

Draft Master Plan for Taconic State Park

Columbia and Dutchess Counties
Towns of Copake, Ancram, and Northeast, NY
August 2, 2017



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

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Introduction

The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) administers over 200 state parks and historic sites encompassing more than 330,000 acres of parkland divided into 12 regions. The Taconic District park region contains 12 parks and 6 historic sites. Taconic State Park (TSP) is administered by the Taconic State Park region.

Taconic State Park is divided into two developed areas – Copake Falls and Rudd Pond. These areas are treated as one managerial unit in one comprehensive master plan because of their close relationship both geographically and administratively. Even so, there are some specific differences of need between the two locations that will be pointed out in the plan.

Under Section 3.02 of the Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation Law, OPRHP is directed “...to conserve, protect and enhance the natural, ecological, historic, cultural and recreational resources contained therein and to provide for the public enjoyment of and access to these resources in a manner that will protect them for future generations.” Master planning is an important tool that can be used to help meet the substantial responsibility of providing recreation while at the same time protecting and interpreting resources. The master plan process explores the existing physical, natural, cultural, recreational, and structural resources of the Park. It assesses the condition of these resources to provide recreation and interpretive opportunities within healthy and productive environments. The process calls for the development and consideration of alternatives that improve the recreational opportunities and experiences offered at the Park and enhance the stewardship of natural, cultural, and historic resources. The preferred alternatives best meet OPRHP’s mission and vision for the Park and form the final master plan.

OPRHP has determined that the preparation of a master plan for Taconic State Park will further its mission to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural and cultural resources.

Establishment of the Park

The genesis of the idea to secure Bash Bish Falls and the surrounding mountains for public ownership dates back to the 1880s (Gobrecht, Larry 2000b). TSP was first envisioned as part of a 40,000 acre Tri-State Park of New York, Massachusetts, and Connecticut. However, MA and CT decided, for different reasons, to abandon the idea, and New York proceeded on their own. In 1924 local landowners Francis and Ella Masters donated land to New York State as the first parcel of what was to become Taconic State Park (Chatham Courier, 1964). They also purchased Bash Bish Falls just to sell it to the State of Massachusetts for no gain with the provision that it forever remain undeveloped public land. As a result, Massachusetts established Bash Bish Falls State Park. In 1924 New York State authorized funding to the Conservation Commission for land purchases in the area. A year later the Taconic State Park Commission was established to take over the development of plans and to assume administrative responsibility. Five Commissioners were selected, with Francis Masters representing Columbia County, and F.D. Roosevelt as chairman.

Taconic State Park opened to the public in 1927 on approx. 2,600 acres of land around Copake Falls, NY. The Rudd Pond area in the Park’s southern section was acquired by the state in 1928 and opened to the public in 1931.

Beginning in 1933, the Park underwent renovation and expansion by the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC). Camp #3 Copake was established in Copake Falls, employing local men as foremen, all of them former employees of the Commission and the Park. For a brief portion of 1933, a CCC camp was located in the Boston Corners section of the Park. The CCC undertook a multitude of labor-intensive projects.

New York State continues its efforts to connect fragmented tracts of TSP and to extend the Taconic trail system. The most recent additions to the park were a 250 acre land purchase in 2008 and the purchase of development rights in 2015 over approximately 800 acres of private land spanning Washburn Mountain. Both transactions closed significant gaps in Taconic State Park’s Dutchess and Columbia County portions, the first near the newly extended South Taconic Trail, the other connecting the Park’s Copake Falls area with Alander Mountain.

Planning That Has Been Done in the Past

Development plans for Taconic State Park were completed in the 1930’s. Individual projects, some in cooperation with the Civilian Conservation Corps, were undertaken since that time, but no formal, public planning process has been initiated until this time.

Planning and Environmental Review

The environmental review of proposed master plans for state park facilities is conducted in accordance with the State Environmental Quality Review Act (SEQRA). OPRHP fully integrates the planning and environmental review processes. This document is accompanied by a Draft Environmental Impact Statement which provides that review and compliance with SEQRA.

Park Description

The Region

Taconic State Park is in the Taconic Region. This region covers state parks and historic sites in Columbia, Dutchess, Putnam and Westchester Counties.

Location and Access

Taconic State Park is located along 16 miles of the Taconic Mountain Range in eastern Columbia and Dutchess Counties. From north to south, portions of the Park are within the towns of Copake and Ancram of Columbia County, and in the town of Northeast, Dutchess County.

The two developed areas of Taconic State Park are located in Columbia and Dutchess counties between NY 22 and the borders of Massachusetts and Connecticut in the Taconic Mountains. The Copake Falls area entrance is on NY 344, approximately 3/5 mile east from NY 22 and approximately 4 miles south of NY 23 in Hillsdale, NY in the Village of Copake Falls, NY. The Rudd Pond area entrance is in the Village of Millerton, NY approximately 2 miles north of NY 44 in Millerton, NY.

Both areas are accessible by motor vehicle from NY 22. There are no bus routes that access the Park. Pedestrians and bicyclists enter the Park from the main state roads. Access on foot is also available from the South Taconic Trail, a hiking trail that extends from NY 23 in the north to the Rudd Pond area in the south. This trail stays mostly on the mountains along the state borders with occasional side trails to the east and west. These side trails provide hiking access to the Park from other areas in and outside the state.

The Park is also accessible by bicycle and on foot on the Harlem Valley Rail Trail (HVRT). The HVRT provides off road connection to the park from the Wassaic Metro North train station in Amenia, NY.

Existing Conditions

This description of the existing conditions at the Park is meant to be a summary highlighting the most important elements which lead to the formation of the master plan. More detailed descriptions and maps of the existing resources are included in Chapter One of the accompanying DEIS, and its Figures and Appendices.

Physical Resources

Geology. Taconic State Park spans the westernmost edge of the Southern Taconic Mountains and the adjacent Harlem Valley. The Southern Taconic Mountains are a sub-section of the Taconic Range, a physiographic section of the larger New England province and part of the Appalachian Mountains. The Taconic orogeny was the first Paleozoic mountain building event in North America, and the first of a series of mountain building plate collisions that contributed to the formation of the Appalachian Mountains, North America's oldest mountain range.

What underlies much of the Southern Taconics today are the older rocks, such as Everett Schist, that were pushed up and thrust during the Taconic Orogeny. It is a highly metamorphosed rock that is greenish in color due to the distinctive minerals in it. Underlying the Everett Schist is the younger Walloomsac Formation, a dark gray to black slate and a higher grade metamorphic rock known as phyllite. Separating the two rock types are low-angle faults known as thrust faults. Four ice ages continued to erode the surface geology of the area. Today, much of the rock record is eroded and the ancient Everett Schist bedrock is at or near the surface across the Southern Taconics.

The dominant bedrock in the valleys is Stockbridge Marble, a metamorphic rock composed of the minerals calcite and dolomite. Other bedrock components in the valleys are also metamorphosed rocks, a collection of early Paleozoic limestones, slates, gneisses, and schists. Topping the bedrock is a mantle of glacial debris left by the melting of the

Wisconsin ice sheet approximately 15,000 years ago. As the Wisconsin ice age waned in the area, it left behind extensive deposits of glacial till and outwash.

Soils. The soils at both areas in the park are mainly Macomber-Taconic series derived from the parent glacial till. These soils present some restrictions to development.

Topography. Eons of erosion in the area that includes Taconic State Park have resulted in a valley and ridge topography oriented mostly north-south along the eastern edge of Dutchess and Columbia counties in New York and adjacent New England. The less resistant carbonate rocks of the Stockbridge formation create the floors of wide valleys, Harlem Valley among them, while the highly metamorphosed, erosion resistant rocks of the South Taconic Mountains form ridges parallel to the valleys and rising as much as fifteen hundred feet above the valleys.

Water Resources. Taconic State Park drains into four watersheds, spanning three states. The Park's dominant watershed, which drains most of its Columbia County area as well as the northern part of its Dutchess County portion, is the Roeliff Jansen Kill watershed. This watershed is a significant tributary to the Hudson River and belongs to the Upper Hudson major watershed. The remainder of the Park empties into the Housatonic major watershed via three watersheds.

Numerous streams, flowing east to west at Taconic State Park are classified as "C" by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC). This classification designates streams that support fisheries and are considered suitable for non-contact activities such as fishing and boating. The most prominent stream in the Park is Bash Bish Brook, which originates in Massachusetts but drains into Roeliff Jansen Kill in New York. This brook and its famous waterfall (Bash Bish Falls) provided the impetus for creating today's Village of Copake Falls and the extension of the Harlem Valley Rail Road.

Rudd Pond is the largest water body in Taconic State Park. It is located at the southern end of the Park, with a surface area of 64 acres and a maximum depth of 15 feet. Rudd Pond, named after local landowner Major Bezaleel Rudd (1751-1846), was created by damming an existing wetland. To this day, the southern tip of the pond remains a wetland with an active beaver population. The pond is classified by DEC as class A, indicating that it is suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation such as swimming and boating. There is a swimming beach on its eastern shore, established in 1932, and a car-top boat launch at the northeastern shoreline of the lake.

Three smaller ponds at the Park were originally dug for iron ore during the region's iron mining era in the 18th and 19th century. After the mining industry ceased, the pits filled with water, creating several small but deep ponds popular with Park visitors for fishing and swimming. The biggest of the three pits-turned-ponds, Iron Mine Pond is about a quarter mile south of Rudd Pond, with a surface area of 5 acres, a maximum depth of 70 feet and a mean depth of 65 feet.

Weed Mines Pond is the oldest of the three mining pits in the Park, this pond was originally opened c. 1775-80 and has a surface area of 3 acres, a maximum depth of 20 feet and a mean depth of 10 feet. This pond, named after a Capt. Weed of Salisbury, CT who worked the mine in the 1850s, is in the approximate middle of Taconic State Park, accessible by a short hiking trail on its western shoreline with a trail-head parking lot located on Weed Mines Road.

Ore Pit Pond is in the developed Copake Falls area. Despite its small surface area of 3 acres, it is a popular destination that draws many day-users and overnight campers. Ore Pit Pond has a maximum depth of 48 feet, with a mean depth of 23 feet. It is currently classified by DEC as class A, indicating that it is suitable for primary and secondary contact recreation: swimming and fishing. There is a designated swimming area with a dock and a children's beach / kiddie pool with a seasonal life guard on duty. This pond is exempt from ADA compliance due to its physical characteristics. Ore Pit Pond was originally dug for the Copake Iron Works, and there are several remaining buildings and remnants of the mining operation that comprise the nearby Copake Iron Works Historic District. Ore Pit Pond drains into Bash Bish Brook.

Adjacent to the Copake Falls area of the park, just over the NY-MA state line is Bash Bish Falls (in the past also called Copake Falls), the highest single drop waterfall in Massachusetts. The waterfall is at the mouth of a gorge formed during the last ice age. The falls are made up of a series of cascades tumbling through a hemlock – northern hardwood forest ravine, nearly 200 feet in total, with the final cascade being split into twin falls by a jutting rock, dropping 60 feet into a serene pool below. Bash Bish Falls empties into Bash Bish Brook, a tributary to New York's Roeliff Jansen Kill.

There are numerous smaller, unnamed waterfalls in TSP, notably along the Quarry Hill Road Trail, by Iron Mine Pond, and several waterfalls visible from the newly completed extension of the South Taconic Trail.

The majority of Taconic State Park is located within the Harlem Valley Calcareous Wetlands Complex, a Significant Biodiversity Area identified by DEC that occurs in the valleys and adjacent western ridges of the southern Taconic Mountains. The Park contains two fens, aka calcareous wetlands, which are the result of freshwater upwellings of relatively high pH that are maintained by the basic, non-acidic (alkaline) composition of bedrock in the Park's lower elevations. An example is Mt. Riga Fen, located partially in the Park north of Rudd Pond. The Mt. Riga fen is a good occurrence of a rare medium fen grading into a shrub fen and red maple swamp (Evans et al. 2001 and 2004).

Natural Resources

Ecological Communities. The unique calcareous bedrock geology and distinctive ridgeline and valley topography add significantly to the biodiversity of the Park. The New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) has identified 25 ecological community types in TSP (Edinger et al, 2014). Nine of the natural community types, covering most of Taconic State Park, are considered ecologically significant from a statewide perspective (Significant Natural Communities Map, NYNHP 2016; Figure 9).

Taconic State Park is part of a 40,000 acre contiguous Taconic-Berkshire Landscape Complex that is one of the most intact forested landscapes within the Lower New England / Northern Piedmont Ecoregion (NatureServe, 2016), spanning from Maine to New Jersey.

Flora. The flora of TSP includes species typical of forests and fields of the region as well as less common species that occur in more unique habitats such as the talus slopes, the fens, and canopy openings on the ridgetops. The NYNHP has plant lists from its ecological community and rare plant surveys in the Park, as well as a snapshot of 204 plants recorded in a one day Bioblitz – a 24-hour survey by scientists – in May 2013 (NYNHP, 2013, and Appendix B of accompanying DEIS).

Invasive Flora. Surveys for invasive plants have not been done in most areas of the Park. At least twenty three terrestrial and four aquatic species of non-native invasive plants have been documented in the Park and entered into the iMapInvasives database by NYNHP, OPRHP and other organizations.

Fauna. The birds, fish, mammals, amphibians and reptiles that are found in the surrounding areas are representative of those found in the Park. The diverse ecosystems of the Park provide a variety of habitats that support a variety of fauna typical of this area of New York State. These include both terrestrial and aquatic species. In 2013, a Bioblitz documented 288 animal species in the Park, including 65 birds (resident and migratory), 17 reptiles and amphibians, 14 mammals, 4 fish, 85 moths, and 103 additional invertebrate species (NYNHP, 2013). A more comprehensive list is available in Appendix B of the accompanying DEIS.

Invasive Fauna. Three destructive, invasive forest pests are either in the Park or represent a serious threat: Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is present in the Park; Emerald Ash Borer is already in Columbia County and on the brink of breaching the Park's borders; and Asian Long-horned Beetle has the potential to reach the Park from neighboring Massachusetts through the movement of firewood. The invasive Chinese Mystery Snail, an aquatic invasive organism, has been identified in Weed Mines Pond.

Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species. Eleven species listed as rare, threatened or endangered in NY State have been documented in the Park to date (Conrad, N.B. et al. 2016) including nine plant and two animal species. New records continue to be found and more species are added to the state lists through periodic reviews. Although rare species surveys have been conducted through many areas of the Park, it is impossible to cover every area and all taxa. In addition, some taxa are easily overlooked or are harder to inventory or identify such as moths, beetles, mosses, and sedges. Further surveys are warranted.

Cultural Resources

The area as a whole is significant from a Native American, early-American trading, Revolutionary War, and Industrial Revolution standpoint.

Archeologists estimate that Native Americans, specifically Mohican and pre-Mohican people, lived in today's Columbia County for about 10,000 years, with some archeological sites indicating continuous human settlement for approx. 5,000 years, until the area was colonized by the Dutch. Today's Dutchess County was the northernmost range of the native Lenape people who, like the Mohicans, thrived on the resources of the region's rich forests and waterways for thousands of years.

From the early 1600s, European settlers - Dutch, English, then French and Norwegian - entered into economic and military agreements with Mohican and other neighboring Native American tribes. Native Americans got swept up in

the wars Europeans waged for access to the fur trade and land, and their numbers plummeted, further exacerbated by losses from intertribal conflicts. The few remaining Native Americans of today's Columbia and Dutchess counties in New York, as well as Berkshire County in Massachusetts came to be known as the 'friendly' Stockbridge Indians.

The Copake Iron Works was established in 1845 along the Bash Bish Brook at the base of the Taconic Ridge. At that time the area around the site had not been settled. The Copake Iron Works' original owner was Lemuel Pomeroy II of Pittsfield, MA. In 1862 he sold it to Frederick Miles of CT. In 1903, when the foundry fell silent, William A. Miles took control of the operations with Miles' Copake Plow Works. In 1926 the State of New York purchased the land and remaining structures (including the Iron Workers Cabins now available for rent to Park visitors) and equipment from William A. Miles. In 2007, the Copake Iron Works and its surrounding 18 acres were listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places. The Copake Iron Works Historic District comprises all of the buildings in the Copake Iron Works area: the historic blast furnace, three workers' houses (used today as park cabins), and the now-flooded ore pit, as well as the National Register-listed Church of St. John in the woods. In 2016, the Copake Iron Works was designated a Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Designated Site.

Other smaller ore pits can be found on both public and private lands to the south of Copake Falls.

The New York and Harlem Railroads opened a line through Copake in 1852 and the stop became known as Copake Iron Works. This rail line offered passenger service until 1972. After it became abandoned, the Harlem Division track along the western border of TSP began its transformation to trail use as the Harlem Valley Rail Trail. Several sections have been completed and today serve as picturesque trails for public recreation.

Among the many visitors who came to Copake Falls to enjoy the first-rate recreational opportunities of the Taconics, was Mr. Francis Masters. In 1904 he built his own fishing lodge, and soon after, having fallen fully under the spell of his surroundings, Mr. and Mrs. Masters purchased many acres and established High Valley Farm. The Masters family has played a critical role in the history of Taconic State Park since its inception.

Scenic Resources

The main scenic resources of the Park are the vistas from the South Taconic Trail along top of the Taconic Ridge. The view takes in the Hudson and Harlem Valleys, the Southern Taconics, and the Catskill Mountains. TSP provides access to Bash Bish Falls, the highest single-drop waterfall in MA, by a moderate half mile trail.

Recreational Resources/Activities

Recreational resources can be seen on Figure 10 of the accompanying DEIS.

The Park has a great complex of approx. 31.5 miles of designated trails for hiking, biking, cross-country skiing, and/or snowshoeing. A draft trails plan is part of the DEIS and is included as Appendix A. The Park's most frequently used trail leads from the Copake Falls area to Bash Bish Falls just over the NY State line.

Taconic State Park offers two locations with swimming opportunities: a swimming dock and a kiddie pool at Copake Falls' Ore Pit Pond, and a small sandy beach at Rudd Pond. Ore Pit Pond is exempt from ADA compliance due to its physical characteristics. There are seasonal life guards on duty at both locations.

Public boating is permitted at Rudd Pond with a Taconic Region boating permit. Boats with a trolling motor are permitted with valid NYS DMV registration. Visitors can rent kayaks, canoes, and row boats from TSP between Memorial Day and Labor Day, 7 days a week to enjoy at Rudd Pond. There is a boat launch from the shore of Rudd Pond, north of the beach/ swimming area, and along Dutchess County Route 62 on the west side of Rudd Pond.

The Copake Falls campground has sites to accommodate campers seeking a more rustic as well as a more comfortable experience. There are four camping loops encompassing 45 tent sites, 25 tent platforms, and 36 trailers for a total of 106 campsites. Centrally located restroom and shower facilities are found in all campsite areas. Requests for group camping have been accommodated if space can be provided without inconveniencing other campers.

The Rudd Pond campground has 15 tent sites and 26 tent platform sites, each providing campers with grand views of Rudd Pond, and the nearby countryside. Comfort stations and a hot water shower house are located within the campground. There are no trailer sites.

The Copake Falls developed area has three cabin groups for a total of 18 cabins. All cabins have electricity, lights, hot and cold running water, a kitchen with a refrigerator and stove, a dining area, a picnic table, and outdoor camp fire ring with grill.

Hunting, with a state hunting license and a Park permit, is allowed in the Park at certain times of the year corresponding to DEC hunting seasons. Hunting is allowed only in designated areas of the park. Taconic State Park property encompasses land in both Dutchess and Columbia Counties and hunters are required to adhere to the appropriate regulations set forth by the DEC that pertain to each county.

Fishing, with a state fishing license, is permitted on all waters within the Park boundary. Fishing in Rudd Pond is allowed from the shore and from boats. In the winter months, conditions permitting, visitors can ice fish on the pond.

Brace Mountain is a favorite in the region for paragliding, an activity only permitted through a paragliding permit issued by the Park. Currently the Brace Mountain Club holds the paragliding permit.

Taconic State Park has picnic tables and grills both at the Copake Falls and Rudd Pond areas which are available on a first come – first serve basis. There is one pavilion at the Copake Falls area overlooking Ore Pit Pond. The amenities of the pavilion include picnic tables, one large and three small barbeque grills, and a water source.

Taconic State Park has a playground each at Copake Falls and Rudd Pond, for the 6-12 year old age group.

Taconic State Park staff, in conjunction with the Friends of Taconic State Park, provides guided walks and snowshoes throughout the year. During the summer, TSP hosts family friendly wildlife presentations by environmental educators. The schedule is posted on the Park's website (www.parks.ny.gov/parks/83/details).

Agency Mission

The mission of the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation is to provide safe and enjoyable recreational and interpretive opportunities for all New York State residents and visitors and to be responsible stewards of our valuable natural, historic and cultural resources.

Taconic State Park Vision Statement

Introduction. Taconic State Park is the first state park in the Taconic Region and reflects its age in stately mountains and forests, and verdant fields. Nestled along the Taconic Mountains, the park straddles long and narrow stretches of ridgelines, woods and meadows from its large center in Copake Falls to its smaller satellite to the south, Rudd Pond. The Park runs parallel to the Massachusetts and Connecticut state borders from Hillsdale, NY at the northern end to Millerton at the southern end. Historically, Taconic State Park is the entryway to the scenic Bash Bish Falls, just over the state line in Massachusetts. The 19th century Copake Iron Works, a Hudson River Valley National Heritage Area Designated Site, preserved, stabilized, and open year-round to visitors, is located within the Park.

Vision. As the first park of the Taconic Region, the vision of Taconic State Park is to remain a premier destination for the public's enjoyment: to provide recreational opportunities, engage visitors about the environmental, historic, and cultural resources of the Park, and to be a place of inspiration and wonder at nature's splendor. It is the Park's vision to be a steward to protect and to enhance its natural habitats and species, and to remain available to the public for future generations.

The Park will accomplish this vision as follows:

- Maintain and enhance the Park's biodiversity and existing natural communities. Protect rare and endangered plants and animals and control invasive species in the Park.
- Maintain and enhance the trail system to provide a variety of opportunities and to safeguard the habitats through which the trails run. Explore opportunities to connect to other long distance trails, such as the Harlem Valley Rail Trail which runs through the Park.
- Implement sustainable practices in the Park's facilities, infrastructure and operations, and strive to use renewable resources.
- Continue to preserve, interpret, and brand the Copake Iron Works, a National Heritage Area Designated Site
- Expand educational programming in the Park on environmental and historic themes.
- Collaborate with other New York State agencies, landowners, and other like-minded organizations, as well as with the Commonwealth of Massachusetts and State of Connecticut, to build on the tri-state vision for the Park and to further protect the resiliency of the Park's natural, cultural and recreational assets.

Action Items

This section provides a narrative description of the master plan, outlining what will be done in the Park for natural and cultural resource protection, recreation resource development, and management and operations, pending available funding. Most of the action items described here are based on the analysis in the accompanying DEIS and the preferred alternatives (Chapter Two). Some of the action items are administrative or managerial in nature and are only presented here without extensive discussion in the DEIS.

Action items are listed in a geographic order from the Park's north to south, not in order of importance.

Action items are presented which have been guided by the vision for Taconic State Park. Each element of the Park vision has one or more action items that will be part of its realization. Taken together with the vision, these action items describe the master plan. The master plan is also presented graphically in the large format Master Plan Map and Trails Plan Map that accompany, and are part of, this document.

Natural Resource Protection Strategies

Natural resource protection and management strategies are in place throughout TSP to protect the ecological communities and enhance biodiversity. Adaptive management strategies are needed to manage forest health, invasive species, and potential impacts to water quality or fish and wildlife. Management strategies must also consider potential future impacts to TSP.

Action Item. Designate All of Taconic State Park as a Bird Conservation Area (BCA)

This alternative selects the entire Park for a BCA. The BCA designation will provide statewide recognition of the importance of this area for bird habitat. See Figure 11 of the accompanying DEIS for a map of the proposed BCA, and Appendix C for the management guidance summary.

Action Item. Designate All of Taconic State Park as a Natural Heritage Area (NHA)

The designation of the National Heritage Area will help emphasize the importance of TSP's many significant ecological communities and rare species. Figure 12 in the accompanying DEIS illustrates the area that is chosen.

Action Item. Develop a Comprehensive Invasive Management Plan, Including Early Detection and Rapid Response, Follow Recommendations of OPRHP Staff and Biologists, and Coordinate Invasives Control Efforts with Neighboring MA and CT

The planning team selected these alternatives because they allow for the current management protocol to be expanded with new techniques and strategies that will detect and respond to invasive species more effectively and on a more timely basis.

Action Item. Continue Current Management of Aquatic Plants at Rudd Pond and Explore Alternatives to Manage Aquatic Plants

The planning team selected this combination because it allows for the continued use of Rudd Pond for recreational swimming and boating which is currently a priority for the Park. Exploring alternative methods to control aquatic plant growth allows the Park to consider other existing and emerging management techniques.

Action Item. Review Agricultural Land Management to Conform to Statewide Guidelines

The selected alternative allows the Park and the region to draw from the forthcoming statewide OPRHP agricultural land management guidelines that will provide strategies for sustainability, impact mitigation, and consistency of

operations. The selected alternative also conforms to TSP's vision to be a steward protecting and enhancing its natural habitats.

Recreation Development

Action Item. Improve Day Use Area at Copake Falls

This alternative was selected because it will provide numerous recreational opportunities for both day use and overnight visitors. Elements of this action step include: generating a new overall site plan, analyzing the recreational needs of day users, providing new courts and play fields, providing a new group fire ring, and expanding the existing playground to include a tot lot.

Action Item. Build a New Camping Loop at Copake Falls to Decrease Campsite Density, Include ADA Campsites

This alternative meets multiple master plan goals. The Status Quo does not address overcrowding and other park patron needs. Spreading out the same number of campsites over a larger camping area, including ADA compliant campsites, and installing new camping infrastructure provides the amenities the Park patrons require.

Action Item. Improve Ironworker Cabins

This action item safeguards a resource of the Copake Iron Works National Historic District, and meets part of the Park vision statement. Not improving the cabins will result in further deterioration, and unsatisfactory conditions. The Park is committed to preserving these historic cabins and providing comfortable accommodations to patrons staying overnight to meet their expectations.

The cabins will be improved one at a time to accommodate patrons. One duplex will be renovated first and made ADA compliant, followed by the triplex, and finally by the second duplex.

Action Item. Improve Bash Bish Cabins

The planning team selected this alternative because, as with the Iron Workers Cabins, the Park is committed to preserving its historic structures and providing comfortable accommodations. The selected alternative will meet the expectations of patrons staying overnight. The selected action safeguards a significant historic and recreational asset, and meets part of the vision developed for the Park.

Action Item. Improve Greenwich Cottages

The planning team selected this alternative because it will meet the diverse expectations of patrons visiting the Park while safeguarding a significant historic and recreational asset. The current storage building will be converted into a multipurpose event hall suitable for group rentals and events such as wedding receptions. The original caretaker's cottage will be re-purposed to house interns. These changes will provide more flexible use of the facilities and will create opportunities for programmatic expansion at the Park.

Action Item. Improve the Copake Iron Works in Cooperation with OPRHP's Division of Historic Preservation and the Friends of Taconic State Park

This alternative allows the Park to capitalize on a Park asset listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places and among National Heritage Area Designated Sites; it solidifies the current collaboration with the Friends of Taconic State Park; and meets the Park's vision to preserve, interpret, and brand the Copake Iron Works. All improvements will preserve the Copake Iron Works Historic District's features, provide safe educational and recreational opportunities for Park patrons, and foster their appreciation of the Park's cultural resources.

Action Item. Provide Dog Run for Campers at Copake Falls

The planning team selected this alternative because it responds to the request of Park patrons to let their dogs off leash while staying at the Park, and directs the Park to uphold its commitment to remaining a pet-friendly park. The off leash area will be in the vicinity of the Copake Falls camping area and can be built when the new camping loop is developed.

Action Item. Improve Day Use Area at Rudd Pond

This action item provides upgraded recreational opportunities for both day use and camping visitors. The biggest changes to the day use area are the much needed facility improvements and possible alternatives that provide swimming, discussed elsewhere in the DEIS. The improvements will follow a proposed site plan developed by the region. This site plan includes remodeling the bathhouse into a new picnic pavilion with comfort station, and providing playground equipment for the three to six year age group.

Action Item. Change Campsite Layout at Rudd Pond

The planning team selected this alternative because it recognizes the patrons' need for campsites with more privacy. There would be no net increase or decrease in the number of camping sites but sites could be staggered and/or some moved into adjacent wooded area.

Action Item. Continue Rudd Pond Swimming and Explore Alternatives to Maintain Swimming in the Future

The planning team selected this combination because the Park would like to provide swimming to patrons at Rudd Pond; however it is uncertain how the Park will control aquatic plant growth and hold back the natural process of succession to a wetland.

Action Item. Increase Interpretation at the Park

The planning team selected this alternative because it responds to the request of Park patrons to offer more interpretive programs at the Park, with a wider range of topics. TSP intends to hire and house seasonal interpreters.

Action Item. Designate New Group Campsites

There are frequent requests for group campsites from several groups. A group campsite could accommodate up to 60 individuals and would address the needs of groups to explore the Park in the off season. Designated group campsites would operate in the off-season, before and after the main camping season. Specific group camping dates will be determined by the park manager. Approximate group camping season would run from April 1st – late May or early June, and Labor Day – Columbus Day.

The campsites could be developed at Copake Falls and Rudd Pond areas and would take advantage of nearby parking, trails and trailheads, comfort stations, picnic tables, grills, pavilion and potable water. Two areas to consider are the Rudd Pond grass parking area and grassy area near Bash Bish cabins.

Action Item. Provide Backcountry Camping

The planning team selected this alternative because a backcountry campsite provides novel recreational opportunities for overnight visitors seeking a rustic camping experience, and can foster their appreciation of the Park's resources. There is also a strong interest for backcountry campsites given the extension of the South Taconic Trail. The Park has begun scouting for possible campsite locations south of Brace Mountain. Final siting of backcountry camping will be determined at a later time. The siting of these campsites will consider the sensitive natural areas in the Park and will be simple, having no privy or other amenities. Backcountry camping will require overnight parking permits.

Action Item. Provide Additional Fishing Access to Roeliff Jansen Kill (Roe Jan) and Explore ADA Fishing Access

These improvements will provide numerous recreational opportunities for daytime and overnight visitors. The action steps also allow the Park to continue safeguarding the habitat of its native trout, eel, and other fish, and to foster an appreciation of these resources among Park patrons. The steps include providing fishing access to the Roeliff Jansen Kill near the junction of Orphan Farm Road and NY Rt. 22, utilizing an existing pull-off on NY Rt. 22 for parking. The action step also includes exploring the viability of fishing at the Odyssey Farm Pond and the development of an ADA fishing site there.



Action Item. Explore Changes to Hunting at Taconic State Park

Changes to park rules being considered include adding spring shotgun hunting for wild turkey on weekdays and until 10:00AM only, and designating an area for small game hunting. Hunting opportunities will remain consistent with other NY State Parks of the Taconic Region. All DEC hunting regulations for Columbia and Dutchess Counties will be followed.

Operations, Infrastructure and Facilities Strategies

Action Item. Improve Picnic Areas and Pavilions at Copake Falls and Include ADA Compliance

A site plan and redesign will be developed for the overall layout of the Copake Falls day use area. The new plan will accommodate a wider diversity of uses: team sports and more gathering space with more amenities, including ADA compliance. The selected improvements respond to Park patron needs and help tailor its day use area to current and projected needs.

Action Item. Improve Comfort Stations at Copake Falls

Comfort stations in campground loops A, B and C will be improved one station at a time to accommodate visitor need for bathrooms during construction. The comfort stations in loops A and B are historic and will be improved in coordination and with approval from the Division of Historic Preservation.

The Park will also construct a new campground shower house in a central location for all campground loops. As the last element in the comfort station improvements, TSP will upgrade the existing shower house. All comfort stations and shower houses will be made ADA compliant at the time of renovation.

Action Item. Renovate Ore Pit Pond Bathhouse

Improvements to be made include installing electricity and telephone service, improvements to the rest rooms and changing area, adding outside tower showers and indoor showers. Bathhouse will be ADA compliant.

Action Item. Improve Bash Bish Shower House and Remodel Bash Bish Shower House into Cabin

The Bash Bish shower house will be upgraded to building and ADA compliance. Once each Bash Bish cabin has upgraded bathrooms with showers, the Bash Bish shower house will be converted into ADA compliant cabin with full bathroom. This action will accommodate families with small children and patrons with impaired mobility, and will safeguard a significant historic and recreational asset in the Park.

Action Item. Add Electric and Water Service at Selected Existing Copake Falls Campsites and New Campsites

This action step accommodates camper needs for water and electric access. The addition of a new camping loop at Copake Falls will be an opportune time to build this infrastructure. This step also increases the range of campsite offerings at the Park. The Park will also explore renewable energy sources.

Action Item. Move Maintenance Facility to New Location

This action aligns with the vision for the Park, moves the maintenance operation away from the Copake Iron Works Historic District, and meets the statewide goal of fixing aging infrastructure. A new location in the Copake Falls area of the Park has been selected by the core team.

Action Item. Relocate Copake Falls Dump Station

This action is a solution to the current impractical dump station location and improves the traffic pattern for patrons leaving the Park. It changes the design and orientation of the dump station which currently is incorrect for campers as they leave the Park.

Action Item. Provide Wi-Fi Hotspot(s) at Copake Falls

This is the number one amenity requested by visitors to the Park. The current internet connection at the Park office will also be improved and hotspots will be located at the Park office, Iron Works Museum, Ironworkers Cabins, Greenwich Cottages and the campground.

Action Item. Remodel Rudd Pond Bathhouse to Picnic Pavilion with Comfort Station

This action item will follow the new site plan for the Rudd Pond area developed by the region (see p.13). Repurpose the wings of the existing bath house as open but covered picnic areas with picnic tables. Additional picnic area/patio space will be developed in front of the pavilion facing Rudd Pond and will serve day users and campers. Center of bathhouse will be remodeled into comfort station. Renovation will include ADA compliance.

Action Item. Upgrade Rudd Pond Campground Comfort Station

Along with the remodeling of the bathhouse, which will include a comfort station, the existing campground comfort station will be upgraded to comply with current building codes and ADA standards.

Action Item. Remodel Existing Rudd Pond Comfort Station into Staff Work Station

The currently deteriorating comfort station will be renovated and remodeled into a staff work station as part of the new site plan. This will provide Rudd Pond staff a four season work space and allow removal of the existing work trailer.

Action Item. Upgrade Rudd Pond Water Distribution System

Rudd Pond's water line and distribution lines are very old. There are broken pipes and the connection points in piping are failing. The whole water system is deteriorating and needs replacement. The Rudd Pond pump house and water storage unit are new and function well. New water lines will be installed.

Action Item. Update Parking and Circulation at Rudd Pond

The parking and vehicular circulation at Rudd Pond will be improved following the regionally developed site plan. Features of this new design are: keeping current parking area as grass and adding two paved ADA spaces, limiting vehicular access and exiting through the parking area only, and converting the paved road to pedestrian and bike access only.

Action Item. Provide Wi-Fi Hotspot at Rudd Pond Area

Adding a Wi-Fi hotspot answers the overwhelming patron desire for this service. The hotspot will be located at the campground shower house.

Action Item. Facilitate New Signage for Taconic State Park

The new signage internal to the Park will utilize the forthcoming statewide signage plan. Additionally TSP will work with DOT to coordinate better wayfinding signage between the two areas of the Park.

The location of the two Park areas will be indicated along the Taconic State Parkway and state roads.

Sustainability and Green Infrastructure

TSP is committed to sustainable and ecologically sensitive operations, including energy sourcing and use, water conservation, recycling, reduced mowing, and native plant selection for revegetation. For example, TSP incorporated green infrastructure features into its recently restored Park headquarters, and renovated its visitor parking with pervious surface materials. The Park has a successful and robust single-source recycling system for its day users and overnight patrons. TSP does not use pesticides or chemical treatments, unless it becomes absolutely necessary. OPRHP's Taconic Region installed solar panels at Lake Taghkanic State Park in 2016, only 15 miles from TSP. These panels provide substantial energy and savings to the Taconic Region, including TSP. The region identified another solar opportunity at Orphan Farm, managed by TSP, which will generate revenue for TSP. The Park

recognizes that additional sustainability improvements will be appropriate as technology, resources, and opportunities arise. Going forward, TSP is committed to exploring all sustainability features available to its facility and infrastructure upgrades (day use, camping, cabins, etc.), and tap into the expertise of OPRHP's trained regional sustainability construction staff.

Action Item. Explore and Incorporate New Green Infrastructure

The Park will strive for energy independence and explore all sustainability features it can reasonably incorporate into its operations. In-house sustainability staff, OPRHP support, emergent technologies, and potential funding opportunities make green infrastructure increasingly more accessible for TSP.

Mutual Aid Agreement with Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation

Taconic State Park sits directly on the border of Bash Bish Falls State Park, MA and Mt. Washington State Forest, MA. TSP's Park office is located two miles from Bash Bish Falls, MA, and TSP provides the majority of parking, as well as most lodging and camping for this heavily visited sightseeing landmark. TSP's Bash Bish Falls Trail is the most visited trail in the Park, with patrons hiking into MA to view the Falls. In addition, the approximately 23 mile long South Taconic Trail traverses the length of TSP and switches between NY and MA several times along its length.

In most cases, TSP staff are the first responders to emergencies at Bash Bish Falls, MA and on the South Taconic Trail in Massachusetts. TSP reached out to the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) who own and manage Bash Bish Falls State Park, MA and Mt. Washington State Forest, MA in order to establish legal parameters for mutual emergency response and rescue efforts. DCR has less resources in the area than TSP.

Both TSP and DCR are ready to sign an appropriate legal agreement. The purpose of the legal agreement is to allow NYS OPRHP and Massachusetts DCR staff to work together when responding to emergencies in bordering parks - Mt. Washington State Forest (MASS DCR), Bash Bish Falls State Park (MASS DCR), and Taconic State Park (NYS OPRHP). Currently, NYS Park vehicles and employees are not supposed to leave NYS without written permission. If and when NYS employees are injured helping during a response in MA, they may not be granted Workmen's Comp benefits. OPRHP currently violates this guideline when it allows TSP staff to provide aid in MA. Many other NYS agencies have interstate emergency aid plans in place including police, fire, EMS, etc. through the National Incident Management System.

Common emergency responses by Taconic State Park staff in MA include: injury or medical emergency at Bash Bish Falls State Park (MA); lost hiker(s) on South Taconic Trail (MA and NY); and automobile accidents along Rt. 344. Other potential emergencies that will require coordinated emergency response include wildland fire and aircraft crash (paraglider).

Action Item. Sign Mutual Aid Agreement with MA DCR

This action item indicates recognition and a legal framework for the mutual aid operations that de facto exist between NY and MA park staff.

Other Parking Areas

Action Item. Improve Parking at Bash Bish Trailhead

The region and Park will work with NYS DOT to design a safer parking lot at the Bash Bish trailhead. OPRHP will be providing preliminary design work and NYS DOT will finalize the plan. As a pilot program, the Park will explore the addition of honor system donation stations at the trail head parking. Trail users will be encouraged to use the day use parking at the Copake Falls area and use the existing trail to access the Bash Bish trail head. Parking along NY 344 will be discouraged with "No Parking" signs and enforcement of the parking regulations.

Action Item. Modify Parking at the Harlem Valley Rail Trail (HVRT) Near Park Headquarters

Short term donation stations will be installed at the HVRT lot as a pilot program, with appropriate signage encouraging visitors to support the Park. Long term use will be phased in for Empire Passport holders and handicapped tagged vehicles only. The selected changes allow both Park patrons and TSP to get adjusted to the new use over time.

Action Item. Improve Parking at Under Mountain Road

Land will be acquired that will accommodate parking and eliminate illegal parking on the road. The Park will work with law enforcement to educate visitors about parking regulations.

Action Item. Create Parking for Proposed Trail at Kaye Road

This new parking area will serve the proposed trail and the Harlem Valley Rail Trail.

Action Item. Reroute Base of Rudd Pond Trail to Rudd Pond Parking

The base of the Rudd Pond Trail will be relocated along the utility line path to the main Rudd Pond parking area. The existing base trail will be converted to a service access for Park staff.

Implementation

Priorities

The master plan sets forth OPRHP’s vision for capital improvements and operational enhancements to the Park for the next ten to fifteen years. OPRHP has not developed detailed cost estimates for the proposed components. Cumulatively they will cost tens of millions of dollars to implement. The pace and sequencing of recommended actions will be determined by the availability of funding, which is a function of the size of OPRHP’s annual capital budgets and the need to balance investments throughout the park system. The master plan will be reviewed annually to select projects that will be added to the Park’s budget for implementation and to assess the progress of plan implementation.

Any operational improvements that are already planned at the time of the master plan will go forward as planned. They include the replacement of the water system with ground source supply at Copake Falls for the Copake Iron Works site, maintenance, and Park residence, as well as distribution improvements and treatment. Also included is the upgrade of the Bash Bish Cabin complex waste water treatment system.

The implementation of the master plan for the Park is divided into priority phases. These elements are subject to reorganization based on available funding for specific components in the master plan.

Implementation Priorities	Description/Development Component
Immediate:	Designate Bird Conservation Area
	Designate Natural Heritage Area
Capital Infrastructure Priorities	
Priority 1:	Improve all three existing Ironworker Cabins. They are in poor condition. Significant interior rehabilitation is necessary to make them code and ADA compliant, and to improve aesthetics. One duplex will be renovated first and made ADA compliant, followed by the triplex, and finally by the second duplex.
	Improve and update Bash Bish Cabins and shower house serving all five cabins. Improvements to include code compliance and aesthetic improvements.
	Construct new Copake Falls campground shower house that is centrally located for all campground loops and ADA compliant. Existing shower house is in poor condition and requires renovation to meet patron demand.
Priority 2:	Improve all three comfort stations at Copake Falls campground loops A, B, and C, currently in poor condition. Comfort stations in loops A and B will be improved in coordination with and approval from the Division of Historic Preservation. Rehabilitation of comfort station to include ADA compliance, code compliance and aesthetic improvements.
	Build a new campground loop at Copake Falls to decrease campsite density and include ADA campsites. No net increase in sites. Provide electric at new sites. Construct new campground loop road.
	Renovate Ore Pit Pond bathhouse. It has no electric service and no rinsing showers. Structure needs building code updates and ADA compliance improvements. Area needs new pathways, seating and aesthetic improvements.
	Improve parking at Bash Bish trailhead
	Modify parking at the Harlem Valley Rail Trail near Park headquarters Improve the Copake Iron Works site in cooperation with OPRHP’s Division of Historic Preservation and the Friends of Taconic State Park

Implementation Priorities	Description/Development Component
	<p>Provide Wi-Fi hotspots at Copake Falls</p> <p>Upgrade existing Copake Falls shower house: after construction of new shower house, upgrade existing shower house. Improvements to include ADA compliance, code compliance and aesthetic improvements.</p>
Priority 3:	<p>Improve Greenwich Cottages: Continue updating and improving camp cabins.</p> <p>Rehabilitate current storage building, former Rec Hall, in Greenwich cottage area for conference, classroom and event space.</p> <p>Improve parking and trailhead for Alander Brook and Robert Brook trails</p> <p>Remodel Rudd Pond bath house into picnic pavilion with comfort station</p> <p>Remodel Rudd Pond comfort station into staff work station</p> <p>Upgrade Rudd Pond water distribution system</p> <p>Improve Rudd Pond day use area: Follow proposed Site Plan to make improvements that include vehicular circulation, parking, pathways, boat launch, boat rental facilities, playground, and fishing access.</p> <p>Rehabilitate or replace existing Rudd Pond Campground area comfort station which is in poor condition</p> <p>Improve Copake Falls day use area: Generate overall site plan and construct sports courts, pathways, group fire ring, multi-use/athletic field(s), 2-5 year old playground equipment, picnic pavilion, and picnic area improvements.</p> <p>Provide electric for select Copake Falls campground sites in loops C and D.</p> <p>Explore rehabilitation and adaptive reuse of CCC-era log-construction boat house at Rudd Pond, currently in poor condition and in need of repair</p> <p>Construct storage building at Rudd Pond for maintenance equipment</p> <p>Relocate Copake Falls dump station</p>
Ongoing:	<p>Ironworkers Cabins: upgrade waste water treatment system</p> <p>Bash Bish Cabins: upgrade waste water treatment system</p>
To Be Determined:	<p>Provide dog run for campers at Copake Falls</p> <p>Change campsite layout at Rudd Pond</p> <p>Move maintenance facility to new location at Copake Falls</p> <p>Provide Wi-Fi hotspot at Rudd Pond area</p> <p>Remodel Bash Bish shower house into ADA compliant cabin w/ full bathroom</p>
Operations Priorities	
Priority 1:	<p>Fill 'Park Worker 3' title</p>
Priority 2:	<p>Install donation stations at Bash Bish Trail parking lot at Rt. 344</p> <p>Install donation stations at Harlem Valley Rail Trail parking lot at Rt. 344</p>

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