



9 December 2016

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Conservation  
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Education  
\*  
Recreation  
*Since 1922*

RE: Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness UMP /Colgate Wild Forest UMP  
Scoping

Dear Maxwell,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide scoping comments for the Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness UMP and Colgate Wild Forest UMP revision.

### **Mountain Biking**

We understand that there may be interest from the cycling community to connect riding opportunities in the Onteora Park and Parker Mountain Area with the Dutcher Notch Trail. After field work in the area, we believe there may be a ways in which a mountain bike trail could legally and enjoyably connect Onteora Park and the Parker Mountain Area (see map attached). There is an old forest road that skirts the boundary of the Wilderness and Wild Forest on the South side of Colgate Wild Forest. A trail from the intersection of Route 25 and 23c could traverse the Colgate Wild Forest south of the lake and reach the Dutcher Notch Bike connector trail. This would provide a connector route, however mountain bikers would need to travel along route 25 for approximately .8 miles.

### **Scenic Vista Maintenance**

A 1935 New York Attorney General opinion states that immaterial amounts of tree growth could be removed for the purpose of opening views along foot trails ( 1935 Atty. General 274). The 2008 Catskill Park State Land Master Plan states on page 36:

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### *Wilderness Vistas*

Recognizing that the geography and forest types in the Catskills either minimize or obscure natural viewpoints, man-made vistas provide the user with exceptional panoramas. And yet while recognized for its visual aesthetics and lauded for its inspiration by painter and poet alike, the creation and/or maintenance of a vista in a wilderness area must be balanced with both the philosophical as well as physical limitations of the area. Existing vistas may be maintained where only an immaterial amount of tree cutting is necessary on an occasional basis. The preferred method of vista maintenance is side trimming of lower branches. Vistas may be temporarily obscured to allow small trees to grow high enough to permit branch trimming. Vistas to be maintained will be identified in UMPs. No new vistas may be created.

Periodic maintenance cutting of an immaterial amount of trees and vegetation is highly recommended to maintain and restore existing or pre-existing scenic vistas in the Catskill Forest Preserve's Wilderness Areas. A goal of forest planners must be to encourage exploration of all trails in order to avoid overuse of those leading to peaks with views and other overlooks. This goal can be partially attained by maintaining former or grown in views in Wilderness Areas and creating new views in Wild Forest Areas.

The following vistas should be considered for view restoration and vista maintenance in the UMP:

Escarpment Trail—A 24.3-mile trail that offers many magnificent vistas. Former views now impacted by tree growth should be restored.

NYNJTC Northeastern Trail Map 141, trailhead grid P4/M2.

Trails Illustrated Map 755. The Escarpment Trail coincides with the Long Path; because the LP is described S to N, this description begins at Schutt Road off Greene County Rte. 18 outside North/South Lake State Campground gatehouse, trailhead grid K18.

- At mile 1.2 at Layman Monument, there is a limited view down to NY 23A. This view could be enhanced. At 1.3 miles, a large cliff top above Layman Monument provides excellent viewing S across Kaaterskill Clove and W to

Haines Falls. This expansive spot is doubtless the true Sunset Rock, with its western view. Sunset Rock is now identified at a much smaller, down-sloping, pebbly ledge—a bit dangerous—at mile 1.8; the DEC should reestablish Sunset Rock here).

- At mile 1.9, Inspiration Point, and at mile 2, views to the Hudson Valley, are in no danger of obstruction by tree growth.
- At mile 4, Boulder Rock features views to the Hudson Valley and to Kaaterskill High Peak and Roundtop Mt. These views gradually become more limited by tree growth; located just 0.5 miles above the vista at the Catskill Mountain House site, the Boulder Rock view must be maintained.
- At mile 5.3, the trail passes Artists Rock, with unobstructed views of the Hudson Valley.
- At mile 5.8, a jct. has an incorrect mileage sign, “0.3” mi. to Sunset Rock on a yellow-marked spur trail; it is 0.18 miles to Sunset Rock. This should be corrected. At mile 6, Newman’s Ledge offers an unobstructed view across the Hudson Valley.
- At mile 7.4, a ledge offers a good view to North-South Lakes and mountains beyond. This view is becoming obstructed by tree growth. At mile 7.6, North Point provides unobstructed views of the Hudson River Valley and North-South Lakes. Paths lead to another open area allowing expansive views N and W to the Blackhead Range. Tree growth on the N side could be cut back to allow better viewing of the Blackhead Range. At mile 7.8 there is unobstructed viewing S and E.
- At mile 9.3 at 3420-foot Stoppel Point, a sign “8.9 miles” is incorrect. Views from a rock ledge are unobstructed. At mile 9.5 on Stoppel Point’s west side, the entire Blackhead Range is in view, currently not obstructed. At mile 10.4, Milt’s Lookout presents unobstructed viewing to the Hudson River Valley.
- At mile 12 a side trail L leads in 50 yards to an outstanding overlook. At mile 13, a short side trail leads to excellent views. At mile 14.4, a rock ledge identified as “Camp Steel” is near the viewless summit of Blackhead. The now-limited view E from this nearby ledge should be restored.
- At Yellow Jacket Overlook at mile 14.9, vistas N and E are unobstructed. Two more ledges at mile 15.8 and 16 should be monitored for tree growth. At 17.2 miles, Acra Point is becoming treed-in and needs clearing.
- At mile 17.6, a side path L to several rock ledges offers excellent views of the Blackhead Range, Burnt Knob, and Windham High Peak. This outstanding vista should not be missed—the short path to it should be identified with a “Vista” sign on the Escarpment Trail, or the ESC Trail could be slightly re-routed to pass over this open rock.
- At mile 18.2, a path L leads down to a cliff top with unimpeded views S to the Blackhead Range and to the northern escarpment. At mile 18.9, a path R goes to a cliff that offers unobstructed viewing N, E, and W to Windham High Peak. A sign noting “Vista” should be placed on the Escarpment Trail, because this destination is not visible from the trail. At mile 19.2, two other

side trails L offer excellent views S and W. The first of these two is grown in and should be cleared; the second is an excellent overlook that won't be impeded by tree growth, but vegetation around this smallish rock ledge could be cleared.

- At mile 20.5 on the west side of Windham High Peak's summit, an unobstructed open rock ledge offers outstanding views N and E to the Hudson Valley. Vegetation next to the ledge could be cut to allow viewing of the Blackhead Range to the S—a good view only when leaves are off. The trail ascends to the true summit of Windham High Peak, elevation 3524 feet; tree growth has obliterated the former modest view here; hikers turn back from here and miss the view from the open ledge described above (unless they read ADK's *Catskill Trails*.) New spur trails along the summit ridge offer views S and N and the view to the Blackhead Range is improved.

Black Dome Range Trail (also known as Blackhead Range Trail):

NYNJTC Northeastern Trail Map 141, trailhead grid N3/03.

Trails Illustrated Map 755, trailhead grid L17.

Trailhead: 0.9 miles E of Green County Rte. 40 at DEC parking area at end of Barnum Road in Maplecrest.

- At 1.0 miles, a short, extremely steep pitch up massive boulders and ledges rewards the hiker with an excellent view S and W to Devil's Path peaks. This viewpoint is from the trail, which moves away from the vista. If allowed in Wilderness Areas, an open area could be created atop this cliff or a short spur path could lead to more viewing places from the cliff-top.
- At 2.0 miles, the trail reaches Camel's Hump, elevation 3500 ft. Thomas Cole Mt. is visible nearby to the E from a spur path, R, as are peaks to the SE. Trees have now obliterated this view, which should be restored; it is good viewing only when leaves are off. Another spur path L on Camel's Hump had fine views N to Windham High Peak and the northern escarpment, to Windham ski slopes, and down to Black Dome Valley. This, too, is obscured by trees and bushes. Camel's Hump is an excellent moderate hike and destination if hikers can enjoy these vistas when leaves are on. (The steep pitch noted at mile 1 can be icy and dangerous, a barrier to visiting Camel's Hump when leaves are off).

- At mile 2.5, E of a long level stretch, a side path R has good views S and W. This view bears watching and should be restored when obscured. At 2.9 miles, a yellow-marked spur trail leads to a completely treed-in lookout S. Summit elevation is 3940 ft. and views S would be outstanding. This former view must be restored. It is ironic that this now viewless peak is named after Thomas Cole, who established the Hudson River School of landscape painters in the 19th century and especially enjoyed Catskill views.

ADK is also concerned with existing over-use impacts in the area of North Point in the Windham-Blackhead Range Wilderness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Neil F. Woodworth". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish at the end.

Neil F. Woodworth  
Executive Director and Counsel  
Adirondack Mountain Club, Inc.