



Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail  
c/o Scenic Hudson  
85 Civic Center Plaza, Suite  
300 Poughkeepsie, NY 12601  
hhft.org

**Contact:**

Lori Moss, Communications Manager  
[lmoss@hhft.org](mailto:lmoss@hhft.org) / 845-625-3301

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

June 12, 2024

**New Date for Release of Fjord Trail Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS)**

*Early-fall public review and comment period will allow for completion of Visitation Data Committee process and avoid a public comment period during the busy summer travel season*

FISHKILL, NY — Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. (HHFT) announced today that the DGEIS public comment period for the project has been shifted by New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) to early fall 2024.

This timing will better align with the completion of the important work of the HHFT Visitation Data Committee (VDC) in preparing local municipal boards for their review of the Draft Generic Environmental Impact Statement (DGEIS) during the public comment period.

The Visitation Data Committee was formed by HHFT to create an opportunity for project area communities to get early review and analysis of three data topics that will be included in the Fjord Trail's DGEIS: pedestrian counts, visitation projection for the proposed Fjord Trail linear park area with the trail fully built and without it, and a traffic study that informs the traffic section of the DGEIS.

Each municipality in the project area has representation on the committee, as does the Village of Nelsonville. The Villages of Cold Spring and Nelsonville have the most representation per capita.

The scope of the committee's work is to objectively review and help refine analysis — as appropriate to professional standards of practice — of each of these data topics, ultimately helping inform each respective municipality to make official comments as Interested/Involved Agencies during the DGEIS public comment period.

As part of the VDC process outlined by HHFT, the volunteer municipal appointees work with a professional planning consultant, BFJ Planning (BFJ), who was independently selected by the volunteer municipal appointees. The role of BFJ is to aid the municipal appointees in their review of data gathered and presented by HHFT's planning and visitation management consultants, AKRF and ORCA; and to help clarify technical points and share industry best practice guidelines. HHFT is covering the cost of BFJ's services.

After additional appointments to the committee from the City of Beacon and the Town of Fishkill, VDC meetings resumed on June 5 with an onboarding session for new members. The VDC process will continue through August. The VDC is currently comprised of the following project area residents: Sarah Mencher, Zack Smith, and Amber Grant of Beacon; Ozzy Albra, Greg Totino, and Jon Kanter of Fishkill; Phil Cotennec and Jeff Robins of Philipstown; James Labate and Henry Feldman of Cold Spring, and Chris Winward of Nelsonville.

It should be noted that some of the information on visitation projections included in a report-out by two Philipstown VDC members to the Philipstown Town Board on June 6 has not been vetted by BFJ or the committee, and does not represent consensus from the VDC. Specific recommendations on the visitation projection from members of the VDC received during the committee meeting process are currently being incorporated, and a revised projection from HHFT's visitation management consultant, ORCA, is forthcoming. The VDC will review this revised projection at its scheduled meeting on June 25th. Once the projection is reviewed and accepted to the satisfaction of the majority of the committee, it will be released to the public.

#

#### About HHFT

Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail, Inc. (HHFT) is a subsidiary nonprofit of Scenic Hudson, Inc., an organization devoted to sustaining and enhancing the Hudson Valley's inspirational beauty and health for generations to come. HHFT's mission is to plan, build 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, which is planned to be completed in 2031, 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, visit [hhft.org](http://hhft.org).

#### About ORCA

ORCA Consulting has over three decades of experience, which 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.

#### About AKRF

AKRF, a leading environmental engineering firm specializing in climate resilience and sustainability, offers a full spectrum of environmental, planning, and engineering services. Founded in 1981, AKRF now has ten offices in five states and a remote employee network covering fourteen states. Their collective team is comprised of over 300 planners, engineers, scientists, economists, landscape designers, and construction professionals.