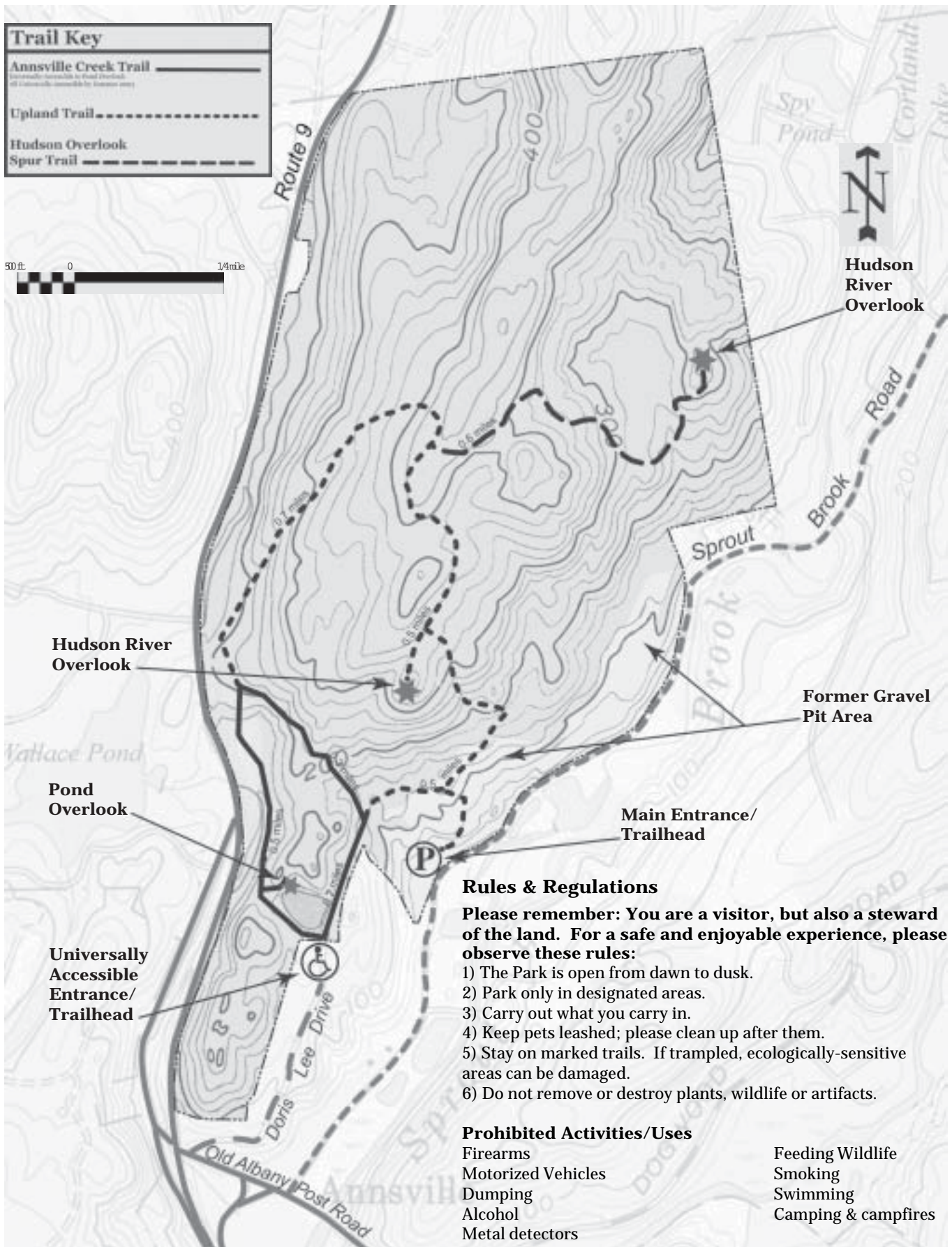


# Welcome to Hudson Highlands Gateway Park



## Rules & Regulations

**Please remember: You are a visitor, but also a steward of the land. For a safe and enjoyable experience, please observe these rules:**

- 1) The Park is open from dawn to dusk.
- 2) Park only in designated areas.
- 3) Carry out what you carry in.
- 4) Keep pets leashed; please clean up after them.
- 5) Stay on marked trails. If trampled, ecologically-sensitive areas can be damaged.
- 6) Do not remove or destroy plants, wildlife or artifacts.

## Prohibited Activities/Uses

Firearms  
 Motorized Vehicles  
 Dumping  
 Alcohol  
 Metal detectors

Feeding Wildlife  
 Smoking  
 Swimming  
 Camping & campfires

## **History of the Site**

Hudson Highlands Gateway Park, 352 acres of woodlands, streams, steep slopes, exposed bedrock, and meadows, has been a site of much human and natural history.

During the Revolutionary War the hilltops were used to light signal fires to send messages to troops up and down the Hudson River and troops were stationed nearby, possibly in the park itself.

In the 19th century the hills were stripped clean of trees to feed the furnaces of the region's Iron Foundries, such as the West Point Foundry in Cold Spring, which were a booming industry along the Hudson at the time.

From the late 1800s to about 1950 the park was used for farming, especially dairy farming. Much of the milk produced to make Horton's Ice Cream came from here. One of the most recent past uses of the parkland can still be seen today on the eastern side of the park where a gravel mine operated as recently as the early 1970s.

As the active/commercial use of the park stopped, vegetation grew back and local residents started to use and value it for hiking, watching wildlife, and as open space in an area being quickly developed into homes, stores, and other businesses

## **How the Park was Protected**

Once the gravel mine closed, pressure to develop the property began to increase. First, a plan to build 1200 multi-family and individual houses was proposed but was defeated. Later, a 352-unit development was planned and it became clear permanent protection was needed or a valuable community resource would be lost.

In 1998 a coalition of more than 35 groups of homeowners associations, local community groups, governmental organizations, and several national and regional environmental organizations (led by Scenic Hudson) came together in a tale of collaboration, partnership, and effective use of public and private resources. The Coalition to Preserve the Hudson Highlands Gateway, as the group was called, worked to convince the developer to sell the property, and raise the \$6 million needed to buy the property. The fundraising alone took over a year to accomplish.

In May of 2000, The Scenic Hudson Land Trust, Inc. purchased 203 acres of the park and the Town of Cortlandt and Westchester County purchased the remaining 149 acres. Ultimately, a conservation easement will be granted to Scenic Hudson by the Town and County, forever preserving the property as parkland and passive recreational use. Enjoy your time here, but please "take nothing but pictures, leave nothing but footprints."

## **Natural History of the Site**

Hudson Highlands Gateway Park's 352 acres encompass many different ecologically significant habitats. The Annsville Creek runs through the property providing stream and riparian habitats, which support brown and brook trout breeding as well as populations of wood duck. The park's upland wetlands consist of vernal pools and wooded swamps that are crucial habitat for wood frogs, tree frogs, red-backed and two-lined salamanders. Several different snake species use the prominent, east-facing cliffs of the park to warm themselves in the sun.

Westchester County is in the Atlantic Flyway, one of three major bird migration corridors in the United State. Come spring, hundreds of thousands of birds fly over and often stop in the park. It is the diversity of habitats the park holds that draws them here. The relatively unfragmented forest of the park attracts species such as the scarlet tanager, ovenbird, and great-crested flycatcher. The former gravel mines and agricultural fields provide habitat for blue jays, catbirds, house wrens as well as hawks and owls that use these areas to hunt.

All of the ecological richness of the park is now yours to enjoy. To insure that the plants and animals that rely on this park are there for future generations, please do not touch, remove or in anyway disturb any of the plants or wildlife you may see.