

WARREN COUNTY, NY

Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan

February 2025

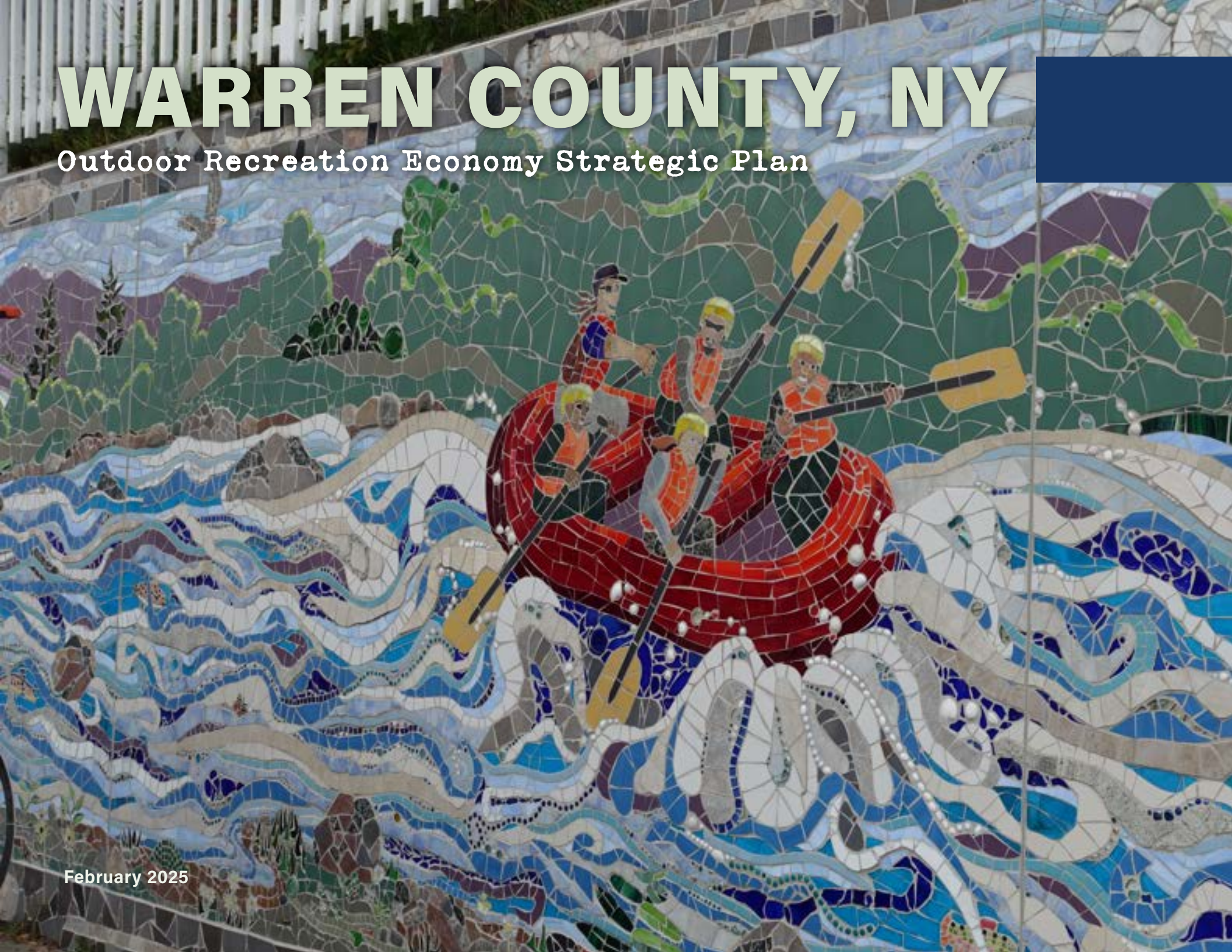


TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY.....	3
OUTDOOR ECONOMY OVERVIEW.....	7
OUTDOOR ECONOMY VISION & GOALS.....	19
OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS.....	23
OUTDOOR ECONOMY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & INVESTMENT PROGRAM.....	42
CAPITAL PROJECTS & KEY INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE THE OUTDOOR ECONOMY.....	48
APPENDICES.....	60
▪ Appendix A: April 2024 Outdoor Economy Research Report	
▪ Appendix B: Stakeholder Engagement Summary	

The Warren County, NY Planning Department led the development of this plan, with funding provided by Empire State Development.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

WARREN COUNTY PLANNING DEPARTMENT

Ethan Gaddy | County Planner

Sarah Brugger | Principal Planner

Sara Frankenfeld | GIS Administrator

PROJECT ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Heather Bagshaw | Warren County Tourism Department

Pete & Cassandra Burns | Beaver Brook Outfitters

Drew Cappabianca | The HUB / Upper Hudson Trails Alliance

Eric Lendrum | Rick's Bike Shop

Steve Magee | Lake George Regional Convention & Visitors Bureau

Clint McCarthy | SUNY Adirondack

Dean Moore | Warren County Parks, Recreation and Railroad

Tricia Rogers | Adirondack Regional Chamber of Commerce

CONSULTING TEAM

Alex Belenz | SE Group

Caleb Schmitz | SE Group

Larissa Read | Common Ground Consulting

INTRODUCTION & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Project Background

Warren County is home to some of the premier recreational landscapes in the Northeast. The County's lakes, peaks, rivers, and forests have for many years been a backyard playground for residents and a primary destination for visitors. Lake George (the "Queen of American Lakes") and Gore Mountain are amongst a number of headline outdoor recreation attractions in the County, beyond which lie hundreds of thousands of acres of forest and many hundreds of miles of recreational trail. Over 90% of the County falls within the Adirondack Park.

Warren County has long served as the southern gateway to the Adirondacks. Accordingly, many of the County's communities have been shaped by the "experiential economy" - recreation, tourism, and leisure. This legacy persists and continues to evolve today, shaped by sustained increases in the popularity of outdoor recreation nationwide over the past decade. During this time, other towns, regions, and states around the country have taken an increased interest in outdoor recreation as a driver of community and economic development, making for an increasingly competitive outdoor economy landscape.

While Warren County is blessed with top-tier outdoor recreation assets, it has not been immune from the challenging demographic trends facing rural regions in the Northeast. After nearly 200 years of steady population growth, the County's total population has leveled off, remaining virtually unchanged from 2010 to 2020. During this time, the population declined in the majority of Warren County's towns, offset by population growth in Queensbury. Warren County is the fifth-oldest county in New York State, with a median age of 47.5 years - nearly a decade above the national average (2020 Census). As of 2020, the County now has a more residents over the age of 65 than residents under the age of 18. Unsurprisingly, school enrollments have declined by at least 17% in every Warren County school district since 2000.



Boating on Lake George, 1908

Purpose of the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan*

The *Warren County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* represents a renewed commitment by Warren County government to growing and sustaining outdoor recreation as a driver of economic development and quality of life in the County. In response to increased competition from other regions and local demographic challenges, this plan provides actionable recommendations to enhance outdoor recreation offerings, activate outdoor recreation experiences for residents and visitors of all backgrounds and ability levels, and position businesses and communities to build wealth and offer quality of life to current and prospective residents.

Executive Summary

As the southern gateway to the Adirondack Park, Warren County has long enjoyed a well-deserved reputation as a haven of outdoor recreation. Warren County currently has a well-rounded outdoor economy supported by three critical pillars:

- **INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS.** The County has an enviable array of year-round outdoor recreation offerings, supported by stunning natural assets (e.g., mountains, lakes, rivers, and forests). There are opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation infrastructure (e.g., trails, trailheads, boat launches) throughout the County, including improving the accessibility of outdoor recreation for residents and visitors of different ability levels.
- **BUSINESSES.** There is a strong core of outdoor recreation businesses in Warren County, with at least 160 private businesses involved directly in outdoor recreation sales, services, and/or experiences. Outdoor recreation contributes strongly to the County's significant tourism economy. An aging stock of motels and limited overnight accommodations in some areas are amongst the primary challenges for the County's tourism economy.
- **COMMUNITIES.** Outdoor recreation is a critical quality of life amenity for Warren County residents; participation in outdoor recreation is nearly ubiquitous. Municipal governments and community organizations recognize the economic potential of outdoor recreation, particularly the proximity of hamlets and downtowns to outdoor recreation offerings, but don't always have the resources to invest in and capitalize on these economic assets.

To steward and enhance the County's outdoor economy, Warren County government and its local and regional partners will need to undertake a sustained, long-term program of support and investment. Warren County government is well-positioned to play a central part in supporting the outdoor economy through four critical roles:

- **COORDINATION.** Serving as a central convener and liaison between communities, outdoor recreation organizations, state agencies, and other key outdoor economy stakeholders.
- **PLANNING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE.** Lending capacity and expertise to plans and processes that sustain and enhance outdoor recreation offerings and boost local economic development initiatives.
- **INVESTMENT.** Lending financial support to projects and initiatives that advance outdoor economy goals and result in tangible community and economic benefit.
- **MANAGEMENT.** Stewarding County-owned recreational infrastructure and assets to a high-standard of quality and providing resources to support community partners in their management of local outdoor recreation offerings.



Crane Mountain



Executive Summary (continued)

Through these “core actions”, Warren County government will be able to lead and support a variety of local and regional outdoor economy initiatives. This plan identifies a comprehensive set of **27 action areas** that the County and its partners can initiate or incorporate into their ongoing work, ranging from improving accessibility of existing trails to supporting entrepreneurship in the outdoor economy.

To put these “core actions” into play, the County should initiate an **Outdoor Economy Technical Assistance & Investment Program** with a focus on key outdoor economy gaps and opportunities identified through this planning process:

- Leveraging County staff capacity and consultant support to provide technical assistance to local outdoor recreation projects that advance outdoor economy goals.
- Providing matching funds to projects that improve access to outdoor recreation offerings in proximity to the County’s hamlets and downtown areas.
- Providing matching funds to projects that improve public access to the County’s waterbodies.

Lastly, the County should support the advancement of six regional outdoor economy projects and initiatives that are well-positioned to sustain and enhance outdoor recreation offerings:

- Sustaining recreational access along the Hudson River using the County-owned railroad corridor.
- Enhancing the Gurney Lane-area trail system.
- Connecting the North Creek hamlet to nearby outdoor recreation amenities.
- Establishing and enhancing the lower Schroon River recreation corridor.
- Improving multi-use trail connectivity in southern Warren County.
- Maintaining and enhancing the Warren County Fish Hatchery.

Lake George

PLANNING PROCESS

1. RESEARCH & ANALYSIS

2. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

3. VISIONING & GOAL SETTING

4. STRATEGIC PLANNING

5. FINAL PLAN

From summer 2023 to winter 2025, the Warren County Planning Department led a detailed and collaborative planning process to develop the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan*. A nine-member Project Advisory Committee, consisting of community and business leaders across the County, provided critical project oversight and strategic direction.

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Outdoor recreation asset inventory.
- Outdoor recreation business inventory.
- Two-day "Grand Tour" site visit.
- Review and synthesis of existing plans, policies, studies, and projects.
- Preparation of *Outdoor Recreation Economy Research Report* (see Appendix A).

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Online resident survey (776 responses).
- Nine-member Project Advisory Committee.
- *Comprehensive Plan* Open House Event.
- Eight focus group meetings with over 50 County stakeholders and industry professionals, plus additional follow-up meetings.

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Preparation of a four-part Vision Statement and a comprehensive set of outdoor economy goals to guide strategic planning.

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Development of 27 Action Areas, policies for County support and investment in the outdoor economy, and six key outdoor economy projects and initiatives.

KEY ACTIVITIES:

- Preparation of comprehensive *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* detailing key findings and recommendations.



Sticky note exercise at the *Warren County Comprehensive Plan* Open House, January 2024.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY OVERVIEW

Defining Outdoor Recreation

There is not a standard, universal definition of outdoor recreation. Generally, outdoor recreation refers to recreational activities that are undertaken for pleasure in nature-based settings, often involving some level of physical exertion.

The *Warren County Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* focuses on recreational activities that are trail-based (e.g., hiking, mountain biking, horseback), water-based (e.g., canoeing, motorized boating, fishing), and/or snow-based (e.g., skiing, snowmobiling), as well as other recreational activities that primarily occur in a nature-based setting (e.g., road biking, hunting). This can also include competitive activities, such as trail running races, but does not include more traditional team sports (e.g., soccer).

Defining The Outdoor Economy

Broadly, the concept of an “outdoor economy” speaks to the influence that outdoor recreation activity has on economic activity in a given area. More practically, an outdoor economy can be thought of as the linkages between three key pillars: INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS, BUSINESSES, and COMMUNITIES.

PILLAR #1: INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS both public and private, offer various outdoor recreation experiences for residents and visitors. ASSETS are the natural features and landscapes that host outdoor recreation (e.g., mountains, lakes, rivers, forests, ponds), while INFRASTRUCTURE is the means by which recreationalists access and engage with assets (e.g., trails and trailheads, boat launches, campgrounds, beaches, chairlifts). See *pages 9 - 11 for a detailed overview of outdoor recreation infrastructure and assets in Warren County.*

PILLAR #2: BUSINESSES are where dollars associated with outdoor recreation activity and travel are received. “Core” outdoor recreation businesses are directly involved in the sale of outdoor recreation goods, services, and/or experiences (e.g., retail stores, gear manufacturers, guide services, marinas). In some cases, assets are also businesses (e.g., campgrounds). This category also includes other businesses that benefit directly from outdoor recreation activity and travel, such as food and beverage establishments, hotels and motels, and general stores. See *pages 12 - 14 for a detailed overview of outdoor recreation businesses in Warren County.*

PILLAR #3 COMMUNITIES includes local and regional governments, non-profit organizations, and volunteers. Of particular interest in Warren County is the role that outdoor recreation can play in encouraging residents to stay or move to the County, which can impact the ability of businesses to recruit and retain their workforce and encourage young families to stay or locate in the County in response to long-term aging trends. These linkages are not easily quantified using numbers but are important for communities to explore as they provide critical infrastructure, services, and support for outdoor recreation experiences and businesses. This also includes residents, employers, and other local institutions that benefit from the quality of life afforded by outdoor recreation amenities. See *pages 15 - 18 for a detailed overview of the relationship between communities and outdoor recreation in Warren County.*

An Established & Growing Economic Sector Nationwide

Nationally, the outdoor economy is tracked by the US Bureau of Economic Analysis via the Outdoor Recreation Satellite Account (ORSA). According to ORSA data, outdoor recreation was a \$33.9 billion industry in New York State in 2023, accounting for 247,330 jobs.

There is a growing recognition of the scope and impact of the outdoor economy nationwide, and this is translating into policy and investment at different levels of government. There are now 24 states that have created state government offices dedicated specifically to outdoor recreation, all in the last 11 years. The specific duties of these offices vary, but they are all generally focused on growing outdoor recreation to support economic development and quality of life.

Examples of recent outdoor economy policy development and investment from around the Northeast include:

- **New York State Environmental Bond Act (2022):** this landmark environmental bond sets aside \$650 million for investments in open space and recreation statewide. In the 2023 - 2024 fiscal year, \$85 million in Bond Act funds supported the creation of a new State Park and the completion of the Adirondack Rail Trail.
- **New York Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (2020):** this plan, updated every five years, establishes statewide priorities for investment in outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure through the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund. This funding source was made permanent through the Great American Outdoors Act of 2020.
- **Maine Trails Bond (2024):** in fall 2024, voters approved \$30 million bond for trail design, construction, and maintenance - a first in Maine's history.

- **Vermont Outdoor Recreation Economic Collaborative (VOREC):** VOREC is a public/private consortium of outdoor economy partners, established in 2017. Through competitive grants, VOREC awarded \$6.3 million to municipalities and non-profits in 2024, up from \$4.5 million in 2022.
- **New Hampshire Office of Outdoor Recreation Industry Development (ORID):** established in 2021, ORID coordinates outdoor recreation policy, promotion, and economic development with the state's Department of Business and Economic Affairs.

These projects and investments demonstrate significant momentum around the outdoor economy and represent increased competitiveness in an area in which Warren County has long relied and held a competitive advantage. The time is now for the County, municipalities, and partners to position themselves for long-term success and investment. The *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* includes key insights, goals, and actions that Warren County government and its partners should use to sustain and enhance the outdoor economy for the long-term benefit of County residents and businesses.



Photo courtesy Warren County EDC

INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

KEY FINDINGS:

Impressive year-round outdoor recreation offerings:

You can just about do it all in Warren County, with multiple downhill and Nordic ski areas, hundreds of miles of hiking and mountain biking trails, dozens of lakes and streams, and hundreds of thousands of acres of conserved land. Few individual counties in the Northeast can lay claim to a similar array of outdoor recreation assets and supporting landscapes.

Thanks to the County's excellent outdoor recreation assets, County residents are active participants in outdoor recreation. During the County's 2023 Comprehensive Plan survey, 93% of resident respondents indicated that they participate in outdoor recreation. According to survey results, residents are largely satisfied with the availability and quality of outdoor recreation activities in the County. The most popular activities amongst resident respondents were hiking (85% participate at least 1-2x/season), flatwater paddling (70%), motorized boating (53%), road/gravel biking (48%), fishing (46%), and downhill skiing (39%).

Diversity & accessibility of outdoor recreation activities - with room for improvement:

Overall, Warren County generally offers a wide spectrum of outdoor recreation experiences suitable for different ability levels. For true beginner recreationalists (or those with mobility limitations), experiencing the Lake George Lakefront Walkway or riding in a rail bike along the Hudson River can offer a memorable and invigorating experience, while more experienced recreationalists can adventure to remote and challenging summits and trails, like Peaked Mountain in North River or the Brant Lake Bike Park.



◀ 3 downhill ski areas and 5 groomed Nordic ski trail networks

▶ Over 270 miles of publicly accessible natural surface trail where hiking is permitted

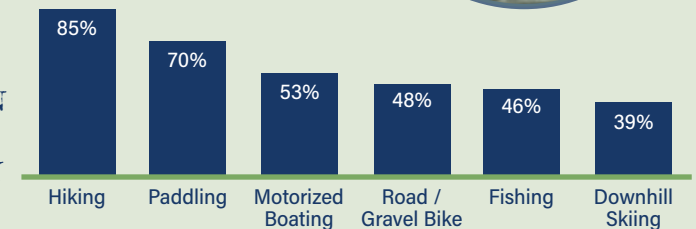


◀ Seven cross-country mountain bike trail networks and over 220 miles of snowmobile trails

▶ 42 water bodies over 40 acres in size, two major navigable rivers, and over 200,000 acres of state-managed public lands



MOST POPULAR OUTDOOR RECREATION ACTIVITIES FOR COUNTY RESIDENTS



INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

KEY FINDINGS (continued):

However, there is still room for improving the accessibility and comfort of outdoor recreation amenities to residents and visitors of varying ability levels. Outdoor recreation stakeholders across the county note increasing participation in outdoor recreation by older residents, as well as an increase in visitors of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, particularly in the Lake George area, with corresponding needs for improved programs, education, transportation services, and visitor experience training that would complement more accessible recreational trails and facilities.

While Warren County is blessed with water resources, there is limited public access to certain waterbodies, with some larger waterbodies having only a single public access point and a handful having no public access or poorly-maintain boat launches. Additionally, some “legacy” recreational trails in the County are challenged by outdated trail layouts and insufficient trailhead facilities, resulting in challenging gradients and surfaces along certain trails and safety and parking challenges at certain trailheads.

There is interest, need, and opportunity to improve the diversity and accessibility of bicycling in the County as well. This includes enhancing and expanding opportunities for low-stress road biking, particularly where separated bike paths (or wider road shoulders where paths are infeasible) can provide safe and comfortable connections between residential areas or tourist accommodations and recreational destinations, or where quiet byways and gravel roads can offer a pleasant touring experience.



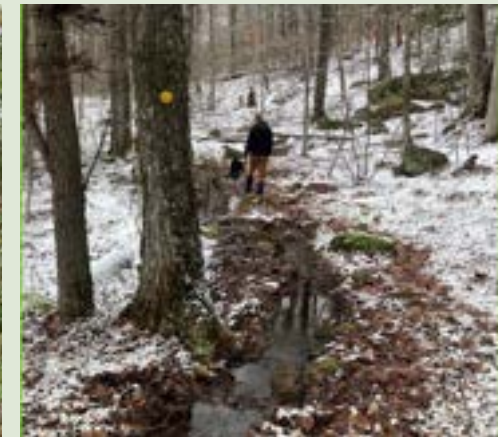
The Feeder Canal Trail in Glens Falls provides a beginner-friendly trail surface.



Hikers using the Clay Meadow Trail in the Tongue Mountain Range must walk along busy NY Route 9N.



This lower Schroon River access point includes a kayak slide for improved access, but is in need of routine maintenance.



Legacy hiking trails, such as this trail in the Siamese Ponds Wilderness, often lack proper design, leading to drainage issues.

INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

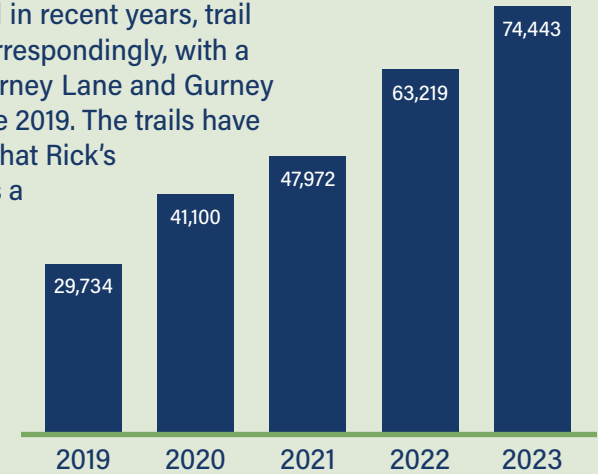
KEY FINDINGS (continued):

There has also been significant work and advocacy around expanding mountain biking offerings, including more beginner-friendly trails as well as more advanced trails that can be a draw for experienced riders. While there are notable mountain bike trail networks in southern Warren County (Gurney Lane, Rush Pond, West Mountain) and in far northern Warren County (North Creek Ski Bowl, Garnet Hill Outdoor Center, Brant Lake Bike Park, Gore Mountain), there are few trails where mountain biking is permitted in central areas of the County.



Part bike shop, part trailhead, and part bar and cafe, The Hub in Brant Lake is the also the access point for the Brant Lake Bike Park.

Queensbury is home to a growing network of multi-purpose trails that are primarily used by mountain bikers. As the trail system has expanded and improved in recent years, trail usage has increased correspondingly, with a 153% increase to the Gurney Lane and Gurney South trail systems since 2019. The trails have grown popular enough that Rick's Bike Shop now operates a bike rental outpost at the trailhead.



Total visits to Gurney Lane & Gurney Lane South Trail Systems, 2019 - 2023





BUSINESSES

KEY FINDINGS:

A strong core of private businesses supports recreation:

At least 160 private businesses in Warren County are directly involved in the sale of outdoor recreation goods, services, and/or experiences. This includes at least 71 businesses involved in the sale of outdoor recreation goods and services (e.g., retail sales, gear repair) and 89 businesses providing outdoor recreation experiences (e.g., guides, campgrounds, boat rentals, ski areas). The wide array of outdoor recreation activities that these businesses cater to speaks to the diversity of recreational offerings available in Warren County and the surrounding region.

A robust outdoor recreation tourism economy - with some needs:

In 2022, tourism spending supported 5,866 direct jobs in Warren County, accounting for one in six jobs in the County (16.4%). Including indirect and induced economic impacts, the tourism industry supported 8,174 jobs in the County (22.4% of all jobs).

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY IN WARREN COUNTY ACCOUNTS FOR...



5,866

Direct jobs

16.4%
of all jobs



\$859 Million

In annual visitor spending

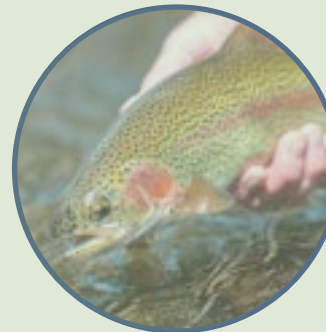
WARREN COUNTY'S OUTDOOR RECREATION PROVIDER BUSINESSES INCLUDE..

33 privately-operated campgrounds and RV parks



30 businesses offering motorized boat rentals

16 sleepaway summer camps (12 privately-operated, 4 non profit)



12 fishing guide/charter services

10 whitewater rafting guide companies operating on the Hudson River





BUSINESSES

KEY FINDINGS (continued):

Recent studies of tourism in Warren County suggest that outdoor recreation plays a major role in attracting tourists and generating visitor spending. The 2022 *Warren County Tourism Study* conducted by Hunden Strategic Partners identifies the primary tourism activity nodes in County, most of which involve outdoor recreation. Key outdoor recreation activities and assets identified in this study included:

- Gore Mountain
- West Mountain
- Lake George cruises
- Lake George beaches
- Revolution Rail Company
- Whitewater rafting
- Multiple aerial adventure parks
- Mountain biking
- Snowmobiling

The 2022 study also highlights some of the community tourism hubs in Warren County and notes their connection to outdoor recreation activities:

- Lake George Village: waterfront path, beaches, parks, cruises.
- Bolton Landing: beaches, water activity rentals, island camping, fishing, hiking.
- Warrensburg: multitude of outdoor recreation activities including hiking, skiing, fishing, and snowmobiling.

While outdoor recreation tourism is a well-established contributor to Warren County's economy, prior studies and tourism industry stakeholders note some challenges (see right panel).

WARREN COUNTY'S OUTDOOR RECREATION TOURISM INDUSTRY ADVANTAGES AND CHALLENGES...

TOURISM ADVANTAGES

- Diversity and quality of outdoor recreation assets.
- Proximity and ease of access from major metro areas (Albany, NYC, New Jersey).
- Seasonal workforce synergies between summer and winter destinations.
- Proximity of hamlet/downtown areas to outdoor recreation amenities.
- Presence of SUNY Adirondack, offering a two-year Outdoor Education associates degree program that prepares students for careers in outdoor recreation, such as guiding.

TOURISM CHALLENGES

- Lack of a consolidated and centralized information source on outdoor recreation activities, leading to inconsistent, incomplete, and/or incorrect information being provided to visitors.
- Limited overnight accommodations in certain areas, particularly in northern Warren County.
- Lack of a consistent brand to help promote the full spectrum of outdoor recreation experiences in the County.
- Lack of training and experience for welcoming visitors of diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds.
- High insurance costs for outdoor recreation providers.
- Poor cell phone coverage discourages visitor exploration.
- Inconsistent weather reporting leading to last-minute visitor cancellations.
- Trend towards shorter visitor stays and last-minute trip planning.



BUSINESSES

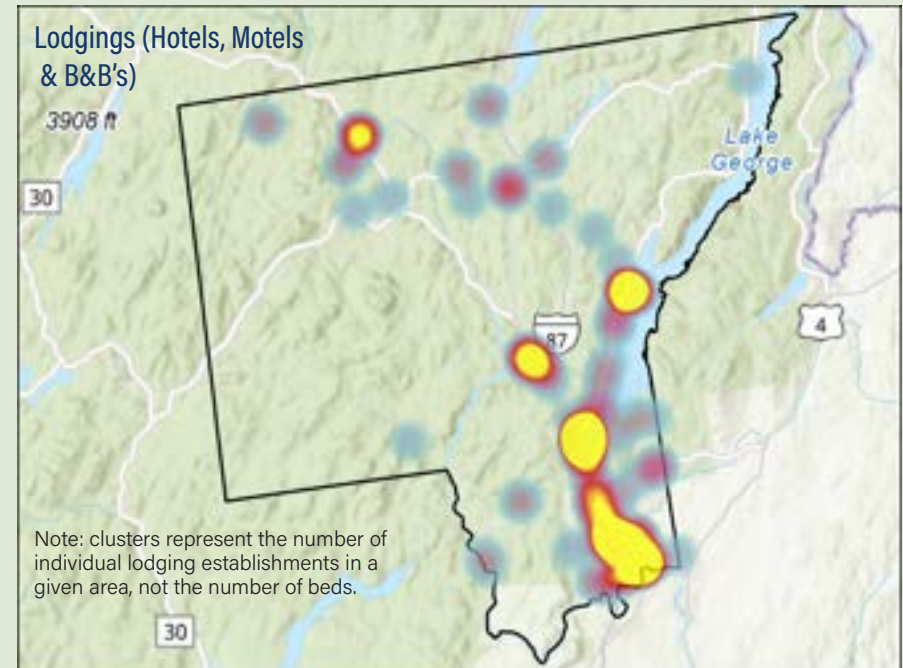
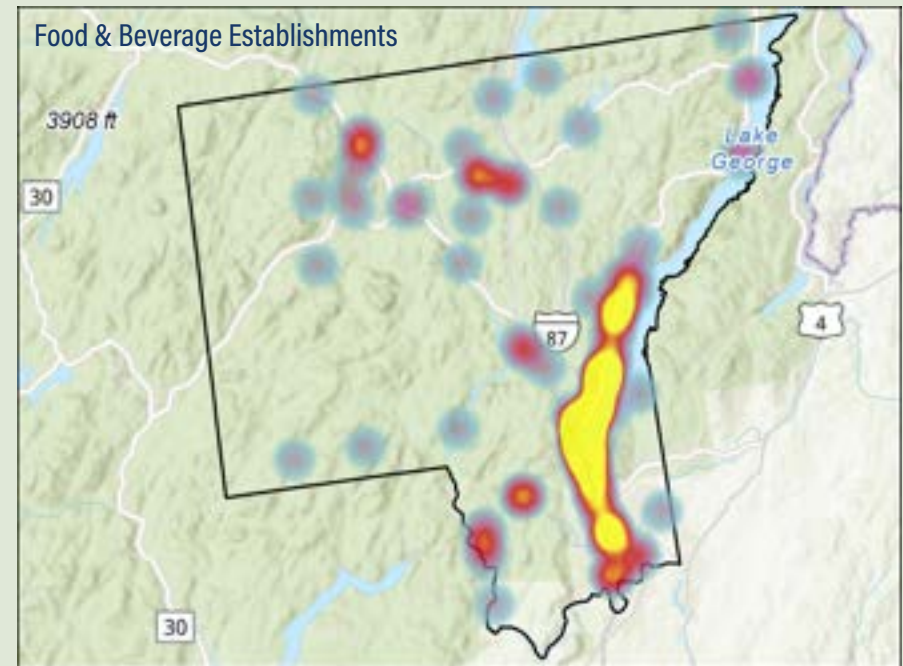
KEY FINDINGS (continued):

In addition to the overall County tourism industry, there has been significant study of the hotel and motel sector in Warren County. Overnight accommodations are of particular importance to the outdoor recreation economy, as overnight visitation typically results in significantly higher visitor spending. Key trends and insights on the state of hotels and motels in Warren County include:

- While there is a robust stock of hotels and motels overall (140 hotels with 6,843 rooms, as of 2019), most hotels are clustered in the southern part of the County, with limited options for overnight accommodations in northern Warren County, particularly around Gore Mountain/North Creek.¹
- There are dramatic swings in hotel and motel occupancy, with over 80% occupancy in August and 30% occupancy in January – a comparable seasonal swing to Cape Cod.¹
- There are many older motels that are in need of investment to upgrade facilities and infrastructure. However, motel owners are struggling to access needed capital or solicit buyers. High land values, conversions to private residences, and proliferation of short-term rentals (STRs) are additional challenges for reinvestment in motels in the County. This has important implications for the availability of affordable overnight accommodations in the County, although this may be somewhat offset by lower-priced STRs.

¹The State of the Warren County Tourism Industry. Presentation by STR, Inc., October 2019.

MAPPING THE HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY IN WARREN COUNTY...



COMMUNITIES

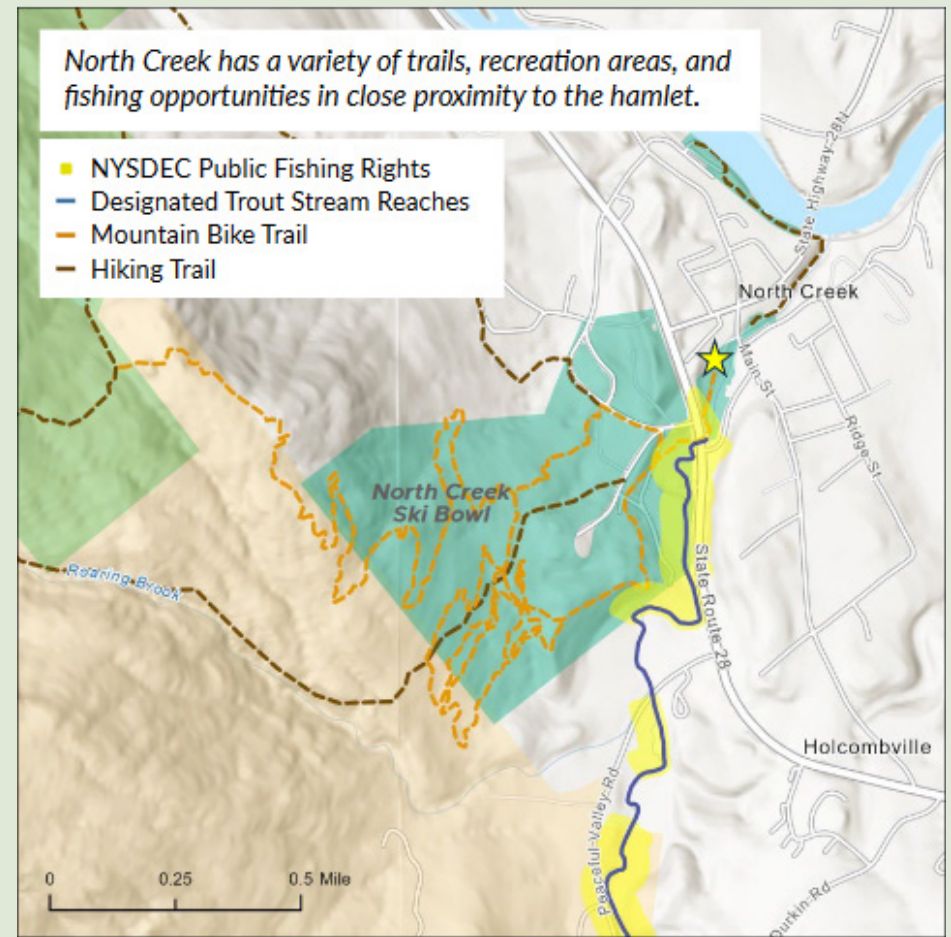
KEY FINDINGS:

Economic connections to outdoor recreation assets:

Outdoor recreation opportunities abound in Warren County. Notably, many of the County's premier outdoor recreation assets – lakes, rivers, trails, mountains - are located in close proximity to local hamlets and downtown areas, which serve as economic hubs for communities and the County.

In some instances, these assets are well-connected to hamlets and advertised with wayfinding signage, which helps residents and visitors alike find and access recreation opportunities. For example, Shepard Park and the Lake George Waterfront Walkway provide an accessible, well-advertised connection from Lake George Village to the adjacent lakefront. In other cases, hamlets may be missing out on economic and quality of life benefits when nearby outdoor recreation amenities lack convenient pedestrian access or proper wayfinding signage.

Municipal planning documents codify the importance of outdoor recreation to local economies and resident quality of life as official local policy in Warren County. Nine of Warren County's eleven municipalities have adopted community plans that emphasize the importance of the local outdoor economy. This includes town-wide comprehensive plans as well as other community planning efforts. These plans identify a variety of strategies, initiatives, and capital projects for enhancing outdoor recreation to deliver economic and community benefit, including new connector trails, improved water access, wayfinding signage for recreational amenities near hamlets, and partnerships and funding for long-term stewardship of recreational assets. For example, the 2015 *Chester Townwide Recreation Plan* describes itself as "an economic development initiative that taps outdoor recreation and heritage tourism strategies" and goes on to identify 35 capital projects to expand, enhance, and connect recreational trails, parks, water access points, and natural areas.



The Carol Thomas Trail in North Creek provides a useful connection from Main Street to Ski Bowl Park, connecting residents and visitors with outdoor recreation amenities in close proximity to local eateries and retailers. This trail could be better activated for residents and visitors, who must walk down a long driveway and parking area to get to the trail and informational kiosk.

COMMUNITIES

KEY FINDINGS (continued):

There is significant alignment between the outdoor economy goals and objectives codified in these local plans. Many communities want, and are striving for, similar outcomes – improved outdoor recreation offerings for residents and visitors and securing quality of life and economic benefits from those outdoor recreation offerings.

There is also strong alignment between these local plans and County-level planning for the outdoor economy, such as the *First Wilderness Corridor*, Warren County's intermunicipal plan for community development in the upper Hudson River Corridor. A key focus of the *First Wilderness Corridor* is trails and trail connections, both within and between communities, park improvements, and wayfinding signage. The 2019 *Final Layout of the First Wilderness Trail* presents a proposed trail alignment following the Hudson River between Corinth and Tahawus, linking hamlets to outdoor recreation offerings along the river corridor. All of this planning work speaks to a need and opportunity for strategic alignment in Warren County to support and enhance the outdoor economy.

A patchwork of outdoor recreation stewards and supportive organizations:

A variety of community organizations support the outdoor recreation economy through trail maintenance, organizing events and programs, conserving and stewarding land, and other activities. While the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) maintains significant recreational trails and amenities across over 200,000 acres of state lands, many other organizations provide support to NYSDEC and steward recreation opportunities on other publicly accessible lands.

Local and regional economic development organizations provide critical support to the outdoor economy as well, with services ranging from tourism promotion to tax incentives for business development.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT ORGANIZATIONS FOR WARREN COUNTY'S OUTDOOR ECONOMY INCLUDE...

5 volunteer trail stewardship organizations



2 non-profit land conservancies



6 fish and game clubs



At least 6 outdoor recreation outing clubs



COMMUNITIES

KEY FINDINGS (continued):

In addition to community organizations, local and regional governments have taken an active role in supporting outdoor recreation. Some examples of recent initiatives include:

- The Town of Chester has worked to promote local hiking opportunities in the vicinity of Chestertown through the Chester Challenge, which awards a ceremonial pin to anyone who completes a list of six hikes in a single summer, and is working with the Upper Hudson Trails Alliance to expand mountain biking and Nordic skiing trails at the Dynamite Hill Recreation Area.
- The Town of Queensbury has actively supported the development of mountain bike trails at Gurney Lane Recreation Area amongst a variety of other outdoor recreation initiatives.
- The Town of Johnsbury has been studying opportunities to enhance Ski Bowl Park and enhance the connectivity of the park to downtown North Creek.

This patchwork of organizations and governments plays a critical role in supporting outdoor recreation in Warren County but also contributes to an outdoor recreation ecosystem where communities and organizations often operate in silos, may struggle with securing needed resources and organizational capacity, and often need to figure things out for themselves. As noted above, outdoor recreation assets can feel disconnected from nearby communities – there may not be awareness of these proximate recreation assets due to lack of signage, poor pedestrian and bicycle access, or lack of community programming and promotion. These challenges speak to an overall lack of centralized support for the outdoor recreation economy, whether in the form of financial support for maintaining trails and outdoor recreation infrastructure or capacity-building services that offer guidance and technical assistance.

LINKING COMMUNITIES TO OUTDOOR RECREATION...



ABOVE: Logo for the Chester Challenge.

LEFT: Conceptual plan for connecting Ski Bowl Park to North Creek's Main Street from the 2020 North Creek/Ski Bowl Connectivity Study.

COMMUNITIES

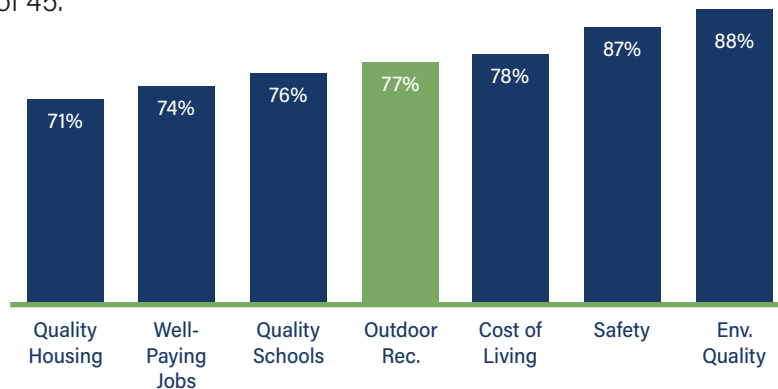
KEY FINDINGS (continued):

Responses to a County-wide survey conducted in fall 2023/winter 2024 indicate that outdoor recreation is a significant factor in encouraging residents to reside and remain in Warren County, particularly for younger residents:

- Participation in outdoor recreation is very high in Warren County. Nearly all resident respondents (93%) participate in outdoor recreation activities in the summer, including 96% of residents under the age of 45. Over three-quarters (77%) of resident respondents participate in outdoor recreation activities in the winter, including 88% of residents under the age of 45.
- Residents indicate that outdoor recreation is very important to their quality of life in Warren County and that outdoor recreation is of similar importance to other key quality of life factors, such as cost of living, schools, wages, and housing. Over three-quarters of survey respondents (77%) indicated that outdoor recreation is “very important” to their quality of life, including 79% of respondents under the age of 45.



TOP QUALITY OF LIFE FACTORS FOR WARREN COUNTY RESIDENTS



Bolton Landing

OUTDOOR ECONOMY VISION & GOALS

WORKING TOWARDS A VIBRANT OUTDOOR ECONOMY

Warren County has an opportunity and mandate to grow and sustain the outdoor economy for the benefit of County residents. The following pages include **vision statements** and **goals** articulating desired future outcomes for the outdoor economy. To achieve these outcomes, the Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan includes a comprehensive set of **actions** on starting page 23.

THE FOUR-PART VISION:

- 1** Warren County supports thriving, multi-generational communities by offering a diverse range of outdoor recreation activities for residents.
- 2** Warren County sustains and enhances its tourism economy by delivering exceptional multi-season outdoor recreation experiences and activating economic connections between communities and outdoor recreation activities.
- 3** The outdoor recreation economy enhances quality of life and benefits the Warren County business community by improving business recruitment and employee retention.
- 4** Residents and visitors of different backgrounds and ability levels all have safe, convenient, and comfortable access to outdoor recreation experiences in Warren County.



OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS



INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

GOAL #	DESCRIPTION	OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREA(S)
1	Warren County residents and visitors of all ages and ability levels have safe and convenient access to a variety of outdoor recreation experiences.	1, 2, 3, 12, 26
2	Recreational trails in Warren County are designed and maintained to a high standard of quality.	4, 5, 6, 12
3	Trailheads in Warren County are well-designed and maintained to be inviting, accessible, safe, and informative.	7, 12
4	Public access to Warren County's many waterbodies is safe, convenient, and accessible.	8, 9, 12
5	Warren County is home to safe, convenient, and comfortable bicycling options.	10, 11, 12
6	Warren County elevates its profile as a mountain biking destination while maintaining its status as a premier skiing, hiking, and watersports destination.	4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16
7	County-owned recreational facilities are well-maintained and support a variety of recreational activities and programming for different ages and ability levels.	12, 13
8	Recreational facilities are designed and maintained to be resilient to increasing severe precipitation events, variable snowpack, and other climate challenges.	14, 15
9	The natural landscapes and resources that support outdoor recreation are well-conserved and stewarded.	16, 17
10	Enhanced recreation management and stewardship is delivered through coordination between land managers, outdoor recreation providers, and support organizations at the local, regional, and state level.	6, 27

See p. 25 - 41 for Action Area descriptions.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS



COMMUNITIES

GOAL #	DESCRIPTION	OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREA(S)
11	Hamlets and downtown districts see increased community and economic benefit from outdoor recreation activity.	2, 18, 19, 21, 22, 23
12	Warren County's municipalities have the tools to successfully plan for, invest in, and implement enhanced outdoor recreation offerings.	See Core Action #2 & Core Action #3
13	Municipalities and community organizations secure funding to support near-term investment and long-term stewardship of the outdoor economy.	6, 12
14	Warren County's "outdoor recreation culture" remains strong across all generations.	3
15	Towns and hamlets within Warren County are connected and enhanced by its county-wide outdoor recreation identity.	24, 26, 27

See p. 25 - 41 for Action Area descriptions.



BUSINESSES

GOAL #	DESCRIPTION	OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREA(S)
16	Outdoor recreation businesses thrive and attract qualified workforces.	19, 20, 21, 22, 23
17	There are reciprocal benefits between businesses, local economies, and outdoor recreation destinations. Outdoor recreation supports business attraction, retention, and expansion; businesses support outdoor recreation stewardship.	12, 21, 23, 27
18	There is investment in overnight accommodations that improve economic conditions for local communities while supporting the outdoor recreation tourism economy.	18, 22, 23

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS



COMMUNICATION

GOAL #	DESCRIPTION	OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREA(S)
19	Warren County's outdoor recreation assets are well-promoted to residents and visitors alike.	24
20	The scope and impact of the outdoor economy in Warren County is clearly articulated and well-understood by outdoor recreation stakeholders, business owners, and general public audiences.	25, 27

See p. 25 - 41 for Action Area descriptions.



OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

CORE ACTIONS: WARREN COUNTY GOVERNMENT

Warren County government is well-positioned to play a central role in supporting the County's outdoor economy. To guide this work, the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* identifies four CORE ACTIONS that County government will take to sustain and enhance this key economic sector in accordance with plan goals. These actions reflect areas where the County strategically adds capacity, resources, and leadership to complement and support the work of local and regional outdoor recreation partners.



COORDINATION

To be a successful steward of the outdoor economy, Warren County government will need to maintain relationships and communication channels with a variety of outdoor recreation partners. County government is well-positioned to be a central conveyor of outdoor recreation partners and stakeholders. Through coordination, the County can keep its thumb on the pulse of outdoor economy needs and opportunities and lend strategic capacity to issues of regional importance.

Coordination actions that the County should take include:

- Developing an Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan "roadshow", with presentations to municipal boards and other stakeholders and appearances at community events.
- Convening meetings of outdoor economy stakeholder groups, such as business owners and trail organizations.
- Assigning County planning staff to be community liaisons.
- Serving as a liaison to state agencies, such as NYSDEC.
- Coordinating with County economic development partners, including Warren County EDC, Warren-Washington IDA, Lake Champlain-Lake George RPB, and chambers of commerce.



PLANNING & TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

Across Warren County, municipalities, non-profits, and other partners have identified capital project opportunities to enhance outdoor recreation experiences for residents and visitors. Implementing high-quality outdoor recreation infrastructure requires thoughtful planning and design, stakeholder and landowner coordination, and detailed project management. The County should provide necessary capacity to these initiatives, empowering communities to be effective recreation planners. These support services can be further identified and refined through ongoing coordination with outdoor recreation partners (Core Action #1).

Planning & technical assistance actions that the County should take include:

- Comprehensive outdoor recreation and trail system planning.
- Capital project planning, design, and cost estimation.
- Project management.
- Ongoing circuit rider support for local boards and committees.
- Volunteer and board member training.

CORE ACTIONS: WARREN COUNTY GOVERNMENT



INVESTMENT

The outdoor economy is largely supported by publicly-managed infrastructure and assets. High-quality outdoor recreation infrastructure comes with costs, from preliminary design and engineering to final construction and long-term maintenance. For municipally-led initiatives, these expenditures compete against other infrastructure and service needs. While grant funding opportunities can defray some of these costs, identifying and budgeting for the required matching funds can still be a challenge. The County can help address these funding gaps to accelerate needed investments.

Investment actions that the County should take include:

- Providing grant writing support, particularly for larger and more complex grant programs (e.g., Northern Border Regional Commission).
- Developing a matching funds program for qualifying local outdoor recreation projects (see p. 44-47).
- Enhancing and stewarding County-owned recreational infrastructure and facilities.



MANAGEMENT

Outdoor recreation infrastructure and assets require dedicated long-term management, entailing maintenance of infrastructure, stewarding environmental quality of supporting landscapes and habitats, establishing and enforcing rules and regulations, and promoting and programming recreational experiences. To do so effectively requires financial and volunteer resources, coordination, and expertise. In addition to managing County-owned recreational infrastructure and facilities, the County should also assist local outdoor recreation partners manage their portfolios of assets and infrastructure.

Management actions that the County should take include:

- Implementing an asset management system for County-owned recreation infrastructure and facilities.
- Providing trail user counting services.
- Offering support for volunteer training and coordination.
- Ensuring that the Parks and Recreation division of the Department of Public Works is adequately resourced and staffed to carry out its duties.

Creating Capacity to Advance Outdoor Economy Goals & Actions



Implementing the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* will require dedicated staff resources within the Warren County Planning Department and other branches of Warren County government. Identifying a consistent point of contact and “outdoor economy lead” staff person within County government will lend consistency and capacity to plan implementation efforts and needed regional coordination efforts. Warren County should also evaluate the creation of a new, dedicated County staff positioned focused on outdoor recreation and the outdoor economy, seasonal internships to support plan implementation, and/or partnering with a broader regional coalition to fund a regional outdoor recreation coordinator.

COUNTY-WIDE ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREAS are areas of County-wide strategic alignment and advancement that different local and regional outdoor economy partners can help tackle through their ongoing work. For each **ACTION AREA**, the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* identifies how Warren County government can lend support through one or more **CORE ACTIONS**.

ACTION AREA #1:

Provide universally accessible and adaptive equipment-friendly trails.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL:
#1: SAFE & CONVENIENT ACCESS

Warren County currently lacks trails that are universally accessible and/or adaptive equipment-friendly.

- Universally accessible trails are designed, constructed, and maintained to be usable by all residents and visitors (to the maximum extent possible) without using separate infrastructure for people with disabilities. These trails offer an inclusive and welcoming experience and limit common barriers to entry for recreating outdoors.
- Adaptive-equipment friendly trails are designed, constructed, and maintained to be accessible for adaptive recreation equipment, such as adaptive mountain bikes. Adaptive-friendly design considerations include minimum trail widths, avoiding steeper climbs, and provide wider turning radii.



Adaptive mountain biking. *Photo courtesy Vermont Mountain Bike Association.*

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Establish partnerships with adaptive sports organizations.
- Identify opportunities for improving accessibility of existing trails.
- Incorporate accessibility into planning and design for new trails.
- Assess and address accessibility barriers at trailheads.
- Track and highlight accessible trails in Warren County.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #2:

Create seamless recreational experiences by connecting hamlets and residential areas to recreational facilities with trails and paths.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#1: SAFE & CONVENIENT ACCESS
#11: HAMLETS & DOWNTOWNS

The proximity of Warren County's hamlets, downtowns, and residential areas to nearby outdoor recreation destinations is a strong economic asset. Welcoming trailheads, thoughtful wayfinding signage, and convenient trail connections can make these areas into jumping off points for outdoor recreation experiences, providing a quality of life amenity for residents and activating connections to downtown businesses for visitors.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Consider outdoor recreation in local comprehensive planning efforts.
- Obtain pre-engineering consulting on trail connection design and cost.
- Incorporate wayfinding signage, bicycle parking, and other trail amenities.
- Serve as a resource for grant application and administration assistance.

ACTION AREA #3:

Activate outdoor recreation experiences through community programming.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#1: SAFE & CONVENIENT ACCESS
#14: OUTDOOR REC. CULTURE

For residents and visitors who are newer to outdoor recreation, providing an accessible or beginner-friendly trail or recreational facility may not be enough to make them feel comfortable enough to participate in a new outdoor recreation experience. Others may simply not be aware that these outdoor recreation opportunities in their community. Community events and programs can help activate these experiences for residents and visitors alike.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers
- Local Businesses
- Schools & Libraries

Strategies

- Offer and support inclusive community events and programs that encourage new participants, such as beginner-friendly outings, skills clinics, and friendly competitions.

ACTION AREA #4:

Deliver excellent new trail experiences through high-quality design and construction.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL:
#2: TRAIL QUALITY

There is significant interest and momentum around the development of new trails in Warren County, including multi-purpose trails and mountain bike trails. To deliver on the potential of these trails to increase quality of life and benefit communities economically, it is important that new trails be designed and constructed to meet trail user expectations and minimize maintenance needs.

In recent years, there has been increased adoption of trail development standards, such as the International Mountain Bike Association's *Trail Development Guidelines*, that can guide this work.

Core County Actions

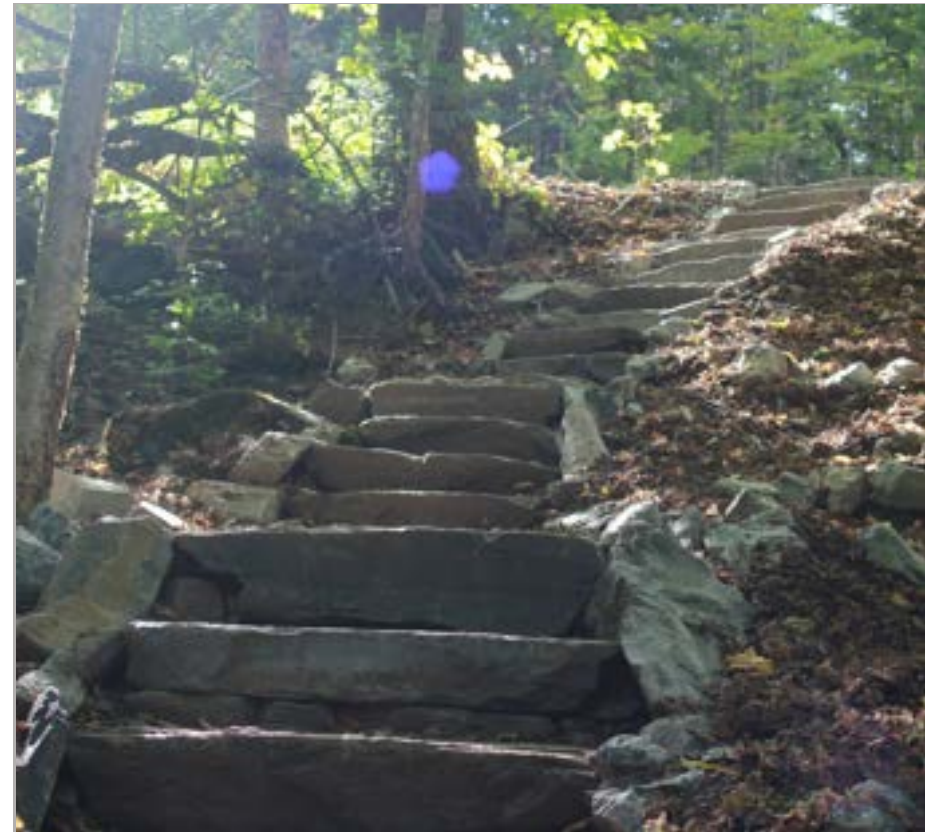


Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Create purpose-built trails that meet a defined need or opportunity (e.g., access to scenic resources, expanding trail system offerings).
- Where possible, upgrade existing trails to enhance user experience.
- Support professionally-led trail design and construction.
- Incorporate climate-resilient trail design principles.
- Undertaken trail system master planning for new trails.



Professionally-built stone stairs provide access to swimming holes along the North Branch Cascades Trail in Vermont. *Photo courtesy of Hermit Woods Trailbuilders.*

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #5:

Maintain trail infrastructure to match intended user ability levels, meet trail user expectations, and remain resilient to climate impacts.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL:
#2: TRAIL QUALITY

Like any other form of infrastructure, trails require dedicated maintenance. Degraded trail quality can diminish trail users' experiences, reduce accessibility, and even result in trail closures. In addition to high-quality initial design and construction, proactive maintenance is critical for sustaining trails amidst increasing usage and climate threats.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Professional trail condition assessments.
- Address areas of poor or challenging trail condition that are inconsistent with trail user expectations and/or desired accessibility.
- Improve drainage and/or armor trail surface in areas with persistent erosion, mud, and/or standing/flowing water.
- Proactively identify trail improvement projects on NYSDEC lands ahead of Unit Management Plan updates.

ACTION AREA #6:

Enhance regional trail stewardship capacity.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS:
#2: MAINTAIN TRAILS
#10: REGIONAL COORDINATION

Trail maintenance in Warren County is supported by a mix of non-profit organizations and government entities, and a significant amount of trail maintenance falls to volunteers. Maintenance activities can involve intense physical labor and require varying levels of skill to coordinate and execute. Building regional capacity for trail stewardship will help ensure that the County's trails are well-cared-for in the long-term.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Promote strategic alignment between trail stewardship organizations for shared needs (e.g., centralized volunteer coordination/training, tool sharing).
- Promote the use of Volunteer Stewardship Agreements for community-support trail stewardship efforts.

ACTION AREA #7:

Support excellent trail user experiences by providing critical amenities and safe access at trailheads.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#3: GREAT TRAILHEADS

Trailheads are the gateways to recreational experiences. A well-designed trailhead safely gets users on to the trail and provides them with the information they need to have a safe and enjoyable experience. At popular trailheads, providing additional amenities, such as bathrooms, picnic areas, and trash receptacles, can further enhance the user experience.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Provide welcoming and safe trailhead amenities and infrastructure.
- Assess and address accessibility barriers at trailheads. Undertake a comprehensive trailhead assessment program to identify accessibility improvement projects and establish a baseline for tracking accessibility improvements.
- Eliminate road gaps between parking areas and trails.
- Prioritize high-use trailheads.
- Proactively identify trailhead improvement projects on NYSDEC lands ahead of Unit Management Plan updates
- Monitor trail user volume at high-demand trailheads.



Recent upgrades to the Potash Mountain Trailhead in Lake Luzerne include an accessible picnic shelter, improved parking area, and other trailhead amenities. *Photo courtesy BusyHiker.*



Inviting and informative trailhead signage in Vermont's Mad River Valley. *Photo courtesy Mad River Valley Planning District.*

ACTION AREA #8:

Provide well-maintained and accessible boat launches and beaches to support quality watersports experiences and limit barriers to access.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#4: WATER ACCESS

Boat launches, including hand launches, docks, and boat ramps, are the entrance points for most water-based recreation. Addressing barriers to access, including accessibility issues, deteriorating infrastructure, and parking, are critical for sustaining water access. River access points can be particularly challenging, with steep terrain and the erosive forces of moving water. Proper design and dedicated maintenance are important steps to ensuring long-term access.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Commission an assessment of public waterbody access infrastructure to identify needed capital upgrades and maintenance priorities for existing water access points and beaches.
- Develop protocol for volunteer stewardship of County-owned boat launches.

ACTION AREA #9:

Expand watersports opportunities by providing additional public access points to waterbodies where public access is currently limited.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#4: WATER ACCESS

One of Warren County's premier outdoor economy assets is its extensive network of lakes, ponds, rivers, and streams. It is critical to ensure that there is permanent public access to these waterbodies. There are some lakes and ponds in the County that currently lack public access, as well as some stretches of larger lakes and rivers with significant gaps between public access points. Public access to Lake George is of particular concern to residents and business owners, with notable gaps between public access locations.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Conduct a community engagement and education process for identifying priority water access needs for new access points.
- Incorporate accessible design standards into new public access points.
- Consider developing a Warren County Water Access umbrella program covering maintenance, volunteer stewardship, water quality, and capital projects for new and existing water access points.

ACTION AREA #10:

Expand and enhance high-quality mountain biking experiences.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#6: ENHANCE M.T.B.

Mountain biking has evolved as a sport over recent decades, with advances in bicycle technology and trail-building standards providing access to a greater range of participant ability levels and expanding the range of mountain bike experiences to be had. Today, participants have higher standards for mountain bike trails, with bikers seeking out purposefully-designed trails including smooth “flow trails” and challenging technical features.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Explore opportunities for mountain bike trail system development in central Warren County.
- Expand the range of trail user experiences at existing trail networks, including adaptive- and beginner-friendly trails as well as advanced and expert-level trails.
- Increase trail stewardship support systems as trail system mileage expands.
- Invest in professionally designed and built trails.
- Support trail system master planning.



Purpose-built flow trail in Vermont. *Photo courtesy Jordan Rowell.*



Beginner-friendly boardwalk trail at Rush Pond in Queensbury.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #11: Provide family-friendly bicycling experiences by improving off-road bicycle path connections between and within neighborhoods, communities and recreation hubs.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#5: SAFE BICYCLING

Providing safe, convenient, and well-connected bicycling paths is critical to opening up bicycling experiences for a greater variety of residents and visitors, as most riders are not comfortable sharing the road with vehicular traffic. Bicycle paths are typically built with paved or smooth crushed stone surface to accommodate all types of bicycles and ideally follow mellow, accessible grades. Great bicycle path networks provide convenient and inviting connections between logical destinations and use wayfinding signage to activate and inform bicyclists.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities

Strategies

- Incorporate outdoor recreation into local comprehensive planning efforts.
- Enhance connectivity to existing bicycle paths (e.g., Warren County Bikeway, Feeder Canal Trail)
- Commission studies of other off-road bike path connections between neighborhoods, hamlets, and recreational destinations.

ACTION AREA #12: Support capital investment in outdoor recreation infrastructure.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#13: INVESTMENT & STEWARDSHIP

Outdoor recreation infrastructure requires thoughtful design and can come with big price tags. The development and maintenance of outdoor recreation should be undertaken in a similar fashion as other public infrastructure, such as roads and sidewalks. Capital project planning that incorporates design, construction, and future capital maintenance projects (e.g., bridge replacement) is important for long-term success.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers
- Warren-Washington IDA

Strategies

- Incorporate outdoor recreation infrastructure needs into comprehensive planning documents and capital improvement plans.
- Build and demonstrate community and business owner support for local outdoor recreation infrastructure projects.
- Evaluate opportunities for alternative fundraising approaches for capital projects, such as crowdfunding and capital campaigns.

ACTION AREA #13:

Sustain and enhance County-owned recreational assets and infrastructure.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS / COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#7: COUNTY-OWNED FACILITIES

Warren County owns and maintains outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure throughout the County. This includes assets and infrastructure that are critical to County tourism, such as the County-owned railroad that is currently leased to Revolution Rail Company for rail biking operations. The County can also evaluate opportunities to enhance or expand its outdoor recreation offerings in collaboration with local partners to address locally-identified outdoor recreation gaps and needs. Dedicated maintenance of County-owned recreational infrastructure and recreational facilities is central to the long-term health of the outdoor economy.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities

Strategies

- Support investment in County assets and infrastructure that play a key role in the tourism economy, such as Up Yonda Farm, the Warren County Fish Hatchery, and the Warren County Bikeway.
- Support and sustain recreational use of the County-owned railroad corridor along the Hudson River.
- Coordinate with municipalities to identify partnership opportunities to enhance local recreation offerings.
- Develop an asset management system for County recreational facilities and infrastructure.
- Develop a formal process for volunteer stewardship of County facilities and infrastructure (e.g., trails, water access).



County-owned Up Yonda Farm offers a variety of outdoor recreation experiences and programming, including a beginner-friendly hike up to an overlook of Lake George. *Photo courtesy Up Yonda Farm.*

ACTION AREA #14:

Support efforts to enhance climate resiliency of ski area operations.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#8: CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Ski resorts and non-profit ski hills alike around the country are taking stock of what it means to operate a ski area in the face of warming temperatures and more variable precipitation. This includes strategies to maintain a consistent base of snow throughout the winter months, as well as evaluating opportunities for enhanced outdoor recreation activities and programming in the summer months to diversify revenue streams.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Ski Areas
- Trail Clubs
- Economic Development Organizations

Strategies

- Invest in multi-season recreation experiences to support year-round operations.
- Continue to invest in snowmaking infrastructure.

ACTION AREA #15:

Support rapid response efforts to address damage to trails and other recreational infrastructure following severe weather events.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#8: CLIMATE RESILIENCY

Severe precipitation events are on the rise in the Northeast, with a 2017 Dartmouth College study identifying a 50% increase in these events in the region during the period from 1996 to 2016 when compared to the earlier 20th century. Strong storms are a threat to trail infrastructure, particularly legacy trails that follow steep grades and lack proper drainage. Trail surface erosion, downed trees, and damage to bridges and culverts are among the most common impacts to trail infrastructure, and high waters can significantly impact water access infrastructure as well.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Explore possible funding and financial management strategies for supporting emergency infrastructure repairs.
- Promote coordination amongst regional trail organizations for mutual support of emergency repairs.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #16:

Maintain pristine water resources to sustain excellent watersports experience and fisheries.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#9: NATURAL LANDSCAPES

Water quality is critical to water-based recreation. Polluted waters harm fisheries, close off swimming opportunities, and reduce the appeal of boating and paddle sports. Warming waters due to climate change, nutrient loading, road salt, runoff, and erosion are all potential threats to water quality that should be monitored and mitigated.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Support efforts to address point source and non-point source water pollution of waterbodies.
- Explore opportunities to develop comprehensive water access and water quality improvement projects.
- Pursue funding from the NYS Environmental Bond Act and other state and federal sources for major water quality projects.
- Continue efforts to limit the spread of aquatic invasive species.
- Conserve and restore thermal refugia for cold-water fish species, such as trout.

ACTION AREA #17:

Maintain balance between recreational access and natural resource conservation.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLAR:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#9: NATURAL LANDSCAPES

Managers of public lands and waterbodies are constantly balancing the dual mandate of providing recreational access and conserving natural resources that sustain both outdoor recreation experiences and critical ecosystems. The ultimate balance depends on a multitude of factors, from the sensitivity of habitats to the economic contribution of recreational opportunities to the capacity of the land manager to implement management tools. Accordingly, visitor use management strategies also vary widely, from passive management (e.g., educational and regulatory signage) to active management (e.g., summit stewards, permit systems, trail reroutes). Finding this balance across the diversity of outdoor recreation landscapes in Warren County will be important for long-term stewardship of the outdoor economy.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

- Follow best practices for trail planning to maintain buffers from critical resources and limit trail density in sensitive habitats.
- Using trail counters and trail stewards, monitor recreational use in high-demand areas so overuse issues can be identified and mitigated.
- Continue efforts to limit the spread of aquatic invasive species.

ACTION AREA #18:

Make hamlets & downtown districts the hubs of outdoor experiences & travel.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:

INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS / BUSINESSES / COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS:

#11: HAMLETS & DOWNTOWNS

Hamlets and downtowns are local and regional economic engines in Warren County. Strategies and investments that position these areas as the jumping off points for outdoor recreation adventures can help drive visitors to patronize local businesses as a seamless part of their recreation experience.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Warren County EDC
- Warren-Washington IDA
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Businesses
- Trail Clubs

Strategies

- Establish physical connections between hamlets/downtowns and nearby recreation offerings, including wayfinding signage.
- Establish and advertise in-town parking options.
- Promote/advertise seamless recreation experiences involving outdoor activities and in-town food, beverage, and accommodations.
- Offer community events that start and end in-town in partnership with local businesses.
- Encourage the development of anchor businesses in hamlets and downtown districts, such as breweries, eateries, and small hotels.
- Promote recreation-friendly business practices, such as posting trail maps, providing bicycle parking, and offering package deals with local outdoor recreation operators and outfitters.



The village of East Burke, VT is the jumping off point for the renowned Kingdom Trails network, which contains over 100 miles of multi-purpose trails for mountain biking, walking, and Nordic skiing. The Kingdom Trail Association (KTA) operates their welcome center in the heart of the village, where there are also multiple trailhead access points. Through recent planning work, KTA has envisioned further integration into East Burke, as visualized above. *Photo from the KTA Network Capacity Study.*

ACTION AREA #19:

Encourage outdoor recreation-friendly business practices.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#11: HAMLETS & DOWNTOWNS
#18: BUSINESS COLLABORATION
#19: BUSINESS SUPPORT

As part of efforts to activate hamlets and downtowns as outdoor recreation hubs, it is critical to bring the local business community into the fold. Even little actions, such as providing bicycle parking or providing trail maps, can make a big difference for encouraging visitors to patronize small businesses.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Warren County EDC
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Businesses

Strategies

- Work with chambers of commerce and business associations to promote recreation-friendly business practices (e.g., bicycle parking, trail maps, frontline staff training, hosting events, aligning business hours with peak travel times).
- Consider developing a County-wide recreation-friendly business program using cross-promotion incentives.
- Promote business sponsorship of trail work days and other volunteer events (financial support, food and beverage donations)

ACTION AREA #20:

Sustain the outdoor economy workforce pipeline.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#17: OUTDOOR BUSINESSES THRIVE

Warren County's outdoor recreation providers encounter many of the same workforce challenges as other businesses, with the added pressures of seasonal operations and requiring niche skills. SUNY Adirondack's Outdoor Education degree program has long supported a local workforce pipeline, with graduates going on to serve as outdoor recreation guides, counselors, and educators in Warren County.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- SUNY Adirondack & other educational institutions
- Warren County Workforce Development
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Businesses

Strategies

- Support and partner with SUNY Adirondack's outdoor education program.
- Explore partnerships with other area colleges and universities with a connection to the Adirondack Park, including SUNY Plattsburgh, SUNY Environmental Science and Forestry, St. Lawrence University, North Country Community College and Paul Smith's College.
- Identify opportunities to incorporate outdoor recreation into STEM education and career and technical programs at local schools.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #21:

Support and sustain outdoor economy entrepreneurship.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#17: OUTDOOR BUSINESSES THRIVE

Private sector outdoor recreation providers are critical for activating and sustaining outdoor recreation experiences for residents and visitors. Entrepreneurs in this space often go into business to follow their passion for outdoor recreation and may lack formal business experience. Access to capital, lack of mentorship opportunities, and high insurance costs are amongst other frequent challenges.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Warren County EDC
- Warren-Washington IDA
- Warren County LDC
- Chambers of Commerce
- Regional Foundations
- Local Businesses

Strategies

- Partner with regional foundations and economic development organizations to evaluate opportunities for outdoor business mentorship, small-scale capital investment for existing businesses, business transition and succession, and other supportive programs.
- Explore and promote market opportunities for small-scale entrepreneurship associated with new or enhanced outdoor recreation infrastructure, such as e-bike rentals for new or expanded trails.
- Ensure that outdoor economy partners, including local businesses, are aware of available support services, grants, and business development incentives.

ACTION AREA #22:

Promote a range of overnight accommodations.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#18: ENHANCE OVERNIGHT STAYS

Overnight accommodations are essential services for supporting economically-impactful outdoor recreation tourism in Warren County. Market dynamics and access to capital investment often complicate efforts to sustain or expand overnight accommodations in rural regions. A balanced approach that considers local needs and market realities across the County is critical to long-term success.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Warren County EDC
- Warren-Washington IDA
- Warren County LDC
- Chambers of Commerce
- Local Businesses

Strategies

- Encourage development of small-scale overnight accommodations in hamlets and downtown districts. Leverage existing tax incentive and economic development programs available through Warren County EDC and Warren-Washington IDA.
- Support development of glamping areas and other less capital-intensive alternatives to brick-and-mortar accommodations, including addressing regulatory barriers for these non-traditional land uses.
- Consider thoughtful regulation of short-term rentals that balances resident housing and tourism economy needs.

ACTION AREA #23:

Leverage the County's outdoor recreation assets and economic development partners to stimulate private sector investment.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:

INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS / BUSINESSES / COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOALS:

#10: REGIONAL COORDINATION / #17: BUSINESSES BENEFIT

Warren County's outdoor recreation offerings are a powerful economic development advantage - one that local and regional economic development organizations are actively capitalizing on to support business attraction, retention, and expansion. These organizations provide tools and services including tax incentives, small business lending and coaching, tourism marketing, administration of state economic development programs, market research, and event management and promotion. Sustained coordination between these entities, Warren County government, municipalities, and private businesses will be critical to maximizing the economic impact of outdoor recreation in the County.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Warren County EDC
- Warren-Washington IDA
- Warren County LDC
- Lake Champlain-Lake George Regional Planning Board
- Chambers of Commerce
- Private Businesses
- Municipalities

Strategies

- Ensure that outdoor economy partners, including local businesses, are aware of available support services and business development incentives.
- Engage economic development organizations during the development of local or regional outdoor recreation plans and projects.
- Coordinate on regional opportunities and strategies to attract new overnight accommodations, particularly in northern Warren County.



YANKEE MARINA: TAX INCENTIVES HELP SECURE PRIVATE INVESTMENT IN A LOCAL OUTDOOR RECREATION BUSINESS

Yankee Marina has been helping residents and visitors get their boats out on Lake George since 1972. After leasing space for boat storage for dozens of years, the company desired to develop their own boat storage facility to expand their business and boat storage capacity. The Warren-Washington Industrial Development Agency (IDA) helped Yankee Marina secure a \$3 million capital investment to develop this project by providing a ten-year, \$250,000 tax incentive package. Once complete, the new facility will store 350 boats and support multiple new employment positions.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY ACTION AREAS

ACTION AREA #24:

Centralized information on outdoor recreation offerings is easily found and delivered to visitors and local audiences.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#19: WELL-PROMOTED

The return on investment in enhanced outdoor recreation experiences in Warren County will be low if residents and visitors are not aware of them. A well-designed and promoted digital platform helps connect residents and visitors alike to outdoor recreation experiences, and can be leveraged to promote coordinated itineraries linking outdoor recreation, local businesses, and overnight stays.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Chambers of Commerce

Strategies

- Facilitate a working group of County outdoor recreation and tourism partners to inform the development of the platform.
- Develop a present a unique “outdoor recreation brand.”
- Emphasize variety of activities available and flexible trip possibilities – “the full Adirondack experience.”
- Promote platform to local audiences and provide information in multiple languages.
- Develop and promote a variety of County-wide visitor itineraries as well as local “hub and spoke” itineraries, (e.g., the Chester Challenge).
- Integrate platform with recreation-friendly business programs by offering cross-promotion.

ACTION AREA #25:

Study and monitor the outdoor economy.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#20: UNDERSTAND ECONOMY

Furthering the depth of understanding of the economic contributions of outdoor recreation in a community or region helps inform future planning and decision-making. Key data points to developing this understanding include the volume of users of a particular outdoor recreation assets and spending patterns associated with outdoor recreation participation and travel. There are limitations to these statistical approaches, which don’t necessarily capture the impact that outdoor recreation has on quality of life or business retention. Ultimately, a blend of quantitative and qualitative approaches is needed to fully articulate the impact of a particular outdoor recreation asset or activity on a community or region.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Chambers of Commerce
- Municipalities
- Trail Groups

Strategies

- The County Planning Department should support the monitoring of trail use around the County, including purchasing a fleet of trail counters and maintaining a centralized trail use data hub.
- Monitor trail/facility use before and after improvement projects.
- Identify and monitor key statistical indicators of the outdoor economy.
- Commission economic impact studies of key outdoor recreation activities.

ACTION AREA #26:

Explore alternative transportation services between communities and recreational hubs.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#1: SAFE & CONVENIENT ACCESS

There are a variety of bus services operating in southern Warren County, including local fixed-route commuter services and charter services to Glens Falls, Lake George, and Warrensburg from a variety of locales along the I-87 corridor. Northern Warren County currently has minimal transportation services - a barrier to access to visitors who arrive in Lake George via bus. Further evaluation of potential destinations and demand for transportation services in northern areas of the County could yield strategic partnerships that unlock a greater variety of experiences for visitors.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Chambers of Commerce
- Public Transit Service Providers

Strategies

- Evaluate the reactivation of public transportation services between Lake George, Warrensburg, and North Creek.
- Explore options for micro-transit or other demand-response services between communities and outdoor recreation hubs.

ACTION AREA #27:

Promote regional collaboration in support of the outdoor economy.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY PILLARS:
INFRASTRUCTURE & ASSETS
BUSINESSES
COMMUNITIES

OUTDOOR ECONOMY GOAL(S):
#1: SAFE & CONVENIENT ACCESS

The outdoor economy spans publicly-managed assets and infrastructure, privately-run businesses, and non-profit stewardship and programming. Outdoor assets (mountain ranges, rivers, forests, lakes) are often not confined to the jurisdiction of a single municipality or land manager. For the mutual benefit of all involved in the outdoor economy, it behooves County partners to identify opportunities to work regionally. Regional coordination promotes strategic alignment, unified voices, and can unlock capacity and partnerships to address shared outdoor economy needs and opportunities.

Core County Actions



Involved Parties

- Warren County
- Municipalities
- Economic Development Organizations
- Private Businesses
- Trail Clubs
- Public Land Managers

Strategies

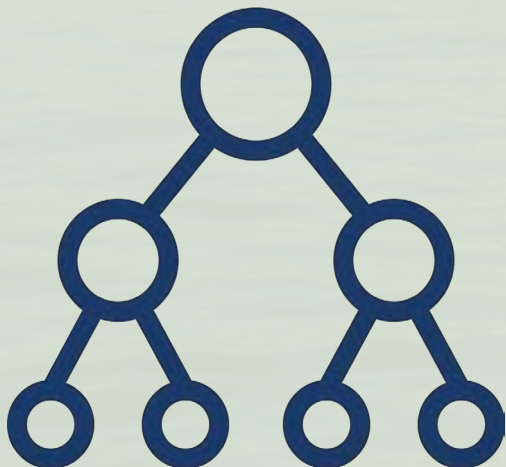
- Position Warren County government as the central convenor and coordinator for the County's outdoor economy through sustained outreach and collaboration.
- Consider developing a County-wide recreation-friendly business program using cross-promotion incentives (see Action Area #25).

OUTDOOR ECONOMY TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE & INVESTMENT PROGRAM

Throughout the process to develop the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan*, there was a clear theme: municipalities and other outdoor economy partners have big dreams for how to enhance outdoor recreation offerings in Warren County but are challenged by competing demands for limited resources. Warren County government is well-positioned to lend strategic capacity to these initiatives and should allocate resources toward local planning, capital project development, and capital project implementation.

The proposed *Outdoor Economy Technical Assistance & Investment Program* includes three key program areas that can guide technical assistance activities and County investments. These programs will need to be further developed, piloted, and refined to deliver maximum impact and return on investment.

- PROGRAM AREA #1: Community Outreach and Technical Assistance
- PROGRAM AREA #2: Downtown and Hamlet Connectivity Investments
- PROGRAM AREA #3: Public Access to Water Investments



BUILDING OFF RECENT COUNTY INVESTMENTS

Warren County government has been increasing its investments in outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure, including financially supporting municipally-led projects. Recent investments include:

- **Dennis L. Dickinson Park at the McPhillips Preserve.** Warren County is contributing \$100,000 in Occupancy Tax funds toward a \$900,000 joint project of the towns of Queensbury and Lake George that will include seven miles of hiking and mountain bike trails and an environmental education center.
- **Mill Creek Recreational Area.** Warren County has allocated \$20,000 to assess possibilities for trail development on this 177-acre property owned by the Town of Johnsbury along Mill Creek and the Hudson River.

PROGRAM AREA #1:

Community Outreach & Technical Assistance

Program Objectives:

- Promote County-wide collaboration and coordination in support of the outdoor economy.
- Build capacity for municipalities to advance outdoor recreation projects and initiatives that result in community and economic benefit.

County Investment Areas:

- Staff time for appearances at local board and committee meetings to share the Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan and associated County support services.
- Staff time for general technical assistance to support local outdoor recreation planning activities.
- Staff time for developing a periodic outdoor economy newsletter.
- Matching funds up to a certain dollar amount to support local outdoor recreation planning efforts that are aligned with that meet Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals.

Eligible Activities for Financial Assistance:

- Hiring of consultants for development of local outdoor recreation plans and/or studies that are aligned with Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals and actions and are focused on broader community and economic benefit.

Eligible Organizations:

- Municipalities
- Non-profit organizations

Planning Process Standards for County Investment:

- Process considers opportunities and needs for a variety of activities and ability levels.
- Process demonstrates commitment to community engagement.
- Process incorporates strategies to leverage outdoor recreation for community and economic benefit (e.g., accessibility, connections to hamlets and local businesses, etc).

Project Prioritization

- Projects that meet the following criteria will be prioritized for County investment above other eligible projects:
 - » Projects that plan for accessible recreation infrastructure.
 - » Projects that are identified in local comprehensive plans, recreation plans/ studies, and/or other local planning documents.
 - » Projects with demonstrated support from the local business community (e.g., letters of support, matching funds donations, etc).

PROGRAM AREA #2:

Downtown & Hamlet Connectivity Investments

Program Objectives:

- Enhance physical connectivity from Main Streets and downtown areas to nearby outdoor recreation assets.
- Enhance outdoor recreation experiences in proximity to Main Streets and downtowns.
- Encourage patronage of Main Street and downtown businesses.

County Investment Areas:

- Staff time for general technical assistance to support project development and financing.
- Support pre-engineering studies for qualified projects that address Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals and actions.
- Create an “Opportunity Fund” to provide grant matching funds up to a certain dollar amount for qualified projects that meet Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals.
- Provide additional matching funds for projects that will result in the creation of accessible infrastructure.

Eligible Organizations:

- Municipalities
- Non-profit organizations

Eligible Project Types:

- Creation of sidewalks, multi-use paths, and/or natural surface trails that provide a safe and convenient linkage from downtowns to outdoor recreation experiences.
- Projects that create accessible facilities will be prioritized.
- Creation of new outdoor recreation infrastructure/experiences that are connected to downtowns using existing infrastructure. Eligible projects include trails, trailheads, water access points, camping areas, and other improvements that advance program objectives.
- Creation of wayfinding systems (e.g., signage, maps, gateway improvements) that activate existing or planned connections from downtowns to proximate outdoor recreation experiences.
- Creation of downtown “trail hubs” or other similar projects that encourage outdoor recreation activities to start and end in downtown areas (e.g., downtown trailheads).
- Projects must be located on publicly-owned land or other lands with permanent public access (e.g., conservation easement lands).

Project Development Standards for County Investment:

- Project follows modern best practices for trail and facility design.
- Project is accessible and enjoyable to a wide range of users.
- Project results in a safe, convenient, and clear linkage between a downtown and nearby outdoor recreation experience.
- Project includes follow-up monitoring and/or benchmarking to track impact of project.

PROGRAM AREA #2:

Downtown & Hamlet Connectivity Investments (continued)

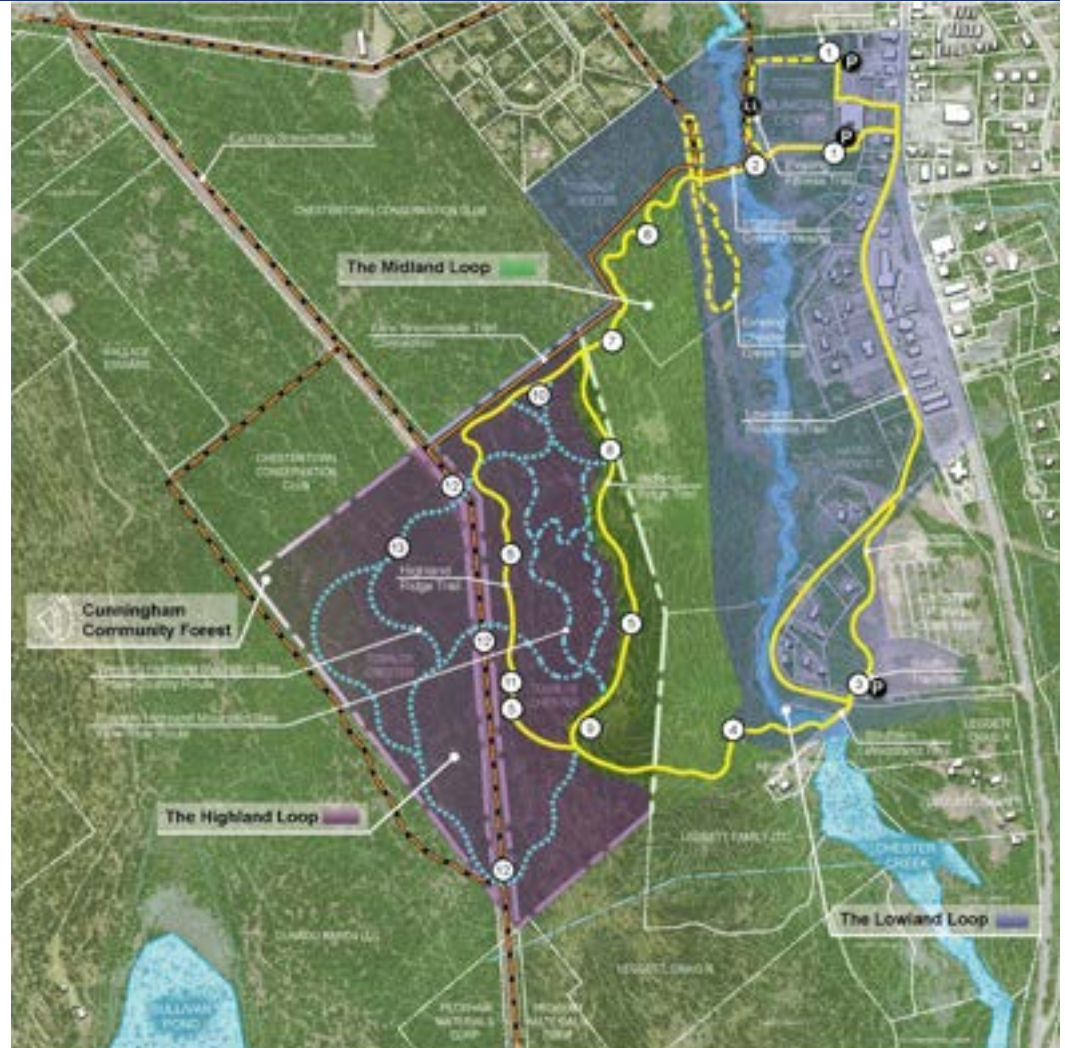
Project Prioritization

- Projects that meet the following criteria will be prioritized for County investment above other eligible projects:
 - » Projects that result in accessible recreation infrastructure.
 - » Projects that are identified in local comprehensive plans, recreation plans/studies, and/or other local planning documents.
 - » Projects with demonstrated support from the local business community (e.g., letters of support, matching funds donations, etc).

Potential Pilot Projects:

The following projects have been identified in municipal comprehensive plans, completed studies, or other local planning documents:

- Chester: Dynamite Hill Multi-Use Path; Cunningham Community Forest Trail/Access Improvements
- Johnsburg: Ski Bowl Park Access Improvements; Riverfront Park Improvements (see p. 54-56).
- Lake Luzerne: Riverside Trail extension to picnic area/ Adirondack Folk School + possible extension to Hadley Bridge; trail along River Rd to Buttermilk Falls
- Warrensburg: Hackensack Mountain Trailhead Improvements



The 2021 *Cunningham Community Forest Master Plan* envisions an integrated trail network connecting Cunningham Community Forest and the Chestertown hamlet.

PROGRAM AREA #3:

Investing in Public Access to Water

Program Objectives:

- Enhance existing water access infrastructure to ensure quality and accessibility.
- Expand public access to water in areas where it is currently limited.
- Ensure safe and convenient river access for white water rafting companies and other paddle sport outfitters.
- Limit potential water quality impacts associated with public access points.

Project Development Standards for County Investment:

- Project follows modern best design practices.
- Project is accessible and enjoyable to a wide range of users.
- Project includes adequate signage and parking facilities.
- Project includes follow-up monitoring and/or benchmarking to track impact of project.
- Project includes measures to limit spread of aquatic invasive species.

Eligible Organizations:

- Municipalities
- Non-profit organizations

County Investment Areas:

- Staff time for general technical assistance to support project development and financing.
- Support pre-engineering studies for qualified projects that address Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals and actions.
- Provide grant matching funds up to a certain dollar amount for qualified projects that meet Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan goals.
 - » Provide additional matching funds for projects that will result in the creation of accessible infrastructure.
- Direct County investment to upgrade and maintain County-owned water access infrastructure.
 - » Development of a volunteer support protocol for volunteer-led maintenance of County infrastructure.

Eligible Project Types:

- Substantial rehabilitation, replacement, and/or enhancement of public water access infrastructure to address defined access deficiencies (e.g., poor infrastructure condition, lack of accessibility, water quality impacts, lack of parking).
 - » Projects that result in accessible facilities will be prioritized.
- Creation of new public water access points, including purchasing of land/easements, site improvements, construction of water access infrastructure and associated amenities (e.g., parking areas, kiosks, benches, fishing piers).
 - » Projects that result in accessible facilities will be prioritized.
- Projects must be located on publicly-owned land or other lands with permanent public access (e.g., conservation easement lands).

PROGRAM AREA #3:

Investing in Public Access to Water (continued)

Project Prioritization:

- Projects that meet the following criteria will be prioritized for County investment above other eligible projects:
 - » Projects that result in accessible recreation infrastructure.
 - » Projects that are identified in local comprehensive plans, recreation plans/studies, and/or other local planning documents.
 - » Projects with demonstrated support from the local business community (e.g., letters of support, matching funds donations, etc).
 - » Projects that are physically connected/in close proximity to hamlet areas.

Potential Pilot Projects:

- Lake Luzerne – new kayak access point/pocket park on Hudson River (identified in municipal comprehensive plan).
- Johnsborg - Riverfront Park improvements (see p. 54-56).
- Individual hand launch locations on the Hudson and/or Schroon River.
- Lower Schoon River Recreation Corridor Improvements (see p. 57).

SARATOGA COUNTY FARMLAND PROTECTION & OPEN SPACE GRANT PROGRAM: A CASE STUDY IN COUNTY MATCHING FUNDS

This program, established by the Saratoga County Board of Supervisors in 2003, is a potential model for Warren County. The Farmland Protection and Open Space Grant Program provides grants to municipalities and non-profits for purposes of farmland and open space preservation. The program was originally established to provide matching funds for applicants to the New York State Farmland Protection Implementation Grant Program (FPIG) and has since expanded to support a greater variety of land acquisition projects. The County awarded over \$600,000 in funds through this program in 2024.

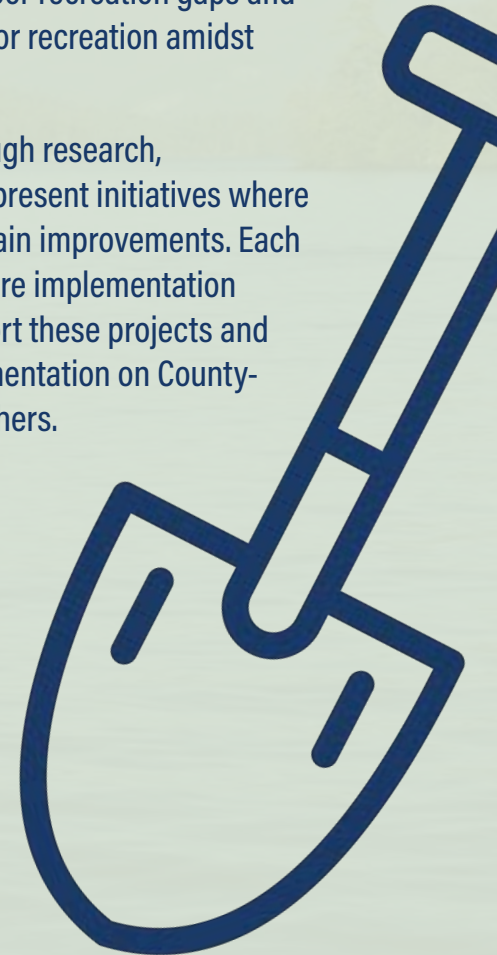


KEY PROJECTS & INITIATIVES TO ADVANCE THE OUTDOOR ECONOMY

Warren County is fortunate to have a strong complement of outdoor recreation assets and infrastructure which have long supported the County's outdoor economy. To further enhance the County's outdoor recreation offerings, the *Outdoor Recreation Economy Strategic Plan* recommends a series of capital projects and initiatives that will sustain and enhance existing outdoor economy assets, address key outdoor recreation gaps and opportunities, and further solidify the County as a leader in outdoor recreation amidst increasing competition from other regions.

These projects and initiatives were identified and prioritized through research, stakeholder consultation, and review of plans and studies, and represent initiatives where there is momentum, interest, and capacity to implement and sustain improvements. Each will require additional planning, coordination, and evaluation before implementation can occur. Warren County government is positioned to lend support these projects and initiatives in different capacities, leading the planning and implementation on County-owned projects while supporting responsible organizations for others.

- #1: Hudson River Recreational Rail Corridor
- #2: Gurney Lane-Area Trail System
- #3: North Creek Hamlet Connectivity
- #4: Schroon River Recreation Corridor
- #5: Warren County Multi-Use Trail Modernization & Connectivity Improvements
- #6: Warren County Fish Hatchery Improvements



HUDSON RIVER RECREATIONAL RAIL CORRIDOR

Background

Warren County owns approximately 40 miles of active rail corridor paralleling the Hudson River between Stony Creek and North Creek. This rail corridor is not actively used for freight or passenger rail service but has become an important outdoor recreation and tourism asset, owing in part to its proximity to the scenic Hudson River.

Portions of this County-owned railroad have been leased to different rail operators over the years, including seasonal tourist train operators and currently Revolution Rail, a rail biking company. Revolution Rail operates popular rail biking tours along the rail corridor in North Creek, Thurman, Stony Creek, and nearby Hadley under a five-year lease agreement with Warren County (2024 - 2028). Revolution Rail serves approximately 50,000 visitors per year through its Warren County operations and has partnered with whitewater rafting outfitters and tour boat companies to offer expanded outdoor recreation itineraries to its guests. North of North Creek, Revolution Rail is the contingent owner of the rail corridor through an agreement with the Open Space Institute and operates rail biking tours out of the County-owned North Creek Depot.

As the owner of this 40-mile stretch of active railroad, Warren County must meet federal standards for maintaining active rail infrastructure. Recently, these costs have ranged from approximately \$100,000 to \$600,000 per year depending on maintenance and capital project needs (e.g., culvert replacement, storm damage). Currently, the County receives \$100,000 annually through the lease agreement with Revolution Rail, as well as sales tax revenues. These revenues help offset maintenance expenditures for the County but do not cover the full costs of rail corridor ownership, with the difference being made up through other County funds.

Warren County is also the owner of four historic rail depots along the rail corridor (North Creek, Riparius, Thurman, and Hadley), which are currently used as bases of operations for Revolution Rail.



This County-owned rail corridor, previously used for passenger and freight rail service, is now providing expanded recreational access along remote and scenic sections of the Hudson River.

OUTDOOR ECONOMY CAPITAL PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

The Vision

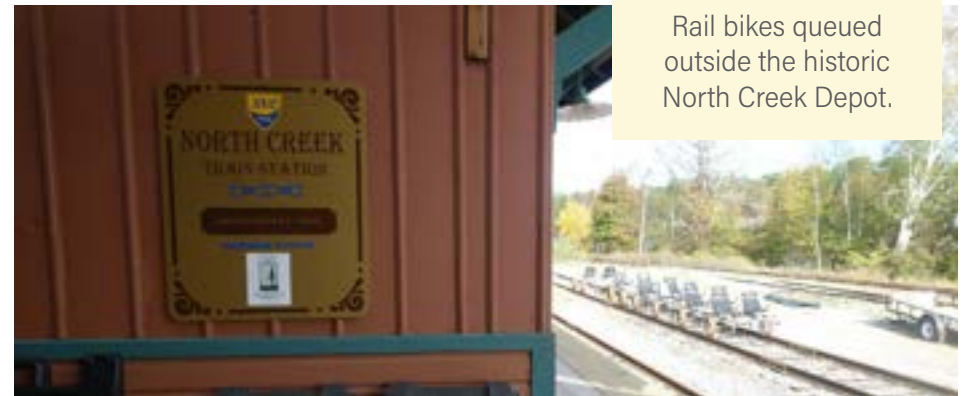
Vision Statement: the rail corridor along the Hudson River in Warren County provides permanent recreational access along this scenic and storied river.

This County-owned railroad corridor is a key regional outdoor recreational asset. Sustaining long-term recreational access along this approximately 40-mile stretch of the Hudson River corridor is a critical priority for Warren County. To achieve this goal, the County should develop a long-term strategy for recreational use of the rail corridor that considers current recreational uses, maintenance and stewardship needs, financial obligations, and adaptation to changes in use or ownership.

This strategy should address the following elements:

- **Current use of the rail corridor.** Rail biking has become a popular outdoor recreation activity for residents and tourists in Warren County and a stable source of revenue for the County. Long-term use of the rail corridor for rail biking necessarily entails the maintenance of railroad infrastructure to active railroad standards. If rail biking is to be sustained as a long-term recreational use along the corridor, the County should explore options for generating additional revenues from the use of the railroad to offset the costs of maintaining railroad infrastructure. The County should also explore possibilities for further use and activation of the County-owned rail depots and associated grounds (in addition to Revolution Rail operations).
- **Major maintenance and capital project needs.** In addition to railroad tracks and ties, the County's maintenance obligations along the railroad corridor include bridges and large culverts. Costs for maintenance, upgrades, and/or replacement of this infrastructure should be factored into long-term planning and decision-making.
- **Ownership of the rail corridor.** If the long-term costs of maintaining rail and/or other recreational infrastructure are determined to be unsustainable for the County, the County should evaluate options to convey the railroad to another entity that will sustain recreational use of the corridor.

- **Alternative uses of the corridor.** Should rail-based recreational operations cease, the County could consider the conversion of the railroad into a rail trail. There would likely be fewer opportunities for revenue generation compared rail infrastructure (if the County were to retain ownership); however; business opportunities such as e-bike tours could be explored and promoted. There are state, federal, and private funding sources that could be pursued to defray capital costs for trail development; traditionally, these funding sources do not fund the maintenance or improvement of rail infrastructure. Additional considerations related to the development of a rail trail include:
 - » **Costs of conversion.** A feasibility study of the rail corridor would need to be conducted to determine project costs. A review of recent rail trail conversion projects suggests that costs could range from \$333,333 to \$2 million per mile. Given that the rail corridor is currently maintained for use by railway operators, capital costs related to conversion may be lower compared to conversion of abandoned/derelict railroads. Salvage value of rail material could help offset capital costs.
 - » **Future maintenance costs.** Data gathered by the Rails-to-Trails Conservancy suggests that annual maintenance costs for a stone dust rail trail can range from \$1,300 to \$2,400 per mile. Long-term capital needs, such as culvert replacements and bridge rehabilitation, will also require budgeting.
 - » **Trail access and amenities.** Planning for the rail corridor conversion would include identifying trail access points and necessary amenities, such as trailhead facilities, rest areas, river access points, and connecting trails.



Rail bikes queued outside the historic North Creek Depot.

GURNEY LANE-AREA TRAIL SYSTEM

Background

The Town of Queensbury is a growing mountain bike destination, featuring the Gurney Lane North and Gurney Lane South/Rush Pond trail networks. Collectively, these networks offer over 20 miles of professionally built multi-purpose trails, with a focus on mountain biking. These trails are mostly oriented towards beginner and intermediate riders. The Town of Queensbury is the owner of these trails and has invested significantly in the development and ongoing maintenance of over 20 miles of high-quality trail infrastructure.

Both trail networks are easily accessible from nearby residential areas as well as Interstate 87. Trail counter data collected by the Town of Queensbury has shown a consistent increase in use as the trail networks have expanded in recent years, with a 150% increase in trail use from 2019 to 2023 (see p. 11). There were nearly 75,000 visits to these trails in 2023 - high enough to support a privately-operated bike rental service at the Gurney Lane North trailhead.

The Gurney Lane-area trails are also becoming a venue for mountain bike events, such as the Churney Gurney (part of the New York State Mountain Bike Series) and the Gurney Lane Fat Tire Bike Race.

With the growing popularity of these trails, there has been strong support from residents, trail users, and business owners for sustaining the existing the Gurney Lane-area trails to benefit the surrounding communities and economy. There is also interest in exploring potential trail system improvements to support further economic and community benefits.

The Vision

Vision Statement: the Gurney Lane-area trails provide a high-quality, well-maintained trail experience to a full spectrum of trail users with different ability levels. The popularity of the trails benefits local businesses, attracts events, and supports quality of life for residents. The trail system is well-connected to nearby communities.

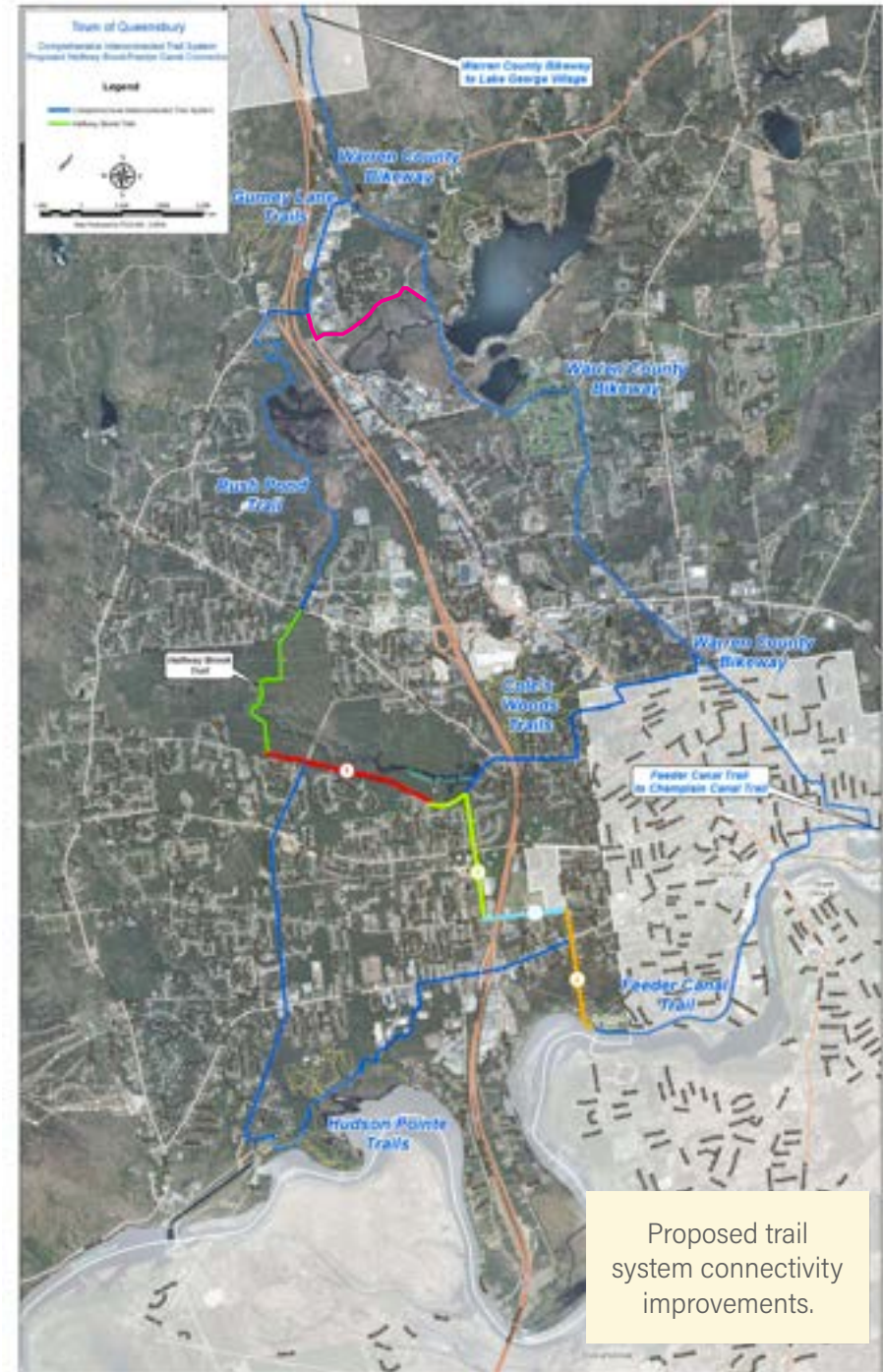
The Gurney Lane-area trails are already well-positioned as a key outdoor economy asset, with room to grow. Continuing to maintain high-quality trails, improving trail accessibility, and exploring options for trail system expansion are key needs and opportunities for expanding the community and economic benefits of these trails.



The Gurney Lane area already has over 20 miles of primarily beginner and intermediate multi-use trails, as well as on-site mountain bike rentals.

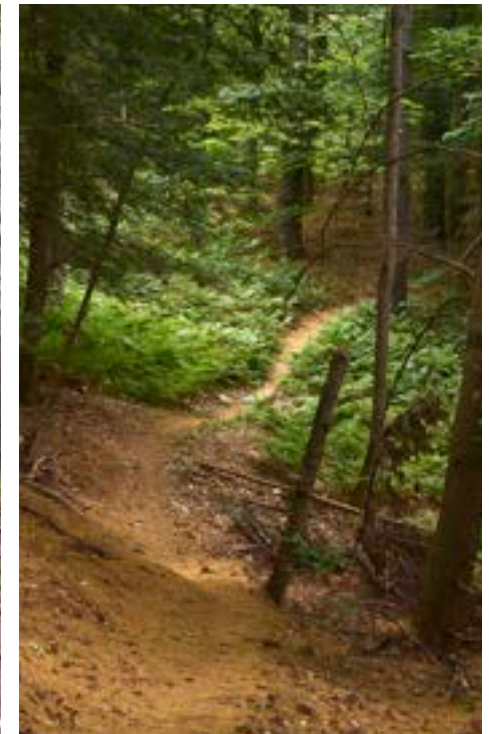
OUTDOOR ECONOMY CAPITAL PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

- **Trail accessibility.** The Gurney Lane North, Gurney Lane South, and Rush Pond areas currently have well-developed trail networks primarily oriented towards beginner- and intermediate-level mountain bikers, as well as walkers and trail runners. For these existing trails, priorities include maintaining existing high-quality trail infrastructure and exploring opportunities to upgrade select trails to adaptive bicycle-friendly and/or universal access standards.
- **Trail system connectivity.** South of Rush Pond, community leaders and advocates have proposed a series of interconnected trails that would connect the Gurney Lane-area trails to a variety of residential areas and recreational assets, including Cole's Woods, Hudson Pointe Nature Preserve, the Feeder Canal Trail, and the Warren County Bikeway. The completion of this network will greatly enhance outdoor recreation access for residents and visitors of Glens Falls and Queensbury, providing an enviable quality of life amenity and tourism asset.
- **Trail system activation.** Local partners should explore possibilities for additional events and community programs that bring in visitors, revenues, and dollars to local businesses.
- **Establishing trails in the Upper Watershed lands.** To the west of these trail networks lie several thousand acres of undeveloped lands owned by the City of Glens Falls that surround City-owned reservoirs. These preserved lands provide critical protections for the City's drinking water supply and also hold significant potential for creating high-quality and environmentally-responsible non-motorized recreational trails. The mountainous and scenic terrain would support the creation of trails that are attractive to advanced and expert level mountain bikers as well as beginner and intermediate riders, hikers, and other non-motorized trail users. Through a thoughtful master planning effort, high-quality beginner- and adaptive bicycle-friendly loop trails could be seamlessly incorporated into the larger trail network. Environmental protections would need to be at the forefront of this planning process, with restrictions on trail creation near drinking water reservoirs. Formalizing public access to these lands would likely discourage environmentally-impactful behaviors that have been an ongoing concern for water quality, such as illegal trail construction, dumping, and camping near reservoirs.



Considerations for Potential Upper Watershed Trail Network

- **Securing access to watershed lands.** An agreement would need to be developed with the City of Glens Falls to secure long-term recreational access to watershed lands. This could take the form of a preliminary agreement to support the development of the trail system master plan (including access to watershed lands for site visits and terrain scouting) and a subsequent, long-term agreement for trail access and development once the master plan is complete.
 - » Through thoughtful planning, watershed lands can support recreational opportunities while ensuring safe drinking water supply and forest health. One case study is the Trescott Water Supply Lands in Hanover, NH, which hosts approximately 15 miles of non-motorized, multi-use trail while maintaining enforced buffers around drinking water reservoirs.
- **Developing a trail system master plan.** As noted above, the preparation of a trail system master plan, endorsed by the City of Glens Falls, will be critical for securing recreational access agreements, protecting drinking water reservoirs, and promoting the development of a high-quality trail network.
 - » Establishing environmental protections (e.g., minimum buffer distances around drinking water reservoirs) would be a foundational step in the development of the trail system master plan. The plan should also identify sustainable trail design standards that limit potential erosion from trails.
 - » Master planning allows for the thoughtful layout of trails aimed at different ability levels, such as a “stacked loop” trail system design in which beginner-friendly trails are constructed closest to the trailhead with more advanced trails located further out in the trail network. The master planning effort can also identify logical locations to emphasize adaptive bicycle-friendly trail design.
 - » The development of a professionally-developed trail system master plan could cost between \$50,000 and \$100,000, based on the desired level of detail.
- **Trail development costs.** High-quality trail design and construction will be critical for limiting environmental impacts and maintenance costs and providing high-quality recreational experiences. Professionally built mountain bike trails can cost between \$50,000 and \$75,000 per mile, depending on the terrain and equipment used.
- **Maintenance and stewardship.** If the trail network expands, so would the need for increased maintenance and stewardship capacity. Currently, the Gurney Lane-area trails are maintained by a collaborative consisting of the Town of Queensbury and volunteers. Future trail stewardship considerations would include revenue-generating options (e.g., trail access fees/memberships, event permit fees, fundraising) and possibly the hiring of non-profit staff to lead and coordinate trail maintenance efforts.



The Woodstock Area Mountain Bike Association (WAMBA) is a non-profit organization maintaining over 30 miles of non-motorized multi-use trails in Woodstock, VT, including trails on municipally-owned watershed lands. As the trail system has grown, so has WAMBA - the organization now has paid staff that lead trail maintenance activities and trail enhancement projects in coordination with community volunteers. *Left photo courtesy WAMBA.*

NORTH CREEK HAMLET CONNECTIVITY

Background

The Town of Johnsburg has long sought to better connect the North Creek hamlet, specifically Main Street, to nearby outdoor recreation assets. The 1993 *North Creek Action Plan* included recommendations to activate Hudson Riverfront Park and create an integrated trail system connecting Main Street, Ski Bowl Park, and the County-owned Hudson Riverfront Park. While elements of this vision have since advanced, North Creek's Main Street remains largely disconnected.

The Olympic Regional Development Authority (ORDA) is currently making significant capital investments in recreational facilities and experiences at the North Creek Ski Bowl Park, including the development of a new base lodge, the installation of a rail zipline coaster, and a new chairlift. The \$44 million campaign will allow Gore Mountain to move its summer recreation operations to the Ski Bowl in closer proximity to North Creek. ORDA estimates that the new facilities will attract 40,000 new visitors per year to Ski Bowl Park. A planned sewer system for the North Creek hamlet is expected to support future redevelopment along Main Street, allowing North Creek to capitalize on increased visitation to Ski Bowl Park.

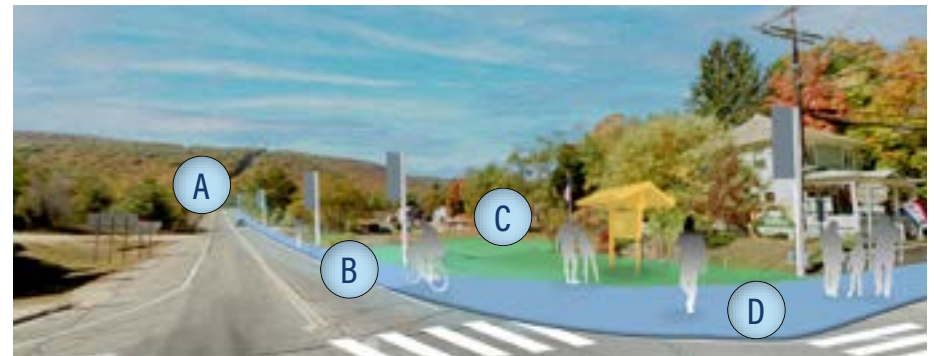
Efforts to improve and expand the multi-use trail system at Ski Bowl Park are also underway. The recent opening of the Rabbit Pond connector trail has added a new three-mile hiking and mountain biking loop. In addition to on-mountain upgrades, there are conceptual plans to enhance community recreation facilities at Ski Bowl Park, including courts and ball fields, as well as rerouting park access roads to align with NY Route 28N and provide a more direct connection to North Creek's Main Street.

Additionally, there is ongoing interest in improving and further activating the County-owned Riverfront Park, including improved public access to the Hudson River and enhanced connectivity to Main Street. Riverfront Park is directly adjacent to the County's North Creek Depot station, home base for Revolution Rail's rail biking tours out of North Creek.

The Vision

Vision Statement: North Creek's Main Street is a vibrant outdoor economy hub, supported by convenient connections to an activated Ski Bowl Park and Riverfront Park.

There is a unique opportunity to leverage the ongoing investment in Ski Bowl Park as a catalyst to better connect the North Creek hamlet to Ski Bowl Park, the Hudson River, and associated outdoor recreation experiences. This improved connectivity, paired with the investments in Ski Bowl Park and water and sewer infrastructure, will support increased vibrancy along Main Street and improved quality of life for hamlet residents.



Connectivity Enhancements

This conceptual rendering shows potential pedestrian and bicycle connectivity enhancements along NY Route 28N between Main Street and Ski Bowl Park.

- A: Connection to new Ski Bowl Park access road.
- B: New side path along Route 28N with inviting gateway banners.
- C: Trail hub/pocket park at intersection of Route 28N and Main Street.
- D: Integration into Main Street streetscape.

A CONNECTED VISION FOR NORTH CREEK

This map presents a unified vision for the varying projects, plans, and initiatives related to outdoor recreation development, connectivity, and Main Street vibrancy in the North Creek hamlet.

A: Ski Bowl Park Enhancements

Envisioned improvements include new ball courts and fields, new playground, centralized parking, and pedestrian paths.

B: New Ski Bowl Lodge & Zipcoaster

This new lodge, currently under construction, will serve as the base of Gore Mountain's summer operations.

C: Ski Bowl Park Access Road & Side Path

A new access road and 8-foot-wide side path to provide a direct connection to North Creek's Main Street for drivers, pedestrians, and bicyclists.

D: Intersection Enhancements (Traffic Signal/Roundabout)

E: Route 28N Trail Corridor & Gateway Elements

A new 8-foot-wide sidepath along Route 28N to provide pedestrian and bicycle access to Ski Bowl Park and space for inviting gateway and wayfinding signage.

F: Main Street Streetscape Enhancements

Improved sidewalks, wayfinding signage, and streetscape beautification to complement anticipated redevelopment following new water and sewer system.

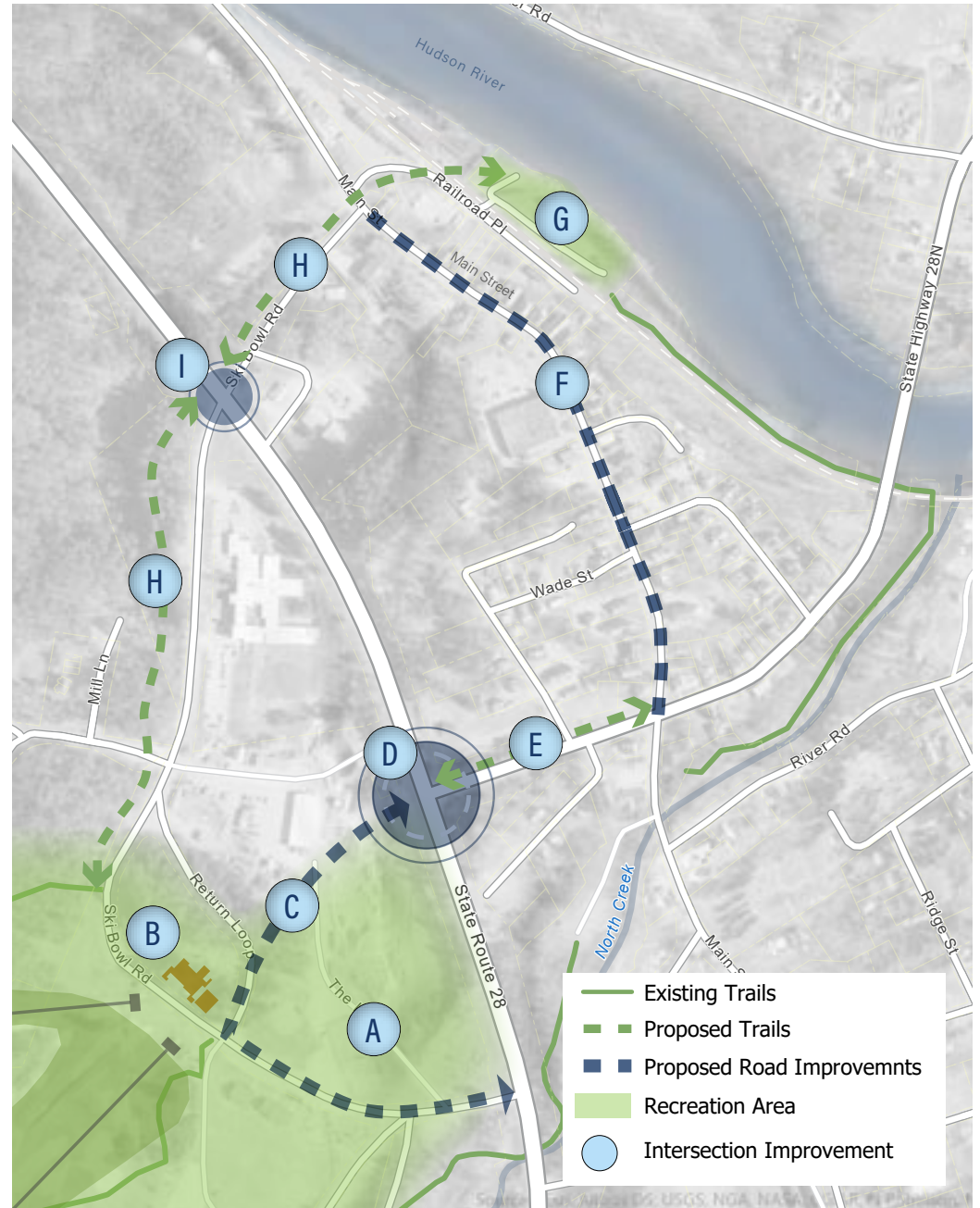
G: Riverfront Park Enhancements

Improved park facilities, including paths, landscaping, and access to the Hudson River.

H: Complete Carol Thomas Trail Loop

A completed loop trail connecting Ski Bowl Park, the Hudson River, and Riverfront Park.

I: Route 28 Pedestrian Crossing Improvement



SCHROON RIVER RECREATION CORRIDOR

Background

The lower Schroon River in Warren County flows 27 miles from Schroon Lake to the Hudson River. This run of river includes long stretches of meandering flatwater paddling as well as brief stretches of Class II and Class III rapids. In addition to paddling and fishing by the public, private operators use this stretch of river for tubing and kayaking trips. This stretch of river is stocked with trout for anglers by Warren County and NYSDEC. There are four formal public hand launches along this stretch of the Schroon River – two are managed by Warren County, one is managed by NYSDEC, and one is managed by the Town of Horicon. During a site visit in fall 2023, deficiencies in boat launch infrastructure were observed, including deteriorating wooden crib staircases, significant erosion, and a lack of accessible infrastructure.

The lower Schroon River corridor is also home to other outdoor recreation opportunities. This area is popular for road biking, offering relatively flat, low-traffic roads with periodic views of the river. Warren County maintains recreational facilities along the river, including river access and picnic facilities at Starbuckville Dam and the Warren County Fairgrounds.



Existing river access point and hand launch along the lower Schroon River.

The Vision

Vision Statement: the lower Schroon River corridor is a recognized outdoor recreation destination, with varied and accessible outdoor recreation experiences supported by high-quality, well-maintained infrastructure.

The following projects and strategies will sustain and enhance outdoor recreation experiences in the lower Schroon River corridor:

- **River access improvements.** Existing river access points should be assessed to determine opportunities for improvements, including increased resiliency to flood events, erosion mitigation, and potential for enhanced accessibility. Additional improvements could include riverside pocket parks and picnic facilities, as well as expanded parking areas, where needed.
 - » Costs for river access improvements can vary significantly. A basic stone staircase could possibly constructed for less than \$20,000, while projects that involve significant site restoration and infrastructure improvements could run into the hundreds of thousands of dollars.
- **Portage trails.** The lower Schroon River features several notable whitewater features, such as the “Big Drop”, a Class III rapid. These areas should be assessed for the creation of high-quality portage trails that allow paddlers seeking a less challenging experience to easily bypass whitewater features.
- **Bicycle route activation.** Adirondack Cycling Advocates already promotes multiple bicycle routes in the lower Schroon River corridor. These routes could be further activated and enhanced using route signage, route itineraries highlighting places for scenic riverside breaks, such as Starbuckville Dam, and identifying possible spot improvements to improve bicyclist safety and visibility. Community events, such as a bike-to-paddle duathlon, could help further promote the range of recreational experiences.

WARREN COUNTY MULTI-USE TRAIL MODERNIZATION & CONNECTIVITY IMPROVEMENTS

Background

Warren County is currently studying opportunities to enhance user experiences and connectivity along the Warren County Bikeway and Feeder Canal Trail. These multi-use trails provide high-quality pedestrian and bicycle connection between Lake George, Glens Falls, and the nearby Empire State Trail in Washington County. This initiative will also dovetail with the Queensbury East-West Connections Study currently underway to make key connections to recreational assets in the town, such as Gurney Lane. There are many opportunities to improve access, connectivity, and safety along these trails, including better connections to residential areas, recreational destinations, and local businesses.



Section of the Feeder Canal Trail in Glens Falls

The Vision

Once complete, this study will identify provide a blueprint for implementing enhancements to for enhancing these recreational trails including:

- Collaborate with utility companies, private entities, and other stakeholders to close gaps along the trail system that necessitate traveling along under-designed and inadequate on-road segments.
- Strengthen connections between the Feeder Canal Trail, the Warren County Bikeway, and the nearby downtown areas
- Identify and prioritize future improvements to the existing trail network to meet modern standards, including ADA compliance
- Continue to implement safety and accessibility improvements to road crossings.
- Develop a wayfinding system to allow users to navigate to and from the trail systems to the downtown areas and places of interest. A comprehensive wayfinding and signage system will provide a more enjoyable user experience and include clearer directional and navigation information, enhanced interpretive signage, and consistent messaging on rules and etiquette of the trail system.
- Determine trailside and trailhead amenities that are needed, such as benches, restroom facilities, bike racks, bike sharing stations, and parking facilities.

WARREN COUNTY FISH HATCHERY MASTER PLAN

Background

The Warren County Fish Hatchery is a unique regional asset that supports the County's high-quality fisheries and provides on-site community recreation amenities. Through the Hatchery's fish stocking program, over 25,000 trout are stocked annually into the County's rivers, lakes, streams, and ponds, sustaining one of the County's most popular outdoor recreation activities.

The Hatchery is located on the banks of the Hudson River. In addition to providing public access to the river, the Hatchery's grounds host other community amenities, such as sheltered picnic areas and disc golf. The Hatchery itself is a recreational and educational resource, with the Visitor Center being popular with school groups and visitors.

The 2024 *Warren County Fish Hatchery Master Plan* identifies a number of maintenance and capital project needs for the Hatchery, including hatchery facility and equipment repairs, expanded storage areas, and improved recreational amenities, such as a new playground.

The Vision

Vision Statement: the Warren County Fish Hatchery is a long-standing community, county and regional resource that serves to promote the conservation of the local environmental ecology along the Hudson River and to promote the rearing of domestic and native fish. Additionally, the facility promotes tourism and provides for distinct recreational opportunities as well a cherished outdoor gathering area and event space.

The 2024 *Warren County Fish Hatchery Master Plan* identifies 12 priority capital improvement projects to Hatchery facilities and grounds. Projects are spread across two phases, with Phase 1 totaling \$1,178,000 and Phase 2 totaling \$379,542. Phase 1 projects are essential to the continued operation of the Hatchery; Phase 2 projects will further enhance visitor amenities and experiences at the Hatchery.



IMPLEMENTING PROJECTS & INITIATIVES

PROJECT / INITIATIVE	NEXT STEPS	KEY PARTNERS
Hudson River Recreational Rail Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a long-term strategy that considers potential scenarios for the recreational use and ownership of the rail corridor. Identify mechanisms for increasing revenues from recreational use of the railroad. Research and perform outreach to potential alternative owners of the rail corridor. 	Revolution Rail Co. Open Space Institute New York State
Gurney Lane-Area Trail System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission a professional trail assessment to identify opportunities and costs for upgrading existing trails to accessible and/or adaptive bicycle-friendly standards. Engage with City of Glens Falls leadership to explore potential agreements that allow for the development of a trail system master plan for City-owned watershed lands. 	City of Glens Falls Town of Queensbury Upper Hudson Trails Alliance
North Creek Hamlet Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage NYSDOT to understand possibilities and mechanisms for project coordination for proposed transportation infrastructure improvements. Conduct an engineering study of Route 28N sidepath and Route 28 / Route 28N / Ski Bowl Park Access Road intersection improvements. Coordinate with the Town of Johnsbury on the ongoing update and implementation of the Town of Johnsbury <i>Comprehensive Plan</i>. 	Town of Johnsbury NYSDOT Gore Mountain / ORDA North Creek Business Alliance
Schroon River Recreation Corridor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commission assessments of existing river access infrastructure and potential portage trail locations. 	NYSDEC Towns of Horicon, Bolton, Chester & Warrensburg
Warren County Multi-Use Trail Modernization & Connectivity Improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete the ongoing <i>Warren County Multi-Use Trail Modernization & Connectivity Improvements Study</i>. 	Town of Queensbury City of Glens Falls
Warren County Fish Hatchery Master Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pursue funding to implement the capital projects identified in the 2024 <i>Warren County Fish Hatchery Master Plan</i>. 	NYS Local Waterfront Revitalization Program