

2.9 Recreational Opportunities on Stony Clove Creek

The Catskill Park is a mountainous region of public and private lands in Ulster, Greene, Delaware, and Sullivan counties. The natural and cultural heritage of the Catskill Region is inextricably linked to the unique high quality streams that course through its mountains and valleys and play a defining role in the character of its landscape. Recreation in and around these Catskill streams provides residents and visitors with a myriad of opportunities to reconnect with the natural world.

Catskill Forest Preserve

The headwaters of the Stony Clove Creek, and small sections along the mainstem, are protected within the Catskill Forest Preserve, the New York State owned land within the Catskill Park (Fig. 1). State land comprises 73% of all land within the watershed, but only 14% of the land within 100 ft. riparian corridor along the mainstem.

The New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) manages lands in the forest preserve according to its classification in the 1985 Catskill Park State Land Master Plan based on specific characteristics and capacity to withstand certain uses. These public uses include Wild Forest, Wilderness, Intensive Use, and Administrative Use. DEC's *Catskill Forest Preserve Map and Guide* graphically depicts the locations of these different management areas and provides general background information about the Catskill Park and Preserve. This information can be obtained at DEC's regional offices, locations are listed on DEC's website: <http://www.dec.state.us>

The Stony Clove Creek and its watershed contain portions of Indian Head, Hunter Mountain and West Kill Mountain Forest Preserves. A guide for the West Kill Mountain Wilderness is currently available at the DEC Region 3 office in New Paltz, NY. Hiking is permitted on all lands held by NYS. Hunting is allowed subject to required NYS licenses and regulations.

Fishing

Steep headwater streams like Stony Clove Creek are renowned for supporting healthy populations of native trout. Stony Clove Creek is not stocked by NYS DEC. Brown and rainbow trout inhabit its lower sections. The fishing season is April 1 - September 30. A New York State Fishing License is required. (The mainstem of the Esopus Creek and the Ashokan Reservoir have an extended season to November 30). The basic state catch limit of five trout is applied in Stony Clove Creek; and as elsewhere, the practice of Catch and Release is voluntary.

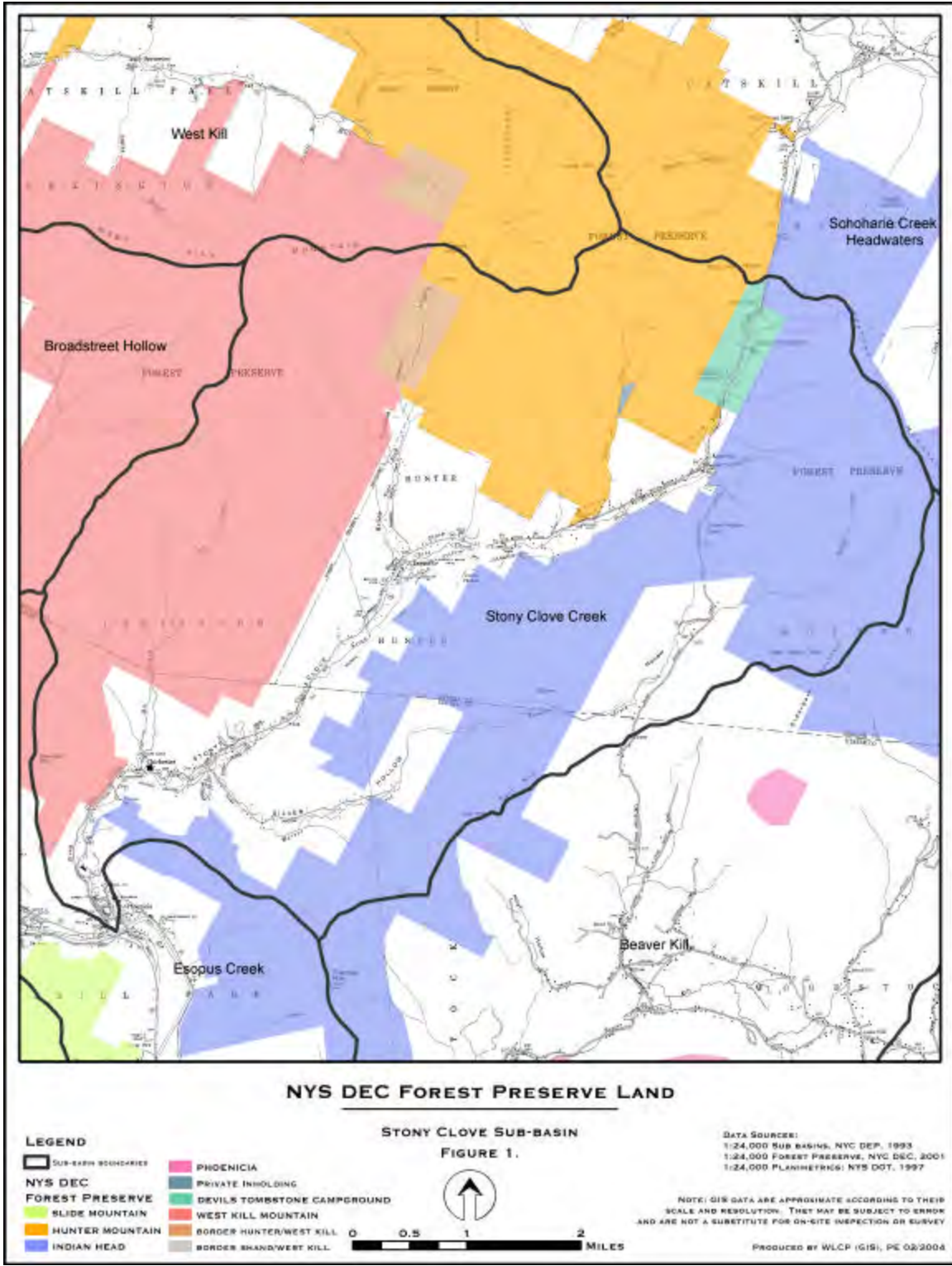


Figure 1 NYS Forest Preserve Lands in the Stony Clove Creek Watershed

Habitat suitability for the fish community native to the Stony Clove Creek was assessed during the preparation of this Plan using the MesoHABSIM model developed by Piotr Parasiewicz at Cornell University. The results of this analysis are included in each of the management unit descriptions in Section 4, and the methodology is presented in Volume III Appendix B.

Due to this limited public access, most people have historically fished Stony Clove Creek by landowner invitation. The Stony Clove Rod and Gun Club stocks the stream annually with brown and/or rainbow trout.

Draft NYSDEC West Kill Mountain Wilderness Plan

The Draft West Kill Wilderness Plan states that all of the streams within the unit feed either the West Kill or Esopus Creeks. These creeks feed the Schoharie and Ashokan Reservoirs, providing surface drinking water for New York City and surrounding counties. Management and use of the unit must not compromise water quality. Tributaries of this unit are important spawning and nursery areas for the wild trout in the West Kill and Esopus Creeks. Protection and maintenance of the water quality in these tributaries is essential for preserving and enhancing aquatic resources.

The following Water Quality Management Objectives are included in the Draft West Kill Wilderness Unit Management Plan, and would apply to Stony Clove Creek:

Water Quality Management

- A. Protect and maintain water quality in all stream systems and their respective watersheds.
- B. Reduce soil erosion and/or stream siltation occurring from improper or neglected trail maintenance.

To ensure management activities have minimal impact on water quality, erosion control tools and techniques as outlined in the Department's Best Management Practices (BMP) for Water Quality - BMP Field Guide shall be utilized during the construction or repair of trailhead parking areas and access roads.