

## High Peaks Visitor Use Management Project Public Meeting #1 Synthesis

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### Background

On May 9, 2023, an in-person public meeting was convened<sup>1</sup> under the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) Visitor Use Management (VUM) Project to address the following purposes:

- Provide foundational information to increase public understanding of the project goals and timeline, and build a shared understanding of how the Visitor Use Management (VUM) Framework will be applied in the High Peaks area.
- Share perspectives about current and desired future conditions for the High Peaks area regarding amounts and types of visitor use, the quality and character of visitor experiences, and public safety considerations.

The public meeting was structured into two distinct parts: Part 1 consisted of a welcome address and overview presentation, while Part 2 consisted of two rounds of facilitated small group discussions (see Appendix A for the meeting agenda, Appendix B for the meeting slide deck, and Appendix C for the discussion group materials). Meeting participants were encouraged to self-select one of four available small group discussion stations to participate in Part 2 of the public meeting. The public meeting closed with an opportunity for participants to share reflections on the evening's discussion, and provided an overview of next steps for the NYSDEC VUM Project. Approximately 57 individuals signed in as they entered the meeting room. A small number chose not to do so. Representatives from Ross Strategic, Otak, and NYSDEC were present at the meeting and served as facilitators during the two rounds of small group discussion.

### Part 1: Welcome and Overview

The meeting began with a welcome and meeting overview provided by lead facilitator Susan Hayman (Ross Strategic).<sup>2</sup> Next, Josh Clague (NYSDEC) provided background information and an overview of the NYSDEC VUM project for the High Peaks project area. Finally, Abbie Larkin (Otak) provided an overview of the VUM Framework and an introduction to Otak's VUM expertise. Part 1 concluded with an open question and answer session facilitated by Susan Hayman. The following topics were raised by participants in the open question and answer session:

- The complex and unique structure of the High Peaks and Adirondack Park landscape, unlike other parks and protected areas;
- The concern that permits would limit local use of the area;
- Long-term evaluations of Otak's work;
- Examples of ongoing studies in the region that this VUM project should be aware of;
- Recommendations should include partnerships and should expand beyond the project area.

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<sup>1</sup> The public meeting was convened at the Harrietstown Town Hall Auditorium, 39 Main Street, Saranac Lake NY, from 5:30 – 8:30 p.m.

<sup>2</sup> Ross Strategic is part of the broader consulting team led by Otak.

## Part 2/Round 1: Current Conditions

The first round of facilitated small group discussion focused on current conditions. Participants received a copy of the discussion group instructions with prompts (Appendix C), a comment card (Appendix C), and a set of numbered stickers to use to record their reactions to the prompts provided in the instructions. Each discussion group shared a printed large-scale map of the project area (Appendix C) to which participants added numbered stickers to identify the relative location on the map that corresponded to their numbered comments (i.e., to “place” the comment on the map). Facilitators described the exercise to their small group and primed participants’ thinking using the relevant prompts for Discussion Round 1: Current Conditions (see Appendix C). Participants were invited to share their comments with the small group while facilitators took notes on a flip chart. Facilitators collected all participant comment cards at the end of the round. The following themes, organized according to the discussion prompts, emerged during Discussion Round 1:

### a) What is *working well* in the project area that contributes to high quality visitor experiences?

- **Wild scenery:** The area includes important and attractive natural scenery ranging from waterfalls to high elevation summits and includes areas such as Marcy Dam that are actively rewilding.
- **Education:** The summit, trailhead, fire tower, and watershed steward programs provide important informal resource interpretation, education, and leave-no-trace messaging to visitors. The positive visitor interactions resulting from these programs foster high quality visitor experiences. The Adirondack Mountain Club in general does a great job of educating visitors and providing information at trailheads and summits. Backcountry caretakers and rangers patrol and educate visitors while enforcing regulations including bear cans for proper food storage. Local municipalities are providing educational and interpretive resources as they are able.
- **Recreation opportunities:** The area offers a diversity of recreation opportunities, including for those with disabilities that can experience the area through roadside pull-offs and frontcountry picnic areas. The Adirondack Mountain Reserve (AMR) hiker parking reservation system managed through the Ausable Club is working well.
- **State management:** NYSDEC manages resources well with the financial and human resources at their disposal.
- **Trail design:** Examples of recent sustainable trail design include Mount Van Hoevenberg and Mount Joe, where excellent new trail construction and parking access invite beginners and older hikers. High-quality trail maintenance and construction overall are important for addressing degradation.
- **Infrastructure:** Recent rehabilitation efforts at Upper Works increased parking and interpretive signage about the area’s rich history. The shuttle from Marcy Field to the Garden parking lot and trailhead is an important tool for increasing visitor access. The parking fee at the Garden supports a parking attendant and important bathroom facilities. Overnight facilities on private lands support longer visitor stays (i.e., more than a day visit).

b) What are *current barriers* to high quality visitor experiences, and for whom?

- **Effective transportation:** Access to the area is nearly impossible without a personal vehicle. There are dangerous driving conditions on some areas along the main roads due to vehicles searching for parking and visitors walking long distances along roadways. There have been pilot shuttle systems that show some degree of success, but have yet to operate for a full suite of days, hours, and stops that meet the needs of most visitors.
- **Cooperative management:** NYDEC manages the forest preserve, but many access points are controlled by private landowners and partners that hold easements with the state. Cooperation and coordination between the state and partners is imperative. Coordination with local communities is also important for providing accurate information and matching visitors to destinations based on their ability and desired experience.
- **Trail design:** More modern, hardened, and sustainably designed trails are needed (Mount Van Hoevenberg example). However, some participants were critical of the Mount Van Hoevenberg project for starting the trail in the Intensive Use/ORDA property, which was described as unpleasant by some, and bringing many visitors into the project area along the trail system. Most other trails in the area are very steep, which impacts the hiking experience and threatens safety.
- **Education and information:** More education is needed despite excellent work by the Adirondack Mountain Club and others. Educational messaging generally covers safety and leave-no-trace but should also aim to foster a deeper understanding of Wilderness. Participants still felt that getting quality information about the area and resources was difficult, particularly before making the visit to the area.
- **Infrastructure:** The area does not have enough bathrooms. There is also not enough attention placed on the southern entrance to the area in terms of bathrooms, signage, etc. The frontcountry lacks adequate facilities, and the shuttle parking options are not adequate to support operations. South Meadows Road affords poor access and needs improvement. Similarly, the Garden parking lot is too small. A participant pointed out that the ratio of parking to trail access is confusing, while some areas have large parking lots that access limited trails, other areas have small lots that access large complex trail networks.
- **Connectivity:** The area suffers from poor cell coverage, which can be a limiting factor for local residents and visitors that stay in the area, and need information or want AMR reservations that are accessible online.
- **Lodging:** Overnight lodging is generally lacking from campground sites to motels. Lodging that is available can be unaffordable or overbooked.
- **Funding:** Some participants commented that more funding is needed to support rangers and trail maintenance. Volunteer support is appreciated, but these operations should be funded by the State and not reliant on volunteers. Still others commented that the state has already over-invested in this area.

c) What are the *current positive impacts* of visitor use to the landscape and local communities?

- **Protection ethic:** Visitors fall in love with the landscape and want to protect it and share their appreciation for their incomparable experiences in wild places. Some visitors even become year-round residents based on this appreciation, and visitors and residents alike become volunteers that give back to the trails and summits.
- **Economic:** Visitation has provided an economic foundation for the region, but the economic benefit is limited to certain areas and communities and is not captured by all equally.
- **Data collection and ongoing research:** Management attention has resulted in campsite inventories, campsite revegetation, and campsite rehabilitation conducted in recent years, as well as research on climate change mitigation and wildlife sustainability.

d) What are the *current negative impacts* of visitor use to the landscape and local communities?

- **Lack of inclusion and representation:** Visitors to the High Peaks are not representative of New York State as a whole, although some participants noticed improvements in visitor diversity over the last few years. Visitors from BIPOC communities may feel unwelcome and unsafe in local rural communities. In some ways, access to the High Peaks is a privilege for those who have the resources to make the visit.
- **Uneducated and unprepared visitors:** Many hikers are in over their heads in general, and are uneducated and unprepared to recreate in the area. These conditions often result in increased calls for support and rescues.
- **Safety:** Increased search and rescue operations attributed to current visitor use trends.
- **Displacement:** Spatial displacement is common as locals shift from accessing the area from the north to accessing the area from the south to avoid other visitors and enforcement presence. Part of the motivation for displacement is to avoid the disappointment of not finding parking at the destination after a long drive, and not being able to have the planned experience. More and more, hiking is a carefully planned, all-day activity. Hiking pressure is also displacing other users, including hunters, climbers, and paddlers who can no longer access prime destinations because parking is lacking or already taken by hikers. This is especially true in the Chapel Pond/NY 73 corridor. Moving the “problem” somewhere else that is not prepared for crowds is not a solution.
- **Evidence of use:** Visitor use results in erosion on trails, crowds on summits, human waste, litter, vegetation damage, impacts to wildlife, resource damage from camping at drive-in sites, and ecological stress, impacts, and disturbance areas.
- **Trail design:** The historic lack of trail design and infrastructure has resulted in degraded resources and is a threat to visitor safety. The lack of information on true trail conditions also impacts visitors’ experiences and safety. Trails near Colden, Saddleback, and Basin were described as “disasters.” The area needs more work to develop sustainable trails like on Cascade.
- **Parking:** Available parking fills early in the morning and results in dangerous traffic and pedestrian levels on NY 73 and elsewhere resulting in safety hazards and inconvenient access. Recent parking closures along NY 73 intensified the degree that pedestrians walk on

roadways, and displaced climbers and other users that relied on those specialty lots. There are also downstream community parking issues attributed to hikers.

- **Overcrowding:** The area has too many visitors in general, and on trails and summits specifically. The number of visitors conflicts with the Wilderness classification, which is described in part by opportunities for solitude. Some described visitor levels on trails as similar to “Mount Everest backlog” or a “conga line” into the backcountry, and called for a broader management vision to manage crowding. However, other participants disagreed that the area is overcrowded or that crowding impacts other visitors and their experiences.

Outside of the structured prompts used to facilitate small group discussions during Round 1, participants expressed concern at the degree of local presence at the public meeting and whether actual users were represented in the meeting’s discussions. At the same time, participants indicated that local input was important for informing decisions. Some pointed out a lack of emphasis on the need for VUM to protect natural resources, not just the visitor experience. Others noted that visitors are generally satisfied, even if they are on crowded trails.

## Part 2/Round 2: Desired Future Conditions

The second round of facilitated small group discussion focused on desired future conditions. Participants used the same discussion group instructions with prompts (Appendix C) but were given a fresh comment card (Appendix C) and set of numbered stickers to record their reactions to the prompts in the instructions. Each discussion group shared the same printed large-scale map of the project area (Appendix C) to which participants added numbered stickers to identify the relative location on the map that corresponded to their numbered comments (i.e., to “place” the comment on the map). Facilitators described the exercise to their small group and primed participants’ thinking using the relevant prompts for Discussion Round 2: Desired Future Conditions (see Appendix C). Similar to Round 1, participants were invited to share their comments with the small group while facilitators took notes on a flip chart. Facilitators collected all participant comment cards at the end of the round. The following comments, organized according to the discussion prompts, emerged during Discussion Round 2:

### a) What would you like to experience when you visit this area?

- **Wilderness experience:** Experiencing Wilderness with all the senses and learning the value of Wilderness management is paramount. Experiencing remoteness, solitude, seclusion, sounds of nature, unspoiled views, and a space to reconnect to nature. A landscape with unique and natural wonders, characterized by healthy ecosystems, birds, wildflowers, ice formations, a lack of erosion, and no human waste or litter.
- **Access:** A backcountry that's easy to get to, especially during winter and low use times, and for visitors with disabilities. To be able to leave for a trip and have confidence that you can access your destination. To have a clear understanding about access in the area.
- **Education:** A complete visitor education system from home to travel corridors to trailheads to summits and back. Signage that shares information and develops visitors' knowledge of trails and trail conditions but is balanced with the goals of a Wilderness experience. Visitors can choose their best adventure given the information at their disposal. Visitors also know about local amenities that support their visit outside of the forest preserve.
- **Trail conditions:** Trails that are hardened, well-maintained, and constructed to protect wildlands and visitor use and safety, and that leverage sustainable design principles.

- **Infrastructure:** Attractively sited and designed roadside infrastructure that is screened, when possible. Parking that is right-sized to trailhead opportunities and keeps visitors off of roadways. Parking that is plentiful and reduces (if not eliminates) the stress of finding a parking spot.

b) **How should people feel and what should they take away from their experiences in this area?**

- **Awareness:** The State Land Master Plan, Wilderness policies, and guidelines should be understood by visitors, who should also grasp the scale and diversity of the High Peaks which is more than just the iconic high peaks.
- **Wilderness value:** Visitors should take away an appreciation for Wilderness that they want to share with others. Visitors should also depart rejuvenated and relaxed.
- **Empowered and inspired:** Visitors should feel empowered to protect the unique and special landscape and rare ecosystems of the High Peaks. They should have a better understanding of the park overall. They should feel inspired by the landscape to protect this and all natural areas. Visitors should feel welcomed, filled with wonder and awe and want to learn about wildlife, plants, and leave-no-trace, to get fit, feel happy, and enjoy fresh air. They should desire to return and explore more, and to connect with nature again and again.
- **Educated and prepared:** Visitors should understand the proper clothing and equipment required to support their experience and should have the information they need to have an enjoyable experience from the start to the end of their trip. Information includes best practices, leave-no-trace, area guidelines and regulations, proper etiquette, etc. Visitors should have a realistic sense of what's to come during their experience and should take personal responsibility while in the area. Visitors should also feel invited, safe, and knowledgeable about trail difficulty. Unprepared visitors should be directed elsewhere.
- **Support:** For NYSDEC and partners in natural resource and visitor management, for a permanent High Peaks Trail crew, and for historic preservation. More funding is needed for these initiatives.

c) **What types of opportunities should the public have to experience this area?**

- **Access:** Improve access via trails to Marcy Dam. Allow for freedom of recreation, and the opportunity to leave the trail and roam unrestricted. Cultivate opportunities to eat, stay, sleep, and recreate. Welcome diverse populations including those with disabilities and across generations. Preserve for future generations.
- **Opportunity spectrum:** Develop as high, medium, and low use areas with management appropriate for each use levels. Develop space for novices as well as the more experienced. Opportunities to immerse and see no one else, or see a few other visitors, without feeling like an urban or suburban park setting. Opportunities for year-round recreation - hiking, skiing, and mid-season activities. Encourage trip planning according to conditions and abilities.
- **Wilderness experience:** Experience an "alive" energy in wild places and honor wild spaces. Wilderness experiences are defined by solitude and remoteness, but there are caretaker cabins and rangers that patrol and make visitors feel safe. People-powered activities (i.e., nonmotorized) are always appropriate. Long distance trails allow for overnight experiences that locals and visitors can appreciate.

- **Transportation:** Available, equitable transport such as a free hiker shuttles along with safe travel corridors. Prioritize transportation that is green and dependable, and of a world-class caliber.

d) **What benefits should people and local communities experience from recreation in this area?**

- **Access:** Continue to provide for accessible visitor use, and opportunities to experience the High Peaks in a way that is consistent with constitutional protection. Locals should be able to visit without barriers of a permit system to allow for "short notice" visits. All should be able to visit without paying a fee to ensure access for all.
- **Economic:** Local communities should benefit from visitors that boosts the economy, contribute to the tax base, and who may become potential future residents. Importantly, residents should also be recognized as visitors and users of the forest preserve.
- **Health:** Mental and physical health benefits, stress relief, increased enjoyment.
- **Involvement:** People giving back, investing, and donating to preserve the Wilderness experience for the future. Promoting advocacy and stewardship.

Outside of the structured prompts used to facilitate small group discussions during Round 2, participants emphasized that discussions about visitor use in the High Peaks should be framed appropriately and focused on the area's "Wilderness" classification. Some participants raised the concern/fear that a permit system similar to the AMR will be implemented in this area as a "predetermined" outcome of the VUM study. Some participants also raised concerns for the wording of Prompt B, which could be interpreted as overly prescriptive, and some felt it was inappropriate to describe how others should feel, and what they should take away, about an area. While some participants agreed that education, enforcement, and visitor management is needed at the most popular destinations in the project area, others acknowledged that at present, visitors are not deterred by current trail and parking conditions. Other participants noted the need for holistic management, instead of unit by unit or project by project.

## Reflection

Following Discussion Round 2, participants were invited to share their reflections on the meeting structure and content. Participants expressed the following reflections:

- Appreciation for the meeting's format, the opportunity for discussion and to share thoughts;
- Request that meeting notes are made public;
- Surprise that some participants were opposed to increasing the amount of parking available in the project area;
- Emphasis should be placed on the project area's Wilderness classification, and desires for recreation should be balanced with the land use classification;
- Importance of connecting the social and ecological/natural resource components of visitor use management.
- Desire to implement positive actions soon—many good ideas have been languishing in the planning space for years.

## Next Steps

The following summarizes next steps for the NYSDEC VUM Project:

- Public meeting presentation posted to the project website (see link below);
- Public meeting notes will be synthesized and shared with the public;
- Public meeting feedback and synthesis will be incorporated into future internal planning workshops, including development of a summer data collection plan;
- Onsite data collection will be implemented this summer in the project area.

Please visit the project website for future updates on the project: [www.highpeaksvum.com](http://www.highpeaksvum.com)



## Appendix A: Meeting Agenda

High Peaks Visitor Use Management Public Meeting  
Harrietstown Town Hall Auditorium<sup>1</sup>  
39 Main Street, Saranac Lake NY  
Tuesday, May 9, 2023 • 5:30-8:30 p.m. Eastern



### Meeting Purpose:

- Provide foundational information to increase public understanding of the project goals and timeline, and build a shared understanding of how the Visitor Use Management (VUM) Framework will be applied in the High Peaks area.
- Share perspectives about current and desired future conditions for the High Peaks area regarding amounts and types of visitor use, the quality and character of visitor experiences, and public safety considerations.

*Note: The meeting will incorporate interactive discussion, rather than a formal public comment approach.*

Time	Topic/Speakers
5:30 pm	Gathering— <i>Susan Hayman, Facilitator, Otak Team; Josh Clague, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and purpose for the meeting</li> <li>• Meeting overview, introductions</li> </ul>
5:45 pm	Foundational Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project overview—<i>Josh Clague</i></li> <li>• Visitor use management framework overview—<i>Abbie Larkin, Otak</i></li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
6:30 pm	Break
6:45 pm	Public Perspectives— <i>Facilitated discussion regarding amounts and types of visitor use, the quality and character of visitor experiences, and public safety considerations</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Round 1: Current conditions</li> <li>• Round 2: Desired future conditions</li> </ul>
8:10 pm	Reflections— <i>Facilitated Comments</i>
8:25 pm	Closing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next steps: Project timeline—<i>Susan Hayman</i></li> <li>• Closing remarks—<i>Josh Clague</i></li> </ul>
8:30 pm	Adjourn

Thank you for attending tonight's meeting!  
Questions about the public process? Please email [yum-facilitators@rossstrategic.com](mailto:yum-facilitators@rossstrategic.com)  
or visit the project website at <https://www.highpeaksvum.com/>

<sup>1</sup> An accessible entrance is located on the left side of the building (when facing the building from Main Street). The elevator is located to the left after entering the building.

## Appendix B: Meeting Slide Deck



# Public Meeting High Peaks Visitor Use Management Project

May 2023



## Welcome!

*Susan Hayman, Ross Strategic (Otak Team)*

*Josh Clague, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation*

## Meeting Purpose

- Provide foundational information to increase public understanding of the project goals and timeline, and build a shared understanding of how the Visitor Use Management (VUM) Framework will be applied in the High Peaks area.
- Share perspectives about current and desired future conditions for the High Peaks area regarding amounts and types of visitor use, the quality and character of visitor experiences, and public safety considerations.

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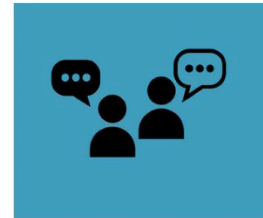
## Meeting Overview

Time	Topic/Speakers
5:30 pm	Gathering—Susan Hayman, Facilitator; Josh Clague, NYS DEC <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Welcome and purpose for the meeting</li> <li>• Meeting overview, introductions</li> </ul>
5:45 pm	Foundational Information <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project overview—Josh Clague</li> <li>• Visitor use management framework overview—Abbie Larkin, Otak</li> <li>• Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
6:30 pm	Break
6:45 pm	Public Perspectives—Discussion Groups
8:10 pm	Reflections
8:25 pm	Closing—Susan, Josh
8:30 pm	Adjourn

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## For Tonight

1. Assume good intent from others
2. Be respectful and kind when speaking
3. Actively participate and share your perspectives
4. Actively listen -- make space for others to be heard
5. Follow guidance from the facilitator



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## Foundational Information

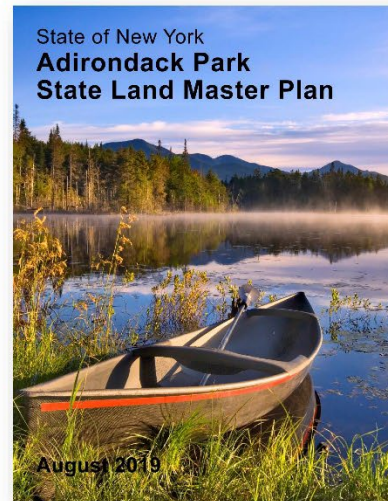
*Josh Clague, NYS DEC*  
*Abbie Larkin, Otak*

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## Background

*"Human use and enjoyment of those lands should be permitted and encouraged, **so long as the resources in their physical and biological context as well as their social or psychological aspects are not degraded.**"*

- APSLMP



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## Background

UMPs must include:

*"...an assessment of physical, biological, and social carrying capacity...with particular attention to portions (of land) ...threatened by overuse in light of its resource limitations and its classification under the master plan."*

- APSLMP

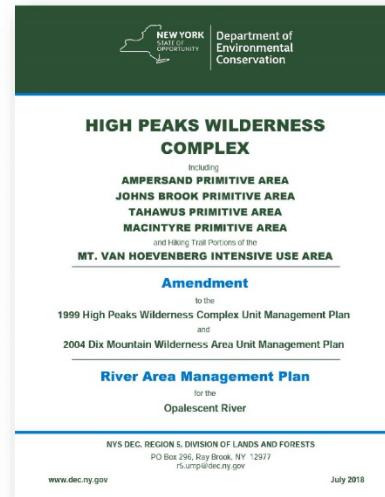


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## Background

1. *The identification of acceptable conditions as defined by measurable indicators;*
2. *An analysis of the relationship between existing conditions and those desired;*
3. *Determinations of the necessary management actions needed to achieve desired conditions; and*
4. *A monitoring program to see if objectives are being met.*

- High Peaks Wilderness UMP Amendment, 2018

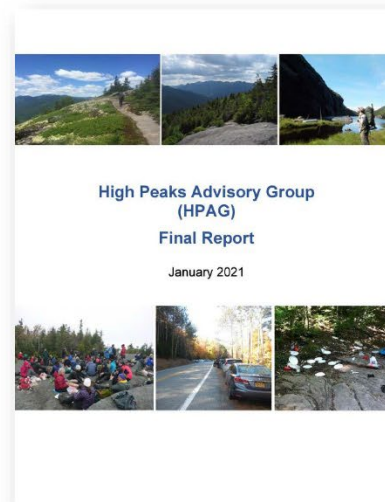


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## Background

*"...the use of adaptive management and the adoption of the...Visitor Use Management Framework (VUMF) as the guiding tool"*

- High Peaks Advisory Group Report, 2021



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## Background

- 2022 State Budget included line for "comprehensive planning"
- Catskill Advisory Group Final Report
- DEC Commissioner announced VUM projects in both ADKs and Catskills
- Request for Proposal (RFP)
- Contract award to Otak

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## Project Purpose

*Implement the VUMF and conduct a visitor use management planning process, with a focus on experiential, social, and public safety elements of visitor use management and visitor capacities, to promote sustainable visitor use.*

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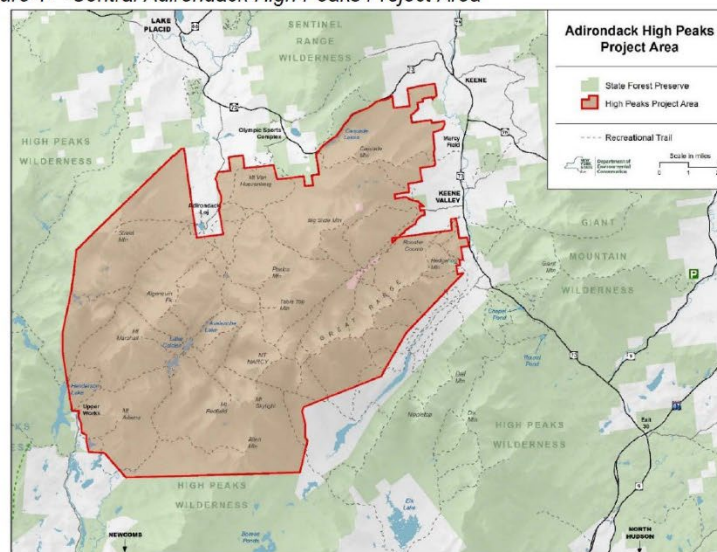
## Other Data Collection Efforts

- Physical condition monitoring for trails and tent sites (DEC)
- Ecological Scorecard (DEC partnership with SUNY ESF)
- Visitor experience survey related to AMR parking reservation (DEC partnership with SUNY ESF)

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## High Peaks Study Area

Figure 1 – Central Adirondack High Peaks Project Area



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## State Project Team

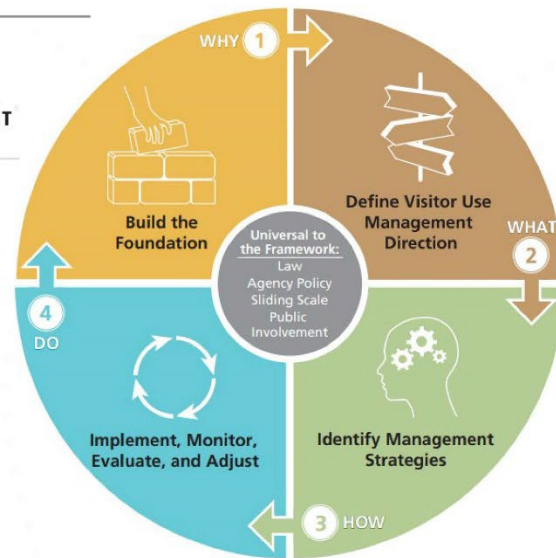
- Forestry / land management (Regional)
- Forest Rangers (Regional)
- Forest Preserve program administration (Albany)
- Adventure NY / Outdoor Recreation program (Albany)
- Adirondack Park Agency

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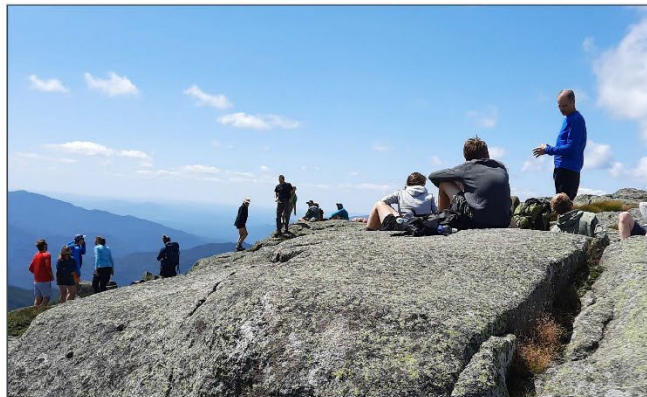
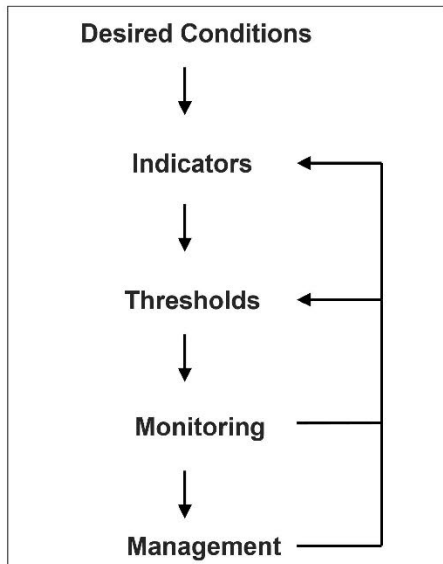


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## Overview of the Visitor Use Management Framework



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**Otak's Visitor Use Management and Carrying Capacity Projects**

**ADIRONDACK PARK ► HIGH PEAKS  
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT**

ACADIA NATIONAL PARK

SHENANDOAH NATIONAL PARK

INYO NATIONAL FOREST

ARCHES NATIONAL PARK

MOUNT RAINIER NATIONAL PARK

ZION NATIONAL PARK

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ADIRONDACK PARK ► HIGH PEAKS  
VISITOR USE MANAGEMENT

# Questions?

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# Public Perspectives

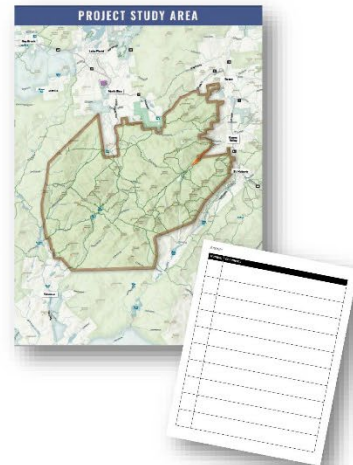
*Facilitated Discussion Groups*

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## Discussion Group Process

### Two Rounds: Current Conditions, Desired Future Conditions

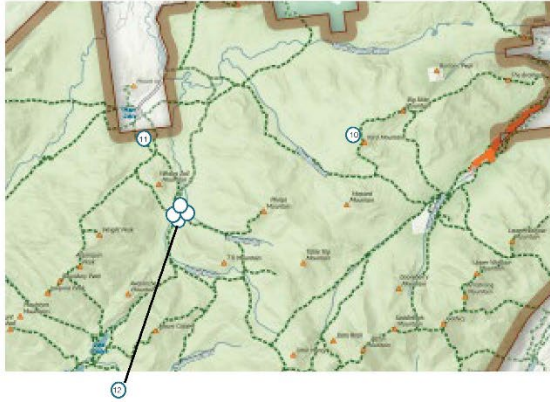
1. Self-select a discussion group (distribute from same organization)
2. Consider prompts in handout--reflect on those of greatest importance to you
3. Place numbered stickers where you'd like to add a comment
4. Add your **Group #** to your worksheet, add **sticker number** and **brief corresponding comments**
5. Facilitator reconvenes group to share comments and discuss
6. Hand in your worksheet to your facilitator before returning to the plenary seating



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## Discussion Group Process (cont'd)

Two Rounds: Current Conditions, Desired Future Conditions



GROUP: A

Number	Comments
10	This is my comment about sticker #10...
11	This is my comment about sticker #11...
12	This is my comment about sticker #12...
	ETC.

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## Reflections

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# Next Steps

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## Next Steps

- Meeting synthesis
- Website updates as information becomes available
- Summer data collection

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## More Thoughts to Share?

Comments are welcome throughout the process and may be submitted in the following ways:

1. By email to: [vum-facilitators@rossstrategic.com](mailto:vum-facilitators@rossstrategic.com)
2. Through the project website at: <https://www.highpeaksvum.com/>
3. No internet access? Send written comments to:

Josh Clague  
625 Broadway, 5th Floor  
Albany, NY 12233-4254

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## Closing Remarks

*Susan Hayman*  
*Josh Clague*

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Thank you for participating!

For more information, visit our project website: <https://www.highpeaksvum.com/>





## Appendix C: Discussion Group Instructions, Comment Card, and Project Area Map

### Participant Discussion Group Instructions

There will be **two discussion rounds** for meeting participants to respond to a series of prompts (see below).

**For each discussion round:**

1. Check out the map posted on the wall.
2. Read the Discussion Round prompts (see below). Reflect on those of greatest importance to you.
3. When it's time, you will have several minutes to place numbered stickers to the map where you'd like to add a comment.
  - ✓ If an area of the map becomes too congested with stickers, place your numbered sticker on an outer area of the map and use a marker to draw a connector line from your numbered sticker to the area relevant to your comment.
  - ✓ We'll have a designated area on the map to place numbered stickers not associated with a specific location on the map.
4. **Please briefly note your comments for each corresponding number** on a card provided by the facilitator (you may enter multiple comments on one card).
5. When the facilitator invites you share one of your comments, please state your sticker number and comment. Be as specific as you can about the experience, location, activity, etc. you are referencing.
6. The group will continue sharing as time allows.
7. The facilitator will collect the Round 1 (white) and Round 2 (blue) cards.

### Discussion Round 1 (35 min)

**Topic: Current conditions** (with respect to amounts and types of visitor use, quality, and character of visitor experiences, and public safety).

**Prompts:**

- a. What is *working well* in the project area that contributes to high quality visitor experiences?
- b. What are *current barriers* to high quality visitor experiences, and for whom?
- c. What are the *current positive impacts* of visitor use to the landscape and local communities?
- d. What are the *current negative impacts* of visitor use to the landscape and local communities?

### Discussion Round 2 (35 min)

**Topic: Desired future conditions** (with respect to amounts and types of visitor use, quality, and character of visitor experiences, and public safety).

**Prompts:**

- a. What would you like to experience when you visit this area?
- b. How should people feel and what should they take away from their experiences in this area?
- c. What types of opportunities should the public have to experience this area?
- d. What benefits should people and local communities experience from recreation in this area?

**GROUP:**

Number	Comments

# PROJECT STUDY AREA

