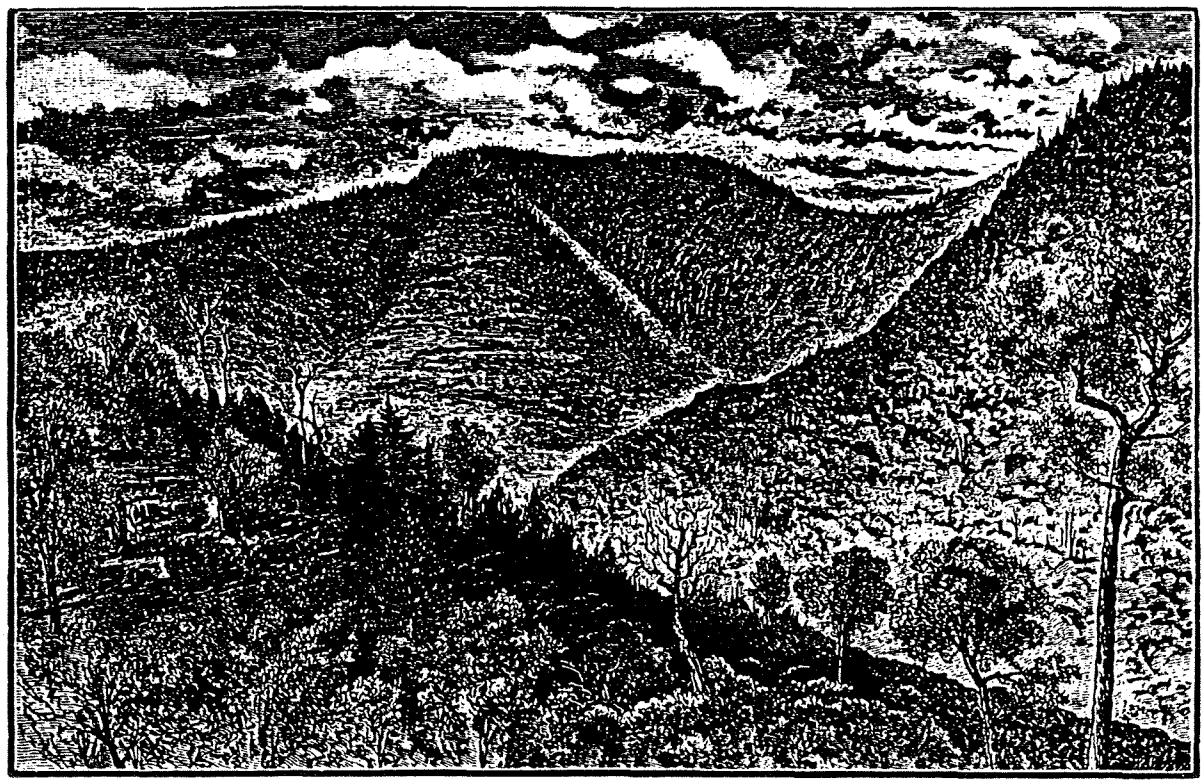
Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit Management Plan



OCTOBER 1998

New York State Department of Environmental Conservation
Region 3 Office, 21 South Putt Corners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561-1696 (914) 256-3000

George E. Pataki, Governor

John P. Cahill, Commissioner

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John P. Cahill
Commissioner

MEMORANDUM

TO: The Record

FROM: Commissioner Cahill

SUBJECT: Unit Management Plan (UMP)
Slide Mountain Wilderness Area

A UMP for the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area has been completed. The UMP is consistent with the guidelines and criteria of the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, the State Constitution, Environmental Conservation Law, and Department rules, regulations and policies. The UMP includes management objectives for a five year period and is hereby approved and adopted.

Commissioner

SLIDE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS

UNIT MANAGEMENT PLAN

PREFACE

The Slide Mountain Wilderness is the largest and most popular of the four designated wilderness areas in the Catskills. A variety of recreational opportunities are available for public use. The hiking trail complex is extensive, over lofty peaks and provides access to much of the interior of the unit. Slide Mountain, with its many unique features, is the highest peak in the Catskills.

A Unit Management Plan identifies a segment of Forest Preserve and provides direction for the management and use of the unit within the constraints of Article XIV of the State Constitution, Environmental Conservation Law, Department policies and the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan. Through the classification of the Forest Preserve lands, according to their characteristics and capacity to withstand use, comprehensive UMP's provide specific management objectives and a schedule of actions needed to meet those objectives. Accomplishment of management actions outlined herein is dependent on legislative budget appropriations, and sufficient personnel to carry them out. However, where possible the Department will work with volunteer groups and pursue alternative funding sources to accomplish some of the proposed projects. For example, volunteers from the NY-NJ Trail Conference have helped the Department maintain most of the hiking trails within this unit.

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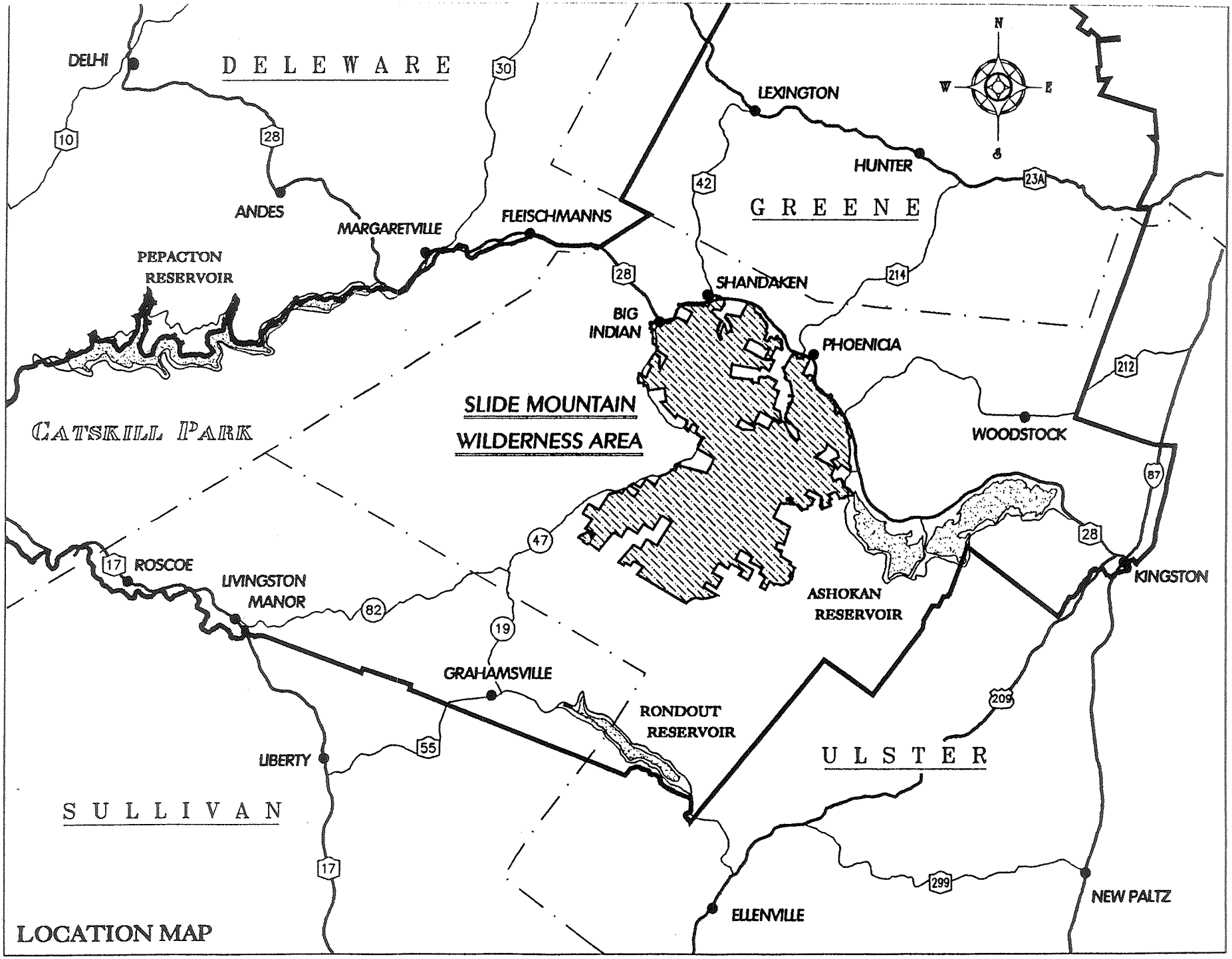


LOCATION MAP

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Area Description

The Slide Mountain Wilderness is located in the Towns of Shandaken, Denning, and Olive in Ulster County. It lies generally west of West Shokan and Woodland, south of Phoenicia, east of Oliverea and Frost Valley, north of Denning and Bull Run and north and west of Peekamoose. The area ranges from 1 to 10 miles in width, is about 13.3 miles long, and contains approximately 47,500 acres of land. The length of the wilderness boundary is 118 miles.

B. History

Human influence to the area began with the Indian tribes from the surrounding river valleys. The Algonkian-speaking Indians of the Hudson, Rondout and Esopus River valleys came as hunting parties in the fall of the year to hunt deer, bear, turkey, beaver and other game animals. Since they were only short term visitors to the area, they had relatively minor influence on the pristine wilderness.

Major changes were experienced by the region as the early Dutch and English settlers expanded their trade, real estate holdings and business enterprise westward from the Kingston and New Paltz settlements.

In 1708 Johannis Hardenburgh and seven other men obtained a land grant of 1.5 million acres from Queen Anne of England. The Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit is contained within the grant known as the Hardenburgh patent.

By the mid 1700's, early surveyors such as Henry and Ebeneezer Wooster had divided the Hardenburgh Patent into smaller lots which the patent owner then sold or leased to the numerous people coming to the area seeking their own land. Most of these early settlers were farmers who opened up lands in the river valleys as the steep hillsides were too difficult to farm.

Three industries developed in the area in the early 1800's which drastically changed the natural conditions of the mountains. Two were dependent on the forests while the other used the mountains themselves.

Most destructive to the prevailing original wilderness was the leather tanning industry. Much of the lower elevations (below about 2500') of the Catskills were covered by dense stands of hemlocks. The bark from these trees was used in the tanning process. Most of the hemlocks were cut only for their bark and the peeled logs were left to rot. As a result, faster growing hardwood species invaded the areas where the hemlocks had been the predominant species. Today hemlocks grow as scattered trees or in clumps and though not rare, do not form the large stands they did in the past.

Roads were built from the forests to the tanneries to draw the needed hemlock bark. Many of the "bark roads" are visible today on the mountain sides. The process of tanning hides into leather required a large and constant water supply, so the tanneries were located in the valleys. The effluents released during the tanning process polluted the streams, a source of annoyance and frustration to people living downstream. By 1870 most of the hemlocks were gone and the tanning industry in the Catskills came to an end.

The second major forest based industry occurring during this period and into later years was the harvesting of hardwood forests. The hardwoods were cut for a variety of uses ranging from lumber for construction and furniture to the making of charcoal. The

forests were often clear cut. The whitetailed deer, wild turkeys and other game animals were almost completely decimated as a result of loss of their habitat. A few areas escaped the axe and saw and remain as virgin forest. The trees in these areas are a mix of balsam fir, red spruce and hemlock which were saved from destruction by their location on steep and inaccessible terrain.

Another major industry arising during the period was bluestone quarrying. The sedimentary bluestone was easily worked, yet durable enough for the paving of streets and sidewalks. From the 1870's to the early 1900's countless tons of stone from the Catskills were shipped by rail to pave streets in Kingston, Albany, New York City and other cities along the east coast.

These early industries changed the forest type over large areas of the Catskills and cris-crossed the mountains with roads and trails. Many of these roads can still be seen and are part of some of the Department's trail system in the Catskills.

The Ulster and Delaware railroad was built through the Catskill Region from Kingston to Oneonta in the late 19th century. Charcoal produced in the area and quarried bluestone was shipped via the railroad to Kingston and then on down the Hudson River Valley. Railroad spurs were not built up the narrow valleys because the terrain was generally too steep.

As the lands in the Catskills were stripped of their timber the State frequently acquired ownership through tax sales. Concerns centering on the dependence of citizens, industry and commerce of the State on the tremendous water resources of the Adirondacks and Catskills and the need for forest cover to protect the quantity and quality of these waters led to the enactment of legislation establishing the Forest Preserve. Though the intent of the Forest Preserve Legislation in 1885 was to preserve public lands in the Adirondacks, numerous lands in the Catskills were saved when they came under the "blanket protection" of the newly established Forest Preserve in Ulster, Sullivan and Greene Counties. Later, legislation gave the same Forest Preserve protection to lands in Delaware County.

In 1985 the Department completed a Catskill Park State Land Master Plan. Providing overall guidance for consistent and uniform management of state lands administered by the Department within the Catskill Park, the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan also requires detailed management plans for each individual management unit within the Catskill Park. These Unit Management Plans establish specific management objectives and a schedule for actions needed to meet these objectives.

John Burroughs, the noted naturalist, frequently hiked the mountains in this unit and was a strong advocate of protecting the forests.

Today, much of the area is covered by second growth which is maturing into climax forest types. The biggest threat to its wilderness character is from recreational overuse on the Slide-Cornell-Wittenberg-Woodland Valley-Panther-Giant Ledge hiking complex. The trail system is the most used in the Catskills. Prudent management coupled with public cooperation will protect the resource and continue to provide the recreational opportunities in the future as in the past.

For additional history see Unique Resources (page 7), Historic Resources (p. 8), Past Management (p. 27) and the Bibliography (p. 47).

II. INVENTORY, USE AND CAPACITY TO WITHSTAND USE

A. Natural Resources

1. Physical Resources

a. Geology

The Catskills are a deeply eroded plateau of sedimentary rock characterized by uniformity of upper elevations, deep ravines, steep escarpments and huge boulders. Glaciation of the area occurred during the Pleistocene Ice Age, beginning a million years ago. The last glaciers retreated 10,000 years ago. Slide Mountain is the highest elevation at 4180 feet while some valley floors are only a few hundred feet above sea level.

b. Soils

Arnot and Oquaga soil types predominate in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit. Both of these soils are formed in glacial till deposits that are similar and derived mainly from reddish sandstone, siltstone, and shale. Arnot soils are commonly found on steep to very steep slopes, on the upper side slopes and mountain tops. They are commonly shallow, excessively to moderately well drained, of medium texture and are 10 to 20 inches deep over bedrock. Oquaga soils are found in gentle to very steep sites on mountains and hillsides that commonly have a terraced appearance. Oquaga soils are moderately deep, well to excessively drained, of medium texture and generally 20 to 40 inches deep over bedrock.

The soils of the Slide Mountain Wilderness area are typically found on steep slopes, interspersed with rock outcrops and are very bouldery. Permeability is moderate while surface runoff is very rapid. The surface runoff is an important consideration in development and maintenance of facilities in the unit.

A quote from H. A. Haring's "Our Catskill Mountains" is significant: *"The trail to Slide from Winnisook . . . suddenly runs over an immense bed of loose gravel or pebbles of quartz, white and glistening,--more like the path of a garden than the hiking trail of a mountain. These pebbles are the disintegration of the conglomerate rock found on the top of Slide. This peculiar conglomerate rock may be observed near the summit of other peaks of the Catskills which rise to 3500 feet, but nowhere as on Slide has the old rock been so strikingly decomposed by weathering. Large boulders of the rock occur at such elevations, their pebbles of quartz sometimes glistening white in the shadow of balsam and hemlock timber. The conglomerate is strikingly unlike the shales and sandstones of lower elevations. It is known as the Catskill Formation . . . High masses of conglomerate greet the mountain climber as he nears the top of Wittenberg to Cornell; they occur on Hunter; but the most prominent are on Slide; where the Catskill Formation attains a thickness of 350 feet..."*

c. Terrain

The terrain is rugged and steep with elevations ranging from 1100 to 4180 feet. It is characterized by deep valleys and narrow, level flood plains with moderate to steep slopes rising to the mountain tops. Many of the slopes are broken by sedimentary rock ledges and narrow level "flats." Most of the rock ledges are 10 to 30 feet high. An exception is Giant Ledge with vertical drops of 80 to 200 feet. Thirteen named mountain peaks with elevations over 3000 feet exist in the area. Six of the peaks over 3000 feet may still be considered trailless to the extent that they have no marked and maintained trails.

Peaks With Trails

Slide	4180'	Table	3847'
Cornell	3860'	Wittenberg	3780'
Peekamoose	3843'	Panther	3720'
Giant Ledge	3200'		

Trailless Peaks

Lone	3721'	Rocky	3508'
Friday	3694'	Van Wyck	3206'
Balsam Cap	3623'	Wildcat	3340'

There are six peaks in the Wilderness less than 3000 feet in elevation:

Samuel's Point	2885'	Cross	2500'
Mt. Pleasant	2800'	Terrace	2360'
Garfield	2580'	Romer	2140'

d. Water

Water in the area comes from springs forming free-flowing mountain streams. The only ponded water in the area is an occasional small beaver pond.

Major water courses in the Slide Mountain Wilderness, with named tributaries as follows:

Esopus Creek
- Little Peck Hollow Brook
- Hatchery Hollow Brook
- Fox Hollow Brook
- Woodland Creek
- Muddy Brook
- Panther Kill
- Traver Hollow Brook
- Dry Brook
- Maltby Hollow Brook
- Wittenberg Brook
- BushKill

Rondout Creek
- Picket Brook
- Buttermilk Falls Brook
- Bear Hole Brook

East Branch, Neversink River
- Tray Mill Brook
- Donovan Brook
- Deer Shanty Brook
- Flat Brook
- Riley Brook
- Erts Brook

West Branch, Neversink River

Downstream from the wilderness unit, the major drainages are impounded to form New York City water supply reservoirs. The west and southwest drainages form the East and West branches of the Neversink River and flow into the Neversink Reservoir. To the south is the headwater of the Rondout watershed feeding the Rondout Reservoir. The Esopus Creek drains the north and eastern edge of the area and is collected by the Ashokan Reservoir. Water quality is very good within all these watersheds. At drought periods, the springs at higher elevations dry up and water is only plentiful in the valley streams.

e. Wetlands

A few, scattered freshwater wetlands exist within the area, and although none are larger than twelve acres (and thus protected under the Freshwater Wetlands Act), they are protected by virtue of location in the forest preserve.

Aerial photographs are the usual process to identify wetlands. The last mapping conducted in 1974, did not identify any wetlands of consequence. However,field surveys have identified some wetlands on the East Branch of the Neversink River and Deer

Shanty Brook. Those wetlands are a result of beaver dams and are usually of short duration. Flooding frequently destroys the beaver dams and as a result the wetlands are drained. The number of dams built is dependent on the beaver population. No management of these wetlands is planned.

2. Biological Resources

a. Vegetation

This management area is almost completely forested, with minor openings associated with natural disturbances, such as landslides or fire being the only exception. None of the mountains are above tree line, and no alpine zone exists.

The northern hardwood forest type covers the greatest part of the unit, dominated by sugar maple, beech and yellow birch. Black cherry, white ash, red maple, hemlock, basswood, red oak, white pine and big tooth aspen are also common, but are only locally abundant.

On the upper slopes and ridges, generally above 3,000 feet in elevation, a ridge forest type develops. In most cases within this unit, the ridge forest is a mountain spruce - fir forest community, generally dominated by balsam fir and red spruce, and to a lesser extent, paper birch, with yellow birch, red maple, black cherry and beech intermingled. However, the composition of the ridge forest can vary from summit to summit. Red spruce dominates the upper slopes of Rocky, Balsam Cap, Friday, Cornell and Wittenberg, while balsam fir dominates the summits of Slide and Panther.

The understory of the northern hardwood forest is dominated by sugar maple and beech seedlings. Yellow birch, hemlock, striped maple and black cherry are also common, along with serviceberry and witchhobble. Herb and ground cover plants include woodfern, hayscented fern, Christmas fern, jewelweed, stinging nettle, foamflower, trillium, red baneberry, starflower and wood sorrel.

In the ridge forests, witchhobble, balsam fir, red spruce, mountain maple and striped maple seedlings dominate the understory and the mountain variety of the woodfern dominates the ground cover plants. Other plants of note include mountain ash, pin cherry, clintonia, bunch berry, starflower, wood sorrel, Canada mayflower and clubmoss.

Significant Vegetative Communities:

The New York Natural Heritage Program has identified five significant forest habitats within the unit, as follows:

Mountain fir forest: a conifer forest that occurs at elevations ranging from 3500 to 4500 feet in elevation. The canopy is almost entirely balsam fir with a small amount of mountain paper birch. It is a relatively rare community in New York State.

Mountain spruce-fir forest: a conifer forest that occurs at elevations ranging from 3000 to 4000 feet. Red spruce and balsam fir dominate. Common associates are mountain paper birch and yellow birch. This community is very rare in New York State.

Spruce-fir rocky summit: a community that occurs on cold, dry, rocky ridgetops and summits. Characteristic species include red spruce, balsam fir and mountain ash.

Hemlock-northern hardwood forest: a mixed forest that typically occurs on middle to lower slopes of ravines, on cool, mid elevation slopes, and on moist, well drained sites. Hemlock is codominant with northern hardwoods.

Beech-maple mesic forest: a hardwood forest with sugar maple and beech codominant. It occurs on moist, well-drained, usually acid soils.

Rare Plants: A large colony of the orchid nodding pogonia (Triphora trianthophora) occurs at a low elevation in one ravine in the unit. Rare in the northeast, this orchid is found in only three other locations in New York State.

Old Growth Forests

The core lands making up the Slide Mountain Wilderness are believed to be virgin forest land. The Burroughs Range, the headwaters of the east branch of the Neversink River and the Peekamoose-Table Ridge extending north over Lone, Rocky, Balsam Cap and Friday together make up the largest continuous old growth forest in the Catskills. This old growth area spans a variety of forest types, including all of the significant vegetative communities described above.

b. Wildlife

The wildlife species in this wilderness unit are similar to those found in other areas of Southeastern New York State. The spruce-fir and northern hardwoods, however, favor forest species of wildlife such as black bear, snowshoe hare, wild turkey, gray squirrel and porcupine. Early successional species such as white-tailed deer, cottontail rabbit, beaver and ruffed grouse occur, but at low population levels.

Breeding avian species include Pileated Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Nuthatch, Juncos, Hermit Thrush and Canada Warblers.

Bicknell's Thrush (Catharus bicknelli), long considered a sub-species of the northern Gray-checked Thrush (Catharus minimus) was recently distinguished as a separate species of thrush. It inhabits montane forests, primarily those dominated by balsam fir and red spruce at elevations greater than 3000 feet. It is of special significance to this unit as it was first recognized as differing from other thrushes when a small population was discovered on Slide Mountain by E. P. Bicknell in 1881. While not rare, the restricted breeding distribution and narrow habitat requirements of Bicknell's Thrush suggest it is vulnerable to habitat loss and degradation. Its presence has been confirmed on several summits within this unit.

There are no known endangered species which occur as residents of the area. Bald eagles, osprey, peregrine falcons, and others may use the area during migrations.

This unit provides nesting habitat for forest-interior, area-sensitive bird species including the red-eyed vireo, black-throated blue warbler, black-and-white warbler, Canada warbler, northern waterthrush, Louisiana waterthrush, scarlet tanger and rose-breasted grosbeak (Appendix B, Wildlife). Recent research indicates that these species require large areas (7,500 ± acres) of undisturbed forest for optimal breeding habitat (Robbins et. al. 1989).

This unit is an important component of the Catskill black bear range. As a large, undisturbed forested tract, it provides critical biological and social requirements for the species. It also provides important habitat for white tailed deer, including critical deer wintering areas.

Fisher were reintroduced into the Slide Mountain area in the late 1970's. The released animals have survived and appear to be expanding both their population and range. Based on acreage, this unit can support 20 to 35 fishers.

Recent habitat inventories indicate that there are no potential sites suitable to support beaver populations, primarily a result of the terrain and lack of preferred food species. Recent wildlife surveys have revealed two colonies of bank den beaver on Deer Shanty Brook. Use of marginal habitat is indicative of a beaver population at or near carrying capacity.

A formal inventory of animal life has not been undertaken in recent years. However, Chambers in his handbook, "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management" (1983), compiled an extensive listing of wildlife presumed to be in this ecological subzone and qualified his listing, categorizing by forest type, forest stage and special habitat needs. Based on Chambers' criteria, 44 species of mammals, 98 species of birds and 37 species of amphibians and reptiles possibly reside in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit.

c. Fish Resources

The waters in the unit are all free flowing streams generally less than 20 feet wide. Good numbers of native brook trout (Salvelinus fontinalis) are present in most of the streams and brown trout (Salmo trutta), rainbow trout (Oncorhynchus mykiss) and sculpin (Cottus spp.) are present in some. Suckers (Catostomus commersoni), minnows (Notropis spp.) and dace (Rhinichthys spp.) may be present in some of the lower elevation streams. The small size, steep gradient, seasonal fluctuation of water levels and generally low fertility limit the density and growth rate of the trout populations. Consequently, the unit streams do not lend themselves to stocking or other forms of active management and cannot support an intensive fishery. However, these pristine mountain brooks do provide a unique and high quality angling experience for wild trout in an unspoiled wilderness setting.

3. Visual Resources

The visual attributes of the Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit contribute as much to its popularity as any of its other resources. A climb to the summit of Slide Mountain, the highest point in the Catskills, offering a spectacular view of surrounding mountains, is an inspiring experience. Numerous scenic opportunities exist throughout the unit on Slide, Cornell, Wittenberg, Table, Peekamoose, Panther, Giant Ledge and Balsam Cap. The fall foliage attracts the largest number of hikers, though the area is popular all year round, including winter.

The visual opportunities are not limited solely to vistas from high elevations. Throughout the unit, streams, water falls, a variety of vegetation and wildlife form a landscape of great natural beauty.

4. Unique Resources

The most unique feature of the Slide Mountain Wilderness is its wilderness character. The core lands within this unit were among those lands first protected upon creation of the Forest Preserve in 1885. Rugged, remote, high elevation lands, they make up the

largest tract of old growth forest in the Catskills.

As the highest point in the Catskills, Slide Mountain itself is unique. First recognized as such by Princeton Geologist Arnold Guyot in 1872, Slide Mountain represents the cornerstone of the Catskill Park. It was on the summit of Slide Mountain that then Forest Commissioner Townsend Cox chose to celebrate the creation of the Forest Preserve. Using Slide as an example, Commissioner Cox explained the virtues of the forests of the region in protecting the rivers to which they helped give birth. Cox's ascent of Slide Mountain not only brought widespread public attention to the Catskills inclusion in the State's Forest Preserve, it marked the beginning of the new way of using the Catskills.

Other features on Slide Mountain are the conglomerate rock outcrops and balsam fir stands on and near the summit.

Other unique features include a natural open area on the east spur of Panther Mountain which is not forested because of the lack of till and an open area on Terrace Mountain which was burned over repeatedly, the last time in 1900.

A number of landslides or "debris avalanches" exist in the unit. Slide Mountain is named for a landslide on its northwestern slope which dates back to July 1819. A more recent scouring out of a portion of the old scar occurred during the winter of 1982. A slide occurred on Samuel's Point about 1900. A dramatic slide came down on the ridge to the south of Cornell's summit on July 7-9, 1930. The slide on Wittenberg dates back to the late 1950's or early 1960's. The slide on the northeast slope of Friday Mountain came down on May 29, 1968.

Buttermilk Falls is perhaps the most notable of several beautiful waterfalls found along the Peekamoose Road (County Route 42) in Peekamoose Gorge on tributaries to the Rondout Creek along the southern edge of the wilderness.

5. Historic Resources

Slide Mountain was explored and publicized by the noted author-naturalist John Burroughs from the 1880's through the following decades. In 1923 a memorial plaque was erected on the summit of Slide which reads, *"In Memorium, John Burroughs - who, in his early writings introduced Slide Mountain to the World. He made many visits to this peak and slept several nights beneath the rock. This region is the scene of many of his essays. Here the works of man dwindle in the Heart of the Southern Catskills."*

A stone monument commemorating William Curtis and Allen Ormsbee, builders of the Curtis-Ormsbee Trail which ascends Slide Mountain from the southwest, was erected at the trail's junction with the Woodland Valley - Denning Trail after the two died in a snowstorm on Mount Washington (New Hampshire) in June, 1900.

Charcoal oven ruins can be found below the horseshoe turn below Winnisook Lake and near Maltby Hollow Falls.

The State Forest Commission, later the Conservation Department and ultimately DEC, established a deer propagation area of approximately 100 acres along County Route 47 on the west slope of Slide Mountain. Forty-five (45) white-tailed deer captured in the Adirondacks in 1889 and 1890 were the breeding herd. The herd depleted the browse area in a few years. The deer were released into the surrounding forest in 1895. Remnants of the enclosure still remain. A roadside

historical marker was erected along County Route 47 during the 1985 Forest Preserve Centennial year near the propagation site.

6. Wilderness

As defined in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, "A wilderness area, in contrast with those areas where man and his own works dominate the landscape, is an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammeled by man--where man himself is a visitor who does not remain. A wilderness is further defined to mean an area of State land or water having a primeval character, without significant improvements or permanent human habitation, which is protected and managed so as to preserve, enhance and restore, where necessary, its natural conditions, and which (1) generally appears to have been affected primarily by the forces of nature, with the imprint of man's work substantially unnoticeable; (2) offers outstanding opportunities for solitude or a primitive and unconfined type of recreation; (3) has at least ten thousand acres of contiguous land and water or is of sufficient size and character as to make practicable its preservation and use in an unimpaired condition; and (4) may also contain ecological, geological or other features of scientific, educational, scenic or historic value."

The Slide Mountain Wilderness Area is classified wilderness due to its size, primeval character, opportunities for solitude and lack of significant improvements.

The Forest Preserve lands in the Catskill Park provide areas of protected plant and animal communities, an important component of the array of habitats that support biodiversity in New York State. Forest Preserve wilderness lands present large blocks of undisturbed wild lands with the least human influence.

B. Man-Made Facilities

1. Access

Public Roads

The following public roads abut the wilderness at various locations, providing undeveloped access to the unit:

1) State Route 28
2) Ulster County Route 47
3) Fox Hollow Road
4) Herdman Road
5) Garfield Road
6) Muddy Brook Road
7) Panther Kill Road
8) Woodland Valley Road
9) Andrew Lane
10) Cold Brook Road
11) Traver Hollow Road
12) Bradken Road
13) State Route 28A
14) Dry Brook Road (Olive)
15) Moon Haw Road
16) Ulster County Route 42
17) Porcupine Road

Public Easements

Public Easements traversing private land which provide access to the Unit starting in Big Indian and working clockwise around the Unit:

ROUTE 28 - BIG INDIAN: Just east of the Hamlet of Big Indian, an access strip, approximately 66 feet wide, running from State Route 28 southeast 100 feet to Forest Preserve lands in the Elmendorf Tract, Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1155, Page 934 and Map #2561.

SHANDAKEN - GOLF COURSE ROAD: A right-of-way to Lots 103 and 104 in what was once the "Rip Van Winkle Properties" subdivision (as filed in Ulster County Clerk's Office as Map #910) and which are now owned by New York State provides access to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 1, Sherwood Tract, Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 846, Page 300 and Map #3434. The right-of-way is a southeast extension of Golf Course Road.

FOX HOLLOW: A right-of-way allows for access to Forest Preserve lands in the Sherwood or Peter R. Livingston Tract, Great Lot 8 from Fox Hollow Road across land formerly owned by Robert Fox (west side of Fox Hollow). The Right-of-way follows "along and upon the roads now being used for hauling wood from the lands hear by conveyed from said lands to a point (near the bridge) on the road leading from Fox Hollow Road to the dwelling of the parties of the first part (Robert Fox), thence along said road leading to said dwelling to said Fox Hollow Road." See Ulster Liber 577, Page 93; Liber 475, Page 432 and Map #2125.

FOX HOLLOW/PANTHER MOUNTAIN PARK:

a. **Riseley Road**: An access strip, 10 feet wide, owned in fee, beginning at the turn-around at the end of Riseley Road and running southeast 155 feet to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 5, Great Lot 8, Hardenburgh patent. See Ulster County Liber 1267, Page 674 and Map #8748.

b. **Quarry Road**: An access strip, 10 feet wide, owned in fee, beginning at the turn-around at the end of Quarry Road and running south 200 feet to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 5, Great Lot 8. See Ulster County Liber 1267, Page 677 and Map #8755.

c. **Mountain Drive**: A permanent easement for travel by the public on foot, snowshoes and skis, 10 feet wide, beginning on Mountain Drive and running northwest 110 feet to the Bushkill Stream and Forest Preserve lands in Fox Hollow. See Ulster County Liber 1267, Page 670 and Map #8747. See, also, Map #2593 filed in Ulster County Clerk's office on December 12, 1970 by Ed West.

FOX HOLLOW/VANDERVORT ROAD: A right-of-way from the end of Station Road eastward to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 8, Sherwood Tract, Great Lot 8.

HERDMAN ROAD: An access strip owned in fee, 50 feet wide, beginning at the northern end of Herdman Road and running north 75 feet to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 12, Sherwood or Peter R. Livingston Tract, Great Lot 8. See Map #10,400.

GARFIELD ROAD: An access strip owned in fee, 60 feet wide, running southwest along and including a wood road 160 feet to Forest Preserve land in Lot 15, Sherwood or Peter R. Livingston Tract, Great Lot 8. See Map #10,130.

TONISGAH ROAD/WOODLAND VALLEY: A right-of-way, 50 feet in width, for ingress and egress beginning in the center of Woodland Valley Road and running southeasterly 1,897 feet along Tonisgah Road which borders Forest Preserve land in Cross Mountain Hollow. The Right-of-way provides access to lands on the north side of the Right-of-way (western slopes of Mt. Pleasant). See Ulster County Liber 1402, Page 546 and Map #9477B.

WOODLAND VALLEY - WINNISOOK ROAD - A public easement by way of a qualified abandoned town road provides access from Woodland Valley Road west 1/4 mile to Forest Preserve lands. Note: This road is used as a driveway by the private landowner, who prohibits public access.

WOODLAND VALLEY/FAWN HILL:

a. A permanent easement, 50 feet wide, for purposes of public vehicular parking and for providing access by pedestrians and by vehicles of any and all descriptions to Forest Preserve lands in Great Lot 8 from Fawn Hill Road. See Ulster Liber 1449, Page 001 and Map #10,011.

b. The State also owns land directly adjoining the bounds of Fawn Hill Road at the end of the road southeast side (a cul-de-sac).

WOODLAND VALLEY ROAD: An access strip owned in fee 100 feet in width running from the center of Woodland Valley Road east 786 feet to Forest Preserve lands in Sherwood or Peter R. Livingston Tract, Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1637, Page 241 and Map #X-187.

LANE STREET/PHOENICIA: A right-of-way 50 feet in width, for ingress, egress and regress beginning at the southwestern corner of a turn-around on the bounds of the town road commonly known as Lane Street (off of High Street) southwest 174 feet to Forest Preserve lands (Lot 20, Great Lot 8, Sherwood or Peter R. Livingston Tract, Hardenburgh Patent) on Romer Mountain. (Ulster County Liber 1520, Page 769 and Map #10,383.)

ROUTE 28/MOUNT PLEASANT: A permanent easement for the purpose of public parking of vehicles (100' x 100') and a permanent easement for the purpose of enabling the public to pass on and over, on foot, skis, horseback and snowshoes, 20 feet wide, beginning on State Route 28 (approximately 1 mile south of Phoenicia) and running northwest 518 feet to Forest Preserve lands on Romer Mountain in Lot 23, Peter R. Livingston Tract, Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1190, Page 229 and Map #2975.

ROUTE 28: A right-of-way beginning in the westerly bounds of State Route 28 (approximately 1.4 miles southeast of Phoenicia) and running southwest along the center of a woods road 293 feet to Forest Preserve lands in Lot 1, Allotment southwest of the Esopus Creek, Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1566, Page 262 and Ulster Liber 1941, Page 161 and Map #10,320.

MOUNT PLEASANT - ANDREW LANE: Forest Preserve lands adjoin the western side of Andrew Lane for over 1000 feet. See Map #10,187.

MT. PLEASANT/ROUTE 28: A right-of-way, 50 feet wide, running from State Route 28 (500' north of the bridge over the Esopus in Mt. Pleasant) southwest 476 feet to lands of Ulster County formerly the Ulster and Delaware Railroad. Thence along a right-of-way, 20 feet wide, southeast 379 feet along the bounds of a 7 acre private parcel and the county lands (railroad bed) to Forest Preserve lands in the Allotment southwest of the Esopus Creek in Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1589, Page 102 and Map #10,187.

COLD BROOK ROAD: A right-of-way along an existing wood road which runs from Cold Brook Road in the Town of Olive (0.26 miles north of 28A), west 2252 feet to Forest

Preserve lands in Lot 5 in the Allotment southwest of the Esopus Creek in Great Lot 8. See Ulster Liber 1589, Page 102, and Map #10,187.

TRAVER HOLLOW ROAD: The Department recently received a 3.15 acre parcel (as a gift) which borders the southwest side of Traver Hollow Road about 1,000 feet northwest of the Bradken Road intersection. This gift greatly improves access to Forest Preserve lands in Traver Hollow. See Ulster County Liber 2560, Page 61 and Map #11,343.

PORCUPINE ROAD - A public easement by way of a qualified abandoned town road (Town of Denning) provides access from the currently maintained portion of the road northward 0.1 mile to Forest Preserve lands near Woodhull and VanWyck Mountains.

DENNING ROAD: A public easement, by way of an old town road, in the Town of Denning provides access by foot from where the road is currently gated on private land to Forest Preserve lands to the north, in the East Branch, Neversink River Valley.

DENNING-WINNISOOK ROAD - A public easement by way of a qualified abandoned town road provides access from County Route 47 southward 1/4 mile to Forest Preserve lands on Slide Mountain. Note: This road has been gated at County Route 47 by the private landowner to prohibit all public access.

WINNISOOK-WOODLAND VALLEY ROAD - A public easement by way of a qualified abandoned town road (a road "no longer worked at the public expense...shall not cease to be a highway for purposes of the public easement") provides access from County Route 47 north 1/4 mile to Forest Preserve lands. Note: This roadway has been gated at County Route 47 by the private landowner to prohibit motor vehicle use of the road. The landowner has not discouraged travel by foot.

COUNTY ROUTE 47/OLIVEREA - A right-of-way for ingress and egress beginning at the center of Ulster County Route 47,312 feet south of the bridge crossing the Bushkill Brook runs southeast 1,047 feet to Forest Preserve lands (Elmendorf Tract, Great Lot 8, Hardenburgh Patent) in Hatchery Hollow. No width specified. (See Map #2561 and Ulster County Liber 1155, Page 934.)

PRIVATE EASEMENTS TRAVERSING PUBLIC LAND

MOUNT PLEASANT: Lands lying in Lot 1 in the Allotment southwest of the Esopus Creek in Great Lot 8 of the Hardenburgh Patent which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from Harold and Mabel Riseley on the 10th of December 1985 as recorded in Ulster Liber 1566, Page 219 and as shown on Map #10,187 are subject to the following:

a. A 10 foot wide right-of-way for the purpose of ingress and egress from State Route 28 westerly 2205 feet to a 1.021 acre private inholding (now or formerly owned by Andrew Schrader, Jr.). Owners of the private land which adjoins this right-of-way on the north side, at the eastern end may also use the right-of-way for access to their property.

b. A septic leaching field. An agreement between the Riseleys and Paula Losocki dated November 13, 1981 and recorded in the Ulster County Clerk's Office in Liber 1460, Page 507 allows a portion of Paula Losocki's septic

leaching field to remain on what is now Forest Preserve.

c. Water rights in favor of Benjamin L. Short, or his successors, granted in deed dated July 1, 1874 and recorded November 16, 1877 in Liber 208 of Deeds at page 259.

d. Water rights agreement between H. C. Olds and L. V. B. Lockburn, Elke H. Winnie and W. C. Riseley dated April 16, 1894 and recorded July 28, 1894 in Liber 318 of Deeds at Page 480.

e. Rights of City of New York to add water to Esopus Creek.

HANOVER MOUNTAIN: Lands lying in Lot 9 of Division 3 of Great Lot 7 of the Hardenburgh Patent which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from the Maltby Valley Falls Corporation of West Shokan, New York, on the 16th day of February 1985 as recorded in Ulster County Liber 1527, Page 560 and as shown on Map #11,023 are subject to the following:

a. **Term Estate**: Maltby Valley Falls Corp., its successors and assigns have the right and privilege of using and enjoying a hunting cabin situate on Hanover Mountain together with ten acres around the cabin, also together with a right-of-way and easement for ingress and egress upon an existing wood road which travels from lands of Maltby Valley Falls Corp. westerly, southerly, easterly and then southerly for approximately 8,500 feet to the northern bounds of the hunting cabin parcel. These rights and privileges are for a term of twenty years, and shall expire on the 16th day of February 2005.

HERDMAN ROAD: Lands lying in Lot 12, Sherwood Tract, Great Lot 8 of the Hardenburgh Patent which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from Ruth Kratz on the 10th day of May 1985 as recorded in Ulster County Liber 1531, Page 506 and as shown on Map #10,400 are subject to the following:

a. An access easement for ingress, egress and regress over a 50 foot by 75 foot portion of the lands conveyed at the north end of Herdman Road in favor of the owner of a 75 by 126 foot parcel abutting the easement.

b. Spring and pipeline rights in favor of the owners of the small lots along the westerly side of Herdman Road.

SLIDE MOUNTAIN ROAD: Lands lying in Lot 5, Division 3, Livingston Tract, Great Lot 7 of the Hardenburgh Patent acquired by the People of the State of New York from the Shandaken Rod and Gun Club, Inc. of Valhalla, New York, on the 19th of April 1979 as recorded in Ulster County Liber 1409, Page 135 and as shown on Map #9698 are subject to the following:

a. Waterline easement over a strip of land 15 feet in width running southeast from lands to be retained by Shandaken Rod and Gun Club, Inc. 870 feet to a point in the center of a stream, including the right to use, maintain, clean, replace and repair said waterline either above or below ground.

ROMER MOUNTAIN-LANE STREET: Forest preserve lands in Lots 19 and 20, Sherwood Tract, Great Lot 8 are subject to water right held by others. See Ulster County Liber 1520, Page 769 and Map #10,383.

WOODLAND VALLEY-FAWN HILL: Forest Preserve lands in Great Lot 8 which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from Leadika Development Corporation of Montrose, New York, on the 8th day of June 1981 in Ulster County Liber 1449, Page 001 and as shown on Map #10,011 are subject to the following:

a. A right-of-way 10 feet in width over an existing woods road which traverses along the southerly bounds of Lot 33 of the Fawn Hill Subdivision.

b. A water cistern located at or near the southwesterly corner of Lot 13 of the Fawn Hill subdivision.

MOUNT PLEASANT: Lands lying in Lots 2, 3, 4 and 5 in the Allotment southwest of the Esopus Creek in Great Lot 8 which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from Marjorie Sumers on the 24th day of January 1986, as recorded in Ulster County Liber 1589, Page 102 and as shown on Map #10,187 are subject to the following:

a. A right-of-way, 30 feet wide, over an existing logging road extending from a 7 acre exception southeast 6,912 feet to a 33 acre exception.

b. Water rights - The right to draw and direct water from the property conveyed for the use and benefit of the two parcels (7 and 33 acre exceptions) reserved.

BIG INDIAN: Lands lying in the Elmendorf Tract, Great Lot 8 which were acquired by the People of the State of New York from Craig Wood on the 12th day of August 1964, as recorded in Ulster County Liber 1155, Page 934 and as shown on Map #2561 are subject to easements of pipeline and spring water rights. Two 8' x 8' spring boxes, one with a roof and a smaller, 4 x 4 spring box can be found on the property, just south of Route 28.

UTILITY LINE EASEMENTS

a. **Route 28A** - Central Hudson Gas and Electric Corp. and New York Telephone, Liber 682, Page 90.

b. **Route 28** - New York State Electric and Gas Corporation, Liber 584, Page 580, and Liber 1204, Page 111.

Unmaintained Town Roads

1) **Woodland Valley - Winnisook Road**; 1.7 miles. Barricaded with boulders at the state land boundary.

2) **Denning - Winnisook Road**; 2.65 miles. Barricaded with boulders at the state land boundary.

c. **Railroads**

The Ulster and Delaware Railroad right of way adjoins the unit on its north and east flanks at four locations. Owned by Ulster County, leased by Catskill Mountain Railroad. Pedestrian use of the right-of-way is prohibited.

2. **Barriers (17)**

a. **County Route 47, (1).** A gate prohibits motor vehicle access to Forest Preserve lands along the West Branch of the Neversink River 2.7 miles south of the Slide Mountain Trailhead Parking Lot.

b. **Woodland Valley - Denning Trail (2).** A gate prohibits unauthorized motor vehicles beyond the Denning Trailhead Parking Lot. Boulders

prohibit any motor vehicle use beyond the state land boundary, 1 mile north of the Denning Trailhead Parking Lot.

c. **Forest Preserve/Winnisook Club Property Boundary (2).** Boulders prohibit motor vehicle access to the unit via the unmaintained Woodland Valley - Denning Road.

d. **Fox Hollow (1).** Boulders prohibit motor vehicle access beyond the Fox Hollow Trailhead Parking Lot.

e. **Mount Pleasant (8).** Seven rock barriers prohibit motor vehicle access to Forest Preserve lands along Route 28 between Phoenicia and Mount Pleasant. A gate prohibits unauthorized motor vehicles on a wood road which provides access to a private inholding on Mount Pleasant.

f. **Route 28A (2).** Rock barriers prohibit motorized vehicle access to forest preserve lands bordering State Route 28A at two locations.

g. **Porcupine Road (1).** A cable prohibits motor vehicle access to the unit.

3. <u>Trailheads</u>

a. **With Maintained Parking (5):**

- Slide Mountain
- Giant Ledge
- Fox Hollow
- Denning (outside unit on private property)
- Kanape Brook

b. **Without Maintained Parking:**

None.

c. **In adjacent management units which affect this unit (2):**

- Woodland Valley (Woodland Valley Campground, parking available).
- Peekamoose Mountain (Peekamoose Valley Wild Forest, parking available).

4. <u>Hiking Trails (35.3 Miles):</u>

a. Woodland Valley - Denning Trail (yellow markers) - 9.8 miles.

b. Giant Ledge - Fox Hollow Trail (blue markers) - 7.5 miles.

c. Burroughs Range Trail (red markers) - 9.0 miles.

d. Peekamoose - Table Trail (blue markers) - 6.5 miles.

e. Curtis - Ormsbee Trail (blue markers) - 1.6 miles.

f. Terrace Mountain Trail (yellow markers) - 0.9 miles.

5. <u>Horse Trails</u> - None.

6. <u>Cross-country Ski Trails</u> - None.

7. <u>Unmarked Trails</u>

a. **Old Woods Roads** - These exist sporadically along the outer fringes of the unit. They are most notable on the recently acquired "centennial purchase" (Mount Pleasant).

b. **Herd Paths** - Unmarked foot paths have evolved by use at the following locations:

- **East Branch, Neversink River**. The so called "fisherman's path" follows the river upstream from the Denning Lean-to to its headwaters.

- **Friday/Balsam Cap.** A well defined route originating on private lands in Maltby Hollow ascends Friday Mountain and continues on to Balsam Cap.

- **Slide Mountain.** The so called "Dutcher Trail," also known as the "step trail" or the "ladies trail" originating on private land at Winisook Lake ascends the west side of Slide Mountain, joining the Burroughs Range Trail at about 3,900 feet in elevation.

8. **Department Trail Registers (7):**

a. **Within Unit (6):**

- Slide Mountain
- Giant Ledge
- Fox Hollow
- Woodland Valley/Giant Ledge
- Woodland Valley/Wittenberg
- Denning

b. **In management units adjacent to this unit (2):**

- Peekamoose Mountain
- Biscuit Brook

9. **Club-Maintained Summit Registers (4) on trailless peaks:**

- Lone Mountain
- Rocky Mountain
- Balsam Cap Mountain
- Friday Mountain

10. **Parking Lots - Forest Preserve Access**

a. **Within Unit (10):**

- Slide Mountain Trailhead - 20 cars
- Giant Ledge Trailhead - 10 cars
- Big Indian - 5 cars
- Fox Hollow Trailhead - 10 cars
- Route 28 (Phoenicia) - 10 cars
- Kanape Brook (Watson Hollow) - 5 cars
- Peekamoose Road (3) - 6 cars/each
- Denning Trailhead - 15 cars

b. **In adjacent management units which serve this unit (3):**

- Woodland Valley Trailhead - 20 cars
- Peekamoose Mountain Trailhead - 9 cars
- Biscuit Brook Trailhead - 8 cars

11. **Parking Lots - Fishing Access (2):**

a. Woodland Valley (Woodland Creek) - 3 cars

b. Esopus Creek (Allaben) - 10 cars

12. **Foot Bridges (6):**

a. **Woodland Valley - Denning Trail (3)**

- Woodland Valley, 30' span, log
- 1/4 mile east of Giant Ledge Trailhead treated dimension lumber w/railing 25' span, good condition
- 1/4 mile south of Burroughs Range Trail Junction, treated roundwood, no railing, 30' span, good condition

b. **Burroughs Range Trail (1)**

- Woodland Valley, crossing Woodland Creek treated poles with treated dimension lumber, deck and railings, 50' span, good condition.

c. **Peekamoose - Table Trail (2)**

- Denning, 2 natural log bridges cross channels of the East Branch of the Neversink River. No railings.

13. **Log Ladders (6)**

a. Burroughs Range Trail (4)

- Four successive treated roundwood ladders (8-10 steps each) on Slide Mountain

b. Woodland Valley-Denning Trail (2)

- Two successive, treated, roundwood/dimension lumber ladders (12 & 15 steps)

14. **Nonconforming Structures (4)**

- Mt. Pleasant - a 24' X 24' single story woodframe building in poor condition and a nearby spring house (8' X 10').

- Big Indian - Two 8' x 8' spring houses, one with a roof (see easements).

15. **Lean-tos (3):**

a. Fox Hollow
b. Terrace Mountain
c. Denning

16. **Outhouses (3):**

a. Fox Hollow
b. West Branch Neversink River, near designated campsites southwest of Slide Mountain Trailhead.
c. Kanape Trailhead

17. **Designated Camping Sites (29):**

a. Burroughs Range Trail; col between Slide and Cornell, 6 sites; west side of Slide Mountain at ± 3200 feet (1) 100 feet south of trail
b. East Branch Neversink River; 6 sites
c. Traver Hollow (Bradken Road); 4 sites
d. West Branch Neversink River; 7 sites
e. Giant Ledge; 2 sites
f. Watson Hollow/Bushkill; 2 sites

18. **Vistas (23):**

a. Slide Mountain (3)
b. Cornell (3)
c. Wittenberg (1 on summit, 2 on Lower Wittenberg)
d. Terrace Mountain Trail (1)

e. Panther (3)
f. Giant Ledge (4)
g. Table (3)
h. Peekamoose (1)
i. Curtis-Ormsbee Trail (2)

NOTE: There are also several vistas on the trailless peaks within the unit, as well as some on ridges or peaks with trails which are some distance from the trail. These vistas are not listed because they are naturally occurring vistas that will not be maintained.

19. Developed Springs (4):

- Woodland Valley-Denning Trail (1), .5 miles east of Slide Mountain Trailhead
- Burroughs Range Trail (1), just east of the Slide Mountain Summit
- Giant Ledge (1), south of the summit
- County Route 47, Big Indian (near junction with/Lost Clove Road)

20. Exterior Boundary Lines - 118 Miles:

-	Shandaken	71 miles
-	Denning	32 miles
-	Olive	15 miles

21. Historical Markers (6):

a. Slide Mountain Summit (Burroughs plaque)
b. Curtis Ormsby Trail (Granite marker)
c. County Route 47 (3)
   - Burroughs Marker
   - Deer Propagation Area Marker
   - Entering Forest Preserve Marker
d. County Route 42 (1)
   - Entering Forest Preserve Marker

22. Trailhead Bulletin Boards (4):

a. Slide Mountain Trailhead
b. Denning Trailhead
c. Woodland Valley Trailhead
d. Kanape Brook Trailhead

23. Signs

There are approximately 30 trail directional/destination signs and an unknown number of signs informing users of various Department rules and regulations.

24. Supporting Facilities Outside the Unit

a. Woodland Valley Campground - 72 sites - open mid-May through Columbus Day.

b. Kenneth L. Wilson Campground - Wittenberg Road, Mount Tremper - 76 sites - open mid-May through Columbus Day.

c. Peekamoose Valley Primitive Camping Area - County Route 42, Denning, 40 sites, open throughout the year.

C. Cultural Resources

In 1996 a petroglyph, a carving on a rock, was discovered within the unit. The origins of this petroglyph are unknown. Initial investigations indicate it was probably executed with metal tools. An archaeologist is actively researching this recent discovery. Should it prove to be Indian in origin, or have some significant historic quality, it will be registered and protected. If it proves to be a recent creation, it will be so noted so as to avoid future confusion.

There are no other known archeological resources within this unit.

Numerous visitors to the unit take advantage of the environment to enhance their knowledge and experience in the field of camping, hiking, photography, ski touring, snowshoeing, hunting, fishing, trapping, botany, geology, ornithology and zoology. Universities send faculty and students into the area for research and to develop self reliance. The wilderness character of the unit is a symbol of permanence, experiencing only gradual natural changes.

D. Economic Impact

Besides its many intrinsic values, the Slide Mountain Wilderness is an important economic asset for the Catskill Region. Both indirectly, as a powerful attraction to tourists and a positive influence on private land values, and directly in terms of property tax payments to local governments, the Slide Mountain Wilderness makes substantial contributions to the local economy.

Over 47,000 acres of Forest Preserve land, including 10 peaks over 3,500 feet in elevation and an extensive trail network attract more than 35,000 visitors each year. While some are serious hikers, hunters and anglers who spend all their time on state land, most are day users who consider a wilderness outing just one of many reasons to take a trip to the Catskill region. They may combine a walk on a trail with visits to local shops and restaurants and an overnight stay at an inn or motel. Others are drawn to the area simply to enjoy the impressive mountain scenery. Though these visitors may never set foot on a trail, the contribution that they make to the local economy is partly due to the existence of the Slide Mountain Wilderness.

While it is clear that the indirect effects on tourism and private land values in the Catskill region that result from the existence and use of the Forest Preserve are substantial, they are understood only in general terms. On the other hand, the economic benefits directly conferred on the region by the payment of property taxes can be quantified.

Forest Preserve lands are subject to taxation for all purposes in accordance with Section 532A of the Real Property Tax Law and include "All wild or forest lands owned by the state within the Forest Preserve."

The New York State Office of Real Property Services (formerly Equalization and Assessment) has provided a projection of taxes paid on state land within the towns of Shandaken, Denning and Olive (Table I). Total taxes paid on lands in the Slide Mountain Wilderness, based on the 1996 Assessment Roll, amounted to over 1.3 million dollars. This equates to approximately $28.50/acre.

State government pays the same taxes on unimproved forest lands as private landowners. State government landholdings are assessed by local government assessors. The tax rate that is established by each local government jurisidiction is applied to the assessment and determines the taxes on the parcel. The procedure is the same as for private landowners and the property tax must be comparable to rates on similar private landholdings.

TABLE I. Projected taxes paid in 1996 on Forest Preserve lands in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area.

TOWN	SLIDE MOUTAIN WILDERNESS ACREAGE	TOTAL TAXES	AVERAGE TAXES/ ACRE
Denning	15,450	$408,807	$26.46
Olive	2,240	$52,483	$23.43
Shandaken	29,810	$892,810	$29.95
TOTAL	47,500	$1,354,100	$28.50

E. Public Use

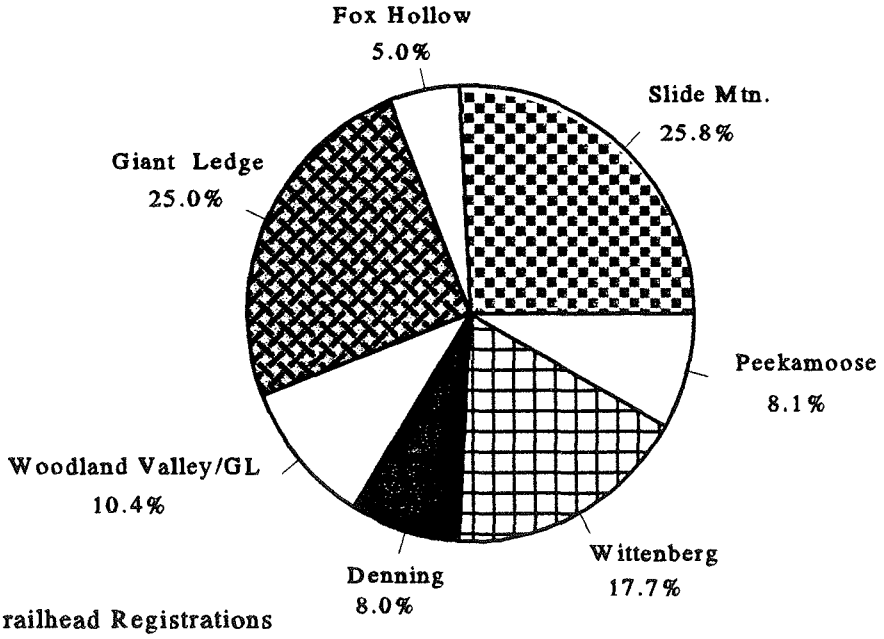
The public visits the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area for a variety of primitive recreational pursuits, including hiking, camping, backpacking, hunting, fishing, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. This use is recorded by trail registers located at the unit's major access points. (See the Facilities Map, Appendix C.) While use of the registers is voluntary, they provide a good characterization of use patterns within the unit. These patterns are illustrated in the following figures.

SECTION II. INVENTORY, USE AND CAPACITY TO WITHSTAND USE

Figure 1 shows the relative levels of use among all trail registers within the unit, Slide Mountain being the most popular trailhead.

1997 VISITOR USE BY TRAILHEAD

SLIDE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS



Source: Trailhead Registrations

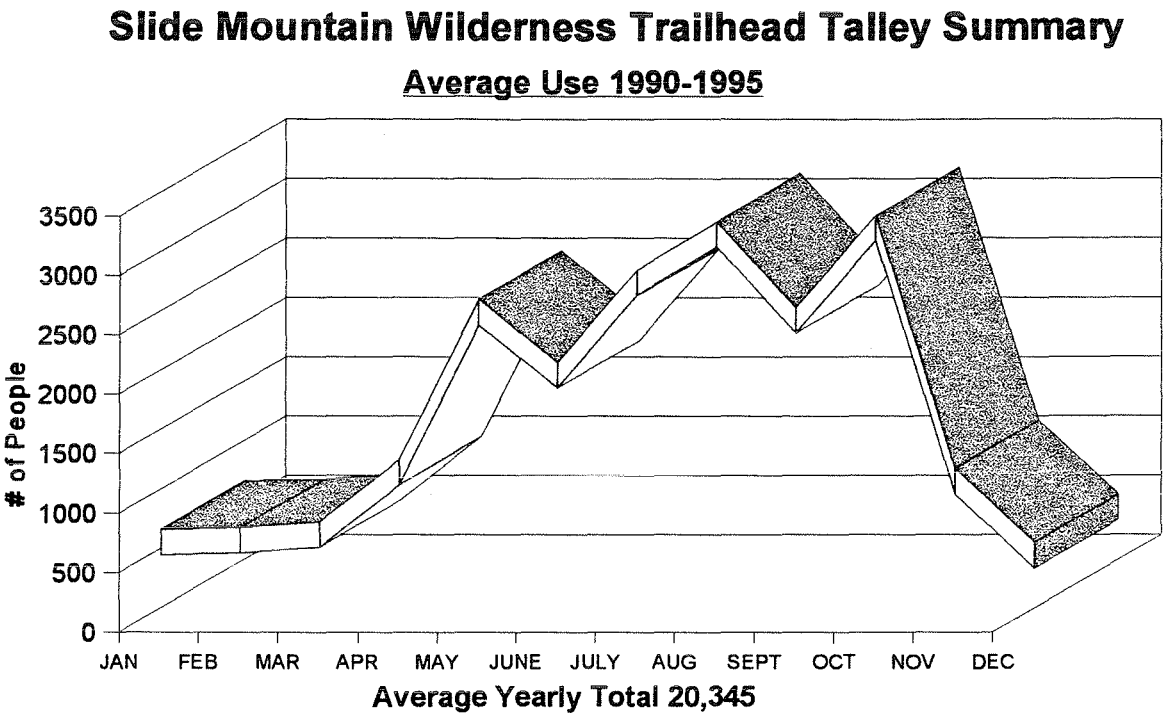


Figure 2 illustrates the seasonal pattern of use over a one year period for the unit's trailheads. This graph illustrates that use peaks in August and again in October.

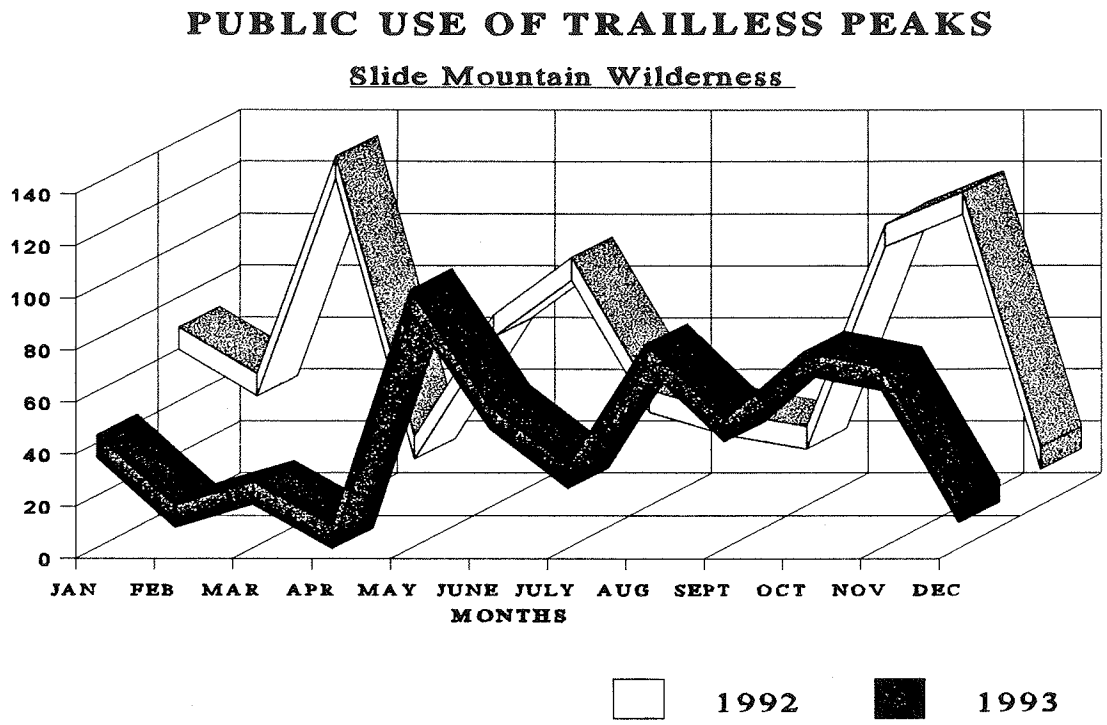
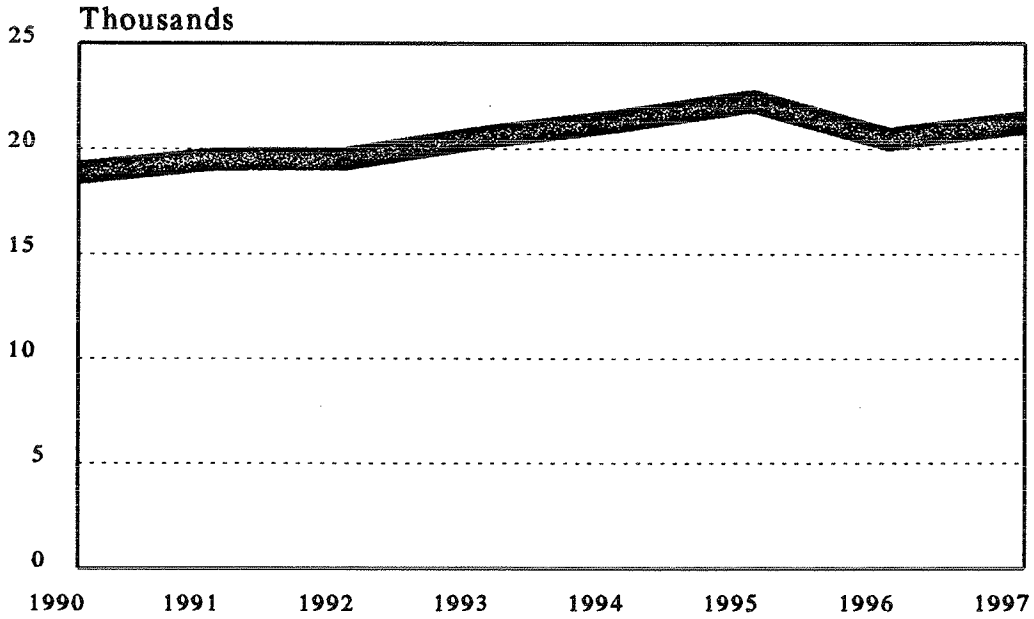


Figure 3 illustrates the seasonal use patterns of the unit's trailless peaks above 3,500 feet in elevation: Lone, Friday, Balsam Cap and Rocky. It is interesting to note that unlike the trailhead registers, the trailless peaks experience the greatest level of use in Spring and Fall, whereas in Summer use is relatively low.

SLIDE MOUNTAIN WILDERNESS VISITATION

1990 - 1997



Source: Trailhead Registrations

Figure 4 shows that total annual use has only slightly increased in recent years.

Because use of both trail and summit registers is voluntary, a correction factor is necessary to determine actual use. This correction factor, the visitor sign-in rate, is likely to vary from register to register depending on the type of user and the character of the area. Studies have shown sign-in rates to vary from as low as 28% to as high as 89% (Leonard 1980). A visitor sign-in rate has not been determined for any of the registers in this unit. However, an estimate of compliance suitable for present management needs has been determined from observations made by the Forest Rangers who patrol the area. Assuming an average sign-in rate of 65% for all registers within the unit, and adding an estimated 10% for non-trail users, total annual use is estimated to be approximately 35,000 visitors for 40,000 visitor-days.

F. Capacity of the Resource to Withstand Use

The ability of this unit to withstand use is a function of its physical and biological resources as well as the type of use the area receives.

1. Land Resource

Soil characteristics play a major role in an area's ability to withstand use. Soils within this unit are generally well drained due to the terrain. However, erosion can be a problem on the steeper slopes unless provisions are made to direct water away from and off of trails. Water bars, drainage dips and ditches, and other devices can be used along with vegetation to stabilize trails.

In valley bottoms, upland benches, and other areas with little relief where drainage is poor, ponds, wetlands or seasonally muddy areas result. These areas are poorly suited to many types of recreation unless significant drainage and/or trail hardening is undertaken. Trails should be routed to avoid these areas or where this is not possible, they must be drained, hardened or bridged to prevent erosion, compaction and other adverse impacts.

The ability of this unit to accommodate the public's demand for camping is dependent upon their compliance with the Department's regulations which prohibit camping (a) above 3500 feet in elevation during the frost-free period of the year (March 22 - December 20) and (b) within 150 feet of any trail and water throughout the year except at areas designated by the Department. Without strict compliance, soil compaction and erosion, degradation of vegetation, water pollution and a deterioration of the wilderness character of the area could result.

2. Wildlife Resources

Two types of visitor use are directly associated with wildlife; viewing or photographing wildlife and harvesting wildlife by hunting or trapping. There are no known animal species within this unit that cannot tolerate the occasional presence of humans. Thus the ability of the unit to withstand non-consumptive wildlife-related use is high.

White-tailed deer are the most commonly harvested species in the unit. Although the actual deer harvest from Forest Preserve lands comprising this unit is not known, Table 2 presents a breakdown of the deer harvest from the three towns in which this unit falls.

TABLE 2. AVERAGE ANNUAL DEER HARVEST (1990-1996) BY TOWN

DEER MANAGEMENT UNIT 55	ADULT MALES	TOTAL DEER
Denning	174	196
Olive	216	275
Shandaken	230	262

Black bear are also hunted within the unit. Table 2 presents a breakdown of the average annual black bear harvest, by Town.

TABLE 3. AVERAGE ANNUAL BLACK BEAR HARVEST (1990-1996) BY TOWN	
Denning	8
Olive	5
Shandaken	16

The average annual Furbearer Harvest for the three towns within which this unit falls, based on pelt sealing, is shown in Table 3.

TABLE 4. AVERAGE ANNUAL FURBEARER HARVEST (1990-1995) BY TOWN					
	BEAVER	BOBCAT	FISHER	COYOTE	OTTER
Denning	1	1	0	1	0
Olive	7	2	0	3	0
Shandaken	10	3	0	3	0

These numbers represent a relatively light harvest when compared to similar and/or adjoining townships. The current consumptive use of wildlife species by hunters and trappers in this unit appears too low to have any detrimental effect on their populations. While the impacts of "non-game" uses of wildlife populations is not well understood at this time, it appears that present use levels have not had a significant impact on the wildlife species found within the unit.

3. Fisheries Resource

In evaluating the capacity of the fisheries resource within this unit to withstand use, two different aspects must be considered. Brook trout are generally considered to be easily caught and increased pressure could result in a decrease in both the quantity and the average size of fish caught. Secondly, the wilderness experience of a fishing trip to this area may be compromised if the level of use were to increase significantly. Presently the fishing pressure for this area is believed to be low. Given the current statewide regulations and the low level of public use there is little chance that fish populations within this unit are being adversely impacted by anglers. However, waters within this unit have been identified as being sensitive to acid deposition, especially in the spring during snow melt, due to the very low buffering capacity of the geology of the region. The buffering capacity of a water will determine how much acidity that water can withstand before experiencing a drop in pH. Increased acidity (lower pH) can lower the reproductive potential of fish or kill fish. Over time decreasing pH can change the abundance and distribution of fish and other aquatic organisms. This situation is being monitored by this agency and others.

III. MANAGEMENT AND POLICY

A. Past Management

Since 1895, management of forest preserve lands within the unit has been guided by the "forever wild" clause of the New York State Constitution (see Constraints). Specific management activities have generally related to fire prevention, fish and wildlife management and recreation. In 1960, the Joint Legislative Committee on Natural Resources began its study of the possibility of designating certain parts of the Forest Preserve as wilderness areas. The following year the Committee completed its wilderness area studies and recommended four such areas be established within the Catskill Forest Preserve, including the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area.

In 1975, a Temporary State Commission to Study the Catskills recommended that the Forest Preserve lands in the Catskills be classified into management units. It specifically urged establishment of the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area along with the other three wilderness areas recommended by the Joint Legislative Committee in 1961.

In 1985 the Department completed a Catskill Park State Land Master Plan which implemented the recommendations of the Temporary Study Commission. The Master Plan further directed the Department to complete individual management plans which would include specific management objectives for each unit. In 1987 the Department completed a unit management plan for the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area - one of the first plans to be completed for Catskill Forest Preserve lands.

Recreational use of this unit dates back to the 1800's when many of the Catskill summer resorts and boarding houses first opened. Alf Evers, in The Catskills, From Wilderness to Woodstock makes note of a rickety observation tower atop Slide Mountain as early as the 1870's. He further notes that a number of guides sprang up during this period, "many of whom were excellent woodsman who laid out and maintained the trails they used." James Dutcher . . . was among the best known of all mountain guides and the guardian spirit of Slide Mountain." Dutcher began leading groups of boarders up Slide in the late 1870's. In fact, he blazed a trail up the mountain from Winisook Lake, building stone steps where needed and an occasional rustic seat to provide his guests with a needed rest. The "Dutcher" or "step" trail, most of which traverses private land, was never marked or maintained by the Department and incurs only occasional use today.

In 1892, the first fiscal allocation by the New York Legislature ($250) was made to construct a "public path" in the Forest Preserve. It was for a trail to the summit of Slide Mountain. While originally constructed as a bridle path, the route proved to be too steep and rocky for horses. It now serves as part of the Burroughs Range Trail (western end).

The Curtis-Ormsbee Trail up Slide Mountain was laid out by William Curtis and Allen Ormsbee prior to the turn of the century. Both men later died in a sudden snowstorm on Mt. Washington, New Hampshire in June of 1900. A granite memorial monument was placed at the trail's junction with the Woodland Valley - Denning Trail by former State Supreme Court Justice Harrington Putnam of Denning.

In the early 1920's the Conservation Commission (an early predecessor of the Department) began clearing and marking existing trails and old lumber roads within the unit as hiking trails.

In 1927 the first of two lean-tos was constructed on the summit of Slide Mountain.

In the summer of 1935 a team of horses from the Forstmann estate (Frost Valley) hauled

pieces of a new "Aero Type" fire tower, complete with windows and a trap door, to the summit of Slide Mountain. "The tower was erected by Forest Rangers and others for the sole purpose of giving the hikers a better view, which is somewhat limited on the ground," (F. Borden, Forest Ranger).

During the same year the Department constructed a trail over Panther Mountain and Giant Ledge from Fox Hollow to connect with the existing Woodland Valley - Denning Trail. Two lean-tos were also erected within the unit: one on the west branch of the Neversink River, upstream of Biscuit Brook and the other on Terrace Mountain.

1936 saw the erection of two more lean-tos, one in Fox Hollow, the other on the Simpson Ski Slope near Phoenicia.

During the 1960's lean-tos were erected in Denning, on Giant Ledge and Slide Mountain while the West Branch Lean-to was removed.

The observation tower on Slide Mountain was deemed unnecessary and dismantled in 1969.

Careless campers allowed the newer of the Slide Mountain lean-tos to burn to the ground in the early 1970's. The older lean-to, in a state of disrepair, was removed by the Department in 1976 in anticipation of new regulations prohibiting camping above 3500 feet in elevation as described below.

In 1972 the Department promulgated 6NYCRR Part 190 which prohibited camping within 150 feet of any trail, road, or water, except at areas designated by the Department. In 1977 this regulation was amended to prohibit all camping above 3500 feet in elevation in the Catskill Park except during the period from December 21 to March 21 of each year. Campfires were prohibited above 3500 feet in elevation the entire year.

In 1985 the Department removed the lean-to on Giant Ledge.

Wildlife

Wildlife management in this unit has generally been limited to regulations controlling length of season, method of taking and bag limits. These regulations were developed for land areas much larger than the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area. However, the history of the white-tailed deer in the Catskills has particular relevance to this unit.

During the 1800's a combination of year-round hunting pressure and destruction of habitat nearly eliminated the white-tailed deer from the Catskills. In 1887 the State legislature passed an act providing for the establishment of three parks in the Catskills for the propagation of deer. One park of 100 acres was fenced in the Town of Shandaken (near Slide Mountain) and stocked with 45 deer trapped in the Adirondacks. It was hoped that these deer would multiply and that their progeny would serve to reestablish the Catskill population. However, the browse was soon exhausted, and it became necessary to feed them. Furthermore, they failed to reproduce in captivity as well as expected and in July, 1895 they were released.

In 1917 Julius Forstmann, former landowner of the Frost Valley YMCA Camp constructed the first of two deer parks on his property. Initially 500 acres around Biscuit and Pigeon Brooks were enclosed with a wire strand fence thirteen feet high. In 1939 an additional 300 acres were fenced in around High Falls Creek. Twenty-seven deer were stocked in the original park, the purpose of which was to provide Mr. Forstmann with deer to hunt the year-round. Periodically the park was restocked and when the fence was opened in 1956 (just

prior to the sale of the Forstmann estate to the YMCA) approximately 200 deer were liberated. Remains of the fence can still be found along the State/YMCA camp boundary line.

While both the State and Mr. Forstmann were developing these deer parks, the region was slowly being reoccupied by deer from Sullivan and Orange Counties, as well as from Pennsylvania. While the deer released from the parks may have hastened the expansion of deer into the region, it is unlikely that they were a major factor in today's thriving population.

Fisheries

Past fisheries management has been primarily limited to the occasional stocking of brook, brown and rainbow trout. There are no current stocking policies for any of the waters within this unit. All the waters within the unit are currently under the statewide general fishing regulations with no special harvest regulations imposed.

Management Since Completion of the 1987 UMP

Table 5 presents the status of the projects proposed in the original UMP. An annual narrative of the work accomplished within the unit by Department staff unless otherwise noted including both UMP and unplanned projects follows.

1988 - With the cooperation of the private landowner, the Denning Trailhead parking lot was graded and defined with large boulders. A gate was erected on the Denning-Winnisook Road just beyond the Denning Trailhead parking lot. A six car parking lot was constructed for access to the Unit from Route 28 in Big Indian. An information kiosk was constructed at the Slide Mountain Trailhead.

1989 - A Kanape Brook parking lot was constructed on County Route 42 in Watson Hollow. The Slide Mountain Trailhead parking lot was enlarged to accommodate 10 more cars. The Woodland Valley-Winnisook Road and the Denning-Winnisook Road were both barricaded with large rocks to prohibit motor vehicle use. An Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC) professional trail crew constructed 61 rock steps, 11 step stones and several log and rock waterbars on the Giant Ledge-Panther Mountain hiking trail.

1990 - Volunteers from the NY-NJ Trail Conference (NY-NJ TC) constructed two footbridges crossing channels of the East Branch Neversink River on the Peekamoose-Table Trail at Denning. Horses were used to skid the 30+ foot logs to the bridge site. An information kiosk was erected at the Denning Trailhead. The roof of the non-conforming stone structure on Mt. Pleasant was removed. An AMC volunteer trail crew constructed five log puncheons in the Slide/Cornell col to bridge wet, muddy areas. The NY-NJ TC adopted the light maintenance responsibilities on 19.4 miles of hiking trails within the unit via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department. Trails adopted include the Curtis-Ormsbee Trail, the Burroughs Range Trail, the Woodland Valley-Denning Trail and the Terrace Trail.

1991 - Seven rock barriers and one gate were erected on the "Centennial Purchase" (Mt. Pleasant) near Route 28 to prohibit motor vehicle trespass of state land. An AMC professional trail crew relocated 100 feet of the Burroughs Range Trail on the north side of Wittenberg Mountain. (3100' el.) and constructed a rock staircase in an eroding gully just below the trail relocation. An Adirondack Mountain Club (ADK) volunteer trail crew installed waterbars, step stones and drainage on the north side of Wittenberg Mountain. below the Terrace Junction. An AMC volunteer trail

crew installed 19 rock steps in a wet area on the Curtis-Ormsbee Trail, three rock staircases on the Peekamoose-Table Trail near the Denning lean-to, and several rock waterbars on the south end of the Peekamoose-Table Trail, just above the Peekamoose Mountain. Trailhead. Volunteers comprising the Paul A. Nickle Memorial Trail Crew adopted the light maintenance of the Giant Ledge-Panther Mountain.-Fox Hollow Trail (7.45 miles) via an MOU with the Department.

1992 - A fireplace at an old lean-to site on Slide Mountain was removed. A foot bridge on the Woodland Valley-Denning Trail a mile south of the Slide Mountain Trailhead was replaced using horses to transport material to the site. An AMC volunteer trail crew installed rock steps in two channels of the Esopus Creek just east of the Slide Mountain Trailhead. The NY-NJ TC adopted light maintenance of the Terrace lean-to via an MOU with the Department.

TABLE 5. Status of Projects Proposed in the 1987 UMP.

YEAR	PROJECT	STATUS	YEAR COMPLETED
I	Barricade Woodland Valley-Winnisook Road	Completed	1989
	Barricade Denning-Winisook Road	Completed	1989
	Remove fireplace from Slide Mountain summit	Completed	1992
	Remove concrete firetower footing from Slide Mountain	still remains	
	Demolish stone structure on Mt. Pleasant	roof removed	1990
	Erect privies at Slide Mountain Trailhead and Denning Lean-to	No acceptable site found	
	Build a six-car parking lot at Big Indian Access	Completed	1988
	Erect a gate at Denning Trailhead	Completed	1988
	Improve the Denning Trailhead Parking Lot	Completed	1988
	Hire Two Assistant Forest Rangers	Hired	1987
	Print a Wilderness Brochure	Completed	1998
II	Build a Six-Car Parking Lot - Watson Hollow	Completed	1989
	Construct Two Footbridges near Denning Lean-to	Completed	1989
	Enlarge Slide Mountain Trailhead Parking Lot	Completed	1989
	Hire Two Assistant Forest Rangers	Hired	1988
III	Hire Two Assistant Forest Rangers	Hired	1989
IV	Hire Two Assistant Forest Rangers	Hired	1990
V	Hire Two Assistant Forest Rangers	Hired	1991

1993 - An AMC professional trail crew installed over 50 rock steps on the Woodland Valley-Denning Trail a mile northwest of the Woodland Valley Trailhead. An AMC volunteer trail crew installed several rock waterbars on the south end of the Woodland Valley-Denning Trail, just north of the Peekamoose-Table Trail Junction. They also replaced some rotted log puncheons near the Giant Ledge Trailhead with step stones. An ADK volunteer trail crew worked on the Burroughs Range Trail at two locations: 1) rock waterbars were installed on the west side of Slide Mountain; and 2) rock staircases and waterbars were installed on the north side of Wittenberg Mountain., just above the Woodland Valley Campground. The NY-NJ TC adopted light maintenance of the Fox Hollow lean-to. One of the log bridges constructed in 1988 on the Peekamoose-Table Trail crossing a channel of the East Branch of the Neversink River (near the Denning Lean-to) washed out in November 1993.

1994 - An AMC volunteer trail crew worked on the Denning - Woodland Valley Trail installing 10 rock waterbars and 6 drainage ditches between Denning and the Curtis-Ormsby Trail junction. They also completed three rock waterbars near the Giant Ledge trailhead, and in Woodland Valley they completed a 21 ft. wood staircase, two small rock staircases and a rock waterbar just above the trailhead parking lot. On the Burroughs Range Trail they completed 13 rock waterbars on the west side of Slide Mountain and two rock staircases in Woodland Valley (Wittenberg ascent).

1995 - A trailhead information board was erected in Woodland Valley. An AMC volunteer trail crew worked on the Burroughs Range Trail, west side of Slide Mountain, installing 10 rock waterbars and improving drainage. An ADK volunteer trail crew worked on the Woodland Valley - Denning Trail, installing stepping stones south of the Slide Mountain Trailhead. They also constructed rock waterbars and rock steps on the south side of Giant Ledge.

1996 - A severe flood in January washed out the Denning footbridge over Dear Shanty Brook. It was replaced in June with logs found at the site.

1997 - An ADK volunteer trail crew worked on the Burroughs Range Trail, just below the summit of Slide Mountain, installing 15 ft. of raised tread and some rock steps in muddy areas. They also completed a small rock staircase and two rock waterbars on the Woodland Valley - Denning Trail near the Slide Mountain Trailhead. On Giant Ledge the crew installed 10 rock steps and completed 210 ft. of drainage.

B. Constraints and Issues

1. Constraints

This unit management plan has been developed within the constraints set forth by Article XIV of the New York State Constitution, Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law, Title 6 of the Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York, the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan Wilderness Management Guidelines, and established policies for the administration of Forest Preserve lands developed by the Department's division of Lands and Forests.

2. Issues

a. Denning Lean-to

Easy access from the trailhead as well as close proximity to the East Branch, Neversink River has resulted in adverse

environmental impacts. This situation is contrary to the Department's goal of minimizing the user's impact on the natural resources of the unit. Its close proximity to the trail detracts from the wilderness character of the area by diminishing the user's sense of solitude. A lean-to in the midst of meandering stream channels precludes the installation of a privy for sanitation purposes.

b. Slide Mountain Summit Vista

Summit vegetation, especially balsam fir, is encroaching on the view from the broad rock ledge (Burrough's Ledge) just south of the summit. This may be a result of the Department's ban on camping and fires on lands above 3500 feet in elevation which went into effect in 1977. It may also be a natural cycle in which balsam fir grow to a certain height and age (depending on soils elevation and exposure), reach site maturity, and die off, only to be replaced by a new stand of balsam fir. Certainly the prohibition of camping and fires has allowed trees that may have been trampled or cut for firewood to proliferate. Regardless of the reasons, balsam fir are encroaching on the view. At present growth rates, the Department projects that within 5 to 10 years much of the view from this location will be lost or greatly diminished.

The State Attorney General rendered an opinion in 1931 that within the Forest Preserve vistas along trails may be provided by cutting trees if such work is carried on with care in order that the tree removal may not be sufficient to pass the point of immateriality, which is clearly prohibited by Article XIV of the Constitution. It is estimated that as many as 40 overstory trees would have to be cut down to open the view from the Burrough's Ledge. Because of the sensitive nature of a high elevation site like this, Department staff believe that a cutting of this magnitude could be considered significant.

c. Long Path Relocation:

The New York - New Jersey Trail Conference has proposed relocating the Long Path from the existing route along Woodland Valley Road (to and through the Village of Phoenicia) onto Forest Preserve lands in this unit. Several alternative routes have been proposed. The preferred route would leave the Burrough's Range Trail north of Wittenberg's summit and head eastward over Cross Mountain, Mt. Pleasant and Romer Mountain before descending to Phoenicia. This would eliminate about 5 miles of road walking for those hiking the Long Path.

d. Herd Paths

A few primitive footpaths have evolved within the unit, the most notable being the so called "fisherman's path" which follows the East Branch Neversink River. While most herd paths simply develop as people hike repeatedly over the same route, some are purposefully marked and maintained by unknown user(s). Their existence detracts from the wilderness character of the unit.

e. Access

While access to this unit is generally very good, it is somewhat limited on the eastern side. A recent land acquisition along Route 28A south of Traver Hollow Road provides an opportunity to improve access to this end of the unit.

f. Foot Trail Link to the Big Indian Wilderness

A foot trail linking this unit to the Big Indian - Beaverkill Range Wilderness has been proposed. The suggested route would originate at the Biscuit Brook Trailhead and head eastward over Wildcat Mountain and then join the Woodland Valley - Denning Trail at

or near the Curtis - Ormsbee Trail Junction. This link would provide users with an extended backpacking route with only one road crossing (County Route 47).

g. Horse Trail System on Mt. Pleasant

Horseback riding enthusiasts have suggested the development of a modest horse trail system on the eastern slopes of Mt. Pleasant and Romer Mountain. They propose to utilize some of the existing wood roads which traverse this area. Forest Preserve lands on Mt. Pleasant and Romer Mountain were only recently acquired by the State of New York (1985) and many of the wood roads traversing the so called "centennial purchase" are in good shape.

However, the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan states that in wilderness, ". . . any new horse trails will only be developed by conversion of appropriate abandoned roads, snowmobile trails and State truck trails." It is unlikely that a coherent recreational trail system could be developed without constructing some new trails to connect the existing wood roads. This would require a change in the Master Plan.

h. Easements

There are several public access easements across private land, as well as narrow strips of land owned by the State in fee, which have not been surveyed, marked, posted with appropriate signage or otherwise maintained. It can be difficult or impossible for the public to utilize them to gain access to the unit. They should be clearly marked and maintained.

i. Outhouses

There are only two outhouses in the entire 47,000 acre unit. Considering the high level of public use, there is a need to provide outhouses at some of the traditional camping areas within the unit. A suitable site could not be found near the Denning Lean-to, nor at the Slide Mountain Trailhead, and thus outhouses were never erected at these sites.

j. Signs

Many of the interior trail direction/ destination signs are in poor shape and/or are inaccurate and should be replaced.

The trailhead bulletin boards at the Slide Mountain, Woodland Valley and Denning Trailheads have proven very successful in providing the public with important information regarding recreational use of the unit. This idea should be expanded to other trailheads serving the unit.

C. Goals and Objectives

1. Goals

a. **Primary Goal** - to preserve and protect the wilderness character of the unit, especially its natural plant and animal communities, in such a way that man's influence is not apparent.

b. **Secondary Goal** - to provide opportunities for a primitive and unconfined type of outdoor recreation, favoring the opportunity for solitude and other experiences unique to and/or dependent upon wilderness.

2. Objectives

a. Land Management Objectives

(1) To effect abandonment of the Woodland Valley - Winnisook Road (Town of Shandaken) and the

Denning-Winisook (Towns of Shandaken and Denning) as they traverse forest preserve lands so as to prohibit motor vehicles within this wilderness area.

(2) Maintain boundary lines to clearly identify public ownership and discourage trespass on private land.

(3) Selectively acquire additional lands contiguous to the unit which will consolidate the State's holdings, simplify boundary lines and/or protect unique areas, provide additional or improved access and otherwise enhance the area. Any such acquisitions will be governed by the Conserving Open Space in New York State Plan (1998).

(4) Adequately protect the unit from wildfire.

b. Wildlife Management Objectives

(1) Maintain all native wildlife species at levels compatible with their natural environment.

(2) Maintain hunting, trapping and other wildlife - related recreational activities.

c. Fisheries Management Objectives

(1) To preserve, enhance, and where needed restore, fisheries habitats to achieve and perpetuate the historic quality of the fish communities found in all streams and ponded waters occurring within the unit.

(2) Emphasize the quality of the angling experience over quantity of use, consistent with wilderness area management guidelines.

(3) Educate Department staff in wilderness management.

(4) Identify future management objectives based upon the ongoing fisheries investigations of this area.

d. Public Use Management Objectives

(1) Provide primitive recreation opportunities only to the extent that they do not infringe upon the area's naturalness and its ability to provide a high degree of solitude.

(2) Monitor the level and intensity of public use. Take appropriate steps to prevent overuse and degradation of the area.

(3) Educate visitors to use and enjoy the wilderness without adverse environmental impacts.

(4) Limit trail maintenance and improvements to those actions necessary to provide access to the unit and/or to protect the natural resources of the unit from degradation. Both physical and mental challenges must be preserved.

(5) Insure that trailless areas, especially summits above 3500 feet in elevation remain trailless.

(6) Educate Department staff in wilderness management.

e. Water Quality Management Objectives

Maintain water courses and ponds in their current natural condition, subject to natural forces and free of human-caused contaminants.

IV. PROJECTED USE AND MANAGEMENT PROPOSED

A. Facilities Development and/or Removal

RELOCATE THE DENNING LEAN-TO:

The existing Lean-to at Denning will be completely removed and the site will be rehabilitated. Camping will be prohibited at this site.

A new Lean-to will be constructed on the western side of Table Mountain, between 3,200 and 3,400 feet in elevation. It will be located on a spur trail at least 150 feet from the Peekamoose - Table Trail. A tentative site with a view has been identified on the southside of the Peekamoose - Table Trail at about 3,400 feet in elevation, near a seasonal spring (the spring is on the north side of the Peekamoose - Table Trail). This new site is approximately 3.75 miles from the Denning Trailhead and 4.60 miles from the Peekamoose Mountain Trailhead.

An outhouse will also be erected near the new Lean-to to provide an appropriate method to dispose of human waste.

CONSTRUCT A WILDERNESS ACCESS PARKING LOT ON ROUTE 28A:

A six car parking lot will be constructed to facilitate access to the unit from the east on Forest Preserve lands adjoining the west side of Route 28A, 2 miles south of Boiceville. An old log landing will be utilized. Boulders will be used to prohibit motor vehicle trespass of the adjoining Forest Preserve lands. A "Slide Mountain Wilderness Access Parking" sign and the Department Rules and Regulations will be erected.

CONSTRUCT A WILDERNESS ACCESS PARKING LOT ON MUDDY BROOK ROAD:

A four car parking lot will be constructed to improve access to the unit from the northeast on Forest Preserve lands adjoining Muddy Brook Road. A Wilderness Access Sign and Department Rules and Regulations will be posted.

CONSTRUCT A NEW LONG PATH ROUTE FROM TERRACE MOUNTAIN TO PHOENICIA:

From the Burroughs Range Trail Junction with the Terrace Mountain Trail (the north side of Wittenberg Mountain) a new foot trail will be constructed which will head eastward over Cross Mountain and then turn northward, climbing over Mount Pleasant and Romer Mountain before descending to Lane Street in the Village of Phoenicia. The length of the new trail is estimated to be 7 miles.

There are both advantages and disadvantages to this proposal. The benefits include:

- elimination of over 5 miles of road walking on the present Long Path Route
- it preserves the Long Path's link with the Village of Phoenicia
- utilizing High Street into Phoenicia provides an existing crossing of both State Route 28 and the Esopus Creek.

The disadvantages to the proposal include:

- creating a trail through a currently trailless area could detract from the wilderness character of the unit

- potential increase in public use of the Burroughs Range Trail, already one of the most heavily used trails in the Catskills

The Department considered several alternatives to the Long Path Reroute as described above.

One alternative would have the route descend the eastern slopes of Mount Pleasant and cross the Catskill Mountain Railroad bed, the Esopus Creek and State Route 28 to the proposed Catskill Interpretive Center site. However, at the present time the Department is no longer pursuing plans for a facility at this site. Without an interpretive center, the advantages of this route are outweighed by the disadvantages, which include crossing both the Esopus Creek and State Route 28. The proposed bridge site is at a relatively remote section of the Esopus Creek which is favored by many anglers due to its distance from roads and bridges. Crossing the Esopus here would require a pedestrian bridge with a span of 120-200 feet or more.

Another alternative would route the Long Path over Giant Ledge and Panther Mountain to Fox Hollow on already existing trail. From Fox Hollow the trail could follow Station Road, cross Forest Preserve and then follow Herdman Road and then High Street to Phoenicia, and thus resume the existing route. While this alternative would minimize the need for new trail construction, it would not reduce the amount of road walking users of the Long Path would encounter.

At present, the Lane Street access the Department owns is not well suited to the development of a trailhead parking lot. Thus the Department proposes to acquire an undeveloped lot (1 or 2 acres) adjoining existing Forest Preserve land that would be suitable for that purpose. Acquisition would only be from a willing seller. If a suitable lot is purchased, the Department will construct a ten car parking lot and provide a trailhead information board and trail register.

WILDCAT MOUNTAIN FOOT TRAIL:

A foot trail originating on the West Branch Neversink River at the Biscuit Brook Trailhead will head southward over Wildcat Mountain and then turn eastward and descend into the West Branch Neversink River Valley to join the Woodland Valley- Denning Trail at its junction with the Curtis-Ormsbee Trail. A footbridge will be needed to cross the West Branch Neversink River. The length of this new trail is estimated to be 4 miles.

This trail has been proposed to provide a direct trail link with the Big Indian Wilderness. It would enable users to undertake an extended wilderness backpacking trip with only one road crossing (County Route 47). It could also serve as a route for the Finger Lakes Trail, a long distance foot trail connecting the Catskills with the Alleghany Mountains in western New York.

A trail register will be erected south of the Biscuit Brook Trailhead.

ENLARGE THE BISCUIT BROOK TRAILHEAD PARKING LOT:

To provide adequate parking for visitors to the new Wildcat Mountain foot trail, the Biscuit Brook Trailhead Parking Lot should be expanded to accommodate an additional 10 vehicles (18 vehicles total).

ENLARGE THE GIANT LEDGE TRAILHEAD PARKING LOT:

Giant Ledge is a very popular destination and the existing parking lot is often filled to capacity. Once the parking lot is fill, visitors park along the road below the parking lot, often obstructing the road. A safer alternative would be to expand the existing parking lot to accommodate five more vehicles (15 vehicles total).

REMOVE THE BUILDING REMAINS ON MT. PLEASANT:

This building was apparently overlooked when the original UMP was written. As a nonconforming structure it should be removed as soon as possible and the site rehabilitated.

B. Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Facilities

TRAIL MAINTENANCE: Maintain the existing 35.3 miles of marked foot trails. Annual routine maintenance will consist of marking, cleaning waterbars, brushing and blowdown removal with hand tools. Department policy prohibits the use of motorized equipment for routine maintenance in wilderness areas.

To enhance the area's wilderness character, the Department will strive to use the minimal "tool" necessary to accomplish management objectives. This should include a reduction in trail markers and signage, and a reduction in the size and scale of foot bridges. Some bridges should even be considered for elimination. Wilderness users come to experience nature on her terms, rather than be buffered by man-made conveniences. Wilderness recreation requires personal decision making, from route finding to deciding not to cross a drainage during highwater.

The Department has a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with two hiking trail groups whereby volunteers undertake the routine trail maintenance responsibilities of all the trails within this unit. The New York - New Jersey Trail Conference has adopted all but the Giant Ledge - Fox Hollow Trail which was adopted by the Paul A. Nickle Memorial Trail Crew. The Catskill 3500 Club maintains the Peekamoose - Table Trail via the Department's MOU with the New York - New Jersey Trail Conference. All volunteers are subject to the same constraints as the Department with regards to tree cutting and the use of motorized equipment, as well as other restrictions agreed to in the MOU. A copy of the Volunteer Trail Maintenance MOU is on file at the Department's Region 3 Office. This agreement has proven beneficial to the Department as well as the hiking public. Large blowdown removal, bridging and other major maintenance tasks will continue to be the responsibility of the Department.

In addition to routine maintenance, the following trail maintenance/improvement projects are proposed:

a. **Woodland Valley - Denning Trail:** Rock waterbars, drainage ditches and stepping stones are needed to prevent erosion from the Slide Mountain Trailhead south to the Curtis-Ormsbee Trail Junction.

   Rock waterbars, rock steps and drainage are also needed between the Giant Ledge Trailhead and the Giant Ledge - Fox Hollow Trail Junction.

b. **Giant Ledge - Fox Hollow Trail:** Rock steps are needed to protect steep, eroding sections of the trail on the

north side of Giant Ledge as well as the south side of Panther Mountain (just below 3500 feet in elevation). A trail reroute could be considered as an alternative to rock steps on Panther.

c. **Peekamoose - Table Trail:** As noted in the Past Management section, the Department has met with only limited success in maintaining a foot bridge over Deer Shanty Brook near Denning. The Brook is subject to periodic flooding, and the streambanks in the vicinity of the trail crossing are easily eroded. A new bridge at a more stable location is necessary. This may involve relocating the trail upstream of the present crossing. A rustic design using roundwood materials will be utilized. From the col between Peekamoose and Table Mountains, rock steps, drainage and terrace work is needed to prevent erosion as the trail ascends Table. Rock staircases would also be useful at two locations (3,600 ft. and 3,100 ft.) on the north side of Table Mountain.

Some of these projects will likely be undertaken by volunteer trail crews working under the direction of the Adirondack Mountain Club via a contract with the Department. As noted in the past management section, this organization has accomplished critical trail maintenance projects at a relatively low cost to the Department.

VISTA MAINTENANCE:

Maintain all vistas within the unit, as identified in the inventory of facilities, providing that such work does not require the cutting and/or removal of trees to pass the point of immateriality. In most instances, vista maintenance will only require the brushing and limbing of trees and the occasional cutting of a tree to maintain the window-like vistas typically found within the unit.

However, as discussed in the Issues Section, maintaining the panoramic view from the summit of Slide Mountain would require extensive tree cutting of the encroaching balsam fir as to exceed the point of immateriality. Therefore, this vista will be allowed to grow in naturally, to await the next natural course of events which may lead to a new opening sometime in the future.

ERECT OUTHOUSES AT FOX HOLLOW LEAN-TO, TERRACE MOUNTAIN LEAN-TO, AND GIANT LEDGE:

The Department's traditional rustic design will be utilized.

SIGNS:

Replace deteriorated inaccurate or missing trail directional signs throughout the unit. For interior signage, a smaller sign board (6" X 16") with reduced wording will be utilized.

Regulatory signs shall be kept to the minimum necessary. In most instances they will be posted at trailheads or access points rather than in the interior.

Trailhead bulletin boards will be constructed at the Giant Ledge Trailhead and the Peekamoose Mountain Trailhead.

C. Public Use Management and Controls

GROUP CAMPING:

Department Rules and Regulation Part 190.4(e) states: "No group of 10 or more individuals may camp on State lands at any

time except under permit issued by the Department." In recent years the Department has not issued Group Camping Permits to groups of more than 12 individuals wishing to camp in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area. The Department will continue this policy.

ELIMINATE HERD PATH MARKINGS/ DISCOURAGE ILLEGAL MAINTENANCE

While primitive herd paths in and of themselves do detract from wilderness, it is the marking and maintenance of herd paths that wilderness users find most offensive. Therefore, the Department will work to discourage such illegal marking and maintenance whenever possible. This will include removing ribbons, survey tape and other marking techniques as well as painting over routes marked with bright paint with earthtone colors.

Because herd paths are more likely to develop when large groups travel the same route, user groups will be persuaded to limit group size to 12. Note: As of this writing the Catskill 3500 Club, an association of climbers who have ascended all Catskill Peaks above 3,500 feet in elevation, have voluntarily chosen to limit groups to 12 to reduce their impact in trailless areas.

TRAILLESS PEAKS

The Slide Mountain Wilderness has four trailless peaks which exceed 3500 feet in elevation. "Trailless" means that they do not have a DEC designated and marked trail to their summit, nor do they receive any scheduled maintenance. These peaks have special significance to the Catskill 3500 Club, an association of climbers who have ascended all Catskill peaks above 3500 feet in elevation. In 1965, prior to the area's wilderness designation and after receiving permission to do so in a letter from the Department, the Catskill 3500 Club placed canisters with registration books on top of Lone, Rocky, Balsam Cap and Friday (among other trailless peaks). Aspiring members sign the register books to verify ascents.

The canisters are a traditional feature of the trailless summits which enhance the wilderness experience for many users.

However, the canisters are not included in the list of coforming structures in wilderness as per the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan. They are also in violation of NYCRR Part 190.8(i), which prohibits the erection or posting of any notice or sign on State land at any time.

This issue should be addressed in the next revision of the Catskill State Land Master Plan. In the interim, to allow the canisters to remain, the Department will assume ownership of the canisters and enter into an agreement with the Catskill 3500 Club to allow for their continued maintenance by the Club.

BICYCLE USE

There are no regulations regarding the use of bicycles on State land within the Catskill Park. If, in the future, a regulation is enacted which would restrict the use of bicycles to trails designated and marked by the Department, it is recommended that no such trails be designated within the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area.

PUBLIC ACCESS EASEMENTS

Table 6 provides a list of Public Access Easements, their current status, and proposed management to facilitate public use.

TABLE 6. PUBLIC ACCESS EASEMENTS: Status and Management Proposed

*	EASEMENT NAME/LOCATION	DEC MAP #	CURRENT STATUS	MANAGEMENT PROPOSED
1	Route 28/Big Indian	2561	Access road with sign	Maintain
2	Golf Course Road/Shandaken	3434	Unmarked	Paint and post
3	Robert Fox ROW/Fox Hollow Road	2125	Unmarked	Survey, paint and post
4	Riseley Road/Panther Mtn. Park	8748	Unmarked	Paint and post
5	Quarry Road/Panther Mtn. Park	8755	Unmarked	Paint and post
6	Mountain Drive/Panther Mtn. Park	8747	Unmarked	Paint and post
7	Vandervort Road (Station Road) Fox Hollow	9641	Unmarked, unmaintained town road	Survey and post with public easement signs
8	Herdman Road/Woodland Valley	10,400	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post
9	Garfield Road/Woodland Valley	10,130	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post
10	Tonisgah Road/Woodland Valley	9477B	Unmarked	Post with public easement signs
11	Woodland Valley-Winnisook Road		Qualified abandoned town road blocked by owner	Research, resolve access
12	Fawn Hill Road/Woodland Valley	10,011	Unmarked, corners found	Paint and post
13	Woodland Valley Road (east side)	X-187	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post
14	Lane Street/Phoenicia	10,383	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post. Acquire land for parking.
15	Route 28/Mt. Pleasant	2975	Signed, with parking lot	Mark easement from parking lot to State land, erect sign with map
16	Route 28/Mt. Pleasant (Near Esopus Bridge)	10,187	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post
17	Cold Brook Road/Boiceville	10,187	Unmarked	Survey, blaze, paint and post
18	Porcupine Road/Denning		Unmarked	Research, provide parking access
19	Denning Road/Denning		Marked and posted, parking	Maintain
20	Denning Road/Winnisook Lake		Qualified abandoned town road gated by pvt. owner	Resolve access
21	Woodland Valley-Winnisook Road		Qualified abandoned town road gated by pvt. owner	Post with public easement signs
22	Country Rt. 47/Oliverea	2561	Marked	Post with public easement signs

* See Facilities Map

D. Fish and Wildlife Management

1. Fisheries

All waters within the unit will continue to be managed under current statewide general fishing regulations, with no special harvest restrictions imposed. However, in the event that the Bureau of Fisheries finds that fishing populations decline, the following management options may be deemed necessary to improve the quality of the angling experience, consistent with policy and guidelines for management of wilderness areas.

- Special regulations may be necessary in order to achieve the fisheries management objectives developed for this unit.

- In instances where natural fish communities cannot be protected, maintained or restored due to human caused disturbances, a waterbody-specific stocking plan may be implemented. Stocking would be limited to indigenous species or species historically associated with the Catskill Park. (Department Policy 91-31: Fishery Management in Wilderness, Primitive and Canoe Areas; October 1991).

- In the event that acid precipitation creates acidic conditions which threaten fish populations within the unit, a liming program may be implemented to neutralize acidic waters. Any such program will be consistent with the Department's Revised Liming Policy (June, 1991). The Policy has established a series of qualifying criteria, all of which must be met, prior to any liming treatment. At this time, what potential any waters within this unit have to meet these criteria is unknown.

2. Wildlife

No wildlife management projects are planned specifically for the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area. The unit falls within Wildlife Management Unit #11 and Deer Management Unit #55. The management of wildlife populations within the wilderness area will be limited to the hunting and trapping regulations developed for these broader management units.

E. Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers

There are no water courses in this unit classified under the provisions of the Wild, Scenic and Recreational Rivers Act, Title 15 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

F. Fire Management

The Department is charged with protection from fire in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area under provisions of Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law. The Towns of Shandaken, Denning and Olive are all fire towns. It is the Department's policy to extinguish all fires regardless of cause, land classification or ownership. This policy will dictate the fire management program for the Wilderness Unit.

Fire detection has been handled in the past by fire tower observers at the Balsam Lake Mountain, Tremper Mountain and Red Hill Fire Towers. Limited funding for fire detection has prevented the Department from manning any of these towers in recent years.

Fire prevention, detection and suppression is the responsibility of the Forest Rangers assigned to the Shandaken, Olive Bridge and Ellenville Ranger Districts.

G. Administration

1. Staffing

Forest Ranger Staffing:

Slide Mountain Wilderness Area falls within two Forest Ranger districts -- Olive Bridge and Shandaken. The most dominant, positive impact on the unit has been the presence of these Forest Rangers. They are the Department's day to day field managers, watching over the area, interacting with the public, enforcing the Department's Rules and Regulations as well as Environmental Conservation Law, and undertaking fire detection and suppression. Their continued presence is essential in the management of this unit.

Supplement Forest Ranger patrols of this unit with three seasonal Assistant Forest Rangers. They will be hired from May 15 to November 15 of each year, and their work week will be scheduled to include weekends and holidays when public use is highest. Mid-week work would include trail and boundary line maintenance.

Operations Staffing:

Current staffing in the Division of Operations is inadequate to undertake the necessary trail, parking lot, lean-to and sign maintenance within this Unit. In recent years the Department has not received enough funding to hire even one person for a complete year to undertake trail and lean-to maintenance in Region 3.

The Department's policy prohibiting the use of motorized equipment for routine maintenance in wilderness areas further reduces the effectiveness of a limited staff. Additional Operations staff will be required to undertake the maintenance of existing facilities as well as to implement the modest projects proposed in this plan.

Two seasonal maintenance assistants will be hired to work under the supervision of the existing Trails Supervisor. They will be hired from April 1 to December 15 of each year. Their time will be split between this unit (60%) and the Big Indian Wilderness Area (40%). The two laborers will be provided with a vehicle and the necessary hand tools to undertake trail and lean-to maintenance.

The existing temporary trails supervisor position will be upgraded to a permanent Conservation Operations Supervisor I position. Not only is a permanent person necessary to supervise the maintenance crews proposed in this and other regional Forest Preserve unit management plans, the degree of responsibility inherent in this position has also increased.

Fish and Wildlife Staffing:

The existing regional fish and wildlife management staff is adequate to handle all present and proposed management activities requiring their input and assistance.

Preserve Management Staffing:

The current supervisory staff is not adequate to manage this and other Forest Preserve Units in Region 3.

The Preserve Manager position, vacant since September, 1990 should be filled to coordinate unit management planning and implementation, forest preserve management and land acquisition within the region.

Additional Legal and Real Property staff time will also be necessary to resolve easement and access issues, survey boundary lines and resolve trespass and occupancy cases.

2. Education

Most of the Department staff responsible for management of the Slide Mountain Wilderness have not received any formal training in wilderness management. Foresters, Forest Rangers and Operation's staff should all be educated in the basic principles of wilderness management, including minimal impact/leave no trace techniques, wilderness education and information techniques, and the use of primitive means to achieve management objectives.

Develop a Slide Mountain Wilderness Area brochure. A map depicting the unit, rules and regulations governing use, a description of the trail system and minimum impact camping techniques will all be included.

Trailhead information boards have been or will be constructed at major trailheads.

H. Land Acquisition

The enhancement of the Slide Mountain Wilderness through the protection of additional lands with outstanding wilderness values will be pursued in accordance with the provisions of the most recent revision of "Conserving Open Space in New York State (OSP)," a plan developed jointly by DEC and the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, with extensive public participation. The 1998 OSP recommends protection of 5 areas contiguous to the Slide Mountain Wilderness:

- Maltby Hollow/Friday Mountain
- Moon Haw Road-Wittenberg Mountain
- Peekamoose Gorge
- West Branch, Neversink River
- Winnisook Tract

It further recommends the continuation of the use of scenic and conservation easement programs with private landowners on a voluntary basis as the preferred method of conserving forest land for the protection of watersheds and sensitive habitat areas and the preservation of viewsheds.

Recently Catskill towns and counties, the United States Environmental Protection Agency , the Ad Hoc Environmental Coalition, the State of New York and the City of New York forged a Memorandum of Agreement regarding watershed issues. The 1997 Watershed Agreement lays the foundation for cooperation in a program to protect New York City's water supply that involves, among other elements, a major land acquisition effort. With the Slide Mountain Wilderness lying in the heart of the City's Catskill/Delaware Watershed, many of the lands surrounding this wilderness will be considered for acquisition by the City.

New York City's authority to acquire land in their watershed is governed by a water supply permit issued by DEC. The 1997 watershed land acquisition permit requires the City's Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) to consult with DEC, local governments and a regional Sporting Advisory Subcommittee regarding the recreational uses the City deems appropriate on parcels newly acquired in fee. The City shall allow historic recreational uses, including fishing, hiking and hunting to continue on newly acquired parcels, subject to rules and regulations adopted or permits issued by DEP, unless DEP determines that such uses threaten public safety or water quality. DEC will take an active role in pursuing public recreational use of lands the City may acquire in the future which adjoin the

Slide Mountain Wilderness to enhance existing compatible uses, as well as to improve access to the unit.

In addition to these larger acquisition efforts, the Department will pursue the following small projects to improve access to the unit:

- Lane Street, Phoenicia. Acquire 1-5 acre lot to provide trailhead parking.
- Private inholding along County Rt. 47, .25 miles east of Biscuit Brook Parking Lot.
- Cold Brook Road. Acquire 1-5 acre lot to provide parking for right-of-way to Forest Preserve land.

I. SEQR Requirements

The actions proposed in this unit management plan will not result in any significant environmental impacts and thus a negative declaration was filed, a copy of which can be found in Appendix A.

J. Relationship of this Unit With Other Forest Preserve Units

The Slide Mountain Wilderness lies in the heart of the southern Catskills, surrounded by seven other Forest Preserve management units. While the relationship varies from unit to unit, they all compliment each other to some degree. Many of the adjoining units such as the Woodland Valley Campground and Peekamoose Valley Wild Forest offer more developed recreational opportunities with better access for people not seeking the solitude or the challenges of wilderness.

With over 33,000 acres lying in many cases just across the road (County Route 47) to the west, the Big Indian Wilderness provides even greater opportunities for solitude.

Linking these two units with a foot trail over Wildcat Mountain, as proposed in this plan, will allow an extended wilderness experience.

The Long Path, a continuous, marked hiking trail which originates in Fort Lee, New Jersey and extends northward through the Catskills to John Boyd Thatcher State Park in Albany County passes through this unit, along with eight other Forest Preserve management units. It provides a continuous route for hikers wishing to undertake a north/south traverse of the Catskill Park. Within the Slide Mountain Wilderness, the Long Path currently utilizes over 18 miles of foot trail. The proposed foot trail over Cross Mountain, Mt. Pleasant and Romer Mountain would increase the Long Path's route within this unit to over 23 miles and eliminate five miles of roadwalk along Woodland Valley Road while preserving a link with the Village of Phoenicia.

This unit accommodates another long distance foot trail as well. The Finger Lakes Trail, which originates in the Allegheny Mountains in western New York, travels over 550 miles eastward through the southern tier of the State before reaching the Slide Mountain Wilderness where it ends at its junction with the Long Path near Denning. The Finger Lakes Trail thus provides an east-west link with several Forest Preserve Management Units including the Balsam Lake Mountain Wild Forest and the Delaware County Wild Forest Units.

V. SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/BUDGET

The following schedule will be implemented over the five year period of the plan, if funding is provided. Estimated costs are in addition to normal program funding.

YEAR	PROJECT	ESTIMATED COST
I	Relocate the Denning Lean-to, provide a new privy	$3,000
	Construct a wilderness access parking lot on Muddy Brook Road	$2,000
	Erect an information board at the Giant Ledge Trailhead on County Route 47	$1,000
	Rehabilitate and enlarge the Giant Ledge Trailhead Parking Lot	$5,000
	Replace the Deer Shanty Brook Foot Bridge	$2,000
	Replace the cable gate on Porcupine Road with boulders	$500
	Erect an outhouse at the Terrace Mountain Lean-to	$500
	Print a Slide Mountain Wilderness Brochure	$1,000
	Two Assistant Forest Rangers (May 15 to November 15)	$23,000
	Annual Facility Maintenance (Includes parking lots and mowing and snow plowing, lean-tos, foot trails, bridges, bulletin boards and trail registers)	$6,000
	Survey, mark and post four public access easements (from Table 6)	$4,000
	Boundary line maintenance (20 miles/year)	$6,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR YEAR I	**$54,000**
II	Construct a foot trail from Phoenicia over Romer Mountain to Terrace Mountain	$10,000
	Construct a Lane Street Trailhead Parking Lot with Information Board and Trail Register	$10,000
	Remove the building remains on Mount Pleasant	$3,000
	Erect an outhouse on Giant Ledge	$500
	Print a Slide Mountain Wilderness Brochure	$1,000
	Three Assistant Forest Rangers	$36,000
	Annual Facility Maintenance	$6,000

SECTION V. SCHEDULE FOR IMPLEMENTATION/BUDGET

YEAR	PROJECT	ESTIMATED COST
	Survey, mark and post four public access easements (from Table 6)	$4,000
	Boundary Line Maintenance	$6,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR YEAR II	**$76,500**
III	Construct a wilderness access parking lot on Route 28A	$7,000
	Erect an Outhouse at the Fox Hollow Lean-to	$500
	Print a Slide Mountain Wilderness Brochure	$1,000
	Three Assistant Forest Rangers	$36,000
	Annual Facility Maintenance	$6,500
	Survey, mark and post four public access easements (from Table 6)	$4,000
	Boundary Line Maintenance	$6,500
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR YEAR III	**$61,500**
IV	Construct a Wildcat Mountain foot trail, work to include a foot bridge over the West Branch Neversink River	$10,000
	Enlarge the Biscuit Brook Trailhead Parking Lot	$6,000
	Print a Slide Mountain Wilderness Brochure	$1,000
	Three Assistant Forest Rangers	$36,000
	Annual Facility Maintenance	$6,500
	Survey, mark and post four public access easements (from Table 6)	$4,000
	Boundary Line Maintenance	$6,500
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR YEAR IV	**$70,000**
V	Print a Slide Mountain Wilderness Brochure	$1,000
	Three Assistant Forest Rangers	$37,000
	Annual Facility Maintenance	$7,000
	Survey, mark and post four public access easements (from Table 6)	$4000
	Boundary Line Maintenance	$7,000
	TOTAL EXPENSES FOR YEAR V	**$56,000**

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APPENDICES

617.21

State Environmental Quality Review

NEGATIVE DECLARATION

Notice of Determination of Non-Significance

ID #98-PL/FP-3-17

Project Number: Date: June 2, 1998

This notice is issued pursuant to Part 617 of the implementing regulations pertaining to Article 8 (State Environmental Quality Review Act) of the Environmental Conservation Law.

The NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), as lead agency, has determined that the proposed action described below will not have a significant effect on the environment and a Draft Environmental Impact Statement will not be prepared.

Name of Action: Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit Management Plan Revision

SEQR Status: **Type I** ☒
Unlisted ☐

Conditioned Negative Declaration: ☐ **Yes**
☒ **No**

Description of Action:

Revision of the Slide Mountain Wilderness Unit Management Plan of 1987. As directed by the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, the original plan is being revised to reflect changes to the unit and new issues which have arisen since completion of the original plan over 10 years ago.

The plan identifies and provides an inventory of the various physical, biological, visual, cultural, historical and unique resources within the 47,500 acre Slide Mountain Wilderness, a management unit in the Catskill Forest Preserve. It also identifies the constraints and issues affecting the area and develops a series of goals and objectives which will govern the area's future management. Specific projects proposed to fulfill these goals and objectives include relocating a lean-to, constructing 2 new foot trails (11 miles total) erecting 4 outhouses, constructing 4 new parking lots and 2 information boards, maintaining 35 miles of existing foot trail, 29 primitive campsites and 3 lean-tos and hiring additional Department staff to manage the area. See the unit management plan revision for a complete list of management recommendations.

Location:

Ulster County Towns of Shandaken, Denning and Olive. NYS Forest Preserve lands designated as the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area in the Catskill Forest Preserve.

Reasons Supporting This Determination:

The area will be managed in accordance with the Wilderness guidelines established in the Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, as well as the constraints set forth in Article XIV of the NYS Constitution and Article 9 of the Environmental Conservation Law.

Four small, unpaved parking lots (less than ½ acre total) will be located so as to provide safe and appropriate access to the unit. Tree cutting will be minimized by utilizing existing open areas, and any tree cutting that is necessary will be in compliance with the Commissioner's Delegation Memorandum #84-06 on the cutting, removal or destruction of trees on Forest Preserve lands.

Relocation of a lean-to to a site 150 feet from trail and water will reduce recreational impacts. The existing site is too close to water courses to allow for continued use without adverse water quality impacts. Existing lean-to will be taken apart with hand tools. Shingles and roofing paper will be stripped from the roof, carried out and disposed of at the Town landfill. The logs will be scattered in the woods at least 150 feet from the trail and stream and left to decompose. The fireplace will be broken up and buried. The site will be raked to expose mineral soil and then reseeded with a conservation mix of grasses to prevent soil erosion. New outhouses will be located at least 150 feet from water on well-drained upland sites to prevent surface water contamination. Outhouses facilitate the disposal of human waste at appropriate locations. They will be checked annually and relocated when the pit fills.

New trail construction will involve some tree cutting, and possible soil erosion and the trampling of vegetation within the trail corridor(4-6 feet wide, 4 and 7 miles long). These impacts will not be significant for several reasons. Tree cutting will be limited by passing around large trees and cutting only small understory trees blocking the route. Any actions involving tree cutting will be in compliance with the Commissioner's Delegation Memorandum, #84-06, on the cutting, removal or destruction of trees on Forest Preserve lands. The Department will follow minimum impact trail building techniques including: avoiding steep grades and employing drainage dips, ditches and waterbars to prevent soil erosion. Rare plant habitats will be avoided. Only hand tools will be utilized, thus reducing the noise associated with trail construction.

CONTINUED ON ATTACHED SHEET

For Further Information:

Contact Person: William Rudge, Senior Forester

Address: **NYS Department of Environmental Conservation**
21 South Putt Corners Road, New Paltz, NY 12561

Telephone Number: (914) 256-3083

A Copy of This Notice Sent to:

Commissioner, NYSDEC, 50 Wolf Road, Albany NY 12233-0001
Chief Executive Officer of the municipality in which the action will be principally located.
Applicant
Other Involved Agencies

The proposed construction of water bars and drainage ditches on existing marked and maintained trails is intended to minimize soil erosion.

Information boards will be erected and maintained at major trailheads to convey rules and regulations governing the use of Forest Preserve land and to instruct users in techniques for minimum impact camping, proper human sanitation and precautions concerning Giardia and Lyme Disease and prevention measures on rabies. Emergency phone numbers will also be posted. The construction of these boards will have a minimal impact because no trees will be cut and they will be painted with earth tone colors compatible with the area.

The impacts of all of the actions discussed were evaluated in the accompanying Full Environmental Assessment Form and are more fully described in the Unit Management Plan. The UMP also contains a Bibliography which includes references which were relied upon in the preparation of the Negative Declaration. All impacts were determined to be small. Their affects were limited to relatively small areas with the area involving being far less than 1% of the total project area.

APPENDIX B - WILDLIFE.

Appendix B-1. Status and occurrence of New York amphibians in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area, a part of the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

SPECIES	STATUS in NY
Jefferson Salamander	Special Concern
Blue-Spotted Salamander	Special Concern
Spotted Salamander	Special Concern
Red-spotted Newt	
Dusky Salamander	
Mountain Dusky Salamander	
Redback Salamander	
Slimy Salamander	
Four-toed Salamander	
Spring Salamander	
Red Salamander	
Two-lined Salamander	
Longtail Salamander	
American Toad	
Fowler's Toad	
Spring Peeper	
Gray Treefrog	
Bullfrog	Game Species
Green Frog	Game Species
Wood Frog	Game Species
Pickerel Frog	Game Species

Appendix B-2. Status and occurrence of New York reptiles in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area, a part of the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

SPECIES	STATUS in NY
Snapping Turtle	
Stinkpot	
Spotted Turtle	Special Concern
Wood Turtle	Special Concern/Game Species*
Painted Turtle	
Northern Water Snake	
Brown Snake	
Redbelly Snake	
Common Garter Snake	
Eastern Ribbon Snake	
Eastern Hognose Snake	Special Concern
Ringneck Snake	
Black Racer	
Smooth Green Snake	
Rat Snake	
Milk Snake	

* Currently no open season

Appendix B-3. Status and occurrence of New York mammals in the Slide Mountain Wilderness Area, a part of the Catskill Peaks subzone as listed in "Integrating Timber and Wildlife Management Handbook" (Chambers, 1983).

SPECIES	STATUS*	SPECIES	STATUS*
Masked Shrew		Eastern Chipmunk	
Smoky Shrew		Gray Squirrel	GS
Longtail Shrew		Red Squirrel	
Water Shrew		Southern Flying Squirrel	
Least Shrew		Northern Flying Squirrel	
Shorttail Shrew		Beaver	GS
Starnose Mole		Deer Mouse	
Hairy-taled Mole		White-Footed Mouse	
Little Brown Bat		Southern Bog Lemming	
Keen's Bat		Southern Red-Backed Vole	
Small-Footed Bat	SC	Meadow Vole	
Silver-Haired Bat		Woodland Vole	
Eastern Pipistrelle		Muskrat	GS
Big Brown Bat		Meadow Jumping Mouse	
Red Bat		Woodland Jumping Mouse	
Hoary Bat		Porcupine	
Black Bear	GS	Snowshoe Hare	GS
Raccoon	GS	Eastern Cottontail	GS
Whitetailed Deer	GS	Mink	GS
Fisher	GS	Shorttail Weasel	GS
River Otter	GS	Longtail Weasel	GS
Striped Skunk	GS	Coyote	GS
Red Fox	GS	Gray Fox	GS
Bobcat	GS	Woodchuck	GS
Opossum	GS		

*Status = status in New York State,
SC = Special Concern
GS = Game Species

Slide Mountain Wilderness Area

Catskill Forest Preserve

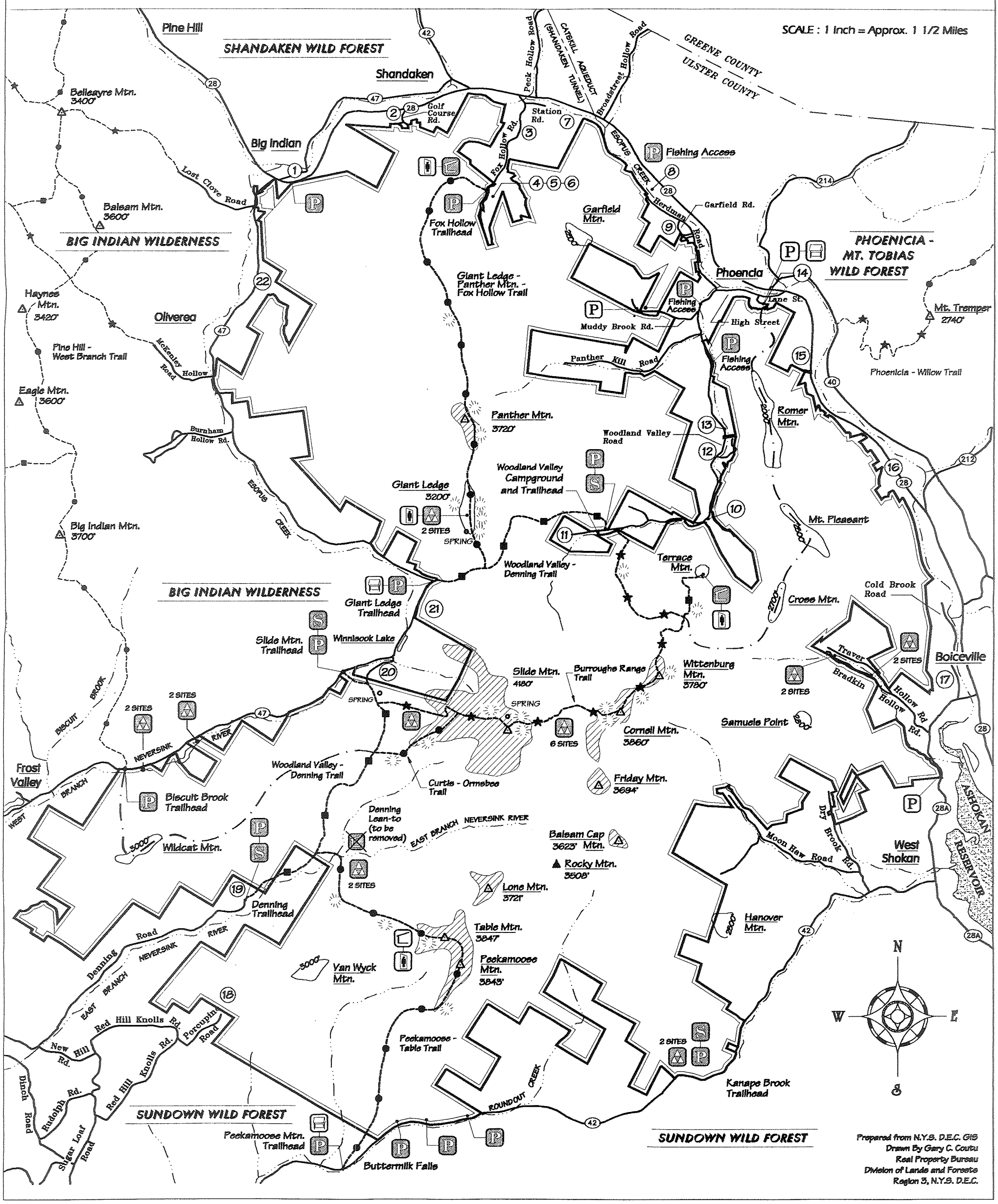
Foot Trail - Blue Markers
Foot Trail - Yellow Markers
Foot Trail - Red Markers
Lands Above 3500' Elevation
Proposed Foot Trail
Wilderness Boundary
Road/Route Number
Watercourse
Vista
Public Access Easement

EXISTING IMPROVEMENTS

Designated Campsite
Sign / Bulletin Board
Parking Lot

PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

Forest Preserve Info Kiosk
Designated Parking Area
Lean-To Location
Outhouse



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