

# Kaaterskill Clove Visitor Use Management Stakeholder Working Group Meeting #1 Summary

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## Background

On October 3, 2023, an in-person meeting of the Kaaterskill Clove Visitor Use Management Stakeholder Working Group (KC-SWG) was convened by Otak and held from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. at Tannersville Village Hall, Tannersville, New York. The meeting agenda is included in [Appendix A](#). The purpose of the meeting was to:

1. Convene the Stakeholder Working Group and affirm guidelines for how the group will work together.
2. Review and discuss summer 2023 onsite data collection activities to learn the type of information that has been collected and how it will be analyzed and applied in the project.
3. Discuss ideas about desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds for visitors' experiences and public safety in the project area.

Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic, facilitated the meeting. Abbie Larkin, Otak, provided VUM technical expertise, and New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) staff were present as observers and responded to questions. See [Appendix B](#) for a table of meeting participants.

[Appendix C](#) contains a map of the project area that was on display as a reference during the meeting.

## Gathering

The meeting began with a welcome and meeting overview provided by Susan Hayman, Facilitator (Ross Strategic).<sup>1</sup> The group participated in a round of introductions, and each person shared a favorite memory of this area.

## Stakeholder Working Group Operational Guidelines

Susan reviewed key sections of the proposed KC-SWG Operational Guidelines. The following are key areas of discussion:

- The working group is convened by Otak, and is not an advisory body to DEC. This process is different than processes that many of the working group members previously participated in, and will not result in the working group producing and submitting a final report to DEC.
- Management strategies discussed in the VUM report submitted to DEC by Otak will include actionable and tactical items, and will be informed by discussions facilitated with the KC-SWG.

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<sup>1</sup> Ross Strategic is part of the broader consulting team led by Otak.

- Otak is aware of prior proposed management strategies from prior reports and previously existing data, and will incorporate those relevant to this study.
- The project map displayed in today's meeting room was affirmed to be the same map on display at the May 10, 2023, public meeting.
- With reference to the project/study boundary, some in the group expressed the desire for the study to include:
  - North/South Campgrounds and Day Use Area, due to the area's importance as an adjacent and alternative area for visitors when overcrowding occurs at Kaaterskill Falls/Laurel House Rd.
  - North/South Lake Road/County Route 18, as it is a major access corridor for the study area.
- Some members noted the value of New York State Consolidated Funding Application (CFA) grants for supporting service improvements in the area, such as the Trolley.
- It was noted that the two observers at this meeting ([Appendix B](#)) requested to be added to the stakeholder working group. Otak will take this under advisement.

As there were no objections to the Operational Guidelines as written, Susan affirmed them as adopted ([Appendix D](#)).

### Summer 2023 Onsite Data Collection

Abbie presented slides containing information on onsite data collection (see [Appendix E](#)). Key points of discussion included:

- All field work has been completed—the team is now working on data analysis (Ryan Chadwick offered to provide data he collected regarding Trolley/parking use this summer).
- Schutt Road; visitor use patterns measured via GPS devices are unlikely to include use in the Schutt Road area.
- It would be helpful to see the data expressed by days of the weeks, e.g., weekend versus weekday trend.
- Those who were carrying GPS units were not the same people who were surveyed at trailheads.
- People-at-one-time (PAOT) and people-per-viewscape (PPV) counts were collected simultaneously on the same days at one of two locations per day.
- Discussion concerning future management practices included:
  - Opportunity to offer a free shuttle, and whether that would be advantageous.
  - Consider impacts to private landowners from hikers parking cars on private property adjacent to state land.

- Help to create a sense of arrival/sense of place for visitors.
- Mitigating the effects of social media drawing people to the falls.
- Responsible movement of people along a transportation system.
- Consider multiple, and possibly divergent perspectives of residents and visitors.

## Desired Future Conditions, Indicators, and Thresholds

### **Desired Future Conditions Activity**

Meeting participants gathered in small groups of 3-4 people to discuss how they would describe desired future conditions for the Kaaterskill Clove study area. While a discussion of desired future conditions occurred at the May 10, 2023, public meeting, Otak emphasized the value of having a separate, consolidated perspective of desired future conditions from this assembled group of key stakeholders.

To prepare participants for this discussion, Otak provided a desired conditions “thought activity” with prompting questions to KC-SWG member one week in advance of the meeting. Two members of the stakeholder working group who could not be in attendance sent in written responses to the information, which are reflected in the discussion.

When reconvened as a large group, members shared the following key concepts related to desired conditions<sup>2</sup>, organized according to the following prompting questions:

1. *What should visitors experience when they visit the Kaaterskill Clove project area?*
  - Reach people with information starting from home to “meet people where they are” (e.g., amenities, what they will find when they get here, accessible information, no surprises, creating a reduction in “bad behavior”).
  - Better information about why the Clove and surrounding region are important and should be protected.
  - Everyone should be honored and respected.
  - Quality trail management and maintenance.
  - Visitors are also residents.
  - Opportunity for residents to be better familiar with being “out in the woods”
  - Ample parking
2. *How should people feel and what should they take away from their experiences in the Kaaterskill Clove project area?*

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<sup>2</sup> KC-SWG member Sean Mahoney read from a written desired conditions statement, provided to Otak after the meeting.

- Safe (visitors and emergency responders)
  - Good signage and wayfinding
  - Pleasing aesthetics
  - Relaxed
  - The development fits the majesty of the area
3. *What types of opportunities should the public have to experience the Kaaterskill Clove project area?*
- For sportsman, there should be fishing or hunting opportunities on the mountain.
  - Motorized access to hunting/fishing areas, and increased understanding that this activity is going on.
  - Improve the defined sense of place to help people to understand the expectations while they are there. Respect for this place as a user.
  - Appropriate signage for respecting the place and people (including availability for a variety of languages).
  - Visitor Center/Kiosk that provides useful information (Leave no Trace) and helping people understand the importance of the area—why it matters. User friendly, easy to understand—messages reinforced by people on the ground.
  - Meeting people where they are in terms of information provision (make it easy for them)
  - Leave no Trace (plan and prepare)—start with more planning and information gathering as the basis for planning.
  - Maintain the history of the roads (for example, the “Justine road” to reflect and maintain the artistic/aesthetic consistency –sets the tone of this place and increases respect for it –special character (materials, signage, etc.)
4. *What benefits should people and local communities experience from recreation in the Kaaterskill Clove project area?*
- Helping Tannersville/Palenville vitality through moving people around...improving parking and improved wayfinding.
  - Safety (capacity for traffic, resources)
  - Grow visitation—drive Catskills and County Tourism economy
  - Resource Protection—appropriate for carrying capacity
  - That people come here knowing they have a safe, available place to park to visit the falls and other areas—dependable way to get to where they want to go.
  - Reduced need for law enforcement intervention in parking issues—offsite parking as an option.
5. *Other*

- Increased focus on resource management (less about people and more about protecting resources).
- Resource management that can allow for tourism and economic development.
- Consider the private and public land mix in management decisions.
- State lands managed appropriately by the state (with partner support).
- Improved public and private relationships (work together to achieve results).
- Respect incorporating values of the state park when considering recreational uses – refer to Article 14 State Constitution (including signage consistent with State constitution—be mindful of over-signage and impacts to scenery).

### **Indicators Activity**

Small groups again met for several minutes to brainstorm potential indicators for measuring desired conditions. As with the desired conditions activity, Otak provided an indicators “thought activity” with prompting questions to KC-SWG members one week in advance of the meeting. When reconvened as a large group, members shared the following indicators from their small group discussions, based on 1) the quality and character of visitors’ experiences, and 2) public safety

### **Quality & Character of Visitors’ Experiences**

- Visitor density on the trails (impact on natural setting)
- Track where visitors travel within the project area...how they are interacting with the local communities (“download the app”— which can include rewards, passports)
- Observations by stewards, vendors, rangers of bad actors and future limitations
- Amount of trash taken out of the Clove
- Amount of cars going into the gate at N/S Lake this year vs previous years (reflect actions at Laurel House this year) and into the future
- Collect traffic information for all four seasons to document year-round trends and trends over time, in order to inform regulation decisions)
- Resource degradation in different places (e.g., areas of high use)
- Carrying capacity of the land
- Tracking invasive species

### **Assessing Public Safety**

*(a member noted there are technologies/artificial intelligence applications that can assist with these measurements)*

- Visitor density
- Parking tickets issued

- Carrying capacity (volume and density) of pedestrian traffic on 23A near the Clove
- Reports of injuries and deaths, and rescues
- Reports of visitor conflicts; and visitors and landowners
- Number of times mutual aid is required
- Organized groups that use the park for more “extreme” sports and may have a higher risk when bringing in people with different capabilities.

***Thresholds--Photo simulation activity***

Meeting participants were invited to participate in an activity to document perceptions of crowding in a scene at Kaaterskill Falls (see representative slides 8-13 in [Appendix E](#)). Otak presented a series of photo simulations<sup>3</sup> engineered to include an increasing amount of people per photo or “viewscape.” Members were given a worksheet to record whether they would or would not feel crowded if they were at Kaaterskill Falls with the number of people depicted in each viewscape (i.e., people-per-viewscape or PPV). During a brief break, Otak tabulated the results and shared them with the meeting participants (Figure 1).

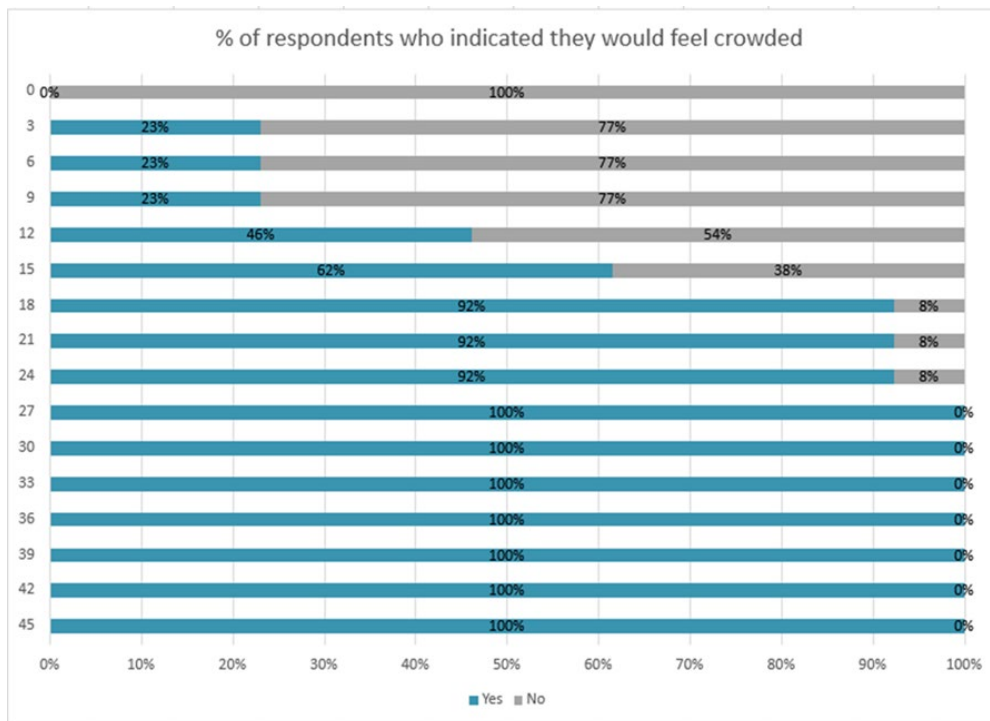


Figure 1. Results of photo simulation exercise with meeting participants.

<sup>3</sup> A similar photo simulation exercise was conducted onsite as part of the visitor use survey administered at the Laurel House Road Trailhead.

These results suggest that 23% of meeting participants would feel crowded with 3-9 PPV, 46% would feel crowded with 12 PPV, the majority (62%) would feel crowded with 15 PPV, and all participants would feel crowded with 27 or more PPV. These results are similar to results from the onsite visitor use survey administered at Laurel House Road Trailhead that Otak is currently analyzing. Otak emphasized that these and other perspectives will be important for developing draft thresholds as part of the resulting management report and monitoring plan.

### Next Steps

Members were invited to comment on whether future KC-SWG meetings should be held online or in-person. The group agreed that in-person, morning meetings were preferable.

Prior to concluding the meeting, a member asserted that some members needed to have greater interaction with DEC throughout this analysis process and that this difference in needs was not adequately reflected in the KC-SWG<sup>4</sup>. DEC will follow up separately with these individuals.

A summary of today's meeting will be distributed to KC-SWG members. Abbies will confirm with the project team about sharing the slide deck in advance of the summary.<sup>5</sup>

Otak provided a review of the project's next steps:

- Data entry, cleaning, and preliminary analysis: September-- December 2023
- Data tabulation and final analyses: January—May 2024
- Study report and monitoring plan: May—October 2024

Otak and NYSDEC thanked participants for their engagement, and reminded everyone that an ongoing source of information about the project can be found on the project website at: [www.kaaterskillclovevum.com](http://www.kaaterskillclovevum.com). Members of the KC-SWG are encouraged to disseminate the project website throughout their network to raise awareness about the project and to share information with the public.

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<sup>4</sup> Susan Hayman, Facilitator, provided additional thoughts on this conversation in an email to KC-SWG members on October 11, 2023.

<sup>5</sup> PDF file of slides were emailed to KC-SWG members on October 11, 2023.



## Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

CATSKILL PARK ▶ KAATERSKILL CLOVE  
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT

### Stakeholder Working Group Meeting #1

#### Meeting Agenda

Tuesday, October 3, 2023

9:00am-12:30pm

Tannersville Village Hall

5974 Main Street, Tannersville, NY

#### Meeting Purpose:

1. Convene the Stakeholder Working Group and affirm guidelines for how we will work together.
2. Review and discuss summer 2023 onsite data collection activities to learn the type of information that has been collected and how it will be analyzed and applied in the project.
3. Discuss your ideas about desired conditions, indicators, and thresholds for visitors' experiences and public safety in the project area.

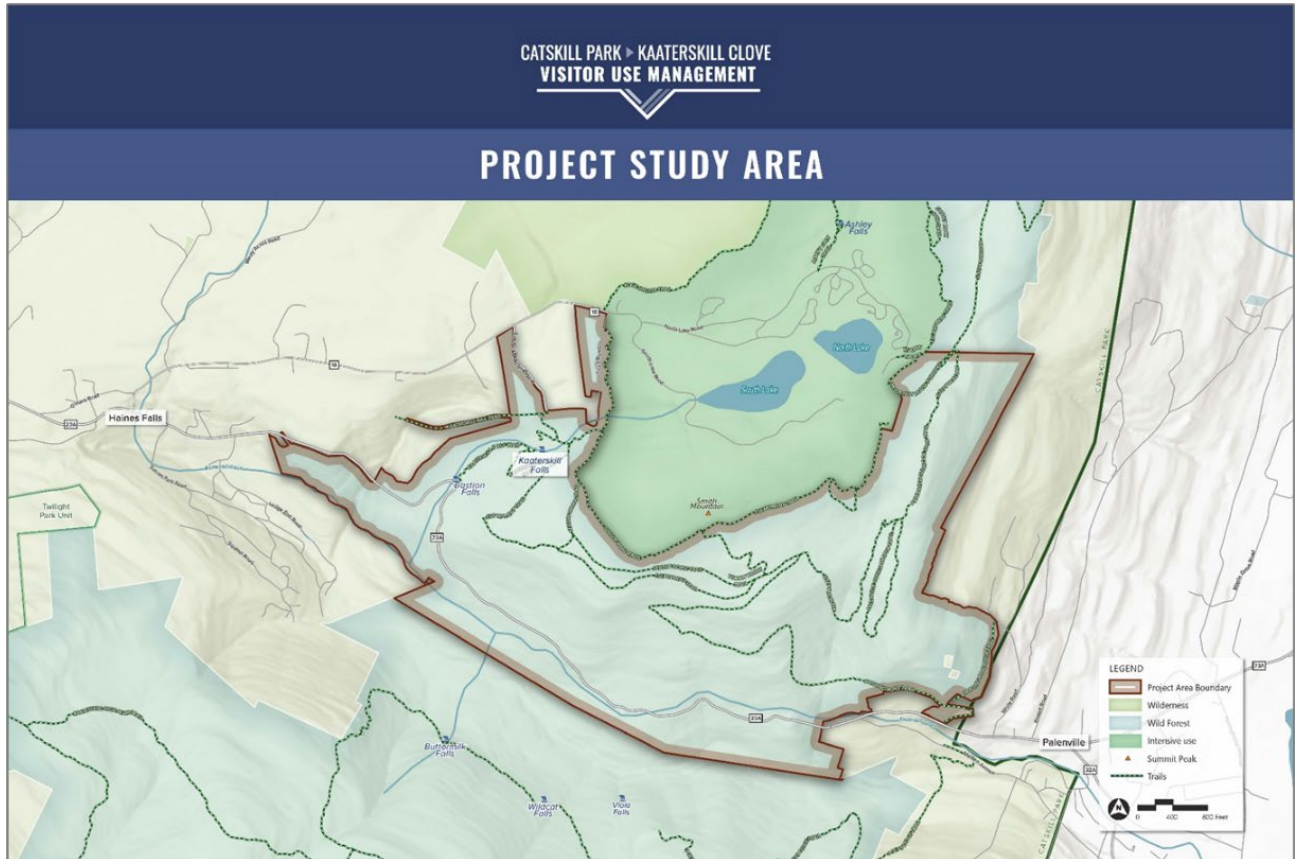
Time	Topic/Speakers	Reference Materials
9:00 am	Gathering— <i>Susan Hayman, Facilitator</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and introductions</li> <li>• Meeting purpose and overview</li> <li>• Gathering activity/introductions</li> </ul>	---
9:20 am	Stakeholder Working Group Operational Guidelines — <i>Susan Hayman</i>	Draft Operational Guidelines (meeting packet)
9:45 am	Summer 2023 Onsite Data Collection— <i>Abbie Larkin, Otak</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refresher on VUM components and how they interconnect</li> <li>• Overview and summary of data collection efforts</li> <li>• Questions/responses/discussion</li> </ul>	Presentation slides (in-meeting)
10:15am	Break	
10:30am	Desired Future Conditions and Indicators— <i>Facilitated Activity</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desired future conditions activity</li> <li>• Indicators activity</li> <li>• Photo simulation activity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Desired Future Conditions Thought Activity (meeting packet)</li> <li>• Indicators Thought Activity (meeting packet)</li> <li>• Photo simulation slides (in-meeting)</li> </ul>
12:15pm	Next steps and future meetings— <i>Susan Hayman</i>	
12:30 pm	Adjourn	



Appendix B: KC-SWG Meeting Attendance

Organization	Representative	Attendance
Adirondack Mountain Club	Cathy Pedler	No
Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies	TBD	No
Catskill Center	Christina Ricciardelli	Yes
Catskill Center for Independence	Meghan Staring	No
Catskill Mountainkeeper	Taylor Jaffe	Yes
Greene County Sheriff	Lt. Andrew Overbaugh	Yes
Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District	Michelle Yost	No
Greene County Tourism	Warren Hart	Yes
Hunter Mountain Resort	Russ Coloton	No
Kaaterskill Trolley	Ryan Chadwick	Yes
Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway	David Kukle	Yes
Mountain Top Historical Society	Ryan Penny	Yes
NYS Dept of Transportation	Robert Rice	Yes
New York/New Jersey Trail Conference	Myra Romano	Yes
Town of Hunter	Sean Mahoney	Yes
Town of Hunter Police Department	Sgt. Bob Haines	No
Federated Sportsmen's Clubs of Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan Counties; NYS Conservation Council	Shannon Ryan	Yes
NYS Dept of Environmental Conservation	McCrea Burnham	Yes
	Josh Clague	Yes
	Vicki Cross	Yes
Otak	Abbie Larkin	Yes
Ross Strategic	Susan Hayman	Yes
<b>Observers:</b>		
1. Robert Monteleone, Catskill Mtn Fish & Game, Federated Sportsmen's Clubs of Ulster County and/or Greene County		
2. Peter Senterman, Landowner adjacent to State Lands		

## Appendix C: Kaaterskill Clove Project Study Area



## Appendix D: Adopted Operational Guidelines

Kaaterskill Clove Visitor Use Management  
Stakeholder Working Group Operational Agreements

October 2023

## Context

This document guides the scope and function of the Kaaterskill Clove Visitor Use Management (VUM) Stakeholder Working Group (KC-SWG) convened by Otak, Inc., which is under contract with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to lead a VUM planning process for the Kaaterskill Clove Project Area. The VUM planning process focuses on the experiential, social, and public safety elements of visitor use management and visitor capacities, to promote sustainable visitor use. The final project report Otak provides to DEC will include recommendations for management strategies and a monitoring plan to achieve and maintain desired conditions over time.

## Purpose and Scope

The purpose of the KC-SWG is to enable a diverse group of stakeholders representing organizations with key interests in the project area to engage in focused discussions about desired future conditions and visitor use management strategies. The KC-SWG will share information, exchange ideas, and provide individual or collective perspectives around substantive topics relevant to the Kaaterskill Clove Visitor Use Management Project. There is no hierarchy of importance among KC-SWG members—no one's voice carries more weight than another's. Each member brings an important and equally valued perspective.

**While this will not be a consensus-based decision-making or DEC advisory group**, group discussions will be timed and structured to maximize opportunities to meaningfully inform key process milestones. Facilitated processes may be used to gauge participant's viewpoints, and areas of agreement will be identified should they emerge.

The KC-SWG will include up to 20 members (see Attachment 1). DEC will participate in the KC-SWG meetings in an ex-officio capacity. Otak knows each member has other interests and needs in the project study area that extend beyond the scope of this visitor use management study. Otak expects members will continue to engage with DEC around these interests and needs—participation in the KC-SWG does not replace other ongoing, important coordination.

Participants agree to:

- Actively participate in discussions, and complete pre-meeting assignments as requested.
- Actively and respectfully listen to and consider other points of view and interests.
- Attend up to three meetings. Participants may designate one alternate to represent their organization in the event they themselves cannot attend.
- Serve as a conduit for information to and from affiliated organization members.
- Assume responsibility for costs (travel expenses, salary, etc.) associated with their participation as an organizational representative in this voluntary working group.

#### Quorum Requirement

Since this is not a decision-making group, there is no quorum requirement.

#### Duration

The KC-SWG will be convened in September 2023, and meet three times: Fall 2023, Spring 2024, and Fall 2024. Meetings will generally last up to 3.5 hours. KC-SWG members prefer to meet in-person, with a preference for morning meetings. Dates for subsequent meetings will be collaboratively determined within the parameters of the project schedule.

#### Meeting Materials

A meeting packet with the agenda and any pertinent pre-meeting reading material will be provided to group members at least one week prior to each meeting.

#### Meeting Outcomes

Meeting summaries will contain key discussion points, areas of agreement, action items, and other synthesized information that will not be attributed to any individual meeting participant, except for the Otak team and DEC representatives.

Information created as a part of this process may eventually be considered part of the public record. A list of KC-SWG participants is attached to these operational agreements (Attachment 1) and may also be considered public information.

#### Process Facilitation

The Otak team includes an independent third-party neutral facilitator who will support this working group. The facilitator neutrally and impartially supports all participants, maintains the integrity of the process, and facilitates communication about the process among participants and other interested parties. The facilitator will collaboratively prepare meeting agendas, suggest process design, and compile working group products.

Private conversations between individual working group members and the facilitator will be considered confidential unless otherwise identified.

#### Group Conduct

All meeting participants, including Otak team member, DEC representatives, and stakeholders agree to:

1. Listen to and appreciate a diversity of views and opinions
2. Actively participate in the group
3. Behave constructively and respectfully towards all participants
4. Respect the role of the facilitator to guide the group process

Disagreement and differences of opinion are acknowledged, explored, and appreciated. Should conflict arise, it will be addressed with the guidance of the facilitator.

Attachment 1: Kaaterskill Clove VUM Stakeholder Working Group

Organization	Representative
Adirondack Mountain Club	Cathy Pedler
Cary Institute of Ecosystem Studies	(To Be Determined)
Catskill Center	Jeff Senterman
Catskill Center for Independence	Meghan Staring
Catskill Mountainkeeper	Taylor Jaffe
Greene County Sheriff	Lt. Andrew Overbaugh
Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District	Michelle Yost
Greene County Tourism	Warren Hart
Hunter Mountain Ski Bowl	(To Be Determined)
Kaaterskill Trolley	Ryan Chadwick
Mountain Cloves Scenic Byway	David Kukle
Mountain Top Historical Society	Ryan Penny
New York State Department of Transportation	Greg Wichser or Bob Rice
New York/New Jersey Trail Conference	Myra Romano
Town of Hunter	Sean Mahoney
Town of Hunter Police Department	Sgt. Bob Haines
Federated Sportsmen’s Clubs of Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan Counties; NYS Conservation Council	Shannon Ryan



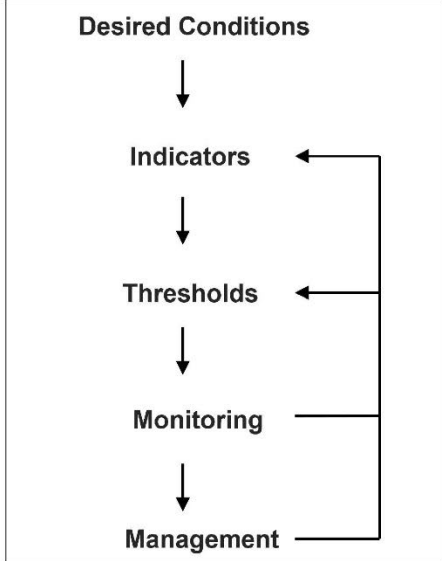
## Appendix E: Summary of Onsite Data Collection




**Summary of Onsite Data Collection:  
Kaaterskill Clove Project Area**

NYSDEC Visitor Use Management Project – Stakeholder Working Group Meeting  
October 2023

*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*



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graph TD; A[Desired Conditions] --> B[Indicators]; B --> C[Thresholds]; C --> D[Monitoring]; D --> E[Management]; E --> B; E --> C; E --> D;
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2

# Data Collection Approach

Operationalize the VUM framework

- Indicators
- Thresholds
- Management strategies



# Data Collection Approach

Operationalize the VUM framework

- Describe current conditions
- Help identify relationships between recreation use and impacts
- Evaluate recreation use conditions
  - Visitor-based thresholds
  - Visitor perceptions, preferences, tolerances
  - Visitor attitudes and opinions

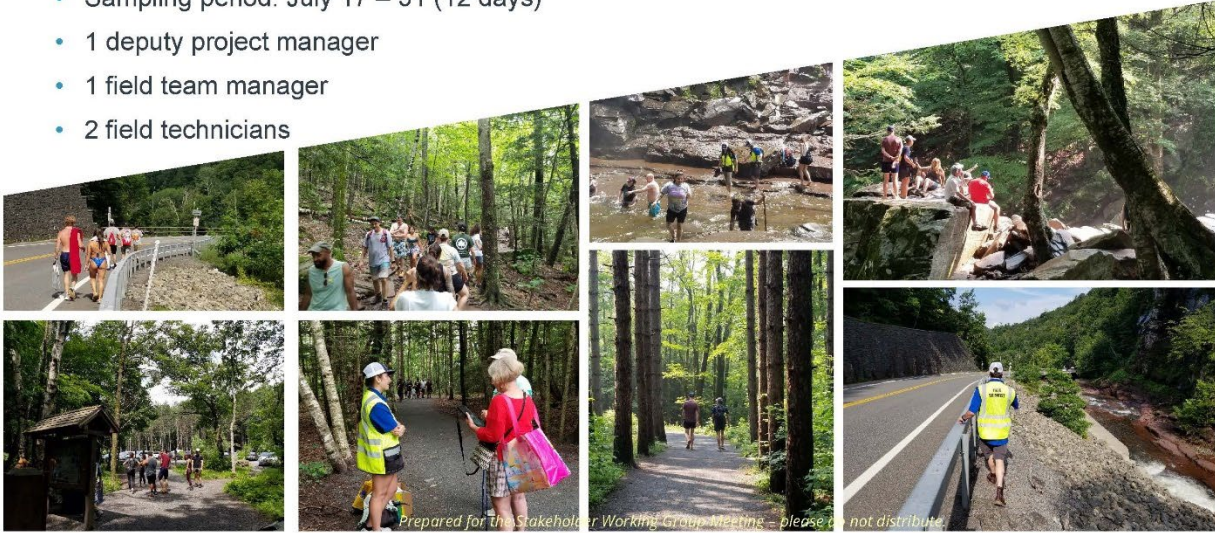






## Onsite Data Collection

- Sampling period: July 17 – 31 (12 days)
- 1 deputy project manager
- 1 field team manager
- 2 field technicians



## Data Collection Summary

- **259 GPS tracks, 99%** response rate
- **248 surveys at Laurel House Road; 84%** response rate
- **82 hours of PAOT/PPV counts** at Kaaterskill Falls Middle Pool and along the 23A road corridor/swimming area



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6

## Data Collection Summary

- **84** hours of **parking accumulation** at Laurel House Road, Mountain Top Historical Society, 23A, and Harding Trailhead
- **5** months of **traffic volumes** (ongoing through mid-October)
- **5** months of **trail volumes** (ongoing through mid-October)



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7

## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #1



*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*

8





## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #2



*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*

9



## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #3



*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*

10





## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #4



*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*

11



## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #5



*Prepared for the Stakeholder Working Group Meeting – please do not distribute.*

12

## Visitor Survey – *Would You Feel Crowded?*

Photo #6



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13

## Visitor Survey – Management Practices

Support/oppose potential management practices to help address parking issues that occur during peak periods:

- Expand or create a new parking lot...
- Temporarily stop vehicles from entering the parking lot...
- Require people to park at an offsite parking lot and ride a free shuttle bus...
- Require people to make an advanced parking reservation...
- Require people to solve the problem on their own...

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14





## Visitor Survey – Management Practices

Support/oppose potential management practices to help address crowding issues that occur during peak periods:

- Require people to make advanced reservations to visit...
  - On weekend days and holidays
  - On any day of the week
- Require people to expect and adapt to crowded conditions

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15



## Next Steps

Task	Tentative Timeline
Data entry, cleaning, and preliminary analysis	September – December 2023
Data tabulation and final analyses	January – May 2024
Study report and monitoring plan	May – October 2024

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16