



Hudson Highlands Fjord
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Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. Announces It Will Take a Trail-First Approach to Implementation

With Feedback from Ongoing Community Engagement and Input from Experts and Partners, Activity Areas Will be Removed from Consideration in the Generic Environmental Impact Statement

HHFT Will also Convene a Series of Community Meetings in the Fall to Review the Proposed and Alternative Routes to Connect the Village of Cold Spring with Breakneck Ridge before Finalizing and Submitting its Draft Generic Environmental Impact Study to the State

Poughkeepsie, New York - Today, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. (HHFT) announced that it will focus exclusively on implementing the proposed 7.5-mile main trail connecting the City of Beacon to the Village of Cold Spring, associated parking areas, trailhead entries, and its visitor center, suspending development of any additional project elements. This represents the latest refinement of the project as it continues to evolve as a visitation management strategy through data, community input, and expert advice.

Additional enhancements in the 2020 Draft Master Plan, including a play area and an outdoor classroom at Little Stony Point, as well as forest nets and a swimming area, will not be included in the pending Generic Environmental Impact Statement (GEIS). Further enhancements will be considered only after construction of the main trail is complete – currently projected for 2031 – and subsequent tourism trends and community needs can be analyzed. Any future enhancements will undergo their own specific environmental review process.

Christopher Davis, HHFT Board Chair, and Philipstown resident said, “Members of the community first envisioned the Fjord Trail nearly twenty years ago as a solution to safety concerns around Breakneck Ridge and on Morris Avenue/Route 9D, and related impacts on the Cold Spring and Nelsonville village centers. Since then, we have shaped and reshaped the vision to ensure the proposed project delivers on that community vision. Many of the program spaces were included to accommodate existing local uses of areas within the park, but we want to proceed with care to ensure we don’t inadvertently add to visitation and congestion. The focused and strategic approach we are now proposing ensures that we

achieve the vision and provide managed access to this beautiful Highlands region that we and our partners have spent so many years working on.”

“Over the past year, HHFT has hosted or attended twenty public meetings or events and numerous listening sessions to gather input. As visitor counts continue to increase, it is clear the project needs to prioritize visitation management to help mitigate the impacts of existing and projected tourism on local communities and the landscape,” said HHFT Executive Director Amy Kacala. “By taking a ‘trail first’ approach, we are reaffirming our top priority: managing visitation to existing destinations in the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve and the related impacts on the Village of Cold Spring. This has always been the core goal of the project.”

Work on the environmental review continues and will include additional opportunities for local communities to weigh in. HHFT has invited each of the project-area communities — Cold Spring, Nelsonville, Philipstown, Beacon, and Fishkill — to name representatives to a Visitation Data Committee that will help review the ongoing traffic study, pedestrian counts, and visitation projection for the project. This committee will be granted a stipend to engage a third-party consultant to lend technical capacity to their review.

The work of the Visitation Data Committee and HHFT’s visitation management consultants will be shared with the community for input and comment in a series of three meetings to be held this fall. These meetings will enable the community to learn about and comment on: (1) routes through the Village of Cold Spring that were considered and which of those remain technically viable; (2) the visitation projection, how it was developed, and what visitation management techniques might be employed to help manage visitors, and; (3) view a live model, based on projections, of how visitors would move through the Village under different route alternatives. Details on the upcoming workshop series will be announced over the summer.

HHFT Board member and Cold Spring resident Richard Shea said, “HHFT is demonstrating through these actions the degree to which we listen to and incorporate community input. The work of the data committee and the fall public meeting series will be additional opportunities for dialogue. I urge all to join in these important conversations to find the best solution for the villages, town, and region.”

The Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail offers a solution for managing tourism in the region and will make the beauty that surrounds us more accessible to people of all ages and abilities, including and particularly local residents. The proposed main trail is intended to reduce visitor overcrowding and relieve traffic congestion by providing six access points across its 7.5-mile route; sidewalks from train to trail; public restrooms at each trailhead, open from dawn to dusk; four parking lots at trailhead entries at Notch, Dutchess Manor, Breakneck Connector, and Little Stony Point; a shuttle van system to help alleviate traffic and encourage public transportation use; trash and recycling collection along the trail; and a Visitor Center at Dutchess Manor.

Last month, Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. [announced](#) that it had hired ORCA Consulting (ORCA) as its visitation management advisor to support ongoing efforts to help refine the plan and develop operational strategies to help mitigate impacts of high visitation on Cold Spring, Philipstown, Nelsonville, and the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve. As experienced visitation management experts with three decades in the field, 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 major trailheads of the Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve.

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About HHFT

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. (HHFT) is a subsidiary of Scenic Hudson, Inc., an organization devoted to protecting the natural beauty of the Hudson Valley. HHFT oversees the direct planning and construction of the Fjord Trail, which is slated for completion in 2031. 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, envisioned by locals nearly two decades ago, aims to address safety, manage visitation, and respect the landscape. It 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. For more information, news, and timely announcements on the Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, [please visit hhft.org/news](https://www.hhft.org/news).