



Hudson Highlands Fjord
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Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. Hires Visitor Management Consultant to Develop Additional Strategies for Managing Tourism in the Hudson Highlands

ORCA Consulting, with three decades of experience, will support Fjord Trail efforts to utilize six unique entry points to trailheads between Beacon and Cold Spring

POUGHKEEPSIE, NY — Today, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail (HHFT) announced it has hired ORCA Consulting (ORCA) as its visitation management advisor to support ongoing efforts to reduce traffic congestion and associated problems currently experienced by residents of Cold Spring and park staff in Hudson Highlands State Park. As experienced visitation management experts, ORCA will work with HHFT to employ state-of-the-art tools and strategies, in collaboration with municipal, state, and other partners, to effectively manage visitation in local communities and Hudson Highlands State Park along Route 9D.

ORCA's experience includes planning for and implementing visitation management strategies across the country. Most notably, the ORCA team worked closely with park managers and municipal leaders on projects like Muir Woods National Monument and Sitka National Historical Park, among others, to mitigate impacts on the gateway communities adjacent to these recreational destinations.

As part of its responsibility for the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, ORCA will analyze current and projected local and visitor vehicular and pedestrian traffic and develop strategies and mitigation plans to address visitation levels in the local communities of Cold Spring, Nelsonville, and Beacon. These strategies will work in tandem with crowd mitigation efforts already planned for the Fjord Trail, including additional parking at Dutchess Manor and other locations, six separate access points to diffuse visitors from Beacon to Cold Spring, wayfinding signage, and sidewalks from train to trail.

“As a former Supervisor, I know the value of hiring the best consultants to deal with complex issues,” said Richard Shea, former Philipstown Supervisor, HHFT Board Member, and Cold Spring resident. “In my twenty years on the Town Board, I gained invaluable knowledge of how much smart engineering, water resources management, and attention to climate change

matter to a project such as this one. I look forward to working with the leading experts at ORCA and members of our community on some of the most consequential aspects of the Fjord Trail.”

“Cold Spring is an extraordinary gem that we at HHFT are committed to protecting in all its rare beauty and qualities,” said HHFT Executive Director Amy Kacala. “The Fjord Trail was conceived by members of the community as a forward-looking solution to help better manage tourism – particularly traffic – in the Hudson Highlands first for local residents and also for visitors to Hudson Highlands State Park. ORCA will help us realize those goals by further developing strategies to manage visitation and preserve and protect our communities and the natural environment that makes them so special.”

AKRF, a leading environmental engineering firm specializing in climate resilience and sustainability, is the consultant team preparing the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS). AKRF has additionally been tasked with bringing all traffic data to current levels by taking new counts during the 2023 visitation season. AKRF and ORCA’s engagement on this project will support efforts to ensure that the Fjord Trail will manage visitation demand and create appropriate infrastructure to mitigate any potential additional stress on local communities. The research and work of both AKRF and ORCA will be integrated to develop collaborative solutions with the Villages of Cold Spring and Nelsonville, the Town of Philipstown, and City of Beacon, to help ensure that local residents can access Main Street, area stores, train stations, and related parking, and enjoy the natural attractions that drew them to the area and are essential to their quality of life.

The visitor management systems will work in parallel with planned measures to protect the surrounding natural environment, enhancing shoreline resilience in anticipation of rising sea levels, incorporating native plants, remediating invasive species, and repairing existing habitat infringement and degradation caused by unauthorized social trails.

“ORCA Consulting LLC has decades of experience in helping communities that serve as gateways to parks manage visitation to ensure local resources and residents’ quality of life are protected,” said Al Shacklett, Principal, ORCA Consulting. “We are pleased to have been selected as the planning consultant working with HHFT to identify and implement strategies for visitation management that will ensure both comfortable and meaningful visitor experiences and mitigate congestion conditions at HHFT activity areas and in the gateway communities of Cold Spring and Beacon.”

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About HHFT

The Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail offers a community-driven solution for managing tourism in the region and will make the beauty that surrounds us more accessible to people of all ages and abilities. HHFT’s mission is to create and steward a 7.5-mile linear park along the Hudson River that solves existing safety concerns around visitation, provides welcoming access to people of all abilities, restores and protects natural resources, and enhances quality of life for local communities. The Fjord Trail will add organized parking, public restrooms, trash/recycling collection, and distribute users of the park along a 7.5-mile route with six main access points. Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail is a subsidiary nonprofit of Scenic Hudson, Inc.