



**Catskill
Heritage
Alliance**



Joint Release from: The Catskill Heritage Alliance, Catskill Mountainkeeper, The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development

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Outdoor Recreation on Catskill Lands Brings 2.5 Million People, Thousands of Jobs, and \$115 million, Study Shows

Public Forum Will Discuss Findings and Their Implications for Development

[Shokan, NY – January 18, 2013] What are the open spaces of the Catskills worth to the local economy? Plenty, according to a new study, which finds that recreational opportunities on the Catskills' publicly owned State and New York City lands* plus private lands open to the public, draw over 1.7 million visitors annually. They create an economic impact of \$46,207,000 and support 980 jobs. Add those who come to enjoy other privately held lands, and the total number of people choosing the Catskills for recreation each year is almost 2.5 million, creating an economic impact of \$114,768,000 and supporting 2,413 jobs.

So states a new report, "Economic Valuation Study for Public Lands in the Central Catskills" prepared by Brian Zweig of Business Opportunities Management Consulting. Commissioned by the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, Catskill Mountainkeeper, and Catskill Heritage Alliance, the report assesses the economic impact of outdoor recreation in our region by analyzing publicly available data using Money Generation Models (MGM) software developed for the National Park Service by a team from Michigan State University. It also identifies potential recreational and marketing opportunities for further consideration, such as a Catskill Interpretive Center and a "Gateway" Visitor Information Center.

Although previous studies and plans have addressed the economic impacts of outdoor recreation in the Catskills, none of them, Zweig says, “have provided a comprehensive estimate of the number of visitors and the economic impact associated with outdoor recreational activities in the Central Catskills region.”

"This economic impact study confirms with hard data the exceptional economic potential of this landscape of mountains, forests, streams, farmland, and villages," said Kathy Nolan, chair of the Catskill Heritage Alliance. "It shows the choice before us in dollar terms: erode what Nature gave us and undermine our economic sustainability, or build on the potential to strengthen the economic future of the region."

"The new numbers confirm what we've known for a long time," said Ramsay Adams, Founder and Executive Director of Catskill Mountainkeeper. "The natural beauty of our region is a unique, world-class asset. It made the Hudson River School of painting world famous in the 19th century, and it's the key to our future in the 21st. Preserving our open space and community character is an environmental and aesthetic imperative, but it's also clearly an economic one. This new study is more evidence that if we want to grow economically, we have to do it in a sustainable way that protects what draws people here: our spectacular environment."

"This study clearly quantifies the economic impact of our protected land and places new priority on projects that will grow tourism in the Catskills, such as the Catskill Interpretive Center and new Catskill Park road signage," said Alan White, Executive Director of the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development. "We can use the results of this study to guide regional efforts to promote the Catskill Park, beginning with creating a new recreational plan."

An executive summary of the economic impact study is posted online at <http://www.catskillheritage.org>. The report will be released in full on January 31, 2013, at a public forum entitled "What are the Catskills Worth? The Economic Value of Catskill Park and NYC Watershed Lands" hosted by the Catskill Center, Catskill Mountainkeeper and the Catskill Heritage Alliance and held at the Olive Town Meeting House (50 Bostock Rd, off Route 28 in Shokan, NY) from 4:30pm - 6pm. The event is free and open to the public and light refreshments will be served.

At the forum, Mr. Zweig will present the study's findings, answer questions and participate in a panel discussion with development experts on implications for future development priorities. Panelists include Peg Ellsworth, executive director of the MARK Project in Arkville, New York, and Ed Goodell, executive director of the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference. The MARK project provides housing programs, economic

development and technical assistance services to the Towns of Andes, Middletown and Roxbury and the Villages of Fleischmanns and Margaretville, including in the outdoor recreation and tourism sectors. The New York/New Jersey Trail Conference is a network of over 1,800 miles of public trails with a membership of 10,000 individuals and 100 clubs that have a combined membership of over 100,000 active, outdoor-loving people.

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NOTE TO EDITORS AND PRODUCERS: *Experts named in this release are available for interviews on request. To arrange an interview, or to request an advance copy of the full “Economic Valuation Study” please contact Stephen Kent, skent@kentcom.com, 914-589-5988*

The Catskill Heritage Alliance is a nonprofit grassroots organization dedicated to preserving the harmony between people and wilderness in the central Catskills. It seeks to protect the unique wilderness environment that is the region’s abiding treasure and its most reliable economic engine.

Catskill Mountainkeeper is a nonprofit grassroots advocacy organization dedicated to protecting and preserving the unique and irreplaceable Catskill Region of New York State, through vigorously fighting threats to our region and simultaneously pursuing opportunities for sustainable growth.

The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development is a member-supported nonprofit organization serving the Catskill Mountain region of New York State. It stimulates, conducts, and supports integrated actions to protect vital ecosystems and unique landscapes, to enhance economic opportunities for all the region’s residents, to preserve cultural and historic assets, and to further a regional vision and spirit.

*The Catskill Park consists of 705,500 acres and includes 287,514 acres of Forever Wild Forest Preserve land. The Catskill-Delaware Watershed covers 1,022,080 acres, of which 150,000 acres are owned by New York City’s Department of Environmental Protection (DEP). Approximately 64,000 acres of these DEP lands are open for public recreation.