

**TOWN OF HUNTER**  
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April 6th, 2026

Amanda Lefton  
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation  
Commissioner  
625 Broadway, Albany, NY  
12233

Dear Commissioner Lefton,

I am writing in my capacity as Supervisor of the Town of Hunter to express our Town's firm opposition to the current direction of the proposed Visitor Use Management strategies for Kaaterskill Clove, while reaffirming our commitment to work collaboratively with the Department of Environmental Conservation to achieve shared goals.

The Town of Hunter supports responsible stewardship of our natural resources, improved visitor safety, and thoughtful management of increasing use. We have been engaged partners with DEC for years and have consistently advocated for practical, on the ground solutions to the very challenges this plan seeks to address.

However, we are deeply concerned that the approach under consideration centers on restrictive access measures such as reservation systems and visitor caps. These limitations are not an appropriate solution for Kaaterskill Clove and are not something the Town of Hunter can support. They run counter to the long standing principle of public access and fail to address the underlying causes of congestion and safety challenges.

The Visitor Use Management plan emphasizes data driven decision making, adaptive management, and prioritizing infrastructure and operational improvements before limiting access. The current trajectory appears to elevate restrictive tools before even attempting to utilize the practical and locally informed solutions identified through years of discussion.

The Town of Hunter has often put forth and participated in many commonsense recommendations that address many of these congestion and safety concerns. These include:

- Expanding and formalizing parking capacity on existing State owned lands, including Laurel House Road and Scutt Road
- Improving traffic flow by converting the North South Lake Campground entrance into a double lane configuration to prevent backups onto Route 23A
- Consideration of reclassification of the Kaaterskill Falls area as an Intensive Use Area
- Increasing staffing and traffic management during peak visitation periods
- Implementation of recommendations put forth by the Catskills Advisory Group

These are achievable and targeted solutions that manage use without restricting access.

We are particularly concerned that a reservation based or gated access system will create significant and immediate economic consequences for our community. The Town of Hunter depends on responsible visitation tied to these public lands, and limiting access to one of the Catskill Mountain region's primary destinations directly affects local businesses, jobs, and municipal stability.

At the same time, such a system will not resolve the underlying challenges, but instead shift and intensify them. Demand to visit this area will not be diminished by restricting access. It is displaced. Visitors who are turned away will continue to arrive in the region, contributing to congestion, unsafe parking, and use of less appropriate areas. In this way, such an approach risks compounding both the management challenges and the economic impacts rather than addressing either effectively.

It is also important to recognize that implementing and enforcing a reservation based or gated access system in this area would be logistically impractical and largely ineffective. The geography of Kaaterskill Clove, existing roadway constraints, and dispersed access points make meaningful enforcement extremely difficult. Rather than solving existing problems, this approach would consume time and resources while adding to congestion and safety challenges already present.

We also note that the Department's own mission includes enhancing the health, safety, and welfare of the people of the State, including their economic and social well being. That mission reflects a commitment to balancing environmental quality with economic prosperity and community participation in decisions that affect their lives. The Town of Hunter believes strongly in that balance. An approach that significantly restricts access to a primary public resource, without advancing practical alternatives, risks undermining the economic stability of the communities most directly impacted.

We urge the Department to ensure that its actions in Kaaterskill Clove reflect its own stated mission by advancing solutions that protect the resource while sustaining the economic vitality and well being of our local community.

We know that there is a better path forward that reflects both the intent of the Visitor Use Management framework and the realities on the ground. That path begins with implementing the infrastructure and operational improvements identified previously and contained in this letter while continuing to evaluate conditions based on real time data.

The Town of Hunter remains ready to work closely with DEC to develop solutions that protect our natural resources, improve safety, and maintain public access for all. We respectfully ask that the Department set aside the current recommendations put forth in the VUM report and continue working with local stakeholders to develop a more balanced and effective approach that works for all parties.

We look forward to continued engagement and to working with you to develop a path forward that reflects the needs of our community and the stewardship of these important natural resources.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Mahoney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sean Mahoney  
Hunter Town Supervisor  
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