
FOREST PRESERVE DETAILED PROJECT WORK PLAN

Fiscal Year 2025
Project # CO-WP-386

<u>Region</u> 6	<u>Project Title</u> Bald Mountain Trail Improvement Part 1
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<u>Project Type</u> Modification of Existing Structure/Improvement	<u>Town(s)</u> Webb	<u>County</u> Herkimer	<u>Management Unit</u> Fulton Chain Wild Forest
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Description of Desired Condition(s) for Project

Current Conditions

The Bald Mountain (AKA Rondaxe Firetower) Trail is one of the most popular hikes within the Adirondacks. Repeated heavy foot traffic across a steep, rocky climb up a ridge, along with a general lack of maintenance, has created a severely eroded, and widened, path. Numerous injuries, and subsequent rescue missions, have occurred at the first rock climb. To begin to address these issues, the following work is proposed.

Desired Conditions

The end goal is to produce a more sustainable and hiker friendly trail capable of withstanding the numerous users that visit each year (over 30,000). A combination of trail hardening, installation of drainage structures, trail relocations (where possible), and stone steps will be used to achieve this objective. However, it should be noted that to completely rehabilitate the entire length of this trail, multiple projects over time will be necessary. Priority is being given to this problematic section in question due to the number of injuries occurring there. Future projects will incrementally address the remainder of the trail.

Description of Project Specifications

It is planned that this project will be undertaken by a contract trail crew whenever possible. With the amount of work that will be required, it is likely that this project will occur across multiple years.

Around 900 feet from the trail head, the existing trail begins its climb up a rocky ridge. Prior to this location, a trail relocation heading off to the northwest is proposed. This trail reroute, flagged with pink flagging, will seek to climb the hillside at a gentler grade, and avoiding a rock scramble in the

process, prior to making a turn back uphill to the south. A series of switchbacks will be necessary to gain elevation to rejoin the existing trail. A total of 1,292 ft (0.24 miles) of new trail will be constructed.

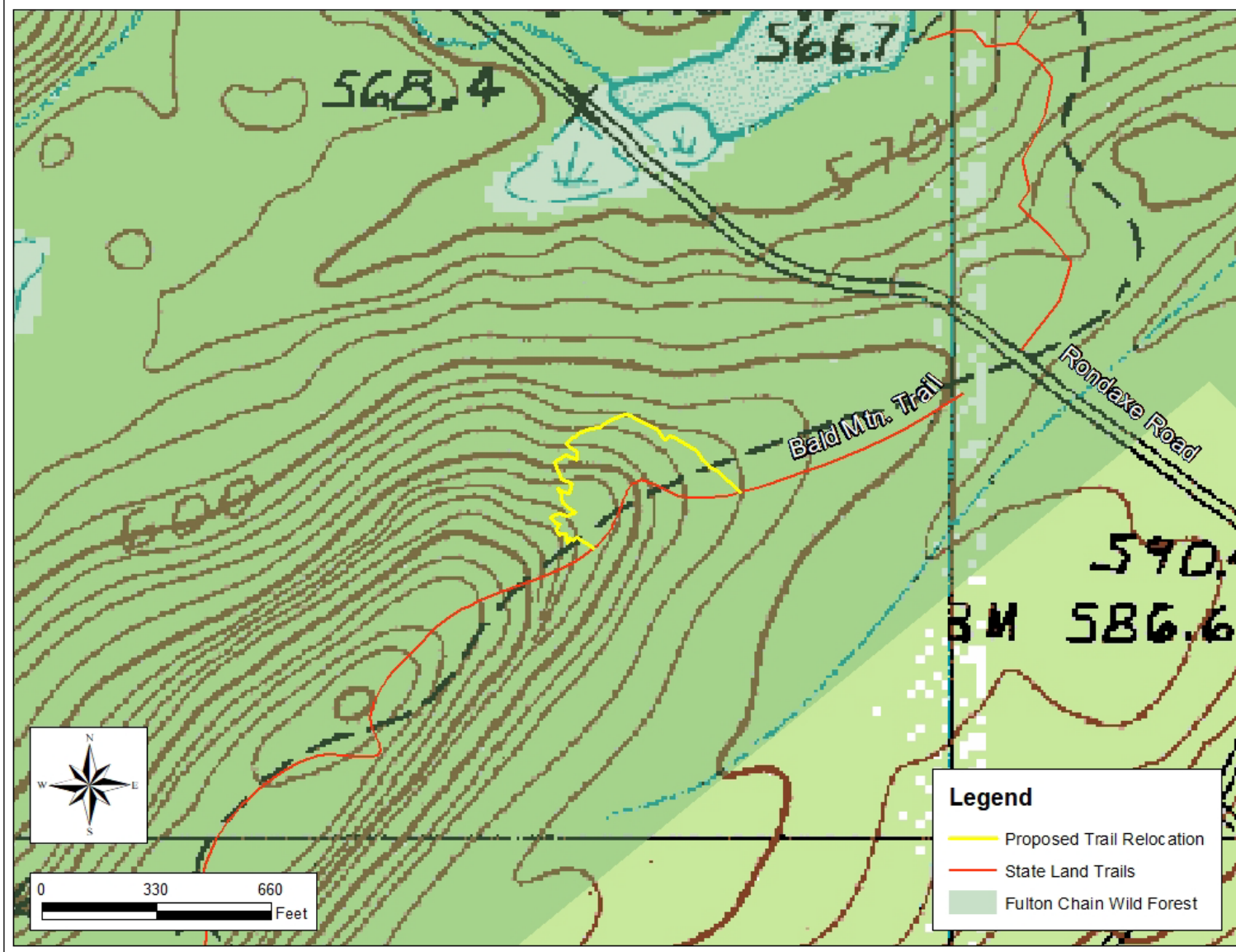
The tread of this trail will be 3 feet wide with vegetation cleared an additional two feet on each side making a seven-foot trail corridor. A full bench cut will need to be installed over the entire length. For longevity in withstanding heavy use, a layer of crushed rock (at least 6 inches in depth) will form the base of this trail. Mineral soil will then be used to cap this layer and form the trail tread. All material (rocks and soil) will be sourced on site through "borrow pits" located adjacent to this reroute.

Although layout sought to keep the grade at or below 10%, the terrain constraints (e.g., bedrock outcroppings) necessitate that this recommended maximum is often exceeded in the last half of this trail reroute. Around 15 rock water bars will be installed throughout this trail but given the slope, most will be concentrated in this steep section.

Following the completion of this trail relocation, the old trail will be closed off and left alone for nature to reclaim.

Tree Cutting

A total of 75 trees between 1" and 3" DBH will have to be cut during the trail construction process. Twenty-Two (22) trees over 3" DBH will also have to be cut. See the summary table on the next page.



Map of the Proposed Trail Relocation



Looking to the Northwest where the proposed trail reroute (marked with pink flagging) leaves the existing Bald Mountain Trail, with successive photos below:











Looking south where the proposed trail reroute rejoins the existing trail.

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

The objective of this project is to produce a new section of trail that is more “hiker friendly” than the existing rocky climb being avoided. Also, of equal importance is constructing a sustainable trail that will be resilient to the biotic (i.e., projected heavy use) and abiotic (i.e., environmental factors such as slope, precipitation, and their compounding effects) factors present. To the greatest extent possible, trail layout sought to avoid problem areas such as wet areas, excessively rocky sections, and steep slopes that would negatively impact the site and produce maintenance problems in the future. However, given the existing site constraints, temporarily exceeding the recommended maximum grade of 10% was unavoidable in the later half of this proposed trail reroute. Erosion control structures, such as water bars, will have to be liberally employed there to stabilize the trail.

Following installation, any disturbed areas, including but not limited to “borrow pits” where mineral soil is to be mined for trail construction, will be naturalized with leaves and brush.

Analysis of Project Location and Design Alternatives

No Action: Without any management intervention, the existing trail will remain unchanged. This consequence is not desirable environmentally or from a recreational standpoint due to the impacts and numerous accidents being experienced.

Closing the Bald Mountain Trail: This option would not be socially acceptable given the high demand for access to the Bald Mountain Fire Tower, especially during the fall foliage season. As a result, this choice was rejected.

Rerouting the Entire Bald Mountain Trail: Previous field reconnaissance indicated that a reroute of the whole trail would not be feasible due to the numerous bedrock outcroppings and cliffs present the closer one travels to the summit. However, a second look at this option revealed that a trail relocation is possible where this current preferred proposal is located. Future work plans will be utilized to address other areas of concerns along the trail.

Installing Stone Steps and/or a Ladder within the Current Trail Corridor: Constructing stone steps would be effective but this alternative has the disadvantage of being very labor intensive. A combination of a wooden ladder and steps could also be installed over the rocky climb on the existing trail, but this option would lead to increased maintenance costs over time. Installing the trail relocation as proposed presents a more permanent solution with less input applied. However, future efforts located further up the trail, where a reroute would not be an option, will likely have to consider these alternatives to improve the existing corridor.

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

There will not be any motorized vehicles used. However, motorized handheld tools, specifically a chainsaw and/or a brush saw, may be used for efficiency in clearing the trail corridor. Additionally, a handheld drill along with a small generator may be used to split rock for water bar construction.

Description of Applicable Standards for Accessibility by People with Disabilities

Consistent with ADA requirements, DEC incorporates accessibility for people with disabilities into siting, planning, construction, and alteration of recreational facilities and assets supporting them. In addition, Title II of the ADA requires, in part, that services, programs, and activities of DEC, when viewed in their entirety, are readily accessible to and usable by people with disabilities. DEC is not required to take any action which would result in a fundamental alteration to the nature of the service, program, or activity, or would present an undue financial or administrative burden. When accommodating access to a program, DEC is not necessarily required to make each existing facility and asset accessible, as long as the program is accessible by other means or at a different facility. The Bald Mountain Trail is existing and is not an accessible trail, and it would not be practical to make it such due to terrain. This relocated trail segment will be constructed with similar techniques to the existing trail, as it would not be pragmatic or serve to increase accessibility to construct just one portion of this trail to meet accessible trail requirements.

Other Relevant Considerations

Natural Heritage Data

A check of the NYS Natural Heritage Database indicates that there are not any known rare, threatened, or endangered species in the immediate area. However, there are three significant Natural Communities traversed by the existing trail and located near, but not within, the proposed project area; Mountain Spruce-Fir Forest, Cliff Community, and Acidic Talus Slope Woodland. Since this proposed trail relocation is not located within any of their boundaries, there should not be any additional impacts.

Cultural Resources

A check of the available Archeological sites in DEC's GIS database indicates that there are not any known cultural resources at or near the project area.

Non-Native Invasive Species

Currently there are not any known non-native invasive species in the immediate area of this project. To help prevent any from becoming established, sanitation efforts consisting of cleaning any hand tools and boots of trail crew workers prior to mobilizing to the site should be employed.

Prepared by (Name & Title): Michael Marsh, Forester
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Date: 12/3/2024

Approvals:

Comments:



Regional Program Manager
Date: 5/30/2025



Regional Director
Date:



On behalf of Fiona Watt

Division Director
Date: 7/14/2025

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 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 type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Approval as part of this work plan.
	Tree Cutting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		See attached
	Negative Declaration	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		See attached
	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 checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		See attached
	APA Wetlands Permit	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		
	Corps. of Engineers	<input checked="" 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"/>		