

Summary of Meetings #7 – #13
High Peaks Strategic Planning Advisory Group (HPAG)

DEC Region 5 Warrensburg – March 3

Virtual Meetings – March 16, March 26, March 31, April 9, April 15, and April 28

HPAG MEMBERSHIP

HPAG Members

Dr. Jill Weiss, SUNY College of Environmental Science and Forestry
Chris Morris, OPHRP Statewide Trails Program Planner
Joe Pete Wilson, Supervisor, Town of Keene
Rocci Acquire, Adirondack Council
Pete Nelson, Adirondack Wilderness Advocates
Charlie Wise, The Mountaineer
Seth Jones, Adirondack Mountain Club
Theresa Cheetham-Palen, Rock and River Guide Company
James McKenna, Regional Office of Sustainable Tourism
Shaun Gilliland, Chair, Essex County Board of Supervisors
Sandi Allen, Retired DEC Counsel
Pat Barnes, DOT Region 1 Director
Rick Weber, APA Deputy Director
Mike Pratt, ORDA CEO, (Alternates: Emma Lamy, Sustainability Officer and
Kris Cheney-Seymour, Nordic Program Manager)
Rob Davies, DEC Director of Division of Lands and Forests
Joseph Z, DEC Region 5 Director

HPAG DEC Staff Support

FACILITATOR: Mary Roy, Strategic Planning/Performance
Management Office Director
Karyn Richards, Special Assistant to the Commissioner
David Winchell, Public Participation Specialist
Laura DiBetta, Director of Outdoor Recreation
Peter Frank, Bureau Chief, Forest Preserve and Conservation Easements

Goals for Managing Public Use in the High Peaks Region

- *Ensure public safety within communities, along roadways, at trailheads, and in interior areas*
- *Protect natural resources and recreation infrastructure*
- *Provide a quality recreation experience*
- *Supporting local economic vitality*
- *Make decisions based on science using the best available data*

HPAG Charge

Undertake a collaborative process to provide a strategic framework to address public use in the High Peaks Region of the Adirondack Park which will:

- *Include short, medium and long-term recommendations (strategies, actions and tactics) to achieve the goals of the initiative*
- *Incorporate, expand, and/or modify recommendations made to date*
- *Identify additional data necessary to inform the HPAG recommendations*
- *Identify priorities for the implementation of recommendations*

- I. Overview – Due to the current COVID-19 public health crisis and New York State on PAUSE, the last in-person meeting of HPAG was held on March 3. The first virtual meeting was held on March 16 after which it was agreed that it would be more productive to hold shorter virtual meetings more often.
- II. COVID-19 – HPAG members determined that, due to COVID-19, conditions in the High Peaks Region this summer, such as visitor use patterns, will be an anomaly. They recognize that the State’s ongoing response to COVID-19, as well as decisions made by local municipalities could alter, sometimes significantly, implementation of the Group’s recommendation
- III. Recommendation Topics – HPAG has continued discussions to identify recommendations for short-term actions and long-term strategies for DEC to consider in managing use in the High Peaks region, again recognizing that management of the current public health crisis may alter implementation. Below is a summary of the recommendation topics HPAG is considering addressing in an interim report to DEC, which will be shared publicly in June after DEC review is completed.

a. **Human Waste Management at Trailheads**

Preliminary Concepts: State and municipal partners should coordinate on how to manage human waste along the Route 73 corridor. This coordination should address public education and communication as well as safe placement and use of portable toilets in the short term and the exploration of alternatives to portable toilets for the future.

b. **Shuttles (Including Electric Shuttles)**

Preliminary Concepts: Assist New York State, County of Essex, and Town of Keene to lay the groundwork for a green transportation for system hikers and other visitors, and to evaluate electric shuttles as part of that solution.

c. **Data Collection**

Preliminary Concepts: Establish a collaborative approach to the means for collecting relevant and reliable data and analysis to help manage visitor use in the High Peaks region, and to coordinate with other data gathering and surveying projects in the region.

d. **Education and Messaging**

Preliminary Concepts: Enhance and coordinate education efforts, including public health messaging (e.g., social distancing) for summer 2020. Messaging should focus on dispersal and provide alternatives outdoor recreation opportunities - (trails less traveled) – and use Leave-no-Trace principles as the core element. Messages should be coordinated with numerous and varied sources of information to ensure a widespread and consistent messaging.

e. **Leave No Trace (LNT)TM**

Preliminary Concepts: Ensure LNT outdoor skills and ethics be a core educational program for users.

f. **Parking and Enforcement**

Preliminary Concepts: State and local partners should improve coordination of efforts to monitor, assess, and communicate on parking matters, including building capacity for enforcement of parking restrictions along the Rt. 73 corridor.

g. **Trail Assessments, Maintenance, and Funding**

Preliminary Concepts: It is critical that DEC document and understand what current trail issues exist and where these issues are located spatially within the High Peaks area trail system. This documentation will inform the resources necessary to address critical impacts to the environment and recreation experience. DEC, working with partners, should continue to pursue resources and a build-up of capacity for maintenance/construction and further develop the wildland monitoring program with emphasis on supporting trail assessment with updated technologies.

h. **Limits on Use**

Preliminary Concepts: Pilot limits on use on private lands to reduce impacts associated with exceeding capacity should be tested and considered. First steps should involve increasing public education and awareness and collecting data at key entry points to document number of people and associated impacts.

- IV. Public Input – HPAG continues to seek input from the public on the topic's above both for the interim report and the final report. Remarks may be sent emailed to info.r5@dec.ny.gov with "High Peaks Use" in the subject line.