

Chapter IV.I: Recreational and Open Space Resources, Accessibility – Fjord Trail South

A. INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes the existing conditions and assesses the Proposed Action’s potential effects on recreational and open space resources within the Fjord Trail South Corridor. An evaluation of the proposed Fjord Trail North is provided in Chapter III.I, “Recreational and Open Space Resources, Accessibility – Fjord Trail North.”

This chapter describes existing recreational and open space resources in the Fjord Trail South Corridor and assesses the future conditions with and without construction of the proposed Fjord Trail South. The assessment identifies connecting recreational resources (those that are adjacent to the Fjord Trail South Corridor and/or are immediately accessible from the existing resources the Fjord Trail would tie together), noting Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessible (ADA Accessible) facilities and parking, within or directly adjacent to the Fjord Trail South Corridor. The assessment considers the ownership, operation/maintenance responsibilities, type of recreation, current use levels, and capacities of the resources.

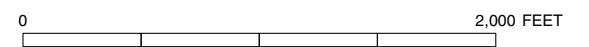
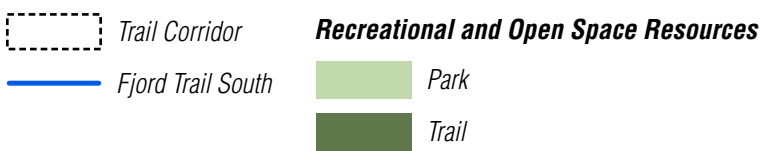
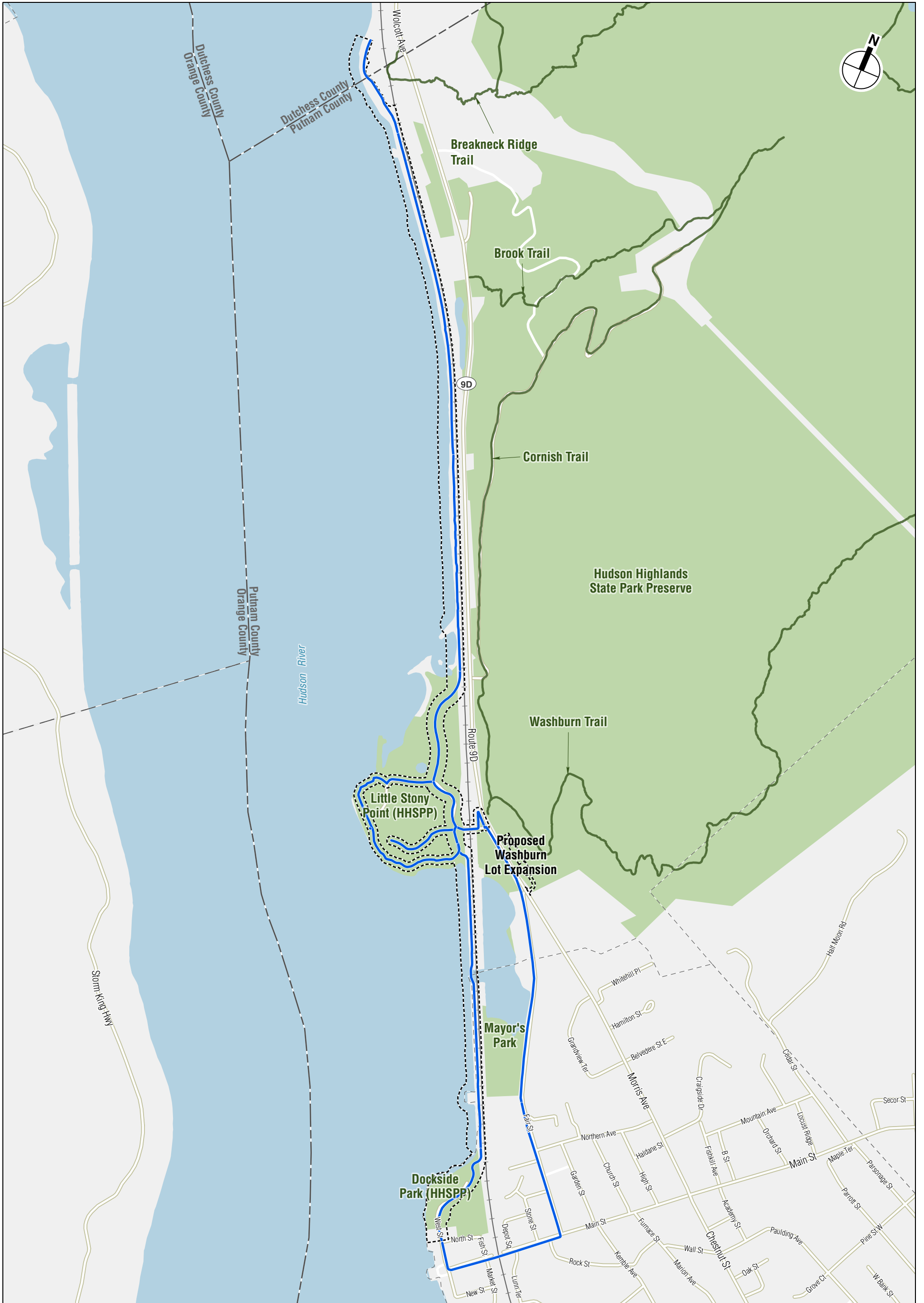
The proposed Fjord Trail is anticipated to be a recreational resource as well as a connection to additional recreational opportunities within the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve (HHSPP), City of Beacon, Town of Fishkill, Town of Philipstown, and Village of Cold Spring. The potential for any significant adverse impacts to open space and recreational resources and accessibility resulting from the construction and use of the Fjord Trail South section of the Fjord Trail are considered herein.

B. EXISTING CONDITIONS

The existing trails, parks, playgrounds, and other recreational resources, and ADA Accessible facilities and parking within or directly adjacent to the Fjord Trail South Corridor are identified below. These recreational and open space resources are also shown in **Figure IV.I-1**.

Nearly 50 percent of the Fjord Trail alignment (including Main Trail, Meanders, and Connectors), or approximately six miles, would be located within or adjacent to HHSPP. HHSPP is owned by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) and is made up of a series of separate parcels along a 16-mile stretch of the eastern shore of the Hudson River and extends eastward up to four miles inland from the Hudson River’s shoreline. Recreational resources within HHSPP that are directly within Fjord Trail South Corridor include Dockside Park and Little Stony Point along with the Washburn Trail, located on the opposite side of NYS Route 9D from Little Stony Point. HHSPP trails/trailheads including Breakneck Ridge and Wilkinson-Memorial Trails would be accessed by way of the Breakneck Connector and Bridge Project (BNCB) at the northern end of the Fjord Trail South Corridor.

Table IV.I-1 identifies the recreational resources along and immediately adjacent to the Fjord Trail South Corridor. This section describes the connecting recreational resources, noting ADA



Recreational Resources Location
Figure IV.I-1

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

Accessible facilities and parking, within or directly adjacent to the Trail Corridor including ownership, operation/maintenance responsibilities, type of recreation, current use level, and visitor capacity.

Table IV.I-1
Existing Recreational and Open Space Resources, Fjord Trail South Corridor

Recreational Resource	Municipality	Owner	Type of Recreation	ADA Accessible	Parking
Breakneck Ridge Trail/Wilkinson Memorial Trail/Nimham Trail (HHSPP)	Town of Fishkill	OPRHP	Hiking, hunting access, wildlife watching	No	160+ spaces at informal parking area
Little Stony Point (HHSPP)	Town of Philipstown	OPRHP	Hiking, fishing, picnicking, wildlife watching, Hudson River Valley Greenway Trail Water Trail site	No	Informal dirt parking along the NYS Route 9D west shoulder (up to 30 vehicles)
Washburn Trail (HHSPP)	Town of Philipstown	OPRHP	Hiking, hunting access, wildlife watching	No	Washburn Lot –48+ parking spaces, including 2 ADA
Cornish Trail (HHSPP)	Town of Philipstown	OPRHP	Hiking, hunting access, wildlife watching	No	(Washburn Lot)
Mayor's Park	Village of Cold Spring	Village of Cold Spring	Playing fields, pavilion	Yes	Head-in parking along Fair Steet (approximately 30 spaces) and 38 space parking lot to the south
Dockside Park (HHSPP)	Village of Cold Spring	OPRHP; Managed by Village of Cold Spring through Agreement with OPRHP	Walking, relaxation, fishing	No	No on-site parking. On-street parking on lower Main Street and surrounding roads (45+spaces)

LITTLE STONY POINT

Little Stony Point is a 26-acre park (part of HHSPP) located just north of the Village of Cold Spring and is a peninsula in Hudson River with NYS Route 9D and the Metro-North Railroad (MNR) Hudson Line tracks along its eastern edge. Little Stony Point is managed by OPRHP, which also has an agreement with The Little Stony Point Citizens Association (LSPCA) to support the park.¹ The LSPCA is dedicated to the safe enjoyment and preservation of Little Stony Point and hosts clean-up and other community events and activities there. The entrance to the park is a one lane bridge over the MNR tracks for pedestrians and authorized vehicles from NYS Route 9D.

The heaviest use of Little Stony Point occurs in the spring and fall, but summer can be busy as well. On busy days, parking areas are typically full and overflowing by 9:00 AM, which forces

¹ <https://littlestonypoint.org/> (accessed February 26, 2024).

visitors to park in Cold Spring, where there is limited parking available. There have also been parking issues when the LSPCA (Friends Group) schedules events at Little Stony Point.

Little Stony Point has a walking trail network that consists of a blazed eight-foot-wide loop trail around the peninsula and an out-and-back trail to a scenic overlook. There are some additional informal, unmarked trails within Little Stony Point. It also has a narrow sandy shoreline along the Hudson River, which draws visitors during the summer months. A new volunteer center was recently constructed next to the HHSP park office/visitor center (a rehabilitated former caretaker's cottage) to provide a more visible staffing presence in this section of HHSP.

Parking for Little Stony Point is provided informally just off the west shoulder of NYS Route 9D and at the Washburn Lot across NYS Route 9D. There is a painted crosswalk on NYS Route 9D and signage for pedestrian safety. The informal parking area can accommodate up to 30 vehicles and the Washburn Lot has a capacity for approximately 48 vehicles. On summer weekends, both areas are often overflowing. 'No parking' signage was recently installed on NYS Route 9D to the north and south of Little Stony Point. An additional unmarked, dirt parking area just north of the Northern Avenue/NYS Route 9D (Morris Avenue) intersection and across from the Haldane Schools provides approximately 35 parking spaces and is typically full during peak use.

Access to Little Stony Point can be made by personal vehicle with parking as noted above, by the Cold Spring Trolley with a stop request required, by bicycle, and by foot. Pedestrians travelling from the Village of Cold Spring use Fair Street, and those coming from the parking lot across from Haldane Schools and from Breakneck Ridge walk along NYS Route 9D. The north end of Fair Street and the vast majority of NYS Route 9D north and south of Little Stony Point do not include sidewalks, resulting in potentially unsafe conditions for pedestrians.

WASHBURN TRAIL AND CORNISH TRAIL

The Washburn and Cornish Trails are hiking trails owned and operated by OPRHP within HHSP. The trails are located across NYS Route 9D from Little Stony Point, and visitors use the Washburn Lot for access to the trails or walk to the trailheads from the Village of Cold Spring. The trails offer hiking, hiking access to other trails, and bird watching. They are not Accessible. The Washburn Lot has a capacity for roughly 48 vehicles, including two ADA compliant spaces, and is fully occupied on busy days. Informal parking at Little Stony Point also provides visitors access to the trails. When these parking areas are at capacity, visitors often park at the lot across from Haldane Schools and walk one half-mile to access the trailheads. The Cold Spring Trolley also offers a stop (by request) at Fair Street and NYS Route 9D, providing visitors to the trails with an additional means of access.

Nearly as popular as the Breakneck Ridge Trail, improvements on the Washburn and Cornish Trails are helping the trails withstand continued recreational use and are protecting adjacent natural areas. Over the past several years, OPRHP restored sections of the Washburn Trail below and above the Old Quarry, and improvements included rehabilitation and resurfacing from the Trailhead to the Quarry and the installation of approximately 140 stone steps above the Quarry to the upper overlook. Cornish Trail has been improved to a degree; additional improvements would further enhance access. The Northgate signage project is also bringing more visitors along the Cornish Trail to the Cornish ruins.

MAYOR'S PARK

Mayor's Park is a waterfront park owned and managed by the Village of Cold Spring and is reserved for Village residents, or others by permit. The park, which is enclosed by a chain-link

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metal fence, contains ballfields and a pavilion. Parking for Mayor's Park consists of a single row of paved, head-in spaces along Fair Steet (approximately 30 spaces). Adjacent to the south of Mayor's Park is a Village of Cold Spring paid parking area containing 38 spaces. At peak use, both parking areas are typically fully occupied. During multiple visits to the area during the summer months, Mayor's Park was observed to be lightly used.

DOCKSIDE PARK

Dockside Park is a 6.4-acre park (part of HHSPP) located at the southern terminus of the Fjord Trail South Corridor. The park is operated and maintained by the Village of Cold Spring under a license from OPRHP. Located along the Hudson River waterfront, the park offers open mowed fields with benches along the shoreline for passive recreation, picnicking, and relaxing, and the park is used as a dog walking park for local residents. Recent improvements at Dockside Park included a sustainable shoreline project, which involved removing existing rip-rap, concrete slabs, and wrack from the shoreline; grading the shoreline and installing bank stabilization features including boulder revetments, toe treatments, ice breaker boulders, and native vegetation; and installing a gravel pedestrian pathway (designed to be Accessible) and boat ramp, for non-motorized, car top boats. Native wetland and upland plantings and replacing the wrack provide an improved habitat and reduced erosion potential.

On-street parking on and around lower Main Street within the Village of Cold Spring is available to access Dockside Park, with a capacity for approximately 45 vehicles. At peak hours, on-street parking is typically at capacity. The MNR Cold Spring train station is also nearby, with a parking area that has a capacity for 200 vehicles, which requires payment on weekdays and is free of charge on weekends and designated holidays. At peak weekend hours, the train station parking area was observed to contain approximately 100 vehicles. The Cold Spring Trolley has a scheduled stop at the Cold Spring Bandstand located roughly 250 feet south of the entrance to Dockside Park, providing another means of access for visitors.

C. FUTURE WITHOUT THE PROPOSED ACTION

In the future without the proposed Fjord Trail South, some improvements would take place at recreational spaces along and adjacent to the Fjord Trail South Corridor. The BNCB just north of the Fjord Trail South Corridor is currently underway and will include an approximately half-mile shared-use trail and new bridge over the MNR tracks, parking areas along NYS Route 9D, connections to two trailheads (Breakneck Ridge Trail and Wilkinson-Memorial Trail) within HHSPP, the addition of two restroom buildings, upgrades to the MNR Breakneck Ridge station and platforms, relocation of power lines from the western side of NYS Route 9D to the eastern side, installation of a trail steward station, and upgrades to the upper overlook area along the Breakneck Ridge Trail. The BNCB would improve conditions at this popular and heavily visited destination for hikers, cyclists, and drivers, as it would provide off-street pedestrian facilities and reduce the number of pedestrians walking along NYS Route 9D to access the trails and other nearby recreational resources.

In addition, the LSPCA has been awarded a grant from the Environmental Protection Fund's Park and Trail Partnership Grants program to improve public access to Little Stony Point by re-engineering and restoring the Gateway Trail at Fair Street, which has been severely eroded. The improvements will include interpretive signage along the Gateway Trail, enhanced ADA access to programming at their Volunteer Center, and the Park Visitor Center, by resurfacing the adjacent

parking area, and improved accessibility to Little Stony Point’s riverfront area by restoring the eroded ramp to the bridge entrance to the Little Stony Point peninsula.²

D. FUTURE WITH THE PROPOSED ACTION

The Fjord Trail is intended to be an Accessible waterfront and woodland trail between the Village of Cold Spring and the City of Beacon. As such, it would be a new recreational resource and would link existing recreation resources within HHSPP and the municipalities through which it would be constructed. The assessment below presents the potential beneficial and adverse impacts to recreational and open spaces resources of the proposed Fjord Trail South section of the proposed Fjord Trail. It also addresses the potential impacts associated with the increase in use and accessibility of existing recreational facilities due to the development of the Fjord Trail, including recreational areas along the proposed Fjord Trail South Corridor.

CONSTRUCTION

Construction of Fjord Trail South would occur in and adjacent to existing recreational resources and potentially result in temporary disruption to park and trail users due to noise, emissions (including dust), and visibility of construction activities and staging areas. Measures would be implemented to minimize temporary noise and air quality impacts during construction, as described in Chapter IV.H, “Noise and Air Quality – Fjord Trail South.” Temporary closures or detours of existing trails may also be required during construction for public safety, particularly where existing trails would be improved, such as within Little Stony Point and Dockside Park; however, portions of these parks are expected to remain open during construction.

As discussed further in Chapter II, “Project Description,” Little Stony Point would be used for construction access and staging to construct the on-grade portion of Fjord Trail South within Little Stony Point and along the Hudson River shoreline to the north of Little Stony Point. Construction of this portion of the trail would take approximately five years. The proposed construction methodology for Fjord Trail South requires more detailed plans to confirm if acceptable to protect MNR’s infrastructure/operation. Where construction activities would need to travel over MNR tracks, existing crossings would need to have an engineering and load bearing report prepared to determine if construction materials and equipment can traverse those crossings in order to be considered for use (including the existing bridge at the entrance to Little Stony Point from NYS Route 9D). HHFT, Inc. will continue to coordinate with MNR as design advances to minimize the potential for impacts to MNR and disruption to MNR service.

Little Stony Point and Dockside Park would also be used to provide access for construction of the elevated on-structure portion of the trail along the MNR Causeway between the two parks, followed by on-grade improvements in Little Stony Point and Dockside Park at the landing points of the elevated structure. This work would also occur over the course of about five to six years, but construction of the elevated structure would be restricted to six-month in-water work windows (July 1 to December 31) to avoid impacts to protected aquatic species.

HHFT, Inc. will continue to coordinate with OPRHP and LSPCA as design advances to minimize temporary impacts during construction within Little Stony Point and Dockside Park.

² <https://littlestonypoint.org>. Accessed April 26, 2024.

OPERATION

Among its beneficial impacts, the proposed Fjord Trail South would connect multiple recreational resources along the Trail Corridor including Dockside Park, Little Stony Point, the Washburn and Cornish Trails and Breakneck Ridge Trail, and further enhance the existing network of trails that traverse the area. It would improve access to existing and proposed recreational resources along its route and create new opportunities for visitors to access and enjoy the Hudson River and its scenic views.

With the goal of providing access to the Hudson River to all visitors, the Main Trail of Fjord Trail South would be designed to be Accessible and provide recreational opportunities for everyone regardless of differences in ability. Meanders would also be Accessible, to the extent possible.

As this section of the Fjord Trail would run between the MNR tracks and the Hudson River, the following three access points to Fjord Trail South are proposed: (i) one at the south end of the BNCB, (ii) one at Little Stony Point, and (iii) one at Dockside Park. Access at all three of these locations would be Accessible.

At the time of this assessment, there is no intention to implement fees for use of the Fjord Trail. Fees are being considered for a new shuttle service in the Fjord Trail Corridor (see below) and for parking at the BNCB and the Washburn Lot. The potential implementation of parking fees in these areas would be determined based on the outcome of a planned future parking and shuttle study.

To enhance mobility of trail users throughout the Fjord Trail Corridor, a shuttle would be incorporated into the operations of the Fjord Trail. The shuttle, which may be implemented prior to the Fjord Trail to accommodate existing trailheads in the corridor, would have potential stops at the MNR Beacon train station, Long Dock Park, Beacon Housing Authority, Mount Beacon, the Notch Trailhead, Dutchess Manor, Breakneck Ridge, Washburn Trailhead/Little Stony Point, and the MNR Cold Spring train station. The shuttle would charge users a nominal fee for a daily pass. This fee would be established through a parking and shuttle study undertaken in the future. Additionally, parking facilities at the Boscobel House and Gardens just south of the Village of Cold Spring may be available for Fjord Trail users, pending further coordination with the owners of that site, which could also be served by the shuttle. Further, rail access to Fjord Trail South would be available daily from the MNR Cold Spring station and the MNR Breakneck Ridge station on weekends.

LITTLE STONY POINT

Fjord Trail South would travel through Little Stony Point, incorporating existing trails as part of the proposed Main Trail and Meanders. Existing trails would be improved to be Accessible to the extent possible. Construction of Fjord Trail South would include stabilized trail surfacing and restroom buildings.

In the future, visitors would be able to access Little Stony Point by personal vehicle (parking at Washburn Lot), on foot, by bicycle, or the proposed shuttle. Pedestrian and cyclist access to Little Stony Point would be improved with development of Fjord Trail South, which would eliminate the need for visitors to walk or cycle along crowded roadways (Main Street, Fair Street, and NYS Route 9D) without pedestrian facilities to access the area, thereby providing a benefit to pedestrian safety and mobility. As noted in Chapter II, "Project Description," HHFT, Inc. is also considering a Meander that would travel from Dockside Park along Main Street and Fair Street to the Little Stony Point entrance and Washburn Lot on NYS Route 9D. This Meander could potentially

consist of new sidewalks on the portion of Fair Street where none currently exist, pending further analysis and coordination with the Village of Cold Spring, Putnam County, and NYSDOT.

Fjord Trail South is expected to increase visitation to Little Stony Point (see Chapter III.L, “Traffic and Transportation – Fjord Trail”). However, formalization of trails with implementation of Fjord Trail South would help direct the public to specific areas and to the Main Trail, which would allow users to move through Little Stony Point on designated paths, thereby limiting impacts on the park. Informal, social trails may be considered for closure as designs progress for Little Stony Point in an effort to limit visitors to the formal trail system and amenities.

Increased visitation would further strain existing limited parking for Little Stony Point. To address parking, the Washburn Lot would be expanded from 48 to about 96 spots, which would help to offset impacts from increased visitation (by vehicle) to Little Stony Point, as visitors to Little Stony Point often use the Washburn Lot. The Fjord Trail would also include two new parking areas along the Fjord Trail North Corridor (The Notch and Wade’s Hill Lot), and there would be additional parking improvements associated with the BNCB and at Dutchess Manor (see Chapter III.I, “Recreational and Open Space Resources, Accessibility – Fjord Trail North”). Each of these parking areas would be served by the proposed shuttle, giving visitors the ability to travel from any parking area to any trailhead along the Fjord Trail Corridor. Additional proposed improvements associated with the Proposed Action to address parking limitations, including around Little Stony Point, include smart parking tools such as e-signage and parking apps. These would assist in improving congestion and overcrowding by directing drivers to available parking spaces at other trail access locations in real-time (reducing circular parking search maneuvers) and allowing drivers to pay for parking electronically (see Chapter III.L, “Traffic and Transportation – Fjord Trail”). Further, Fjord Trail South would provide a more direct, and mostly off-road, connection from the MNR Cold Spring station and MNR Breakneck Ridge station to Little Stony Point, encouraging visitors to travel by train rather than personal vehicle.

While visitation to Little Stony Point would increase, through the anticipated mitigating impacts of better connections within and through Little Stony Point discussed above, and the expansion of the parking lot for the nearby Washburn Trail, the increase in users would not be expected to result in a significant adverse impact.

WASHBURN TRAIL AND CORNISH TRAIL

With construction of Fjord Trail South, visitors would be able to access the Washburn Trail and Cornish Trail by personal vehicle, on foot or bicycle, and by the proposed shuttle service. Fjord Trail South would connect to trails at nearby Little Stony Point, as well as provide the opportunity for pedestrians and cyclists to connect to other parks in the area more safely, thereby affording future visitors more options to recreate than are currently available.

With the Fjord Trail proposed to traverse Little Stony Point and thereby increasing visitation to the area, it is likely that these two trails would experience increased visitation. The recent improvements noted above (under Existing Conditions), the anticipated expansion of the Washburn Trail parking lot from 48 to about 96 spaces, the potential construction of a roundabout at the intersection of NYS Route 9D and Fair Street (as discussed in Chapter III.L, “Traffic and Transportation – Fjord Trail”), the continued assessments of the trail conditions, and the presence of Trail Stewards at the trailhead would help to manage increased visitation. As noted above, OPRHP is developing a Visitor Use Management Plan (VUMP) for the Breakneck Ridge Area to help manage use while protecting the sensitive natural resources (see Chapter IV.O, “Other Planning Effort – Fjord Trail South”). Some approaches to visitor management that are being

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considered include targeted trail maintenance and hardening existing trails to sustain increased use. As such, increased visitors to Washburn Trail and Cornish Trail are not anticipated to result in a significant adverse impact.

MAYOR'S PARK

Fjord Trail South would travel past Mayor's Park (on the opposite [west] side of the MNR tracks) and would not directly connect with the park. No changes to the park are anticipated to result from the Fjord Trail South development. The park is restricted to Village of Cold Spring residents, and therefore any increased visitation to the area as a result of the proposed Fjord Trail would not affect use of Mayor's Park. In the future, residents would continue to access the park by personal vehicle (with parking in the provided lot) and by foot and bicycle from the Village of Cold Spring. The existing parking would remain available at Mayor's Park. Therefore, no significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

DOCKSIDE PARK

Dockside Park is at the southern end of the proposed Fjord Trail South and would serve as the proposed southern trailhead of the Fjord Trail. An existing path along the shoreline would be incorporated as a Meander, and restroom buildings, open lawn areas for gatherings, and some seating are proposed at Dockside Park as part of the Fjord Trail.

With construction of Fjord Trail South, visitors would continue to access Dockside Park by personal vehicle using on-street parking in the Village of Cold Spring or at the MNR Cold Spring train station parking lot, which requires payment on weekdays and is available free of charge on weekends and designated holidays. Visitors could also access the park by way of the existing Cold Spring Trolley, the proposed shuttle, the MNR Cold Spring train station, on foot or by bicycle. The Fjord Trail would not introduce additional parking near Dockside Park.

Dockside Park is anticipated to experience an increase in visitation due to its proximity to Cold Spring's downtown, the MNR Cold Spring station, and it being the southern trailhead of the Fjord Trail. Fjord Trail South is expected to increase the availability, access to, and diversity of recreational facilities in the area. With the proposed trailhead in Dockside Park, visitors arriving by MNR and other modes of transportation to Cold Spring would be able to access Fjord Trail South, and other nearby recreational resources, such as the Washburn Trailhead, Little Stony Point, and other points north, via Fjord Trail South, eliminating the need for patrons to walk along streets without pedestrian infrastructure. The number of visitors is expected to be limited by the parking available, the size of the park, and its available amenities. Fjord Trail South would alleviate potential user capacity issues at Dockside Park by offering pedestrian and bicycle access to recreational resources to the north. With current and proposed upgrades to the park, it is anticipated to be able to handle an increase in visitors. Additionally, the Cold Spring waterfront to the south of Dockside Park as well as the Foundry Dock Park at the MNR Cold Spring train station along with Main Street in Cold Spring would provide visitors to the area opportunities for passive recreation, shopping and dining, and draw patrons away from Dockside Park should it become crowded. As such, user capacity is not expected to become an issue, and no significant adverse impacts are anticipated.

E. CONCLUSION

The proposed Fjord Trail South would enhance recreational and open space resources by providing a new trail for pedestrians and bicyclists, by creating more cohesive and safer connections between existing parks and trails, and by expanding access to the Hudson River

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waterfront and scenic vistas in the Trail Corridor. As discussed above, Fjord Trail, by design, would be expected to offset potential adverse impacts to existing recreational resources and open space in the Fjord Trail South Corridor. These include improved, expanded, and new parking areas along the Fjord Trail Corridor, the introduction of smart parking tools (including e-signage and smart parking apps to direct visitors to available parking), the proposed shuttle service, better signage, improved connectivity of local trails and recreational amenities, opportunities for pedestrians to avoid travel on busy roadways, and new physical improvements added to existing recreational resources including the addition of Accessible trails and features. These also include OPRHP's development of a Visitor Use Management Plan (see Chapter IV.O, "Other Planning Efforts – Fjord Trail South") to include targeted trail maintenance and hardening existing trails to sustain increased use, and the continuation of the existing Trail Steward programs at Breakneck Ridge and Washburn Trails to which Fjord Trail South would provide direct access. Additionally, this new recreational resource would be accompanied by new HHFT, Inc. staff, a maintenance and operation plan, and funding meant to manage the resource and distribute visitors across the trail and other nearby recreational opportunities. Thus, with these measures, the Proposed Action of the proposed Fjord Trail South is not anticipated to result in significant adverse impacts to recreational and open space resources, including those related to access and Accessibility. Therefore, no additional mitigation measures are proposed. *