

STORM KING MOUNTAIN FACT SHEET

STORM KING STATE PARK:

- Storm King Mountain looms above the Hudson River like a fortress, dominating the rugged river gorge near Cornwall on Hudson, New York. The 30-year battle to preserve Storm King and create the 1,900-acre Storm King State Park resulted in a court case that became the basis for environmental law in the United States.¹
- The Palisades Interstate Park Commission (PIPC) closed the park to all recreation in 1999 after the intense heat of forest fires detonated old, unexploded ordnance buried in the Park's soils.
- A subsequent investigation revealed that the U.S. Army had tested artillery between 1840s and 1960s by shooting artillery shells from the Cold Spring Foundry and West Point Cemetery into the vicinity of Storm King Mountain.
- Three years later, after scanning the park with sophisticated devices, the Army Corps of Engineers reports:
 - All the hiking trails and 25 feet to either side are cleared of unexploded ordnance to a depth of one foot.
 - The hiking trails and 1,488 acres of parkland are safe for public use with appropriate signage.
 - The off-trail areas in a remaining 400-acre section adjoining West Point to the south and Route 9W to the west are **not** safe for public use and are estimated to have as many as one unexploded ordnance per acre.
- The PIPC has not yet agreed to reopen hiking trails presumably because they are unwilling to risk the liability of someone straying off the trail and becoming injured.
- The Army Corps of Engineers recommendation is to clear the remaining 400-acres to a depth of 6" at a cost of approximately \$5-7 million. However, with an annual budget of \$5 million and 144 other projects costing a total of \$500 million, no clean up is in sight.
- In the more than 100 years that Storm King has contained unexploded ordnance and has been a popular hiking destination, there is no record of any ordnance detonating other than during the intense heat of the major forest fire of 1999.

THE TRAIL CONFERENCE POSITION:

1. The U.S. Department of Defense should commit to a timetable for removal of artillery shells no later than the end of 2004.
2. The PIPC should open all hiking trails as soon as possible with appropriate signs warning people not to leave the marked and designated trails.

¹ The outcome of the conflict established the right of citizen groups to sue a government agency to protect natural resources and scenic beauty. It set a precedent for national environmental issues dealing with the question of whether commercial developers could carry out development to meet one need at the expense of others.

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WE NEED YOUR HELP

Government officials need to know that real people care about the reopening of this popular hiking area. With no end in sight to the park closure, it's time for hikers who love this area to be heard.

1. Attend the public meeting that is scheduled at the Bear Mountain Inn² for Thursday July 25th at 6:00 p.m. Trail Conference staff will be at the Inn with up-to-date information and briefing materials. Come even if you must be late since the meeting is expected to last well past 8:00 p.m. Your presence is needed!
2. After the public meeting there will be a 30-day comment period. Your phone calls, emails, and especially letters or postcards will be needed to influence the outcome positively. The Trail Conference will post the results and outcome of the July 25th public hearing on our website.
3. Write your elected representatives:

[Governor George E. Pataki](#)

State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224
Phone: 518-474-8390
Fax: no public number available
[Governor Pataki](#)

[Congresswoman Sue W. Kelly](#)

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[Sue Kelly](#)

[Senator Charles E. Schumer](#)

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² Palisades Parkway North to Exit 19, Bear Right on Seven Lakes Drive. Follow signs to the Bear Mountain Inn.