

Section 2. Stony Clove Creek Natural and Institutional Resources

2.1 Regional Setting

The Stony Clove Creek watershed is located in the central Catskill Mountain region of southeast New York State (Fig. 1). The Stony Clove Creek flows from its headwaters at Notch Lake to its confluence with the Esopus Creek in the village of Phoenicia. Approximately 80% of the 32.3 mi² watershed falls within the Greene County towns of Hunter and Shandaken, while the remaining 20% is in the Ulster County towns of Shandaken and Woodstock (Fig. 3).

NYS Route 214 bisects the watershed, serving as a major north/south artery from NYS Route 23a in Hunter to NYS Route 28 in the Village of Phoenicia. Located just outside the northern end of the watershed is the village of Hunter, home to Hunter Mountain Ski Resort, which attracts many skiers from New York City. At the south end of the watershed, the village of Phoenicia is a summertime tourist destination for tubers, kayakers, and outdoor enthusiasts. Between these two villages lies the Stony Clove Creek Watershed.

The entire Stony Clove Creek

Watershed lies within the Catskill Park with approximately 16,182 acres of land designated state owned forest. The

Catskill and Adirondack Forest Preserve was established by the NYS Assembly in 1885. An 1894 amendment to the New York State Constitution (now Article 14) directs: "the lands of the State now owned or hereafter acquired, constituting the forest preserve as now fixed by law, shall be forever kept as wild forest lands. They shall not be leased, sold or exchanged, or be taken by any corporation, public or private, nor shall the timber thereon be sold, removed or destroyed (NYS DEC₁, 2003)."



Figure 2 State Land historical marker



Figure 1 Location of Stony Clove Creek watershed

In 1904, the Catskill Park was designated, establishing a boundary or 'blue line' around the Forest Preserve and private land as well. Over the years the Catskill Park grew, and now comprises roughly 700,000 acres, about half of which is public Forest Preserve. The Catskill and Adirondack Parks are nationally unique because they are a checkerboard of public and private land; a grand experiment in how nature and human society can coexist in a landscape (Catskill Center₁, 2003).

A dominant characteristic of the Stony Clove Creek Watershed's regional setting is its location within the 2,000 square-mile New York City Watershed. The NYC Watershed is the largest unfiltered water supply in the U.S., providing 1.4 billion gallons of clean drinking water each day to over nine million residents in New York City and some smaller municipalities (nearly half the population of New York State) (Catskill Center₂, 2003).

The Stony Clove Creek is a tributary of the Esopus Creek, eventually emptying into the Ashokan Reservoir, which supplies approximately 10% of NYC's drinking water.

The NYC Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) operates this drinking water supply under a Filtration Avoidance Determination (FAD) issued by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the New York State Department of Health. Central to the maintenance of the FAD are a series of partnership programs between NYC and the upstate communities, as well as a set of rules and regulations administered by the DEP (GCSWCD₁).



Figure 3 Stony Clove Creek watershed town boundaries

Due to its location within the NYC Watershed, the residents and landowners in the Stony Clove Creek Watershed are subject to the NYCDEP rules and regulations written to protect this watershed. As detailed in Section 2.10, the DEP offers a variety of watershed protection programs to encourage proper management practices within the watershed.