

FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

Fiscal Year 2024-2025

Project # CO-WP-315

<u>Region</u> 5	<u>Project Title</u> Prospect Mountain Overlook Maintenance
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<u>Project Type</u>	<u>Town(s)</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>Management Unit</u>
Modification of Existing Structure/Improvement	Lake George	Warren	Prospect Mountain Veteran's Memorial Highway Day Use Area

Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project

Located just minutes from the Village of Lake George, New York, the Prospect Mountain Day Use Area includes several notable features, including the Prospect Mountain Veteran's Memorial Highway, multiple scenic viewpoints, and a variety of opportunities for people with disabilities. Combined, these attributes provide an opportunity for the public to experience public lands of the Adirondack Park in a unique and positive way.

The desired condition for this project is to continue to provide visitors clear scenic views from the summit and the three existing paved overlooks strategically located along the highway by maintaining them on a recurring basis. The 5½ mile two-lane paved scenic highway winds and climbs its way from NYS Route 9 to the summit. Along the way there are three designated scenic overlooks that previously afforded beautiful views of the Adirondacks of New York State and the Green Mountains in the State of Vermont. The three outlooks, The Narrows, Lake George, and The Eagle's Eye, were designed and constructed to offer visitors picturesque views of Lake George and its surroundings.

Prospect Mountain has served several unique purposes since the late 1800s. The summit was once the site of both a hotel and a sanatorium. An incline cable railway offered a unique form of transportation for the public to reach the scenic summit. By deed dated May 13, 1925, George Foster Peabody conveyed the lands under his control to the State for recreation and park purposes. Legislative efforts began in 1954 to designate and build a scenic parkway to the summit. Finally, in 1969, a 5.5-mile road was built that allowed people to drive to the summit and in 1974 it was designated as the Prospect Mountain Veteran's Memorial Highway in honor of our veterans. The purpose remains the same to this day. Events honoring veterans are held annually at this facility.

The current conditions at the project sites reflect several years of tree growth resulting from a lack of ordinary maintenance that began during the pandemic when the facility was closed during the 2020 and 2021 operating seasons. Many of existing tree stems identified in the tally consist of stump sprouts that have resulted from previously cut trees (see Figure 1). Consequently, the scenic views intended as instrumental to the purpose of the Veteran's Memorial Highway have become obstructed by the rapid growth of these stump sprouts. Recurring tree maintenance is vital to continuing to fulfill the purpose of this facility both as a park, pursuant to the terms of the deed, and as the only scenic

highway in the area offering distinct views of Lake George and the surrounding mountains for people of all abilities.

This project is intended to restore the desired historic condition of the scenic overlooks.

Description of Project Specifications

Overall, between the four distinct scenic overlooks, this project will cut 90 trees that are 3 inches or greater diameter at breast height (DBH), and 4,024 trees that are between 1 and 3 inches DBH. This project proposes to strategically prune and cut these trees on a recurring basis about every two to three years to maintain the historically maintained scenic views. Numerous sprouts over 1-inch DBH growing from previously cut tree stumps due to deferred maintenance contribute to the tree tally.

The attachments provide tree tallies and species counts for each scenic overlook. The attached maps provide a broad overview of the project limits where tree cutting will occur. All cutting will occur within the limited footprint of the historic cutting. However, the footprint for tree cutting at each overlook will be reduced within these historical limits to reduce the number of trees to be cut. These reduced and more focused footprints for cutting will restore the views from the overlooks while minimizing the number of trees to be cut. See Table 1 in the *Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives* below for more details.

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

Due to the legislative mandate for the location and purpose of the Prospect Mountain Veteran's Memorial Highway, it is not possible to completely avoid such impacts. However, this work plan takes great care to limit the view maintenance to those areas necessary to restore the previously established views at the three scenic pull-offs and the summit. The initial project limits were determined from the evidence of historical cutting at these areas. However, after further consideration and evaluation, the project limits were reduced from the historically maintained areas and cutting will be kept within the project limits outlined on the attached maps. This reduction in area was carefully reviewed and is intended to mitigate the impact to the surrounding natural resources, especially the significant natural community noted below. Because the Prospect Mountain Highway is a long-established highly developed area built for the purpose of providing views of the surrounding lands, maintaining the viewsheds will not change the character of the area. This maintenance is necessary to continue to meet the desired conditions of the facility.

Figure 1
Example of Past Pruning at Prospect Mountain



Below are the Forest Preserve Work Plan Tree Tallies for the three overlooks and summit south:

FOREST PRESERVE WORK PLAN TREE TALLY

Project Name: Prospect Mountain Highway Overlook Maintenance- Overlook 1
 State Land Unit: Prospect Mountain Intensive Use Area
 County: Warren Town: Lake George
 Date Tallied: 10/22/2024
 Tallied By: Rich McDermott

Species	Diameter		Total
	1 to 3	4 to 8	
White birch		8	8
Red maple		7	7
Red oak		18	18
Black cherry		1	1
Unknown	2720		2720
Total	2720	34	2754

Note: 1" - 3" size class are trees from 1.0" to 2.9" DBH. 4" size class are trees from 3.0" to 4.9". 6" size class are trees from 5.0" to 6.9".

FOREST PRESERVE WORK PLAN TREE TALLY

Project Name: Prospect Mountain Highway Overlook Maintenance- Overlook 2
 State Land Unit: Prospect Mountain Intensive Use Area
 County: Warren Town: Lake George
 Date Talled: 10/22/2024
 Talled By: Rich McDermott

Species	Diameter		Total
	1 to 3	4 to 8	
White ash		1	1
Red maple		1	1
Striped maple		1	1
Red oak		5	5
Black cherry		1	1
Hickory		2	2
Aspen		3	3
Ironwood		4	4
Unknown	504		504
Total	504	18	522

Note: 1"- 3" size class are trees from 1.0" to 2.9" DBH. 4" size class are trees from 3.0" to 4.9". 6" size class are trees from 5.0" to 6.9".

FOREST PRESERVE WORK PLAN TREE TALLY

Project Name: Prospect Mountain Highway Overlook Maintenance- Overlook 3
 State Land Unit: Prospect Mountain Intensive Use Area
 County: Warren Town: Lake George
 Date Talled: 10/22/2024
 Talled By: Rich McDermott

Species	Diameter		Total
	1 to 3	4 to 8	
Red maple		7	7
Red oak		23	23
White oak		7	7
Serviceberry		1	1
Unknown	680		680
Total	680	38	718

Note: 1"- 3" size class are trees from 1.0" to 2.9" DBH. 4" size class are trees from 3.0" to 4.9". 6" size class are trees from 5.0" to 6.9".

FOREST PRESERVE WORK PLAN TREE TALLY

Project Name: Prospect Mountain Highway Overlook Maintenance- Summit South
 State Land Unit: Prospect Mountain Intensive Use Area
 County: Warren Town: Lake George
 Date Talled: 10/22/2024
 Talled By: Rich McDermott

Species	Diameter		Total
	1 to 3	4 to 8	
Unknown	120		120
Total	120		120

Note: 1" - 3" size class are trees from 1.0" to 2.9" DBH. 4" size class are trees from 3.0" to 4.9". 6" size class are trees from 5.0" to 6.9".

The cut material will be chipped and dispersed on-site or piled and reduced to a height of less than 3 feet from the ground to naturally blend with the environment. Trees over 3 inches DBH within these areas were marked with an orange paint spot. Strategic pruning and cutting mitigates impacts to streams, waterbodies and wetlands because root systems will be left intact which allows trees to hold soil and thus reduce erosion. Large equipment that will be used for tree pruning and cutting will be operated in a manner which does not disturb the integrity of the soils at the project sites.

There will be no earthwork nor any impact to streams, waterbodies or wetlands associated with this project.

There are no rare, threatened, or endangered plant or animal species located within ¼ mile of the project area.

There is one significant natural community located within ¼ mile of the project area noted by the New York Natural Heritage Program (NYNHP) described below. There is the possibility for minor impacts to this community as this proposal includes the cutting of red oak trees. Though, these red oaks are within the historically maintained areas. It is also important to note that pitch pine-oak-heath communities have historically been maintained by fire and that disturbance is a natural component of this community's character.

Pitch Pine-Oak-Heath Rocky Summit – NYNHP describes the significance of this community as a "high quality occurrence of uncommon community type."

- State Protection Status - Not Listed
- State Conservation Status Rank – S3S4 (Vulnerable or Apparently Secure to Vulnerable)

Description: A community that occurs on warm, dry, rocky ridgetops and summits where the bedrock is non-calcareous (such as quartzite, sandstone, or schist), and the soils are more or less acidic. The vegetation may be sparse or patchy, with numerous rocky outcrops. This community is broadly defined and includes examples that may lack pines and instead are dominated by scrub oak or heath shrubs; this variation is apparently related to fire regime. Pitch pine-oak-heath rocky summit communities are often surrounded by chestnut oak forest. (<https://guides.nynhp.org/pitch-pine-oak-heath-rocky-summit/>)

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

As noted above, the State's receipt of the property surrounding the summit of Prospect Mountain was conditioned upon its use for park purposes. Additionally, in 1964, the legislature appropriated the funds to the Adirondack Mountain Authority as authorized by Chapter 267 of the Laws of 1954 for the Whiteface Mountain Authority, "To construct a state parkway in Warren County...to the top of Prospect Mountain" and "To construct, operate and maintain facilities and appurtenances along Prospect Mountain State Parkway and on Prospect Mountain for the public, not inconsistent with state park and parkway purposes, but deemed essential to the development of Prospect Mountain for scenic and recreational purposes..." The statutory responsibility for the care, custody and control of the highway and its facilities now rests with the Department pursuant to Environmental Conservation Law 9-0903(1).

As a result of the above, the location of the highway, scenic vistas and the summit are existing facilities which must be maintained to continue to fulfil the statutory mandate. There are no alternative project locations at which these trees can be cut due to the scenic orientation of the outlooks. In addition to the undesired resource impacts, the historically intended scenic views would still be obscured if cutting were to occur in alternative locations. Therefore, the reduction to historical cutting limits presents the only option for continued management. This management option also limits the impacts to the surrounding environment by avoiding disturbing previously undisturbed areas beyond the original footprints. The proposed cutting will allow visitors a chance to see vast tracts of undeveloped land in the surrounding area without expanding impacts to previously undisturbed areas.

Furthermore, the proposed maintenance will not result in a visual impact as viewed from the roads below. Specifically, the geological features just below the summit will continue to be the dominating natural feature visible from below.

The following alternatives were considered:

- 1) *Cut 284 trees that are 3 inches or greater DBH, and 13,109 trees that are between 1 and 3 inches DBH within the historical cutting limits.*

The original tree count was an estimation based on the historical cutting limits and represented an approximate maximum number of trees that may have needed cutting. The revised estimate was prepared after an evaluation in the field by a professional forester and tree service contractor to identify trees contributing to obscured views and considering the least impactful means and methods for improvement. Reducing the areas of disturbance results in achievement of the project goals and less tree disturbance. This results in a total of 4,114 trees to be cut instead of 13,393 trees. The historical cutting limits are compared with the proposed reduced limits in Table 1 below.

Table 1
Prospect Mountain Overlook Disturbance:
Historical and Proposed Cutting Limits

Overlook	Historical Cutting Limits (acres)	Proposed Cutting Limits (acres)
1	1.35	0.68
2	0.59	0.126
3	1.09	0.17
Summit North	0.39	N/A – no cutting proposed
Summit South	0.46	0.11

2) *No action.*

Allowing trees to grow without continuing the maintenance historically performed will eventually completely block the scenic vistas at each overlook. This would deprive visitors of one, if not the primary purpose of their visit, i.e. experiencing the scenic vistas on Prospect Mountain. The legislative intent of this facility constructed about 55 years ago would no longer be fulfilled.

It is important to note that in the nearly 70 years since the plan to honor veterans by this scenic highway was initiated, the facility receives significant use. Prospect Mountain has experienced an average of 68,588 annual visitors since 2016 (not including 2020/2021) with a significant increase in visitors from 2016 to 2019 (shown in Table 2 below). In 2022, Prospect Mountain experienced a decrease in visitor attendance from its previous totals following a two-year closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, it appears that visitor attendance has been trending upwards ever since.

Table 2
Prospect Mountain Visitor Attendance Records (2016-2023)

Year	Number of Visitors
2016	77,259
2017	65,575
2018	68,787
2019	92,378
2020	0 – Closed due to COVID 19 pandemic
2021	0 – Closed due to COVID 19 pandemic
2022	48,261
2023	59,269

Figures 2 through 10 below represent maps and photographs identifying each Overlook where tree cutting is proposed. The orthoimagery on the maps was taken in 2018, and all the photographs, taken from August to October 2024, represent the current conditions at each site.

Figure 2 – Map of Prospect Mountain Overlooks

Prospect Mountain Overlooks



Figure 3 – Overlook 1 Historical Cutting Limits

Prospect Overlook #1

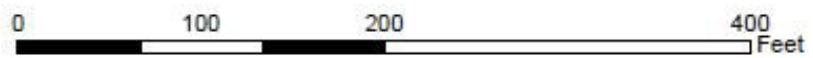


Figure 4 – Overlook 1 – The Narrows



Figure 5 – Overlook 2 Historical Cutting Limits

Prospect Overlook #2

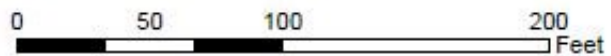


Figure 6 – Overlook 2 – Lake George



Figure 7 – Overlook 3 Historical Cutting Limits
Prospect Overlook #3



Figure 8 – Overlook 3 – The Eagle’s Eye



Figure 9 – Summit South Historical Cutting Limits
Prospect Summit South

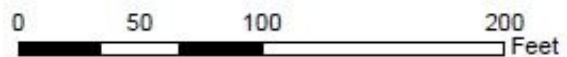


Figure 10 – Summit South



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

Chainsaws will be used to cut the trees and a woodchipper will be used to chip cut portions of trees. A 60-foot brush grapple, a 100-foot bucket truck and a 150-foot crane may be used where the trees and vegetative growth overhang the paved surface of the overlook pull-offs and roadsides. The larger equipment will be staged on both asphalt and routinely mowed areas as to not disturb the character of the surrounding forest.

Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

This facility offers individuals with disabilities rare opportunities to experience mountain summit views that may not otherwise be accessible. There are currently several accessible features at this facility including accessible pull-offs, viewing areas, a viewing scope, vault toilets, parking spaces and a path that serves as an accessible route.

The pull-off areas at each overlook consist of a firm, stable, and slip resistant surface that allows users to maneuver to a place where they can view the surrounding areas. Viewing areas are located at the summit as well as each of the three overlooks. The first overlook, named 'The Narrows,' features an accessible viewing scope which is an addition made in recent years. As one drives even further up the memorial highway, there is a large parking area that has accessible vault toilets for use. Arriving at the summit, there are two to three accessible parking spaces which connect to an accessible path that leads users to an expansive viewing area. This accessible path was recently repaved to improve its function.

Other Relevant Considerations

None

Prepared by (Name & Title): Mitchell Krah - EPS 1
Phone: 518-897-1205

Date: 2/28/2025

Approvals:

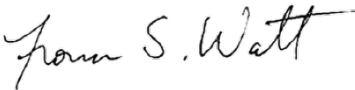
Comments:



Regional Program Manager
Date: 2/28/2025



Regional Director
Date: May 5, 2025



Division Director
Date: 5/5/2025

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Mineral Resources	Mining	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Materials Management	Solid Waste Mgt. Fac.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Water	Dam Safety Review	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Const. in Flood Hazard	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Public Water Supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	SPDES	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Spills Management	Petro. Bulk Storage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Lands and Forests	Unit Management Plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Tree Cutting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Mitchell Krah	Pending approval through this work plan
	Protected Native Plants	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Historic Preservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Fish and Wildlife	Freshwater Wetlands	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Wild Scenic & Rec. River	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Compliance Services	Other Protection of Waters	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	EAF	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Negative Declaration	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Env. Impact Statement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Water Quality Cert.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
DEC (other)	CP-17	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Commissioner (aircraft, motorized equipment)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Flight Request	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Contract Clearance Sh.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	DOB Exemption	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Other Agencies	APA MOU	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Corps. of Engineers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Building Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Local Permits	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Easements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Highway Enter DOT	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
Wastewater Disposal	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			