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Economic Development, Tourism & Planning

New Trail-Based Tourism Plan Completed for Greene County, NY
Priority Trails Projects Identified, Work Underway on Kaaterskill Clove and Other Projects

GREENE COUNTY, NY (April 2, 2014) – The Greene County Department of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning, working in partnership with the Greene County Highway Department and the New York State Department of Transportation, recently completed a countywide trail-based tourism development plan. The Trail-Based Tourism Plan can be accessed on the County website <http://greenegovernment.com/>.

Greene County's new Plan includes an inventory and analysis of key trail related historical, cultural, natural and recreational resources; considers potential linkages and partnerships; and provides recommendations to develop trails, greenways and infrastructure for trail-based recreation. The Plan envisions a connected network of trails for a variety of four-season activities that will improve the economy, environment, and quality of life throughout Greene County.

Consultants Elan Planning, Design & Landscaping Architecture, together with Alta Planning and Design worked with the County to develop the plan, identifying a series of projects which incorporate existing rail corridors, bikeways, scenic byways and destinations in Greene County to promote trail development and expand mountain biking, cycling and other recreation uses. Local communities, trail-based organizations, and tourism businesses and attractions will be able to use this plan to advance their initiatives, produce funding applications and communicate with potential partners.

The two fastest growing tourism travel segments are adventure travel and heritage travel, stated Warren Hart, Director of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning for Greene County. "The Plan provides recommendations for building on our existing recreation-based tourism assets and will help us in promoting the County as a recreation tourism destination."

Hart added that the Plan also includes recommendations for 11 projects, several of which are slated to begin in 2014.

The Plan outlines five thematic trail areas including:

1. Kaaterskill Clove Trails: This area is central to tourism and recreation in Greene County, with Kaaterskill Falls and the North-South Lake State Park campgrounds being one of the most popular outdoor recreation and camping areas in upstate New York. The projects in this area will promote economic development and create sustainable art, nature and heritage based tourism opportunities.

2. Mountain Bike “Ride Center”: Efforts are well underway in Windham and Round Top to provide infrastructure and promote the sport of mountain biking. Two projects are proposed in the area to further the goal to create an International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) “Ride Center” within Greene County that will attract riders, beginner through advanced, from across the country.

3. Town Center Connections: Connections to and within town centers are important for tourism as well as quality of life for residents. Trail connections to the centers of Catskill and Prattsville are detailed in the Plan as examples for each of the communities in Greene County.

4. Scenic Vistas: The views from the Catskill Mountains and the shores of the Hudson River are known by many through the works of famous artists of the Hudson River School of Landscape Painting. Enhancing and promoting these historic views, along with the promotion of existing scenic by-ways and driving tours can generate additional tourism opportunities.

5. Natural Trails: Natural surface trails provide opportunities for multiple trail uses, including hiking, birding, fishing, snowshoeing, and cross-country skiing. There are many shorter trails throughout the County and also a few very well-known and popular long-distance trails, including the Escarpment Trail and the Long Path. Expanding on these trails and developing more opportunities will bring more trail users to Greene County.

Several projects identified in, and supporting, the Plan are already in progress.

- **UAlbany Planning Studio:** The Spring 2014 UAlbany Planning Studio is conducting a public involvement process in Palenville to develop an action plan for trails, downtown, and tourism for the historic hamlet of Palenville. Led by Jeff Olson, R.A., Principal and Project Director at Alta Planning and Design and nationally recognized trail/bike planner, the plan will include information on existing conditions, opportunities and challenges, and proposed planning concepts. The proposed plan will connect residents, visitors and businesses with trails, parks and support facilities in this important gateway to the Catskill Mountains. Destinations including Kaaterskill Falls, the Long Path, and the arts and heritage of the region will be key elements. The goal is to create a ‘trail oriented development’ plan for walking, running, bicycling, Nordic skiing, equestrian and other uses. A project website is live. The Studio’s work will be coordinated with the Palenville Hamlet Committee, the Town of Catskill, and the Greene County Office of Economic Development, Tourism and Planning. Work is being done pro bono.
- **Kaaterskill Clove National Advertising Campaign:** The County was recently approved for \$150,000 for The Kaaterskill Clove- America’s First Vacation Destination: “Building a National Awareness Campaign” a collaborative approach to sustainable tourism development. The project will promote the Kaaterskill Clove with international advertising and a new website. The project also includes the development of new way-finding signage for visitors.
- **Bridge to Bridge Walking Loop along Catskill Creek:** The County recently secured \$600,000 in funding from the NYS Department of State through the Capital Region Economic Development Council Consolidated Funding Application process in partnership with the Village of Catskill to construct a waterfront trail along Catskill Creek from the Uncle Sam Bridge to the Black Bridge.

Additional grant funding for the project is being provided from the Catskill–Olana Mitigation Fund, which has been dedicated for downtown and waterfront development in the Village of Catskill.

- Black Bridge: The Greene County Highway Department, in cooperation with the Village of Catskill, was recently awarded a \$2.24 million grant for rehabilitation of the historic Black Bridge as a pedestrian walkway. The bridge was once part of the historic Catskill Mountain Railway, and will be a key part of the new bridge to bridge pedestrian walking path.
- The Windham Path and Mountain Biking Ride Center: Phase one of The Windham Path and Mountain Biking Ride Center was recently completed, creating a new family-friendly trail network for hiking and mountain biking. Phase two will include the construction of a connector trail over the Batavia Kill for cyclists. Funding options for phase two are being identified by community representatives and local cycling organizations.

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