

Long Path Protection Plan



New York-New Jersey Trail Conference plan to protect the Long Path, extending 400+ miles between New York City and the Adirondack Park.



The Long Path is maintained by volunteers of the New York-New Jersey Trail Conference in conjunction with multiple park partners and maintaining clubs in New York and New Jersey.

The Long Path Protection Plan was supported with funding from the New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP) and New York's Environmental Protection Fund. The NYSCPP is administered by the Land Trust Alliance, in coordination with the state Department of Environmental Conservation.



The **New York-New Jersey Trail Conference** has partnered with parks to create, protect, and promote a network of over 2,100 miles of public trails in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan region. The Trail Conference organizes volunteer service projects that keep these trails open, safe, and enjoyable for the public. We publish maps and books that guide public use of these trails. The Trail Conference is a nonprofit organization with a membership of 10,000 individuals and 100 clubs that have a combined membership of over 100,000 active, outdoor-loving people.



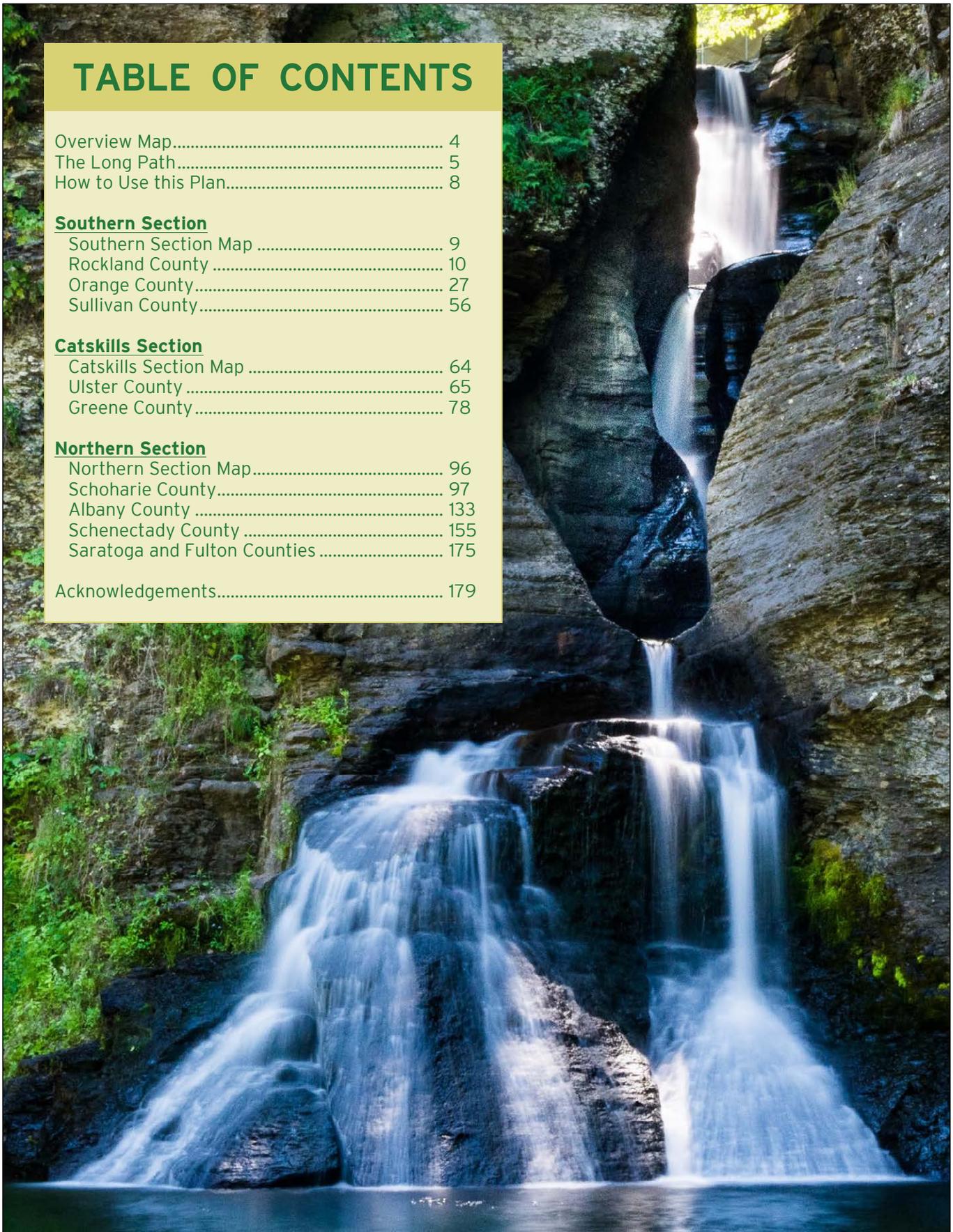
The **Land Trust Alliance** is a national nonprofit conservation organization that works to save the places people need and love by strengthening land conservation across America. The Alliance represents more than 1,000 member land trusts and their 4.6 million supporters nationwide. As the voice of the land trust community, the Land Trust Alliance is the national leader in policy, standards and education.



The **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC)** was created in 1970 to combine all state programs designed to protect and enhance the environment into a single agency. DEC's mission is to conserve, improve, and protect New York's natural resources and environment and to prevent, abate and control water, land and air pollution, in order to enhance the health, safety and welfare of the people of the state and their overall economic and social well-being.

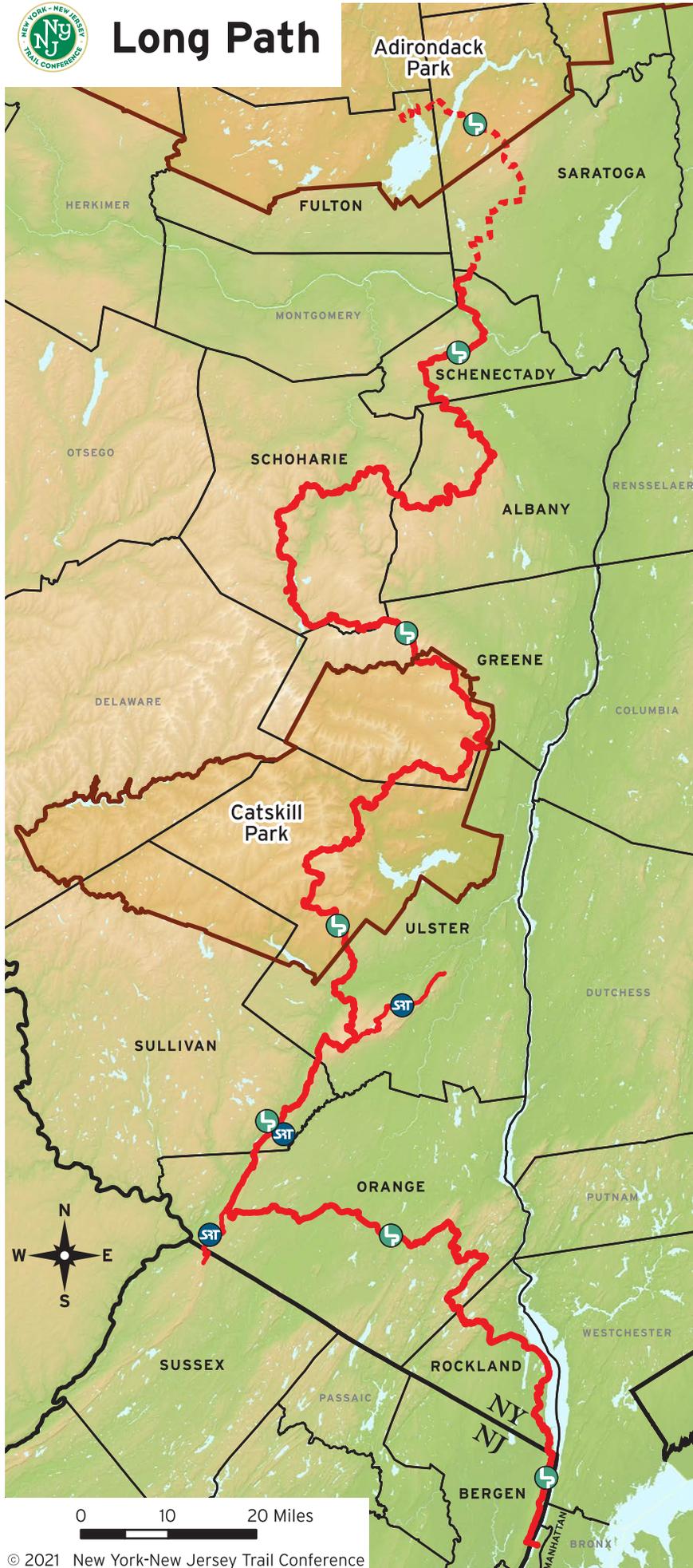
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Long Path



The Long Path

The **Long Path (LP)** is a trail that extends nearly 360 miles as a completed trail from near the 175th Street Subway Station in New York City to John Boyd Thacher State Park near Albany, New York, the current official terminus. The trail continues northward with blazed roadwalks and some off-road sections to the Mohawk River, and then a mostly unblazed roadwalk to reach Northville in the Adirondack Park for a total Long Path length of more than 425 miles; there are ongoing efforts to move more of these sections off the roads. The aqua-blazed Long Path traverses many scenic and historic regions of varied geologic setting on the west side of the Hudson River, including the Palisades, Harriman State Park, the Shawangunk Ridge, the Catskills, and the Helderberg Escarpment.

The New York-New Jersey Trail Conference has been championing the Long Path for decades, with more aggressive protection work beginning in the late-1990s and early-2000s. Efforts have largely been piecemeal, with progress made slowly but surely to close or narrow gaps in protected lands. Assembling a 400+-mile-long trail corridor is a labor-intensive, multi-decade campaign that largely does not fit the missions of most other land conservation organizations, so the experiences and many small achievements has led to the Trail Conference acquiring institutional knowledge of how to create minimalist linear corridors where necessary and state forest-sized corridors where possible.



The Trail Conference has learned that providing a vision and a plan for trail corridor protection can be an extremely useful resource. This Long Path Protection Plan (LPPP), with detailed maps and descriptive priority parcel protection narratives, will serve as a roadmap for partnerships and engagements. The Trail Conference already works with many great partners at all levels of involvement, but this LPPP will advance shared missions and open space goals and ultimately help expedite the goal of creating a protected Long Path corridor from New York City to the Adirondacks.

The following testimonial from Kylie Yang, Long Path End-to-End #190 and former Trail Conference NY Program Coordinator, encapsulates the importance of protecting the Long Path:

The Long Path is a truly unique and beautiful trail. After joining the Trail Conference in 2020, I decided to section hike the Long Path over a few months. While I had experience with long-distance hiking on the Appalachian Trail, I was shocked at the swiftly changing scenery the Long Path provided. Winding through Palisades Interstate Park, over cliffs in Minnewaska, with sweeping views throughout the Catskills and views of Albany from John Boyd Thatcher State Park, I cannot think of another trail that encompasses so many diverse parks in so few miles. Walking through small communities I would've otherwise not seen, and being greeted by livestock on road walks was a truly unique experience. The trail was often remote, but it was always marked and maintained well. While I regularly went several days without seeing other hikers, I was grateful for the rugged, beautiful, and often solitary experience that many other long-distance trails cannot provide. The Long Path is a true gem, and deserves protection to ensure it lasts for generations of hikers to come!

History of the Long Path:

In 1931, Vincent J. Schaefer of the Mohawk Valley Hiking Club put forth an idea for "New York's Long Path." Unlike other trails, the Long Path was to be a path without any clearing or marking, where one would just wander using a compass and maps to reach pre-determined destinations, which he labeled as points. This trailless path had a predetermined starting point of "Towers of the George Washington Bridge" and an ending point of "Whiteface Mountain."

With the help of W. W. Cady, he took this one step further to scout the complete route. On March 27, 1934, Raymond Torrey began to print a section of the Long Path every Tuesday in his article "The Long Brown Path." This was done every Tuesday through August 26, 1935. There were soon some efforts to create a marked trail, including by Alexander Jessup who marked the trail into the Catskills by 1943, but the timing of World War II led to the idea soon fading away.

In 1960, Robert Jessen and Michael Warren revived the idea as a cleared, marked and maintained path. By this time both housing developments and private property postings prevented a hiker from wandering wherever they wanted. Without a planned route or permission from private landowners, an off-road bush whacking route would have been difficult to achieve. Through the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s the Trail Conference worked to refine the path and protect it through advocacy efforts. In the 1990s, the Trail Conference began to get more aggressive with moving the Long Path off roads while also extending the Long Path north into Schoharie and Albany counties. The Trail Conference also began to purchase properties to protect the Long Path.

By the turn of the century, the Trail Conference was aggressively working to protect the Long Path north of the Catskill Park. Here the Trail Conference's 30-year effort has permanently protected 14.3 miles of the Long Path with the protection of more than 1,000 acres, which was instrumental in the creation of Mount Hayden State Forest. By 2000, the Trail Conference also began to aggressively preserve the Shawangunk Ridge Trail (SRT) from High Point State Park in New Jersey to Sam's Point Preserve, now part of Minnewaska State Park Preserve. This mammoth effort required assistance from numerous partner organizations and buy in from New York State. Over the last 30 years, Trail Conference efforts have helped protect more than 4,000 acres along the southern Shawangunk Ridge to help create a protected corridor for the Long Path and Shawangunk Ridge Trail. In 2012, the Long Path route through Orange County was significantly moved to align it with the Shawangunk Ridge Trail for nearly 36 miles, from the Town of Greenville in Orange County northward to Sam's Point.

Land Protection Steps:

The strategy used by the Trail Conference in planning and pursuing protected corridors has largely consisted of the following steps:

1. Identify corridor priority parcels

- These are parcels that protect critical areas, parcels that connect to other protect lands, parcels that provide a protected land buffer, or parcels that could provide additional trail opportunities. These parcels are largely identified through a combination of on-the-ground assessment, GIS mapping, and county/municipal tax maps.

2. Identify which parcels may be feasible to protect

- The Trail Conference and its partners may attempt to identify which parcels may actually be feasible for protecting with some form of protection, starting with landowner agreements and progressing to trail or conservation easements and outright acquisition. This process can involve establishing relationships and lines of communication with landowners, negotiating potential costs of the land, and working with park partners to understand whether potential acquired lands would ultimately be transferred.

3. Work to complete the protection

- Once a parcel is considered feasible for protection, the Trail Conference and its partners work to line up everything needed to complete the protection. For an acquisition, this process can involve working with the landowner to finalize a purchase price and other terms, obtaining funds needed to acquire the parcel, and conducting surveys and performing legal reviews and title searches. These steps eventually lead to a closing date, when the land is transferred to the Trail Conference or other land trust partner and becomes protected!

4. If land is acquired, transfer the acquisition to New York State or another partner

- The Trail Conference is not a land trust, so we prefer to not hold on to protected land and instead transfer it to either New York State or a land trust partner. The timeframe for when a transfer occurs depends on several variables, including the parcel's significance and priority in comparison with potential acquisitions statewide, as well as the amount of funding New York State or other land trust partners has available to purchase these lands.

The situations surrounding any particular parcel vary greatly, such that the timeframe between the first step and last step can involve only 1-2 years of work, or require 10-20 years of persistence!

Conservation Corridor Protection:

The Long Path Protection Plan aims to link conservation and recreation goals by preserving land adjacent to the Long Path to contribute to interconnected conservation corridors that support habitat connectivity and combat landscape degradation. The strategic protections outlined in the Long Path Protection Plan aim to create a fully protected corridor that would benefit recreational and environmental resources from New York City to the Adirondack Park.

The protection of ecological corridors is a strategy that land managers, planners, and interest groups utilize to reduce habitat fragmentation and degradation. Anthropogenic disturbances such as urbanization and development disrupt wildlife interactions and movement, resulting in a decline of biodiversity in developed areas. Clearing of native vegetation creates patches or islands of habitats, isolating plants and animals and interrupting ecological processes like migration, dispersal, pollination, and mating.

Ecological or conservation corridors link vegetated areas and water bodies, enabling habitat connectivity that allows plants and animals to migrate and disperse in the face of changing seasons, degraded ecosystems, and changing climate. Wildlife moves daily and seasonally to reach food, water, shelter, and breeding sites and are more frequently relying on corridors to locate their needs. A study in Tensas River Basin, Louisiana found that bears moved more regularly through wooded patches connected by corridors than wooded areas fragmented by agricultural land, indicating corridors supported the idea that habitat connectivity is necessary to sustain black bear population (USDA 1999). Additionally, Aziz & Rasidi (2014) found that greater species richness is likely in wider corridors with more forest.

In addition to habitat connectivity to wildlife, corridors play a substantial role in improving watershed conditions by reducing the impact of agricultural runoff into riparian zones, decreasing erosion and flooding, and improving water and air quality (USDA 1999; Lynch 2019).

Investment in corridor protection adjacent to recreational trail systems offers an opportunity to promote ecological conservation that is compatible with human activity. There is a growing body of research that indicates physical and psychological human health benefit from the presence of biodiversity and natural landscapes (Russell et al. 2013; Seymour 2016; Frumkin et al. 2017). Therefore, by integrating regional trail networks with ecological corridors, the Long Path will serve as a multipurpose corridor that protects functioning ecosystems and promotes human health.

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How to Use this Plan

This **Long Path Protection Plan** examines individual Project Areas that are largely focused on unprotected property between already-protected lands. These Project Areas are organized by county, starting in Rockland County at the New York/New Jersey state border and proceeding northward toward Adirondack Park. The initial section in New Jersey is not included here because once the Long Path crosses the George Washington Bridge, it is routed entirely through protected Palisades Interstate Park land in New Jersey with one small exception that occurs as the Long Path crisscrosses the border at Rockland County.

The counties are grouped into the following sections, with an overview section map proceeding each section in the Plan:

- **Southern Section:** Rockland, Orange, Sullivan
- **Catskills Section:** Ulster, Greene
- **Northern Section:** Schoharie, Albany, Schenectady, Saratoga, Fulton

The first eight counties are structured in the following way:

- **Overview and History** of the Long Path in that county
- **County Map** showing the route of the Long Path and specific project area locations
- **Project Area Descriptions** and **Action Items**
- **Project Area Parcel Lists** of protection priority parcels within the desired corridor
- **Project Area Maps** showing protected lands and preferred Long Path routes

The northernmost counties of Saratoga and Fulton are represented by descriptions of potential routes and rough maps of these routes, but they do not yet include specific Project Areas. The section for Orange County also includes information and project areas for the related Shawangunk Ridge Trail.

While this Long Path Protection Plan is designed to show all the priority areas along the trail, each section and county can also be looked at individually. The hope is that this plan will assist interested Long Path stakeholders in engaging in actions to preserve and protect the Long Path in any given Project Area or County.

Each Project Area Map includes a legend showing the manager level of protected lands (i.e., state, county, municipal, land trust). Note that orange-shaded Corridor Priority Parcels are parcels for which some form of protection should be secured, so that could include direct acquisition as well as other easements or agreements that could provide protection for the corridor.

County	Number of Project Areas	Number of Priority Parcels
Rockland	6	31
Orange	9	96
Sullivan	2	9
Ulster	4	18
Greene	6	33
Schoharie	13	79
Albany	7	46
Schenectady	6	64
Saratoga	Work is underway to further develop a potential protected corridor through these two counties.	
Fulton		
TOTAL	54	376



Long Path

Northern Section



0 2.5 5 10 Miles

Saratoga & Fulton Counties



Saratoga & Fulton Counties

Protection Overview:

Work is underway to further develop a potential protected corridor through these two counties, so individual project areas have not yet been identified. New subcommittees of the Long Path Committee for these counties are being created to spearhead these important efforts. It has been over 25 years since the Long Path was extended north of the Catskill Park approximately 75 miles, and the time has come to properly connect it with the Adirondack Park through Saratoga and Fulton counties.

The Long Path enters Saratoga County in the Town of Charlton and is currently routed completely along roads for 34 miles through the county. It then follows roads in Fulton County for 2.6 miles to reach the village of Northville, where a hiker can connect to the Northville-Placid Trail and the network of trails in the Adirondack Park. To date, there has never been any on-the-ground Long Path trail building or blazing in these two counties.

The proposed trail corridor for the Long Path in these counties could include these areas, which are included in the two maps on the following pages:

- Numerous public preserves, conservation easements, and farmland conservation easements protected by Saratoga PLAN that could allow for recreational trail usage.
- Small county and state forest parcels detached from larger protected units.
- The outskirts of a facility operated by the U.S. Navy, located in the towns of Galway and Milton. The facility occupies approximately 121 acres, with the remaining 3,400 acres being forested land surrounding the facility. The Long Path could be routed along the eastern and northern borders, using a similar model to how the Long Path traverses West Point Military Academy lands in Orange County.
- Middle Grove State Forest, which the Long Path currently passes on roads.
- Lake Desolation State Forest, which is at the edge of a large area of preserved land that could provide opportunities for an off-road route of the Long Path.
- Wilcox Lake Wild Forest, which is contiguous with Lake Desolation State Forest but within the Adirondack Park Blue Line.
- Two lumber company properties that are protected with New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) recreation easements, including the Corinth Tract and the Hans Creek Tract. The Hans Creek Tract already includes a trail easement for the Long Path. In combination with Lake Desolation State Forest and Wilcox Lake Wild Forest, there is the potential for an approximately 9-mile section of off-road trail through these lands.
- The Batchellerville Bridge includes a sidewalk to cross Great Sacandaga Lake.
- To reach Northville, there may be opportunities to explore off-road routes just to the north of the bridge in Saratoga and Fulton counties before ending in Northville.

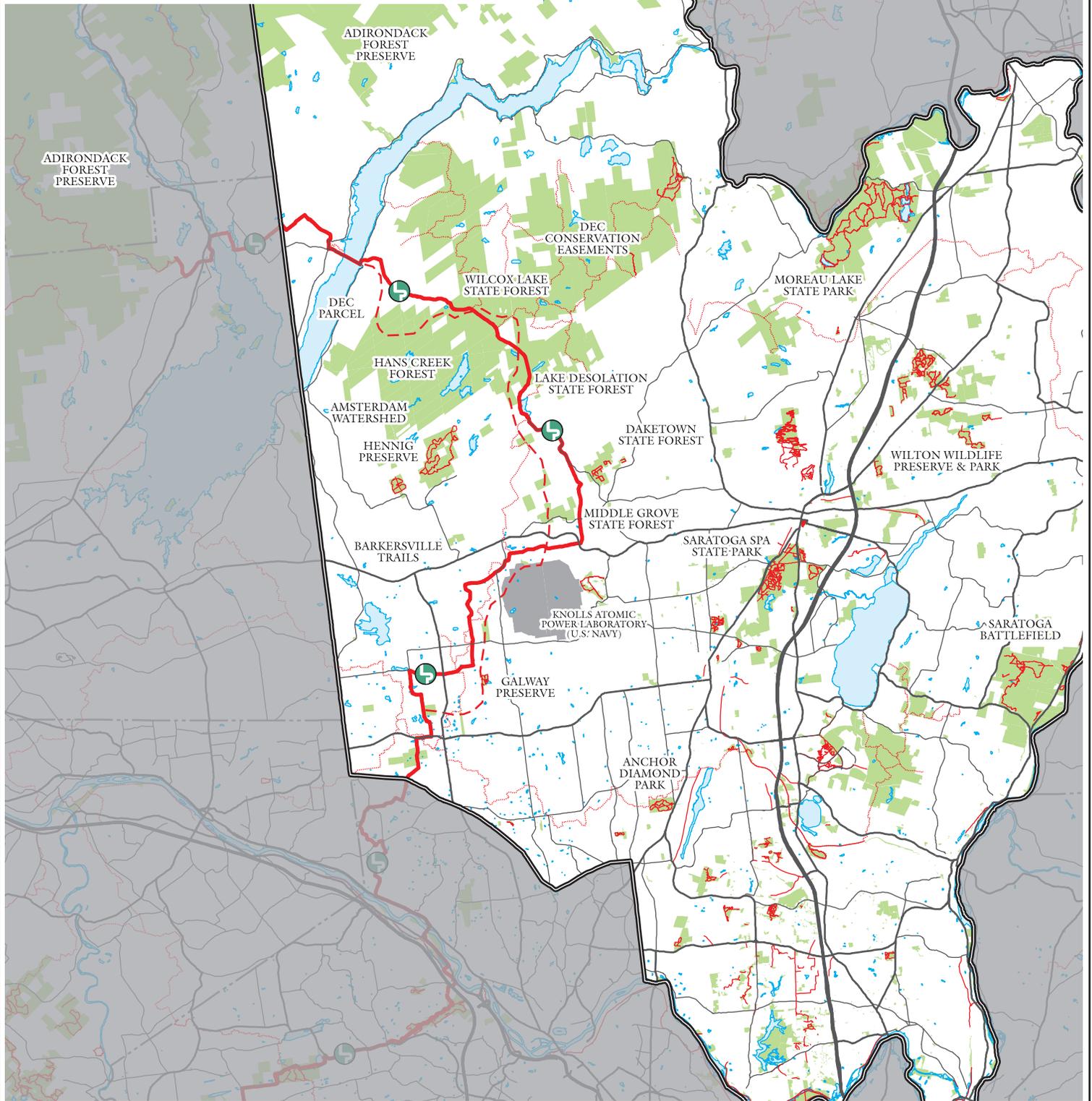
Action Needed:

- Develop subcommittees of the Long Path Committee to create plans for these counties.
- Work closely with Saratoga PLAN as the local land trust organization, and Saratoga County Trail Committee with their expertise.
- Work with DEC to incorporate the Long Path into Unit Management Plans.
- As sections are approved, start building off-road sections, as has been occurring in neighboring Schenectady County over the last decade.
- As off-road sections are approved on already preserved land, more specific project areas can then be developed.



Saratoga County

Proposed Route



- Protected land
- Long Path
- Snowmobile trail
- Other trail
- Proposed route



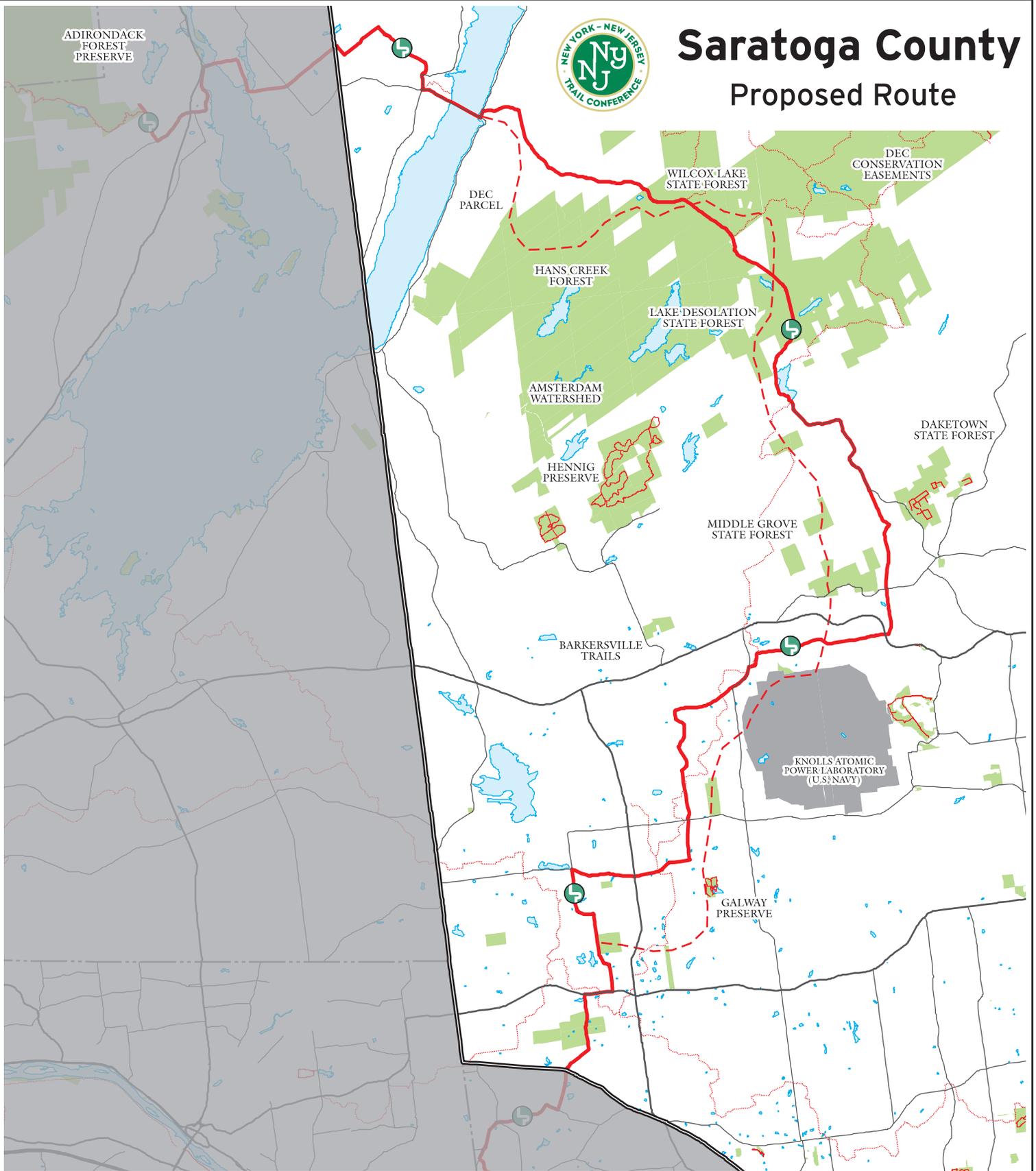
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ADIRONDACK
FOREST
PRESERVE



Saratoga County Proposed Route



-  Protected land
-  Long Path
-  Snowmobile trail
-  Other trail
-  Proposed route



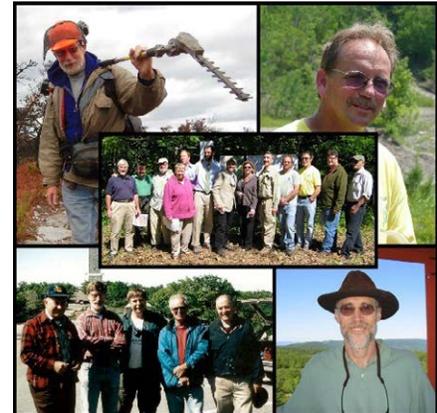
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Acknowledgements

The creation of a greenway corridor, perhaps above all else, requires dedicated people working together for a common conservation cause. Over the past several decades, land protection progress along the Long Path has been the result of Trail Conference volunteers and staff working closely with land trust partners, New York State park partners, local community members, and landowners themselves. The photos to the right show just a few of the people who have played instrumental roles in creating protected corridors for the Long Path, especially along the Shawangunk Ridge.

This Long Path Protection Plan has come together thanks to several dedicated individuals. The following two volunteers deserve special recognition for their contributions:



Andy Garrison, for his long-time dedication to the Long Path both on the physical trail and behind-the-scenes. His step-by-step knowledge of the entire Long Path and ability to plot out potential corridors has been instrumental to preparing each of the project areas in this plan and the overall vision for protecting the Long Path.

Nick Boyle, for working closely with Andy to develop the structure of this plan, and also helping to organize and edit the descriptions and parcel info for each of the counties and project areas.

Thanks also to contributed photos from **Steve Aaron, Daniel Chazin, Jakob Franke, Alex McClain**, and other volunteers, and text about the importance of conserving corridors from **Cory Tiger**.

Our land protection efforts and the development of this Plan would also not have been possible without large amounts of funding support.

- The Long Path Protection Plan was supported with funding from the **New York State Conservation Partnership Program (NYSCPP)** and New York's Environmental Protection Fund. The NYSCPP is administered by the **Land Trust Alliance**, in coordination with the **New York State Department of Environmental Conservation**.
- Additional funding for this Plan came from the **Trail Conference's donor-supported Land Acquisition and Stewardship Fund (LASF)**.

We hope this Long Path Protection Plan will also inspire more people to join this cause to protect the important lands throughout our region.

Happy Trails!

Jeremy Apgar
Cartographer
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference