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A PUBLICATION OF THE SULLIVAN COUNTY DEMOCRAT

SULLIVAN COUNTY
Democrat

MAY 2022 • SECTION T • CALLICOON, NEW YORK

Sullivan County is going all in on trails

BY FRED EISENBERG

With the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail initiative, a growing coalition of local governments and non-profits are working to implement an ambitious plan to connect the five existing rail trails in Sullivan County into a single, regionally-scaled facility spanning 50 miles from Mamakating to Rockland.

The Feasibility Study for this work was completed in 2020, and since then nearly \$3 million in federal, state, local and private grants have been assembled to implement its top priority project: literally bridging a one mile gap between the existing segments of rail trail in Hurleyville and Woodridge that entails crossing the Neversink River. The Fallsburg DPW will break ground this summer on a part of that project, with bridge and boardwalk construction anticipated next year.

Further north, the Towns of Liberty and Rockland are collaborating to extend the Parkville rail trail seven miles, bringing it to



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

U.S. Congressman Antonio Delgado, left, and Heather Jacksy, chief planner at the Sullivan County Division of Planning, Community Development and Environmental Management, during a press conference last summer, where Delgado announced over a million dollars in funding for the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail.

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This map illustrates the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail. Currently, plans are underway to connect the five existing rail trails from Rockland to Mamakating, spanning approximately 50 miles.

Livingston Manor. The Town of Mamakating completed a one and a half mile section of its Canal Trail last summer; the handicap-accessible segment connects the Wurtsboro residential and shopping area to the town hall, state police barracks and local supermarket. This summer, the Sullivan County Parks Department will begin to create a network of walking trails through Lake Superior State Park. Trails will also be developed in a new park the County is planning for a site on the Upper Delaware River. Elsewhere along the river, Friends of the Upper Delaware has been exploring options for a bicycle and pedestrian trail from the Village of Hancock in Delaware County to the hamlet of Callicoon. SUNY Sullivan is expanding the trails on its campus.

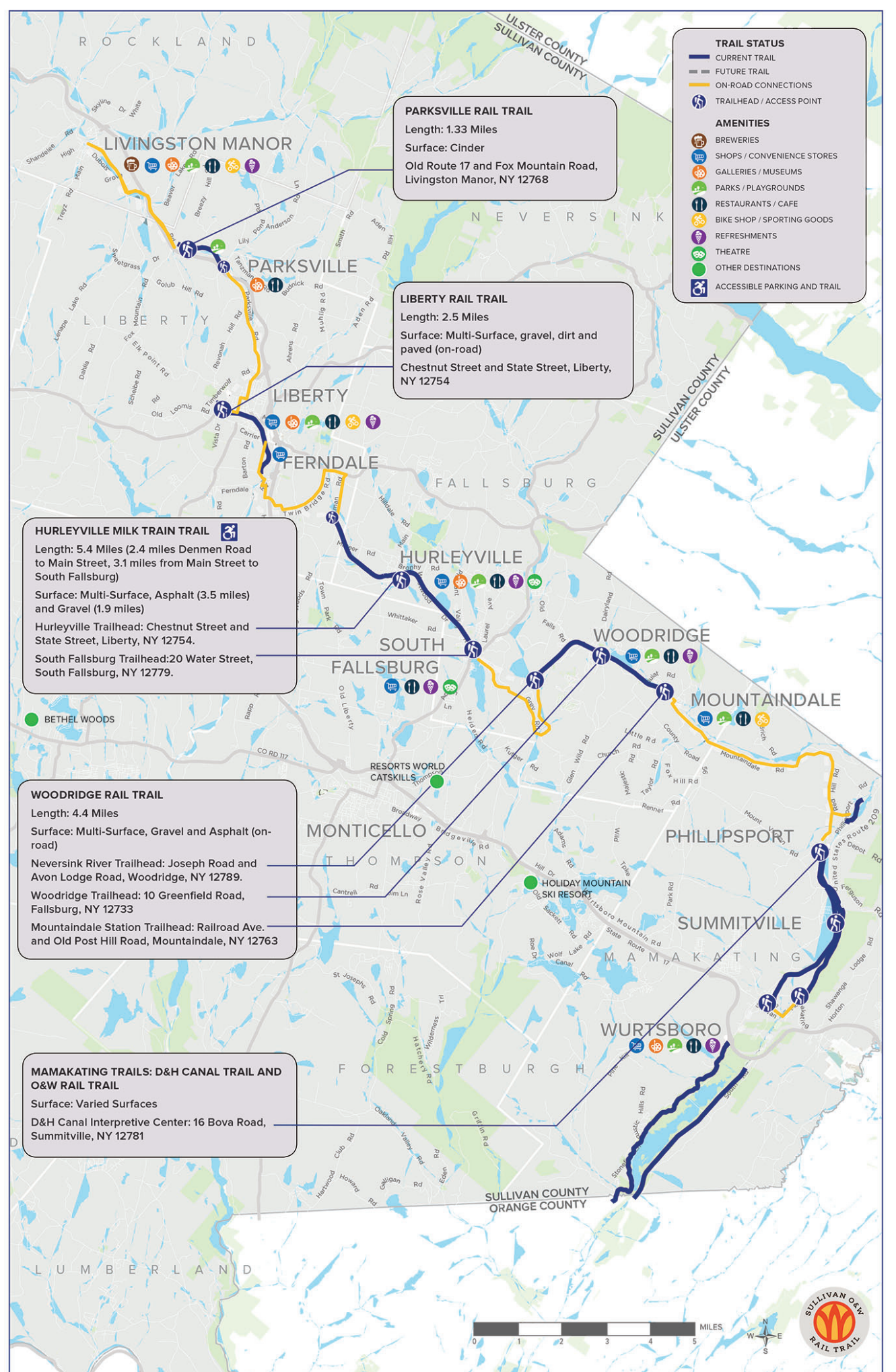
Cornell Cooperative Extension is enhancing trails in multiple Sullivan communities through NYS grant-funded signage, benches, bike racks, bike repair stations, and other amenities.

And Sullivan Renaissance and Sullivan 180 have been strong supporters of the trail movement here through events, promotion, and funding.

This is hardly an exhaustive list of all the activity in Sullivan County right now to plan, build, improve, and promote use of trails.

Why is there so much enthusiasm and momentum? There are many benefits trails provide, with claims backed up by decades of research.

For Sullivan, health impacts are paramount. The County is at the bottom of New York State health rankings, and studies show those





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After returning indoors, check for ticks, change clothes, and shower as soon as possible.

Avoid tick infested places such as brush, tall grass, and wood piles.

Hike in the center of trails.

Check your pets for ticks regularly.

Do tick checks on your clothes and skin while hiking.

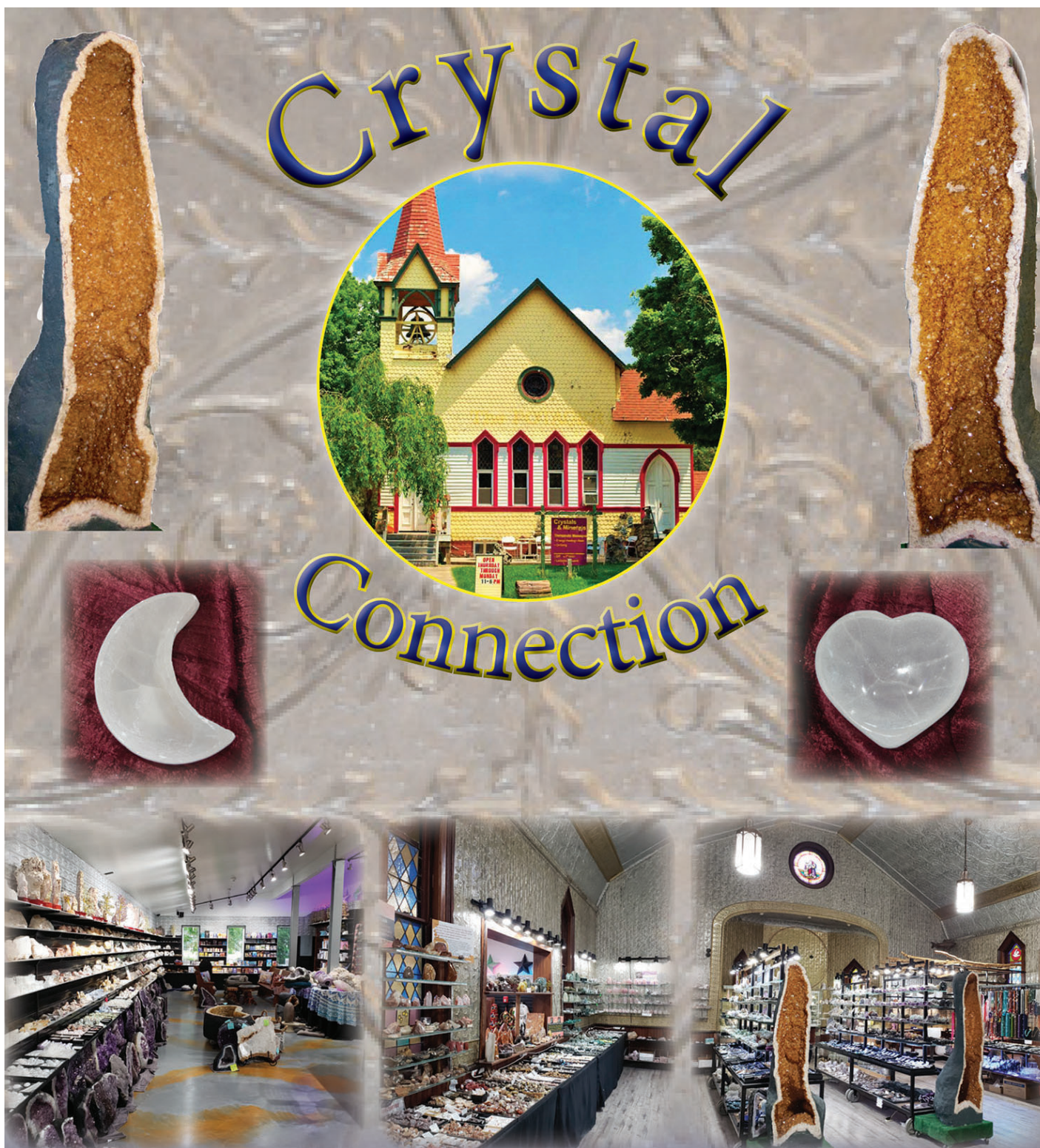
Use an insect repellent with at least 20% DEET, picaridin, or IR3535.

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CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

most likely to report increased activity through the use of a trail are area residents who were not regular walkers. Trails not only provide opportunities to exercise, they also contribute to health by reducing social isolation and increasing self-esteem and mood, especially among young people.

A 2011 review by the American Heart Association found that for every \$1 invested in building

trails there is a direct correlation to \$3 of saved medical costs.

Trails provide good economic development value as well since users spend money supporting jobs and businesses. One study for the Federal Highway Administration calculated that trail projects were nearly twice as cost-effective at job creation as conventional road building.

Ulster County reports it derived more than \$10 million from spending by rail-trail users in 2019. The pandemic triggered an

enormous increase in visitation to parks and trails, so that figure is likely to have risen sharply since then. At the individual business level, the owner of a hotel near the Ashokan Rail Trail says bookings rose 15-20 percent after the facility opened, paying off on his bet to develop where the trail was planned.

Distance matters. Local trail users typically spend \$3 - \$15 per day but non-local users spend \$15 - \$35 and overnight visitors spend considerably more, \$100-

\$300. But in order to attract outside use, trails must be long enough to provide an excursion length experience. Participants in a survey for the 2020 NYS Greenway Trails Plan said trail length and proximity were their main considerations when planning a trip to a trail.

That's an important reason behind the O&W initiative. Sullivan's existing rail trail segments are small; connecting them will yield bigger, more impactful benefits.



MINISINK BATTLEGROUND PARK

Town of Highland, New York
58 County Rd 168 Barryville, NY 12719
Around a mile of trail

located off Route 97 on County Road 168, Barryville within the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River in close proximity to the famous Roebling Bridge and Zane Grey Museum.



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- Museum of Colonial History
- Stone Arch Bridge Historical Park
- Livingston Manor Covered Bridge Park
- Sullivan County Museum

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D&H LINEAR PARK

Town of Mamakating, New York

3½ miles of trail situated along the historic D&H Canal ideal for hikers, bikers, cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, nature watching and fishing. No admission fee, the park is open year round. Hours are from 8:00am 'till dark. Two accesses located off Route 209 - Hornbeck's basin access ½ mile north of Wurtsboro; Bova Road 4½ miles north of Wurtsboro between Summitville and Phillipsport



Find Your Trail

"The Great Hiking Opportunities in Sullivan"

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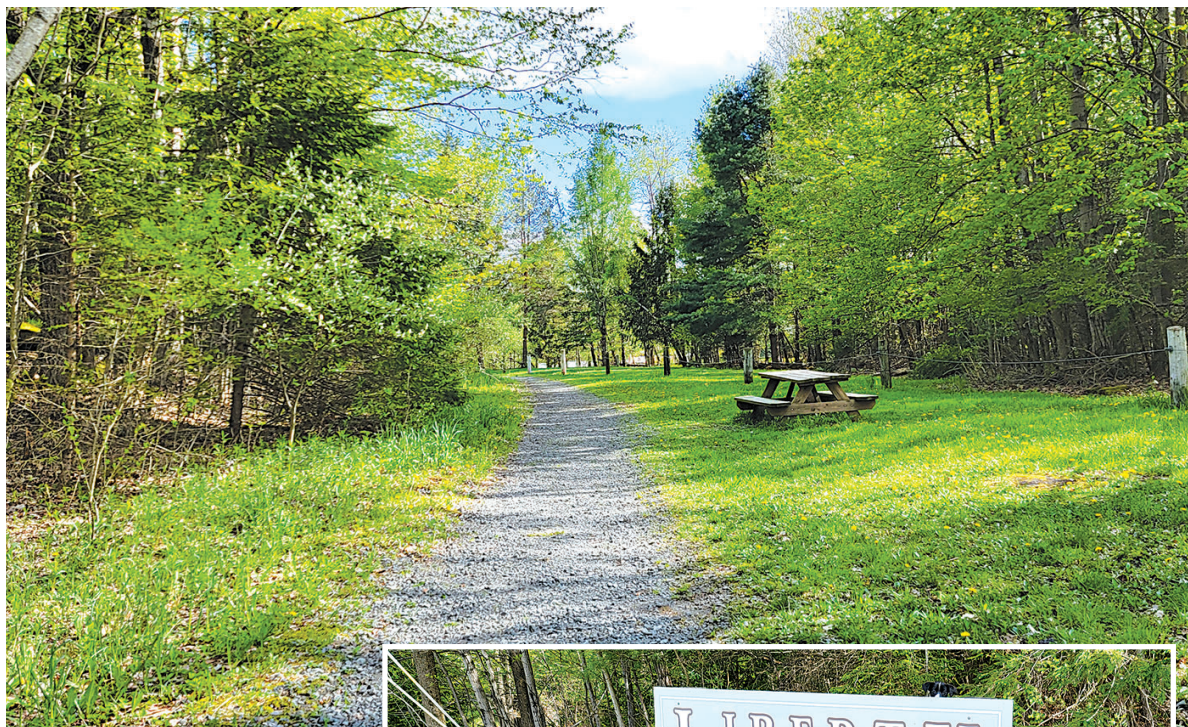
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Connecting the County's rail trails also connects communities, enhancing their ability to serve a transportation function. The proportion of households in some Sullivan towns that do not have even one vehicle is two to four times the national average. Regardless of whether or not one has access to a car, commuting by trail provides flexibility, enjoyment, health benefits and cost savings.

The importance of trails is evident in the significant role they play in people's choices about where to live. When a National Association of Realtors survey asked people to rate 18 community amenities that would seriously influence them to move to a new community, walking/jogging/bike trails came in at number two, second only to highway access. Homes near trails sell faster and have more value. The closer a house is to a trail, the stronger the impact.

To find a Sullivan County trail near you, go to Trailkeeper.org. To learn more about the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail, including both existing segments and planned expansion, go to sullivan-oandw.com. You can also follow the rail trail project on Facebook @sullivanrailtrail and Instagram @sullivan_oandw_rail_trail.

Eisenberg is the Chair of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Alliance and Commissioner of the Sullivan County Division of Planning, Community Development and Environmental Management.



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Even though this trail goes through a residential area of town, you wouldn't know it half the time. The Liberty Rail Trail, a little over 2.7 miles, is great for biking and hiking.



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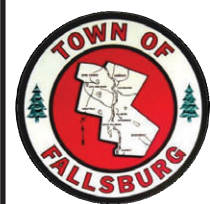
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3. The Bashakill Wildlife Management Area in Wurtsboro is full of breathtaking views.

4. Humans aren't the only ones who love a good hike. Bring a camera along for your hike and snap photos of local wildlife, like this chipmunk.

5. If you're looking for a quiet stroll, the Parkville Rail Trail has a lot to offer.

6. Each trail has a unique story. One of the most fascinating things about the Hurleyville Rail Trail are rock structures such as this one.

7. Hide and go seek is a game herons seem to be remarkably good at. This one was barely spotted in the Bashakill.



1. The Tusten Mountail Trail provides many gorgeous scenes. Make sure to look up because you may spot a Bald Eagle.

2. Ever been to a fire tower? On your way to the one in the Roosa Gap in Wurtsboro, you'll get plenty of exercise exploring the surrounding area.

PHOTOS BY JOSEPH ABRAHAM

When you're visiting a place as scenic as the Sullivan Catskills, it can be difficult to figure out which trail you should visit first.

Luckily, trailkeeper.org has you covered. The website not only has a full list of trails, state and national parks in Sullivan County (while ranking their difficulty), it also provides tips and information on hiking and the various regions in general.

The purpose of the Trailkeeper Project, which was assisted by a grant from the Upper Delaware Council in Narrowsburg, as well as additional funding provided through the Sullivan County Plans and Progress Grant Program, is to provide easy-to-read, easy-to-access maps and facilities information and guides to hiking safety.

But enough talk, here are some scenic scenes that await you!





Our Trails are for everyone

BY DENISE FRANGIPANE

Whether you are a hiker, walker, equestrian; cyclist, roller skier or in-line skater; interested in birding, identifying trees, foraging plants, experiencing history, forest bathing or getting exercise; **Sullivan County has a trail for you.**

The diversity of options makes it possible for all ages and interests to use and appreciate our trails. From the Sullivan O&W, to the trails at Walnut Mountain; from the mossy lush Forest Reserve at

Smallwood or the newly developed Healthy Heart Trail at the Town of Thompson Park, to the Tusten Mountain Trail in Narrowsburg, our trails are as unique as the communities who host them.

Our trails are for families.

During the pandemic trails were a free family activity that kept us moving, and in some cases allowed us to safely see friends, family and neighbors. Many trails, especially the Sullivan O&W Rail, the D&H Canal and the Healthy

Heart Trail at the Town of Thompson Park are excellent for introducing little legs to the joy of hiking. They offer short and interesting excursions where the direction and duration can be easily adjusted for a successful outing.

Narrow roads, without bike lanes or shoulders, often hosting farm tractors and other large vehicles, makes sharing the road an exercise requiring a bit of skill and

a lot of judgement. Our roads do not lend themselves to bicycling with children. Trails to the rescue! Mountain biking at Walnut Mountain Park or enjoying smooth sailing on the Milk Train Trail in Hurleyville (part of the O&W) can give kids the freedom to ride and parents peace of mind.

PHOTO BY JONATHAN HYMAN
The Milk Train Trail in Hurleyville is a great place for a bike ride.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTOS

Sit and read a book or go for a stroll at the Mountaintale Rail Trail.



Sullivan County is connected through our trails and outdoor spaces.

Sullivan O&W Rail Trail • Walnut Mountain Park, Liberty • Healthy Heart Trail, Town of Thompson Town Park • Forest Reserve at Smallwood • Neversink Gorge, Rock Hill • Roundtop Trail, Livingston Manor • Tusten Mountain Trail, Narrowsburg

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Our trails connect us to history.

A walk on the trails at the Minisink Battleground is a walk back in time. Both the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail and the D&H Canal preserve historically significant transportation corridors. Manville Wakefield's "To the Mountains by Rail" captures the glory of the hotel and railroad era of Sullivan County.

The book examines a time when the railroad brought people here

for recreation and leisure. It provided jobs for local people, and became the center of an economy that connected Sullivan County from the Town of Mamakating to the Town of Rockland. The work to reconnect this linear experience and to make the trail useable for all is ongoing and progress is being made! (See article by Freda Eisenberg in this section.)

Our trails connect us to nature.

Many of our trails are located within parks or are themselves, linear parks. In this way they are conserving open and green space; and providing access to nature. The creation of the Forest Reserve at Smallwood was the result of citizen activism and government collaboration to protect a critical natural resource and source of drinking water.

Today, the Forest Reserve has a developing system of trails that

bring users through a variety of ecosystems including grassy meadows, pine forests, rocky outcroppings and boggy wetlands. Most of these trails are easy to navigate; making them accessible and enjoyable for all hiking abilities.

Our trails are good for the economy.

"The economic effects of trails

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15



The Forest Reserve at Smallwood takes travelers on a journey through various ecosystems.



The Walk Your Heart Healthy Trail at the Town of Thompson Park is waiting for you to explore it.

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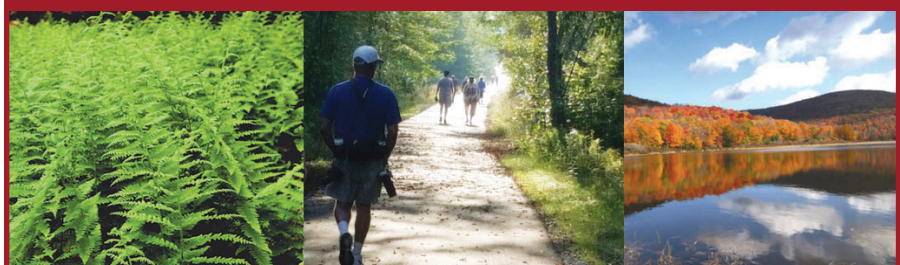
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The Pathway to Success

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THE SULLIVAN CATSKILLS VISITORS ASSOCIATION

What came first, the chicken or the egg? The same can be asked for trails and businesses—what came first, the trail or the trail town? The answer might be both, and it turns out that the economic impact of regional trails is immense.

According to the Trail Town Program, studies show that trail towns create economic growth, grow local business, create jobs and protect the trails and surrounding nature. We know that here in the Sullivan Catskills our businesses along trails have been consistently increasing for residents and visitors to enjoy.

During the pandemic these past two years, city residents have flocked to areas with natural beauty. Here in the Sullivan Catskills, we have an abundance of nature and trails. From more strenuous longer mountain hikes to a

flat terrain walking trail, we have something for all levels and ages. You can find beautiful trails that you can hike, bike or even horseback ride. But just as exciting as the trail is what's around it—check out the shops, lodgings, and attractions of Sullivan County (www.sullivancatskills.com).

While there aren't cash registers on the trail, having access to nature, fresh air, and an outlet for physical activity is its own form of wealth. Trail towns attract visitors, boosting the local economy by supporting local business and creating a vibrant and healthy community.

The Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) has partnered with TrailKeeper to bring detailed information about everything you need to know about trails and what's nearby. Food and restaurants,

lodging and camping, attractions, activities, clothing and equipment retailers for outdoor recreation, transportation options and more, are right at your fingertips at www.trailkeeper.org.

"Sullivan County is full of wonderful locally-owned, small businesses that offer a variety of experiences," remarked SCVA President/CEO Roberta Byron-Lockwood. "Whether you're coming for a day or an overnight stay, our properties are ready for you."

After a day on the trail what sounds better than enjoying a delicious meal and drink while you relax at one of the many restaurants, cafés, coffee shops, or breweries. Try a cold beer from our breweries or a farm-to-table meal while dining al fresco.

Want the complete outdoor experience? Our campgrounds offer options for tent camping, RVs, or cabins.

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Some are located right on the riverfront or in quiet retreats in the woods. Many also provide access for fishing, boating, or swimming in the river or in nearby lakes.

Or maybe you want to experience a more luxurious stay? From small bed-and-breakfasts to large resorts and everything in between, Sullivan County has something for everyone. Get a great night's sleep in a comfortable bed at a boutique

hotel or inn, or relax at the spa.

"We're excited to bridge our trails with our businesses, a symbiotic relationship that benefits both the visitor and our own communities," Byron-Lockwood stated. "If we want visitors to be interested in the Sullivan Catskills, we want to build the best Trail Towns."

As the saying goes, if you build it, they will come.



PHOTO BY JERRY COHEN

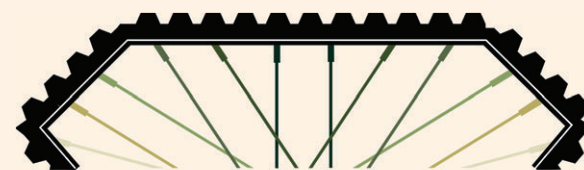
There are so many trails in the Sullivan Catskills where you can get outside and immerse yourself in nature, like this trail at the Bashakill Wildlife Management Area.

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Celebrate National Trails Day in Parksville on June 4th

Help beautify this section of the historic Sullivan O&W Rail Trail

FERNDAL – Come celebrate National Trails Day with Sullivan 180, Sullivan Renaissance and the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Alliance on Saturday, June 4th! The kick-off will take place at 9 a.m. on the Parksville Section of the historic Sullivan O&W Rail Trail (Trailhead A: Old Route 17 & Fox Mountain Road, Parksville).

Opening remarks with special guests will begin at 9:00 a.m., followed by a trail clean-up and hiking. There will also be Sullivan County Roadside & Trail Litter Pluck Disposal Coupons on hand, that waive disposal fees for trail trash brought to County-operated transfer stations through June 30th. For more information on the Countywide "Litter Pluck" coupons, please call the Sullivan County Department of Parks,



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Recreation, and Beautification at (845) 807-0287.

The Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Alliance in Sullivan County has

been a decades-long effort, spearheaded by multiple municipal, private, and grassroots organizations, all with a common goal of

connecting communities along the corridor and providing an important recreation and transportation asset to area residents and visitors alike. To learn more about the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail, please visit www.SullivanOandW.com.

Sullivan 180's mission is to build a healthy, vibrant Sullivan County where everyone has a sense of purpose, connection to family and community and access to fresh foods and an active lifestyle. To learn more, please visit www.Sullivan180.org.

Sullivan Renaissance is a beautification and community development initiative of the Gerry Foundation. To learn more, please visit www.SullivanRenaissance.org.



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Hike this beautiful section of the historic Sullivan O&W Trail
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SULLIVAN 180



SULLIVAN RENAISSANCE



OUR TRAILS: For everyone

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 11

and greenways are sometimes readily apparent (as in the case of trailside businesses) and are sometimes more subtle" (Benefits of Trails, Rails to Trails Conservancy.)

In the 60's my mother-in-law, Alice Tierney Pammer, had a bicycle rental business from the lawn of her parents' house on LaVista Drive in South Fallsburg. She would leave snacks and fresh water for her patrons at particular locations along the route. One happened to be at what is now the end of the paved portion of the Hurleyville Rail Trail, in the direction of South Fallsburg.

Today Hurleyville and Mountaintdale have bike shops offering rental and repair. Hurleyville also has a new outdoor gear store. Both communities have several eateries. As we build on our trails, there is great potential for continued business development.

Our trails build community.

Through the investment of time and resources by volunteers, our trails have become a source of community identity and pride. As government, organizations and volunteers come together to build trails; we also come together to build community.

In the 22 years of Sullivan Renaissance, there have always been trail projects led by volunteers working on a grassroots level to create interesting trailheads, organize trail clean ups and program events. There are no politics in working alongside a neighbor or a stranger to remove downed limbs or stabilize embankments to make them safe for passage. At the end of a day's trail labor, friendships have formed; and something has been created that will last beyond that day, for years to come.

Yes, our trails also attract visitors. As another aspect of natural beauty they add to the experience of people coming to Sullivan County. The amazing thing is

that we get to enjoy them all the time. We don't have to travel or Airbnb to get here. All four seasons, seven days a week, 365 days a year, they are here; and they are our trails.

To find a trail visit www.trail-keeper.org.

Frangipane is the Executive Director of Sullivan Renaissance and a member of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Alliance.



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The rustic, unpaved Parksville Rail Trail is just over 3 miles long.

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- Third Place, Best Public Service or Non-Profit Section, 2020
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