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New York State Department of Environmental Conservation

Andrew M. Cuomo, Governor

Joe Martens, Commissioner

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**DEC PARTNERS WITH NY/NJ TRAIL CONFERENCE ON VOLUNTEER
OPPORTUNITIES FOR ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP PROJECTS IN THE
CATSKILL REGION**

Collaboration Reflects the Goals of National Trails Day®

Building on New York's long-standing tradition of environmental stewardship, the State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) and the New York/New Jersey Trail Conference have formed the Catskill Conservation Corps, a partnership to provide opportunities to volunteer on projects that protect natural resources and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities in the Catskill Region.

As New York and other states celebrate National Trails Day® on Saturday, this program is another step to advance Governor Andrew Cuomo's efforts to develop additional access for outdoor recreation activities and promote tourism.

"Governor Cuomo is committed to expanding outdoor recreation opportunities in the Catskill Region and across the state so that people of all ages and abilities can enjoy New York's beautiful scenery and a wide range of activities," DEC Commissioner Martens said. "DEC is pleased to partner with the Trail Conference to form the Catskills Conservation Corps to protect and improve lands and waters in the Catskills and create additional access for residents and visitors. Working together, we will preserve critical habitats, develop and enhance outdoor recreation opportunities like hiking and fishing, promote tourism in the Catskills and ensure our environment is in good hands."

Ed Goodell, executive director of the Trail Conference, said, "The Trail Conference is pleased to assist DEC in developing a Catskills Conservation Corps that will provide volunteering opportunities to the public and augment DEC's professional efforts to protect and improve the Park. Working together, we will be able to engage more individuals and groups in the stewardship and recreational development of the Catskills."

Under a contract with DEC, the Trail Conference will recruit and supervise volunteers to perform various stewardship tasks in conjunction with DEC's efforts in the Catskills. The contract totals approximately \$75,000 for two years, funded through the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF), with an option to extend the agreement for an additional three years.

DEC will identify specific needs and the Trail Conference will recruit, train and supervise volunteers working on specific projects across multiple DEC divisions and at various sites in the Catskills. Project may include trail construction and maintenance, fish sampling, invasive species control, research and monitoring of State Lands, and a broad range of other activities.

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Alan White, executive director of The Catskill Center, said, "The Catskill Center recognizes that there are thousands of volunteers helping the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation maintain the tremendous outdoor recreation opportunities available in the Catskill Park and we applaud DEC for dedicating these new resources to coordinating this army of volunteers."

Ramsay Adams, Catskill Mountainkeeper, said, "We applaud Governor Cuomo and Commissioner Martens for their commitment to protecting, maintaining and improving the Catskill Park. The Trail Conference has long been dedicated to using volunteers to maintain trails in the Catskill Park and we are pleased that the DEC has announced that the Trail Conference will receive critical resources they need to continue this work. The real winners here are the millions of visitors that use the Catskill Park and its trail systems every year.

Under Governor Cuomo, New York has created and expanded recreational opportunities for sportsmen and women, which boosts tourism and benefits regional economies. The 2014-15 State budget includes \$6 million in NY Works funding to support creating 50 new land and water access projects to connect hunters, anglers, bird watchers and others who enjoy the outdoors to more than 380,000 acres of existing state and easement lands that have not reached their full potential. These 50 new access projects include building new boat launches, installing new hunting blinds and building new trails and parking areas.

American Hiking Society's National Trails Day® is the country's largest celebration of trails. National Trails Day® is a nationally recognized trail awareness program that occurs annually on the first Saturday of June and inspires the public to discover, learn about, and celebrate trails while participating in outdoor activities, clinics, and trail stewardship projects. National Trails Day® is a registered trademark of American Hiking Society.

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