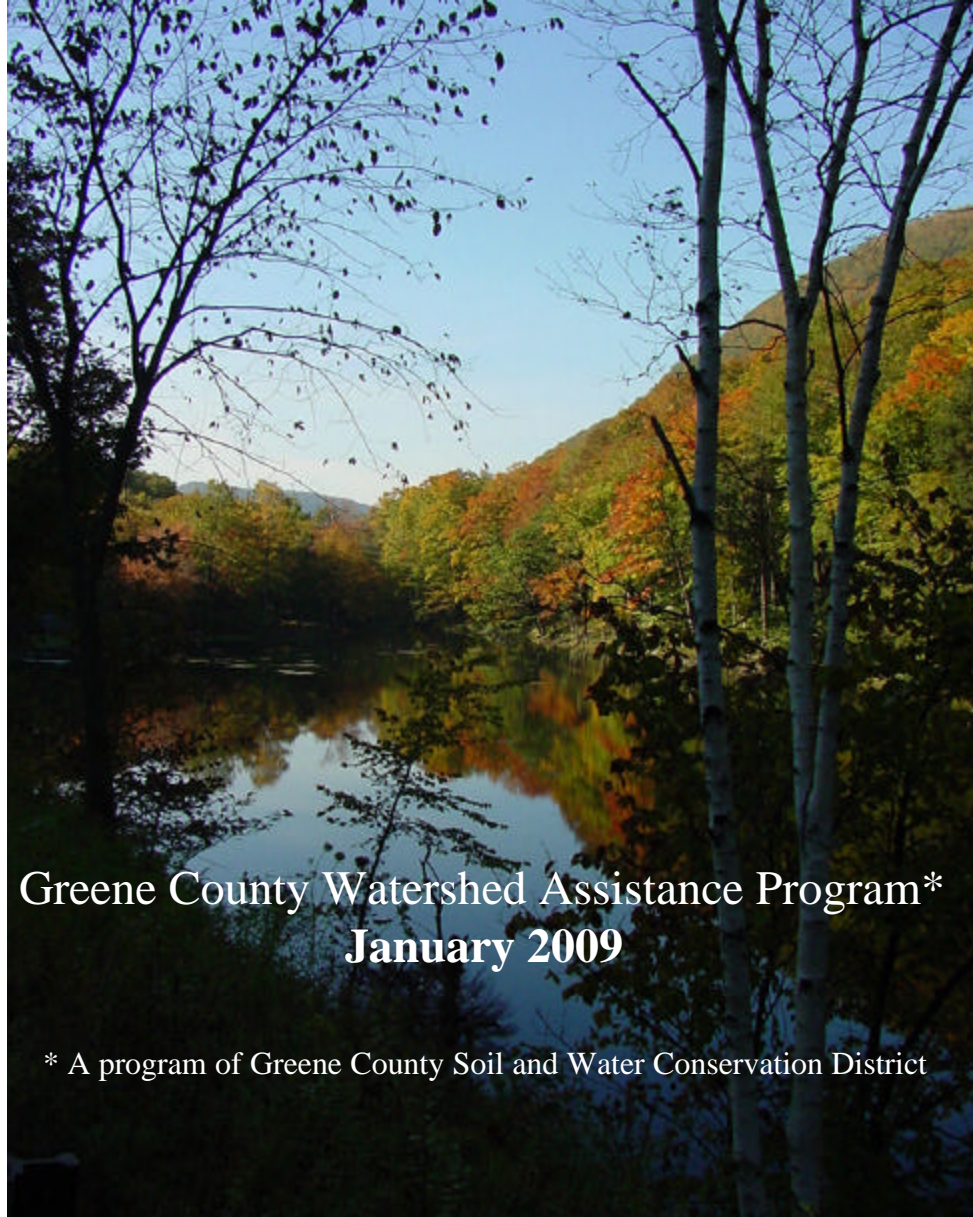


# Mountaintop Community Recreation, Cultural Resources and Scenic Quality Strategy



Greene County Watershed Assistance Program\*  
**January 2009**

\* A program of Greene County Soil and Water Conservation District

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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## Executive Summary

	Page
<b>1. Introduction-----</b>	<b>6</b>
1.1 Project Context and Significance	<u>7</u>
1.2 Vision & Goals	<u>8</u>
1.3 Document Organization & Intended Use	<u>9</u>
<b>2. Relevant Planning Documents and Reports-----</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>3. Inventory and Analysis of resources-----</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>4. Organizing Project Stakeholders, Identification of Needs</b>	<b>13</b>
4.1 Project Advisory Team (PAT)	<u>14</u>
4.2 Focus Groups	<u>16</u>
4.2.1 Hospitality	<u>16</u>
4.2.2 Recreation Business	<u>17</u>
4.2.3 Scenic Resources	<u>18</u>
4.2.4 Arts and Cultural	<u>21</u>
4.2.5 Sportsmen	<u>22</u>
4.2.6 Outdoor Recreation	<u>24</u>
4.2.7 Snowmobile	<u>27</u>
4.2.8 Historical Resources	<u>28</u>
4.3 Surveys and Interviews	<u>30</u>
<b>5. Action Items and Recommended Projects For Follow Up-----</b>	<b>31</b>
5.1 Underlying needs involving marketing, coordinating and outdoor recreation	<u>32</u>
5.2 Management Strategies – Role of subcommittees in project follow-through	<u>33</u>
5.2.1 Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner	<u>33</u>
5.2.2 Outdoor Resource Infrastructure Projects	<u>35</u>
Windham Path	<u>35</u>
Kaaterskill Rail Trail	<u>37</u>
<b>6. Implementation Strategy and Teams-----</b>	<b>38</b>
6.1 Marketing and Coordinating Needs	<u>38</u>
6.2 Outdoor Resource Improvement Projects	<u>42</u>
6.3 Other projects identified during outreach	<u>45</u>
<b>7. Conclusion-----</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>8. Appendices</b>	



## Executive summary

Situated in the northern Catskills State Park and the New York City Watershed, the Mountaintop region of Greene County is known for its scenic beauty, outdoor recreation and cultural and historical heritage. Tourism is the predominant industry which the small rural communities rely upon followed by a strong second homeowners market.

In order to keep up with changing economic times that influence the tourism market, it is important for the Mountaintop communities to work together to assess current resource attractions, identify where improvements are needed, develop a plan to address those needs, and begin implementing actions for the betterment of the Mountaintop as a whole. The Mountaintop Community Recreation, Cultural Resources and Scenic Quality Strategy is the culmination of such a collaborative effort. The Strategy provides a foundation for the communities to work individually and collectively on solutions to enhancing the region's outdoor recreational, historical and cultural resources, as well advance innovative ways to market the local tourism economy.

The project included research on previous planning documents which were used as a basis for prioritizing and implementing actions. A comprehensive inventory of resources across the Mountaintop was also conducted. Knowing what resources exist, where they are located, what concerns users may have, and how they are marketed helped identify where improvements are needed and what potential solutions exist to enhance the marketability and variety of resource attractions.

Community participation was the driving force throughout the project. A Project Advisory Team was organized to represent the public and private resource sectors including local businesses, community leaders, public agencies that own land, and organizations active in the project area. Working through the Project Advisory Team, projects were identified by reaching out to a wide variety of local and regional participants, organizing focus groups around specific resource areas, inventorying existing resources to know what exists and where, and finally prioritizing recommendations for immediate action.

Primary findings from the outreach identified inadequate event and program coordination among municipalities, chambers of commerce and organizations. Alternatives in year-round attractions and outdoor activities were also noted as lacking, as well as a comprehensive regional marketing strategy.

From the beginning, project participants voiced concern that not enough was being done to implement recommendations from past planning efforts. Responding to this input and drawing on community and regional plans, the MCRS facilitators organized subcommittees to advance recommendations around two key areas identified in the primary findings and prioritized by the PAT as needing the most attention – marketing and coordinating, and enhancing outdoor recreational opportunities.

On the basis of the project findings, the following recommendations are made:

1. Create a Mountaintop recreation and event planner position, someone who would bring additional resources to the region and provide much needed assistance to volunteer Chambers of Commerce and organizations with event and program coordination and comprehensive marketing of all tourism attractions.



2. Coordinate events and programs across the Mountaintop to maximize attractions and minimize overlapping.
3. Enhance economic development potential to include marketing material such as a mountaintop resource map, a regularly updated calendar of events, and expanding internet marketing.
4. Improve outdoor recreational activities by focusing on projects that involve:
  - ❖ Developing multi-use trails conducive for families and casual walkers
  - ❖ Working with NYCDEP to create complementary trails on city-owned property
  - ❖ Improving access to streams, and
  - ❖ Creating bicycling lane designations &/or widening shoulders for bicycle riders.
5. Investigate feasibility and implications of an occupancy tax, a potential revenue source which would go towards tourism initiatives outlined in the report.
6. Coordinate resource initiatives with non-profit organizations and municipalities in areas of historic preservation, cultural programming and scenic attractions.



# 1. Introduction

The *Mountaintop Community Recreation, Cultural Resources & Scenic Quality Strategy*, or Mountaintop Community Resource Strategy for short, was initiated to identify and prioritize opportunities for improving recreational, cultural and scenic resources that could benefit the Mountaintop communities' tourism industry. Tourism has always been the driving factor behind the Mountaintop's economy, and in order to respond to the current economic challenges, the project brought diverse interests together to develop a locally driven plan that addresses resource improvements, management and marketability.

*Tourism is a significant contributor to the Greene County economy. (Tourism Industry Analysis, GCEDP)*

The project area covers nine municipalities located in the Mountaintop region of Greene County, New York in the northern Catskill Forest Preserve and includes the towns of Ashland, Halcott, Hunter, Jewett, Lexington, Prattsville, and Windham, and the villages of Hunter and Tannersville (Figure 1.1), collectively referred to as the Mountaintop.

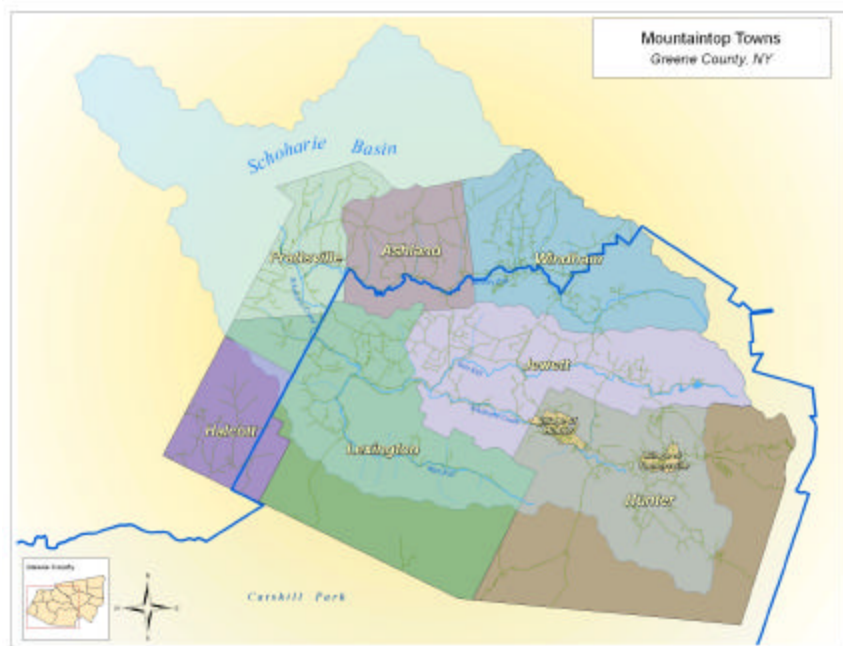
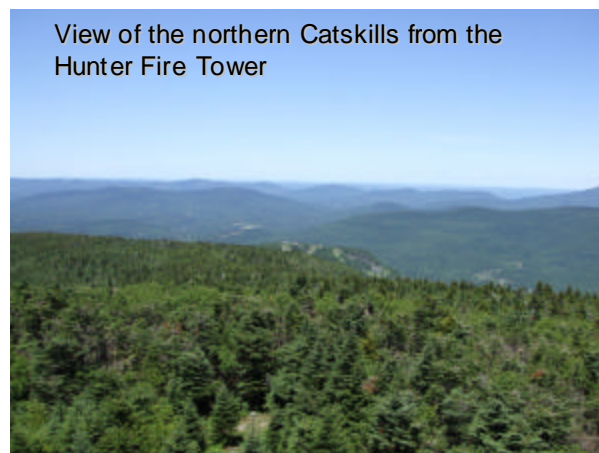


Figure 1.1 Map showing geographic scope of project area within the blue line of the Catskill Forest Preserve.

The Mountaintop's scenic beauty and outdoor recreational activities have attracted visitors for generations, establishing the region as a tourist destination and contributing to the livelihood of the local communities. For close to two centuries, travelers have frequented the area to enjoy the scenery, recreate in the beautiful outdoors and relax in the splendor of the mountains and country air. With each generation, however, the demand for and



utilization of the region’s tourism attractions has fluctuated with demographic, economic and infrastructure changes, resulting in cyclical boom and bust periods for the local economy.

Taking into account these economic fluctuations, the Mountain Community Resource Strategy (MCRS) identifies needs and gaps as voiced by local residents, businesses and resource providers and users and establishes an implementation plan that addresses these concerns. The project’s holistic approach integrates the natural, recreational and cultural values of the area while making the most of public investment, supporting economic development using eco-tourism principles, establishing partnerships between the public and private sector, and ensuring consistency with past planning efforts by taking recommendations to the next level of detail through implementation.

For the first time, the Mountaintop communities have come together to develop an overarching plan that sets forth a collective vision for addressing current economic challenges in relation to the region’s tourism attractions. By improving upon the recreational and cultural resources that are the hallmark of the northern Catskills, the local communities and businesses not only stand to gain economically but also in how the region grows and promotes itself as a modern tourist destination in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

### 1.1. Project Context and Significance

In Greene County, tourism based on outdoor recreation has long been the backbone of the local economy. From the early 1800’s to the mid 1900’s, Mountaintop communities were a draw for people seeking an “experience” with nature. From the former great resorts (i.e. Catskill Mountain House) to the average farm that took in summer borders, the project area has a strong tradition of catering to people who sought to enjoy the scenic quality and recreational and cultural amenities of the area. In more recent times, the tourism base has been primarily focused around the ski facilities located in Hunter and Windham, and since the mid-1990’s, there has been a focus on community revitalization in the villages and hamlets and a resurgence in arts and cultural programming.

The Mountaintop has a diverse mix of private and publicly-owned land and seasonal and year-round residents. The natural beauty, recreational attractions and proximity to the metropolitan area have attracted second homeowners to the region for generations. In addition to the second homeowners market, there is a strong influence of publicly owned land as the Mountaintop is located in the NYC Watershed and the NYS Catskill Forest Preserve.<sup>1</sup> With the respective mandates of the state and city agencies to protect the landscape for recreation, wilderness and watershed protection purposes, the needs of the local communities at times have been in conflict with the public land owners. While the project does not address the balance between development and conservation, it is significant in that the project area is the NYC watershed. In addition to the critical need to protect the City’s water supply, there is an equally important need to maintain sustainable communities.

As noted in Section 2 below, many studies, surveys and planning documents have clearly indicated that building upon the watershed’s scenic quality and natural resource-based recreation will be the key to improving the local economy while

“Greene County is the most dependent upon tourism in the Catskills region with 23% of all employment sustained by visitors,” *Economic Impact of Tourism in NYS, August 2008*, a tourism impact study.

<sup>1</sup> New York State owns 35% of land as part of the Catskill Forest Preserve, New York City owns 3.3 % of land for watershed protection, and the majority is under private ownership at 61.4%. Acreages based on 2007/2008 real property tax data.



avoiding alternate development (i.e. industry which may not be as protective as a strong tourism base). Given the Mountaintop’s abundant recreational, cultural, historical and scenic qualities, and the diverse mix of people and organizations in the watershed that feel passionately about these issues, opportunities for cultivating resource improvements for the betterment of the local economy are numerous.

It is a premise of the strategy that it is basic human nature that people will be more inclined to protect the resources if they are seen as having direct value to them. In the case of the NYC watershed, and the enhancement of recreational and scenic opportunities, if the local communities can continue to draw more people from the downstate metropolitan area to the watershed for natural resource-based recreation, these consumers will supply a sustainable demand for high quality natural resources, which translates to local “value” and resource protection.

## 1.2. Vision and Goals

The impetus behind the project is to enable the local communities to plan collectively and collaboratively on developing a detailed action plan that focuses on enhancing the region’s resource attractions including more effective usage of publicly-owned land. The MCRS sets the foundation for ideas and projects that can build the capacity of the local economy by improving upon the Mountaintop’s outdoor-based resources, tourism attractions and marketability.

Through organized outreach efforts involving private and public agencies, businesses, organizations, and municipalities, the project brought diverse parties together to plan under one umbrella. Recognizing what is good for one sector is good for the Mountaintop as a whole, it was important from the start to plan holistically and keep the broader, interconnectedness of the Mountaintop’s resource attractions in perspective.

### **Project Vision**

*Develop a locally driven resource and recreation plan that seeks to preserve and enhance the scenic quality, outdoor-based recreation, open space, and cultural resources that have attracted people to the area for generations and have provided economic vitality for the mountaintop communities. Guided by a Project Advisory Team representing public and private resource sectors, significant outreach was conducted to engage diverse stakeholders to provide input on resource strengths, needs and areas for improvement. Out of this inclusive process, key recommendations for resource enhancements and safeguards have been identified along with an implementation plan and funding sources.*

The project goals are as follows:

1. Develop a resource improvement plan that represents the collective interests of local communities, businesses, organizations and agencies working on the Mountaintop.
2. Integrate past planning efforts and recommendations by initiating implementation actions.
3. Identify and prioritize opportunities for resource expansion and integration that could benefit the mountaintop communities’ tourism industry.
4. Develop an action plan with implementation priorities, managing partners and funding sources.
5. Encourage community participation and leadership at the local level to facilitate follow through.
6. Serve as a model for other Catskill communities addressing the same issues.





### 1.3. Document Organization & Intended Use

The document is organized around the following sequence of steps taken to develop the strategy:

- ❖ Relevant planning documents and studies.
- ❖ Resource inventory and analysis outlining existing recreational, cultural, historical and scenic resources including location, overseeing entity (public, private), age range, fee/no fee, and programming nature.
- ❖ Interdisciplinary approach that was used to solicit input from involved stakeholders including role of the Project Advisory Team in guiding the process.
- ❖ Recommendations that came out of the publicly-driven process.
- ❖ Underlying themes, priority concerns and areas for action.
- ❖ Management strategies and role of subcommittees as implementers.
- ❖ Implementation strategy and teams.

After initial research on resources and previous studies was conducted, the strategy outlines the outreach planning components starting with the Project Advisory Team (PAT), identifies recommendations from each resource group, prioritizes recommendations for implementation, and sets into motion the implementation of some recommendations. Detailed planning has been done for each recommendation including its origin, those who are most likely to implement it, possible funding sources and time tables for completion.

The MCRS is intended to guide future decision-making around actions and projects that can be implemented locally and by regional partners to build upon the outdoor, scenic and cultural assets that blanket the Mountaintop and that support tourism growth for the local communities. It is also intended to promote greater cooperation across organizations, resource providers and users in the private and public sectors so that recommendations are organized around implementation teams with strong local and regional commitment to see projects through to fruition.

The strategy is meant to be used by local organizations, non-profit groups, outdoor clubs, businesses, interested citizens, local, county, state and city government to focus attention on where resources, personnel and collaborative efforts should be directed.

## 2. Relevant Planning Documents and Reports

In an effort to avoid duplication, documents and reports relevant to the project's scope were reviewed and used as a guide to advance previously identified recommendations. In addition to local and regional documents, studies and reports from other states and organizations that were pertinent to the MCRS focus were used as references to guide planning decisions and implementation strategies as relevant. Trail guides, plans from other tourist communities, and impact surveys, for example, provided direction to different user groups throughout the project.

*"Tourism makes a large contribution to the economy of Catskill communities,"*  
Catskill Park State Land Master Plan, August 2008.

Drawing on past reports and documents (See Appendix A), the MCRS is partially the result of recommendations in local comprehensive plans, county documents, and regional and state plans that recommend improving natural resource-based recreation, cultural resources, and scenic quality (Table 2.1).



Table 2.1 Documents used in development of MCRS

**Municipal Comprehensive Plans**

- Town of Halcott Comprehensive Plan (2003)
- Village of Hunter Comprehensive Plan (2002)
- Town of Hunter Comprehensive Plan (2002)
- Town of Lexington Comprehensive Plan (2003)
- Town of Prattsville Comprehensive Land Use Plan (2000)
- Town of Windham Comprehensive Plan (2002)
- Town of Jewett Draft Comprehensive Plan (2007)
- Village of Tannersville Infrastructure Revitalization Master Plan (2004)



**Economic Reports**

- West of Hudson Economic Development Study for Catskill Fund for the Future (1999)
- Greene County Comprehensive Economic Development Plan (2007)
- New York Economic Impact of Tourism (2007)

**Resource Management Plans**

- NYSDEC Unit Management Plans, Catskill Park State Land Master Plan (2008), and the Catskill Public Access Plan (1999)
- Stream Management Plans (SMP) developed by the GCSWCD and NYCDEP for sub-basins in the Schoharie watershed under the Stream Management Program
- Town of Hunter Mountain Cloves Scenic Byways Corridor Management Plan (2008)

**Recreation Plans**

- Greene County Open Space and Recreation Plan (2002)
- Greene County Parks & Recreation Plan (1998)
- Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2003)

The project builds on the successful Stream Management Plans (SMP)<sup>2</sup> developed jointly by the Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District and the NYCDEP, as well as recommendations in local and county comprehensive plans including the Greene County Economic Development Plan (GCEDP).<sup>3</sup> Completed in August 2007, the GCEDP provided a platform that this project relied extensively on. Focusing on economic development strategies for the Mountaintop and the county, the GCEDP underscores the need for enhanced tourism venues and marketing as a

<sup>2</sup> Enhancing public enjoyment of stream systems through improved access, low impact streamside trails, stream celebrations that are educational and fun are examples of the type of recommendations in SMPs that the strategy promotes. Plans can be found at <http://www.gcswcd.com/stream/eastkill/EastKillSMP/>

<sup>3</sup> Document can be found at <http://www.greeneplanning.com/planning/programs-services>



means to building the local economy. The GCEDP identified key recommendations that this project took to a greater level of detail and set the stage for implementation.

Pertinent recommendations from these reports were summarized and used in the outreach phase as a basis from which to work. A summary of each document can be found in Appendix A, with a sample of recommendations that support protecting and enhancing outdoor, scenic and cultural resources provided below (Table 2.2). It is clear from the reports that the Mountaintop communities recognize the importance of scenic, historic, and recreational resources to their economic livelihood.

Table 2.2 Recommendations from existing reports at a glance

<b>Key:</b> <u>CFF</u> – Catskill Fund for the Future <u>GCEDP</u> – Greene County Economic Development Plan (2007), <u>GCOSRP</u> – Greene County Open Space & Recreation Plan, <u>CP</u> – Comprehensive Plan (municipalities), <u>CPSLMP</u> – NYSDEC Catskill Park State Land Master Plan			
<b>1. Preserve scenic values and resources:</b>			
Lexington CP	Jewett CP (ID areas for protection)	Prattsville CP	
Halcott CP	Windham CP	GCOSRP	
Town of Hunter CP (pursuing Scenic Byways designation)			
<b>2. Preserve historical resources:</b>			
Lexington CP	Jewett CP	Halcott CP	GCEDP
Prattsville CP	Windham CP (historic Windham museum)		GCOSRP
<b>3. Promote more cultural activities and amenities:</b>			
Halcott CP      Village of Hunter CP (film, visual and performing arts)			
GCEDP (cultivate arts/cultural resources)			
<b>4. Maintain and improve fisheries resources and stream access:</b>			
Windham CP	Village/Hunter CP	Jewett CP	GCEDP
GCSWCD Stream Management Plans		CPSLMP (DEC)	
<b>5. Support for expanding multi-use paths</b> (within communities and across mountaintop):			
Town of Hunter CP (Huckleberry Trail)	Jewett CP	CFF	GCEDP
Windham CP (Batavia Kill pedestrian trail)	GCSWCD Stream Management Plans		
<b>6. Improve public access to state and city lands (ensure Information is readily available):</b>			
Windham CP	Halcott CP	Jewett CP	GCEDP
Town of Hunter CP	GCSWCD Stream Management Plans	CPSLMP (“family trails”)	
<b>7. Improve &amp; coordinate marketing efforts:</b>			
Windham Community meeting	CFF	Prattsville CP	
Town of Hunter CP (improve signage & promotional material)		GCEDP	
<b>8. Transportation system improvements:</b>			
Jewett CP	Windham CP (shuttle)	CFF	GCEDP (shuttle service)
<b>9. Support for Community &amp; Recreational facility:</b>			
Windham CP	Jewett CP (multi-use government facility)	GCEDP	
Tannersville Infrastructure Revitalization Plan			



- 10. Support off season activities (mountain boarding, fishing, biking, skating rink, bird watching):** Windham CP GCOSRP GCEDP
- 11. Hamlet & Village improvements (expand retail, specialty services opportunities):**  
 Village of Hunter CP CFF GCEDP (Main St. improvements)  
 Tannersville Infrastructure Revitalization Plan

A component of the project involved cataloguing existing resources, organizing them under one system, and using the inventory to enhance marketing efforts of individual businesses and the county. Much of this information will be presented in map format including interactive mapping that will be available for use on local, county and regional websites.

### 3. Inventory and Analysis of Resources

Researching information on the vast array of resources throughout the Mountaintop was conducted to better understand what exists and to use in planning deliberations. Knowing what exists and where provided background information that was used in identifying needs and gaps and to improve marketing material and publications. Compiling this information was done through website research, publications, travel guides, resource maps, and data through the Geographic Information Systems (GIS) clearinghouse.

The inventory consists of different types of information that were plotted on maps and serves as a repository of the targeted resources below. The data are organized under one umbrella for multiple purposes – website posting, publications, public displays, and organizational and business uses. Resources were cataloged visually on maps and descriptively in spreadsheet format with information on the type, size, location, overseeing entity, cost (if applicable), age range, seasonal nature, etc. A summary of the resources inventoried include:

- I. Outdoor recreation – state and private hiking trails, snowmobile and multi-purpose trails, public fishing rights (state access locations), NYCDEP parcels that allow recreation and the new Public Access Area parcels (NYCDEP permit not required), lean-tos, municipal parks, lakes, public and private camp grounds, horseback riding, outdoor amphitheater, golf courses, ski resorts, cross country ski centers, mountain biking trails, guide services.
- II. Cultural and Arts – performing arts centers, program venues and theaters, art studios and centers, organizations that offer programs, concerts, and educational classes.
- III. Historical – structures on state and national Historic Register or sites nominated, museums
- IV. Hospitality/lodging by type – Bed and Breakfasts, Hotels, Motels, cabins, RV parks
- V. Scenic – points of scenic interest on public and private land (private not exhaustive)
- VI. Other – fire towers, movie theaters, nature preserves, book stores

Resources were also identified by ownership, municipal boundaries, and as relevant included natural features, such as streams, wetlands and topography.

Key findings from the inventory:

- ❖ No fishing access points along the headwaters of the Batavia Kill for at least 5 miles until the junction with County Route 17, Town of Ashland, and none along the East Kill in Jewett.



- ❖ There are very few family multi-use trails for casual walkers, as well as trails for mountain biking. Those that do exist include the Huckleberry Trail (Tannersville), Dolan’s Lake (V/Hunter), and the North-South Lake NYSDEC trails (Haines Falls).
- ❖ Portions of state and county roads are not wide enough to accommodate cyclists, e.g., State Route 296, sections of State Route 23, County Route 16.
- ❖ There are many activities and resources for tourists but no central location or publication that lists them all.
- ❖ The Mountaintop’s natural environment and valley streams offer much potential to improve and expand outdoor recreational activities, namely family-oriented trails.
- ❖ Opportunities exist to expand recreational benefits on city and state land as long as there is no water quality threat and the activity is a benefit to the community.
- ❖ Between hotels, motels, B & B’s and Inns, the Mountaintop has approximately 1, 037 rooms, with only one grand style hotel, the Kaatskill Mountain Club.
- ❖ Structures listed on the state and national Historic Registry are numerous throughout the Mountaintop. (see inventory spreadsheet)

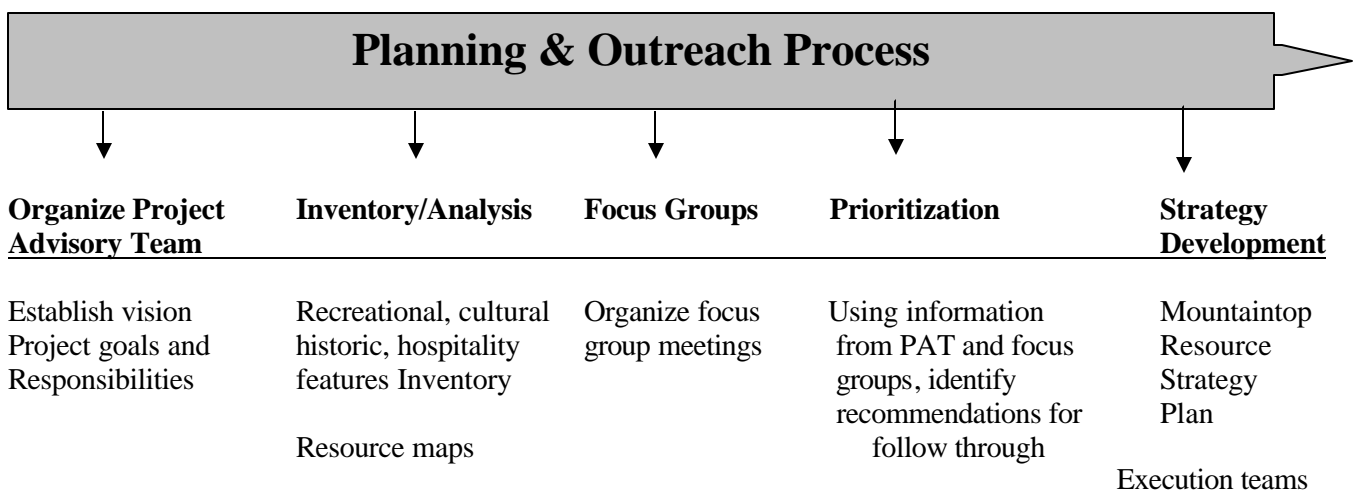
A detailed listing of resources is provided in Appendix D along with maps identifying where they are located.

#### 4. Organizing Project Stakeholders, Identification of Needs

The Mountaintop Community Resource Strategy was developed based on extensive community input. Facilitated by the GCSWCD Watershed Assistance Program, outreach methods that were used to solicit information from various sources included (Figure 4.1):

- A Project Advisory Team
- Focus Groups
- Interviews
- Past surveys and MCRS survey

Figure 4.1 Outreach and Plan Development Sequence



The planning phase entailed reaching out to a wide variety of sources from public and not-for-profit agencies to area businesses and community leaders. By engaging the public and private interests under a unified approach, participants were able to voice concerns about what they felt the Mountaintop needed in terms of improving the local economy, attracting more visitors to the region, and facilitating cooperation and collaboration among the different stakeholder groups, all of whom share a common interest in promoting the region’s resources more effectively and efficiently.

The first step involved organizing an advisory team to represent the diverse interests of the Mountaintop communities and provide direction on project outcomes, action steps, and implementation priorities.

### 4.1 Project Advisory Team

The Project Advisory Team (PAT) was the primary steering committee and assisted with planning and outreach, project identification, prioritization of recommendations, and implementation (Table 4.1). The interdisciplinary group played an integral role in shaping the strategy from defining the project’s scope to determining feasible recommendations that fit into the overall vision for the mountaintop community. A guiding principle the PAT impressed upon was to focus on projects that could be successfully implemented within reasonable time frames, so that participants could see results.

Table 4.1 Project Advisory Team responsibilities:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Identify project outcomes</li> <li>● Provide direction on outreach methods</li> <li>● Serve as a link to focus groups</li> <li>● Prioritize recommendations</li> <li>● Establish framework for implementation</li> </ul>

Representing the local municipalities, area businesses, and public and non-profit agencies, PAT members included (Figure 4.2):

1. Municipal representatives (9 total)
2. Representation from local businesses and user groups including outfitter shops, ski centers, and the hospitality industry
3. Greene County government agencies (Planning & Economic Development, Industrial Development Agency, Tourism & Promotion, Soil and Water Conservation District)
4. Public regulatory agencies (NYSDEC, NYCDEP)
5. Non-profit organizations involved in public, educational, cultural, and natural resource programming (Catskill Mountain Foundation, Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension, Catskill Center for Conservation & Development, Trout Unlimited)



Figure 4.2 Project Advisory Team Meeting

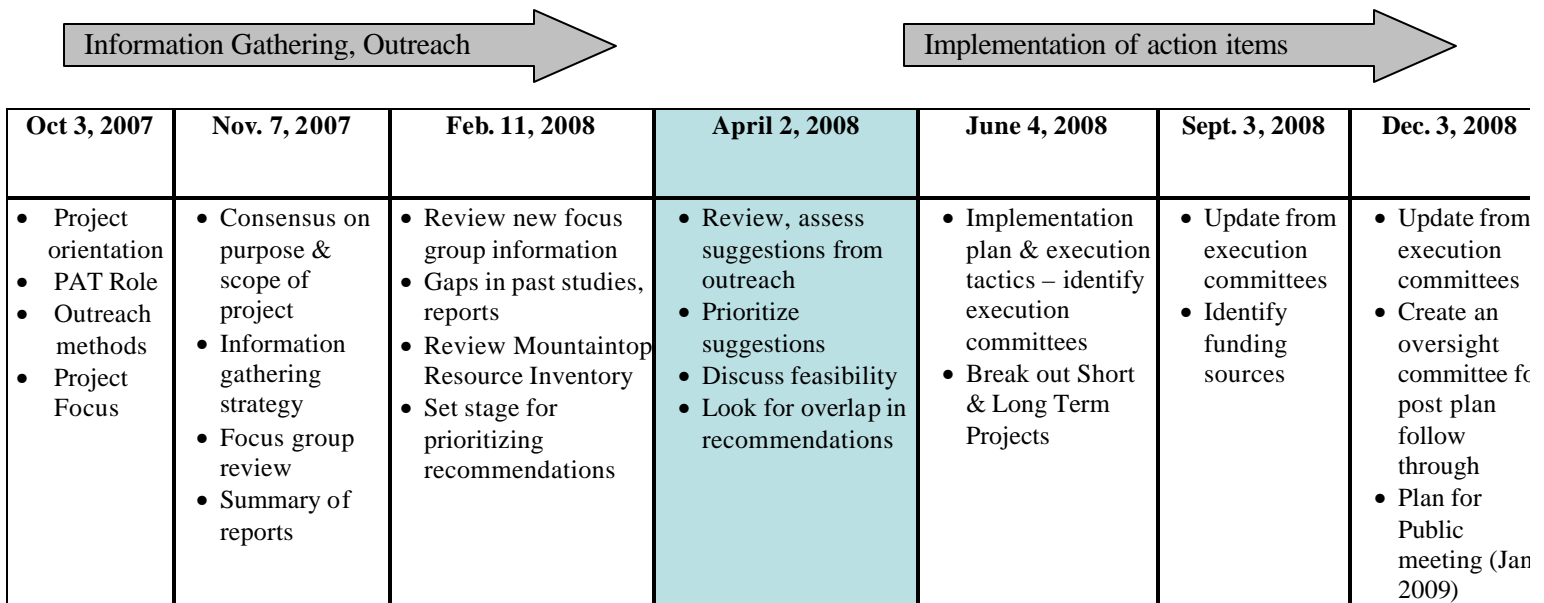


The makeup of the group was designed to solicit different perspectives and ideas on what the Mountaintop needs to improve the local economy and its resource offerings. Based on one's area of expertise and interest, PAT members shared concerns regarding business and tourism trends, community, organizational and public agency needs, and lack of coordination and cooperation across these sectors in addressing current Mountaintop issues. As concerns were aired and more information was gathered through outreach methods, common gaps and needs emerged which provided direction for the group on where to focus their energies.

The PAT held their first meeting in October 2007 (Figure 4.3) and met regularly throughout the year. The timeline below shown in Figure 4.4 shows the sequence of steps undertaken by the team. The first half of the project involved researching planning documents, inventorying resources and conducting outreach through focus groups. The April meeting was a turning point for the PAT in that recommendations amassed from the outreach and research phase were prioritized and subcommittees were formed to begin working on implementation plans.



Figure 4.4 Project Advisory Team Work Timeline



With each meeting the PAT was updated on the progress of the focus groups and summaries were provided listing each group's recommendations. As the outreach phase came to a close, it was up to the PAT to prioritize recommendations that were compatible with the project's vision and that could be implemented to show progress, a consistent desire voiced by participants. (A summary of the recommendations is provided in Section 5.)



Focus groups were essential to providing direction on resource needs, issues and concerns relative to their particular area of interest or business. The following section summarizes the different resource groups and priority recommendations that came out of these meetings.

## **4.2 Focus Groups**

Substantial outreach to user groups, community clubs, government agencies, business owners, and organizations was conducted through focused discussions in specific resource areas that the project addresses – active and passive outdoor recreation, historical resources, cultural programming, and scenic beauty.<sup>4</sup> Underpinning these discussions is the need to improve the local economy through enhanced tourism. Groups that were organized to provide input into the strategy include:

- Hospitality (restaurant & lodging industry)
- Recreation businesses and county economic development support
- Historical societies and associations
- Arts and Culture organizations
- Sportsmen and women
- Outdoor recreation interest groups
- Snowmobiling clubs
- Scenic resource and village improvement interests

### **4.2.1 Hospitality**

The hospitality group was comprised of the Mountaintop’s dining and lodging representatives, a key constituency of the tourism market. This group felt strongly that lack of action from past planning efforts has resulted in minimal change or improvement to the area’s tourism base. Preferring to avoid another planning project with limited follow through, the hospitality group advocated for prioritizing key recommendations in the Greene County Economic Development Plan and beginning implementation so that progress can be seen within a reasonable time frame. A facilitated prioritization exercise in December 2007 with hospitality representatives identified the need to have a dedicated person work with the Mountaintop communities and businesses on coordinating an advertising strategy and assisting with event management and other resource attractions (Table 4.2).

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<sup>4</sup> Minutes from the Project Advisory Team and focus group meetings can be found in Appendix B.





**Table 4.2 Recommendations from the hospitality focus group**

The overarching recommendation is to create a mountaintop recreation and event coordinator position (MTC), someone who would assist with event planning and management, outdoor resource improvements and accessing funding through grants. Needs identified in the GCEDP that a MTC would address include:

- Increasing tourism for special, off season events, such as bike races, big weekend venues (Mountain Jam, October Fest, Autumn Fest), festivals (food & wine, motorcycle)
- Developing & distributing to lodging venues a coordinated monthly schedule of Mountaintop programs/activities that minimizes overlapping events
- Branding the mountaintop using an identity that has meaning to the area and to customers who come here, such the Rip Van Winkle persona
- Assisting with planning and organizing attractions/activities that complement existing outdoor activities, such as multi-use trails, children's activities, and theme festivals

The call to action voiced by this group, and others as uncovered later in the process, spurred an implementation effort to find funds to create the mountaintop coordinator/planner position. The hospitality group was the most vociferous in terms of wanting to see immediate action to getting projects implemented. As an industry that relies on tourism, the lodging and restaurant sector is feeling the impacts of a lagging economy and is one that stands the most to lose when the tourism market is down.<sup>5</sup>

#### 4.2.2 Recreation Business

Outreach to Mountaintop businesses and county agencies involved in business and tourism promotion was conducted to provide insight from an economic standpoint on current business trends and needs, county department initiatives, and potential projects that could be advanced under the MCRS. Again, drawing on recommendations from the County's Economic Development Plan, the group identified priority needs they would like to see advanced through this project.

"It is obvious that the mountaintop community has diversified and changed economically. It is time for us to take advantage of our natural resources to help boost our economy and improve the quality of life for residents, second homeowners, local businesses and visitors/tourists." Pete Greco, Jr. Rip Van Winkle Outfitters

Representatives from local businesses (ski centers, outdoor activity providers) and county agencies providing economic support (Greene IDA, Greene County Planning and Economic Development, and Greene County Tourism & Promotions) explored project ideas involving:

- ❖ small business incubator program to encourage natural-resource based entrepreneurial pursuits, such as canoe rentals, hunting/fishing/outdoor guide services, moonlight kayak tours<sup>6</sup>
- ❖ a coordinated marketing and advertising campaign that would cover all Mountaintop communities, businesses and resource attractions

<sup>5</sup> Since this project started in September 2007, at least 5 lodging/restaurant businesses have closed on the Mountaintop.

<sup>6</sup> Starting on Memorial Day 2009, the NYCDEP will be allowing enhanced recreational uses on the Cannonsville Reservoir in Delaware County as a pilot program; expanded uses include non-motorized boating such as canoes, rowboats, kayaks, and sailboats. If successful, a similar recommendation will be explored with the NYCDEP as part of this project to open the Schoharie Reservoir for the same expanded uses.



- ❖ professional assistance for chambers of commerce (limited by volunteers) and Mountaintop communities with event coordination and outdoor resource improvements (creating more family trails, providing support to private trails with maintenance, interpretive signage), and
- ❖ promoting more package deals between outdoor-based businesses (ski centers, guide services, summer bike rentals) and hospitality sector as a way to attract people to the area (Figure 4.5)

Figure 4.5 Sample Ski Package advertisement

**SKI PACKAGES: VALUE & DETAILS**

The Hunter Inn offers a discount packages that include skiing at Hunter Mountain or Windham Mountain. Our package options can save you from 10% to 55% off the standard room rates. The Hunter Inn offers....

- **SKI PACKAGE: Room - Lift Ticket - Breakfast**



A common thread in the business community boiled down to a lack of a coordinated, centralized approach to marketing and advertising the outdoor recreational resources across the Mountaintop. Even in the ski resort communities and the many businesses that rely on that industry, coordinating efforts more was identified as a means to increase the tourism potential to the area. From small businesses on the outskirts of communities, such as Mountain Brook Farms in Ashland, to the established ones in villages and hamlets (e.g., Windham and Colonial Country Clubs, Bear Creek Landing), a comprehensive marketing strategy that includes all resources and attractions is needed to promote the region and its many offerings.

**Priority recommendation from the Business Recreation Group**

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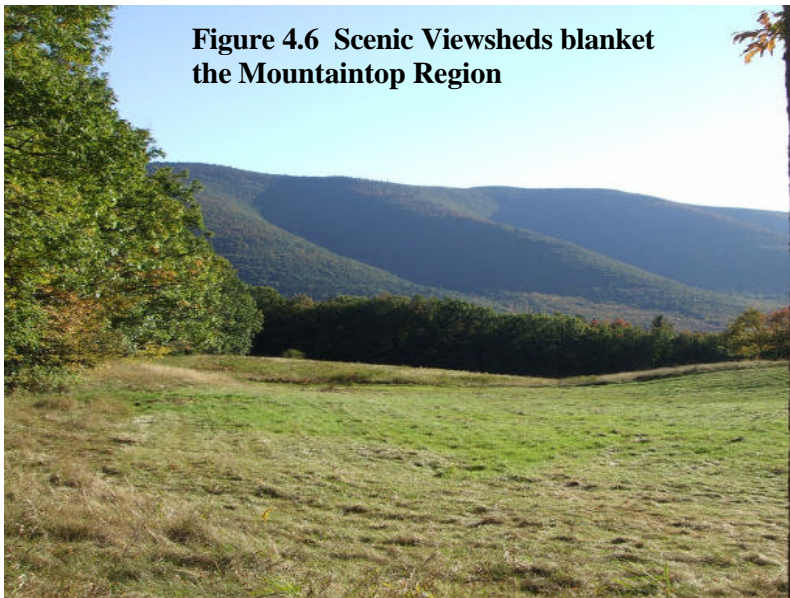
Develop an organizational model for a Mountaintop Tourism Director/Coordinator to work with communities, businesses and county agencies and solicit funding from private and public sources

As endorsed by the hospitality group, this group feels having a dedicated person to support the Mountaintop businesses and communities with streamlining a marketing and coordinating strategy across all communities would be a huge asset to promoting the existing resource attractions. Moreover, a planner/coordinator could also assist with event management and be a resource for outdoor recreation improvements, another need area that has enormous potential to build on the region’s tourism as identified in many studies and plans. Developing a business model with possible funding sources to create a new position and organizing around those sources was the primary recommendation (Business Model can be found in Appendix C).

### 4.2.3 Scenic Resources

Focusing on community revitalization, beautification, and scenic resources, this group met to discuss current projects and areas for improvement involving the Mountaintop’s villages, hamlets, Main Streets and corridor viewsheds. Organizations and community members invited to participate included revitalization organizations, chambers of commerce, municipal representatives, and planning organizations.





**Figure 4.6 Scenic Viewsheds blanket the Mountaintop Region**

The scenic quality and small-town character of the Mountaintop is the primary reason people choose to live and recreate in Greene County (Consumer Preference Survey for the Greene County Economic Development Plan). As identified in local and regional plans, protecting scenic viewsheds (Figure 4.6) and improving village and hamlet centers is a means to promoting tourism and investing in the local economy (Table 4.3).

<b>Table 4.3 Prior Scenic Recommendations</b>	
Town of Hunter Comp Plan (CP)	Protect the visual qualities of Hunter
Town of Windham CP	Encourage Reuse and Revitalization
Town of Prattsville CP	Protect Scenic Qualities
	Encourage a walking village atmosphere in the hamlet-elevate sidewalks
Village of Tannersville Infrastructure Revitalization Master Plan	Additional sidewalks, trails, & street trees
	Reorganize /formalize parking (removing pavement to allow for pocket parks/ increased green space)
Greene County Economic Development Plan	Consider additional set-aside of Main Street Revitalization Program funds for enhancing important community gateways
	Continue reinvestment in Main Street areas and village centers.
Economic Study for Catskill Fund for the Future	There is a lack of adequate and consistent signage to orient visitors
	Revitalize hamlets/villages – specialty services and tourism
Greene County Open Space and Recreation Plan	Protect Mountaintop area’s Scenic & Open Space
	Historic Sites should be restored (Tax Incentives available)
Catskill Forest Public Access Plan	Enhance Scenic Travel Corridors with multiple sub-projects addressing this

The Mountaintop is fortunate to have a number of organizations working towards improving downtowns and village centers. Between non-profit organizations, such as the Hunter Foundation, Inc., the Catskill Mountain Foundation, the Community of Windham Foundation, the Catskill Center for Conservation & Development, and community and county leaders, there are many good examples of Main Street improvement and beautification projects. The business district in Windham and Main Streets in Hunter and Tannersville (Figure 4.7), for example, have benefited from such improvement programs, resulting in lasting impressions when driving through these communities.





Figure 4.7 (left) The Fromer House, a Historic building on Main Street, Tannersville renovated by the Hunter Foundation, a non-profit organization working to improve Hunter’s scenic corridor along State Route 23A.



Figure 4.8 Dolan’s Lake, Hunter

Some communities have taken advantage of planning assistance grants working through regional organizations like the Catskill Center for Conservation and Development (CCCD). The CCCD has been active working with the Town of Hunter on a Corridor Management Plan for the Scenic Byways program and the Town of Prattsville on a master plan for Pratt Rock. They were also instrumental in assisting the Village of Hunter with Dolan’s Lake, a quaint village park (Figure 4.8), and the Town of Windham on Main Street improvements.

Whereas there are a number of examples to point to, there are many more opportunities that need attention to protect and enhance the intrinsic visual qualities of the Mountaintop. For example, projects and buildings that would benefit from revitalization and renovation efforts include:

- Saint Mary’s Church, Route 23A, Village of Hunter
- Lexington House (on state and national Historic Register) and Lexington Hotel
- A small municipal pocket park on County Route 13A, Lexington
- Beautification projects along Main Streets in Prattsville, Lexington and Ashland
- Village of Hunter Main Street business development plan – façade improvements along the Village’s Main Street

Revitalizing historic “Main Street” commercial districts is an approach advocated in the Greene County Economic Development Plan to encourage economic development and tourism, and tapping into county and state resources more would serve the Mountaintop well. A limitation as voiced by this group is having enough staff and personnel resources to initiate and see projects through to fruition. If the Mountaintop had its own planner, someone responsible for accessing funds for communities through county, state and non-profit resources, more projects would be realized.

Out of the recommendations below that came out of the February 2008 meeting (Table 4.4), the one that ties the others together is hiring a planner, someone who can facilitate coordinating and accessing more resources for community projects such as those listed above.

**Table 4.4 Recommendations for improving & protecting the scenic quality of Mountaintop Communities**

2. Extend Scenic Byways designation in Hunter along State Rte. 23A west to Prattsville and through Windham along State Route 23 (in keeping with holistic planning across the region)
3. Encourage local governments to establish building codes &/or design standards that would direct future development along Village and Hamlet Main Streets to be compatible with the natural surroundings and historic resources (e.g., Village of Hunter's Architectural Review Law, GCEPTP Main Street Revitalization Program Design Guidelines)
4. Facilitate coordination among the mountaintop historical societies and associations under the umbrella of the Mountaintop Historical Society, as historic resources go hand in hand with community and scenic preservation
5. **Hire a planner to facilitate/coordinate initiatives for Mountaintop communities that would maximize available resources to conduct Main St. revitalization, beautification, and historic preservation**
6. Identify stream-related issues that affect scenic qualities, especially in hamlets & villages, and develop response plans for each, such as impacts from Japanese knotweed on stream stability and scenic viewsheds, promote more stream clean ups, and work with NYCDEP to manage city-owned parcels with high scenic resource quality (i.e., not let land go fallow and lose the viewshed)

#### 4.2.4 Arts & Culture

Arts and cultural resources are an inherent part of the Mountaintop and continue to attract visitors from all over. As was the case in the years of Thomas Cole and the Hudson River School, the mountainous landscape of the northern Catskills (Figure 4.9) continues to inspire artists specializing in different mediums (painting, photography, pottery, jewelry, music, literary) and organizations that offer an assortment of cultural and educational programming.



Figure 4.9 Artist painting the Batavia Kill Landscape (Photo by Jenn Grieser)

Recognizing the important contribution the arts and cultural community has on the Mountaintop and its economy, the project reached out to diverse organizations to look collectively at areas of mutual interest and concern involving these resources (Figure 4.10). Organizations that participated in the discussion include the Catskill Mountain Foundation (CMF), Sugar Maples Center for Arts & Education (operated by the CMF), Greene County Council on the Arts, and the Community Foundation of Windham. Talking points included:



Figure 4.10 Arts and Cultural Organizations Group

- ❖ organizational needs involving arts and cultural services
- ❖ how participants feel about current arts and cultural venues on the Mountaintop
- ❖ where linkages could be made to strengthen the arts/cultural community, and
- ❖ how to market the collective arts/cultural offerings in order to draw more people to the Mountaintop for these interests

Each organization shared information on their mission, programs and projects, funding sources, and organizational needs. Priority needs identified by the group are summarized in Table 4.5 and are similar to what other groups are voicing in terms of lack of a cohesive marketing and branding strategy and the need to communicate with each other to align programming and resources more effectively. For instance, if the Mountain Culture Festival the Catskill Mountain Foundation used to host were planned and organized on a regional scale with different communities and agencies participating, it would become a regional effort and likely ensure this unique Mountaintop event would continue.

**Table 4.5 Cultural & Arts Focus Group Recommendations**

1. Marketing & advertising needs to be on a much larger scale to attract both tourists and locals, and must come from more diverse sources (state, county, private). Cannot rely on individual organizations to do it alone.
2. More cooperation and coordination among organizations and mountaintop communities (need entity to host meetings, keep dialogue going), for example organizing the Mountain Culture Festival event as a collaborative venture.
3. Develop an image, branding strategy for the Mountaintop to attract more people (lacking an identity).
4. Funding to support low cost programs for area residents or free programming – way to connect with local communities more.

As another of area of interest, the project looked at outdoor sporting activities for which the Mountaintop is well known.

#### 4.2.5 Sportsmen

Fishing, hunting and trapping have long been part of the Mountaintop’s way of life and are a predominant influence in the state and county economy. The region is rich in streams (Figure 4.11) and abundant forests and wildlife offer many opportunities for these passive outdoor sporting activities which contribute to the local economy.

According to the report, “*Hunting and Fishing: Bright Stars of the American Economy/A force as big as the outdoors*,” New York ranks 7<sup>th</sup> in the nation in number of hunters and 9<sup>th</sup> for resident anglers, and NY hunters and anglers are among the most prominent and influential, spending more than \$1.8 billion a year on their sporting pursuits.



**Figure 4.11 Angler on Schoharie Creek, Prattsville**

To gather input how sportsmen and women feel about wildlife-related activities, a group of local and regional residents involved in sporting clubs, fishing services, hunting, outdoor equipment businesses, and those working in the field of wildlife management was organized to provide insight into the Strategy’s development for outdoor sporting improvements.



From a marketing perspective, the group felt more could be done to organize and advertise fishing and hunting guide services and market them as part of package deals similar to what the ski resorts do with the hospitality industry (see also Business Recreation recommendations). The Mountaintop has a few guide services, such as Judd Weisberg from Lexington (Figure 4.12) and Hunter Mountain Fly Fishing School, but they are not part of a comprehensive marketing strategy that would promote these activities in relation to the Mountaintop as a tourist destination.



According to the *2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation*, the US Fish & Wildlife Service estimates that America’s passion for wildlife-related outdoor recreation generated about \$120 billion in 2006, which is roughly equal to Americans’ spending at all spectator events, casinos, movies, golf courses, and amusement parks combined.

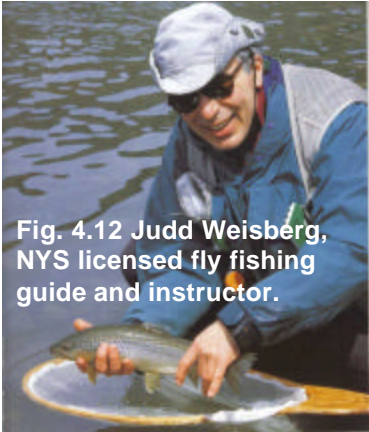


Fig. 4.12 Judd Weisberg, NYS licensed fly fishing guide and instructor.

In addition to promoting fishing and hunting, the group identified a number of ideas that could enhance these sports and the direct and indirect economic benefits that come from them (Table 4.6).

<b>Table 4.6 Recommendations from Sportsmen Focus Group</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase sporting activities for children – post fishing spots for “children only” with attractive signage, promote more fishing derbies and education programs (e.g., Stream Celebrations &amp; sporting classes), encourage kids involvement in stocking program, designate “Kids Only” hunting and fishing days (accompanied by adults)</li> <li>• Improve access to streams (designated parking areas) and signage noting types of fish found in the area to attract more anglers</li> <li>• Stocking – space out locations (include still waters such as ponds, lakes) and schedule; wait a few days before posting stocking information on DEC website; designate catch and release fishing one to two days after stocking</li> <li>• Organize fishing and hunting outings as guided tours, pair with package deals with hospitality industry and market them</li> <li>• Expand access to NYCDEP land for low impact recreational activities such as fishing, hiking, hunting and trapping (covered under Outdoor Group below)</li> <li>• Organize public events similar to the Batavia Kill Stream Celebration that promote these activities and the outdoors, e.g., Lexington Opening Day Fair on West Kill (businesses, breakfast, outfitters, programs)</li> </ul>	



#### 4.2.6 Outdoor Recreation

Outdoor recreation is one of the largest draws that attracts people to the Mountaintop. Almost all of the land lies within the Catskill Park Forest Preserve, and there is an abundance of outdoor recreational activities, such as hiking, road and mountain biking, skiing (cross country and alpine), snowmobiling, horseback riding, and the passive activities of hunting, and fishing. A frequently cited reason why people move to the Mountaintop is because of the recreational activities and beautiful scenery.<sup>7</sup>



From an economic standpoint, the driving force behind the region's tourism is the plethora of outdoor recreational activities available. The Mountaintop's economy relies extensively on visitors seeking outdoor experiences from skiing in the winter to camping and biking in spring, summer and fall and hiking year-round. Even with the Mountaintop's reputation as a haven for outdoor enthusiasts, there is much untapped potential to expand recreational amenities to provide visitors and residents with more year-round activities and to help local communities and businesses deal with economic fluctuations and weather-dependent activities, such as skiing.

The Outdoor Recreation group was convened to look at improvements in outdoor recreation and education activities that are compatible with promoting the region, such as environmental programming, stream access, parking, signage, trail expansion & management, and municipal parks. The group (Figure 4.13) was comprised of hiking clubs, trail and biking enthusiasts, organizations providing environmental programming, and regulatory agencies that have oversight of the public lands (New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) and NYCDEP).



Overall, the group felt the Mountaintop region has great potential to become a premier outdoor resource destination, but has yet to reach its capacity in offering more alternatives in outdoor recreation. For example, the group felt the existing trail network was lacking in two areas – diversity (very few leisure, family-oriented trails) and limited trails and parking heads on NYC-owned land. It is not surprising the group identified multi-use trails as a means to promote the region by offering alternative year-round activities for people of all ages. In practically every

<sup>7</sup> Greene County Consumer Preference Study, conducted as part of the Economic Development Plan



community plan and survey, residents and tourists have endorsed multi-use trails as an alternative to the strenuous, vertical trails on the state land.

There are very few short trails that are attractive to families and those not interested in extended hikes into the back country (Catskill Park Public Access Plan, page 48).



Figure 4.13 Outdoor Resource Group

A Mountaintop trail system that can link downtowns and villages together and offer tourists a year-round opportunity to experience the natural beauty of the mountains has enormous potential economically, educationally and physically in terms of promoting health benefits. Such a trail system would encourage people to be outdoors and exercise more and promote multiple benefits for:

- learning (educational kiosks, guide services, environmental classes)
- local businesses with offshoot trails to villages/hamlets/business districts
- a variety of outdoor experiences (bird watching, signage of natural features), and
- branding the mountaintop as a trail destination area (marketing)

Although it is easy to envision the possibilities of a trail system given the Mountaintop’s scenic landscape, it can take years to develop and would require an exorbitant amount of money.



Figure 4.14 Ulster-Delaware Railroad bed, Hunter, potential multi-use trail.

As way of example, it took Stowe, Vermont over 12 years to construct a 5.3 mile multi-use path throughout the town, which cost \$680,000 in 1989. Stowe’s Recreation Path, however, has become a beacon for attracting visitors to that community linking businesses with the Path and promoting the local economy.

As with any good idea on a grand scale, small steps are needed first, and the Outdoor group saw an opportunity to revisit two multi-use path projects from the past in the towns of Windham and Hunter (Figure 4.14). Both are discussed in Section 5 under the *Outdoor Resource Infrastructure Projects*. In addition to multi-use trails, other improvements the group feels are within reach include bike lane designations/widening shoulders and expanding recreational activities on NYC land that would benefit the region’s economy, such as fishing and low impact trails.

Public Agency Involvement

Given the amount of public land in the project area, the NYSDEC and NYCDEP are key agencies to work with in advancing outdoor recreation such as family multi-use trails. As participants of the MCRS project, the NYSDEC and NYCDEP have been working closely with this group and with the Project Advisory Team in clarifying issues that need to be considered



when proposing trails on public property. Both agencies have been supportive working with local communities and groups to improve recreational opportunities on public land, providing their concerns are addressed.

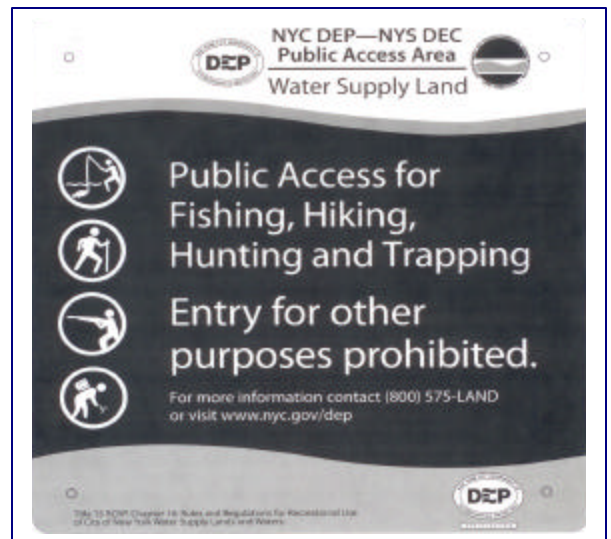
At the February 2008 focus group meeting, NYSDEC and NYCDEP staff outlined considerations that have to be weighed when proposing trail development on state and city lands:

- Agency resources are available to meet management needs (maintenance, staff oversight)
- Liability and public safety are not an issue
- On NYCDEP land, security is not a concern (e.g., proximity to reservoirs)
- Trail is well sited, avoids impacts to land that may be detrimental to water resources, such as wetlands, stream banks, or mitigates potential impacts
- For snowmobile proposals, must connect to other trails, i.e., will not approve circular trail
- Land Use Permits formalize arrangement and partnership (NYCDEP)
- Recommendations are part of well thought out plan that enhances recreational benefits
- Public participation process drives the recommendation (via the UMP process on NYSDEC land),
- Proposed expansion is consistent with the Catskill Park Land Master Plan and the Unit Management Plan (UMP) for the proposed area.

The NYCDEP has responded to public input regarding enhancing public access and recreational use of city property. In September 2008, for example, close to 18,000 acres of city land were re-designated as Public Access Areas eliminating the requirement to have a NYCDEP access permit or hunt tag (See map in Appendix D).

As a result of local mountain biking advocates pushing for enhanced use on a parcel in East Windham, the NYCDEP granted the DEC a land use permit to manage mountain biking trails on the property known as Mount Hayden. The city has also granted land use permits to snowmobile clubs allowing access on city land to connect to other trails if deemed suitable and in accordance with the criteria above. These are examples where the NYCDEP is open to recreational proposals providing the above considerations are met.

Other programming and outdoor resource improvements the group identified as beneficial for the Mountaintop are highlighted in Table 4.7.



**Table 4.7 Recommendations from the Outdoor Recreation Focus Group**

- Long-term goal – create a multi-use, family trail system across the mountaintop, linking communities, starting with small projects to generate success and momentum
  - Revisit multi-use trail projects in Windham and Hunter
  - Develop master plan for enhanced multi-use trail system
- Improve parking facilities and low impact trail access on City land
- Link outdoor recreation and natural resources to environmental education programming
  - Work with Greene County Cornell Cooperative Extension (GCCCE) and other educational organizations to develop a program that uses volunteers as Master Naturalists to work with schools, community groups and the tourist industry to promote the outdoors through facilitated educational sessions (note: GCCCE and Outdoor Pursuits (guide service) are working on initiatives like this)
  - Reach out to schools and students to determine what interests they have and build educational programming around that
- Work with the NYSDOT and County Highway Department to create bike lane designations or widen shoulders where feasible

#### 4.2.7 Snowmobile

Snowmobiling is another outdoor activity that local residents and visitors enjoy. A group involving the Mountaintop snowmobile clubs (Figure 4.15) was organized to provide input into the future of snowmobiling on the Mountaintop, what challenges they are confronted with and the potential opportunities to link the different trail networks. There are three state registered clubs on the Mountaintop – the Big Valley Trail Blazers (Lexington/Halcott), the Kaaterskill Snowmobile Association (Hunter area) and the Mountaintop Snow Travelers (mainly East Windham/Conesville area), and they are responsible for trail planning, maintenance, insurance, and training those within the clubs on safety and wise use of snowmobiles.



**Figure 4.15 Snowmobile Clubs Meeting**

The vision as articulated by this group would be to create a corridor system that would link individual trails in and outside of the county. As with the Mountaintop multi-use path system it is important to start with small segments to see what is feasible and plan from there. Although snowmobiling is seen by some as incompatible with passive winter activities like hiking, the two can complement each other under the right circumstances and serve to advance both interests as seen at the North- South Lake campgrounds and the Catskill Scenic Trail, a 19 mile converted stretch of a NY City Central Railroad line in Delaware County (Figure 4.16).



**Figure 4.16 Catskill Scenic Trail is a multi-use trail that allows snowmobiling**

Laying out a potential course and contacting property owners would be required and the group thought it would be best to work with NYSDEC (largest landowner) and NYCDEP as much as possible in identifying these potential trail linkages. Working with private landowners may be more problematic depending on trail location and number of individual parcels through which the trail is proposed. As noted above, the state and city agencies are amendable to considering expanding recreational access as long as the proposal meets the necessary conditions and safeguards. There are some restrictions, however, that cannot be changed, such as prohibitions on snowmobiles in Wilderness designated areas of the Catskill Forest Preserve.

**Table 4.8 Snowmobile Club Recommendations**

- Expand snowmobile trail network by connecting existing trails
- Identify possible linkages for a corridor trail and work with property owners, namely state and city, to determine feasibility
- Coordinate efforts with other trail users to create multi-purpose corridor trails

The potential exists for the clubs to expand their trail systems and a couple have been working with private landowners and the state and city agencies on this. One is in Lexington over Bearpen Mountain that would connect to the Roxbury railroad trail and an existing snowmobile trail the Big Valley Trail Blazers use currently, and the other involves connecting the East Windham trails to the Catskill Scenic Trail along Route 23. The Catskill Scenic Trail connects to a much wider network of trails in Delaware County, offering significantly more terrain for snowmobiling.

#### 4.2.8 Historical Resources

As significant contributors to preserving the Mountaintop’s heritage and promoting historical attractions, historical societies and associations throughout the Mountaintop are integral to the region’s tourism. Between local historians and historical societies, the Mountaintop has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to understanding and appreciating its past. Historical organizations exist in most of the communities including Halcott, Ashland, Lexington, Prattsville through the Pratt Museum, Hunter, Windham and Jewett (newly formed).



The West Kill house Levi Hill lived in while experimenting on a formula for color photography. Photograph by Carolyn Bennett (taken from Guide Magazine website)

Whereas, each society is distinct, they all share a common bond in preserving the history of the Mountaintop and increasing the public’s awareness of that history. To understand the challenges historical organizations face and the potential for networking with each other, a meeting was held with local historians and society representatives in March 2008. A number of issues were identified that affect each organization including:

1. Lack of funding – a common need voiced by historical societies is not enough funding to administer programming, promotions, proper archival material protection, and operation and



maintenance for those that own buildings. Inadequate resources are a limiting factor for historical preservation efforts.

2. Coordination of events could be improved as well use of resources, e.g., cross-promoting one another’s events and attractions, sharing promotional expenses
3. Inadequate archival space – as more memorabilia, artifacts and items of historical significance are amassed, societies need space to properly store and display the material. The Ashland and Windham societies, for instance, are in need of a “home” for their growing items.
4. Promotional material – whether educating visitors through outdoor interpretive signage or pamphlets for guided tours, much more could be done to orient residents and visitors to the wealth of history dispersed throughout the Mountaintop.
5. Proper maintenance and preservation of buildings that are on the state &/or national historic register, e.g., the Lexington House is in a state of disrepair.
6. Uncertainty with memberships, need for organizations to increase and sustain their memberships.



As identified in Table 4.8, there are opportunities for the individual societies and associations to partner and share resources for more effective use of limited funds. Additionally, collaborating more on program initiatives, advertising and expanding promotions could help the historical organizations with some of the administrative challenges they are experiencing.

<b>Table 4.8 Historical Resource Recommendations</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordinate events and programs better across the societies and build on existing events, e.g., Civil War encampment in Windham.</li> <li>• Share in promoting attractions and programs, such as developing a Mountaintop publication devoted to all historical resources and programs</li> <li>• Consider consolidating or sharing storage space, having one location for material, possibly a Mountaintop Museum.</li> <li>• Assistance pursuing grants for historical preservation projects, such as buildings on the historic register, e.g., Lexington House, and those that may be nominated (Saint Mary’s Church, Village of Hunter, (Figure 4.17).</li> </ul>



**Figure 4.17, Saint Mary’s Church, falling into state of disrepair.**

The group recognized having a Mountaintop planner, someone who would serve as a resource, assisting with coordination and accessing funds for historic preservation and planning would be a benefit to historical preservation efforts across the Mountaintop.

### 4.3 Interviews and Surveys

The project focused mainly on outreaching to focus group participants, however, for those who could not attend meetings, personal contacts and phone calls were made to allow for input into what others see as priority needs for the Mountaintop. There was a general sentiment shared that more could be done to improve resource offerings for residents and visitors, that the Mountaintop has much to offer but has yet to realize its full potential in creating more outdoor and cultural attractions to promote the area as a tourism destination. A number of comments emphasized the need to have more activities for children and to plan year-round attractions that take advantage of the natural beauty, outdoor activities and arts and cultural venues. Creating family trails was one recommendation that received much support, as well as expanding creative cultural and arts events, such as nighttime art gallery walks with refreshments and entertainment. A summary of interview contacts can be found in Appendix F.

Surveys from local and county plans as well as national surveys relevant to the areas of interest were referenced in the development of the MCRS (Table 4.11). The role outdoor recreation and scenic quality play in maintaining a viable tourism base are underscored in survey responses. Most surveys, especially those conducted as part of Comprehensive Plans, affirm the need to protect the scenic character and to plan for year-round activities to sustain the communities during the quiet, off-season.

Table 4.11 Reference Surveys

1. **Greene County Economic Development Plan**  
Resource Assessment and Stakeholder Feedback regarding economic development in Greene County. Consumer Preference Surveys starts on page 38:  
[http://www.greeneplanning.com/files/docs/ChapterTwo\\_ResourceAssessmentandStakeholderFeedback.pdf](http://www.greeneplanning.com/files/docs/ChapterTwo_ResourceAssessmentandStakeholderFeedback.pdf)
2. Greene County Winter Visitor Survey (2006)
3. CARDI Study, Town of Hunter- Cornell Community and Rural Development Institute, a study that targeted retail economic development by demographic data in the Town of Hunter (2004)
4. Local comprehensive plans surveys
5. The 2006 National Survey of Fishing, Hunting and Wildlife-Associated Recreation Released, <http://www.muirnet.net/?p=407>, [http://library.fws.gov/nat\\_survey2006.pdf](http://library.fws.gov/nat_survey2006.pdf)
6. Hunting and Fishing: Bright Stars of the American Economy, a force as big as all outdoors:  
[http://www.sportsmenslink.org/reports\\_and\\_data/Sportsmens-Economic-Impact.html](http://www.sportsmenslink.org/reports_and_data/Sportsmens-Economic-Impact.html)
7. Although not a survey, a public meeting was held at the Centre Church, Windham on February 12, 2007, organized by the town board, to discuss the economic future of community and brainstorm ideas how to enhance tourism. This was prompted by a particularly warm winter season that was difficult on the business community.

#### MCRS Recreation Survey

The project also conducted its own Mountaintop Recreation survey to gain additional input from tourists visiting the area. Printed surveys were distributed to lodging establishments and



resorts, and a table was set up at the 2007 October Fest at Hunter Mountain. The response rate was low, but nevertheless trends could be gleaned:

- ❖ Most who responded visit the area for the weekend or a day trip
- ❖ Most are predominantly adults traveling as couples
- ❖ The scenery is the main attraction why respondents come to the area, followed by outdoor activities (hiking, skiing), seasonal homeownership, and visiting family
- ❖ In descending order of activity preferences, most visitors like to participate in hiking, festivals, dining out, shopping, photography/wine tasting and arts and historical attractions
- ❖ Most respondents indicated they visit the Mountaintop mainly in the Fall
- ❖ Having more festivals was cited as a draw to get people to visit the area in off seasons
- ❖ The majority of respondents make \$50,000, with half making over \$100,000
- ❖ Suggestions for more attractions include:
  - Festivals (Brew, Coin/Stamp, Theatre)
  - A visitor’s center/ need more trail and resource information
  - Family Events, Concerts
  - If more were open in the off season, e.g., restaurants, may build tourism base

After the first phase of the project came to a close, it was time to organize the information gathered and prioritize project areas for implementation. The next section covers how the PAT arrived at prioritizing projects, what projects emerged as needing the most attention and the role of subcommittees in beginning the implementation and following through.

## 5. Action Items and Recommended Projects For Follow Up

As the outreach phase concluded, specific recommendations were identified and organized for the Project Advisory Team to review and prioritize for action. The chart below (Table 5.1) lists the main recommendations that were rated by the PAT at their April 2, 2008. PAT members were asked prior to the meeting to assess the feasibility of each recommendation above using a 1 – 5 Capacity Rating scale. Criteria for rating included human resource needs, financial capacity, capacity for infrastructure improvements, how willing others will be to embrace it, as well as the attitude and relationships of the communities and agencies involved.

<b>Table 5.1 Final recommendations for PAT review at April 2, 2008 meeting</b>
<p><b>1. Create a Mountaintop Community Planner/Coordinator Position to assist with event management, tourism and resource improvements:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Coordinate community efforts &amp; events</li> <li>➤ Assist with marketing &amp; branding efforts</li> <li>➤ Assist municipalities/organizations with beautification/Main Street Planning Initiatives/Grants</li> <li>➤ Reprint/Create new publications for tourists and distribute throughout the mountaintop (e.g., calendar of events, attractions)</li> </ul>
<b>2. Develop branding strategy for the Mountaintop for easy identification</b>
<b>3. Increase Special Events during off season</b>
<b>4. Offer Low Cost &amp; Free Arts &amp; Cultural Programming (consider local residents)</b>



<b>5. Create Self-Guided Site Seeing Tours of region’s Natural, Scenic, Cultural, and Historic Attractions</b>
➤ Create Environmental/ Nature Education Opportunities for both Residents and Tourists
<b>6. Explore Ideas for Indoor Recreation Activities</b>
<b>7. Create Environmental/ Nature Education Opportunities for both Residents and Tourists</b>
<b>8. Build upon alternatives to active outdoor recreation, e.g., theater, antiquing, music</b>
<b>9. Develop more child friendly activities</b>
<b>10. Create more municipal parks</b>
<b>11. Create Family Multi-Use Trails</b>
➤ Develop Master Plan for Multi Use Trail System across mountaintop, focusing on smaller segments first – Batavia Kill, Rail Road bed in Hunter
<b>12. Develop road designations for bike lanes (296, 23A, 23, 214) by working with DOT</b>
<b>13. Improve maintenance of trails through volunteer coordination &amp; agency supports</b>
<b>14. Extend Hunter’s Scenic Byways Designation to other scenic roads (23A West to Prattsville, 23 in Windham)</b>
<b>15. Expand access to NYCDEP land with specific recreational benefits, such as low impact trails</b>
<b>16. Enhance Access to Streams for Fishing</b>
<b>17. Proactively Encourage Entrepreneur Ventures (tap into county programs, advertising turnkey operations)</b>
<b>18. Develop additional Snowmobile Trails on public &amp; private properties</b>
➤ Explore possible linkages by working with NYCDEC and NYSDEP
<b>19. Develop Maintenance Plan for Scenic Vistas on NYCDEP land that have scenic value that is important to the communities</b>
<b>20. Restore &amp; maintain Historic Sites e.g., the Lexington House, Pratt Rock, Levi Hill’s Home</b>
<b>21. Reprint old &amp; create new publications for tourists highlighting resources &amp; activities, i.e., outdoor, arts, cultural, historical resources</b>
<b>22. Create a Visitor/ Information Center on the Mountaintop</b>
<b>23. Foster Coordination between Mountaintop Historical Societies</b>

Upon reviewing the scores, the Mountaintop Planner/Coordinator (#1) ranked the highest followed by increasing special events during the off season (#3), enhancing stream access (#16), and expanding access on NYCDEP land (#15).

### **5.1 Underlying needs involving marketing, coordinating and outdoor recreation**

Upon further analysis, there were two overarching categories that emerged under which the higher ranked recommendations fell:

#### **a. Marketing and coordinating needs**

- Create a Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner (MREP) position to:
  - i. streamline publications, such as a comprehensive Mountaintop activity, event & program calendar, and distribute at key locations





- ii. develop branding techniques
- iii. assist municipalities & organizations with accessing funds for beautification & Main St. projects
- iv. increase special events, attractions
- v. promote coordination with organizations, historical societies

Out of all the recommendations, the **Mountaintop Planner/Coordinator** ranked the highest. The concept originated with the hospitality group in November 2007 and clearly shows a need to support area businesses, agencies and communities with a dedicated person to increase communication, coordination and tourism efforts on the mountaintop.

Integrating the coordinating needs of improving the mountaintop’s resources, a MREP would also assist with outdoor resource projects, the other priority category identified by the PAT.

**b. Outdoor resource infrastructure projects**

- creation and maintenance of multi-use trails including spurs for snowmobiles
- promote more stream access
- improve access to NYCDEP land
- establish NYS DOT bike lane designations

The April 2, 2009 meeting was a turning point in the project in that participants narrowed down two key areas that they felt needed the most attention to address the economic needs of the Mountaintop Community. Two subcommittees were formed to further vet and prioritize feasible workable projects for implementation.

**5.2 Management Strategies – Role of subcommittees in project follow-through**

It was clear from the start that participants wanted more action in implementing recommendations than more planning without implementation, so the second half of the project entailed working with two subcommittees around areas identified as needing the most attention – marketing and coordinating and outdoor resource improvements. The groups were charged with refining the prioritized recommendations above into action plans they felt would be achievable. Other recommendations that came out of the outreach are also accounted for in Section 6, Implementation Strategy and Teams, and include funding sources and implementation partners.

**5.2.1 Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner**

The main task before the *Marketing & Coordinating subcommittee* was to identify funding sources to create a Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner (MREP) position that would address the gaps listed above. Committee members represent a cross-section of the smaller focus groups that identified the marketing/coordinating needs, as well as a potential mix of private and public funding sources including municipal representatives, chambers of commerce (ski resorts, hospitality businesses), and staff from the Greene County Economic Development and Planning and Tourism and Promotions departments.

The subcommittee (Figure 5.1) started with organizing the tasks a MREP would fulfill. Using a draft job description from an earlier proposal initiated by the Windham Chamber of Commerce, the subcommittee refined the duties of a coordinator to reflect the needs identified by



the focus groups. Next a funding model was drafted based on the development model the Recreation Business focus group recommended and identified a mix of public, private and grant funding sources. The subcommittee felt the best chance of getting the position funded was through a partnership involving local municipalities, county funding and chambers of commerce, while exploring options such as an Occupancy Tax, Business Improvement District, and grants. Subcommittee members with experience in similar cost proposals volunteered to work on a budget, which was turned into a three year budget plan to present to the three likely funding sources (See Appendix C for business model and budget).



**Figure 5.1 Marketing & Coordinating Subcommittee Meeting**

A break through came in June 2008 when Larry Gardner, a Greene County Legislator representing Mountaintop communities, offered to sponsor a proposal through the county legislature to fund half of the position *if* the local share matched that. With that possibility, the local communities and chambers responded. Seven out of nine Mountaintop municipalities saw the benefit to their communities and the Mountaintop as a whole and agreed to contribute \$3,000/year for a three year pilot program to hire a full-time Planner. The Hunter and Windham Chambers of Commerce, also seeing a direct benefit to them, were next to sign on allocating \$2,000/year. With \$25,000/year raised from local sources, a proposal was submitted to the county legislature to fund the remainder (included in Appendix C).

Other suggestions that came out of the Marketing/Coordinating subcommittee include looking into an Occupancy Tax to fund tourism initiatives and creating a Mountaintop-wide Chamber of Commerce. Although both are not fully embraced by the public and business community, there is enough interest to explore these options for future funding and partnership building.

As the national and state economic situation deteriorated throughout the latter part of 2008, so did the hope that the county would fund the difference for the position. All was not for naught, however, as the county legislature responded to the needs put forth in the proposal and promised greater attention and assistance to the Mountaintop communities from the merging of the Tourism & Promotions Dept. with Planning & Economic Development – the new Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning Department (GCEDTP). Although the county did not fund half of the new position, some of the project needs expressed by the Mountaintop constituency through this project will be addressed as a result of the merger. Committee members are currently working with the county staff to prioritize projects to be implemented under the umbrella of the GCEDTP department and other agencies as relevant.

The chambers of commerce and participating municipalities have two other options to direct the allocated funds toward the marketing and coordinating needs – they could decide to pursue the planner on a part-time basis, or they could direct the funds to go towards supplemental marketing and tourism products beyond what the county can provide. A need uncovered by most focus groups is not having enough coordinated, representative marketing material that includes all

resource attractions on the Mountaintop, and conducting a comprehensive marketing campaign requires considerable expense.

The other overarching area identified by the PAT for action involves outdoor resource enhancements. As noted frequently in past reports and reiterated again by project participants, the Mountaintop has enormous potential to improve its outdoor resource infrastructure.

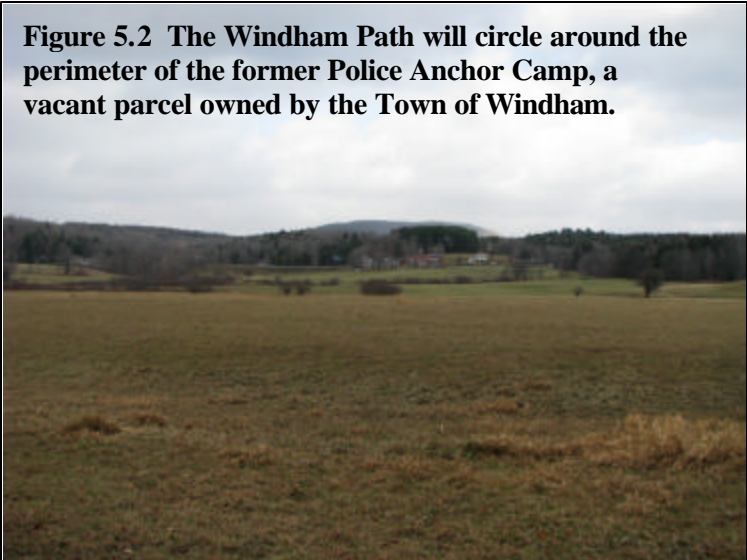
**5.2.2 Outdoor Resource Infrastructure Projects**

Representing outdoor interests (environmental education groups, trail and bike advocates, outfitter businesses), the *Trails & Infrastructure Subcommittee* was formed to address needed improvements to the Mountaintop’s outdoor infrastructure, specifically creating more year-round opportunities, such as multi-use & family trails, designated road bicycle lanes, stream access and recreational enhancements on NYCDEP land that reflect the communities’ vision for access and usage. Working in the same vain as the Marketing and Coordinating subcommittee, this group was charged with assessing recreational improvement projects, determining which ones are most feasible given community support and adequate funding where needed, and beginning implementation.

Seeing the opportunity to work under the umbrella of this project, the group endorsed revisiting two trail projects – a trail along the Batavia Kill (the Windham Path) and the Kaaterskill Rail Trail (an extension of the Huckleberry Trail) in Windham and Hunter, respectively.

**Windham Path**

A group of dedicated business owners and residents laid the foundation for the Windham Path, a 1.5 mile loop trail that meanders along the Batavia Kill and circles around a large vacant parcel owned by the Town of Windham (Figure 5.2). Organized as the Windham Path committee, the group laid out the proposed route, met with property owners, and solicited trail easements in anticipation of applying for a grant – the Recreation Trails Program (RTP) administered by the Office of Park, Recreation and Historic Preservation (OPRHP). After much leg work pulling the information together, a grant was submitted by the Town of Windham, with the understanding the Windham Path Committee would be responsible for constructing and funding the trail. The proposed trail route is provided in Figure 5.3 below. If the grant is not approved, the Windham Path Committee is prepared to implement a fundraising strategy and will be meeting in the spring to layout a plan.



**Figure 5.2 The Windham Path will circle around the perimeter of the former Police Anchor Camp, a vacant parcel owned by the Town of Windham.**

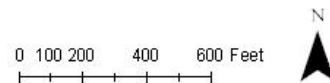


**Figure 5.3 Proposed Windham Path, a low impact multi-use trail along the Batavia Kill**



Note: GIS data are approximate according to their scale and resolution. They may be subject to error and are not a substitute for on-site inspection or survey.

Prepared by: Greene County Soil & Water Conservation District, Carrie Miles, November 2008  
 Source: Pidometry International Corp, 2006  
 Greene County Real Property Digital Tax Parcels, 2008



## Kaaterskill Rail Trail, Haines Falls

Another committee was revived from years past to assess a multi-use trail on an old railroad bed in the Town of Hunter. The Kaaterskill Rail Trail has great potential to connect the Mountaintop Historical Society (MTHS) property in Haines Falls to the NYSDEC North-South Lake Campgrounds. Given the trail's natural, scenic and historical features, such as the renowned Kaaterskill Falls (Figure 5.4), the highest falls in NYS, and the original railroad station, an historic structure on the MTHS property, the railroad line makes a perfect rails-to-trails project that capitalizes on the natural and cultural resources for which the northern Catskills are known. The project, proposed six years ago in a Recreation Trails Program grant, has received much community support.

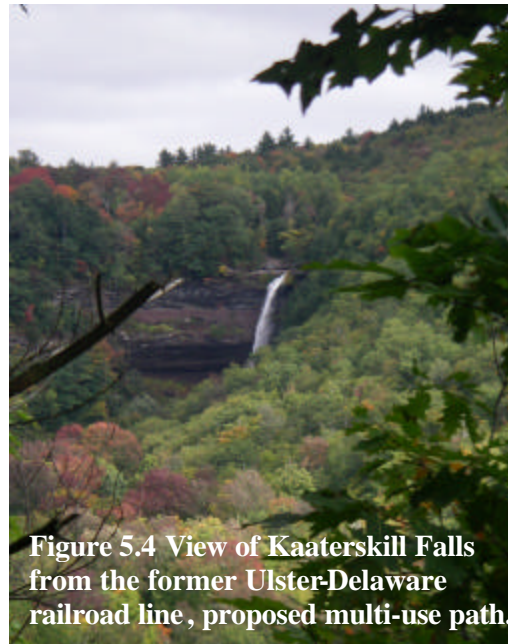
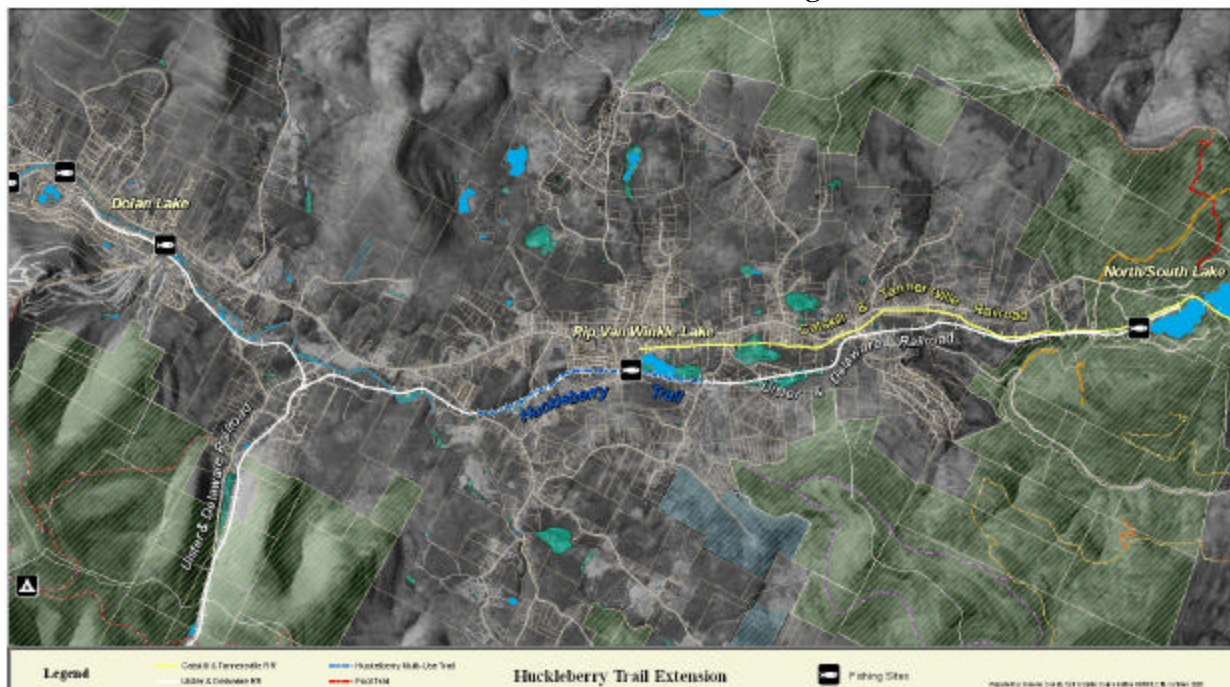


Figure 5.4 View of Kaaterskill Falls from the former Ulster-Delaware railroad line, proposed multi-use path.

As with the Windham Committee, the group saw an opportunity to revisit this project and decided to focus on the section between the MTHS property and the DEC campgrounds as the first step of a multiple phase trail project (known by its full name, the Huckleberry Trail) connecting the North-South Lake campgrounds to Dolan's Lake in the Village of Hunter along the old railroad line (Figure 5.5).

Figure 5.5 Multi-use path recommended along the Ulster/Delaware RR line between North/South Lake in Haines Falls and Dolan's Lake in the Village of Hunter.



Similar to the Marketing and Coordinating subcommittee, these projects require leadership and dedicated people to see them through. The Trails and Infrastructure subcommittee will meet regularly to continue working on action plans to implement recommendations that ranked highly by the PAT. Future meetings will be planned around designation of road bicycle lanes (a popular activity on the Mountaintop), development and improvement of fishing access points and working with the NYCDEP to improve recreational access (parking) and activities (low impact trails) on city-owned property.

The following section lists implementation steps, project partners, and funding sources and correlates recommendations to the Greene County Economic Development Plan. The subcommittees will continue to play a major role in advancing many of these recommendations and if future funding is found to create the Mountaintop planner position, that person will take the lead in implementing many of these projects.

## **6. Implementation Strategy and Teams**

This section is the nuts and bolts that ties the others together and lays out recommendations the Project Advisory Team (PAT) and subcommittee members feel are attainable. From the very beginning, participants voiced a strong desire to get projects implemented, to “pick the low hanging fruit” so to speak, so that results could be achieved. After the PAT prioritized recommendations in April, the project focused on action tasks, which essentially was the beginning of an implementation phase. Progress has been made on a few as noted in Section 5, but much still remains.

The dedication and optimism many participants brought to the project should see many of these recommendations through to completion. However, as noted above, leadership is key to following through, whether that comes from an agency, a community leader, a business owner, or a combination of these. The Windham Path committee is one example of residents organizing around a common vision and following through on a trail project. The proposal and funds raised for the Mountaintop Planner through the Marketing and Coordinating subcommittee is another. Committed residents, municipal officials and business owners have made a difference in the short time this project has been underway, and it is expected that will continue under the right leadership and community supports.

The following recommendations are organized around the two subcommittees, Marketing and Coordinating and Outdoor Recreation Improvements, as well as other actions identified by the PAT and through focus group outreach. The lead entity and task partners are critical to following through and have been identified based on their knowledge of the particular area, their interest in seeing the action to fruition and their ability to pull other supporters in.

### **6.1 Marketing and Coordinating Needs**

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The most significant needs prioritized by the Project Advisory Team boiled down to lack of a cohesive regional marketing strategy and project/event coordination across the Mountaintop. Developing an identify to brand the Mountaintop, streamlining publications that market the area’s outdoor and cultural resources, attractions and programs, and coordinating events were identified as priority needs. There was a concerted effort to find funding to create a full-time Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner position to support Mountaintop communities and businesses with these needs. Although the position is not the panacea to the economic downturn and tourism challenges the region faces, it would be a catalyst to addressing some of these gaps.



<b>Marketing and Coordinating Needs</b>			
<b>Recommendation 1</b>	<p><b>Create a Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner (MREP) to assist communities and chambers with event management, tourism and resource improvements specifically:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>streamline publications, event advertisements, create a Mountaintop calendar of events, programs, attractions, etc. and distribute at key locations, such as lodging venues</b></li> <li>• <b>event management that integrates attractions while minimizing overlapping</b></li> <li>• <b>strategic marketing and branding efforts</b></li> <li>• <b>planning &amp; organizing attractions/activities that complement existing resource attractions, such as multi use trails, children’s activities, theme festivals, Main St. improvement projects</b></li> </ul>		
<b>Priority &amp; Time frame</b>	Ranked highest by Project Advisory Team/Short-term January 2009	<b>Lead entity</b>	Marketing/Coordinating subcommittee in conjunction with GCSWCD-WAP via this project
<b>Funding sources</b>	County and municipalities Chambers of commerce Member item for start up costs Occupancy Tax – to support tourism initiatives Business Improvement District	<b>Task Partners</b>	Chambers of commerce Greene County Legislature Municipalities GCCOC GCEDTP Non-profit Foundations Ski resorts
<b>Estimated cost</b>	\$170,000 for three year pilot (see MREP budget, Appendix C)	<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes/Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Spending plan and proposal developed, \$25,000/year raised through local share (municipalities, chambers); county decided not to fund difference in 2009 budget, however, some needs will be addressed through enhanced EDTP assistance. Working on priority projects with GCEDTP and PAT representatives.</li> <li>➤ Chambers and municipalities requested to keep money in their budgets to be used either to hire a part-time planner or put towards enhanced marketing</li> <li>➤ Chambers of Commerce could send a representative to each other’s meetings, share information, align event planning</li> </ul>		



<b>Recommendation 2</b>	<b>Develop comprehensive marketing material that promotes and supports economic development for the Mountaintop including items such as a Mountaintop resource map, a calendar of events that is published at least quarterly, and similar types of resource publications that collectively promote the Mountaintop’s programs, historic, outdoor and cultural attractions, and distribute throughout region. (Task formerly under MREP)</b>		
<b>Priority &amp; Time Frame</b>	Very high Spring 2009/Short term	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCEDTP
<b>Funding sources</b>	Existing GCEDTP budget Local funds raised for MREP Chambers of commerce Non-profit organizations Businesses/Advertisement fee in publications I Love NY funds Long-term – Occupancy Tax to support tourism initiatives	<b>Task Partners</b>	Municipalities Chambers of Commerce Ski Resorts College Internship GCSWCD & EDTP interactive mapping (Arc IMS potential) Regional colleges with graphic arts program
<b>Estimated cost</b>	For printed material depends on frequency ( monthly, quarterly, bi-annually) and amount	<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	GCEDP Action 2.7 (program schedule of activities)
<b>Notes/Progress</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Ensuring information is available on outdoor resources for tourists &amp; residents is critical – currently no comprehensive publication or map exists that lists all outdoor recreation activities on the Mountaintop. Different maps listing catalogued resources from the inventory have been developed as part of this project.</li> <li>➤ Improving internet marketing also falls under this category.</li> <li>➤ This could also include developing quarterly newsletter of events, happenings, and attractions.</li> </ul> <p>Designing publications could be college internship/graduate work project. Offer contest across Mountaintop with prizes.</p>		

<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Develop strategic branding strategy to market Mountaintop for easy identification (formerly under MREP position)</b>		
<b>Priority Time Frame</b>	High Fall/Winter 2009 – initial framework	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCEDTP
<b>Funding sources</b>	GCEDTP Greene County Legislature Municipalities CWC, Loan program Chambers of Commerce Pool funding – ski resorts, chambers, businesses, organizations College internship, approach	<b>Task Partners</b>	College Business program/internship GCSWCD, GCEDTP – use of Interactive mapping capability Chambers of Commerce Municipalities County Legislature





	departments Occupancy Tax to support tourism initiatives		
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.24 – Rip Van Winkle persona/branding efforts
<b>Notes</b>	Initiate College internship opportunity for business or marketing programs. Meet with communities that have successful marketing approaches, learn what strategies they employ.		

<b>Recommendation 4</b>	<b>Increase Special Events during off season (spring and fall)</b>		
<b>Priority Time Frame</b>	Moderate – High Ongoing	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCEDTP in conjunction with Marketing and Coordinating subcommittee
<b>Funding sources</b>	GCEDTP Chambers of Commerce GCCOC Local businesses, ski resorts Non-profit organizations Municipalities Occupancy Tax to support tourism initiatives	<b>Task Partners</b>	Non-profit organizations (CMF, CFW, GGCCE) Chambers of Commerce GCCOC Ski resorts
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.8 – increase tourism promotion for spring/fall events
<b>Notes</b>	Events such as the <i>Tour of the Catskills</i> bike race, the National Mountain Bike Series hosted at Windham Mountain, and fall festivals have great potential, as well as organizing the Mountain Culture Festival as a regional collaborative venture (formerly under the CMF).		

<b>Recommendation 5</b>	<b>Promote coordination among non-profit foundations and Mountaintop Historical Societies (formerly under MREP position)</b>		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate Ongoing	<b>Lead entity</b>	Historical society heads GC Historical Society
<b>Funding sources</b>	OPRHP Individual societies Non-profit organizations	<b>Task Partners</b>	Historical societies and associations Non-profit organizations – CMF, CFW, the Hunter Foundation, Sugar Maples
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes</b>	As identified by the organizations, having more communication regarding what each is doing can help coordinate efforts and resources. Designate contact person in each organization to rotate meeting schedule, attend each other’s meetings.		



<b>Recommendation 6</b>	<b>Assist municipalities and volunteer organizations with accessing funds for beautification and Main Street improvement projects (formerly under MREP position)</b>		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate to High Ongoing for some communities (Lexington, Ashland, Prattsville)	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCEDTP
<b>Funding sources</b>	GCEDTP Main Street funds Rural Area Revitalization Program New York Main St. Program NYSDOS Div. of Coastal Resources/Inland Waterways Program CWC Redi-Loans	<b>Task Partners</b>	The Hunter Foundation (for Route 23A projects) Historical societies CCCD GCSWCD-WAP Local Beautification Committees
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes</b>			

<b>Recommendation 7</b>	<b>Investigate feasibility and implications of an Occupancy Tax in Greene County</b>		
<b>Priority Time Frame</b>	High Summer/Fall 2009 – develop framework	<b>Lead entity</b>	Marketing & Coordinating subcommittee
<b>Funding sources</b>	N/A investigatory	<b>Task Partners</b>	Chambers of Commerce County hospitality industry Municipalities County Legislature GCEDTP
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	N/A
<b>Notes</b>	This recommendation came up repeatedly during the project as a potential source of funds to further tourism initiatives, such as the ones identified in this plan. There are differences of opinion whether the county should adopt such a tax. The Project Advisory Team feels it is worth exploring to know how an OT would work and how it could potentially affect the hospitality sector.		

## 6.2 Outdoor Resource Improvement Projects

Improving upon the Mountaintop’s outdoor recreational offerings was the other priority area identified by the PAT and focus groups in order for the Mountaintop Community to promote itself. Although, the region has historically been a draw for a wide range of recreational activities, much more can be done to enhance outdoor recreation experiences that add value to the local economy. With the natural beauty of the mountains, valley streams and small-town communities, the Mountaintop is perfectly suited to enhance outdoor resource attractions, which in turn promote the tourism economy.



<b>Outdoor Recreation Improvement Projects</b>			
<b>Recommendation 8</b>	<b>Create Family Multi-Use Trails across the Mountaintop starting with small segments first – Batavia Kill project, old railroad bed in Hunter</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCSWCD and trail committees
<b>Time frame</b>	Work – ongoing		
<b>Funding sources</b>	<p>NYSOPRHP programs – RTP (biennial)</p> <p>Acquisition (easement or fee purchase)</p> <p>Municipalities</p> <p>Hudson River Valley Greenway</p> <p>(for eligible communities)</p> <p>NYS DOT – TEP</p> <p>National Scenic Byways Program (if Hunter trail is in conjunction with Byways project)</p> <p>Stream Management Implementation Program (through SWAC)</p> <p>Kodak American Greenways</p> <p>Impact fees from development projects – percentage for recreational use</p>	<b>Task Partners</b>	<p>Windham Path committee</p> <p>Hunter Kaaterskill Rail Trail (KRT) committee</p> <p>Hunter Scenic Byway Committee</p> <p>NY-NJ Trail Conference</p> <p>NYSDEC – state land</p> <p>NYCDEP – when proposed on city land</p> <p>Property owners</p> <p>P&amp;TNY – technical assistance</p> <p>Outdoor clubs – CMC, AMC</p> <p>National Guard Service, AmeriCorps program – trail blazing work</p>
<b>Estimated cost</b>	\$69,000 for Windham Path, Kaaterskill Rail Trail (KRT) – needs assessment	<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.2, 2.17
<b>Notes</b>	<p>Two trail committees active under umbrella of Outdoor Resource Committee – 1) Windham Path committee submitted a RTP grant for a 1.5 mile multi-use path partially along Batavia Kill. Committee to work on fundraising campaign if grant not approved. 2) The KRT committee (Hunter railroad multi-use trail project) working with three property owners on easements, one willing, two need more information.</p> <p>➤ Maps created for both projects identifying potential routes and natural features</p>		

<b>Recommendation 9</b>	<b>Enhance Access to Streams for Fishing</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Lead entity</b>	NYSDEC GCSWCD
<b>Funding sources</b>	NYSDEC – public access funds/Habitat Access Stamp Funding	<b>Task Partners</b>	NYCDEP Trout Unlimited Habitat & Recreation



	SWAC/Stream Management Implementation program Impact fees from development projects		committee under the SWAC GCSWCD CWC – parking improvements
<b>Estimated cost</b>	DEC program offers \$15K per linear mile Possibly no cost if owner donates access	<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	GCEDP - Action 2.2, 2.10
<b>Notes</b>	Identify areas in watershed where gaps exist, e.g., headwaters of Batavia Kill. Habitat and Recreation committee under SWAC also identified more access to streams as a priority. ➤ Through a partnership between CWC and NYCDEP, three NYCDEP parcels in Greene County may have parking areas created – Roundtop Mountain off Gillespie Rd. Hunter, Patterson Ridge on Rte. 23 in Ashland and along the West Kill on Rte. 42 in Lexington (the latter two will offer stream access)		

<b>Recommendation 10</b>	<b>Improve parking facilities and low-impact trail access on NYCDEP land that are compatible with water quality protection</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Lead entity</b>	Outdoor Resources Committee and NYCDEP
<b>Funding sources</b>	NYCDEP Stream Management Implementation Program (SMIP) All funding sources listed under # 7 above	<b>Task Partners</b>	GCSWCD NYSDEC Municipalities Trail committees CWC – 3 parking lot projects slated in Greene County Trail clubs & organizations – NY-NJ Trail Conference, Catskill Mountain Club, AMC
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.10
<b>Notes</b>	Projects underway that address this goal – 1) 800-acre DEP parcel in Windham (Mount Hayden) will be open for mountain biking. 2) Three city properties will be improved with parking areas in 2009 (listed above in # 8), and 3) an agreement between NYCDEP and DEC re-designated nearly 18,000 acres of NYCDEP land as Public Access Areas (no permit or hunt tag required), which is consistent with accessing state land. NYCDEP has also expanded the PAAs to non-adjacent lands.		

<b>Recommendation 11</b>	<b>Establish bike signage &amp; lane designations/enhance shoulders on local, state, and county roads that are conducive for bicycling (e.g., state roads 23A, 23, 214; County Roads 23C, 25)</b>		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate to high Spring/summer '09 – meet	<b>Lead entity</b>	NYSDOT and Outdoor Resource Committee



	with highway depts. begin planning		
<b>Funding sources</b>	NYSDOT OPRHP ISTEA-TEA-21 State, county, local highway departments NY Scenic Byways program	<b>Task Partners</b>	GC Highway Department Local Highway Departments Bike clubs (Windham Mountain Outfitters) GCSWCD
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.2, 2.17
<b>Notes</b>	Initial roadways identified, need to map and provide to highway departments, schedule meeting with DOT, Greene County and local departments to discuss feasibility (DOT specifications, min. 4' wide). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Road cycling is becoming increasingly popular on the Mountaintop, e.g., <i>Tour of the Catskills</i> event in Sept. 2008</li> <li>➤ Hunter Corridor Impact Study to incorporate assessment along 23A as part of traffic study</li> </ul>		

<b>Recommendation 12</b>	<b>Expand snowmobile trail network by identifying possible linkages between existing trails</b> ( Explore possible linkages by working with DEC & DEP in particular)		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate to high	<b>Lead Entity</b>	Snowmobile Clubs
<b>Funding sources</b>	Recreational Trails Program Municipalities OPRHP	<b>Task Partners</b>	Outdoor Resource committee GCSWCD NYSDEC NYCDEP NYS Snowmobile Assoc.
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes</b>	Three clubs on Mountaintop registered with NYS Snowmobile Association, all see benefit of working together and with the state and city agencies		

### 6.3 Other Projects Identified During Outreach

The following recommendations involve building partnerships and coordination efforts among agencies and non-profit organizations working on the Mountaintop to improve programming and resource protection. These were also identified by project participants and rated by the PAT.

Other Community Projects Recommendations	
<b>Recommendation 13</b>	<b>Offer Low Cost &amp; Free Arts &amp; Cultural Programming (consider local residents)</b>



<b>Priority</b>	Moderate	<b>Lead entity</b>	GC Council on the Arts in conjunction with Mountaintop foundations providing programming
<b>Funding sources</b>	GCEDTP NYS Council on the Arts Greene County Council on the Arts Community grants and Foundations, such as Foster's Community Grants	<b>Task Partners</b>	The CMF Sugar Maples Center for Arts & Education (CMF) Community Foundation of Windham MTHS Mountaintop Arboretum Local artists GCEDTP
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.23
<b>Notes</b>	Identified in the Arts and Cultural Focus Group as an avenue to promote the area		

<b>Recommendation 14</b>	<b>Create Environmental - Nature Education Opportunities for both Residents and Tourists, e.g., CCE's Master Naturalist Program highlighting natural, geological, ecological, historical concepts</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	High	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCCCE
<b>Funding sources</b>	CWC SMIP – education & outreach projects Foster's Community Grants	<b>Task Partners</b>	Mountaintop Arboretum CCCD Regional schools and libraries MTHS GCSWCD NYCDEP NYSDEC
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Actions 2.7, 2.8, 2.9, 2.10, 2.25
<b>Notes</b>	Proposal developed by GC Cornell Cooperative Extension, will need funding to advance program, could integrate with lodging industry and offer something different for guests to experience. NYCDEP has issued Prattsville/Conesville school district a land use permit for the school, as part of its environmental education program, to build and maintain an interpretive nature trail.		

<b>Recommendation 15</b>	<b>Restore &amp; Maintain Historic Sites and Natural Resources, e.g., the Lexington House, Pratt Rock, Levi Hill's Home, and Kaaterskill Falls, Bastion Falls, Platte Clove Preserve (litter and graffiti monitoring)</b>		
<b>Priority</b>	High for certain sites Moderate for others	<b>Lead entity</b>	Historical associations and societies
<b>Funding sources</b>	OPRHP Historic Preservation	<b>Task Partners</b>	GC Historical Society Municipalities



	Grant Program Heritage Areas Program Preserve New York Foster's Community Grants NYSDOS Inland Waterways program (downtown and hamlet revitalization) if along designated inland waterway		Non-profit foundations (Hunter Foundation, CMF, CWF) GCEDTP MTHS NYSDEC – adopt-a- natural resource program
<b>Estimated cost</b>	Depends on structure	<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Inventory includes complete listing of registered sites on the Mountaintop.</li> <li>➤ Popular scenic areas tend to be prone to litter and graffiti and NYSDEC runs an Adopt-a-Natural Resource Stewardship program which could help alleviate these stresses on natural resources.</li> </ul>		

<b>Recommendation 16</b>	<b>Extend Hunter's Scenic Byways Designation to other scenic roads (23A West to Prattsville, 23 in Windham)</b>		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate to High Long term	<b>Lead entity</b>	CCCD
<b>Funding sources</b>	NYS Scenic Byways program	<b>Task Partners</b>	Municipalities Chambers of Commerce NYS DOT
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	
<b>Notes</b>	CCCD facilitated Hunter's Corridor Management Plan for the Mountaintop Clove Scenic Byways.		

<b>Recommendation 17</b>	<b>Create Self-Guided Site Seeing Tours of Region's Natural, Scenic, Cultural, and Historic Attractions</b>		
<b>Priority Time frame</b>	Moderate to High Long-term, identify small projects first	<b>Lead entity</b>	GCEDTP in conjunction with non-profit agencies
<b>Funding sources</b>	Municipalities NYS Council on Arts GC Council on Arts Historical societies Chambers of Commerce CWC GCCCE	<b>Task Partners</b>	MTHS Historical societies NYCDEP GC Council on the Arts GCCCE CCCD
<b>Estimated cost</b>		<b>Connection to GCEDP</b>	Action 2.25
<b>Notes</b>	Ties into Master Naturalist program under GCCCE (recommendation # 14 above)		



## 7. Conclusion

The Mountaintop Community Resource Strategy was developed to bring diverse parties together to work on workable solutions to improving the Mountaintop's tourism economy through outdoor-based recreation, scenic and cultural resource enhancements. The capacity to expand and improve in these areas for the betterment of the local economy is great as identified by project participants and noted in the report.

By engaging the public and private sectors together under a unified approach, a number of common gaps were identified that resulted in project recommendations and subcommittees to begin carrying out actions to address resource and marketing needs. As pointed out during the outreach phase, participants felt not enough was being done to implement past recommendations and preferred to see more action than planning. With that in mind, the project entered an action-oriented phase and formed the two subcommittees to work on recommendations the Project Advisory Team identified as needing the most attention – improving marketing, coordination with agencies and municipalities and outdoor recreation activities.

The marketing and coordinating subcommittee is advancing support for regional marketing material with the assistance of existing agencies, such as the Greene County Economic Development, Tourism and Planning department, and local communities. Tapping into existing resources more effectively is an outcome that came out of the top recommendation in the plan – create a Mountaintop Recreation and Event Planner. Although the position was not created during the project period, it is a goal that the Project Advisory Team would like to keep in the plan and strive to achieve at some point in the future. A possible funding source the PAT agrees is worth investigating is an Occupancy Tax that could be used to promote tourism initiatives, such as the Mountaintop Recreation and Event planner.

The outdoor resource improvement subcommittee is actively working on two multi-use trail projects, which are relatively long-term projects, but have a great potential to offer another type of outdoor experience for families and the casual walker. The other outdoor resource enhancements identified in the plan will require ongoing work and continued participation from the communities, government entities and organizations that have a role in seeing the recommendations through to fruition.

There are many instances across the Mountaintop where recommendations from plans have been implemented for the betterment of the local communities. Examples such as Dolan's Lake in the Village of Hunter, the Town of Hunter's Scenic Byways designation, the numerous building and façade improvements in Tannersville, Hunter and Windham, the Catskill Mountain Foundation's arts and cultural workshops and shows, and the listing of historic structures throughout the Mountaintop, to name a few, are evidence of communities and organizations working towards improving the Mountaintop's aesthetic appeal and attractions. Although, it is important to recognize what has been accomplished, there is much more that can and should be done as outlined in this plan and others before it. But like with any plan, if there is no person, agency, or team to see recommendations through, they will flounder.





Well before the national economic crisis of 2008 bubbled to the surface, the Mountaintop was experiencing a lag in its local economy, one that had been building for some time. As participants voiced, it is past time to regroup, take a look at where the Mountaintop has been and where it is going in the future. As spelled out in the strategy, investing in outdoor-based recreation, Main Street beautification, cultural and historical resource projects will help build the local economy and the region's reputation as an eco-tourism destination. There are model communities to emulate that are similar to the Mountaintop region in terms of demographics, topography and proximity to millions of potential tourists who have yet to discover the beauty of the northern Catskills.

The capacity to build on the available resources, improve coordination across public and private sectors, and tap into various funding sources is so great that implementing the recommendations in the report should be relatively easy. Leadership is required, however, and as stated above some entity needs to carry the torch, to keep projects moving forward and parties engaged in the process. The effort to secure funds for the Mountaintop planner is a good example and epitomizes the reason the Mountaintop Community Resource Strategy was initiated in the first place – to engage different stakeholders to work together to address needed improvements to the region's tourism economy and resource attractions.

The final step of the project will be to encourage municipalities to adopt the plan which will formalize their continued participation in project follow through. Whereas, this finalizes the grant period, it will be the beginning of maintaining the broad representation and shared responsibility for project implementation. Local involvement and leadership is a strong component to seeing the recommendations through, and as each community recognizes they are part of the bigger picture, that each has something to offer the other and there are benefits to working collectively on improving the Mountaintop's tourism attractions, then the results will speak for themselves.

