Sustainable practices and alternatives were considered in the planning process and incorporated throughout the Master Plan.

Introduction to the Preserve

Establishment of the Preserve

Minnewaska State Park was established in 1971 with initial purchases of approximately 7,000 acres including Lake Awosting. Several more parcels were acquired between 1971 and 1987, bringing the total protected acreage to approximately 12,000 acres. Between 2003 and 2009, significant acquisitions were made totaling more than 9,000 acres of land. These acquisitions came to fruition with the assistance of the Open Space Institute, Trust for Public Land and The Nature Conservancy. The purchases included The Ellenville Tract, the Awosting Reserve, and the Shevchenko property along with the Wawarsing, Deiner, Truchan, and Oleksiw properties. Each of these acquisitions supports previous planning efforts and the Park Preservation Law by preserving and protecting rare or threatened species along with their significant ecological communities. The current planning

process is dedicated to the research and preservation of these acquisitions while keeping them open for passive recreation.

Sam's Point

In 2006, PIPC purchased 3,799 acres of land (the Ellenville Tract) from the Open Space Conservancy (OSC). These lands were formerly owned by the Village of Ellenville and contain unique and extensive ridge top dwarf pitch pine barrens that had been a high priority for State acquisition since the mid-1970s. Prior to the State acquisition, The Nature Conservancy (TNC) had been managing the OSC lands as Sam's Point Preserve. At the time of this purchase, TNC retained management of the approximately 1,400 acres that make up the core area of Sam's Point. At the same time, it was agreed that TNC would continue to manage the OPRHP lands as part of Sam's Point. Through a management agreement with OPRHP, TNC manages this property under the rules and regulations that apply to Sam's Point. OPRHP staff work cooperatively with TNC assisting with rescue and emergency operations and resource management needs along the Shawangunk Ridge. Because of their different management and organization structure, TNC has prepared a separate Master Plan for Sam's Point. See Appendix F - Sam's Point Master Plan Summary.

Planning that has been done in the past

Minnewaska State Park Preserve has had two Master Plans since its inception in 1971. The first Master Plan was conducted in 1971 and undertaken by the National Park Service, the second plan was conducted in 1993 by OPRHP/PIPC. The initial master plan provided significant direction for the park and a preservation minded approach. In 1993, following the acquisition which added Lake Minnewaska and the lands surrounding the lake, a more comprehensive Master Plan was prepared and adopted. The 1993 Master Plan was developed over two years with a considerable amount of labor and input from OPRHP staff, PIPC staff, a hired consulting firm, and an advisory group, each playing a significant role in the creation of the plan. Research and studies were undertaken on a variety of natural, cultural and recreational aspects to assist with the planning process. A carrying capacity study and visitor surveys were conducted. With the adoption of the 1993 Master Plan, the park was designated a Park Preserve under Article 20 of New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law. This law allows the Commissioner of OPRHP to designate park land which possesses outstanding ecological values, including assemblages of flora and fauna that are unique or rare in the state. This designation provided significant direction and guidance for the Preserve. The 1993 Master Plan was used as a base for this master plan. This plan retains the park preservation focus on biodiversity, conservation, and providing visitors with a variety of passive recreation opportunities and environmental education.