



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic  
Preservation**

# New York's Breakneck Ridge

A Challenge for Hikers Becomes a Challenge to Sustain

Presented by  
New York-New Jersey Trail Conference  
and  
New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation, and Historic Preservation



## Presentation overview:

- Introduction to Hudson Highlands & Breakneck Ridge
- Visitor use highlights, trends, and issues
- Management efforts to date
- Future efforts
- Summary & Q&A





*"Breakneck Ridge from the West Bank" Frank Anderson (1844-1892)*





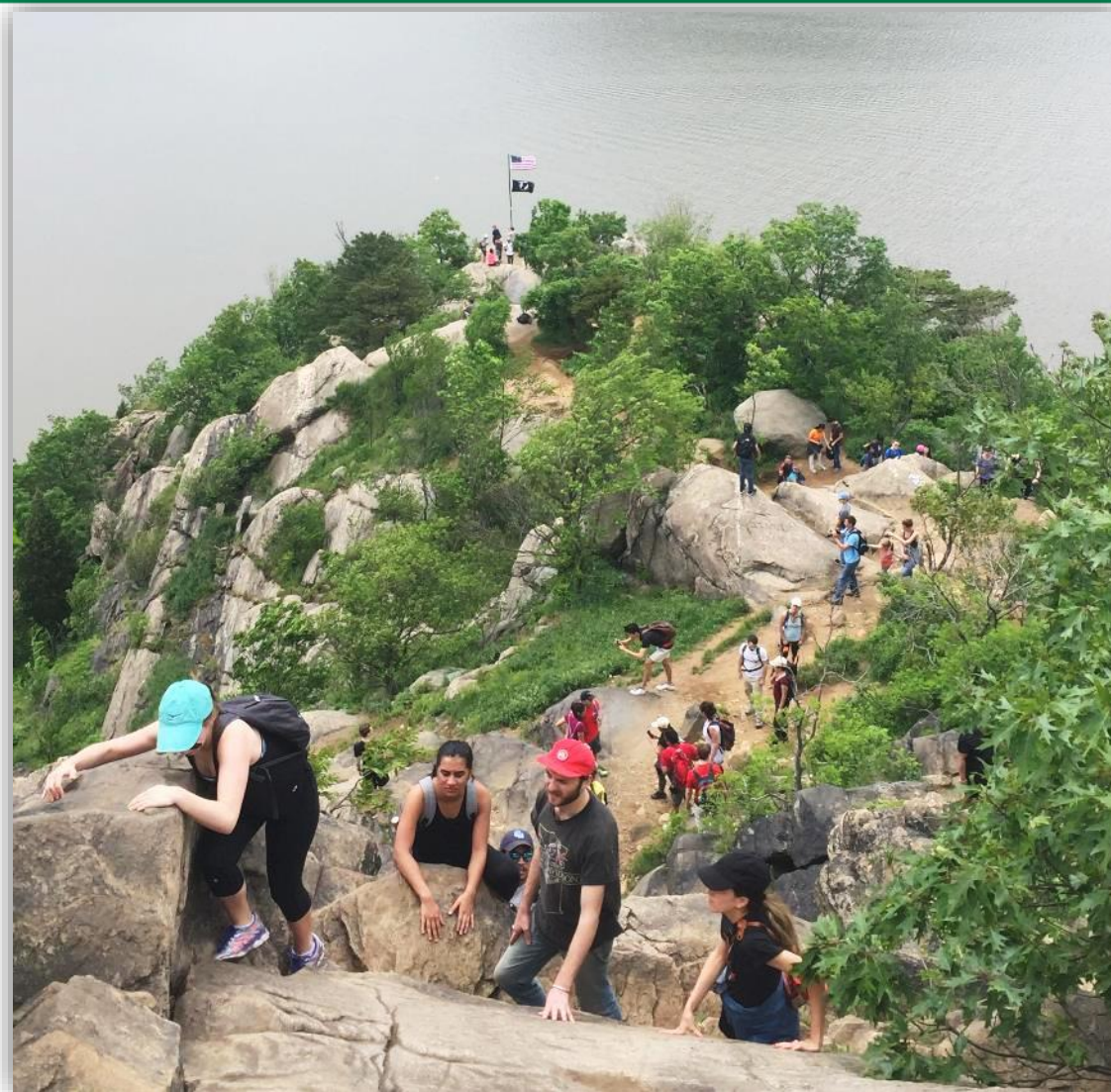
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# An introduction...via social media

**#BreakneckRidge**







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**tjraszka** • [Follow](#)  
Cold Spring, New York



tjraszka One of my favorite shots from last weekend. Where to next?  
#hikeny #breakneckridge

4d



**louis.mancini** thru hike the AT



4d Reply

— View replies (2)



34 likes

4 DAYS AGO

Add a comment...

Post



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andre\_nizzari • [Follow](#)

Breakneck Ridge Trail Loop

andre\_nizzari #breakneckridge  
#trailsteward #winterpatrol #nynjtc  
#leavenotrace #hiking  
#lookacrosstheriver #hudsonriver  
#hudsonvalley #i♥ny

10w



marcelafae =)

8w Reply



Liked by nynjtc and 32 others

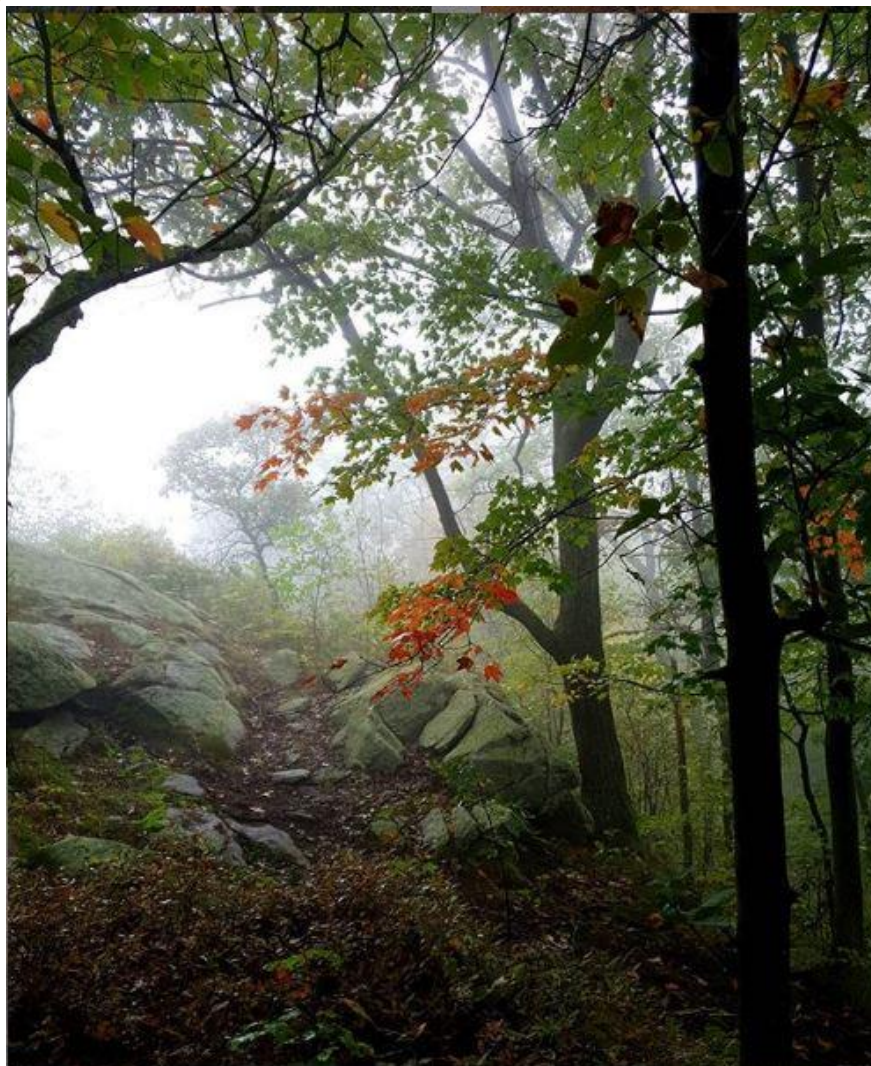
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**nehayem** • [Follow](#)  
Hudson Highlands State Park



nehayem Time spent amongst trees is never time wasted. I'm sure heaven looks something like this!

#breakneckridge #foggy #heaven  
#qualitytimewithmybrother  
#somethingnew #hike  
#worththeclimb #worththehike  
#colourful #nature #naturewalk  
#walkforlife #walk #weekendvibes  
#weekendfun #photography  
#photooftheday #photographylover  
#ilovephotography #naturelover  
#naturephoto #lovethis  
#photographyseries #natgeotravel

27w



**sunshinewitharu** Beautiful



66 likes

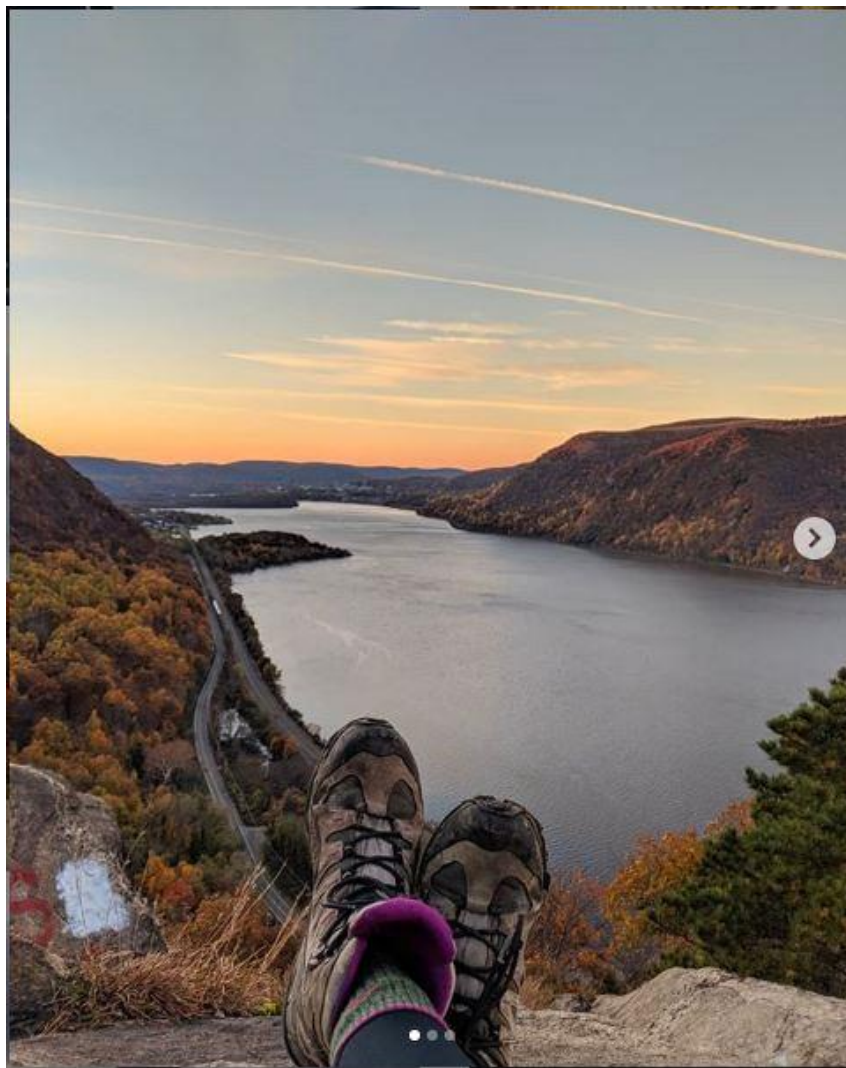
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sammibee93 • [Follow](#)



sammibee93 Taking in the views of the #hudsonhighlands at #breakneckridge after some steep scrambling 🧗🏻

23w



33 likes

NOVEMBER 4, 2018

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**r.ace.me** • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



19w



**azayakanna** What a view 🌄



19w 1 like Reply

— View replies (1)



**capturecoolness** Rock on! 🎸



19w 1 like Reply

— View replies (1)



**jgqpugliese** cool pic ! :)



19w 2 likes Reply

— View replies (1)



Liked by nynjtc and 68 others

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hudsonvalleyhappenings • [Follow](#) ...



beaconbarkingfrog WOW!



11w Reply



xxixyzttk @tatylna picknick and  
sungazing. But have to get down  
in dark safely.



11w 1 like Reply



minimalmaxx A-MAZING !



9w Reply



Liked by nynjtc and 3,551 others

JANUARY 27

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**claudsdawson** • [Follow](#)  
Hudson Highlands State Park



claudsdawson Trying to channel  
some of this stunning stillness in the  
middle of an insane work week

•  
•  
•  
•  
•



#upstateny #hikemore  
#getperspective #hudsonhighlands  
#breakneckridge #hikingadventures



94 likes

FEBRUARY 20

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astrobound\_adventures • [Follow](#) ...

astrobound\_adventures Queen of the mountain! Unless the wind blows me right off 🤪🤪 #breakneckridge #hudsonvalley #hudsonvalleyhiking #downstateny #iloveny #hometown #getoutside #getoutandplay #hiking #winterhiking #womenwhohike #badasshikingwomen #hikingwithdogs #rei #ospreypacks #rei #padagonia #hikingwithdogs #hikinggirl #jeepgirl #jkugirl #adventureisnecessary

18w



knives\_dailyyy Pretty cool :)



18w Reply

— View replies (1)



47 likes

DECEMBER 4, 2018

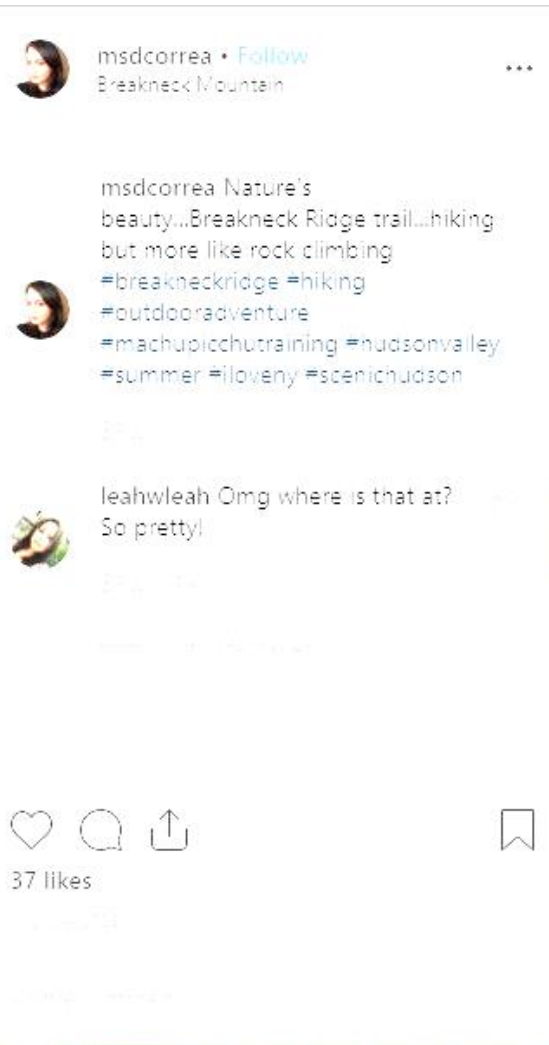
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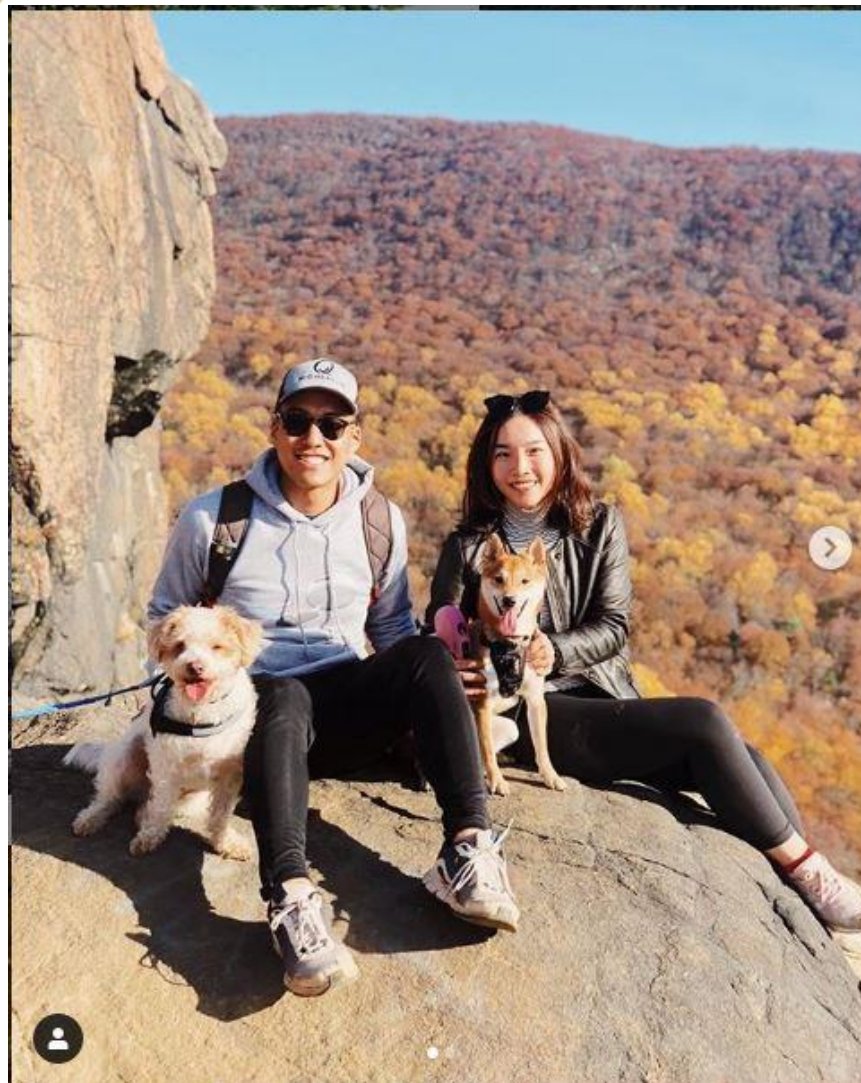




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carolollllll • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge

carolollllll The trail looked so flat on the map 🗺️



#family #hiking #foliage #upstateny  
#breakneckridge #duke #fall  
#shibainu #puppy

23w



yomikaze Wait whoops was I supposed to smile or something

23w Reply

— View replies (2)



soungyeob\_shin · (👍👍👍) · (👍) (👍)



Liked by nynjtc and 83 others

NOVEMBER 5, 2018

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bornatthewrongtime • [Follow](#)



bornatthewrongtime The sign at the Breakneck Ridge trailhead reads, "This is not a walk in the park."

#rockscramble #hikethehudsonvalley  
#hikelocal #exploremore #getoutside  
#puttingthecanincancer  
#ourcancerjourney #hudsonriver  
#hudsonvalley #breakneckridge  
#hudsonhighlandsstatepark #newyork  
#ny

1w

christie\_burda I did that rock scramble....holy heights! Super fun though. Beautiful day for it!



1w 1 like Reply

terina It's on my list!



85 likes

APRIL 6

Add a comment...

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life\_Of\_ma • [Follow](#)

Breakneck Ridge Trail Loop



#theviewlooksgreatfromhere  
#firstlookout #doingshikingthings  
#offtothewoodswego  
#jamesneedstokeephiseyesopened  
#theasianguywassleepingontheshot

25w



kuyaulo @misterjames\_\_ lol  
them hashtags



25w Reply



11 likes

OCTOBER 22, 2018

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 **farewelltravels** • Follow ...  
Breakneck Ridge

#farewelltravels #travellermade  
#adventuretravel #iloveny

25w

 elsabordelasnubes ✨✨✨!!!!!! ♡  
22w Reply

 carlosgomes2754 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌 ♡  
17w Reply

 boubakri.mourad 🙌🙌🙌🙌🙌 ♡  
15w Reply

 kumara.chandra.395 Hello.. ♡  
10w Reply

♡ 💬 📌 🔖

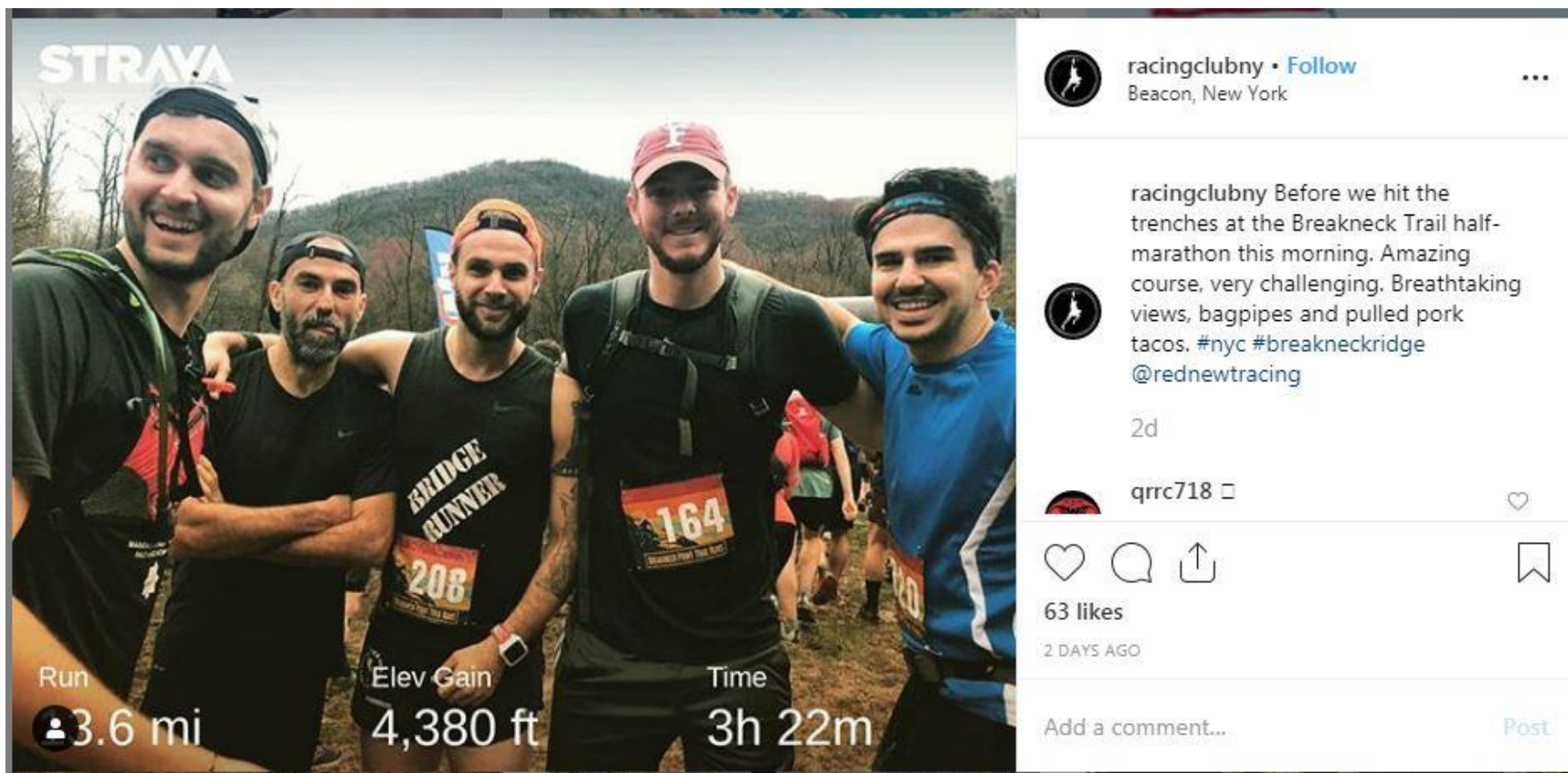
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**mirjirum** • [Follow](#)

Breakneck Ridge



#breakneckridge #trailmarathon  
#nytrailseries #rednewtracing  
#timetoplay #hudsonvalley  
#mountainrunning #trailrunning  
#happilyrunning @happilyrunning  
@runonhudsonvalley

31w



**katrin\_runs** Wow! What a taff  
race □□□□



31w Reply



**jeremiahjbautista** Who would  
climb Breakneck in the middle of  
a marathon??? That just sounds  
DUM



30w 1 like Reply



50 likes

SEPTEMBER 10, 2018

Add a comment...

[Post](#)





**jibby.the.sixth** • Follow  
Breakneck Ridge



jibby.the.sixth We thought we were going for a hike. NO ONE told us we would be scaling a mountain - unharnessed! That smile quickly turned into fear a few metres higher...perhaps we should have guessed with a name like Breakneck!!!!  
👤👤👤👤👤👤 #hiking #fear #fearofheights #almostdied #badidea #goodidea #ny #breakneckridge

23w



**rosemortadella** This is a good story lol 😂



23w 1 like Reply

— View replies (1)



32 likes

NOVEMBER 5, 2018

Add a comment...

Post





**danielle\_despres** • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



danielle\_despres Hump day has me wishing I was back hiking in the sunny sunshine ☀️ with my Willy Fam at Breakneck Ridge 😊!!

#SQUAD

#WillyFam

#AdventuresOfTandD

#HumpDay #WishfulThinking #Fam

#Love #Friends #Happy #Hike

#Instagood #Nature #PicOfTheDay

#Wanderlust #Run #Walk #Climb

#Fitness #Muscle #Abs #Workout



46 likes

OCTOBER 24, 2018

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oliviagram • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



oliviagram The appropriately named  
Breakneck Ridge in Cold Springs...  
#survivors #hikethehudson  
#topoftherock #newyork #viewpoint  
#nature #breakneckridge #winterhike  
#escapethecity

9w



Liked by nynjtc and 45 others

FEBRUARY 7

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Post





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**oishi\_mimi** • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



23w Reply



**martinramos5478** you look pretty 😊😊



23w Reply



**tigerzain** Beautiful



22w Reply



63 likes

NOVEMBER 4, 2018

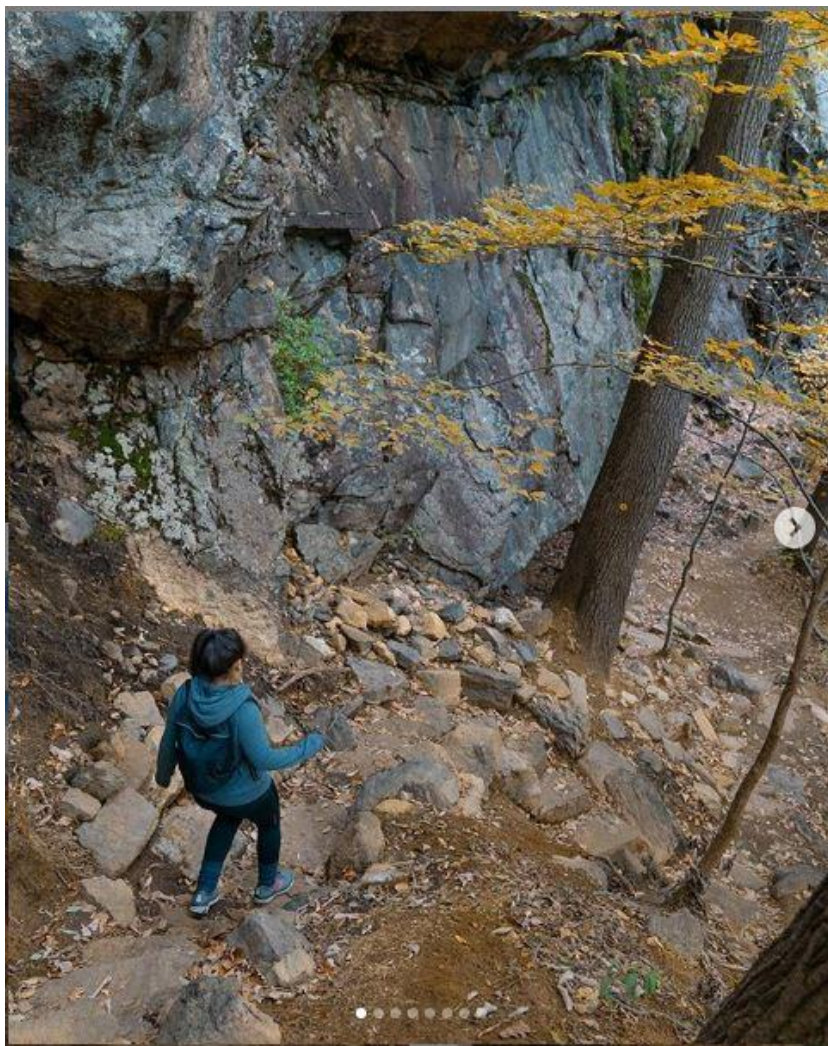
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hoezayyy • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



hoezayyy 🍁🌿 part 2



#fall #foliage #breakneckridge  
#outsideisfree #hiking #climbing #ny  
#nys #newyork #vsco #vscocam  
#sony #sonyalph #landscape  
#explore #outdoors #photography

22w



itsveeng Good stuff!



22w Reply

— View replies (1)



Liked by nynjtc and 85 others

NOVEMBER 10, 2018

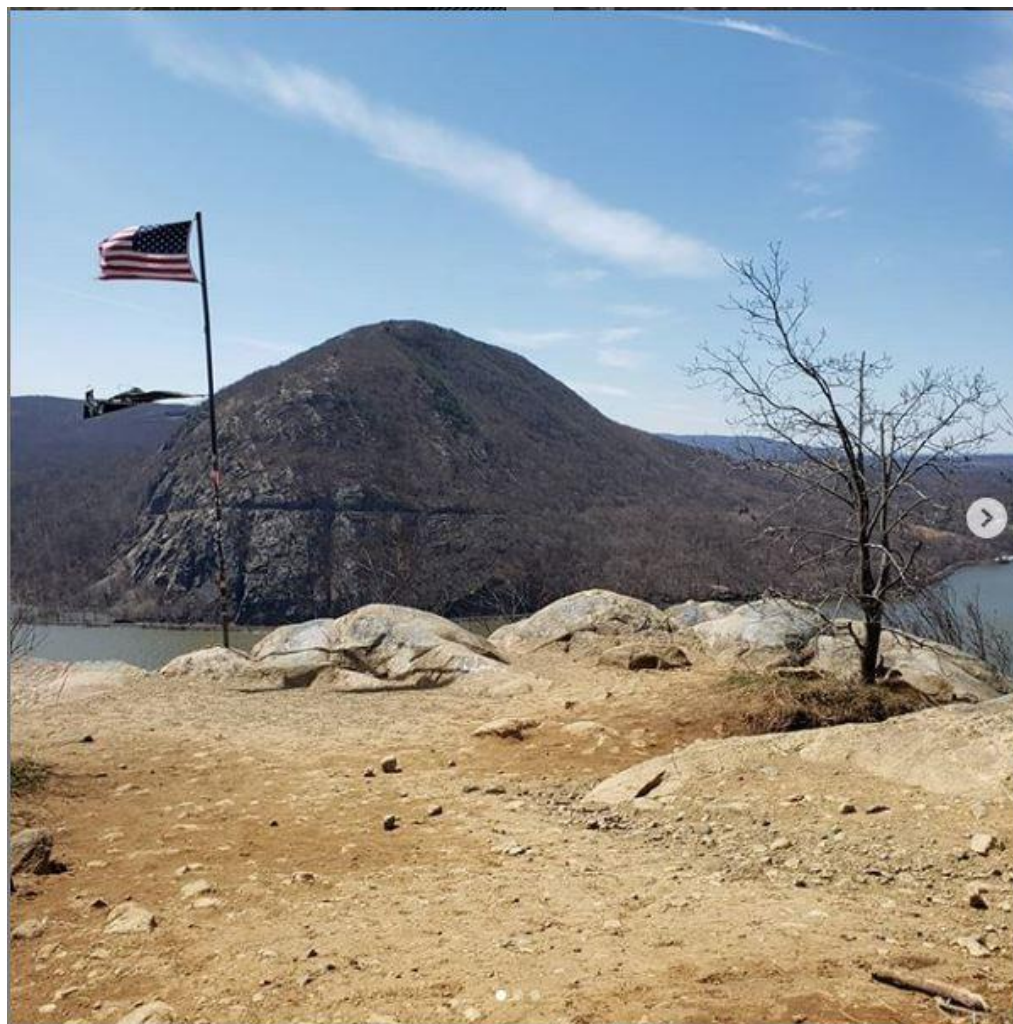
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sweetcheeks24.13 • [Follow](#)  
Breakneck Ridge



sweetcheeks24.13 #catskills  
#breakneckridge #coldspring  
#peekskill #upstateny #upstate  
#hiking #gorgeous #beautiful  
#thatview #peaceful #america  
#nature #hike #spring #awesome  
#amazing #river #mountaintrail  
#weekdayfun #explore #escape  
#adventure

1w



johnpeter\_pipicella [👤](#) [👤](#) [👤](#)  
#photooftheday!



1w 1 like Reply



69 likes

APRIL 4

Add a comment...

[Post](#)






**jellybeanboom** • Follow  
Beacon, New York



jellybeanboom I just wish @scheidel and Oskie could have seen the headline attraction of today's hike 🐍🐍

32w

jellybeanboom #hike #hiking  
 #Appalachianmountainclub  
 #snake #rattlesnake  
 #sunsoutsnakesout #outdoors  
 #getoutside #beacon  
 #hudsonhighlands  
 #breakneckridge

32w Reply

scheidel No way! Why does the photo look like you zoomed way in rather than hiking up close to






26 likes

SEPTEMBER 1, 2018

Add a comment... Post





**climbfishsleep** • [Follow](#)  
Hudson Highlands State Park



climbfishsleep Eastern Fence Lizard  
(*Sceloporus undulatus*)  
#herping #lizard #hudsonhighlands  
#breakneckridge

23w



18 likes

NOVEMBER 5, 2018

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yepgreatestgm • [Follow](#)



yepgreatestgm When you twist your ankle rock scrambling on Breakneck Ridge. But I'm still the king of Xtreme.  
#twistedankle #ouch #hiking  
#hikingadventures #breakneckridge  
#malesoles #malesolefetish  
#rockscrambling #size12 #malefeet  
#piesmasculinos #ice #icepack  
#icepacks #gaytoes #achingfeet  
#rubmyfeet #sadface #aww  
#kingteddy #bigbaby #tattoo  
#sexymalefeet #injury #milkingit

42w

foxcker Oh no! ☹️...but ☺️☺️!  
Hehe



42w 1 like Reply



166 likes

JUNE 22, 2018

Add a comment...

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**#BreakneckRidge**

Looks awesome, right?  
Let's Go!





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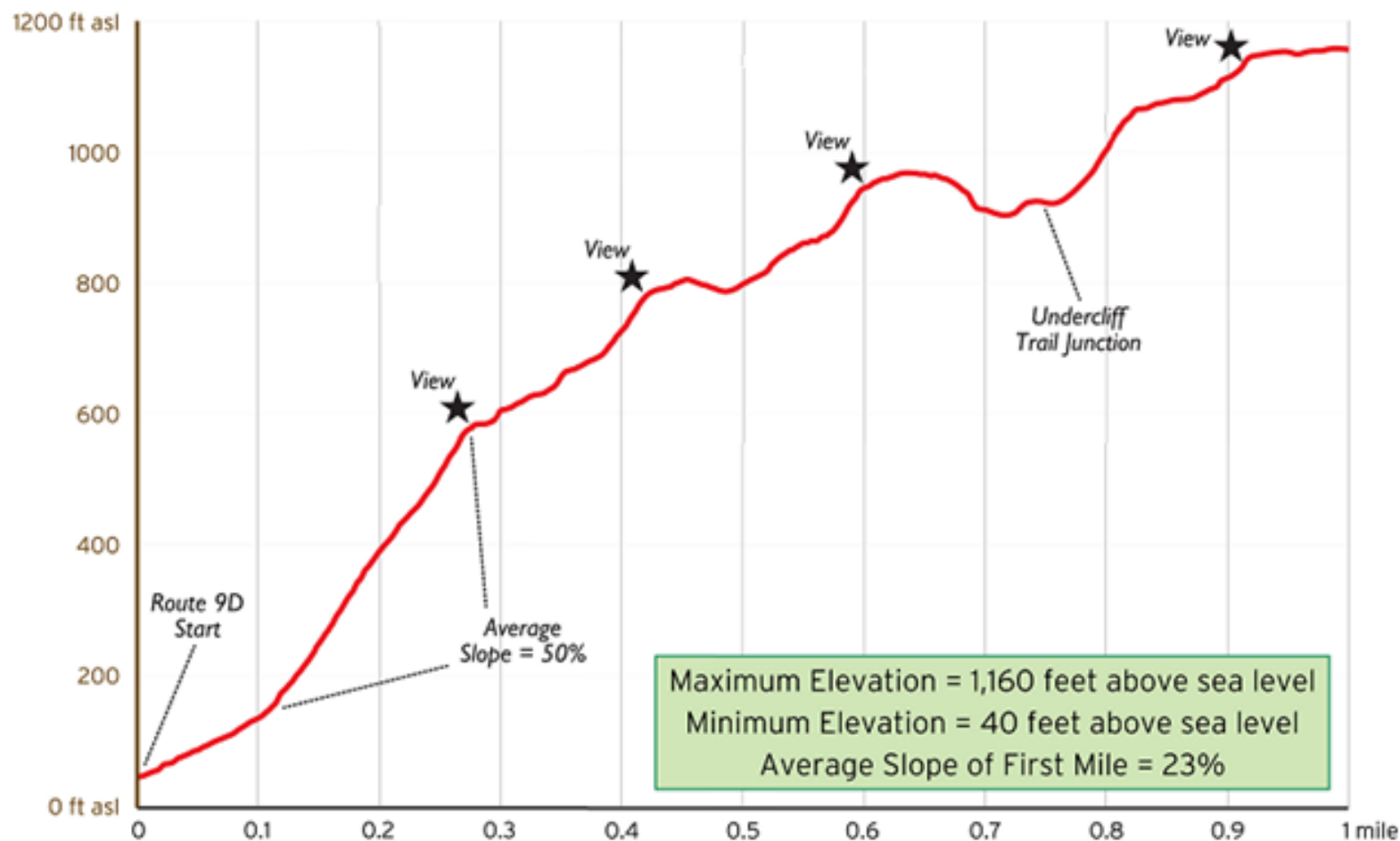


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## Breakneck Ridge Trail (First Mile) - Elevation Profile







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# How did we get here?

Outdoor recreation lifestyle, social media, internet

Breakneck's increasing popularity has brought many issues to the forefront including:

- Safety along roadway
- Informal & inadequate parking
- Trail and natural resource impacts
- Unprepared / lost hikers, emergency response
- Litter, graffiti





# What are we doing about it?

- Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail: Breakneck Connector\*
- Research on visitor use and management
- Data collection
- Trailhead stewards
- Trailhead counts
- Leave No Trace Hot Spot
- Graffiti treatment
- Trail improvements

\*Scenic Hudson & Town of Fishkill





# Hudson Highlands Fjord Trail

- Short term: address safety and parking issues at Breakneck Ridge
- Long term: develop a destination linear park in the Hudson Highlands
- Not a Parks project, not on Parks property



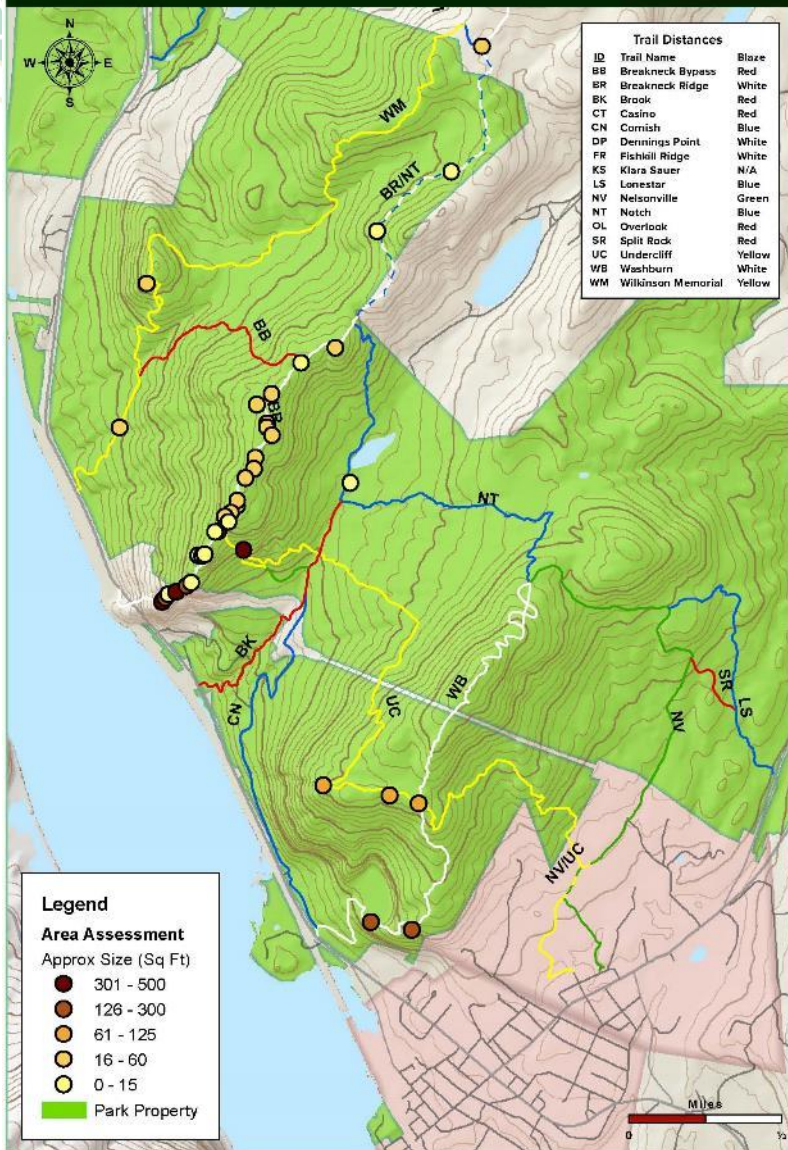
# Data Collection

- Baseline for management decisions
  - Capture existing impacts and evaluate future impacts
- Spatial data collection on Breakneck and surrounding trails
  - Degraded areas (trampling)
  - Social Trails
  - Vandalism
  - Trail Conditions (widening, erosion)
  - Trail Intersection Counts



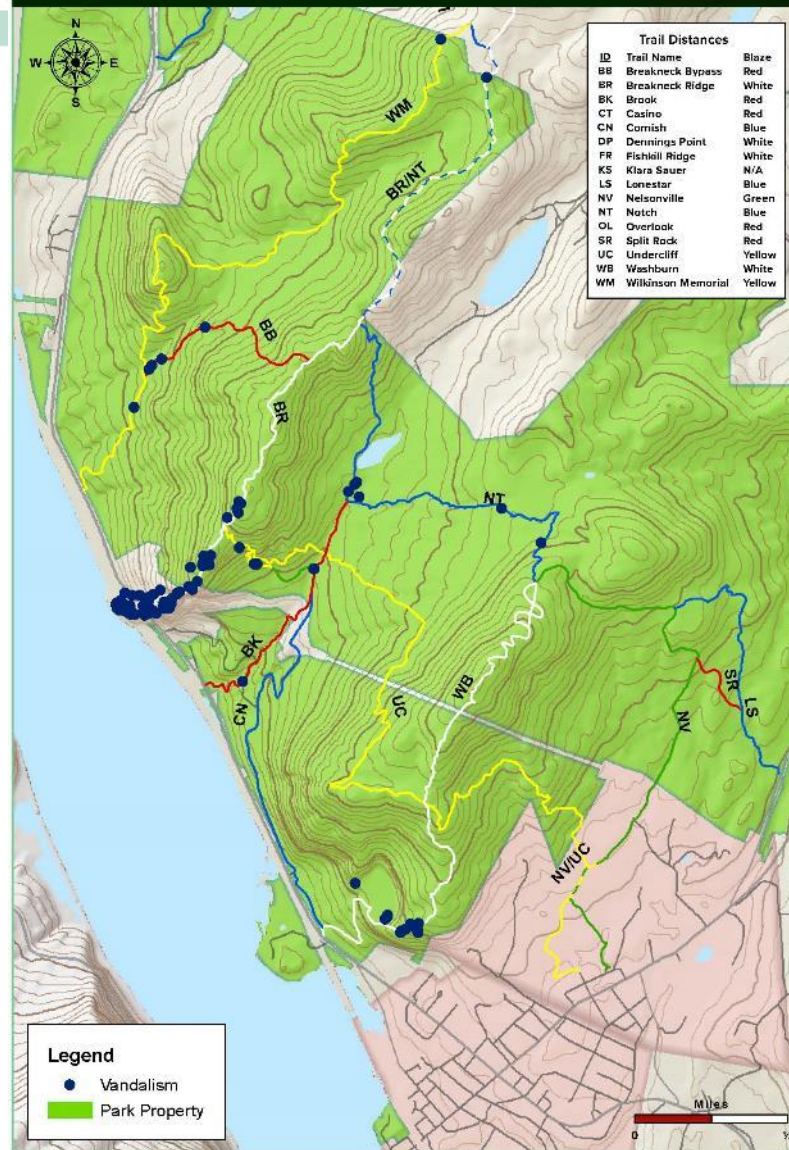
## Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve

### Locations of Problem Areas



## Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve

### Locations of Problem Areas



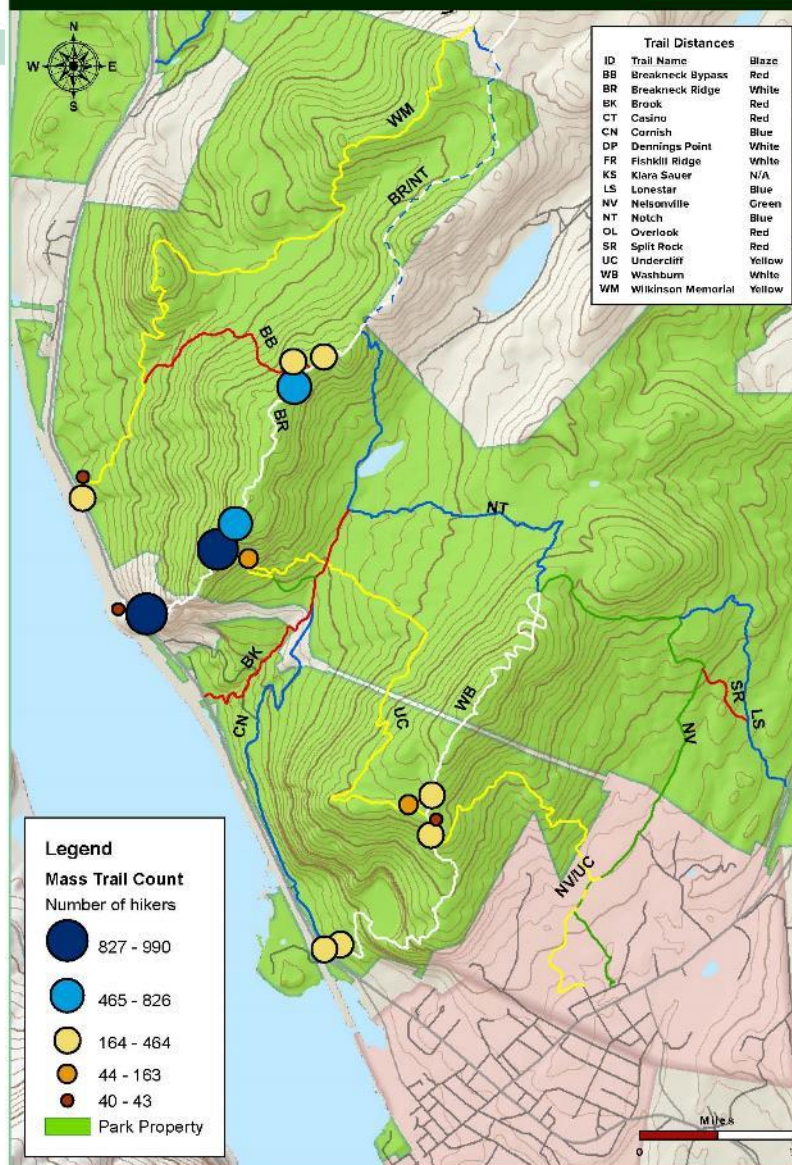




## Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve

### Locations of Problem Areas

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# Trail User Survey

Capture visitor data:

- Where are they coming from?
- Why are they coming?
- What is their experience?





# Trail User Survey

## Key takeaways

- Local feedback vs. intercept surveys
- Difficult to capture user intersect surveys
- Confirming assumptions
- Some surprises
- Survey available if interested

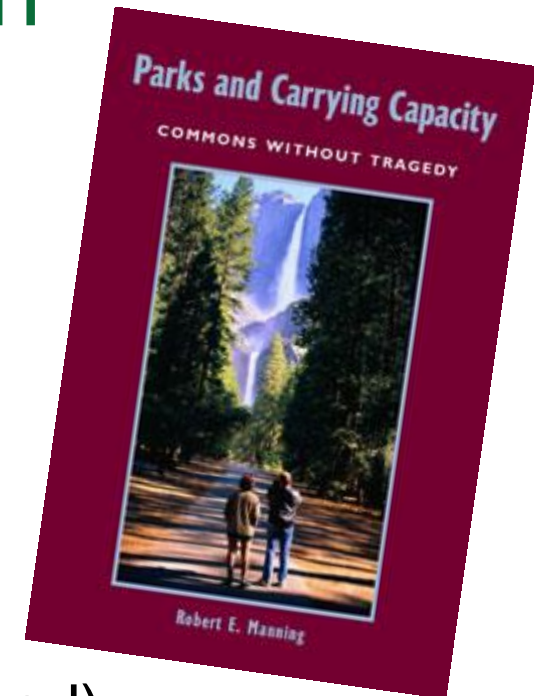
# Managing visitation

Existing frameworks & resources

- LAC, VERP, VUMF
- Great foundation for mgmt. decisions
- Challenging to implement

Takeaways:

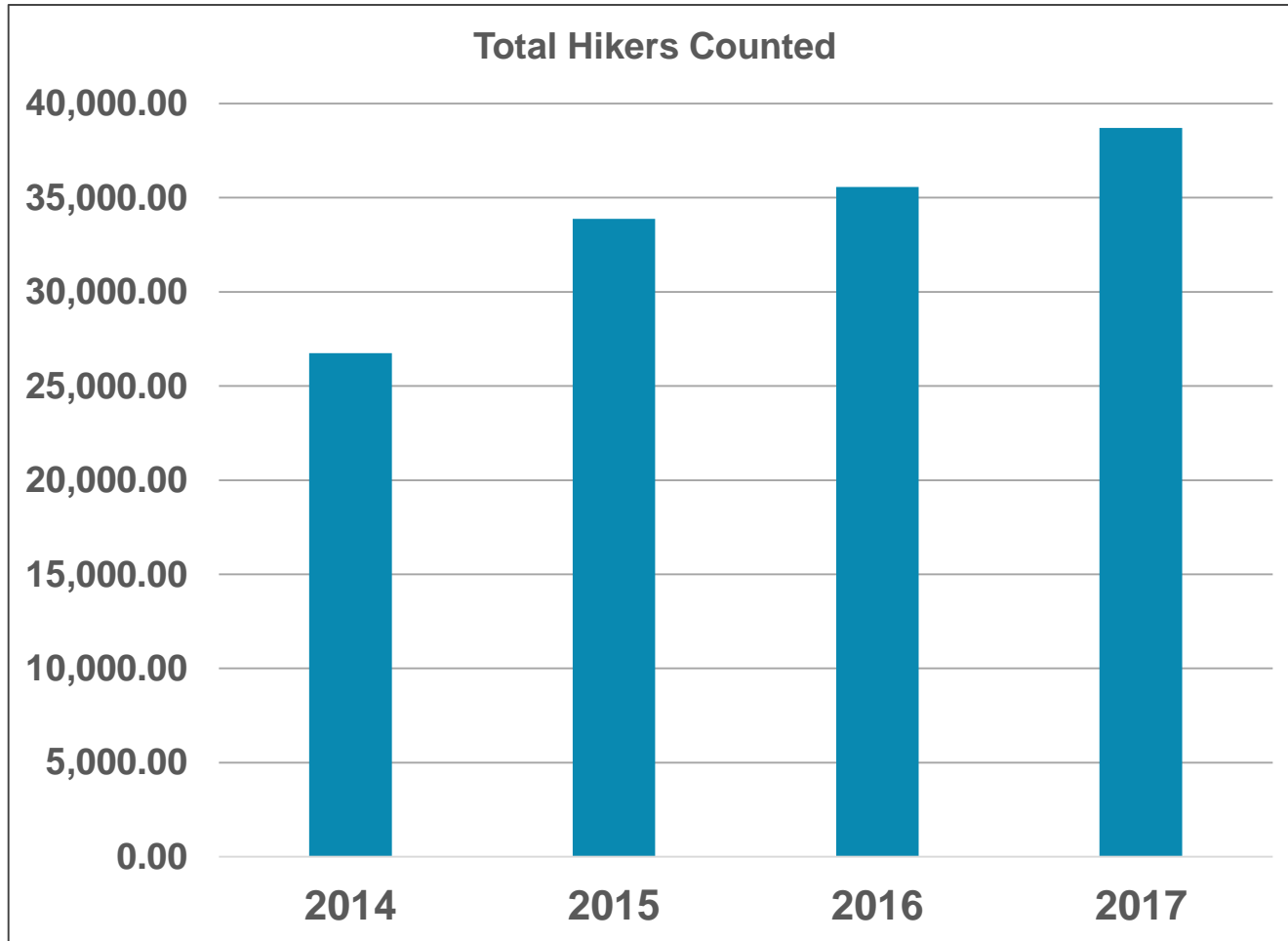
- Think beyond just carrying capacity
- Education is key (informed vs uninformed)
- Face-to-face interactions = change behavior





# Trailhead Stewards & Data

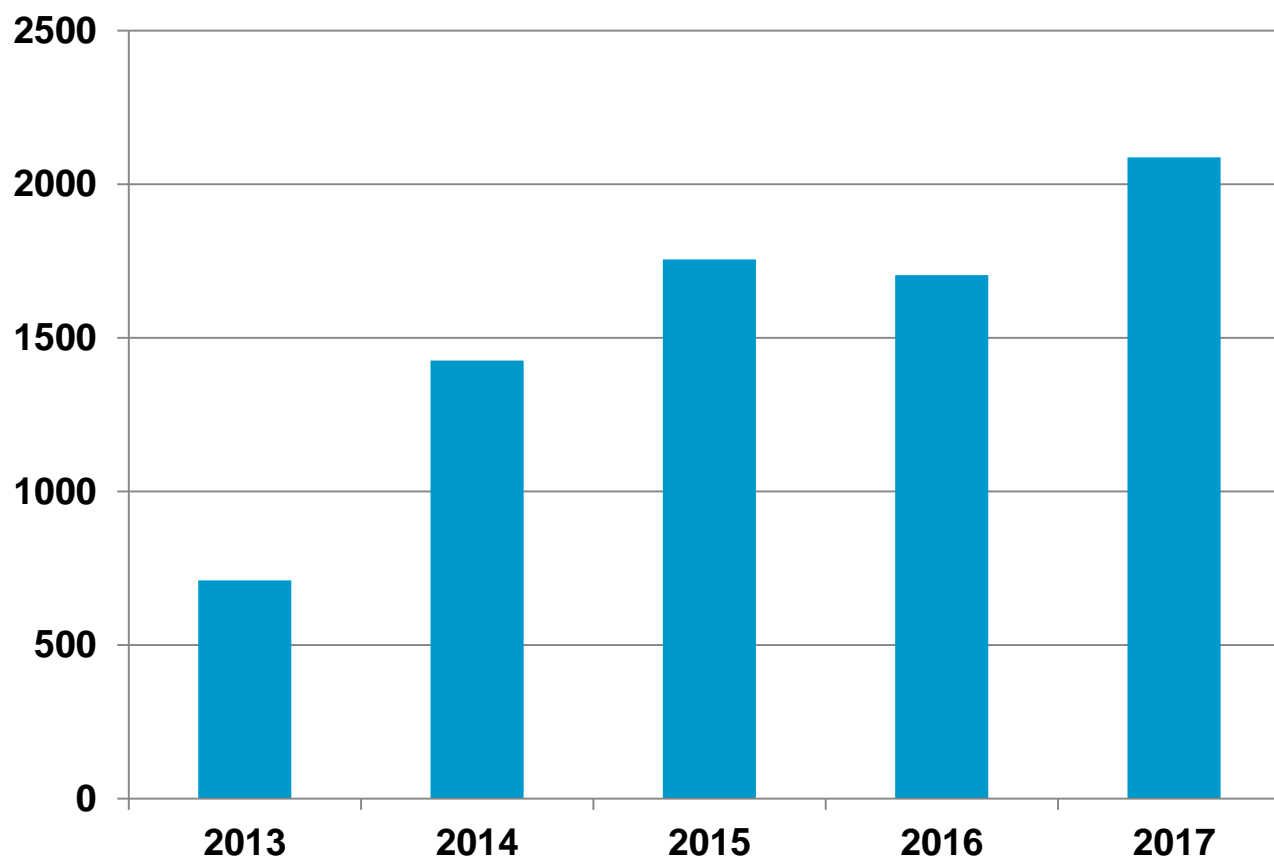








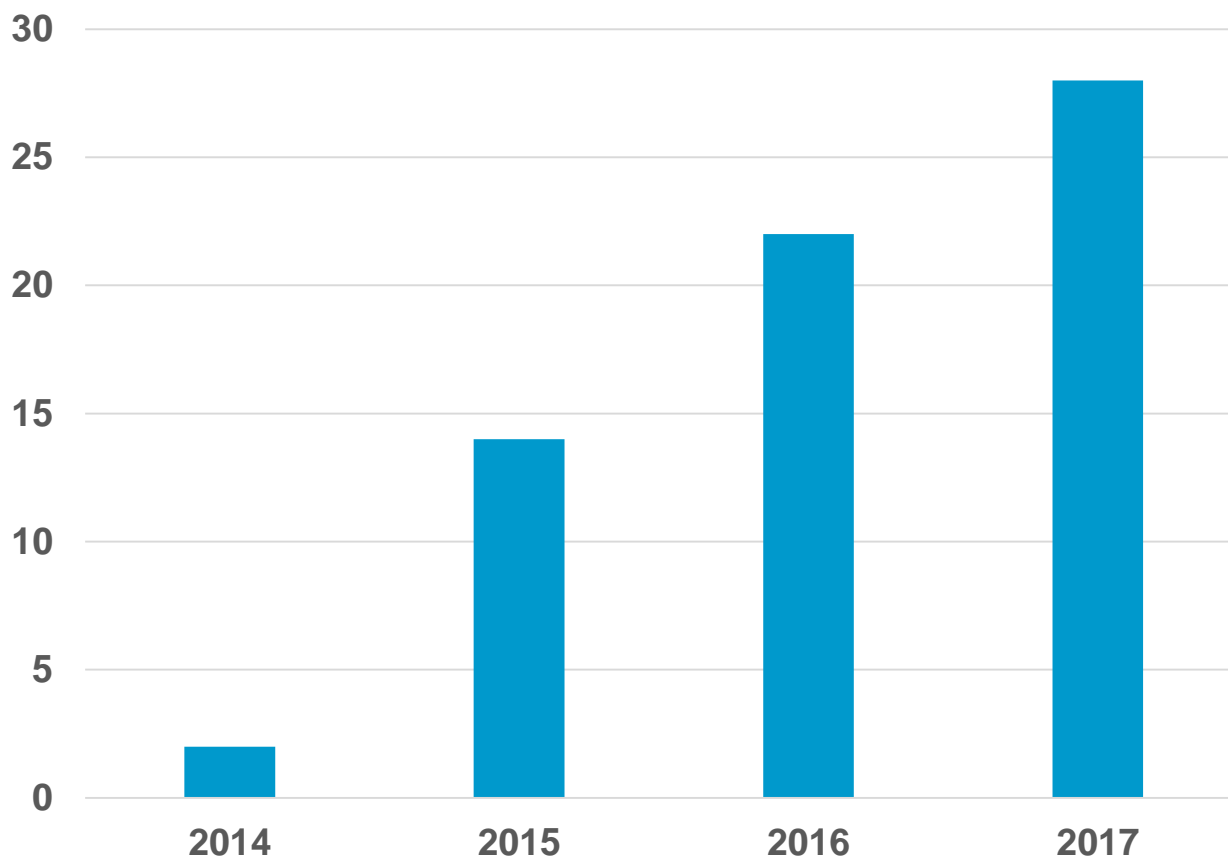
### Most Hikers in a Single Day





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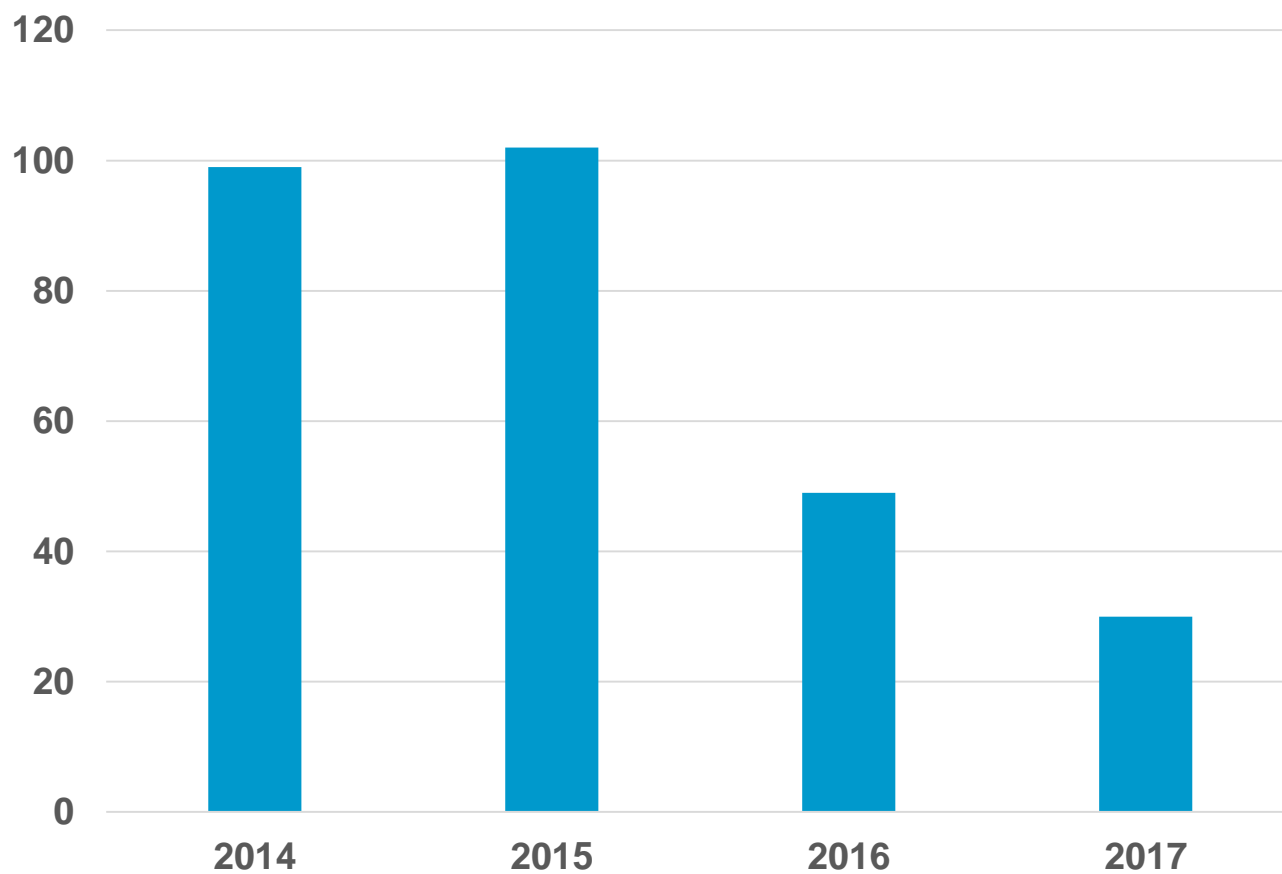
**Days with over 1,000 hikers**





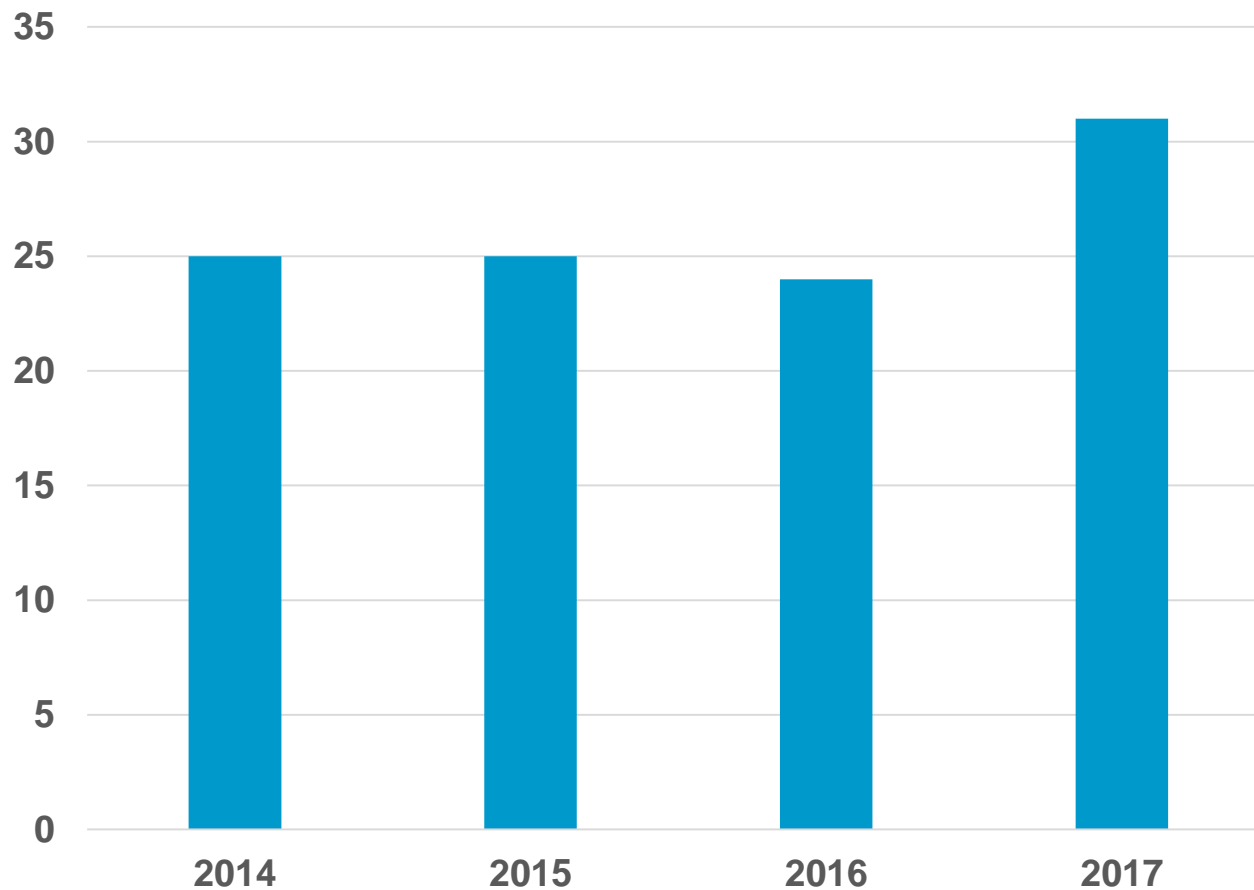


## Lost Hikers





## Injuries







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# Leave No Trace Hot Spot

- Week long event with:
  - Stakeholder meetings
  - Trainings
  - Public outreach
- Generated Hot Spot report with recommendations.





# Signage & Wayfinding









## **WARNING:** ***This Is Not Just a Walk in the Park!***

**Breakneck Ridge is a steep rock scramble that is for experienced hikers in excellent physical condition only.**

You are about to ascend 1,250 feet in only 3/4 mile.  
This hike should not be attempted by anyone with a fear of heights.  
Do not climb alone or in adverse weather conditions.

In the course of this hike, you will be treated to breathtaking views and will have the option to connect to a variety of other trails here in Hudson Highlands State Park Preserve.

The recommended route is the  
**White Trail to Red Trail to Yellow Trail.**  
This takes an average of 3 hours to complete.

### **TIP:**

Download Avenza's free "PDF Maps" app on your smartphone and search for "Hudson Highlands State Park Trail Map North" to have your GPS-enabled device show where you are located on the trail!

For the safety of you and other hikers,  
please do the following:

Bring a trail map and plenty of water.  
Stay on marked trails at all times.  
Wear proper hiking gear.  
Remove all garbage.

Enjoy the hike and views!



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**Avenza PDF Maps**  
Get the app.  
Get the map.®



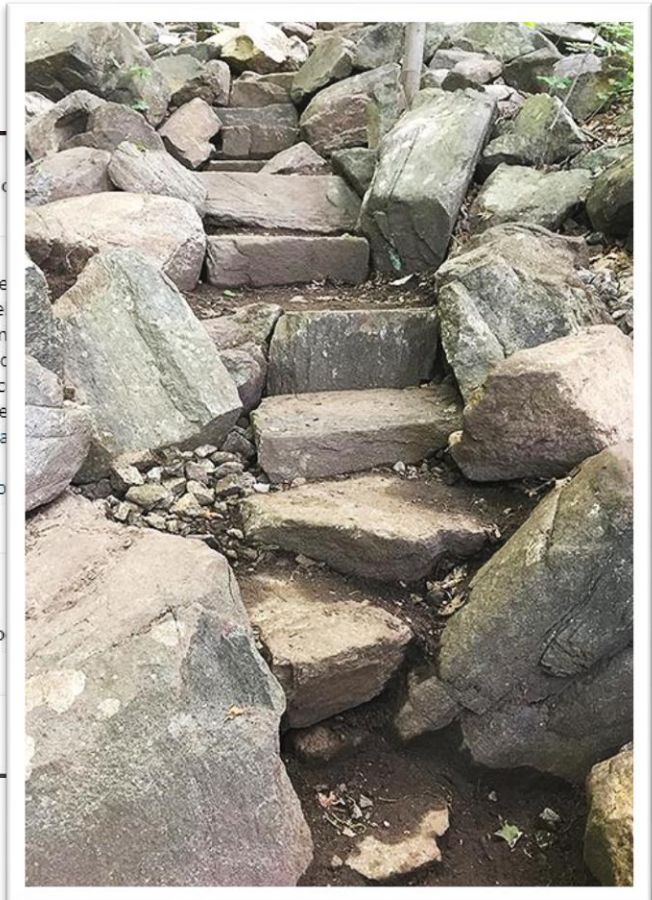








# Trail Restoration





# Graffiti Treatment





# What are we doing from here?

- Trailhead Stewards
  - Planning/management report
  - Hot Spot report recommendations
  - Signage & wayfinding improvements
  - Additional data collection/surveys
  - Graffiti removal
- 
- Challenges: Staffing, funding, restoration, dispersal





# Takeaways

- Data collection is valuable & informative
  - Monitor trends
  - Evaluate management strategies
  - Confirm/disprove assumptions
- Visitor management is more than a number
  - Informed users = less impacts
- Active vs. passive management techniques
- Face to face interactions: effective and positive
  - Communicate with a person rather than a sign
  - Leave No Trace messaging



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Thank you:

Park Staff, Trail Stewards, Leave No Trace Center &  
Trainers, Hudson Highlands Land Trust, Volunteers

Questions?

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Chris Morris: [Christopher.Morris@parks.ny.gov](mailto:Christopher.Morris@parks.ny.gov)