

INFORMATION PACKET for  
TACONIC STATE PARK DRAFT MASTER PLAN and  
DRAFT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT  
**WORKSHOP AND PUBLIC INFORMATION MEETING**

March 16, 2016 and April 2, 2016  
Millerton, NY and Copake Falls, NY



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ROSE HARVEY**  
Commissioner

## ***Agenda for Workshop and Public Information Meeting***

1. Workshop
2. Introductions and Welcoming Remarks
3. Overview of the Planning Process
4. Overview of the Park
5. Public Input
6. Next Steps

## ***Introduction***

### **Mission Statement**

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.

### **Guiding Principles**

Fundamental to the successful achievement of our mission is the dedication of our employees and the adherence to a common set of values. These guiding principles serve as a pledge to the people we serve and a commitment to ourselves and to each other.

- **A Commitment to People.** We are committed to serving and protecting the public to the best of our ability, with courtesy and respect. We are committed to our employees and volunteers, encouraging teamwork, self-improvement and mutual support.
- **A Commitment to Preservation.** State Parks and Historic Sites are unique and irreplaceable public assets. We are committed to wise acquisition, planning, and, where appropriate, development; timely and professional care and maintenance; and a responsibility to future generations in whose trust we manage our resources. We are committed to providing encouragement to all agencies and individuals to identify, evaluate and protect recreational, natural, historic and cultural resources.
- **A Commitment to Service.** The availability of recreational, educational and cultural opportunities to all is vital in today's society. We are committed to equal access and outreach to all segments of our society, recognizing individual needs and interests. We are committed to safety, security, creativity and accountability in providing our programs and services.
- **A Commitment to Leadership.** We recognize the preeminence of the New York State Park and Historic Site System. We are committed to excellence, innovation and professionalism. We are committed to forging partnerships with others who are responsible for providing recreational, natural, historic and cultural services.

The master plan for Taconic State Park is part of a statewide planning initiative that will advance these principles, and determine the best course of action to preserve and utilize park resources for this and future generations.

Taconic State Park, distinguished by its abundance of recreation resources, spectacular views, extensive and sensitive natural areas, water resources and historic areas, is one of New York State's finest state parks.

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**Purpose of the Meeting**

The purpose of this public information meeting is to actively invite public participation and involvement in the planning process. Public participation will help OPRHP in identifying issues, concerns and alternatives as well as determining the depth to which each of the topics is explored within the Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS)

This information packet and the public information meeting are intended to provide the public with a concise overview of Taconic State Park, its setting, resources and the issues identified to this point. Additionally the meeting is designed to provide an opportunity for public input at an early stage in the master planning process.

Additional information can be obtained from OPRHP at:

Taconic State Park Region 9 Old Post Road PO Box 308 Staatsburg, NY 12580 845-889-4100	OPRHP Planning Bureau 625 Broadway, 2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor Albany, NY 12207 518-486-2909
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Email: [taconic.plan@parks.ny.gov](mailto:taconic.plan@parks.ny.gov)

***Tentative Master Plan Timeline***

Public Information Meeting – Early Spring 2016

Draft Master Plan and Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Mid Summer 2016

Public Hearing – Late Summer 2016

Final Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (FEIS) – Winter 2016/17

Findings and Adoption – Winter 2017

***Overview of the Park***

Established in 1924, Taconic State Park is a just over 6,773-acre park located on the Taconic Range along the eastern edge of the Harlem Valley where New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut come together. The area has a long history of logging and mining attributable to an iron industry that thrived for almost a century from after the Revolutionary War to the late 1800's. Scree slopes left over from this mining era are still evident throughout the region and can be seen in some sections of Taconic State Park.

Today, the two sections of the park (Copake Falls in the north and Rudd Pond in the south) provide a variety of recreational opportunities for local community residents and visiting tourists. These opportunities include swimming, camping, picnicking, cross country skiing, snowshoeing, horseback riding and hiking. Hiking and sightseeing are two very popular forms of recreation in the park, and are well provided for in the park and the surrounding area. Along with the South Taconic Trail, which passes through the park as it crosses the Taconic Ridge, an extensive network of trails and loops within the park provides access to the Harlem Valley Rail Trail as well as the Appalachian Trail and additional trail systems across the state border in Massachusetts and Connecticut. The park receives about 200,000 and 300,000 visitors annually.

## ***Environmental Setting***

### **Recreation Resources**

Taconic State Park has been providing a variety of high quality recreational opportunities for the public since the 1930's. It is a very popular park for both day users and overnight recreationists. It is a year-round facility. Recreation opportunities at the park include:

- campsites (106 – Copake Falls, 41 – Rudd Pond)
- swimming
- boating (Rudd Pond)
- picnic areas
- playgrounds
- trails (hiking, equestrian, nature, snowmobile, cross country skiing and snowshoeing)
- educational and interpretive programs
- fishing and ice fishing
- hunting

### **Cultural Resources**

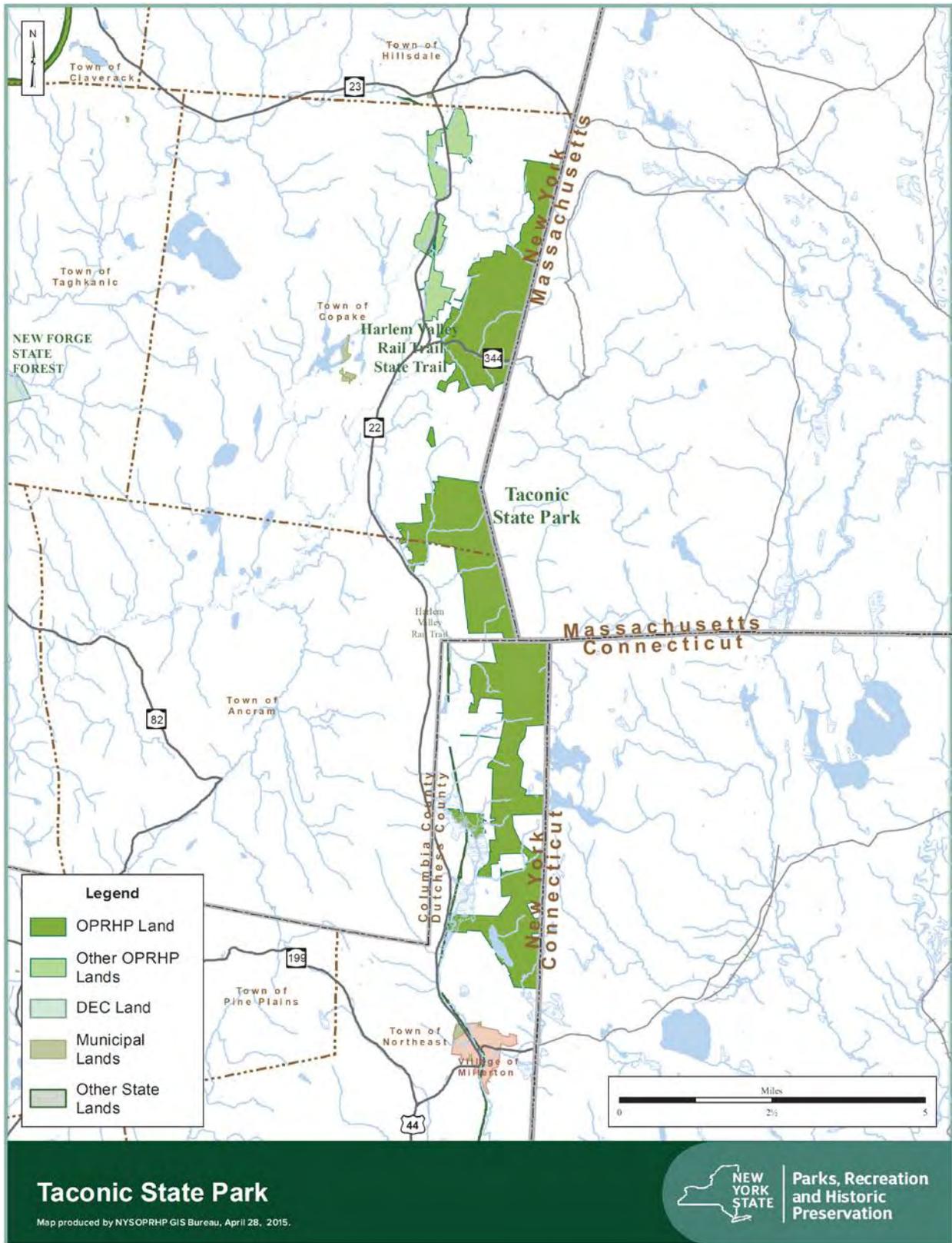
The primary cultural resource in Taconic State Park is the Copake Iron Works Historic District, managed by the Friends of Taconic State Park. The Copake Iron Works was established in 1845 along the Bash Bish Brook at the base of the Taconic Ridge. In 2007, the Iron Works site and 18 acres surrounding the area were listed on the State and National Register of Historic Sites. The Copake Iron Works Historic District comprises all of the buildings in the Iron Works area, the historic blast furnace, three workers' houses, and the now-flooded ore pit, as well as the previously National Register-listed Church of St. John in the Wilderness. (<http://www.friendsoftsp.org/history/>)

Connected historically with the Copake Iron Works was the New York and Harlem Railroad for which the valley is named. Today the former railroad right of way through Dutchess and Columbia Counties from Wassaic to Chatham is the route of the Harlem Valley Rail Trail which, when completed will provide excellent recreational opportunities as well as economic development through tourism. For more information on the trail and which sections are complete see the website at <http://www.hvrt.org>.

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## **Environmental Resources**

### ***Flora and Fauna and Ecological Communities***

Forested upland communities dominate approximately 78 percent of the park.

The natural communities of Taconic State Park are similar in composition to the Berkshires to the north. Past iron-ore mining and associated logging activities involved large scale clear-cutting, evident today in the predominantly second growth forests that occupy the area. Appalachian oak-hickory forests dominate mid-elevations of the park. Chestnut oak forest is typically found on mid to upper slopes often just below ridge-top pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit communities and, on Brace Mountain, just below high quality rocky summit grassland. Hemlock-northern hardwood forest occupies the very steep ravines of the area as well as some low-elevation rolling hills that flank the Harlem Valley.

Indicative of the calcareous nature of the bedrock in the area, large and small patches of maple-basswood rich mesic forest can also be found on low to mid slopes in the park. Most of these patches are positioned on the steep west-facing slopes of the Taconic Range where the bedrock is at or near the surface.

Located primarily at the base of the Taconic Ridge and on the valley floor, wetlands in the park are strongly influenced by the underlying calcareous bedrock. Small depressions and wetlands along streams in the valley typically support very diverse red maple-hardwood swamps and shrub swamps. Larger flooded areas, created by beaver activity and surrounding human activity, support rich peatlands, including a notable medium fen in the vicinity of Mount Riga and a small, but very diverse rich shrub fen along Preachy Hollow. Additional pockets of rich open or shrubby wetlands within the valley potentially exist along the numerous perennial streams that pass through the park.

## **Physical Resources**

### ***Geology, Topography and Soils***

Bedrock of the area is mostly of Cambrian and Ordovician age and was formed from sediments that were eroded from the land to the east and deposited in the sea that covered the area during these geologic periods. Deposits during this period included sandstones, shales, and limestones, as well as other carbonate sediments, all of which heavily influence the vegetation patterns seen in the area today.

Topography and soils found in the park are typical of the Taconic and Berkshire areas where the park is found.

### ***Water***

There are two important ponds in the park, Ore Pit Pond in the Copake Falls area and Rudd Pond in the Rudd Pond area. Both ponds are used for swimming and fishing. Rudd Pond also allows human powered boats.

The major stream in the park is Bash Bish Brook. This stream flows out of Massachusetts at the site of Bash Bish Falls, into the park and on to join with Cedar Brook and the Roeliff Jansen Kill eventually to flow into the Hudson River.

### ***Scenic Resources***

Taconic State Park is abundant with scenic views of the Harlem Valley and beyond to the Catskill Mountains in the west and views of the Taconic and Berkshire Mountains in the north and east. Trails in the park often guide users to locations which take advantage of these scenic resources.

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**Next Steps**

- The suggestions, issues, concerns and alternatives identified at the public information meeting and through written comments will be summarized and made available. The Draft Master Plan/Draft Environmental Impact Statement (the draft plan) will address these issues.
- Public review of the draft plan will include a public hearing and public comment/review period. Comments made during this time will be considered in the preparation of the Final Master Plan/Final Environmental Impact Statement (the final plan).
- After the issuance of the final plan and a public consideration period, a findings statement will be issued along with the Commissioner's decision regarding adoption of the plan.

Written comments will be accepted until April 29, 2016. Please send them to:

Sara Hart  
OPRHP Planning Bureau  
625 Broadway, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
Albany, NY 12207

Or by email to: [taconic.plan@parks.ny.gov](mailto:taconic.plan@parks.ny.gov)