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PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING  
OF THE DRAFT GENERIC  
ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
FOR THE PROPOSED HUDSON  
HIGHLANDS FJORD TRAIL

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Client-managed on Webex  
January 14, 2025  
2:03 p.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING held virtually  
at the above time, taken before  
SAMUEL HITTIN, a Notary Public of the  
State of New York.

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PRESENTING ADMINISTRATIVE LAW JUDGES:

NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF HEARINGS AND  
MEDIATION SERVICES OF THE DEPARTMENT  
OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

625 Broadway  
Albany, New York 12238

BY: MOLLY MCBRIDE  
AND: DANIEL O'CONNELL

\* \* \*

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MS. McBRIDE: Good afternoon  
3 everyone, my name is Molly McBride and  
4 I'm an administrative law judge with  
5 the New York State Office of Hearings  
6 and Mediation Services of the  
7 Department of Environmental  
8 Conservation. I am joined by my  
9 colleague, Administrative Law Judge,  
10 Daniel O'Connell. At the request of  
11 New York State Office of Parks,  
12 Recreation and Historic Preservation  
13 Judge O'Connell and I have been  
14 assigned to conduct this public  
15 comment hearing concerning the draft  
16 generic environmental impact statement  
17 for the proposed Hudson Highlands  
18 Fjord Trail. For the review required  
19 by the State Environmental Quality  
20 Review Act the office of Parks  
21 Recreation and Historic Preservation  
22 is the lead agency.

23 The purpose of today's public  
24 comment hearing session is to provide  
25 members of the public with the

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]  
2           opportunity to comment about the draft  
3           generic environmental impact  
4           statement. During today's hearing  
5           sessions agency staff will not be  
6           available for comments or questions  
7           about the proposal. As the lead  
8           agency staff from the office of Parks  
9           Recreation and Historic Preservation  
10          will review these comments made and  
11          develop a responsiveness summary that  
12          will be incorporated into the final  
13          Generic Environmental Impact  
14          Statement.

15                 The notice for today's hearing  
16                 was published in the Department of  
17                 Environmental Conservation's  
18                 environmental notice of bulletin on  
19                 December 4, 2024. In addition, the  
20                 notice was published in the Putnam  
21                 County News, the Beacon Free Press and  
22                 the southern Dutchess News on December  
23                 4, 2024, and in the Highlands Current  
24                 on December 6, 2024.

25                         Please note that written and

## 1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 oral comments are given the same  
3 weight. If you would like to submit  
4 written comments please send them to  
5 Nancy Stoner, environmental analyst,  
6 New York State Office of Parks  
7 Recreation and Historic Preservation,  
8 Division of Environmental Stewardship  
9 and Planning, 625 Broadway, Albany,  
10 New York 12238; this address is also  
11 available on the slides on the screen  
12 if you have joined by the internet  
13 today. You may also submit your  
14 comments by e-mail to  
15 hhtf.plan@parks.ny.gov. Written  
16 comments are due by March 4, 2025.  
17 This is an extension of what appeared  
18 in the initial notice, please note the  
19 change. Again, the revised due date  
20 for written comments is March 4, 2025.  
21 Speakers are encouraged to submit  
22 lengthy statements in writing and  
23 provide only a summary of their  
24 comments today. Given the number of  
25 speakers who have registered, we will

## 1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 limit the length of comments of all  
3 speakers to two minutes, we ask that  
4 you please be respectful of that time  
5 limit. If you have not completed your  
6 comments in two minutes we will ask  
7 you to wrap up your comments at that  
8 time. We will have a timer on the  
9 screen for those who have joined by  
10 the internet and you will see how much  
11 time is left for you to make your  
12 comments. Again, we ask that you  
13 please be respectful of that time  
14 limit so that we can accommodate all  
15 people who have registered to make a  
16 comment here today.

17 In a minute I will call Linda  
18 Cooper, regional director for the  
19 Taconic Region from the Office of  
20 Parks Recreation and Historic  
21 Preservation who will make a brief  
22 presentation on behalf of the lead  
23 agency about the environmental review,  
24 then we will call the name of each  
25 person including any elected officials

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 who have preregistered to speak here  
3 today. After I call your name your  
4 line will be unmuted and you may  
5 present your statement. If you are  
6 speaking on behalf of a group or  
7 another person please identify who you  
8 represent here today. Again, given  
9 the number of speakers who have  
10 registered, all comments will be  
11 limited to two minutes. If I  
12 mispronounce your name when I call  
13 your name please correct me when we  
14 unmute your line. If you have joined  
15 us today by telephone when we call  
16 your name we will ask you to raise  
17 your hand so we know which phone line  
18 to unmute; in order to raise your hand  
19 when we call your name by phone if you  
20 have joined us by phone please press  
21 star 3 on your phone to raise your  
22 hand but please do not raise your hand  
23 here today until we have called your  
24 name. Thank very much.

25 Now I would like to introduce

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Linda Cooper from the Office of Parks  
3 Recreation and Historic Preservation.

4 MS. COOPER: Thank you, and  
5 welcome to this public hearing for the  
6 proposed Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail  
7 Draft Generic Environmental Impact  
8 Statement. As noted, my name is Linda  
9 Cooper, I am the regional director of  
10 State Parks Taconic Region and the New  
11 York State Office of Parks Recreation  
12 and Historic Preservation or often  
13 known as State Parks is the lead  
14 agency under the State Environmental  
15 Quality Review Act and its regulations  
16 otherwise known as SEQR for this  
17 environmental review process. The  
18 Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail Inc. is  
19 the applicant, hereafter I'll be  
20 referring to it as Hudson Highlands  
21 Fjord Trail, sometimes Hudson  
22 Highlands Fjord Trail Inc.

23 Our thanks to the Department of  
24 Environmental Conservation known as  
25 DEC for facilitating this public



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 hearing.

3 Craig, are you going to switch  
4 the slides?

5 MR. PETTINGER: I'm sorry, I  
6 thought you were going to share them,  
7 I don't have them ready to go.

8 Do you have them so you can  
9 share them?

10 MS. COOPER: I'd have to pull  
11 them up.

12 MR. PETTINGER: Okay. We could  
13 see it.

14 MS. COOPER: Okay. My  
15 apologies, we both thought something  
16 different, so let's just see if I can  
17 move them forward.

18 Okay. So here's a brief summary  
19 of the planning and public engagement  
20 efforts that have been conducted by  
21 the plant, the Hudson Highlands Fjord  
22 Trail Inc. There were multiple public  
23 workshops held and public surveys that  
24 were conducted in 2014 and 2015. The  
25 preliminary draft master plan for the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 proposed Fjord Trail was published in  
3 2015. A steering committee was  
4 engaged periodically over the past  
5 eight years, there had been ongoing  
6 site investigations, data gathering,  
7 and design work over that same period  
8 of time. Public webinars were  
9 conducted in 2019. The Hudson  
10 Highlands Fjord Trail established an  
11 ecology working group that met a  
12 couple of times in 2019 and 2020. In  
13 2020 the applicant published the draft  
14 master plan with continued  
15 presentations, workshops and meetings  
16 over the next few years.

17 In its role as lead agency,  
18 State Parks issued a positive  
19 declaration of environmental  
20 significance in 2015 which required  
21 the preparation of a generic  
22 environment impact statement or GEIS,  
23 this was followed by a draft scoping  
24 document in 2016 and a final scoping  
25 document in 2017. Planning an

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 analysis has been ongoing since that  
3 time. On December 4, 2024 State Parks  
4 issued a draft generic environmental  
5 impact statement for public comment,  
6 we are holding these two public  
7 hearings today, January 14, 2025. And  
8 again, thank you to DEC for  
9 facilitating these hearings.

10 Following the close of the public  
11 comment period which was extended to  
12 March 4th, State Parks will consider  
13 and respond to substantive comments  
14 received during the development of the  
15 final Generic Environmental Impact  
16 Statement and after the publication of  
17 the final GEIS State Parks will issue  
18 a findings statement. This public  
19 comment process is part of the  
20 environmental review and at some point  
21 in the future state parks will issue a  
22 final Generic Environmental Impact  
23 Statement that will be posted for the  
24 public to see.

25 The proposed action will

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           construct a non-motorized shared-use,  
2           meaning pedestrian and bicycle,  
3           publicly accessible linear park along  
4           the eastern shore of the Hudson River  
5           between the City of Beacon and Dutchess  
6           County on the north and the Village of  
7           Cold Spring, Putnam County on the  
8           south. The trail components include  
9           the main trail meanders trail banks,  
10          water trail connections and regional  
11          trail connections as well as ancillary  
12          components including parking areas,  
13          restroom buildings and a maintenance  
14          facility. The component parts of this  
15          action described above were part of  
16          the applicant's 2020 master plan --  
17          draft master plan for the Hudson  
18          Highlands Fjord Trail.

19                   Public comments will be accepted  
20                   till the end of the public comment  
21                   period on March 4, 2025. Verbal  
22                   comments will be accepted during this  
23                   public hearing. Written comments can  
24                   be mailed to Nancy Stoner,  
25

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 environmental analyst in New York  
3 State Parks, the Division of  
4 Environmental Stewardship and  
5 Planning, 625 Broadway, Second Floor,  
6 Albany, New York 12238 or e-mailed to  
7 hhft.plan@parks.ny.gov.

8 The draft generic environmental  
9 impact statement is available at the  
10 web site that is -- the web address  
11 that's posted on the screen but it is  
12 basically the Park's web site,  
13 parks.ny.gov, you go to the insider  
14 agency in the public document section.

15 Once again, our thanks to DEC  
16 for its facilitation for this public  
17 hearing and our thanks to each of you  
18 for participating.

19 Stop sharing slides.

20 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you,  
21 Ms. Cooper.

22 We're now going to begin calling  
23 speakers, and I will begin with  
24 elected officials who have registered  
25 to speak hear today. Our first

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 registered elected official is Lee  
3 Kyriacou. Go ahead, you've been  
4 unmuted.

5 MR. KYRIACOU: Okay. Good day.  
6 I am Lee Kyriacou. In my 6th year as  
7 mayor of the City of Beacon,  
8 previously an 18-year City Council  
9 member first elected in 1993. Allow  
10 me to offer my enthusiastic  
11 unqualified support for the proposed  
12 Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail which  
13 will take a heavily used trail head  
14 desperately in need of improvement and  
15 transform it in a seven and a half  
16 mile stretch on the Hudson into a  
17 beautiful and unique linear park  
18 linking Beacon and Cold Spring and  
19 hopefully soon connecting to the  
20 Beacon-Hopewell Rail Trail and the 750  
21 mile Empire State Trail.

22 The recreational benefits of  
23 this project are myriad, the unsafe  
24 and overcrowded roadside trail at  
25 Breakneck will see a vast improvement

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 for all, it will be greater access not  
3 only to the Hudson Highlands but for  
4 the first time to large sections of  
5 the Hudson River that have been cut  
6 off by railroad tracks. Along the  
7 Hudson will be flat trail sections you  
8 broadening access to those who cannot  
9 easily do mountain hikes: Seniors,  
10 persons with disabilities, cyclists,  
11 runners, those simply wanting less  
12 strenuous options.

13 I, for one, am past the age that  
14 I regularly hike the Highlands but my  
15 entire family will take frequent  
16 walks on the Fjord Trail as we do  
17 today on the walkway over the Hudson  
18 and Beacon's Klara Sauer Trail.

19 The City of Beacon is already  
20 partnering with the Hudson Highlands  
21 Fjord Trail Inc. (HHFT) and is looking  
22 for additional ways to work together.  
23 We're negotiating for HHFT to building  
24 its maintenance facility adjacent to  
25 the trail at the city's waste water

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 treatment plant. The city was excited  
3 when HHFT moved forward its proposed  
4 timetable for construction in Beacon  
5 and encouraged them to build sooner  
6 here.

7 Another major benefit is that  
8 the Fjord Trail will connect to our  
9 Dennings Point State Park, Madam Brett  
10 Park, our future rail trail, Klara  
11 Sauer Trail, Long Dock Park, Cedar  
12 River Front Park, and then to the  
13 train station. With another train  
14 station connected to the Fjord Trail  
15 we believe that will help make the  
16 trail more successful and relieve  
17 traffic from other locations.

18 Thank you.

19 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is Janice  
21 Hogan. Go ahead, you've been unmuted.

22 MS. HOGAN: Okay. I believe I'm  
23 unmuted.

24 MS. McBRIDE: Yes, you are.

25 MS. HOGAN: Okay. Hi. I'm a



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 resident of Philipstown and I am a  
3 strong supporter of the Fjord Trail;  
4 however, more than being a strong  
5 supporter of the Fjord Trail, I'm a  
6 strong supporter of a healthy  
7 Philipstown and a healthy connection  
8 to Beacon, and so I am speaking to  
9 urge everyone who is a supporter or an  
10 opponent to bring down a level of  
11 acrimony in the discourse, to focus on  
12 the specifics of the DGEIS, and to  
13 talk about those rather than to, you  
14 know, hurl their anger at each other.  
15 Everyone can compromise and end up  
16 with a plan that works, can be built  
17 on time, and is a place for all of the  
18 residents of Philipstown and Beacon to  
19 enjoy the Hudson River in our  
20 beautiful Hudson Highlands.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

23 Our next speaker is Joshua  
24 Wojehowski. Hello, you had been  
25 unmuted.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MR. WOJEHOWSKI: Hi.

3 MS. McBRIDE: Go ahead.

4 MR. WOJEHOWSKI: Okay. My name  
5 is Joshua Wojehowski, Cornwall town  
6 supervisor, and I'm here to speak  
7 today in strong favor of the Fjord  
8 Trail. Overall, the trail will help  
9 our region to better manage the  
10 thousands of visitors who visit for  
11 outdoor recreational opportunities.  
12 The EIS was very comprehensive and  
13 responsive to all the identified  
14 environmental issues.

15 As a leader of the municipality  
16 directly across the river this project  
17 will have a positive impact on  
18 Cornwall, Cornwall-on-Hudson, and the  
19 greater Cornwall area. The Fjord  
20 Trail has the potential to elevate the  
21 regional identity of the Hudson  
22 Islands including providing economic  
23 benefits to surrounding businesses and  
24 communities in Cornwall. This will  
25 tie directly into the vision and

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 strategic investment plan that was  
3 created as part of our round one New  
4 York Ford grant. Cornwall is home to  
5 outdoor recreational businesses that  
6 run out of the waterfront which  
7 include kayak rentals and tours of the  
8 shoreline along the project area. The  
9 trail will have dedicated kayak pull  
10 in points that will have a direct  
11 benefit to Cornwall businesses and  
12 tourism. Overall the Fjord Trail will  
13 provide new accessibility for visitors  
14 to experience and enjoy the project  
15 area waterfront including pull up  
16 landing areas and other benefits for  
17 outdoor recreationalists while also  
18 protecting the ecological resilience  
19 of the shoreline.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

22 Our next registered elected  
23 official is Kevin Byrne. If you've  
24 joined us today by telephone please  
25 press \*3 on your phone to raise your

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 hand and we'll know to unmute your  
3 line. If Kevin Byrne has joined us by  
4 phone please press \*3 on your own and  
5 we'll know to unmute your line.

6 Okay. We don't have a raised  
7 hand for any of our telephone  
8 attendees, but I will go onto our next  
9 registered speaker Jason Angell.

10 Go ahead, you've been unmuted.

11 MR. ANGELL: Okay. Thank you.  
12 So as a local member of the Town of  
13 Philipstown board I recognize that  
14 Philipstown doesn't have any clear  
15 jurisdiction over the Fjord Trail  
16 project, so I'm primarily offering  
17 these comments as a member of the  
18 community.

19 When I think about the Fjord  
20 Trail I think it's important to take  
21 both the regional and the local  
22 perspective. I think from the  
23 regional perspective I support the  
24 Fjord Trail because it helps address  
25 nature access inequalities with our

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 neighboring communities such as  
3 Newburgh, such as Peekskill. At the  
4 same time from a regional perspective  
5 I'm someone who works to address  
6 climate change and I know that a  
7 project of this scale will have  
8 negative environmental impacts as it's  
9 built because almost everything we  
10 build does, but the real question is  
11 will the environmental benefits of the  
12 project outweigh the environmental  
13 impacts, and I think that building  
14 safe accessible infrastructure that  
15 allows people to move around without  
16 motorized transportation is exactly  
17 what we need to do right now, getting  
18 people out along the Hudson out away  
19 from their screens, to nurture love  
20 for nature for -- the environmental  
21 movement is exactly what we need to do  
22 right now. But from the local  
23 perspective won't bring in too many  
24 people here and manage the local  
25 ecology we love, it's a fair question.

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           As any Philipstown resident  
2           knows through experience, the people  
3           keep coming with or without the Fjord  
4           Trail, visitor estimate given our  
5           proximity to New York City are  
6           expected to keep growing. So I think  
7           the question is, from a local  
8           perspective, what's better for our  
9           ecology and our local quality of life;  
10          managed visitation or unmanaged  
11          visitation?  
12

13          The proposed Fjord Trail south  
14          runs roughly from the Town of  
15          Philipstown line to Little Stony Point  
16          to Dockside Park, the DGEIS identifies  
17          it as phase four, the tour trails  
18          south with a build carrier from 2026  
19          to 2031.

20          Given that most of the local  
21          concern in our community focuses on  
22          the visitor impact off Dockside Park  
23          as the main trail entry, I think that  
24          that proposed trail section from  
25          Little Stony Point to Dockside should

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 become a new phase five with a start  
3 date after a majority of the trail is  
4 complete. I also would recommend that  
5 the proposed Washburn parking lot  
6 expansion by Little Stony Point and  
7 the proposed Cold Spring meander  
8 signage be moved from phase four to  
9 phrase one, this is the best way to  
10 test that the Fjord Trail strategies  
11 actually fulfill their founding intent  
12 to address increased visitation by  
13 looking at real data and if it makes  
14 sense to continue the trail from  
15 Little Stony Point to Dockside. I  
16 think that we can do these things both  
17 ways by getting the regional benefit  
18 for the Fjord Trail which I support  
19 while finding ways to look at that  
20 last section between Little Stony  
21 Point and Dockside, recharge up the  
22 phasing plan, give a little bit more  
23 community input before that last  
24 phrase is built.

25 Thank you so much.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you very  
3 much.

4 Our next speaker is Sam Adels.

5 MR. ADELS: Hello. Thank you.  
6 I live in Beacon and I'm a member of  
7 the Beacon bicycle coalition, I also  
8 served on the City of Beacon  
9 Conservation Advisory Council for two  
10 years, helped to write the natural  
11 resources inventory, I'm also a former  
12 national park ranger and staunch bike  
13 advocate.

14 I think the Fjord Trail is a  
15 very-very positive development for the  
16 region. I believe in the park land  
17 for the people. And as previous  
18 commentators have spoken about, what we  
19 want to do is increase access to the  
20 natural resources we have such as the  
21 beautiful Hudson River. Everyone in  
22 this region knows that it's really a  
23 world famous and natural famous area;  
24 you have the Hudson River school of  
25 painters that, you know, 200 years ago



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 knew how special this region was, and  
3 this is an opportunity to allow people  
4 access to the river that wouldn't  
5 otherwise happen. I really appreciate  
6 the focus on mobility and increasing  
7 access for people that otherwise, you  
8 know, aren't necessarily going to hike  
9 up Breakneck Ridge or, you know, bike  
10 around Cold Spring or Beacon. So this  
11 will be an incredible boom to the  
12 communities not just to Beacon and  
13 Cold Spring but to the region at  
14 large, it will increase tourism and  
15 solve the horrible problem that is the  
16 Breakneck Ridge parking lot area as  
17 anyone who's driven on 9D can attest  
18 it's definitely a nightmare right now,  
19 and this is not only a very creative  
20 solution, but I think it will have  
21 extremely positive impacts on the  
22 regional tourism, recreation, it will  
23 also link the communities, and it will  
24 help people trying to live a car-free  
25 lifestyle be able to connect Beacon

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 and Cold Spring, and as a parent I  
3 look forward to biking between Beacon  
4 and Cold Spring a lot, I think that  
5 will be a fantastic opportunity.

6 This is a very special place and  
7 I think the Fjord Trail as envisioned  
8 will be a very special park and I  
9 don't think any of the environmental  
10 impacts as indicated in the report are  
11 enough to make this project not worth  
12 doing. So I'm really glad that the  
13 review has been so comprehensive, and  
14 I can tell the Fjord Trail have been  
15 making all their efforts to mitigate  
16 any possible impacts. I think this is  
17 a fantastic project and I  
18 enthusiastically support it.

19 Thank you.

20 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

21 Our next commenter is Travis  
22 Biro. Go ahead you've been unmuted.

23 MR. BIRO: Enthusiastic support  
24 for the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.  
25 As a member of Nelsonville's village

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 board and director for several of  
3 Philipstown's recreations athletic  
4 program I've had the opportunity to  
5 interact with numerous community  
6 members who support this project. The  
7 consensus among residents I speak with  
8 is that the Hudson Highlands Fjord  
9 Trail will offer a safe and futurist  
10 opportunity to enjoy an accessible  
11 park promising numerous economic and  
12 social benefits to our village and the  
13 local surrounding areas. Local  
14 business owners I've spoken with  
15 acknowledge the positive impact that  
16 tourism from the Hudson Highlands  
17 Fjord Trail will undoubtedly have on  
18 our community. The Fjord Trail will  
19 be a fantastic example of a park that  
20 can attract people to our village  
21 while also helping to mitigate many of  
22 the challenges that come from the  
23 influx of visitors we already receive  
24 every weekend.

25 While I appreciate the

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1  
2 contributions of our visitors through  
3 our mainstreaming economy I'm excited  
4 the trail will offer a conduit to the  
5 hikes and rest pit along the way to  
6 Beacon and keep people from traversing  
7 unsafely down 9D towards their  
8 destinations.

9 I have believe the trail will  
10 provide a safe and scenic place for  
11 residents and visitors alike to enjoy  
12 outdoor activities such as biking and  
13 walking, that's why I believe it is  
14 critical to maintain the original  
15 scope of the project starting at  
16 Dockside Park and traveling along the  
17 fjord. This design reasonably  
18 accounts for local residents access to  
19 the trail. As residents of  
20 Nelsonville the trail that best serves  
21 my needs and my neighbors' needs for  
22 safe and convenient access is one that  
23 starts at Dockside Park, providing a  
24 secure environment for families,  
25 cyclists and pedestrians to explore

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the natural landscape without the  
3 hazards associated with busy roads.

4 The DGIES report is encouraging.  
5 I believe many of the concerns and  
6 complaints I've heard for this project  
7 are addressed and mitigated throughout  
8 this report. I don't mean to  
9 represent myself as an expert on  
10 everything that this report says but  
11 many of the economic and environmental  
12 concerns that I've heard for the trail  
13 appear to be researched and addressed,  
14 and I believe the report represents a  
15 great step forward for the trail, and  
16 I look forward to reading more of  
17 these interpretations as we continue  
18 through this.

19 Thank you. And again, I just  
20 want to reiterate my support for this  
21 trail starting at Dockside Park and  
22 continuing along the entire traverse  
23 of the Hudson River.

24 Thanks.

25 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 I'm now going to begin calling  
3 members of the public. I'm going to  
4 list the first group of speakers and  
5 then I are call everyone one by one.

6 I will remind everyone again that  
7 your time is limited to two minutes,  
8 we have a timer on the screen if you  
9 joined by the internet, I would ask  
10 that you please be mindful of the  
11 two-minute time limit.

12 Our first group of speakers are  
13 in this order: Diego Haskell-Ramirez,  
14 Timothy Haskell, Shannon Bernacchia,  
15 Carolyn Glauda, Thomas Wright, Irene  
16 Pieza, Dar Williams, Gretchen Dykstra.

17 And our first registered speaker  
18 is Diego Haskell-Ramirez, if you have  
19 joined us today by telephone please  
20 press \*3 on your phone to raise your  
21 hand and we will know to unmute your  
22 phone line. Diego Haskell-Ramirez.  
23 If you have joined us by phone, Diego  
24 Haskell-Ramirez please press \*3 on  
25 your phone.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Okay. We're going to go onto  
3 our next registered speaker, Timothy  
4 Haskell. Go ahead, you've been  
5 unmuted.

6 MR. HASKELL: Hello. I'm happy  
7 to see that there's been such a --  
8 well, first of all, I'm a huge  
9 advocate for the Fjord Trail and  
10 always, and I'm a huge advocate for  
11 the -- I'm from Cold Spring, I live in  
12 the village. And so Dockside entry is  
13 an important aspect and an important  
14 argument that we are debating here so  
15 I'd also like to register my support  
16 for a dockside entry of the Fjord  
17 Trail. I'm happy to see there's been  
18 such a thorough and robust study and  
19 analysis from the GEIS which I read a  
20 lot of it, and I would like thank HHFT  
21 and express gratitude that the SEQRA  
22 process exists to protect the  
23 environment and communities from  
24 excessive impacts. Thankfully the  
25 Fjord Trail team has taken this

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 requirement seriously and design a  
3 linear park that solves existing  
4 challenges and that could -- to trail  
5 visitation for both residents and  
6 visitors.

7 I'd just like to say we don't  
8 own this land, we don't own this  
9 beauty. I am fortunate that I live  
10 here but like so many others before me  
11 I decided to move here a number of  
12 years ago because of how beautiful it  
13 is, you firmly believe that the Fjord  
14 Trail will only add to that not  
15 detract. I realize our town already  
16 suffers from overtourism but our  
17 village is suffering because most  
18 locals don't actually come to the  
19 village in the first place, they have  
20 long since abandoned coming to the  
21 village on the weekends. I see  
22 arguments about how bad that's going  
23 to be, our local shops are dying now  
24 because weekend-only money is not  
25 enough, and locals don't come during



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the weekdays either, the Fjord Trail  
3 will help this. I'm all for a  
4 streamlined and elegant entry at  
5 Dockside because it will give someone  
6 like me with bad knees and a bad back  
7 easy access and it'll bring shoppers  
8 during the week and it'll keep the  
9 crowds at bay and spread them out.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

12 Our next registered speaker is  
13 Shannon Bernacchia, if you have joined  
14 us by phone please press \*3 on your  
15 phone and we will unmute your line.  
16 Shannon Bernacchia if you have joined  
17 us by phone please press \*3 on your  
18 phone and that will raise your hand  
19 and we'll know to unmute your line.

20 Okay. I'm going to go onto our  
21 next speaker, Carolyn Glauda. Carolyn  
22 Glauda if you've joined us by phone  
23 please press \*3 on your phone, we'll  
24 know to unmute your line. I have a  
25 Carolyn Bennett -- there we go. Thank

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 you. If we can unmute Carolyn Bennett  
3 Glauda please? Go ahead, you've been  
4 unmuted.

5 MS. GLAUDA: Thank you so much,  
6 hi. My name is Carolyn Bennett  
7 Glauda, I live in the City of Beacon  
8 and I'm a member of the Traffic Safety  
9 Committee with the City of Beacon.  
10 I'm calling to offer my enthusiastic  
11 support for a the Fjord Trail. I have  
12 dreamed of safely cycling between  
13 Beacon and Cold Spring for years and  
14 I've been following the work of the  
15 Fjord Trail since I first heard of it.  
16 This summer I had the opportunity to  
17 volunteer with the trail on the  
18 invasive strike force and I got  
19 first-hand experience of how  
20 thoughtful and creative the trail  
21 leaders are, they've been responsive  
22 to community feedback and nimble in  
23 overcoming obstacles. As far as  
24 traffic safety goes, I'm very in favor  
25 of the trail's proposal to reduce the

1           [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]  
2           speed limit on 9D and to add rapid  
3           flashing beacons at crosswalks. I'm  
4           very glad that the trail's plans will  
5           mitigate some of the traffic and help  
6           drivers who run out of parking and  
7           drive aimlessly and are looking for a  
8           place to turn.

9           Overall, this trail proposal is  
10          accessible to all, it will prevent  
11          conflicts between casual hikers,  
12          children just learning to ride a bike,  
13          those with mobility issues and  
14          hardcore athletes who want to conquer  
15          the mountain or train for a triathlon.  
16          I'm very pleased with what I've seen  
17          in the DGEIS and I'm -- thank you all  
18          so much for your time.

19                 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

20                 Our next speaker is Thomas  
21          Wright. Thomas Wright, if you have  
22          joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
23          your phone and we'll know to unmute  
24          your line. Thomas Wright?

25                 If we could please unmute Andy

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Chmar? Okay. You've raised your  
3 hand, Andy Chmar, so I'm unmuting your  
4 line quickly, can you identify  
5 yourself please, and let us know why  
6 you're raising your hand?

7 MR. CHMAR: Yes. I'd like to  
8 make some public comment.

9 MS. McBRIDE: Okay. We have a  
10 list of speakers so we're pulling  
11 everyone in the order that they  
12 registered, so if you're on the list  
13 we'll call you. Thank you.

14 MR. CHMAR: Okay. Thank you.

15 MS. McBRIDE: I don't see Thomas  
16 Wright so we're going to move on to  
17 our next registered speaker, Irene  
18 Pieza. Irene Pieza, if you have  
19 joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
20 your phone to raise your hand and  
21 we'll know to unmute your line.  
22 Irene, if you have joined us by phone  
23 please \*3 and we'll know to unmute  
24 your phone line.

25 Our next speaker is Dar

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Williams. Dar Williams, if you've  
3 joined us by phone please \*3 to unmute  
4 your line? Dar Williams. I have no  
5 raised hand symbol, we'll move on to  
6 our next registered speaker, we have  
7 Gretchen Dykstra. We could unmute  
8 Gretchen Dykstra.

9 MS. DYKSTRA: I'm going to  
10 testify tonight, all right?

11 MS. McBRIDE: Okay. Well, we'll  
12 call you then this evening, thank you.

13 Our next registered speaker is  
14 Stephen Ives. Stephen Ives. We have  
15 a raised hand from a call-in user, if  
16 we could unmute that line?

17 Go ahead, we've unmuted the  
18 caller who has raised their hand, can  
19 you identify yourself please?

20 MR. BYRNE: Yes. This is Kevin  
21 Byrne Putnam County executive.

22 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you. Go  
23 ahead with your comment please?

24 MR. BYRNE: Thank you. Okay.  
25 I've just been told my raised hand

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 status has been cleared so I just  
3 wanted to say thank you for holding  
4 this public hearing, I know there's  
5 been a number of -- a series of  
6 correspondents advocating for the  
7 towns and villages and the county for  
8 time for public input from both the  
9 business community, residents and  
10 local stake holders. I have repletely  
11 shared with the residents on the  
12 western side of the county and those  
13 interested in this project that the  
14 county government is absolutely a  
15 stake holder, an important stake  
16 holder, but not a decision maker.  
17 That said, one of the things that  
18 we've been advocating for for the very  
19 beginning was local government  
20 engagement because of potential  
21 impacts on the communities and the  
22 residents and the businesses,  
23 obviously we see there's positives  
24 that can come from this as well. I  
25 understand there's a lot of excitement

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 from members of the community but  
3 there's also concerns. I know we  
4 wrote to the governor in the state  
5 back in September of last year, the  
6 correspondence that I received from  
7 the mayors and supervisors last month,  
8 anecdotally I also held one of my  
9 annual constituent forums, I do it --  
10 I hold a forum in every town within  
11 Putnam County, I held one in  
12 Nelsonville in late December and by  
13 far over the hours of conversation the  
14 number one topic was this project, and  
15 the biggest issue was not necessarily  
16 the project itself but it was the  
17 opportunity for in person public  
18 comment and to have adequate time for  
19 people to raise their concerns. The  
20 other big issue that we are trying to  
21 work with are our towns and villages  
22 is to get them information,  
23 understanding the DGEIS's out, it's a  
24 lot to sit through, and one of the  
25 things the county government is

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 responsible for is managing and  
3 supporting a sound emergency service  
4 response system, our 911 center that's  
5 based in Carmel serves every section  
6 of the county and supports all of our  
7 local service agencies, the sheriff's  
8 office, patrols the western part of  
9 the county too, and obviously we have  
10 transportation services and needs that  
11 would need to be addressed. The towns  
12 and villages asked and my commissioner  
13 of emergency services is trying to  
14 perform an analysis on what the needs  
15 and impacts would be to the emergency  
16 services community, I think that takes  
17 time and that's why one of my  
18 additional requests before this  
19 proceeds is that we do schedule an in  
20 person public hearing with additional  
21 time to comment on such a significant  
22 project.

23 And with that, Linda and  
24 everybody that's chimed in, thank you  
25 for your time and I appreciate you



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 giving me a moment to share my piece,  
3 if you will.

4 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you,  
5 Mr. Byrne.

6 I see that we now have Dar  
7 Williams, I'm going to unmute the line  
8 of Dar Williams. Go ahead, you've  
9 been unmuted.

10 MS. WILLIAMS: Can you hear me  
11 now?

12 MS. McBRIDE: Yes.

13 MS. WILLIAMS: Okay. I looked  
14 for the red flags in the DGEIS report  
15 and from what I saw I trust that the  
16 challenges raised can be duly  
17 addressed. I support a Dockside Park  
18 entrance to the Fjord Trail. I have  
19 lived in the village for over 20 years  
20 and watched the patterns of visitation  
21 as well as the village's response to  
22 it, and I believe that we are starting  
23 to make meaningful efforts whereby we  
24 can encourage our visitors to come by  
25 train and benefit from them --

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 visitation. I think that we have a  
3 long way to go in the village in  
4 helping to form the visitor  
5 experience, traffic control,  
6 optimizing the trolley route but -- to  
7 name a few, but I believe the Fjord  
8 Trail will be a part of increasing the  
9 harmonious flow of visitation.

10 I know there's an interest in  
11 starting the trail at Little Stony  
12 Point which is exactly one mile from  
13 the Cold Spring Metro-North Station,  
14 and I do not support that idea. As a  
15 traveler, I know that I will take  
16 public transportation to a site that  
17 is half a mile away but I will  
18 probably choose to drive to a site  
19 that is a while away, a Little Stony  
20 Point entrance would mean that we  
21 would get all the congestion and  
22 confusion here in the village that we  
23 already experienced on 9D without any  
24 of the benefits of having Metro-North  
25 Railroad in our village.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 I trust, also, that the efforts  
3 to draw visitors from Breakneck and --  
4 I see the efforts to draw people to  
5 Breakneck and points north of  
6 Breakneck and I believe that they will  
7 be successful, I think there's been a  
8 lot of effort to make sure that people  
9 go up in that direction, and I guess,  
10 just I want to summarize by saying --  
11 I'm saying the word "trust" a lot, we  
12 make contracts with people that we  
13 trust, I have chosen to trust the  
14 entities that have put all of this  
15 time into making, optimizing, the  
16 experience of the Fjord Trail not  
17 because I implicitly trust them but  
18 because of their track record and  
19 because iteratively they have been  
20 working on the means and ends of  
21 making this a sustainable successful  
22 harmonious project.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

25 I'm now going to Anita Peltonen,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Dan Blumberg, Michael Crane, Fred  
3 Osborn, John Plummer, Peter  
4 Salmansohn, Susan Peehl, David Watson,  
5 Ana Silverlinck, John Crouch.

6 Our next speaker is Anita  
7 Peltonen. Anita Peltonen, if you have  
8 joined us by phone please \*3 on your  
9 line to raise your hand. I don't see  
10 anyone with a raised hand so we'll go  
11 on to Dan Blumberg.

12 Dan Blumberg, if you've joined  
13 us by phone please press \*3 on your  
14 phone to raise your hand.

15 I'll move on to our next  
16 speaker, Michael Crane. Michael  
17 Crane. Again, if you've joined us by  
18 phone, when I call your name please  
19 press \*3 on your phone and we'll know  
20 to unmute your line.

21 Our next speaker is Fred Osborn.  
22 Go ahead, Mr. Osborn.

23 MR. OSBORN: I'm unmuted as I  
24 see, thank you. The timer has now  
25 started. I'm Fred Osborn, I live in

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           Garrison.    In 2010 I became a member  
2           of the Taconic Regional Commission of  
3           New York State Parks.    In my early  
4           years on the commission we discussed  
5           how to encourage more use of our  
6           parks, in recent years we've discussed  
7           the opposite, how to manage crowding  
8           and overuse of the parks.  
9

10           The Fjord Trail has been under  
11           discussion since before I joined the  
12           commission, it's primary purpose then  
13           and now remains the safe management of  
14           crowds.    The DGEIS is an  
15           extraordinarily conscientious and  
16           consequential document, I'm impressed  
17           with its thorough explanation and  
18           analysis of the project and its  
19           impacts.    The consortium of agencies,  
20           not-for-profits, and municipalities  
21           that constitute the HHFT Steering  
22           Committee have guided the evolution  
23           and given voice to all affected  
24           parties.

25           I don't second-guess the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 expertise of my car mechanic to make  
3 competent repairs to my vehicle, nor  
4 do I seek to understand every detail  
5 of my doctors' diagnosis of my health,  
6 similarly I don't second-guess the  
7 HHFT's sincere intent to help us solve  
8 some serious problems. We are lucky  
9 that they use internationally  
10 qualified consultants in their  
11 planning studies.

12 I urge OPRHP to continue the  
13 process and build out this exciting  
14 project, it will provide tremendous  
15 benefit to me and to my neighbors by  
16 controlling overcrowding and overuse  
17 of our trails and parks.

18 Thank you.

19 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

20 Our next speaker is John  
21 Plummer. Mr. Plummer, if you've  
22 joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
23 your phone and we'll know to unmute  
24 your line. John Plummer. I don't  
25 have a raised hand from our phone-in

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 user so I will go on to Peter  
3 Salmansohn.

4 Go ahead, you've been unmuted.

5 MR. SALMANSOHN: Before I start,  
6 just very brief.

7 MS. McBRIDE: Go ahead.

8 MR. SALMANSOHN: Up until about  
9 45 minutes ago those of us who have  
10 signed up were told that our comments  
11 will be three minutes or more and as  
12 we began it was noted that we would  
13 only have two minutes, so I understand  
14 that there's a lot of people wanting  
15 to speak today but it seems that a  
16 role change at the very last moment  
17 doesn't seem exactly fair.

18 MS. McBRIDE: We're doing our  
19 best to accommodate all the speaker  
20 and we welcome additional comments to  
21 be submitted in writing and remind you  
22 that the written comment period is  
23 through March 4th. Go ahead.

24 MR. SALMANSOHN: I'm an  
25 environmental educator, I worked for

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           New York State Parks for the DEC, I  
2           worked for National Audubon Society,  
3           I've worked for the Hudson Highlands  
4           Land Trust, the Garrison and Haldane  
5           Schools and the Beacon Institute, and  
6           I'm also currently a trail steward for  
7           New York State/New Jersey Trail  
8           Conference at the Washburn Trail.  
9

10           The construction of the Fjord  
11           Trail will be responsible for more  
12           than 50 acres of direct habitat loss  
13           and destruction thus promoting for  
14           augmentation of previously undisturbed  
15           forest lands that will lead to an  
16           invasion of exotic plants such as  
17           mugwort. Additionally, and perhaps  
18           more importantly we ever never know  
19           with the removal and clearing of  
20           hundreds if not thousands of trees  
21           shrubs and other plant life for  
22           parking lots and the trail itself will  
23           destroy. Will nursery trees for bats  
24           be cut down inadvertently? Will the  
25           necessary shrubby habitat for New



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 England Cottentails be diminished?

3 Will roost trees for eagles be cut?

4 Will habitat for the east and

5 fenceless be wiped out in parts?

6 The most astonishing part of the  
7 overall discussion here whether to  
8 give this project a green light or to  
9 stop it is that the plan is to the  
10 seven and a half mile route, knew well  
11 in advance, of course, that this area  
12 of the Hudson Highlands had been  
13 designated as a scenic area of  
14 state-wide significance as the Hudson  
15 River natural heritage area is passing  
16 through seven ecological areas through  
17 miles of the state park reserve and  
18 through the corridor where at least 15  
19 wildlife species are state or  
20 federally listed.

21 I ask you: Where is the logic,  
22 the respect for nature and science in  
23 Scenic Hudson's very problematic plan?  
24 This proposal must be given a positive  
25 declaration and stopped.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Thank you.

3 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

4 Our next speaker is Susan Peehl,  
5 go ahead.

6 MS. PEEHL: Can you hear me?

7 MS. McBRIDE: Yes, we can.

8 MS. PEEHL: Okay. LA is  
9 burning, with whiplash from flooding  
10 to drought LA amassed fuel which is  
11 now being fanned by while fluctuating  
12 winds, even the Santa Annas are no  
13 longer predictable coming in the  
14 raining season bringing with them LA's  
15 driest weather, it's being called  
16 apocalyptic, yet here we are in New  
17 York commenting on an analysis based  
18 on projections from 2014. We just  
19 lived through Earth's hottest year on  
20 record. Again, 2024 temps will pass  
21 predictions, sea surface temps and  
22 water vapor also reached record highs,  
23 we've seen the images: Spain, Greece,  
24 Brazil, the southwest flooding, the  
25 New York Times reported eight

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 catastrophic floods around the world  
3 in 11 days. Most recently it was  
4 North Carolina where Helene's flooding  
5 obliterated records. We have only to  
6 look two years ago to see flooding  
7 here with eight-plus inches most of  
8 which fell in five hours. Sandy and  
9 Irene flooded the Hudson in  
10 back-to-back years, neither was a  
11 hurricane when it arrived, both broke  
12 records with their damage and unusual  
13 behavior. In Cold Spring they flooded  
14 the train tracks, dockside and lower  
15 main. My new personal high water fear  
16 became the storm containing both rains  
17 of Irene and surge of Sandy flooding  
18 the Hudson from land and sea. This is  
19 now happening in other places; why not  
20 here?

21 The CRRRA which offers guidance  
22 upon which this DGEIS is based was  
23 signed into law in 2014, it is now  
24 2025, the Fjord Trail is years away  
25 but just last year scientists

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 determined that all climate records  
3 are willfully wrong and AI is our last  
4 hope for modelling the future. So  
5 what does it mean when the climate  
6 models upon which the CRRRA guidance is  
7 based can't be trusted? What does it  
8 mean for this DGEIS? How responsible  
9 is it to build in a flood plain when  
10 you can't predict the future?

11 Thank you.

12 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

13 Our next speaker is David  
14 Watson. Go ahead, you've been  
15 unmuted.

16 MR. WATSON: My name is David  
17 Watson. I have the honor to live in  
18 Cold Spring and to have restored the  
19 William Kimball House which is part of  
20 the West Point Foundry, it is a  
21 national landmark and so I am  
22 very-very pleased to support the Fjord  
23 Trail as you think it will be a  
24 fantastic addition and will perhaps  
25 reverse some of the pollution and some

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 of the damages being caused by the  
3 people that built the foundry and the  
4 railroads which are the real source of  
5 pollution originally in the Hudson.  
6 The Fjord Trail will do one thing and  
7 that is provide safe secure access to  
8 the Hudson Highlands, one of the most  
9 beautiful regions of the country.

10 I, myself, am 81 years old,  
11 played a lot of rugby and have limbs  
12 that can no longer manage the  
13 difficult trails around the Cold  
14 Spring so the Highlands would for me  
15 be a wonderful way to access the river  
16 side and to indulge myself in the  
17 tranquillity of being besides water,  
18 something that I think most of  
19 humanity would love to enjoy and I  
20 think the Fjord Trail is one way to  
21 help our neighbors and our friends  
22 enjoy as will most -- all of my  
23 family.

24 One last point: I would like to  
25 suggest that part of this effort could

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 be used to create a car-free zone in  
3 Cold Spring so that the crowding that  
4 people fear, if it is a -- if we have  
5 a car-free zone in Cold Spring on the  
6 weekends of the high season from May  
7 into October I think that would add  
8 significantly to the Fjord Trail's  
9 success.

10 Thank you.

11 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

12 Our next speaker is Ana  
13 Silverlinck. Go ahead, you've been  
14 unmuted.

15 MS. SILVERLINCK: Thank you for  
16 this opportunity to speak in support  
17 of the Fjord Trail. I am speaking on  
18 behalf of myself and my husband Jeff  
19 Silverstein. We are both local  
20 business owners, he owns a business in  
21 Beacon and I own a business in Cold  
22 Spring, and we live in the village of  
23 Cold Spring.

24 I support this primarily because  
25 of three reasons: Accessibility,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 safety and much needed infrastructure.

3 As I said, we live in village of  
4 Cold Spring with our two dogs --  
5 sorry, our three dogs, two kids, and  
6 my mother who lives with us and has  
7 Alzheimers and mobility issues, she's  
8 a nature lover and used to love to  
9 hike and walking is very good for her,  
10 but there is not very many accessible  
11 places to walk if you have mobility  
12 issues in the village of Cold Spring  
13 due to the incline and inconsistent  
14 sidewalks and traffic.

15 My children also love to ride  
16 their bikes but also this village is  
17 not very safe for that activity with  
18 no bike lanes and steep inclines. So  
19 I look forward to the accessibility of  
20 a trail and I also look forward to --  
21 for safety reasons. Anyone who's  
22 driven to Beacon or from Beacon knows  
23 that there are way too many people  
24 walking on the road, I also think the  
25 people are coming and we need the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 infrastructure, bathrooms, parking  
3 lots and refuse containers, so those  
4 are some of the reasons I support this  
5 trail.

6 Thank you.

7 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

8 Our next speaker is John Crouch.  
9 Go ahead, you've been unmuted. John  
10 Crouch, you've been unmuted. John  
11 Crouch, we've unmuted your line, if  
12 you're there.

13 MR. CROUCH: Can you hear me  
14 okay now?

15 MS. McBRIDE: Yes, we can.

16 MR. CROUCH: Great, thank you.  
17 Sorry about that.

18 I'm a Philipstown local, I'm a  
19 -- we got a family that loves being  
20 outdoors, we've lived here in the area  
21 for eight years, we love the area.  
22 And I've seen some, you know, just  
23 amazing transformations just in a very  
24 positive way, and I've really seen the  
25 energy behind the Hudson trail and



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 it's just such a positive energy, it's  
3 about bringing community together and  
4 about creating something really  
5 beautiful, and I think that grand  
6 beautiful vision is something that we  
7 should always keep in mind. I also  
8 just want to be thankful. I think a  
9 lot of the comments here, and the  
10 comments that I've heard just in  
11 general, not here, had really had a  
12 negative bias but I think that they've  
13 really missed the gratitude. We've  
14 had a very generous donor, Chris,  
15 who's, you know, created a grand  
16 vision, put his own hard-earned money  
17 into this, you know, beautiful vision.  
18 And then we -- we also have New York  
19 State coming to bail us out of a  
20 clearly tough situation that we have  
21 the crowds in our town. So I'm a huge  
22 fan of this. You're going to find me  
23 on those trails, you're going to find  
24 me on the bike, and I'm going to be  
25 there and I'm going to be loving the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 whole thing. I think it's going to  
3 really bring a great thing to our --  
4 to Cold Spring and to the grander  
5 area.

6 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

7 I'm now going to call the next  
8 group of speakers: David Merandy,  
9 Sheila Rauch, Davis McCallum, Chip  
10 Loewenson, Scott Hill, Alice Krakauer,  
11 Heidi Wendel, Steve Voloto, Mai Yee.

12 Okay. Our next speaker is Dave  
13 Merandy, you've been unmuted.

14 MR. MERANDY: Can you hear me?

15 MS. McBRIDE: Yes.

16 MR. MERANDY: Hello. Yes.

17 Thank you for the opportunity. I was  
18 previously the mayor of the Village of  
19 Cold Spring for seven years and during  
20 my tenure as mayor I was member of the  
21 Fjord Trail Steering Committee, prior  
22 to that I was a councilman on the Town  
23 of Philipstown town board for three  
24 years. All that to say, I've been  
25 involved with Philipstown community my

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 entire life and with the Fjord Trail  
3 for over a decade. Because of this  
4 relationship I understand impacts this  
5 project will have on our community  
6 infrastructure and nature, and believe  
7 the risks and consequences of building  
8 the Fjord Trail seriously outweigh any  
9 promised benefits.

10 As lead agency, New York State  
11 Office of Parks Recreation & Historic  
12 Preservation acknowledge the  
13 sensitivity and significant of the  
14 Hudson Highlands when under SEQRA they  
15 declared this a type-one action and  
16 gave it a positive declaration. The  
17 DGEIS includes chapter 3 and 4 each  
18 with 16 sections identifying most of  
19 the potential negative impacts this  
20 project will have in and around the  
21 area it is to be built.

22 Unfortunately the mitigation  
23 measures suggested throughout the  
24 DGEIS don't actually address the  
25 destruction and disturbance this

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 project will cause, they're vague and  
3 ambiguous and do little alleviate any  
4 real concern one has over this  
5 project. They do not remedy negative  
6 impacts, they only suggest possible  
7 ways to lessen them with no guarantee  
8 that mitigation measures will even  
9 work.

10 This project does not solve the  
11 problems HHFT cites as reasons for  
12 building this attraction in the DGEIS  
13 but exacerbates them. It will  
14 significantly increase visitation not  
15 only on weekends as we now experience  
16 it but throughout the week most who  
17 arrive by car resulting in increased  
18 air pollution, noise and congestion  
19 all equalling a dramatic decrease in  
20 the quality of life for those living  
21 in the Hudson Highlands and the  
22 experience of those visiting,  
23 roundabouts and turn lanes are not the  
24 solution.

25 The bottom line is that this

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 project should not be improved because  
3 it's not needed. Safety for hiker and  
4 traffic concerns. The original  
5 impetus for this project can all be  
6 addressed without clear-cutting and  
7 destroying existing woodlands,  
8 expanding parking, and most  
9 importantly without building a  
10 boardwalk attraction in the Hudson  
11 Valley.

12 As lead agency, all the risks  
13 are brought to your attention in the  
14 DGEIS and I ask you to give serious  
15 consideration to whether this project  
16 is actually needed. Is this project  
17 worth the risk of jeopardizing the  
18 iconic Hudson Highlands with all the  
19 beauty and wildlife it holds.

20 Thank you for your time.

21 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Sheila  
23 Rauch, go ahead.

24 MS. RAUCH: I live at 356 Lane  
25 Gate Road in Cold Spring and I'm very

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 concerned about this project and I'm  
3 going to talk mainly about the Village  
4 of Cold Spring.

5 The DGEIS acknowledges increased  
6 traffic on 9D and it offers  
7 mitigations, I don't think those  
8 mitigations really will do anything  
9 but nevertheless they're there, it  
10 offers nothing for what will be  
11 tripling traffic in the village.

12 Planners suggest that  
13 alleviating 9D traffic by making  
14 turning lanes at the intersection with  
15 Main Street will be helpful, but where  
16 are they thinking that traffic turning  
17 into Main Street will go, there's just  
18 nothing said about that? Main Street  
19 is basically a dead end, it's a sort  
20 of dead end at the railroad that you  
21 take three sharp turns to get over the  
22 railroad tracks, and it's a real dead  
23 end at the river which is exactly  
24 where a major entrance to this project  
25 is.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 The Fjord Trail had meetings  
3 trying to convince the community that  
4 the real entry will be at Dutchess  
5 Manor, but I noticed in the DGEIS that  
6 is not stressed, it is a trail from  
7 Cold Spring to Beacon or Beacon to  
8 Cold Spring, and Cold Spring will be a  
9 major entry.

10 And the thing that really  
11 worries me is that because it wasn't  
12 mentioned at all, there's going to be  
13 along the way devastating adjustments  
14 to Main Street, and just a process of  
15 turning this village which is viable  
16 and -- you know, a viable village of  
17 homes and businesses, turning it into  
18 a gateway for the Fjord Trail.

19 I find a lot in this DGEIS  
20 somewhat condescending, the scenic  
21 resources won't be disturbed from the  
22 point of view of the village or from  
23 the point of view of the other side of  
24 the river. They say, for example,  
25 that Myers Park, you won't even notice

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the -- well, they don't say that but  
3 it's as if they don't -- it's as if  
4 you won't notice that linear park.

5 Because it's linear, like the  
6 railroad, like the river, like the  
7 train on the other side, it'll all be  
8 horizontal and so your eyes will focus  
9 on the mountains on the other side. I  
10 -- they presented a picture of that at  
11 one of the meetings and you could hear  
12 groans in the audience and request to  
13 see that slide again. The intrusion  
14 of this structure on a valued scenic  
15 resource matters in this community and  
16 I'm concerned also about the removal  
17 of vegetation and the destruction of  
18 habitat on the shoreline trail all the  
19 way from the village to Breakneck  
20 Mountain.

21 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you,  
22 Ms. Rauch, your time is over.

23 MS. RAUCH: Okay. Thank you.

24 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

25 Our next speaker is Davis



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 McCallum, go ahead.

3 MR. McCALLUM: My name is Davis  
4 McCallum, I'm a resident of Cold  
5 Spring. When I'm driving from Cold  
6 Spring to Beacon on a weekend  
7 afternoon and I see all the cars  
8 parked alongside 9D with hikers  
9 milling about and putting on their  
10 hiking boots and scampering across the  
11 roadway, it makes me mindful of the  
12 fact that Fjord Trail is in fact a  
13 visionary solution to a currently  
14 existing challenge. And as much as I  
15 value every moment that I have to be  
16 physically connected to river I'm also  
17 aware that the Highlands don't belong  
18 to just those of us who are lucky  
19 enough to live in this area, they can  
20 and should be widely shared, and with  
21 an ADA accessible path that  
22 life-affirming experience will be  
23 accessible to older folks, folks with  
24 physical challenges, parents pushing  
25 strollers and 50-year-old recreational

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 joggers like myself who want a scenic  
3 place to plot along free from the  
4 noise and aggravation of vehicular  
5 traffic.

6 I also think that the status quo  
7 is not sustainable from a climate  
8 resilience standpoint and those of us  
9 who care a lot about the impacts of  
10 climate change on the Hudson Highlands  
11 should be grateful we have some of the  
12 great design minds of our generation  
13 planning for a more resilient future  
14 alongside the Hudson River shoreline.

15 As a member of the community who  
16 cares about the vitality of our towns  
17 and villages and the responsible  
18 stewardship of our natural resources I  
19 implore the state to ensure that the  
20 project reaches completion as  
21 designed.

22 Thank you very much for your  
23 time, appreciate it.

24 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

25 Our next speaker is Chip

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Loewenson, go ahead.

3 MR. LOEWENSON: My family's had  
4 a home in Garrison since 2008, and for  
5 about a decade I've been a member of  
6 the board of Scenic Hudson, and I am  
7 completely in favor of the proposed  
8 Fjord Trail.

9 I have two brief comments; one  
10 personal and one general. My personal  
11 comment focuses on accessibility. My  
12 27-year-old Henry has autism, he lives  
13 in a group home in the town of  
14 Newburgh, my wife Susan Broony and I  
15 see Henry about every other weekend  
16 when we usually take him on a Sunday  
17 afternoon hike. I'm 67 years old, as  
18 we get older the Fjord Trail will  
19 provide an accessible trail for us to  
20 hike with Henry, not just us but the  
21 Fjord Trail will provide access to  
22 outdoor recreation and exercise and  
23 up-close views of the Hudson River for  
24 anyone with limited mobility; people  
25 walking with canes, people using

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 wheelchairs, people pushing a child's  
3 stroller, so that's my personal  
4 comment.

5 My general comment focuses on  
6 the potential alternatives for a route  
7 from the Cold Spring Train Station.  
8 Given the concerns about potential  
9 pedestrian congestion in Cold Spring  
10 as it is, there's a walk from the  
11 train station toward Breakneck Ridge.  
12 It makes sense to provide multiple  
13 paths to reduce congestion on any one  
14 path. The dockside route would be  
15 appealing for visitor who want to stay  
16 close to the river and would also  
17 provide relief for residents of Cold  
18 Spring by offering visitors a quick  
19 attractive exit path from the village.  
20 So I endorse the preferred a line  
21 along reach number one at the southern  
22 end of the Fjord Trail. The Fair  
23 Street route with the proposed  
24 enhanced sidewalk permits visitors  
25 another way to come up Main Street a

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 little bit then go north, for others  
3 who want to go further up they can go  
4 left on Route 9D. There's three  
5 pedestrian routes out of Cold Spring,  
6 provide options for visitors and would  
7 reduce congestion on any one route.

8 Thank you for your time and  
9 attention.

10 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you. I see  
11 that speaker Steve Ives has joined us.  
12 Mr. Ives, go ahead.

13 MR. IVES: I'm a resident of  
14 Garrison and I believe that the Fjord  
15 Trail is a well-funded and well  
16 organized plan to address a complex  
17 local problem. The issue of  
18 overcrowding in these parks fuelled by  
19 social media and the discovery of the  
20 beauty of the Highlands during Covid  
21 is not going to go away.

22 I sympathize with my friends and  
23 neighbors in Cold Spring who bear the  
24 brunt of this stress on our community.  
25 But I believe that only the kind of

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 overarching and carefully designed  
3 approach like the one put forward by  
4 HHFT has a chance of succeeding, and I  
5 believe that the beauty of the  
6 Highlands should be shared.

7 The land along most of this  
8 route is not ours, it belongs to all  
9 New Yorkers as part of the New York  
10 State park system and it should be  
11 made available for all to enjoy.

12 I know that this is not an easy  
13 decision for our community and I  
14 regret this has become such a pole  
15 arising issue at our town, but I also  
16 believe that the organizers of trail  
17 have listened to local concerns,  
18 already modified their plans  
19 accordingly, and will be mindful of  
20 the issues as the construction of the  
21 trail continues, they are members of  
22 our community too.

23 Thank you.

24 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

25 I'll call Nancy Montgomery next,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 go ahead.

3 MS. MONTGOMERY: Can you hear  
4 me?

5 MS. McBRIDE: Yes.

6 MS. MONTGOMERY: Hi. It's a  
7 crucial moment in this process, I'll  
8 continue to listen and work toward the  
9 best outcome. In addition, I  
10 represent the community's interest and  
11 always, no matter where I am, in the  
12 living room, in the board room, at the  
13 supermarket, in the paper, my comments  
14 are that of my elected office and  
15 reflect my commitment to the best  
16 possible outcome for our shared  
17 constituents.

18 Thank you state parks for the  
19 rigorous work that has gone into this  
20 project especially through this SEQRA  
21 process, this is exactly the type of  
22 responsible oversight we need in  
23 projects of this magnitude.

24 For over a decade Philipstown  
25 has been contending with the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 challenges of over-tourism, our scenic  
3 beauty along with the stretches of  
4 state-owned land make this a  
5 destination for people from all over  
6 the world, it's a blessing and a  
7 challenge. This is not going to  
8 change unless of course parks in New  
9 York State decide they're going to  
10 stop preserving land, open it up for  
11 sale, allow uncontrolled development.  
12 I would imagine less people would come  
13 here if you allow us to become  
14 overdeveloped and ugly, I don't see  
15 that happening. When I first took  
16 office it was a struggle with all this  
17 land, we felt as if we were left to  
18 fend for ourselves when it came to  
19 maintaining and caring and responding  
20 for the state lands in our area, that  
21 has changed a lot, and I want to thank  
22 New York State parks for listening,  
23 collaborating, and acting to improve  
24 the infrastructure of the state park  
25 system within Philipstown.



## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           The existing results to your  
2           improvements are clear. Fewer  
3           emergency calls, more New York State  
4           staff to respond, improved facilities,  
5           and the renewed commitment to  
6           preserving the natural beauty that  
7           makes this place unique.

8           Speaking from a personal place,  
9           Dockside, a location that holds deep  
10          meaning for me. I spent many years at  
11          Dockside during its vibrant heyday,  
12          it's special place and much of my life  
13          has unfolded there. It's a unique  
14          thing to be able to live, work, raise  
15          a family and recreate all within one  
16          town, that's what I had there for so  
17          many years, and it's at Dockside and  
18          the 7-mile trail that I see the value  
19          of continuing this opportunity.

20          There's a history to our region  
21          that's built around connection and  
22          centuries' pathways ran along the  
23          river, pathways that tied the  
24          communities together. I'm sure there  
25

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 was a foot path from Beacon to Cold  
3 Spring but those walkways were  
4 replaced by infrastructure; roadways  
5 then railways, the rise of planes,  
6 trains and automobiles transformed  
7 landscape and in many ways cut us off  
8 from the very river that defines our  
9 identity. I wonder what the Fords and  
10 Vanderbilts would say when I ask why  
11 didn't they consider pedestrian access  
12 along the riverfront when they created  
13 their legacy of railroads and roads?  
14 Why didn't they ensure the public  
15 could walk along the shore like they  
16 had done for centuries? What we need  
17 today are not just roads, but places  
18 where people can walk off the record,  
19 not in the road. For over a century  
20 and a half the railroad has  
21 essentially cut off the community from  
22 fully experiencing the Hudson River.

23 A great project takes on  
24 multiple challenges, challenges that  
25 when tackled thoughtfully can lead to

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 something better and safer, the  
3 shoreline trail will do just that.

4 I'm hopeful that New York State  
5 parks and the Department of  
6 Transportation and the MTA will  
7 continue to collaborate. The reality  
8 is that time brings changing growth.  
9 This kind of infrastructure is  
10 necessary now, it will be critically  
11 necessary in the very near future.  
12 This project is an investment in the  
13 future of our community, in the safety  
14 of our residents and in the long term  
15 health of our shared environment. I  
16 urge you to move forward. Failing to  
17 address these long standing safety  
18 issues and infrastructure needs would  
19 be a costly, unforgiveable oversight.

20 Thank you.

21 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

22 Our next speaker is Scott Hill.  
23 Scott Hill if you've joined us by  
24 phone please press \*3 on your phone to  
25 raise your hand and we'll know to

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 unmute your line. Scott Hill.

3 I'll go onto our next speaker,  
4 Alice Krakauer. Go ahead.

5 MS. KRAKAUER: Thank you. I  
6 need to edit down my prepared remarks  
7 so I will speak this evening instead.

8 MS. McBRIDE: Okay. Thank you.

9 Our next speaker is Heidi  
10 Wendel. Heidi Wendel, if you've  
11 joined us today by phone please press  
12 \*3 and we'll know to unmute your line.  
13 Is Heidi here?

14 Okay. We'll go onto our next  
15 speaker, Steve Voloto. Steve Voloto,  
16 if you've joined us here this  
17 afternoon by phone please press \*3 on  
18 your phone to raise your hand and  
19 we'll know to unmute your line. Steve  
20 Voloto.

21 Our next speaker is Mai Yee.

22 MS. YEE: Can you hear me?

23 MS. McBRIDE: Yes.

24 MS. YEE: Okay. Great. I'm a  
25 resident of Cold Spring in the town of

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Philipstown and I appreciate the  
3 opportunity to comment.

4 The Fjord Trail design proposed  
5 would result in the permanently loss  
6 of nearly 54 acres of ecological  
7 communities and would entail an  
8 estimated five years of massive  
9 construction with heavy cranes, drills  
10 and other machinery in the Hudson  
11 River and on land. We would have the  
12 horrendous noise and disturbances  
13 associated with the building on such a  
14 scale and no guarantee that permanent  
15 lasting damage would not result to  
16 wildlife or fragile aquatic  
17 ecosystems.

18 I'm particular concerned about  
19 the 398 total new parking spaces that  
20 would be added to the 7.5 mile stretch  
21 of Route 9D that spans this project,  
22 that number includes new parking lots  
23 at Notch and Waite Hill doubling the  
24 size of Washburn Lot and parking  
25 spaces at Dutchess Manor that were

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 historically not available for trail  
3 use but would now be part of the Fjord  
4 Trail plan.

5 While Duchess Manor is not  
6 included in this DGEIS, Duchess Manor  
7 is part of HHFT's overall strategy and  
8 it would be an oversight not to  
9 consider the 180 spaces that will  
10 newly be made available for public use  
11 at that location. Creating more  
12 parking would only encourage more car  
13 usage into the area leading to more  
14 traffic, fossil fuel usage, pollution  
15 and noise.

16 Clearly more needs to be done to  
17 make it safer for pedestrians and cars  
18 but this can be accomplished with a  
19 much more modest less impactful inland  
20 trail, one that doesn't insist on  
21 locating itself partly along the  
22 shoreline of the Hudson where fragile  
23 aquatic habitats would be harmed with  
24 years of drilling and construction in  
25 its river bed. A more modest option

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 could include sidewalks on 9D and Fair  
3 Street and connecting with existing  
4 paths, and in fact part of one such  
5 solution is already being accomplished  
6 with DOT's recent work to put  
7 sidewalks into the Breakneck Tunnel  
8 which could serve as part of a similar  
9 Fjord Trail pathway design.

10 I ask the Parks Department and  
11 all responsible authorities to  
12 consider a less invasive trail that  
13 doesn't involve building a boardwalk  
14 over the Hudson River or adding almost  
15 triple the number of parking spaces to  
16 Route 9D but rather one that preserves  
17 the land, shoreline and ecosystems  
18 that makes this area the extraordinary  
19 place it is for both visitors and  
20 residents alike.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you for your  
23 comment.

24 Our next speaker is Patricia  
25 Klubnick. If Patricia Klubnick has

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
3 your phone to raise your hand and  
4 we'll know to unmute your line.

5 Patricia Klubnick, if you've joined by  
6 phone please press \*3 on your phone to  
7 raise your hand.

8 Our next speaker is Matthew  
9 Umbro. Matthew Umbro, if you've  
10 joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
11 your phone to raise your hand and  
12 we'll know to unmute your line.  
13 Matthew Umbro.

14 Our next speaker is Sal  
15 Migliore. Sal Migliore, if you've  
16 joined us by phone please press \*3 on  
17 your phone to raise your hand and  
18 we'll know to unmute your line. Sal  
19 Migliore.

20 Our next speaker is Meg Oakes.  
21 Meg Oakes, if you've joined by phone  
22 please press \*3 on your phone to raise  
23 your hand and we'll know to unmute  
24 your line. Meg Oakes.

25 Our next speaker is Karen



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Frilmann. Karen Frilmann. Karen  
3 Frilmann, if you've joined us by phone  
4 please press \*3 on your phone to raise  
5 your hand and we'll unmute your line.

6 Our next speaker is Ethan  
7 Millrod. Ethan Millrod. Ethan  
8 Millrod, if you've joined us by phone  
9 please press \*3 on your phone to raise  
10 your hand and we'll unmute your line.

11 I'm going to call the next group  
12 of speakers and then I'm going to --

13 MS. FRILMANN: Hello.

14 MS. McBRIDE: Oh, I'm sorry. Go  
15 ahead.

16 MS. FRILMANN: This is Karen  
17 Frilmann, I was not unmuted, I raised  
18 my hand though.

19 MS. McBRIDE: Go ahead.

20 MS FRILMANN: I would like to  
21 thank you for the opportunity to  
22 speak. I live between Cold Spring and  
23 Beacon in -- technically in Dutchess  
24 Junction, and I guess in looking at  
25 the environmental review it's very

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 likely that it's -- you know, it's  
3 expensive but I'm a little concerned  
4 about the way it sort of rolls over  
5 certain details such as no potential  
6 significant adverse traffic impacts  
7 were identified within the City of  
8 Beacon. Now, anyone who has watched  
9 the growth of the population in the  
10 City of Beacon over the last five  
11 years knows that once you put out on  
12 social media that there is this  
13 wonderful trail the idea that we will  
14 not have significant adverse issues  
15 seems to me -- it's just ingenuous and  
16 I think what I'm concerned about is  
17 the fact that 9D is a very narrow  
18 strip, it is my only egress in and out  
19 of my home, it stopped -- it becomes  
20 stopped up for emergency vehicles, if  
21 we have a fire which is very possible  
22 in the Hudson Highlands. These woods  
23 are in a state of decay as it may, if  
24 you know, if you've hiked. And so I  
25 guess my question is: Is solving a

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 problem, a real-real problem along  
3 Route 9D of, you know, where to park,  
4 is the solution to invite thousands  
5 and thousands of more people up on  
6 nice weekends? And the idea that this  
7 will be spread out over multiple  
8 weekends we know that's not true,  
9 there's nobody hiking during this cold  
10 weather. We will have crowds of  
11 people during the best weather. And  
12 I'm concerned that this review does  
13 not really address the problems that  
14 we will see.

15 Thank you.

16 MS. McBRIDE: Thank you.

17 I'd like to unmute Seth Wiley.

18 I see that you've raised your hand so  
19 go ahead, we've unmuted your line.

20 MR. WILEY: Thank you very much.

21 Seth Wiley. I did sign up to be a  
22 commentator; do I have that 2-minute  
23 now or -- I just didn't know if I had  
24 gotten onto the roll call because it  
25 didn't --

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MS. McBRIDE: No. We haven't  
3 gotten to your name yet, no.

4 MR. WILEY: Thank you very much,  
5 ma'am.

6 MS. McBRIDE: Okay. All right.  
7 I'm now going to list the next ten  
8 speakers and then we're going to take  
9 a very brief break.

10 The next ten speakers are  
11 Goldee Greene, Andrew Samuel, Michael  
12 Dulong, Dede Farabaugh, Hank Osborn,  
13 Philip Weiss, Graham Lawlor, Seth  
14 Wiley, Neil Caplan, and James Miller.

15 Those will be our next ten  
16 speakers, we're going to take a very  
17 quick break. Thank you.

18 [Whereupon, a short break was  
19 taken.]

20 MR. O'CONNELL: May we go on the  
21 record please? Before we adjourned  
22 momentarily Judge McBride had read the  
23 next set of names, so our next caller  
24 as we continue now is Goldee Greene.  
25 Goldee Greene, if you're a call-in

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 user please press \*3 and we'll unmute  
3 you. Goldee Greene. Goldee Greene  
4 please press \*3 and we'll unmute you  
5 if you're a call-in user.

6 Our next speaker is Andrew  
7 Samuel. Andrew Samuel, if you're a  
8 call-in user please press \*3 to raise  
9 your hand and we will unmute you.  
10 Andrew Samuel. Andrew Samuel, please  
11 press \*3 if you're a call-in user and  
12 we will unmute you.

13 Our next speaker is Michael  
14 Dulong. Michael Dulong, you're  
15 unmuted, please continue.

16 MR. DULONG: Good afternoon.  
17 Thank you, Judge McBride and Judge  
18 O'Connell and Office of Parks' staff  
19 for the opportunity to testify today.

20 My name is Michael Dulong, I'm a  
21 legal program director for Hudson  
22 River Keeper, we're an environmental  
23 non-profit whose mission includes  
24 protecting and restoring the Hudson  
25 River from source to sea.

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1  
2 River Keeper supports the goals  
3 of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail to  
4 facilitate human interaction with  
5 nature and the Hudson River, to  
6 increase public safety along the Route  
7 9D corridor and to provide a  
8 recreational asset for the region;  
9 however, we have concerns about the  
10 project's impacts on the Hudson, many  
11 of these impacts are avoidable  
12 depending on the route alternative  
13 that is selected. I will address  
14 three comments today and we look  
15 forward to submitting the rest of our  
16 comments in writing.

17 First: New fill-in pilings  
18 would be harmful to the Hudson River  
19 and should be avoided. Under the  
20 current plan about one mile of the  
21 proposed Fjord Trail south would be  
22 elevated over the Hudson River  
23 shoreline with 149 piles and 23,000  
24 square feet of walkway installed  
25 within the water. These

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 pile-supported structures would  
3 disturb the river bed, impede title  
4 variation and shade in-water  
5 ecosystems along a significant portion  
6 of the Hudson's eastern bank. River  
7 Keeper is especially concerned about  
8 the impact on endangered shortnose and  
9 Atlantic sturgeon species in their  
10 established food web. To wholly avoid  
11 these impacts River Keeper requests  
12 that the Fjord Trail avoid in-water  
13 and over-water structures.

14 Second: Protecting and  
15 preserving existing wetlands must be a  
16 priority. There are two main trail  
17 options for the Fjord Trail north,  
18 option one would result in boardwalk  
19 crossings over freshwater wetlands  
20 south of Fishkill Creek. These are  
21 particularly important wildlife areas  
22 as they provide habitat for threatened  
23 and endangered species, the trail  
24 should not disturb these wetlands.

25 And third and last: Impervious

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 surfaces should be avoided entirely.  
3 The Fjord Trail would result in a  
4 significant increase in roughly 22 and  
5 a half acres and impervious and  
6 semi-pervious surfaces which would  
7 increase storm water pollution in the  
8 river and local wetlands. We urge  
9 that the Fjord Trail instead be  
10 constructed with minimal or no new  
11 impervious surfaces, but instead with  
12 pervious materials like gravel,  
13 interlocking stones, et cetera.

14 Thank you for your consideration  
15 of our comments, we look forward to  
16 submitting the rest of them in  
17 writing.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
19 much. Our next speaker is Dede  
20 Farabaugh. Dede Farabaugh, if you're  
21 a call-user please press \*3 so we can  
22 unmute you. Oh, I see that -- yup, go  
23 ahead, you've been unmuted.

24 MS. FARABAUGH: Hi. Yes. My  
25 name is Dede Farabaugh, I'm here as a



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 resident of the Village of Cold  
3 Spring, New York. I've lived in  
4 Hudson Highlands for the past 12 years  
5 and the last five years as a resident  
6 in Cold Spring. I'm an avid user of  
7 the Hudson Highlands parks and I enjoy  
8 the incredible access I have to walk  
9 and hike in them on a daily basis such  
10 as I did this morning.

11 I've reviewed the DGEIS report  
12 on the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail  
13 and I am here to express my full  
14 support of the project as conceived.  
15 The Dockside Park entry point is the  
16 best route option to address issues  
17 that I and many of my fellow Cold  
18 Spring residents have about managing  
19 visiting crowds, providing needed  
20 services such as bathrooms and  
21 signage, providing increased  
22 accessibility for all, and addressing  
23 the clear safety issues of pedestrians  
24 walking down route 9D and Fair Street  
25 for the Metro-North Train Station.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Fjord Trail project is the best  
3 option to protect and preserve this  
4 special area of the Hudson Valley for  
5 locals and visitors alike.

6 Thank you.

7 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
8 much.

9 Our next speaker, Hank Osborn.  
10 Go ahead, Mr. Osborn.

11 MR. OSBORN: Hello. Can you  
12 hear me?

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I can.

14 MR. OSBORN: My name is Hank  
15 Osborn. In 2006, as a member of the  
16 Philipstown Greenway Committee I was  
17 part of the first discussions aimed at  
18 finding solutions to the overcrowding  
19 and safety concerns from parking and  
20 walking along Route 9D at Breakneck  
21 Ridge. We recognized the need for a  
22 trail to get people off the road and  
23 out of Cold Spring, we named our idea  
24 the Fjord Trail, and it was an effort  
25 to control the small crowds that

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 seemed large at the time and make the  
3 situation safer. Visitation has only  
4 increased since then, the project has  
5 become controversial, process has  
6 evolved to now include a consortium of  
7 agencies and organizations and  
8 municipalities, and throughout the  
9 evolution of the project the process  
10 has always relied on input from local  
11 communities. The DGEIS is consistent  
12 with the mission of the Fjord Trail to  
13 solve safety concerns around  
14 visitation and enhance the quality of  
15 life for local communities, the plan  
16 also protects and restores natural  
17 resources and also restores access to  
18 the Hudson River itself. The DGEIS  
19 solves the safety concerns and reduces  
20 the impacts of high visitation, it  
21 identifies important social and  
22 environmental concerns, steps for  
23 mitigation of controversial issues are  
24 clearly provided. The plan is for an  
25 ADA accessible trail that makes the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 beauty of the Hudson Highlands  
3 welcoming and inclusive and accessible  
4 to people of all ages and all  
5 abilities. The outdoors should be  
6 enjoyed by all.

7 The Fjord Trail will provide  
8 tremendous benefits to the people at  
9 Philipstown, to the Village of Cold  
10 Spring and the City of Beacon, as well  
11 as people coming from other  
12 communities across New York State and  
13 beyond. I urge the State of New York  
14 to provide the support needed to  
15 complete the project.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you.

18 Our next speaker is Philip  
19 Weiss. Philip Weiss, if you're a  
20 call-in user please raise your hand by  
21 pressing \*3. Philip Weiss. Philip  
22 Weiss.

23 MR. WEISS: (Inaudible).

24 MR. O'CONNELL: It's difficult  
25 to hear you. Could you start again

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 please?

3 MR. WEISS: Can you hear me now?

4 MR. O'CONNELL: That's much  
5 better. That's much better. Philip  
6 Weiss.

7 MR. WEISS: Thank you. Thank  
8 you. My name is Phil Weiss, I live in  
9 Philipstown. The impact statement  
10 before you is filled -- (inaudible) --  
11 consequences of this construction  
12 project has the affect an  
13 rattlesnakes, quote, the survivorship  
14 of some individuals unable to relocate  
15 would likely be reduced, unquote.  
16 That's bureaucratic speak for "we're  
17 going to destroy a lot of threatened  
18 animals' habitat."

19 The DGEIS never addresses the  
20 climate change implications of pouring  
21 thousands of tons of concrete and  
22 clear-cutting hundreds of thousands of  
23 trees. The carbon footprint of this  
24 project is never stated and it's a  
25 mess. There are far better ways to

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 address overcrowding and get people  
3 into the parks than disfiguring an  
4 iconic landscape with a concrete  
5 boardwalk and lighting. The bidder  
6 division that this project has caused  
7 in our community is reminiscent of the  
8 campaign by ConEd to blast Storm King  
9 Mountain in the 1960s also for the  
10 public good. That foolish project was  
11 stopped and this one should be too.

12 Thank you very much.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you.

14 Our next speaker is Graham  
15 Lawlor. Graham Lawlor, go ahead,  
16 you've been unmuted.

17 MR. LAWLOR: Hello, can you hear  
18 me?

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I can.

20 MR. LAWLOR: Oh, great. Yeah.  
21 My name is Graham Lawlor. I have been  
22 a Beacon resident here for about eight  
23 years, I hike almost every single day  
24 in Hudson Highlands State Park, I  
25 think I'm going on the past 20 days

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 running, I'm also a trail maintain and  
3 steward in Hudson Highlands State  
4 Park, and I'm on the Beacon Greenway  
5 Trail Committee and have been for  
6 probably five, six years, and in  
7 addition to that I maintain a section  
8 about a mile long of the future Beacon  
9 Hopewell Junction Rail Trail just on a  
10 voluntary basis by my house, myself  
11 and residents of Beacon to come and  
12 use.

13 I am in strong support and favor  
14 of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, I  
15 hope it goes all the way from Beacon  
16 to the park in Cold Spring as it's  
17 originally designed, I will definitely  
18 be using it myself and I know lots of  
19 people that will. I was particularly  
20 impressed by the very-very detailed  
21 environmental impact statements and  
22 mitigation statements in this report  
23 and the contrast with what's done in  
24 Hudson Highlands State Park which is  
25 pretty much nothing as far as I'm

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 aware that so much attention was put  
3 into preserving this delicate  
4 ecosystem on the river which I think  
5 is -- needs to be done and I think  
6 this trail is going to be a great part  
7 of that. The fact that River Keeper  
8 endorses the trail I think is --  
9 really just says it all. Definitely  
10 take into account all of what they're  
11 saying, nobody else speaks for the  
12 river like they do. And the safety  
13 concerns; blinking on Highway 9D is  
14 very hazardous, I've known people that  
15 have gotten permanent brain damage by  
16 getting hit by a car around here and I  
17 hope that that doesn't happen, so I  
18 have supported this trail.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
21 much.

22 Our next speaker is Seth Wiley.  
23 Seth Wiley.

24 MR. WILEY: Good afternoon.  
25 Seth Wiley. Thanks so much for this



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 and the opportunity to speak.

3 You know, it's funny, I'm sort  
4 of two minds about this proposal. I'm  
5 actually a resident of Rockland County  
6 just across the river, I'm a cyclist,  
7 I'm a father and I'm also an  
8 architect. You know, as a cyclist I'm  
9 actually on the board of directors of  
10 the Rockland County Bicycle Club,  
11 we're very close with the Westchester  
12 County Bicycle Club, we all ride on  
13 both sides of the river throughout all  
14 the areas very often, we all love the  
15 riverfront trails, towns and all the  
16 businesses and everything, so that  
17 half of me looks at this project  
18 proposal, you know, and says "gosh, it  
19 would be amazing to have an asset like  
20 this," and so I love it for that.

21 The other half of me, you know,  
22 is -- you know, takes -- you know, I'm  
23 an architect, I happen to be on the  
24 board of directors of the New York  
25 State American Institute of

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Architects, I happen to be on the  
3 International Code Council's Energy  
4 Conservation Code, so I have access to  
5 a lot of information, a lot of you  
6 probably know that, you know, regards,  
7 you know, greenhouse gas emissions,  
8 environmental, you know, climate  
9 change, et cetera. You know, the  
10 environmental, you know, research done  
11 on this, a SEQRA process, in New York  
12 State does not include the assessment  
13 of greenhouse gas emissions' impact.  
14 Look at the SEQRA process in  
15 California, it does include greenhouse  
16 gas assessments, so a total carbon  
17 footprint.

18 This project needs to be  
19 analyzed for its real greenhouse gas  
20 footprint because it is not  
21 sustainable. One of the first lessons  
22 in sustainability is not to build in  
23 green spaces, do not tear down green  
24 spaces to build something.

25 So unfortunately I can't support

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the project and I do think that it  
3 will negatively impact the current  
4 environment and future generations.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you.

7 Our next speaker will be Neil  
8 Caplan, go ahead please.

9 MR. CAPLAN: Hi. Can you hear  
10 me?

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I can.

12 MR. CAPLAN: Hi. I'm Neil  
13 Caplan and I live in Beacon and I've  
14 been here for 30 years. I want to  
15 speak on behalf -- well, of myself and  
16 the Bannerman Castle Trust in support  
17 of Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail.  
18 There is -- and just to talk a little  
19 bit about that: There is currently a  
20 viewing platform for the Bannerman  
21 Island located just north of the  
22 pedestrian bridge at Breakneck Ridge  
23 whistle stop. The trail to get to the  
24 overlook is extremely dangerous as it  
25 must be accessed from Route 9D.

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1  
2 Almost every day and especially during  
3 the spring/summer/fall months Route 9D  
4 has hundreds of cars parked along the  
5 side -- the shoulders, hikers unaware  
6 of the danger are walking along 9D and  
7 can easily be hit by cars. At other  
8 entry points to the Bannerman viewing  
9 area platform there had been some  
10 fatal car accidents.

11 The Fjord Trail would help to  
12 solve the pedestrian safety issues on  
13 9D by creating parking areas and  
14 providing a beautiful world-class  
15 Hudson River trail that keeps  
16 pedestrians safely away from 9D and  
17 the Metro-North train tracks.

18 It is very important that the  
19 Fjord Trail will be accessible to all.  
20 Unfortunately not all parks can be  
21 accessible due to the terrain such as  
22 Breakneck Ridge Mountain, but the  
23 Fjord Trail will address this issue  
24 and make it possible for people with  
25 all abilities to access the trail.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 The Fjord Trail would benefit  
3 Bannerman Island, Hudson Highlands  
4 State Park Preserve by giving  
5 thousands of visitors who don't know  
6 about Bannerman Island an opportunity  
7 to learn more about this unique  
8 historic site. At the Fjord Trail  
9 Bannerman Island lookout that won't be  
10 created for the trail, people who  
11 visit Bannerman Island can also see  
12 people on this incredible chair, it's  
13 only about a thousand feet away, and I  
14 think it's going to be terrific and  
15 we'll do that. It's a win-win for the  
16 Hudson Highlands State Park and for  
17 all the visitors, and I want to thank  
18 you all.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
20 much.

21 James Miller is our next  
22 speaker. James Miller, if you're a  
23 call-in user please raise your hand by  
24 pressing \*3. James Miller. James  
25 Miller, if you're a call-in user

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 please press \*3 to raise your hand.

3 Okay. As to advise everyone of  
4 our next set of speakers, they will be  
5 Christine Foertsch, Ned Sullivan, Yali  
6 Lewis, Steve Jacobs, Theresa Kraft,  
7 Kelly Ellenwood, Chiara Di Lello,  
8 Daniel Vatsky, Matt Decker, Julie  
9 Corbett and Edward Currelley.

10 So if we'll start at the  
11 beginning of the list there again.  
12 Christine Foertsch, if you are a  
13 call-in user please raise your hand by  
14 pressing \*3.

15 Our next speaker is Ned  
16 Sullivan. We have two Neds on our  
17 list here.

18 MR. SULLIVAN: I'm Ned Sullivan.

19 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. Good. Go  
20 ahead, sir.

21 MR. SULLIVAN: Okay. Good  
22 afternoon. I'm Ned Sullivan,  
23 president of Scenic Hudson and board  
24 member of the Hudson Highlands Fjord  
25 Trail, an affiliate of Scenic Hudson

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 that shares our values and commitment  
3 to protecting and sustaining the  
4 inspirational beauty and health of the  
5 Hudson Valley for generations to come.

6 The Fjord Trail will provide  
7 safe public access to Hudson Highlands  
8 State Park and its most popular  
9 destination, Breakneck Ridge. While  
10 the railroad provides many benefits to  
11 the regions -- to the region it's  
12 tracks have been a barrier to the  
13 public access to the Hudson for over  
14 170 years, and our work to conserve  
15 land and create trails and parks along  
16 the river have been specifically aimed  
17 at overcoming this barrier, and the  
18 Fjord Trail will powerfully advance  
19 this work as well as the vision and  
20 goals of the Hudson Valley Greenway  
21 and the state's costal resource  
22 program.

23 DGEIS comprehensively analyzed  
24 the projects whose purposes, whose  
25 very purposes of public safety,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 enhanced access to the river and its  
3 beauty and environmental improvement.  
4 The project and the DGEIS reflect the  
5 work of experts known for their global  
6 leadership and environmentally  
7 sensitive design and ecological  
8 restoration, and already --

9 MR. O'CONNELL: I'm sorry,  
10 Mr. Sullivan, you've been cut off.

11 MR. SULLIVAN: I'm still here.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: Good. I'm  
13 sorry, you were cut off momentarily.  
14 Would you please continue.

15 MR. SULLIVAN: Yeah. I think I  
16 lost some time there while I was cut  
17 off.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Yeah, I  
19 understand. Please continue.

20 MR. SULLIVAN: Great. So I was  
21 saying that we have -- that the Fjord  
22 Trail has engaged leaders and  
23 environmentally sensitive design and  
24 ecological restoration. The Fjord  
25 Trail's outreach and engagement with



## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           the public reflects Scenic Hudson's  
2           commitment to public input that Fjord  
3           Trail staff have sponsored and  
4           participated in over a hundred public  
5           forums and demonstrated that they are  
6           listening to both supporters and  
7           critics, making changes to the project  
8           and response to identified public  
9           concerns.  
10

11           I've devoted my life to the  
12           Hudson Valley and I'm hardened that  
13           this project will not only comply with  
14           environmental rules but will restore  
15           by a diversity and resiliency in the  
16           face of rising sea levels and storm  
17           surges, it will promote inclusivity  
18           and recreational opportunities for  
19           people of all ages, mobility and  
20           socioeconomic status. And finally, as  
21           a public private partnership it  
22           mobilizes significant private  
23           resources to save taxpayer dollars.

24           I know that the Fjord Trail is  
25           committed to taking whatever steps are

1           [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]  
2           necessary to mitigate any specific  
3           impacts identified through the  
4           environmental review process, and I  
5           just want to thank the State Parks  
6           Department, DEC, all the other  
7           agencies and everyone who has spoken  
8           today to share their views of this  
9           important project for the region and  
10          for the community.

11                   Thank you so much.

12                   MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
13                   much.

14                   Our next speaker is Yali Lewis.  
15                   Yali Lewis, if you're a call-in user  
16                   please press \*3 to raise your hand.  
17                   Yali Lewis.

18                   Steve Jacobs. Steve Jacobs, if  
19                   you're a call-in user please raise  
20                   your hand by pressing \*3. Steve  
21                   Jacobs. Steve Jacobs.

22                   Our next speaker is Theresa  
23                   Kraft. Theresa Kraft, if you're a  
24                   call-in user please raise your hand by  
25                   pressing \*3. Theresa Kraft.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Our next speaker is Kelly  
3 Ellenwood. Kelly Ellenwood.

4 MS. ELLENWOOD: Hello.

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Go ahead,  
6 please.

7 MS. ELLENWOOD: Okay. Great.  
8 Hi. My name is Kelly Ellenwood. I  
9 live in Beacon on Route 9D adjacent to  
10 the Mount Beacon trailhead. Thank you  
11 for the opportunity to speak in  
12 enthusiastic support of the Hudson  
13 Highlands Fjord Trail.

14 As someone who cares deeply  
15 about both the safety and  
16 sustainability of our region, and as a  
17 community leader I find this project  
18 and the problems that it will solve or  
19 mitigate to be thoughtfully planned.

20 I'd like to highlight three key  
21 reasons why I'm in favor of this  
22 trail: Obviously improvements to  
23 safety along Route 9D, the proposed  
24 mitigations to safeguard wildlife, and  
25 the increased accessibility the trail

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 will offer as I age. As you know,  
3 safety along 9D has been a concern a  
4 for a very long time. Over the past  
5 decade I commuted to work from Beacon  
6 to Garrison and I have watched as  
7 pedestrians, bicyclists and vehicles  
8 have precariously traversed its  
9 shoulders in the Breakneck corridor.  
10 It is a fact that hikers have been  
11 killed along that road which is  
12 unacceptable, full stop. I am  
13 thrilled that this is phase one of the  
14 project and I look forward to its  
15 completion before other tragedies  
16 occur.

17 Second is: I read the entire  
18 700 pages of the DGEIS, I became  
19 particularly impressed by the  
20 mitigations proposed to safeguard  
21 wildlife while the trail is being  
22 built. While the trail will require  
23 some temporary disturbances to the  
24 natural environment during  
25 construction, the DGEIS outlined

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 specific mitigation strategies  
3 designed to minimize and even reverse  
4 the impacts on wildlife. Measures  
5 like seasonal construction  
6 restrictions, habitat restoration  
7 plans, and the careful relocation of  
8 species are a testament to the  
9 project's commitment to preserving the  
10 natural beauty and biodiversity of the  
11 region.

12 It's time for people, and by  
13 proxy the wildlife that reside there,  
14 to reclaim access to the river after  
15 being cut off at Metro-North as well  
16 as restoration of native plants,  
17 species. Finally, I'm particularly  
18 interested in how this project will  
19 impact me personally as I grow older.

20 In conclusion, I wholeheartedly  
21 support the Hudson Highlands Fjord  
22 Trail and the preferred alignment of  
23 the project as planned.

24 Thank you.

25 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you. Our

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 next speaker is Chiara Di Lello.

3 Chiara Di Lello, if you're a call-in

4 user please raise your hand by

5 pressing \*3. Chiara Di Lello. Chiara

6 Di Lello, please raise your hand by

7 pressing \*3 if you're a call-in user.

8 Our next speaker, Daniel Vatsky.

9 Daniel Vatsky, go ahead.

10 MR. VATSKY: Good afternoon. My

11 name is Daniel Vatsky and I'm a

12 resident and home owner in Beacon, New

13 York and a member of the Beacon

14 Bicycle Coalition. I want to voice my

15 strong support for the Fjord Trail

16 proposal and its preferred alignment.

17 Part of the vision of our

18 coalition is the interconnection of

19 communities in the Hudson Valley for

20 safe practical and enjoyable cycling

21 is accessible to all kinds of riders.

22 The Hudson Highlands severely lacks

23 these connections. A single road

24 route between Beacon and Cold Spring

25 is 9D and it's a narrow, winding,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 2-lane road with a minimal shoulder  
3 and a 55-mile per hour speed limit.  
4 It takes a highly fit and capable  
5 cyclist to even travel this route and  
6 it is prohibited for cyclists carrying  
7 cargo or riding with children. The  
8 Fjord Trail would allow my family to  
9 leave our car at home when visiting  
10 Cold Spring for shopping and hiking  
11 trips. I believe this will become a  
12 popular choice for many of us choosing  
13 to live car-free or car-light. The  
14 Fjord Trail and its services like  
15 shuttle buses and better train access  
16 will redistribute car use and parking  
17 demand, keeping spaces available for  
18 those who really need them. It will  
19 also reduce traffic, noise, emissions  
20 and the production of greenhouse  
21 gases.

22 The Highlands is a place of  
23 great natural beauty but it is not  
24 exclusively a natural creation,  
25 civilization has long altered this

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 landscape for benefit and for harm.  
3 By each to preserve the status quo is  
4 also to embrace dangerous traffic,  
5 economic exclusivity, unchecked  
6 erosion, and inadequate waste disposal  
7 conditions. The impact statement  
8 repeatedly states that the development  
9 is proportionately to existing uses,  
10 and based on my experience with Scenic  
11 Hudson's work I trust the Fjord Trail  
12 leadership to proceed responsibly.

13 The Fjord Trail reflects the  
14 projects undertaken by Franklin  
15 Roosevelt's New Deal programs  
16 including the Gorge Parks or the  
17 Finger Lakes and portions of Bear  
18 Mountain. While these sites contain  
19 pristine natural wonders we equally  
20 marvel at the human vision and effort  
21 evolved to create them and how they  
22 harmoniously augment the landscape  
23 with the goal of making these places  
24 accessible to call while preserving  
25 them for generations to come.



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 I believe the Fjord Trail is  
3 modelled in the commission of such  
4 goal and transformative projects.

5 Thank you.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you. Our  
7 next speaker is Matt Decker. Matt  
8 Decker, go ahead please.

9 MR. DECKER: Hi. Can you hear  
10 me?

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, I can.

12 MR. DECKER: Thanks. Hello. My  
13 name is Matt Decker. I'm a land  
14 project manager for the Open Space  
15 Institute. My family and I live in  
16 the Town of Wappinger and I'm speaking  
17 from our office in Beacon. Thank you  
18 for this opportunity to summarize  
19 comments on behalf of OSI.

20 The Open Space Institute is a  
21 leader in land conservation and  
22 efforts to make parks and other  
23 protective land more welcoming for  
24 all. While OSI is partnered in the  
25 protection of more than 2.5 million

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 acres up and down the east coast our  
3 foundation is here in the Hudson  
4 Highlands. OSI has also been a member  
5 of the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail  
6 Steering Committee since its inception  
7 over eight years ago. We support the  
8 Fjord Trail for all public benefits  
9 and access it will offer to visitors  
10 too and residents of the region.

11 The Hudson Valley has seen an  
12 increase in people looking for outdoor  
13 adventure and the solace it can  
14 provide. OSI believes the  
15 conservation community should welcome  
16 all visitors looking to enjoy natural,  
17 and the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail  
18 is part of a strategy to make outdoor  
19 visitors more welcome in our region.

20 The Fjord Trail will offer  
21 greater access to the riverfront and  
22 connecting trails to all users who  
23 will accommodate families, people with  
24 disabilities, seniors, and those that  
25 may not be comfortable tackling narrow

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 or steep trails. Since the Fjord  
3 Trail will be wide and flat it should  
4 be easy for all users to experience  
5 the beauty of the Hudson River and  
6 surrounding landscape. Offering a new  
7 flat trail will also balance the use  
8 of other local trails; Breakneck Ridge  
9 is a very well-known trail in the  
10 region, it's difficult and not for all  
11 users. Offering an alternative like  
12 the Fjord Trail will spread out  
13 visitation and offer a safer  
14 alternative in Breakneck Ridge.

15 Lastly, the Fjord Trail will be  
16 accessible by public transportation  
17 which allows a more diverse community  
18 of visitors to connect with nature and  
19 improve their well-being.

20 In summary, OSI is an  
21 enthusiastic supporter of the Fjord  
22 Trail, we have no doubts that the  
23 trail will be constructed following  
24 all environmental guidelines.

25 Thank you.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you. Our  
3 next speaker is Julie Corbett. Julie  
4 Corbett.

5 MS. CORBETT: Thank you for  
6 letting me share my personal and  
7 professional perspective on the DGEIS.  
8 I am a member of Philipstown  
9 community, raised my family there for  
10 only 31 years, I am an avid hiker and  
11 I am an occupational therapy  
12 practitioner and researcher. I have  
13 reviewed the exhaustive and thorough  
14 709-page document, attended multiple  
15 informative public presentations with  
16 Q-and-A sections, as well as  
17 physically walked the trails. This  
18 project occupies my balanced life of  
19 work, play, and rest.

20 We can all agree participation  
21 is a poor concept of development and  
22 healthy well-being and requires active  
23 involvement in meaningful everyday  
24 activities. In event years studies  
25 show that outside participation grew

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 4.1 percent, a Harvard study also  
3 shows those who spend time in nature  
4 have a lower level of stress, lower  
5 blood pressure, decreased anxiety,  
6 improved sleep and improved cognitive  
7 function, potentially -- sorry,  
8 potentially reducing chronic disease.

9 More outdoor enthusiasts so  
10 narrowly are finding the beauty of the  
11 Hudson River and surrounding  
12 landscape. In keeping with the 2012  
13 Cold Spring's comprehensive plan which  
14 includes a river with all of these  
15 aforementioned evolving values as well  
16 as concerns are addressed in the DGEIS  
17 with sensitivity to access  
18 accessibility, adaptation for changing  
19 needs and values of and for local  
20 visiting participates with thoughtful  
21 mitigation measures.

22 Thank you.

23 MR. PETTINGER: Judge, you're  
24 muted if you're talking.

25 MR. O'CONNELL: And that's why

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 you couldn't hear me pulling our next  
3 speaker, Edward Currelley, thank you.

4 MR. CURRELLEY: How are you?

5 MR. O'CONNELL: Go ahead, sir.

6 MR. CURRELLEY: Hi. How are  
7 you? My name is Edward Currelley. I  
8 am a ten-year resident of Cold Spring,  
9 former business owner and legal  
10 advocate for Dutchess in New York --  
11 Dutchess, Putnam, and New York  
12 counties.

13 I've attended over the last year  
14 or so a number of meeting with my  
15 neighbors and residents of Cold Spring  
16 in regard to the Hudson Highlands  
17 Fjord Trail project, and the overall  
18 census that I found was that the  
19 project was met with a lot of  
20 skepticism and I've tried to encourage  
21 my neighbors and my friends to look  
22 back at all the other projects that  
23 came to fruition like Dumbo walkway  
24 over the Hudson River, the Manhattan  
25 waterway -- Waterfront Greenway, the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 East River Waterway and the trail it  
3 surrounds. Yes, all these projects  
4 were not perfect. They were designed  
5 to create green spaces and public  
6 publics for residents, and they all  
7 raised -- once completed they all  
8 raised to their own individual level  
9 of excellence, and we are the better  
10 for it. And I believe that this --  
11 the Hudson Highlands Fjord project is  
12 a very valid project whose time has  
13 come and it will, dare to say preserve  
14 our waterfront, you know, it will  
15 create a green space, intersect public  
16 access, and we have to keep in mind  
17 that the public access to these parks  
18 belong to all New Yorkers and not just  
19 the select few of us who live in Cold  
20 Spring or Beacon or nearby.

21 So with that I just want to say  
22 to my neighbors, please look further  
23 into it, embrace the oncoming  
24 intersect -- inevitably of something  
25 wonderful.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Thank you so much.

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you. So  
4 we'll continue now with our next group  
5 here: Grace Kennedy, Susan Coleman,  
6 Andy Galler, John Brian, John Zuvic,  
7 Brian Cookstra.

8 We'll start please with Grace  
9 Kennedy.

10 MS. KENNEDY: Can you hear me?

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes, please  
12 continue.

13 MS. KENNEDY: My name is Grace  
14 Kennedy, I'm in Garrison and I'd like  
15 to point out that I'm not related to  
16 or married to anyone who works for  
17 Fjord Trail or Scenic, I'd also like  
18 to address the proposed Fjord Trail  
19 south, in particular the shoreline  
20 trail which is largely actually a  
21 boardwalk on top of pilings in the  
22 river. There is truly a no-build  
23 trail proposed though not in this  
24 DGEIS, it gets folks directly from  
25 Cold Spring Metro-North Station to



## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1 Little Stony Point with no shore line  
2 impact, no impact to river views of  
3 the residents along Fair Street and it  
4 was proposed by protect all Highlands  
5 on August 21, 2024 at the Philipstown  
6 town board. What has been proposed  
7 between Dockside and Little Stony  
8 Point will cut off the river views of  
9 Fair Street residents with a 5-foot  
10 berm topped by an 8-foot fence. The  
11 bulk of the proposed shoreline trail  
12 will denude the vast proportion of  
13 river's edge between Little Stony  
14 Point and Breakneck. Most mature  
15 trees will be removed to accommodate  
16 the new grades, there will be no shade  
17 along this stretch, mostly 10-foot  
18 wide boardwalk for decades and decades  
19 which would actually be pretty  
20 dangerous when you consider the heat  
21 and reflection of the water and bikes  
22 and children and dogs and people in  
23 wheelchairs on a 10-foot wide  
24 platform. In fact this land was --  
25

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 they're considering it disturbed land  
3 but it was disturbed over a 170 years  
4 ago and has mostly regenerated. The  
5 new plantings will be no match for the  
6 climate change induced storms that we  
7 will endure if Dockside's newly  
8 disturbed planting and river's edge  
9 are any indication of what will happen  
10 we are in trouble. Removing mature  
11 trees there resulted in boats, logs  
12 and tons of trash washing ashore  
13 multiple times over 2022 and 2023.  
14 There's limited room on the northern  
15 stretch of this between the tracks and  
16 the river and much of this path will  
17 be only 20-feet away from trains  
18 traveling at 80 miles an hour, the  
19 decibel level here is dangerously  
20 high. The proposed fence that they --  
21 between tracks and trail will impact  
22 views of the train riders and people  
23 on Route 9D where, by the way, there  
24 actually had been no fatalities  
25 related to hikers.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Further north Breakneck's iconic  
3 river face will be cleared to build  
4 the lower overlook. This area will  
5 become an attractive nuisance as users  
6 will no doubt try to jump into the  
7 river. Lighting there has been  
8 minimally discussed in the DGEIS and  
9 it's pretty sure to be increased  
10 thereby impacting the view from across  
11 the river. I believe the entire  
12 stretch from Breakneck south is  
13 unnecessary and a potential liability  
14 for Philipstown and Metro-North  
15 railroad including Amtrak.

16 Thank you.

17 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
18 much.

19 We need a moment please to reset  
20 our timer. Our next speaker will be  
21 Susan Coleman. Susan Coleman. If you  
22 are able to unmute Susan Coleman  
23 please do so.

24 MR. PETTINGER: I'm trying to  
25 unmute her but she's not unmuting.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay.

3 MR. PETTINGER: Let's go back  
4 and circle back with her and go onto  
5 to the next one for now.

6 MR. O'CONNELL: Sure. Andy  
7 Galler. Andy Galler.

8 Are you having any luck with  
9 Mr. Galler?

10 MR. PETTINGER: I am not. Are  
11 you able to unmute him because I'm  
12 clicking on it and nothing is  
13 happening?

14 MR. O'CONNELL: Let me try that.  
15 No, I'm not able to unmute him. All  
16 right. If we could go off the record  
17 for a moment please while we try to  
18 work on this technical difficulty.  
19 We'll go off the record please and  
20 we'll reconvene at 4:15 please.

21 Thank you.

22 [Discussion held off the  
23 record.]

24 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. Could I  
25 ask the stenographer to begin the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 transcript again please? Thank you.

3 So are we having any luck with  
4 Susan Coleman? Now I see that she's  
5 dropped from the list. If you're a  
6 call-in user, Susan Coleman, please  
7 press \*3 on your telephone. Okay. So  
8 we haven't forgotten about you, Susan  
9 Coleman, we'll come back, we'll move  
10 with the rest of our speakers here.

11 How about Andy Galler?

12 MR. PETTINGER: Andy, if you can  
13 hear us we still cannot unmute you,  
14 you're having some connection issues.  
15 You can either connect through your  
16 computer speakers or use headphones,  
17 and if that doesn't work log back out  
18 and try to log back in or you can call  
19 in, but as it stands right now we  
20 can't unmute you.

21 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So we'll  
22 get back to Mr. Galler.

23 How about John Zuvic? John  
24 Zuvic, if you're a call-in user please  
25 raise your hand by pressing \*3. John

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Zuvic, if you are a call-in user  
3 please raise your hand by pressing \*3.

4 Okay. Let's try our next  
5 speaker then, Brian Cookstra, Brian  
6 Cookstra. Brian Cookstra, if you're a  
7 call-in user please raise your hand by  
8 pressing \*3. Okay. I see that we  
9 have someone there.

10 MR. COOKSTRA: Yeah. Hi. Can  
11 you hear me?

12 MR. O'CONNELL: I can hear you,  
13 yes. Thank you.

14 MR. COOKSTRA: Oh, hi. Thank  
15 you for what you're doing. This is  
16 Brian Cookstra. I'm a resident of  
17 Philipstown outside the Village of  
18 Cold Spring. For the last four years  
19 our daughters come to school in the  
20 Village of Cold Spring and started  
21 kindergarten at Haldane there this  
22 year. This is my first time speaking  
23 up about the Fjord Trail but I've  
24 spent the last several years very  
25 closely following the debate in the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 community.

3 We frequently hiked and attended  
4 a lot of events in the community  
5 gatherings at Little Stony Point but  
6 we've also been cutting back how often  
7 we go because the situation and the  
8 parking and the roads there have felt  
9 very unsafe, we've had multiple  
10 instances where we've almost been hit  
11 by cars speeding through or cars  
12 having being able to see us because of  
13 the cars parked on the road, and we  
14 felt unsafe where there's just lack of  
15 parking over there. We've seen people  
16 almost get hit by cars speeding by on  
17 9D near Breakneck. I'm a long time  
18 runner and cyclist and my daughter's  
19 learning how to bike, and I do not  
20 feel comfortable cycling or running on  
21 the main roads in my own community. I  
22 want to raise my daughter in a  
23 community where she'll feel safe,  
24 where she can experience the natural  
25 beauty of our land and where she will

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 understand the importance of  
3 protecting our environment, and in my  
4 opinion, the point I want above is the  
5 Fjord Trail will make things better on  
6 all three fronts.

7 Finally, as someone who's spent  
8 the last few years and the last  
9 two-and-a-half hours listening and not  
10 saying anything, I appreciate how  
11 strongly people on both sides feel  
12 about this, and know that it's  
13 reflective of how much people here  
14 care about our community and the  
15 character of our community. From  
16 myself and my family, we think this is  
17 a real important step in the right  
18 direction.

19 Thank you.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Thanks very  
21 much.

22 We have another set of speakers  
23 here.

24 So we'll start again here with  
25 Evelyn Carr-White, go ahead please.



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 You've been unmuted, go ahead please.

3 Evelyn Carr-White, can you hear me?

4 You've been unmuted. Evelyn

5 Carr-White, you've been unmuted,

6 please begin. Evelyn Carr-White,

7 we'll have to get back to you.

8 Dorothy Williams, please.

9 You've been unmuted, go ahead, Dorothy

10 Williams. Dorothy Williams, please

11 proceed.

12 Let's try Alexander Reese.

13 MR. REESE: Hello?

14 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes. Go ahead  
15 please.

16 MR. REESE: Thank you so much.

17 Well, my name is Alexander Reese and

18 I'm a resident of the Town of

19 Wappinger, I'm a lover of the Hudson

20 Valley, and I've had a long

21 relationship with Scenic Hudson, and

22 am a current board member.

23 I wanted to register my full

24 support for the Hudson Highlands Fjord

25 Trail, it's an extraordinary and

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 visionary project, and it provides  
3 hope for a sustainable visitorship  
4 into the future and one of the most  
5 precious points of the river. I  
6 support the analysis and the  
7 conclusions of the DEIS which had been  
8 tempered by years of discussion and  
9 debate. I believe the concerns can be  
10 mitigated by careful timing and  
11 learning from actual experience, and I  
12 hope and look forward to having very  
13 close relationships between the HHFT  
14 and local communities in which the  
15 trail is located to ensure that the  
16 trail is a success for all.

17 Thank you very much.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
19 much.

20 Joe Kiernan. Go ahead, Joe  
21 Kiernan.

22 MR. KIERNAN: Hello?

23 MR. O'CONNELL: Hello. Please  
24 continue.

25 MR. KIERNAN: Great. Thank you.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Yeah. My name is Joe Kiernan and I'm  
3 a resident of the Town of Stanford in  
4 Dutchess County. I come before you  
5 today to discuss my full and hardened  
6 support for the Hudson Highlands Fjord  
7 Trail generally and for the preferred  
8 alignment as described in the DGEIS.

9 I've been a Hudson Valley  
10 resident for nearly 25 years, and when  
11 first moving to the area I traveled to  
12 the Hudson Highlands and was just  
13 awestruck really by -- by two things:  
14 One, and obviously the majestic beauty  
15 of the fjord and somewhat surprisingly  
16 the chaotic and dangerous conditions  
17 along the Route 9D and Breakneck  
18 corridor. As others have said here  
19 today, the need for managed access is  
20 abundantly clear and has been for  
21 many-many years, and despite the best  
22 efforts of existing trail managers,  
23 the usage patterns of the area are  
24 like those of ants at a picnic and --  
25 you know, and I think the best way to

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 prevent this too from loving this area  
3 to death is by bringing the Fjord  
4 Trail to life and in its preferred  
5 alignment.

6 As I was considering my comments  
7 here today I thought about the power  
8 of story and how that's perhaps  
9 humanity's most powerful creation.

10 I've been fascinated by these stories  
11 between the connections -- between  
12 people and place, and this area, the  
13 Hudson Highlands and the fjord is  
14 among the richest places to explore  
15 and admire these connections. I'd say  
16 that some of our greatest American  
17 stories have played out here; our  
18 fight for independence, our quest to  
19 forge national identity, indeed our  
20 love of the natural world and our  
21 conservation moving indeed in general  
22 started here, perhaps most  
23 significantly the fight to save Storm  
24 King Mountain and the national  
25 environmental policy that resulted

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 from it incidentally is responsible  
3 for making these environmental impact  
4 statements and assessing for projects  
5 like this. So this area's important  
6 to all of us for the story it tells,  
7 and that story I would say has been  
8 exclusive for folks with mobility  
9 challenges and those with limited  
10 means to access it. The causes of  
11 accessibility and inclusion are dear  
12 to me as I have a daughter with a rare  
13 genetic disorder and a father multiple  
14 sclerosis whose mobility challenges  
15 make meaningful access access to  
16 places like this and possible were it  
17 not for projects like the Fjord Trail.

18 For all of these reasons and for  
19 those others so eloquently and  
20 passionately stated here today I fully  
21 support the project and the preferred  
22 alignment as designed and I would urge  
23 the Department to approve it as  
24 proposed.

25 Thanks very much for the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 opportunity to share these thoughts.

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
4 much.

5 Our next speaker is David  
6 Watson. David Watson, if you're a  
7 call-in user please raise your hand by  
8 pressing \*3. David Watson. David  
9 Watson, if you're a call-in user  
10 please press \*3 to raise your hand.

11 Okay. We have another set of  
12 speakers here: Melissa Cascini  
13 Derrick Hopkins, Gabriel Bures,  
14 Christopher Shields, Ron Hicks, and  
15 Colin Wright.

16 So we'll begin here with Melissa  
17 Cascini. Go ahead please.

18 MS. CASCINI: Hi everybody. My  
19 name is Melissa Cascini. I am the  
20 senior program coordinator for the New  
21 York/New Jersey Trail Conference and  
22 I've been with the organization since  
23 2019 when I started as a trail steward  
24 at Breakneck Ridge.

25 I know firsthand the dangers of

## [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

1           the cars speeding past the hiker on 9D  
2           and have been witnessed to the  
3           challenges faced by visitors to Cold  
4           Spring who are trying to get to  
5           Breakneck Ridge with no alternative  
6           other than a dangerous roadway.  
7

8           The Trail Conference is  
9           recognized as a regional leader and  
10          authority on visitation management.  
11          For 100 years the Trail Conference has  
12          worked to improve public access to  
13          opened space and build and maintain  
14          trails in the New York Metropolitan  
15          region to connect the people with  
16          nature.

17          The Trail Conference has been a  
18          part of the Fjord Trail Consortium  
19          since inception and the visitation  
20          data we have collected in the project  
21          area for over a decade has led to  
22          practical solutions to congestion  
23          management.

24          In 2013 the Trail Conference  
25          launched the first of its kind, trail

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 steward program, to count every single  
3 hiker ascending Breakneck Ridge. We  
4 have expanded the program and are now  
5 nationally recognized for our  
6 environmental conservation  
7 award-winning responses to highly  
8 visited trail lands. Trail Conference  
9 data has helped to create a solid  
10 thoughtful management plan for people  
11 visiting the area. The Fjord Trail  
12 plan improves access to better connect  
13 people to a natural and cultural  
14 history of the Hudson Highlands.  
15 Perhaps most significantly the current  
16 plan prioritizes an ADA accessible  
17 main trail, and sharing the beauty of  
18 the Highlands is welcoming, inclusive,  
19 and accessible to individuals of ages  
20 -- of all ages and abilities so  
21 everyone can experience the joy of the  
22 outdoors.

23 The New York/New Jersey Trail  
24 Conference asked that the State of New  
25 York to continue the process of



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 completing the Fjord Trail project.  
3 The DGEIS solves the safety concerns  
4 around visitation and reduces the  
5 impacts to local communities. The  
6 plan restores and protects New York  
7 State's natural resources and restores  
8 access to the Hudson River for the  
9 people of New York State and for  
10 people with all abilities.

11 Thank you.

12 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
13 much.

14 Derrick Hopkins. Derrick  
15 Hopkins, if you're a call-in user  
16 please raise your hand and by pressing  
17 \*3. Derrick Hopkins.

18 MR. PETTINGER: Derrick, same  
19 thing, we can't unmute you so if you  
20 can either hook your sound through  
21 your computer speakers or go through  
22 headphones or call in please, thank  
23 you.

24 MR. O'CONNELL: So our next  
25 speaker is Gabriel Bures, go ahead

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 please.

3 MR. BURES: I'm a relative  
4 newcomer to this area having moved to  
5 Lake Peekskill in 2018. I'm not on  
6 any boards and I don't go to the  
7 office, what I do is regularly use the  
8 Highland trails to run, hike and spend  
9 time in nature, I've also had the  
10 opportunity to volunteer with the  
11 Fjord Trail project's invasive species  
12 strike force. I think that we who  
13 live here have the responsibility to  
14 be good stewards of the land, and what  
15 I've seen from the Fjord Trail project  
16 numbers is a conscientious earnest  
17 approach to tackling some really  
18 trending problems. The parking along  
19 9D is terrible, I've personally have  
20 nearly been hit a couple of times, and  
21 what I found is a group that is  
22 working hard to sort out both the land  
23 and their communities. I trust these  
24 people both as people and as an  
25 organization to be good stewards of

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the land. Change is coming and I'm  
3 excited and now a little relieved to  
4 know that good people are trying their  
5 best to steer it for the benefit of  
6 all.

7 Thank you for your time.

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
9 much.

10 Our next speaker is Christopher  
11 Shields. So we have a Chris on our  
12 list here.

13 MR. PETTINGER: Christopher  
14 Shields, we're unable to unmute you.  
15 Please use your sound through your  
16 computer speakers, your headphones or  
17 to dial in please, thank you.

18 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. Let's try  
19 our next speaker, Ron Hicks. Ron  
20 Hicks, if you're a call-in user please  
21 press \*3 to raise your hand. Ron  
22 Hicks.

23 MR. PETTINGER: Ron Hicks, I  
24 cannot unmute you. Please use your  
25 sound through your computer speakers,

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 your headphones or call in, thank you.

3 MR. O'CONNELL: Colin Wright.  
4 Colin Wright, if you're a call-in user  
5 please raise your hand by pressing \*3.  
6 Colin Wright. Colin Wright, please  
7 raise your hand by pressing \*3 if  
8 you're a call-in user.

9 MR. PETTINGER: Colin, I cannot  
10 unmute you. If you could run your  
11 sound through your computer speakers  
12 or your headphones or call in for us  
13 please.

14 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. We've  
15 completed the list of every who has  
16 registered as a speaker. What I would  
17 like to do is circle back on a few of  
18 the people that we had difficulties  
19 with.

20 So let's check to see if Susan  
21 Coleman is available.

22 MR. PETTINGER: I cannot unmute.

23 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. Andy  
24 Galler?

25 MR. PETTINGER: Not unmute.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. And I see  
3 here that Andy Chmar has raised his  
4 hand; would you unmute him, please.

5 What can I do for you?

6 MR. CHMAR: Can you hear  
7 somebody?

8 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes.

9 MR. CHMAR: Oh, that's great.  
10 I'm sorry, I registered to speak today  
11 so it must not have taken or must have  
12 been an issue.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: So why don't you  
14 put down your statement now then  
15 please?

16 MR. CHMAR: I would.

17 So although I'm no longer a  
18 resident of the Hudson Valley, I live  
19 in the mountains in North Carolina. I  
20 spent 14 years in laying conservation  
21 work with Hudson Island land trucks.  
22 My participation in the Fjord Trail  
23 began well over 15 years ago as an  
24 original member of the Grass Roots  
25 Group envisioning a trail along the

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 Hudson, then as a member of the  
3 steering committee, and then in 2020  
4 joined the found -- as a founding  
5 board member of HHFT Incorporated, as  
6 such I'm most related with the Fjord  
7 Trail and the many benefits this  
8 exceptional linear park will bring the  
9 residents, visitors in New York State.

10 Since the inception to the  
11 primary objectives to be achieved for  
12 creation of the trail are to include  
13 safety in one of the most visited  
14 areas of the state while concurrently  
15 affording greater public access to the  
16 river which had been cut off as said  
17 by many others for at least 150 years.  
18 In great detail the DGEIS clearly  
19 recognized how both these objectives  
20 would not only be achieved but exceed  
21 all previous expectations for public  
22 benefit while minimizing environmental  
23 impacts. I think we've heard from  
24 quite a number of people today that  
25 have talked about the accessibility

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 standards outlined in the DGEIS and  
3 how important those are to them and to  
4 probably thousands of others.

5 As a long-time conservationist I  
6 was most interested since its  
7 inception on how the Fjord Trail would  
8 benefit the environment while meeting  
9 its other objectives. Ecological  
10 resilience is part of the ethos most  
11 integral to our organization, to the  
12 organization, and for the project.

13 Again, as clearly outlined in  
14 the DGEIS per the stabilization and  
15 straightening out the river shorelines  
16 will buffer it against rising river  
17 levels and restore marine habitat.

18 In closing, this project is the  
19 perfect public private partnership  
20 aligned with the governor's desire for  
21 more shared responsibility in creating  
22 multiple benefits for residents and  
23 visitors. Its documented well -- its  
24 documented broad-based support across  
25 local communities and the region at

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 large will not financially burden the  
3 state or local municipalities will be  
4 enjoined by multiple generations of  
5 users.

6 I appreciate OPHRP's diligence  
7 in completing this DGEIS review, the  
8 DEC's involvement and doing --  
9 completing the review in a  
10 comprehensive and timely manner.

11 And I apologizing for going  
12 over, thank you very much.

13 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you.

14 Going back now to Evelyn  
15 Carr-White, are we able to unmute  
16 Evelyn Carr-White?

17 MR. PETTINGER: Evelyn, can you  
18 hear us? We're able to unmute her but  
19 she's not listening I guess.

20 MR. O'CONNELL: Okay. So we've  
21 completed our list of registered  
22 speakers. Could I please have the  
23 slide that shows the number for  
24 technical issues that people can call?  
25 And just a reminder that we have



1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 another section at 6 p.m. today.

3 So if you're having technical  
4 difficulties please call 518-402-8028.

5 That telephone number again is  
6 518-402-8028.

7 I see that we have Chiara  
8 Di Lello on the line there; would you  
9 unmute you her please or him?

10 Go ahead. Chiara Di Lello,  
11 please begin your statement.

12 MS. DI LELLO: Thank you so  
13 much. I was registered earlier but I  
14 think that I -- I was having trouble  
15 with my spot.

16 I'm speaking as a resident of  
17 Beacon and also as a volunteer from  
18 this past summer with the invasive  
19 species removal team at Breakneck  
20 Ridge and I just -- I'm an  
21 enthusiastic supporter of the Fjord  
22 Trail and I -- as others have said,  
23 like I trust the people who are  
24 running this project because I have  
25 worked with them and I've seen how

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 much they value stewardship and may  
3 getting any adverse impact of the  
4 building of this trail and then  
5 maximizing the benefits to the  
6 environment and the community. This  
7 is a project that's about stewardship,  
8 this is a project that's about equity  
9 and access. I'm an educator, and so  
10 this is, I think, a huge resource to  
11 people of all ages and the Hudson  
12 Valley and it's benefitting our  
13 neighbors. So I thank you for all the  
14 labor that's gone into this report, I  
15 can tell how comprehensive it is and  
16 how aware it is of the possible  
17 impacts and how we mitigate anything  
18 negative, and I can tell you that with  
19 my own two hands I have already been  
20 trying to be part of the positive  
21 impact with replacing invasive  
22 species, planting natives, and  
23 teaching people about how better to  
24 steward our land, this place that we  
25 share that we call home.

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 So again, enthusiastic support  
3 for this project. Thank you for  
4 making time for me.

5 MR. O'CONNELL: You're welcome.  
6 Thank you very much.

7 Dan Shannon.

8 MR. SHANNON: Thank you very  
9 much, I appreciate that.

10 I want to voice my support for  
11 the application with the Dockside  
12 entrance. The plan provides  
13 barrier-free and safe means for  
14 visitors to access the popular natural  
15 trails in the Hudson Valley, it'll  
16 also -- the planning accommodates both  
17 the visitors and the local community  
18 with regard to circulation and  
19 transportation, the design  
20 incorporates both mass transit  
21 connections and private transportation  
22 with the inclusion of two new parking  
23 areas, and the enhanced -- the design  
24 enhances the natural environment with  
25 consideration given to new landscaping

1           [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]  
2           and the removal of invasive  
3           vegetation.

4           As a member of the Cold Spring  
5           community for 25 years I  
6           enthusiastically support the HSFT plan  
7           as it provides a safe and  
8           environmentally sensitive access to  
9           the natural beauty that we all enjoy  
10          in the Hudson Valley.

11          Thank you very much.

12          MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you very  
13          much.

14          So this concludes the speakers  
15          that have registered for this session.  
16          Before we adjourn there are just a few  
17          announcements that I'd like to be sure  
18          that everyone is aware of: I'd like  
19          to repeat the mailing address and the  
20          e-mail address for submitting written  
21          comments. As mentioned in the opening  
22          statement, written comments are  
23          weighed equally with any comments  
24          presented here today, and anybody who  
25          spoke today is certainly free to

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 submit additional written comments.

3 So the mailing address for any  
4 written comments is and should be  
5 addressed to Susan Stoner (sic),  
6 environmental analyst, New York State  
7 Office of Parks, Recreation and  
8 Historic Preservation, Division of  
9 Environmental Stewardship and  
10 Planning, 625 Broadway, 2nd Floor,  
11 Albany, New York 12238; and that  
12 information is being posted now on the  
13 screen for anyone who's watching  
14 online.

15 Now, people may also submit  
16 their comments via e-mail, and the  
17 e-mail address is  
18 hhtf.plan@parks.ny.gov. The e-mail  
19 address again is  
20 hhtf.plan@parks.ny.gov.

21 Now, written comments and e-mail  
22 comments must be submitted by March 4,  
23 2025, and that is an extension from  
24 what was initially published in the  
25 notice initially. So March 4, 2025 is

1 [PUBLIC COMMENT HEARING]

2 the new due date for any written  
3 comments submitted either by mail or  
4 by e-mail.

5 We are adjourned now. And a  
6 reminder that we will convene again at  
7 6 p.m.

8 Before we sign off can I hear  
9 from Joe Kiernan again please?

10 MR. KIERNAN: Yes. Hello there.

11 MR. O'CONNELL: Yes?

12 MR. KIERNAN: I just wanted to  
13 clarify that the name on the screen  
14 says Nancy Stoner, not Susan.

15 MR. O'CONNELL: Oh, I beg your  
16 pardon. Thank you for correcting  
17 that. Yes, that's right. I didn't  
18 read it correctly. And that's who  
19 I've been speaking with all along here  
20 for the past four months.

21 MR. KIERNAN: Thank you.

22 MR. O'CONNELL: Thank you. We  
23 are adjourned. Could we go off the  
24 record please?

25 [TIME NOTED: 4:46 p.m.]

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CERTIFICATION

I, Samuel Hittin, a Notary Public for and within the State of New York, do hereby certify:

That the testimony whose statements as herein set forth within the transcript is a true record of the testimony given by said speakers.

I further certify that I am not related to any of the parties to this action by blood or marriage, and that I am in no way interested in the outcome of this matter.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 28th day of January, 2025.



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SAMUEL HITTIN

\* \* \*

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