



Request for Proposals: Economic Valuation Study for Public Lands in the Central Catskills

Issued By: Catskill Center for Conservation and Development; Catskill Mountainkeeper; Catskill Heritage Alliance

Background

The Catskill Mountain Region is largely defined by a core area of protected public lands inside the Catskill Park and the Catskill-Delaware Watershed, which supplies the majority of New York City's drinking water. Approximately 288,000 acres, or 41 percent of the Catskill Park, are state-owned forest preserve lands. State recreational facilities and assets in the Catskill Forest Preserve include seven campgrounds, a downhill ski facility, two day use areas, 21 fishing access sites, 60 miles of public fishing rights, 303 miles of hiking trails, 80 miles of snowmobile trails, 34 miles of horse trails, mountain-biking opportunities including an 804-acre mountain-biking area (in cooperation with NYC); 33 lean-tos; and five restored fire towers. In addition to the forest preserve lands, New York State's Department of Environmental Conservation manages several thousand acres of state forest and wildlife management areas in close proximity to the Park. The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) owns approximately 150,000 acres within the 1585 square-mile Catskill-Delaware Watershed, and this figure is expected to increase in the coming years. Approximately 64,000 acres of DEP lands are open for public recreation, with some of these opportunities requiring a permit. The city also owns six reservoirs where fishing is allowed, and they are currently allowing for non-motorized recreational boating opportunities on one of those reservoirs (Cannonsville) on a trial basis. Fifty towns and villages have boundaries wholly or partially within the Park or the Watershed.

The concentration of public lands and their recreational and scenic assets represent a significant economic value to the region's communities; however, a comprehensive economic valuation study on these resources has not been undertaken. The Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (CCCD), Catskill Mountainkeeper (CMK), and Catskill Heritage Alliance (CHA) seek to generate a report that will quantify the

economic value of these public lands and their amenities to the communities inside the Catskill Park and the Catskill-Delaware Watershed. (The Catskill-Delaware Watershed encompasses the combined watersheds of the Ashokan, Schoharie, Pepacton, Cannonsville, Neversink, and Rondout Reservoirs).

Project Objectives

This study should examine the economic benefits that are generated for surrounding communities by the Catskill Forest Preserve and the New York City-owned and publicly accessible lands in the Catskill-Delaware Watershed. The benefits include visitor expenditures such as food, lodging, and guide services. Another important benefit is job creation and the secondary impact of employee spending.

The study should be brief and easy to understand and should achieve the following goals:

1. Assess the magnitude of factors such as visitor spending in communities inside the Catskill Park and the Catskill-Delaware Watershed.
2. Identify unrealized or undeveloped recreational opportunities on public lands that could be developed under existing management constraints that would contribute to and/or further enhance local and regional economies.

Scope of Services

Drawing on the expertise of the client organizations, the consultant will succinctly describe the general economic system of the Catskills and the role public land-related activity plays in local and regional economies. The consultant will estimate the individual and combined economic impact of the Catskill Forest Preserve and the New York City owned and publicly accessible lands in the Catskill-Delaware Watershed. Additional publicly accessible parklands owned by other entities should be factored into the examination. The consultant will work with CCCD, CMK, and CHA as well as with NYC DEP, NYS Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC), and other groups such as Trout Unlimited to obtain necessary background information, including user data such as trail registry and permit issuance information. The consultant shall analyze the economic benefits of visitors and workers having a direct relationship with the public parkland. Visitors (anyone who uses the resources) include but are not limited to persons who sign trail registers (and estimates of those who do not), hunters, trappers and fishers, boaters, mountain bikers, river runners, skiers, snowmobilers, horseback riders, students and teachers using the parkland as open classrooms, clients and leaders on guided hikes and camping trips, intentional (spiritual) community members (park as open sanctuary), birders, and those involved in scientific data collection. Workers include public employees of DEC and DEP and other state, regional, or municipal agencies that in some way have responsibility for managing the land (even if

their office is outside the park). Existing information should form the base of the economic valuation to the extent practicable, although complementary estimates may accompany the valuation and should be identified.

The consultant will calculate or estimate the values of:

Visitor expenditures – Consultant should propose the most appropriate method of calculating the impact of visitors to the local economy. Methods may include a transportation analysis based on the distance that visitors travel to the Catskill Region. Another approach would be to use an estimated value for day users and overnight visitors to magnify visitor expenditures by the appropriate multiplier. The counties should be able to provide information about the occupancy and sales tax related to overnight lodging.

Other economic benefits – Consultant should analyze whether a suitable method exists to calculate or estimate any significant amount of economic activity provided by the DEC and DEP and other dedicated public open space landowners in terms of measurable benefits such as jobs, materials, contracts, and tax revenues.

The consultant shall also describe the methodology(ies) proposed for this report, including an assessment of the methodology(ies) in terms of strengths and weaknesses relative to cost. As part of the assessment, the consultant shall describe how the findings in the report can be incorporated within and help stimulate a larger, more comprehensive and detailed economic analysis. The project partners are interested in undertaking this type of larger regional impact project and envision it to include such elements as tourism spending (direct, indirect, induced) and its impacts on employment, income, and taxes; economic impact and trends of second homeowners; impacts of privately owned recreation venues (e.g. ski centers); and the role of heritage tourism.

Project Deliverables

The final report for this project should be concise and not exceed 20 pages. The project's partner organizations have limited financial resources and the intention is for the consultant to generate a focused report that identifies the economic value of the public lands. The project partners envision a six- to twelve-month time period for the project. The final report should be accompanied by a one-page (front and back) stand-alone document that can be used by the clients for purposes including meetings and mailings. Four copies of the final product should be submitted on compact disc.

Qualifications of Consultant

The consultant qualification should include:

- Previous experience conducting economic valuation studies

- Familiarity with the Catskills is a plus

Proposal Contents

Proposals should include:

- Project approach – outline the intended approach to the project including research methods and cost
- Project schedule – if appropriate, the project schedule should include project milestones
- Please identify information that you would need from the clients to successfully complete the project

Selection Criteria

Proposals will be reviewed and a consultant will be selected based on the following criteria:

- Consultant demonstrates an understanding of the project goals
- Consultant has relevant background/experience with similar projects
- Proposed schedule
- Proposed budget
- Interviews and/or phone conversations between clients and consultant

(The partnering organizations, at their discretion, reserve the right to withhold selection of a consultant).

Proposal Submission Deadline

Proposals should be received on or by July 11, 2011. Proposals can be sent by email to:

Peter Manning (pmanning@catskillcenter.org), Ramsay Adams (ramsay@catskillmountainkeeper.org), and Roger Wall (rlwall@mindspring.com).

Or by mail to:

Peter Manning, Regional Planner, Catskill Center for Conservation and Development, PO Box 504, Route 28, Arkville, NY 12406

If you plan to submit your proposal by mail, please include **four** copies.

Prior to submission, any questions about this project can be addressed to Peter Manning: pmanning@catskillcenter.org or (845) 586-2611 ext. 104.