

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter documents existing conditions and addresses the Proposed Action’s potential impacts on the visual character of the surrounding Fjord Trail North Corridor, and the potential for Fjord Trail North to create a significant adverse visual impact on public viewpoints, during both its construction and operation. The assessment in this chapter analyzes views of and from the proposed Fjord Trail North from selected scenic viewpoints. An evaluation of the proposed Fjord Trail South is provided in Chapter IV.G, “Scenic Resources – Fjord Trail South,” of this DGEIS.

The Fjord Trail would provide visitors with the opportunity to enjoy the scenic beauty of the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve (HHSP) and surrounding environs, and help visitors reach previously inaccessible locations to allow for full enjoyment of these views. The Fjord Trail would provide additional opportunities for people to experience the Hudson River shoreline and the unique landscapes of the Hudson River valley.

Several viewing areas that provide scenic vistas of the Hudson River and surrounding lands are proposed along the Fjord Trail North Corridor, including Long Dock Park, Klara Sauer Trail, Denning’s Point, and Madam Brett Park. Views of the Fjord Trail North Corridor can be seen from the western shore of the Hudson River as well (from Storm King State Park and NYS Route 218). This chapter includes a visual analysis to assess potential impacts of Fjord Trail North and discusses ways in which the proposed Fjord Trail North has been designed and aligned to minimize impacts.

The chapter also discusses the designation by the New York State Department of State (NYSDOS) of the Hudson Highlands Scenic Area of Statewide Significance (SASS) (within which the proposed Fjord Trail North would be located) and scenic vistas from, within, and of the proposed Fjord Trail.¹ Finally, this chapter discusses potential mitigation measures where needed.

As discussed in more detail below, Fjord Trail North would not significantly change the visual character of the surrounding Trail Corridor, as it would remain largely forested and blend with the natural landscape. The northern portion of the proposed Fjord Trail North’s Main Trail already exists as recreational trails (e.g., Klara Sauer Trail, and trails through Denning’s Point and Madam Brett Park) with improvements proposed. Additionally, the Fjord Trail North Corridor’s existing topography and wooded buffers would limit the visibility of most of the Fjord Trail North section from surrounding areas. Fjord Trail North would be consistent with, and largely similar to, existing uses within the surrounding areas. Further, Fjord Trail North would not interfere with the public’s enjoyment of local parks and other community assets in the surrounding area; rather, it would enhance access to and views of these scenic resources. Therefore, the Fjord Trail North section would not result in a significant adverse impact on the visual character of the Fjord Trail North Corridor.

¹ <https://dos.ny.gov/scenic-areas-statewide-significance-sass> (accessed April 5, 2024).

EVALUATING VISUAL IMPACTS

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) provides guidance (Program Policy DEP-00-2) for assessing potential visual impacts of projects requiring NYSDEC actions.² The methodology and impact assessment criteria established by the policy are comprehensive and can be used by other state and local agencies to assess potential effects. The policy defines visual and aesthetic impacts, describes when a visual assessment is necessary and how to review a visual impact assessment, differentiates state and local concerns, and defines avoidance, mitigation and offset measures that eliminate, reduce or compensate for negative visual effects. The guidance focuses on assessing visual impacts to inventoried resources of aesthetic significance, such as state and national parks and scenic areas of statewide significance. The impact thresholds identified in the NYSDEC guidance are useful in determining whether a change in visibility may result in a significant adverse impact at the local level. NYSDEC defines aesthetic and visual impacts as follows:

Aesthetic impact occurs when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure. Mere visibility of a project should not be a threshold for decision making. Instead, a project, by virtue of its visibility, must clearly interfere with or reduce the public's enjoyment or appreciation of the appearance of a significant place or structure (e.g., cooling tower plume blocks a view from a state park overlook).

Visual impact occurs when the mitigating effects of perspective do not reduce the visibility of an object to insignificant levels. Beauty plays no role in this concept. A visual impact may also be considered in the context of contrast. For instance, all other things being equal, a blue object seen against an orange background has greater visual impact than a blue object seen against the same colored blue background.

Based on this guidance, while a project may be visible from a certain location, visibility alone does not constitute a significant adverse impact. Significance is determined based on the extent to which the visibility interferes with the public's enjoyment or appreciation of a resource.

According to DEP-00-2, certain variables can affect a viewer's perception of an object or project and the visibility of that object or project in the overall viewshed; these variables include the character of the landscape (existing vegetation, buildings, and topography), size perspective (reduction of apparent size of objects as distance increases), and atmospheric perspective (how colors and contrast are perceived, as impacted by the presence of atmospheric particulate matter). Consequently, according to the NYSDEC guidance, an "impact" would occur when there is a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of a place or structure that interferes with or reduces the public's enjoyment of a resource and when the mitigating effects of perspective, such as vegetation, distance, and atmospheric perspective or other designed mitigation, do not reduce the visibility of a project to insignificant levels. However, as noted above, visibility of a project would not necessarily result in a significant adverse visual impact.

² New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Program Policy DEP-00-2 "Assessing and Mitigating Visual and Aesthetic Impacts," dated December 13, 2019. Available at https://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits_ej_operations_pdf/visualpolicydep002.pdf.

To evaluate the potential visual and aesthetic impacts of the proposed Fjord Trail North, this chapter describes existing views of and from the Fjord Trail North Corridor, and potential changes in views from the proposed Fjord Trail North.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes existing views of the Fjord Trail North Corridor from locations within and near the Corridor as defined in the Final Scoping Document (see **Appendix I-1**) and shown in **Figure III.G-1**. This section also describes the designated Hudson Highlands Scenic SASS, which encompasses the Fjord Trail North Corridor, and is also shown in **Figure III.G-1**. Views from each of these vantage points are shown in **Figures III.G-2 to III.G-6**.

VIEWES OF THE TRAIL CORRIDOR

FROM DENNING'S POINT FACING SOUTH-SOUTHEAST TOWARD POLLEPEL ISLAND

Figure III.G-2 (photo 1) presents a view facing south from the southern tip of Denning's Point (HHSPP) toward the Fjord Trail North Corridor. The view from this location looks across the water toward the densely vegetated eastern shoreline of the Hudson River.

FROM DENNING'S POINT FACING EAST-NORTHEAST TOWARD FISHKILL CREEK

Figure III.G-2 (photo 2) presents the view facing east-northeast from the southern tip of Denning's Point toward the mouth of Fishkill Creek. From this viewpoint, the tracks of the Metro-North Railroad (MNR) on a causeway and the railroad bridge that crosses the mouth of Fishkill Creek are visible. Beyond the railroad tracks are forested lowlands, behind which are the steep mountain slopes of the Hudson Highlands.

FROM STORM KING MOUNTAIN FACING NORTH-NORTHEAST TOWARD DENNING'S POINT

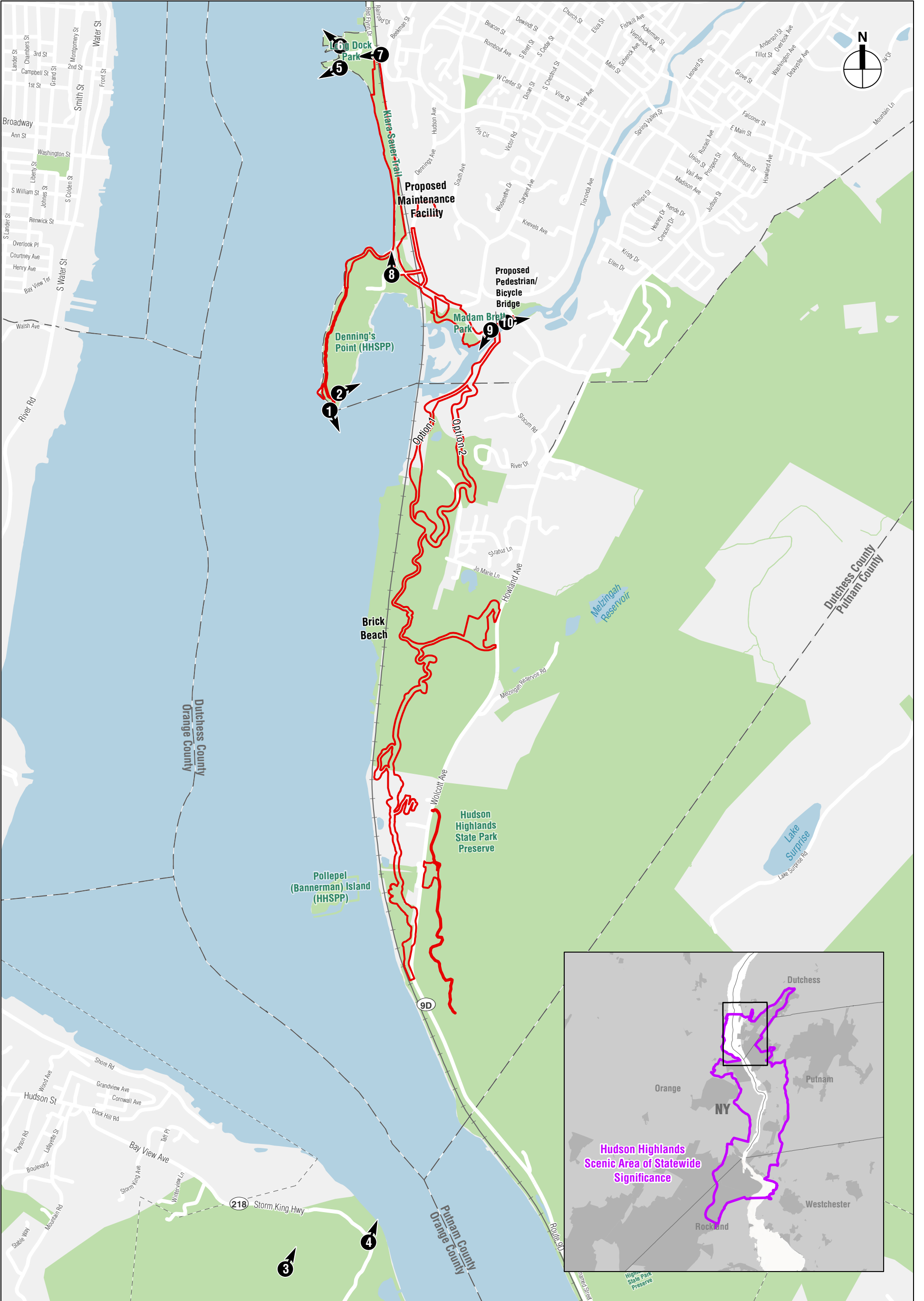
Figure III.G-3 (photo 3) presents the view facing north-northeast from Storm King Mountain across the Hudson River toward its eastern shore, the Hudson Highlands, and points north. From this location, the MNR tracks are visible along the Hudson River's eastern shoreline. Pollepel Island, which houses the ruins of Bannerman Castle, is visible in the foreground. To the northeast of Pollepel Island, just inland from the MNR tracks, the upper portion of Dutchess Manor is visible above the tree canopy. Further north, Denning's Point and Long Dock Park are visible, as are the eastern portion of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge and denser development within the City of Beacon.

FROM NYS ROUTE 218 FACING NORTHEAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL NORTH CORRIDOR

Figure III.G-3 (photo 4) presents the view facing northeast from NYS Route 218 on the west side of the Hudson River. From there, Breakneck Ridge and the Hudson Highlands are visible, as are the MNR tracks along the eastern shore of the Hudson River. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) Hudson River Drainage Chamber (HRDC), located at the foot of Breakneck Ridge, is also visible. To the north, Denning's Point is visible jutting into the river, as is the eastern portion of the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge.

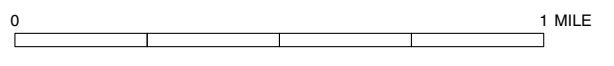
FROM LONG DOCK PARK FACING SOUTHWEST

Figure III.G-4 (photo 5) presents a view from within Long Dock Park, looking southwest toward the Hudson River and its western shoreline in the background. Various landscaped and paved areas of Long Dock Park are visible as the park juts out into the water. Across the Hudson River,



 Trail Corridor - Fjord Trail North

 Photograph View Direction and Reference Number





View from Denning's Point facing south-southeast toward Pollepel Island 1



View from Denning's Point facing east-northeast toward Fishkill Creek 2



View from Storm King Mountain facing north-northeast toward Denning's Point **3**



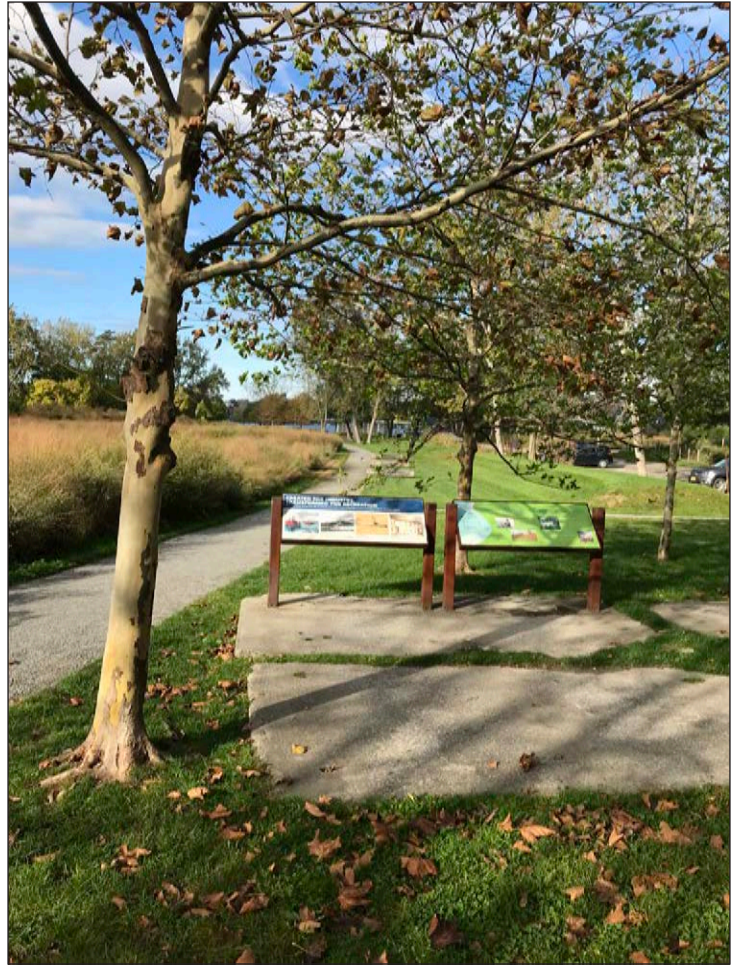
View from NYS Route 218 facing northeast toward Fjord Trail North Corridor **4**



View from Long Dock Park facing southwest 5



View from Long Dock Park facing northwest 6



View from Klara Sauer Trail to Long Dock Park facing west 7



View from Denning's Point entrance to Klara Sauer Trail facing north 8



View from Madam Brett Park to mouth of Fishkill Creek facing southwest 9



View from Madam Brett Park to Old South Ave Bridge facing east 10

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

the City of Newburgh is visible, with buildings along the shoreline and extending upland from the shoreline.

FROM LONG DOCK PARK FACING NORTHWEST

Figure III.G-4 (photo 6) also presents a view from within Long Dock Park, looking through the park northwest toward the Hudson River. From this vantage point, various areas of seating and shelter are visible, as well as manicured lawn areas and a variety of trees. From this view, a small portion of the western shoreline and the Newburgh-Beacon Bridge are visible in the background.

FROM KLARA SAUER TRAIL TO LONG DOCK PARK FACING WEST

Figure III.G-5 (photo 7) presents a view along a paved portion of the Klara Sauer Trail looking westward toward Long Dock Park. This portion of Klara Sauer Trail (which would be incorporated as part of the proposed Fjord Trail North) is surrounded by low brush to the south and manicured lawn to the north. Farther west, past various trees and shrubbery, a small portion of the Hudson River is visible.

FROM DENNING'S POINT ENTRANCE TO KLARA SAUER TRAIL FACING NORTH

Figure III.G-5 (photo 8) presents a view from within Denning's Point looking northward along the Klara Sauer Trail, which runs north-south between the shoreline of the Hudson River (to its west) and the Hudson Line tracks of the MNR (to its east). This view of the Trail Corridor comprises a generally wooded, narrow, flat trail.

FROM MADAM BRETT PARK TO MOUTH OF FISHKILL CREEK FACING SOUTHWEST

Figure III.G-6 (photo 9) presents a view from within Madam Brett Park looking southwest along Fishkill Creek, with limited visibility of the Hudson Highland mountains on the western side of the Hudson River. The Fishkill Creek is surrounded by dense woodlands and vegetation on both sides, with a small, wooden boardwalk along its northern shore.

FROM MADAM BRETT PARK TO OLD SOUTH AVENUE BRIDGE FACING EAST

Figure III.G-6 (photo 10) also presents a view from within Madam Brett Park, looking east along the Fishkill Creek. From this viewpoint, remnants of the Old South Avenue Bridge, which is no longer in use, is visible across the creek. Here, the creek narrows moving inland. Beyond the Old South Avenue Bridge, powerlines are visible, as is the peak of Mount Beacon in the distance.

HUDSON HIGHLANDS SCENIC AREA OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE

Scenic resources are a major component of community character, and special landscape features and views contribute to a community's visual quality. The New York State Department of State (NYS DOS) Office of Planning, Development and Community Infrastructure oversees a scenic assessment program that identifies the scenic qualities of coastal landscapes, evaluates them against criteria for determining aesthetic significance, and recommends areas for designation as SASS.³

The Hudson Highlands SASS encompasses a 20-mile stretch of the Hudson River and its shorelands and varies in width from approximately one to six miles (see **Figure III.G-1**).⁴ It is a highly scenic and valued region of the Hudson River Valley, rich in natural beauty, and cultural

³ <https://dos.ny.gov/scenic-areas-statewide-significance-sass> (accessed April 1, 2024).

⁴ <https://dos.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/08/hudson-river-valley-sass.pdf> (accessed April 1, 2024).

and historical features. The SASS extends from Scofield Ridge and Denning’s Point in the north to Roa Hook (Town of Cortlandt, Westchester County) in the south, and across the river from the base of Storm King Mountain to the southern limits of Bear Mountain State Park, as well as the eastern areas of Harriman State Park. The Hudson Highlands SASS encompasses portions of both municipalities that the Fjord Trail North Corridor runs through (i.e., the Town of Fishkill and the City of Beacon).

The Hudson Highlands SASS is of statewide aesthetic significance by virtue of its combined aesthetic values of landscape character, uniqueness, public accessibility, and public recognition. Variety in landscape character can foremost be found in the topography of the area. The shoreline configuration includes steep cliffs, bluffs, and gently sloping banks. Several promontories jut into the Hudson River, forming bends in the river which mirror the underlying topography. Variations in bedrock composition exist between the east and west shorelands of the SASS, resulting in differential erosion, varying weathering patterns, and discoloration of the rock surface. Within the mountain range there are numerous peaks of various heights, separated by rolling, upland valleys featuring mountain lakes, ponds, wetlands, and streams.

An extensive cover of mature woodlands of mixed deciduous and coniferous trees dominates all but the steepest mountain slopes. On the lower slopes and lowland plateaus, the dense woodland coverage gives way to a combination of mixed woodlands and clearings comprised of farms, open pasture and meadows and landscaped estates with formal gardens and sweeping lawns. Small hamlets and villages are situated in the lowland valleys and plateaus, nestled into the woodlands and typically featuring mature street landscaping. The shoreline vegetation includes wooded banks, bluffs, and cliffs and the wetland vegetation of Constitution Marsh, Manitou Marsh, and Iona Marsh.

The value of the area’s scenic and recreational resources has been recognized through the development of State Parks in the region, and the protection and preservation of the area’s scenic character. For example, HHSPP (most of which is contained in the SASS) is a designated Park Preserve under New York State’s Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Law (Chapter 36-B, Article 20, of the Consolidated Laws of the State of New York).⁵ Article 20 recognizes the importance of the natural and historic value of the park preserves, including HHSPP, finding that “[w]ith the loss of natural areas through development, there is a critical need for the creation of a new designation of park land containing wildlife, flora, scenic, historical and archaeological sites that are unique and rare in New York State.”

Sections of the Old Storm King Highway (NYS Route 218), NYS Route 9W, NYS Route 202, the Bear Mountain Bridge, Bear Mountain Bridge Road, the Bear Mountain-Beacon Highway, and local roads within Bear Mountain State Park are all designated as Scenic Roads under Article 49 of New York State’s Environmental Conservation Law. The historical and architectural significance of the Hudson Highlands is recognized by the large number of resources listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places (see Chapter III.F, “Historic and Archaeological Resources – Fjord Trail North,” and Chapter IV.F, “Historic and Archaeological Resources – Fjord Trail South”).

⁵ <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/laws/PAR/TCA20> (accessed March 1, 2024).

C. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

In the future without the proposed Fjord Trail North, the visual character of the Fjord Trail North Corridor would remain largely unchanged. The existing recreational trails located in the northern portion of the Trail Corridor (e.g., Klara Sauer Trail, and trails through Denning’s Point and Madam Brett Park) would remain as is. The Trail Corridor south of Madam Brett Park would remain wooded and largely undeveloped, with the exception of the existing MNR Hudson Line that parallels much of the Trail Corridor and the residences scattered along its southern extent. As part of a separate action by HHFT, Inc. that is undergoing SEQR review by the Town of Fishkill, HHFT, Inc. plans to repurpose the Dutchess Manor property, which it owns, by removing the modern additions to the historic Dutchess Manor building, restoring the original manor house, and expanding the parking area with up to approximately 180 spaces. While the appearance of the site would change, it would not be prominently visible from the surrounding area, aside from along NYS Route 9D, and would not substantially change the visual character in this area of the Fjord Trail North Corridor.

D. FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

The proposed Fjord Trail seeks to make the scenic Hudson River landscape more accessible. Fjord Trail North, in concert with Fjord Trail South and the Breakneck Connector and Bridge Project (BNCB), would unite this scenic area between the Village of Cold Spring and the City of Beacon. The Accessible and bikeable path would weave in and out of the distinct landscapes that define the Hudson Highlands region, including the river’s edge, the highlands, the forest, and the tributary marshlands.

The Main Trail of Fjord Trail North would be 10 to 14 feet wide and Accessible, and it would include small Trail Banks (pull-off places) for users to rest or admire scenic vistas. Meanders along the Trail would offer destination-based moments and an alternative to the shared space of the Main Trail. These Meanders would be both small, quick departures to see a view or shoreline, or longer walks that create new ways to traverse the landscape. The result would be a landscape that could be experienced in multiple ways, over all seasons.

POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION

During construction of Fjord Trail North, much of the construction activity would not be visible from external viewpoints, as much of Fjord Trail North (e.g., the Notch and areas south of the Notch) is located within forested areas or is buffered by forested shoreline (e.g., Klara Sauer Trail, Denning’s Point). Construction activities related to improvements along existing trails (i.e., raising the Klara Sauer Trail on a berm and Accessibility improvements along trails in Denning’s Point and Madam Brett Park) would be visible to trail users and may temporarily diminish views along these trails. Construction of Trail Banks along Klara Sauer Trail and on Denning’s Point may also be visible from the Hudson River and from landward points further west. Construction activities for the installation of the proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge crossing Fishkill Creek would also be visible from Fishkill Creek and Madam Brett Park. However, due to its short-term and variable nature, the work taking place during the period of construction that may be visible would be temporary and would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact. Refer to Chapter II, “Project Description,” for additional information on the construction program and duration.

POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACTS OF FJORD TRAIL NORTH

The majority of Fjord Trail North would be located inland of the Hudson River shoreline within forested areas with little or no view from the Hudson River and landward locations to the west. This would be similar for both of the Main Trail alignment options south of Fishkill Creek. One section of Fjord Trail North that may be visible from the west is the proposed pedestrian/bicycle (non-vehicle) bridge across Fishkill Creek, but the intervening existing MNR tracks on a causeway across Fishkill Creek would limit views of the new bridge. Trail Banks along the Klara Sauer Trail and on Denning’s Point, as well as the proposed Pollepel Overlook near the southern end of Fjord Trail North, may also be visible from the Hudson River and possibly from points further west. However, the Hudson River is about one mile wide in this area, and there would be limited visibility of the Trail Banks from the western shoreline at this distance.

As design advances, it would consider existing vegetation, including retaining large trees and other natural growth as much as feasible (while potentially removing invasive species, as discussed further in Chapter III.E, “Biological Resources – Fjord Trail North”) in order to protect the viewshed along the vegetated Hudson River shoreline, and to minimize visibility of the Trail in the area of Klara Sauer Trail, Denning’s Point, and Fishkill Creek. Native plantings would be incorporated along the length of Fjord Trail North. Trail materials (type and color) would be selected to blend into the landscape, such as using crushed stone for the trail surface and stonework and plantings for Trail Banks, and the profile of Fjord Trail North (where elevated) would be designed to further meld the Trail into the topography and vegetation through which it traverses.

FROM DENNING’S POINT FACING SOUTH-SOUTHEAST TOWARD POLLEPEL ISLAND

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-2** [photo 1]), facing south-southeast, Fjord Trail North would be within forested areas and would not be visible. Views of scenic resources would not be obstructed. Therefore, this section of Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

FROM DENNING’S POINT FACING EAST-NORTHEAST TOWARD FISHKILL CREEK

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-2** [photo 2]), facing east, Fjord Trail North would generally not be visible as it would be sited inland from the MNR railroad tracks, which travel on a causeway at the mouth of Fishkill Creek, and away from the southern bank of Fishkill Creek. Proposed Main Trail and Meanders through Madam Brett Park would be obstructed from view by the existing MNR tracks and trees and vegetation. Upstream of the mouth of Fishkill Creek, the proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge constructed over Fishkill Creek as part of Fjord Trail North may have limited visibility from this viewpoint, depending on the location of the viewer and the final location of the bridge (further upstream or downstream). The bridge is expected to be about 14 feet wide (the width of the Main Trail) and visible structural elements are expected to be primarily limited to the path, handrails, and potentially several support piers. The types and colors of materials used for the pedestrian/bicycle bridge would be selected to blend into the existing natural landscape, and the profile of the bridge would be designed to minimize visual impacts. Given the anticipated size of the bridge, distance from this viewpoint, and the existing intervening forest and MNR causeway that limit views, this section of Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in significant adverse visual impacts from this or other viewpoints.

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FROM STORM KING MOUNTAIN FACING NORTH-NORTHEAST TOWARD DENNING'S POINT

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-3** [photo 3]) almost all of Fjord Trail North within the viewshed would travel through forest or would be buffered by forested shoreline and would not be visible. Viewers from this vantage point may be able to see proposed Trail Banks at the southern tip of Denning's Point and along the Klara Sauer Trail, and the proposed Pollepel Overlook, but these would not be prominent features and given the distance from the viewpoint to Denning's Point and the intervening topography, visibility would be limited. The natural character of the intervening landscape, and the context into which Fjord Trail North would be placed, would minimize the viewer's perception of the Trail from this viewpoint. Overall, Fjord Trail North would not interfere with or reduce the public's enjoyment of the view from this viewpoint. Therefore, from this viewpoint, Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

FROM NYS ROUTE 218 FACING NORTHEAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL NORTH

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-3** [photo 4]), which is similar to that of **Figure III.G-2** (photo 3) but at a lower elevation, visibility would be more limited to Denning's Point and the Klara Sauer Trail portion of Fjord Trail North than from the previous viewpoint. Any portions of Fjord Trail North that would be visible from this viewpoint, such as the Trail Banks at the southern tip of Denning's Point and along the Klara Sauer Trail, and the proposed Pollepel Overlook, would be minimally visible due to distance. Therefore, Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

FROM LONG DOCK PARK FACING SOUTHWEST

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-4** [photo 5]), no portion of Fjord Trail North would be expected to be visible. Therefore, there would be no change to the viewshed from this location, and there would be no significant adverse visual impact.

FROM LONG DOCK PARK FACING NORTHWEST

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-4** [photo 6]), no portion of Fjord Trail North would be expected to be visible. Therefore, there would be no change to the viewshed from this location, and there would be no significant adverse visual impact.

FROM KLARA SAUER TRAIL TO LONG DOCK PARK FACING WEST

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-5** [photo 7]), no portion of Fjord Trail North would be expected to be visible. Therefore, there would be no change to the viewshed from this location, and there would be no significant adverse visual impact.

FROM DENNING'S POINT ENTRANCE TO KLARA SAUER TRAIL FACING NORTH

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-5** [photo 8]), which includes the existing path of the Klara Sauer Trail that would be incorporated into the proposed Fjord Trail North, the existing trail (already visible) would be improved and raised to address future sea level rise. Those improvements to the existing trail would improve the public's enjoyment of the recreational resource. Therefore, this portion of Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

FROM MADAM BRETT PARK TO MOUTH OF FISHKILL CREEK FACING SOUTHWEST

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-6** [photo 9]), the proposed pedestrian/bicycle bridge across Fishkill Creek would be clearly visible. While the design has not yet been finalized, the types and colors of materials used for the bridge would be selected to blend into the existing natural landscape. The design would carefully consider potential visual impacts to ensure they would not be significant. As a result, the bridge would not be anticipated to have a detrimental effect on the public's perceived beauty of Madam Brett Park or Fishkill Creek. Given the likely size of the bridge as a narrow (up to 14 feet wide) bridge with visible structural elements expected to be limited primarily to the path, handrails, and several support piers, its anticipated design and materials palette, this portion of Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

FROM MADAM BRETT PARK TO OLD SOUTH AVENUE BRIDGE FACING EAST

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-6** [photo 10]), with the new pedestrian/bicycle bridge expected to be constructed west of this location, no portion of Fjord Trail North would be anticipated to be visible. Therefore, there would be no change to the viewshed from this location, and there would be no significant adverse visual impact.

VISUAL ANALYSIS RENDERINGS OF THE FJORD TRAIL NORTH

The 2020 Draft Master Plan for the Fjord Trail⁶ includes renderings of what users of the Fjord Trail may see and experience as they use the new recreational resource. The Fjord Trail would weave through unique landscape types, each with distinct ecological and immersive qualities. The conceptual design of Fjord Trail North was inspired by the unique landscape character of the area, and was guided by the Fjord Trail's surroundings, texture, and local ecology.

Various sections of Fjord Trail North, such as Denning's Point, would bring users to the Hudson River's edge. This would provide an immersive experience of the Hudson River with expansive river views and opportunities for wildlife viewing and water access. Fjord Trail North would also expose users to the glacial geology of the Hudson Highlands.

Along the proposed Fjord Trail North there would be Trail Banks that would bump out into the Hudson River (see Draft Master Plan, page 75 rendering). At these locations, users would experience sweeping views of the Hudson River and western shoreline and potential opportunities for water access (e.g., kayaking, fishing). Additionally, much of Fjord Trail North would weave through existing forests and would allow users to experience moving under the forest canopy (see Draft Master Plan, page 84 renderings).

Fjord Trail North would also pass along and through marshland, particularly in the northern section of the proposed Fjord Trail North (referred to as the Marsh Reach). Where Fishkill Creek meets the Hudson River, a marsh emerges from the dense canopy of the forest (see Draft Master Plan, page 87 rendering). From the proposed Trail Banks in or near the marsh, users of Fjord Trail North would be able to visually engage with the ecology of the area and enjoy a different water experience (see Draft Master Plan, page 88 rendering).

⁶ <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx>

VISUAL IMPACT ON THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS SASS

Construction and operation of Fjord Trail North would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact to the Hudson Highlands SASS. The development of a trail is in keeping with other, similar, recreational resources in the area and all construction impacts would be localized and temporary. As described in Chapter II, “Project Description,” construction of Fjord Trail North would be conducted in phases, with each section expected to take approximately 24-36 months. Further, as stated above, Fjord Trail North would have limited visibility from most viewpoints and would not result in significant adverse visual impacts. Creation of Fjord Trail North would provide users with greater access to the Hudson River shoreline and other natural features of the area, and provide greater connectivity to other regional recreational resources, ultimately enhancing the public’s enjoyment of those resources, including the SASS. Further, the proposed materials and the proposed conceptual alignment of Fjord Trail North have been carefully chosen to integrate this section of the Fjord Trail with its natural environment, and to blend it into the existing landscape. Finally, the size and scale of Fjord Trail North, when compared to the overall expanse of the HHSPP and the surrounding landscape, support a determination that construction and operation of Fjord Trail North would not interfere with the public’s enjoyment of the SASS, and parks or other community assets within its boundaries, and that Fjord Trail North would enhance the public’s enjoyment of them.

E. MITIGATION

Construction of the proposed Fjord Trail North would not significantly change views of the Trail Corridor from surrounding areas and selected viewpoints, due to the perceived scale of the proposed Fjord Trail North and the context into which it would be sited. There would not be a significant change in use from the existing land use, as much of the area is devoted to parks, preserves, hiking trails, and other public open space. Materials used to construct Fjord Trail North would be chosen to complement the natural landscape and to blend into the environs of the Trail Corridor. In areas where trees and other vegetation would be removed, including potential removal of invasive species (see Chapter III.E, “Biological Resources – Fjord Trail North”), to accommodate the proposed Fjord Trail North, and to provide views, native plantings would take their place. In addition, the use proposed for Fjord Trail North, and the scale of Fjord Trail North, would be consistent with the existing visual character of the area. Views would be consistent with or similar to views of other trails and parklands in the community and region, which are already visible. Additionally, Fjord Trail North would enhance views from existing trails (e.g., Denning’s Point and Madam Brett Park) and introduce new viewing locations along its length. Therefore, no additional mitigation would be required. *