

# FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

**Fiscal Year 2024  
Project # CO-WP 357**

<u>Region</u>	<u>Project Title</u>
3	Peekamoose Valley Riparian Corridor (PVRC) Parking Lot Entrance Reconfiguration

<u>Project Type</u>	<u>Town(s)</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Management Unit</u>
Expansion of Existing Structure/Improvement	Denning	Ulster	Sundown Wild Forest

Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project

The desired condition of this project builds upon DEC’s effort to make the Peekamoose Valley Riparian Corridor (PVRC) in the Sundown Wild Forest (SWF) safe and welcoming to the public by alleviating congestion at points of interest, by creating safe conditions for pedestrians and by providing an experience that maximizes the public’s appreciation of the wild setting created by the Forest Preserve. The 2019 SWF Unit Management Plan (UMP) states that parking facilities within the unit must “Provide adequate access and parking and mitigate any parking related problems” (Pg.107). Most visitors access the PVRC by personal vehicle and the extremely high visitor volumes to this location during peak season from May-October has historically resulted in vehicle congestion along the road corridor as visitors attempt to locate available parking. In the past, the traffic congestion on County Rt. 42 led to increased pedestrian traffic on the road corridor and has impeded passage of emergency response vehicles leading to public safety issues. To address these public safety issues, DEC has taken several management actions. In 2023, an Amendment to the 2019 SWF UMP authorized the construction of a parking area in an existing field, construction of a 0.5-mile accessible trail from the field parking lot to the existing Blue Hole access trail and closure of 8 of the existing parking areas in the PVRC to consolidate parking to a single location. The construction of a 58-car parking area and much of the 0.5-mile accessible trail from the parking area to the Blue Hole access trail was completed by DEC operations staff in 2024. Closure of the 8 remaining parking areas is scheduled for spring of 2025 which will divert all visitor traffic to the Blue Hole to the recently constructed 58-car parking area.

Currently, the existing parking area design includes dedicated entry and exit lanes that provide access to a one-way, angled parking area. The 2023 Amendment calls on DEC staff to, “Routinely monitor, evaluate and open and close parking areas as necessary to provide safe access for visitors to the corridor”. In anticipation of opening the newly constructed parking area for the 2025 season, DEC staff conducted an evaluation of the new parking area and entrance to ensure the design will improve traffic flow and reduce vehicle congestion on the public highway (Ulster County 42) which provides access to the area. The results of that evaluation indicated that as currently designed, visitors that do not have permits for the Blue Hole would have to enter the one-way parking area to turn around, which would likely lead to traffic congestion within the parking area and the potential to impact the flow of traffic on the public highway. Staff determined that the current entrance

configuration could be modified to improve efficiency in checking visitor permits, optimize traffic flow into and out of the parking area and further reduce potential impacts to the public highway. High visitation volumes are expected at the 58-car field parking area, particularly during peak season. Reconfiguration of the entrance is necessary to prevent vehicle wait times at the entrance and reduce the chance of waiting vehicles spilling out onto Ulster County Rt. 42.

This work plan proposes a reconfiguration of the existing parking area entrance from a two-way traffic design where the entrance includes side by side ingress and egress lanes, to one that includes a curvilinear ingress lane that is separated from the egress lane, resulting in a one-way entrance and exit design. A curvilinear entry/exit to the parking area allows cars to exit Ulster County 42, allowing for smoother traffic flow and improved efficiencies for checking visitor permits. This curved entry/exit to the parking area will allow visitors that do not have a valid permit to safely exit onto County Route 42 without ever entering the parking area. This design will minimize the potential for traffic congestion, expedite permit checks and increase visitor safety. The existing entrance/exit of the parking area encompasses approximately 2,100 square feet in area. The use of an additional 1,200 square feet of area will be necessary to complete the proposed reconfigured entrance.

#### Description of Project Specifications

This project will be completed by DEC Operations staff. Trees (some considered hazardous) and vegetation will be removed between County Rt 42 and the existing entrance to the Blue Hole parking area. The attached documents provide an overview of the locations of proposed tree removals as well as tree tallies for this project.

#### Description of Measures Taken to Avoid, Mitigate and Minimize Impacts to Natural Resources

2,100 square feet of the entrance is completed. The remaining scope of work for the new parking area entrance will utilize an additional 1,200 square feet and has been designed to minimize tree cutting. This project proposal involves the construction of an ancillary entrance that will involve earthwork within a 3,300' sq foot (0.075 acres) project area.

##### A.) Trees to be removed:

Tree cutting is required for this project. The construction of the parking area entrance reconfiguration will require the cutting of 30 trees in total. Half of the trees (15 trees) tallied for removal during this project are under 3" DBH. Two large White Pine trees (DBH 48" and 55") are currently in serious decline have been classified as hazard trees and must be taken. This type of decline typically occurs in Eastern White Pine when the leading stem of the tree is killed by a nesting white pine weevil in the tree's early developing years, causing extensive lateral branching and subsequent competition between lateral branches to become the new leading stem. Over time, the competition between leading stems can cause decline in the less competitive of the stems, creating the potential for stem failure due to the presence of weakened branch unions and an increased risk to people and nearby facilities. There is one Black Oak with two leaders (DBH 32" and 44", picture attached) that currently overhangs the parking area. The position of this tree presents a public safety hazard and must be removed before the parking area is opened to the public. All trees will be chipped and dispersed on site to blend with the environment. Stumps will be cut low (unless conditions require removal), and debris will be dispersed throughout the surrounding forest. A detailed tree tally is attached.

##### B.) Earthwork and Disturbance:

The organic layer of soil within the expansion area will be removed and replaced with geo-textile fabric and crushed stone. Proper drainage and sloping will be incorporated throughout the parking area and driveway to ensure water is shed quickly to maintain a firm and stable surface. Care to blend the facilities into their surroundings will be taken. Efforts will be taken to minimize the short-term and long-term impacts to the project site. This will result in a sustainably designed facility that protects natural resources while providing the visiting public with a safer, more accessible parking area.

C.) Impacts to Streams, Waterbodies, and Wetlands:

No wetland impacts are involved with the activities as proposed. The Rondout Creek is a CT(S) stream in proximity to the project site. Construction activity will not result in any erosion activity that will impact the water quality within the Rondout Creek.

D.) Identification of Rare, Threatened and Endangered Species:

A search of available GIS databases yielded no known occurrences of Rare, Threatened or Endangered species at or within ¼ mile of the project area.

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

Alternative 1- No Action:

The alignment of the entrance to the Blue Hole parking area will not be adjusted. Cars will have to travel into the parking lot to turn around if they are not in possession of a valid permit. This alternative is unacceptable from a public safety perspective and will result in inefficient circulation of vehicle traffic and could lead to congestion that will spill over onto County Rt 42. Alternative 1 is not the preferred alternative.

Alternative 2- Provide an alternative parking area.

The 2023 amendment to the 2019 Sundown Wild Forest UMP expressly directs DEC staff to close eight parking areas in the PVRC and consolidate parking to a single location. Constructing any alternative parking to increase parking capacity within the PVRC is out of alignment with the desired conditions for the PVRC and therefore alternative 2 was not selected as the preferred alternative.

Alternative 3: Reconfigure the entrance to the Blue Hole Parking Lot

In addition to allowing visitors without a permit to exit the entrance without turning around in the parking area, the semi-circular reconfiguration of the parking area entrance will improve efficiency in the process by which permits can be checked. It will also reduce the potential for traffic congestion on County Rt 42 on days when visitor volumes are at their highest, specifically from May 15<sup>th</sup> to September 15<sup>th</sup>. The planned work does not affect neighboring streams and enhances parking area accessibility as well as safe access to and from the highway. The proposed project accomplishes this without expanding the parking lot's capacity. The only practical way to make the parking lot easier for the public to access is through the proposed improvement. Option 3 is the preferred alternative.

Description of Use of Motorized Equipment and/or Motor Vehicles (if any)

The use of motorized equipment and vehicles for this project will include the use of an excavator and/or backhoe, aerial lift, chainsaw, chipper, dump truck and bobcat.

Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

The reconfigured entrance/ exit will be constructed with compacted stone surfaces to meet accessibility standards.

Other Relevant Considerations

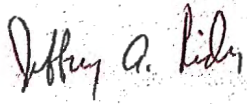
The proposed project will improve user safety and enhance the quality of the visitor experience by improving the efficiency and traffic circulation for visitors to the Blue Hole.

Prepared by (Name & Title): Pine Roehrs, Environmental  
Program Specialist, NR 2  
Phone: 845-256-3075

Date: 12/2/24

Approvals:

Comments:



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Regional Program Manager  
Date: 12/3/2024



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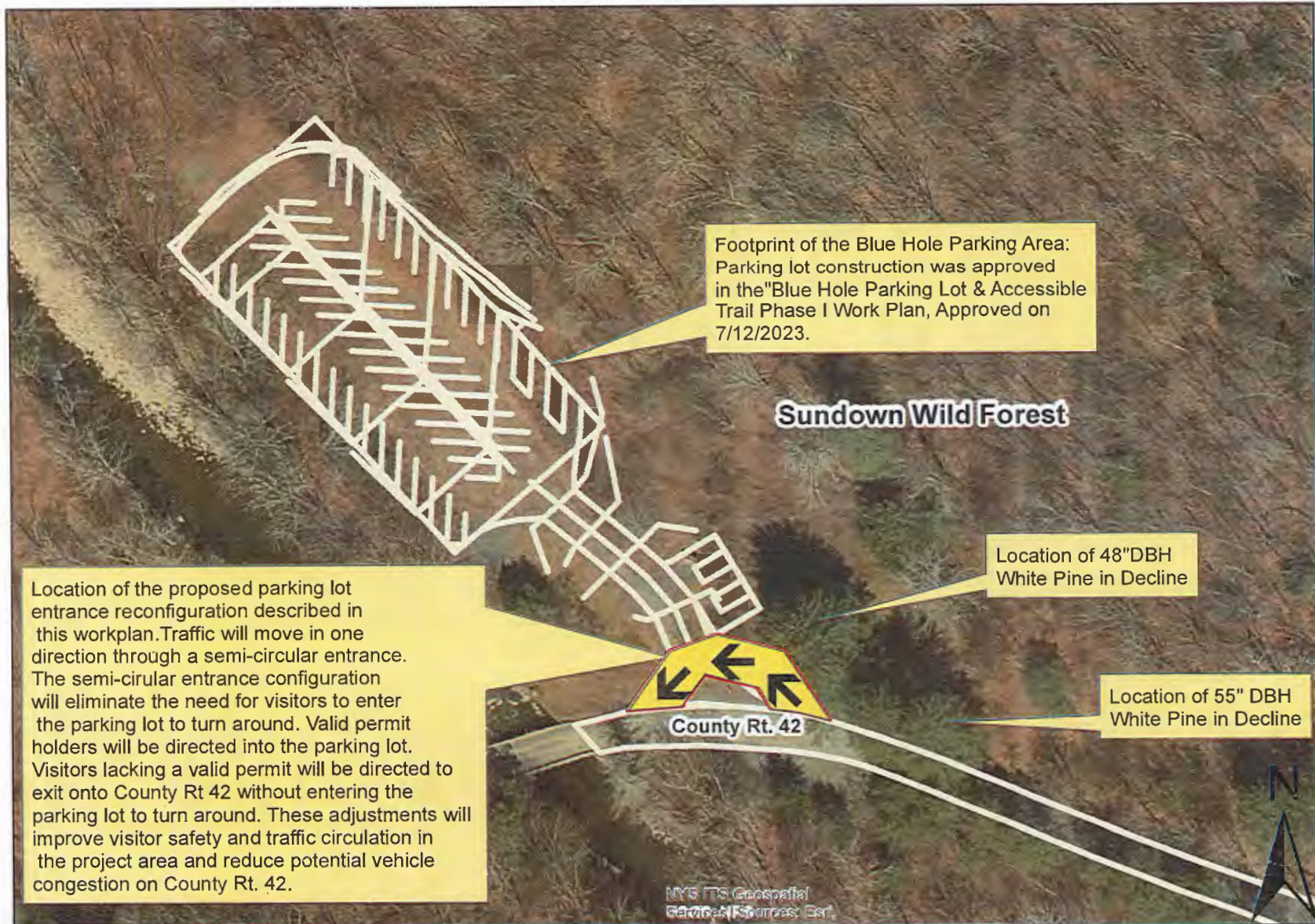
Regional Director  
Date: Click to enter a date 1/10/2025



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Division Director  
Date: 1/09/2025

## Blue Hole Parking Lot Entrance Reconfiguration



0 50 100 200 300 400 Feet

**REGULATORY CLEARANCE CHECKLIST – STATE LANDS and CONSERVATION EASEMENT PROJECTS**

PROGRAM	PERMIT	REQUIRED		SECURED BY	COMMENTS
		YES	NO	(NAME)	
Air Resources	Restricted Burning	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Mineral Resources	Mining	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Materials Management	Solid Waste Mgt. Fac.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Water	Dam Safety Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Const. in Flood Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Public Water Supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	SPDES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Spills Management	Petro. Bulk Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Lands and Forests	Unit Management Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Pine Roehrs	
	Tree Cutting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Timothy Yeats	
	Protected Native Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Historic Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Fish and Wildlife	Freshwater Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	EAF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Negative Declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Env. Impact Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Water Quality Cert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
DEC (other)	CP-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Commissioner (aircraft, motorized equipment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Flight Request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Contract Clearance Sh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	DOB Exemption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other Agencies	APA MOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Corps. of Engineers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Building Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Local Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Easements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Highway Enter DOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	Wastewater Disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		



Approximate location of the new parking lot entrance



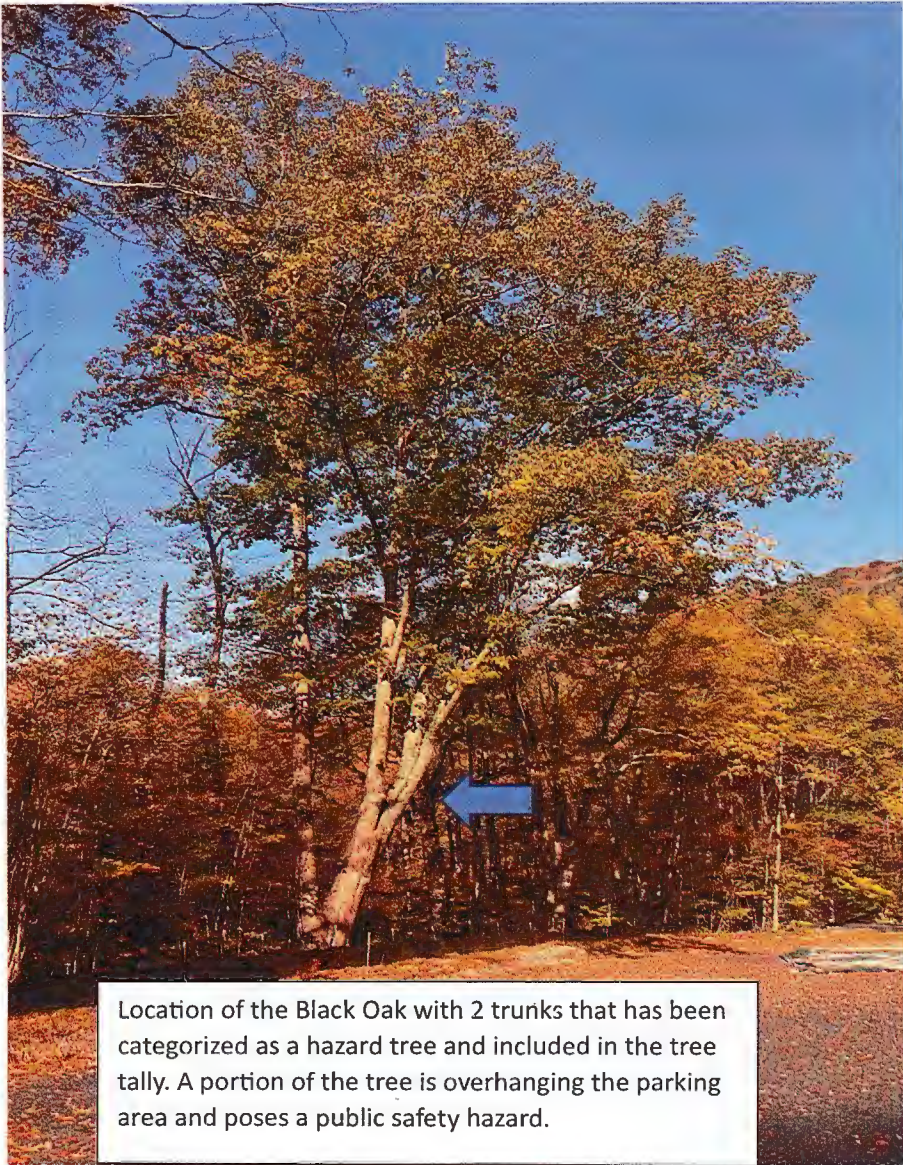
Location of 26 trees tallied and slated for removal is within the orange arrows.



Location of Hazard White Pines that are in serious decline at the entrance of Blue Hole



Existing Exit to the Blue Hole Parking Lot



Location of the Black Oak with 2 trunks that has been categorized as a hazard tree and included in the tree tally. A portion of the tree is overhanging the parking area and poses a public safety hazard.



