

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter documents existing conditions and addresses the Proposed Action’s potential impacts on the visual character of the surrounding Fjord Trail South Corridor and the potential for Fjord Trail South 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 South from selected viewpoints. An evaluation of the proposed Fjord Trail North is provided in Chapter III.G, “Scenic Resources – Fjord Trail North,” of this DGEIS.

The Fjord Trail would provide visitors with the opportunity to enjoy the scenic beauty of 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.

The Fjord Trail South corridor is within the viewshed of multiple locations set forth in the Final Scoping Document (see **Appendix I-1**) including Mayor’s Park in Cold Spring and Donahue Memorial Park, Storm King Mountain, and NYS Route 218 on the western shore of the Hudson River. This chapter includes a visual analysis to assess potential impacts of the proposed Fjord Trail South and discusses ways in which the proposed Fjord Trail South has been designed and aligned to minimize impacts.

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

As discussed in more detail below, Fjord Trail South would not significantly change the visual character of the surrounding Trail Corridor. Existing topography and natural vegetative growth limit the visibility of some portions of the Fjord Trail South Corridor just north of and on Little Stony Point. In areas of the proposed Fjord Trail South lacking natural growth along the shoreline, specifically the northern portion between Breakneck Ridge and Little Stony Point and the southern portion between Little Stony Point and Dockside Park, Fjord Trail South would be more readily apparent, but the linear design of the trail set against the existing linear railroad tracks and NYS Route 9D, would be expected to offset the visual impact of the new recreational resource. Further, Fjord Trail South would be consistent with, and largely similar to, existing uses within the surrounding areas. Fjord Trail South would not interfere with the public’s enjoyment of local parks and other community assets in the surrounding area; rather, it is expected to enhance them. Therefore, the proposed Fjord Trail South would not result in a significant adverse impact on the visual character of the Fjord Trail South 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 visual impacts of projects requiring NYSDEC actions.² The methodology and effect 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.

To evaluate the potential visual and aesthetic impacts of the proposed Fjord Trail South, this chapter describes views of and from the Fjord Trail South Corridor under the current condition,

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

and potential changes in views from the proposed Fjord Trail South. To further evaluate the potential visual and aesthetic impacts of the proposed Fjord Trail South, a vantage point analysis was performed from two viewpoints along the Fjord Trail South Corridor within which the proposed Fjord Trail South would be located, and renderings of the proposed Fjord Trail South were prepared.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

This section describes existing views of the Fjord Trail South Corridor from locations within and near the Corridor that are defined in the Final Scoping Document (see **Appendix I-1**) and shown in **Figure IV.G-1**. This section also describes the designated Hudson Highlands SASS, which encompasses the Fjord Trail South Corridor, and is also shown in **Figure IV.G-1**. Views from each of these vantage points are shown in **Figures IV.G-2 to IV.G-5**.

VIEWS OF THE TRAIL CORRIDOR

FROM STORM KING MOUNTAIN FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD LITTLE STONY POINT

Figure IV.G-2 (photo 1) presents the view from Storm King Mountain on the west side of the Hudson River facing southeast toward Little Stony Point and the Village of Cold Spring. From this location, some of the Hudson River is visible, as is the southern tip of Little Stony Point. Over one mile away, some buildings in the Village of Cold Spring are visible, as are areas of Constitution Marsh, located to the south of the Village.

FROM LITTLE STONY POINT FACING NORTHWEST TOWARD STORM KING MOUNTAIN

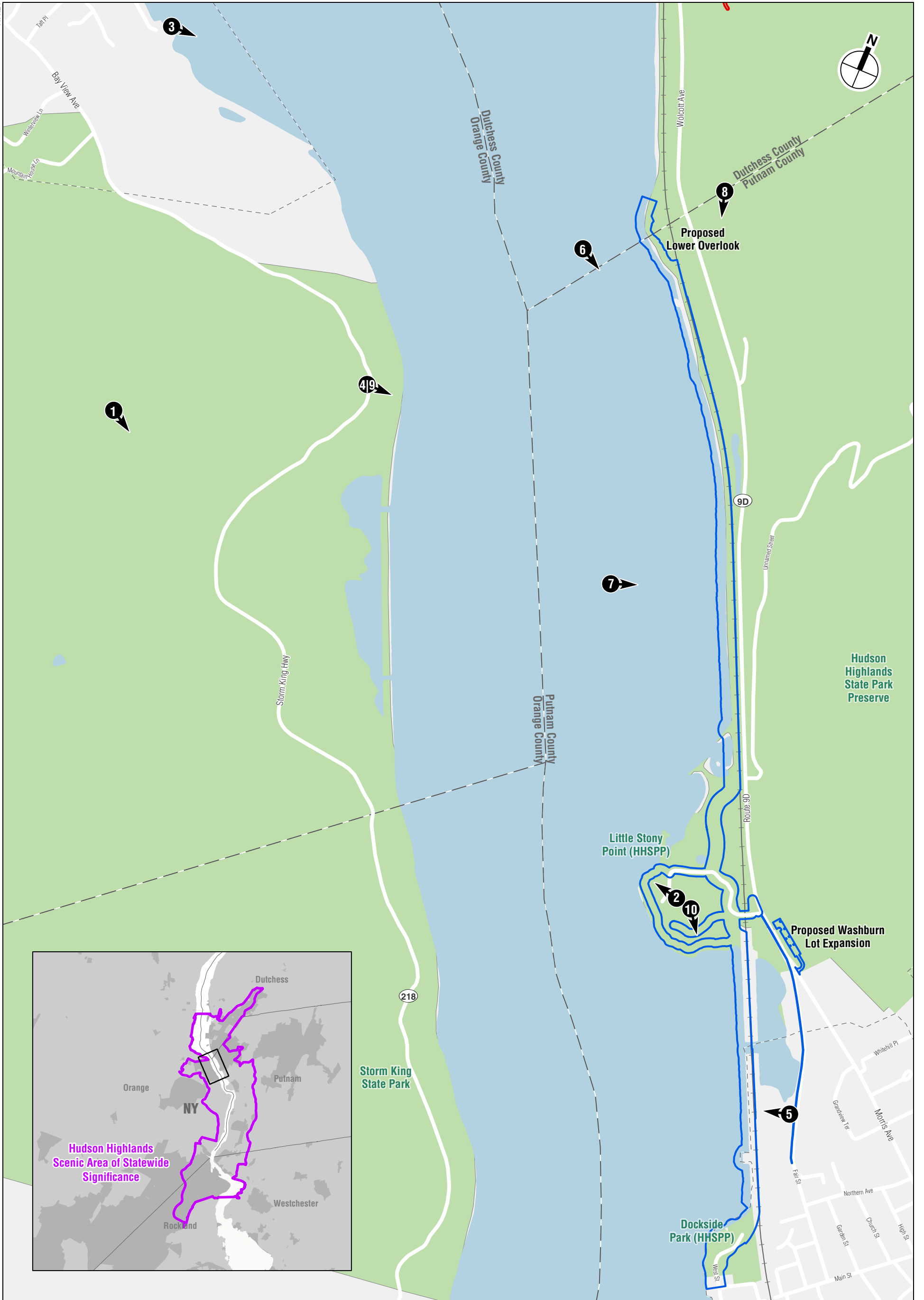
Figure IV.G-2 (photo 2) presents a view facing northwest from Little Stony Point across the Hudson River toward Storm King Mountain. In the foreground (on the east side of the Hudson River) several trails on Little Stony Point are visible among an otherwise generally forested area. Along the western shoreline of the Hudson River, railroad tracks are visible, as are the steep rocky and forested slopes of Storm King Mountain and NYS Route 218 along the mountain's edge, but the western shore in this vantage point is largely undeveloped.

FROM DONAHUE MEMORIAL PARK FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

Figure IV.G-3 (photo 3) presents the view from Donahue Memorial Park on the western shore of the Hudson River in the Village of Cornwall-on-Hudson facing southeast across the river to its eastern shoreline. From there, the mountains of HHSPP are visible. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (NYCDEP) Hudson River Drainage Chamber (HRDC), located at the foot of Breakneck Ridge on the eastern shore of the Hudson River, is also clearly visible. While the tracks of Metro-North Railroad (MNR) run along the eastern shore of the Hudson River, they are not visible from this elevation.

FROM NYS ROUTE 218 FACING EAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

Figure IV.G-3 (photo 4) presents the view facing east from NYS Route 218 on the west side of the Hudson River. The mountains of HHSPP are visible, as are some sections of the MNR tracks along the eastern shoreline of the Hudson River.



 Trail Corridor - Fjord Trail South

 Photograph View Direction and Reference Number



View from Storm King Mountain facing southeast toward Little Stony Point 1



View from Little Stony Point facing northwest toward Storm King Mountain 2



View from Donahue Memorial Park facing southeast toward Fjord Trail South Corridor **3**



View from NYS Route 218 facing east toward Fjord Trail South Corridor **4**



View from Mayor's Park at Fair Street facing west toward mountains of the Hudson Highlands **5**



View from Hudson River facing southeast toward Breakneck Lower Overlook and Fjord Trail South Corridor **6**



View from Hudson River facing east toward Fjord Trail South Corridor 7



View from Breakneck Ridge Upper Overlook facing south toward Fjord Trail South Corridor 8

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

FROM MAYOR'S PARK AT FAIR STREET FACING WEST TOWARD MOUNTAINS OF THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS

Figure IV.G-4 (photo 5) presents the view facing west from Mayor's Park on the eastern shore of the Hudson River in the Village of Cold Spring. From there, the view is of an open field at the park with the MNR tracks and related electrical equipment clearly visible across the park at eye-level. A few small trees are located along the railroad tracks and there are views of mountains of the Hudson Highlands across the Hudson River.

FROM HUDSON RIVER FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD BREAKNECK RIDGE LOWER OVERLOOK AND FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

Figure IV.G-4 (photo 6) presents the view facing southeast from the Hudson River to its eastern shoreline toward Breakneck Ridge, with a former restaurant/catering facility building (the Chalet-on-Hudson; now owned by OPRHP and part of HHSP) and utility poles visible along NYS Route 9D. A small section of the MNR railroad tracks are visible through intermittent vegetation along the shoreline.

FROM HUDSON RIVER FACING EAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

Figure IV.G-5 (photo 7) presents the view facing east from the Hudson River toward Mount Taurus within HHSP. From this water-level vantage point, the eastern shoreline of the Hudson River comprises dense vegetation. At the base of Mount Taurus, there is a visible clearing just inland from the shoreline, associated with the NYS Route 9D and the MNR railroad tracks corridor. Some utility poles along NYS Route 9D are visible as well from this vantage point.

FROM BREAKNECK RIDGE UPPER OVERLOOK FACING SOUTH TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

Figure IV.G-5 (photo 8) presents the view facing south from the Breakneck Ridge Upper Overlook, looking down the Hudson River with the MNR railroad tracks clearly visible along the Hudson River's eastern shore. Little Stony Point juts into the Hudson River to the south. From this viewpoint, the western shore of the Hudson River is visible farther in the distance with railroad tracks along the shoreline. While NYS Route 9D is not visible from this viewpoint, a slight clearing just east of the MNR railroad tracks indicates the presence of the roadway.

HUDSON HIGHLANDS SCENIC AREA OF STATEWIDE SIGNIFICANCE (SASS)

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 (NYSDOS) 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 IV.G-1**).⁴ It is a highly scenic and valued region of the Hudson River Valley, rich in natural beauty, and cultural and historical features. The SASS extends from Scofield Ridge and Denning's Point in the north

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

⁴ <https://dos.ny.gov/scenic-areas-statewide-significance-sass> (accessed November 10, 2021).

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 through which the Fjord Trail South Corridor runs (i.e., the Town of Philipstown and the Village of Cold Spring).

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”).

C. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

In the future without the proposed Fjord Trail South, the visual character of the Fjord Trail South Corridor would remain unchanged. The visual character of the Trail Corridor would continue to

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

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

comprise the existing MNR railroad tracks, NYS Route 9D, various public parks, some commercial establishments, municipal uses, and residences scattered along its length.

D. FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

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

Fjord Trail South would travel between the MNR tracks and the Hudson River. The proposed alignment would bump out to the west from its generally north-south direction within Little Stony Point as well as at the MNR utility structure and rail overpass/bridge located just north of Mayor's Park in Cold Spring. The proposed Lower Overlook Trail Bank at the northern terminus of Fjord Trail South would be at-grade along the Hudson River shoreline. Between the proposed Lower Overlook and Little Stony Point, Fjord Trail South would travel along the Hudson River shoreline, with the first approximately half-mile elevated on piles over the water's edge and the next approximately half-mile on-grade adjacent to the shoreline. Fjord Trail South would travel through Little Stony Point on a boardwalk, a berm, and at-grade. Meanders within Little Stony Point would incorporate existing trails with limited new disturbance. Between Little Stony Point and Dockside Park to the south, Fjord Trail South would again be elevated on piles along the Hudson River shoreline adjacent to the existing MNR tracks. In Dockside Park, Fjord Trail South would be at-grade and incorporate an existing path.

The elevated trail deck would be about one to four feet above the elevation of existing MNR tracks, depending on location. Protective fencing on the east side of Fjord Trail South, in accordance with MNR requirements, would range in height from eight to twelve feet. Typical guardrails of roughly four feet in height would also be installed. The design of the elevated sections would be low profile, and no lighting is proposed.

Fjord Trail South has been designed to avoid mature tree clusters, where possible, to maintain vegetative screening in areas where trees and shrubs are present, especially where the shoreline is wider and currently supports vegetative growth. Where the shoreline is narrow north and south of Little Stony Point, existing vegetation would be removed. Additionally, trees and shrubs would be removed near the northern terminus of Fjord Trail South for the proposed Lower Overlook along the shoreline at the base of Breakneck Ridge. The Lower Overlook would be constructed from boulders and stone blocks to provide sitting areas with some limited planting, converting the area from a vegetated condition to one similar to the open face rock and keeping in kind with the geological condition of the surrounding environs.

The landscape plans include planting of trees, shrubs, and other vegetation along the Fjord Trail South Corridor to help stabilize the shoreline, buffer views of Fjord Trail South, and maintain, where possible, a more vegetated landscape. Boulders are proposed at certain locations to both protect the elevated trail structure and to enhance the aesthetics of the Trail, especially looking underneath the raised platform from the west, in keeping with the visual appearance of the existing shoreline.

The Main Trail portion of Fjord Trail South would be Accessible, roughly 10 to 12 feet wide, and offer elevated Trail Banks, view spurs, and pile-supported "get-down" structures that would allow for direct access to the Hudson River. On-grade sections of Fjord Trail South would be surfaced

with crushed stone and blend into the existing natural landscape. Elevated sections of the Trail would be made of precast concrete, which would be a neutral color and compatible with existing adjacent MNR infrastructure. Trail Banks would also incorporate stonework and plantings to complement the natural landscape.

POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACTS DURING CONSTRUCTION

Construction of the elevated northern section of Fjord Trail South (from about Breakneck Ridge to about the midpoint between Breakneck Ridge and Little Stony Point) would be facilitated by barges along the Hudson River shoreline to gain access to the west side of the MNR tracks. Construction south of that midpoint and on Little Stony Point is expected to be land based. Between Little Stony Point and Dockside Park, a top-down construction method would be used, where the elevated trail would be constructed from the trail structure itself as it is built. It would be constructed from the northern and southern ends simultaneously and meet in the middle, with land-based access from Little Stony Point and Dockside Park, where staging areas would also be established (refer to Chapter II, “Project Description,” for additional information on the construction program and duration).

During construction of Fjord Trail South, much of the construction activity would be visible from within the Hudson River and from both of its shorelines. At the northern section of Fjord Trail South, barges would be used to deliver and store materials and equipment, to support a crane for elevated trail pile and deck installation, and to provide workers with access to the construction work zone. For the top-down construction portion of Fjord Trail South between Little Stony Point and Dockside Park, construction vehicles, cranes, and excavators would be positioned on the completed portions of the Trail as its constructed. Construction of these elevated sections of Fjord Trail South along the Hudson River shoreline would take approximately five years, but due to in-water work restrictions to protect aquatic species, barges and in-water construction activities would only be in place for about six months per year (July 1 to December 31). In-water construction activities would be demobilized during the remaining six months. The shoreline work, while visible, would be temporary, and construction equipment would move along the shoreline as different sections of the Fjord Trail South section are completed, making the presence of construction equipment at any one location transitory.

Some on-grade construction activities for the middle section of Fjord Trail South and in Dockside Park would be partially screened by existing tree and shrub growth along the Hudson River’s edge and at Little Stony Point, and just north of Dockside Park. Construction in Dockside Park would be visible from the Hudson River and possibly from points further west. Where visible, construction activities and the staging areas within Little Stony Point and Dockside Park would temporarily diminish the visual quality of these areas, but they would be restored to the same or better condition once construction is complete. Construction would last approximately four to five years in Little Stony Point, but would vary in intensity during that time period.

Due to its temporary and variable nature, the work taking place during the period of construction would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

POTENTIAL VISUAL IMPACTS OF FJORD TRAIL SOUTH

STORM KING MOUNTAIN FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD LITTLE STONY POINT

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-2** [photo 1]) on the west side of the Hudson River facing southeast across the river toward Little Stony Point and the Village of Cold Spring, the elevated portion of Fjord Trail South, including the proposed fencing and guardrails, between Little Stony

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

Point and Mayor's Park could be visible. Between Little Stony Point and Mayor's Park, where Fjord Trail South would pass a small railroad bridge, it would bump out into the Hudson River, potentially making that portion more noticeable. As the trail would be generally a linear element on the landscape, running alongside the existing railroad tracks, an observer on the western side of the Hudson River would not perceive Fjord Trail South as a distinct new element on the landscape. The Trail would not impede views of the greater natural context within which it is situated and would not interfere with the public's enjoyment of the Hudson River shoreline. Given the limited length of the potentially visible trail section, the distance from which it would be viewed from, and the limited number of people (viewers) affected, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

LITTLE STONY POINT FACING NORTHWEST TO TRAILS BELOW AND STORM KING MOUNTAIN

From this viewpoint (see **Figure III.G-2** [photo 2]), the Little Stony Point trails already visible below would be improved, and the views from this vantage point would not substantially change. As such, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

DONAHUE MEMORIAL PARK FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-3** [photo 3]), an elevated portion of Fjord Trail South would be visible. This section of Fjord Trail South would be supported on concrete pilings between the railroad tracks and the shoreline. Further south along this section within this viewshed, more of the Trail would be partially obscured by existing trees and natural growth. The fencing and guardrails would be minimally visible from this viewpoint and distance. Given that Fjord Trail South would run parallel to, but slightly higher than, the MNR tracks and NYS Route 9D, it would not be expected that the Trail would be perceived as a new or distinct element on the local landscape, but would be a compatible horizontal feature among existing infrastructure similar in appearance. When taken in context of the entire Fjord Trail South, and given the scale of the surrounding topography, the visible portion of Fjord Trail South would be relatively small in scope and magnitude and would not interfere with or reduce the public's enjoyment of the view from this viewpoint. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

NYS ROUTE 218 FACING EAST TOWARDS FJORD TRAIL SOUTH

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-3** [photo 4]), the elevated portion of Fjord Trail South, including the fencing and guardrails, while visible, would appear close in elevation to NYS Route 9D and the MNR tracks, and would blend into the existing linear features. While the elevated portion would introduce a new visual element to an observer from the western shoreline of the Hudson River, when taken in context of the entire Fjord Trail South, and given the limited number of people (viewers) affected, this portion would be relatively small in scope and magnitude, and would not have a detrimental impact on the public's appreciation of the Hudson River shoreline, given the mitigating effects of perspective and distance. Thus, from this viewpoint, the Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

FROM MAYOR'S PARK AT FAIR STREET FACING WEST TOWARD MOUNTAINS OF THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-4** [photo 5]), Fjord Trail South would be elevated (roughly one to four feet above the MNR railroad tracks and intervening lands), linear, running parallel to the MNR railroad tracks, and visible at eye-level. While Fjord Trail South would be visible at Mayor's Park looking westward and would be visible from a small number of residences along nearby Fair Street, it would be consistent with the existing recreational use of Mayor's Park. As such, Fjord Trail South would not result in a significant change in use in this area and would not obstruct views or result in a detrimental impact on the perceived beauty of views from Mayor's Park looking westward, as the scale of the surrounding environmental features would be expected to offset this new visual element. The portion of Fjord Trail South visible from Mayor's Park would represent a small section of the trail. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

HUDSON RIVER FACING SOUTHEAST TOWARD BREAKNECK RIDGE LOWER OVERLOOK AND FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-4** [photo 6]), Fjord Trail South would be elevated (roughly one to four feet above the MNR tracks and intervening lands), linear, parallel to the MNR tracks, and visible at eye-level. While Fjord Trail South would impact southeastward views of the Hudson River shoreline for viewers recreating on the Hudson River, the Trail would be in keeping with the types of uses that already exist in the area. Some clearing of vegetation on and around the Breakneck Ridge rockface would take place, and a viewing area (the Lower Overlook) would be constructed, and visible from the Hudson River.⁶ Given the mitigating effects of perspective and distance, along with the scale of the surrounding natural features, this section of Fjord Trail South would not result in a detrimental impact to the public's perceived beauty of the Hudson River's eastern shoreline. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

HUDSON RIVER FACING EAST TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-5** [photo 7]), Fjord Trail South would transition from an elevated trail (roughly one to four feet above the MNR tracks and intervening lands) to at-grade, and it would be linear, parallel to the MNR railroad tracks, and visible at eye-level. Along this section of Fjord Trail South, there is vegetation along the shoreline, and the design of Fjord Trail South in this area would preserve existing shoreline vegetation to the extent possible. Where invasive vegetation is removed, it would be replaced with native plants and trees (see Chapter X, "Coastal Zone Management Program Consistency," for additional detailed discussion of ways in which Fjord Trail South would be designed to preserve the existing shoreline). The types and colors of materials used to construct Fjord Trail South would be selected to blend into or complement the existing natural landscape and be compatible with existing MNR or roadway infrastructure, such that it would not have a detrimental effect on the perceived beauty of the Hudson River shoreline to a viewer at this location. Additionally, given the linear nature of the existing features (MNR tracks and NYS Route 9D), construction of a linear trail would not be anticipated to change the public perception of the shoreline. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

⁶ See Draft Master Plan, pages 242–243, for imagery showing the proposed alignment of the Breakneck Ridge Lower Overlook.

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

BREAKNECK RIDGE UPPER OVERLOOK FACING SOUTH TOWARD FJORD TRAIL SOUTH CORRIDOR

From this viewpoint (see **Figure IV.G-5** [photo 8]), Fjord Trail South would be visible along the MNR tracks and the Hudson River. A viewer from this perspective would see the surface of Fjord Trail South (its elevated walkway) but not the pilings underneath. From this viewpoint at an elevated location, Fjord Trail South would appear to be on or at a very similar plane as the railroad tracks. The types and colors of materials used for Fjord Trail South would be selected to be compatible with existing MNR tracks and roadway infrastructure, such that the elevated walkway would not have a detrimental effect on the public's perceived beauty of the Hudson River shoreline. Given that Fjord Trail South would align with existing infrastructure (the MNR tracks) and would not be an imposing feature within the broader context of this view, it would not be expected to interfere or reduce the public's enjoyment of the view from this viewpoint, due to the effects of perspective and distance. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

VISUAL ANALYSIS RENDERINGS OF FJORD TRAIL SOUTH

Figure IV.G-6 (photo 9) provides a rendering of the proposed Fjord Trail South as viewed from NYS Route 218 on the west side of the Hudson River. From this elevated vantage point, only some portions of Fjord Trail South would be visible, with the remainder screened by vegetation along the eastern shoreline of the Hudson River. Viewed from this location, the elevated portion of Fjord Trail South would appear at a similar elevation to the MNR tracks and NYS Route 9D. The fencing and guardrails would have limited visibility from this viewpoint. While the elevated portion would introduce a new visual element, taken in context of the entire Fjord Trail South and the existing MNR tracks and associated infrastructure, this change to the visual character of the Fjord Trail South Corridor would be relatively small in scope and magnitude, and would not interfere with or reduce the public's enjoyment of the Hudson River's eastern shoreline. Therefore, Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact from this viewpoint.

Figure IV.G-7 (photo 10) shows a rendering of the proposed Fjord Trail South as viewed from the southern edge of Little Stony Point facing south-southeast. From this elevated vantage point, Fjord Trail South would be visible as it runs alongside the MNR tracks. Further south along this section within this viewshed, Fjord Trail South would be somewhat obscured by trees and natural vegetative growth. The proposed Fjord Trail South at Dockside Park would have limited visibility given the distance and the vegetation both between and behind the proposed trail. Fencing and guardrails would be nearly invisible from this viewpoint, given the intervening distance. There would not be a detrimental impact on the public's appreciation of the Hudson River shoreline, and Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact.

VISUAL IMPACT ON THE HUDSON HIGHLANDS SASS

The entire Fjord Trail South would be within the Hudson Highlands SASS. Construction and operation of the proposed Fjord Trail South would not be anticipated to result in a significant adverse visual impact to the Hudson Highlands SASS. The development of the Trail is in keeping with other, similar, recreational resources in the area. Creation of Fjord Trail South 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 overall SASS. The materials proposed to construct Fjord Trail South would be carefully selected to integrate the Trail into the surrounding



Rendering of Fjord Trail South when viewed from NYS Route 218 facing east 9



Rendering of Fjord Trail South when viewed from southern edge of Little Stony Point facing south-southeast 10

natural environment and to blend with the existing landscape to the extent possible. Wherever possible, Fjord Trail South would maintain shoreline vegetation, and in areas where removal is unavoidable, native species would be planted to minimize potential visual impacts (while potentially removing invasive species, as discussed further in Chapter IV.E, “Biological Resources – Fjord Trail South”). The size and scale of Fjord Trail South, when compared to the overall expanse of HHSPP and the Hudson Highlands SASS, and the context into which the trail would be sited, support that Fjord Trail South would not interfere with the public’s enjoyment of the SASS, and parks or other community assets within its boundaries.

VIEWS FROM FJORD TRAIL SOUTH

The 2020 Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail Draft Master Plan for the Fjord Trail⁷ includes renderings of what users of the Fjord Trail may see and experience along its length. The Fjord Trail would weave through unique landscape types, each with distinct ecological and immersive qualities. The design of Fjord Trail South has been inspired by the unique landscape character, and is being guided by the trail’s surroundings, texture, and ecology.

Fjord Trail South would bring users along the Hudson River’s edge providing an immersive experience of the Hudson River with expansive river views and opportunities for wildlife viewing and water access. Fjord Trail South would also expose users to the glacial geology of the Hudson Highlands (see Draft Master Plan, page 59, “The Highlands” photo, and page 60 renderings). On its north end at Breakneck Ridge, users of Fjord Trail South would be able to experience steep rock faces. This area would also provide users with more opportunities to connect with more challenging hikes such as the Breakneck Ridge Trail.

Along the proposed Fjord Trail South, there may also be Trail Banks which loop out onto peninsulas/land protrusions into the Hudson River (see Draft Master Plan, page 329). At these locations, users can experience sweeping views of the Hudson River and, in some cases, opportunities for water access.

E. MITIGATION

The construction of the proposed Fjord Trail South would not significantly change views of the Fjord Trail South Corridor from the surrounding community and selected viewpoints, owing to the perceived scale of the proposed Fjord Trail South and the context into which it would be sited. There would not be a significant change in use from the currently existing land use, as much of the area is devoted to parks, preserves, hiking trails, and other public open space. Materials used to construct the Fjord Trail South would be chosen to complement the natural landscape and existing MNR and roadway infrastructure, and to blend into the environs of Fjord Trail South. The proposed alignment was selected to weave in and out of areas where vegetation exists and preserve mature trees where possible. Boulders are proposed at certain locations to both protect the elevated trail structure and to enhance the aesthetics of the trail, in keeping with the existing condition. In areas where natural vegetative growth would be removed to accommodate the trail, and to provide views, native plantings would be added to minimize potential visual impacts to the extent possible (while potentially removing invasive species, as discussed further in Chapter IV.E, “Biological Resources – Fjord Trail South”). In addition, the use of the proposed Fjord Trail South and the scale of Fjord Trail South 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 region which are

⁷ <https://parks.ny.gov/inside-our-agency/public-documents.aspx>

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

already visible. Additionally, Fjord Trail South would enhance views from existing locations and introduce new viewing locations along its length. Accordingly, no significant adverse visual impacts are anticipated and, therefore, no additional mitigation would be required. *