

The Pulse of Parks:

A look at who's visiting Fahnestock State Park

A REPORT OF THE OPEN SPACE INSTITUTE'S ALLIANCE FOR NEW YORK STATE PARKS SUMMER 2015



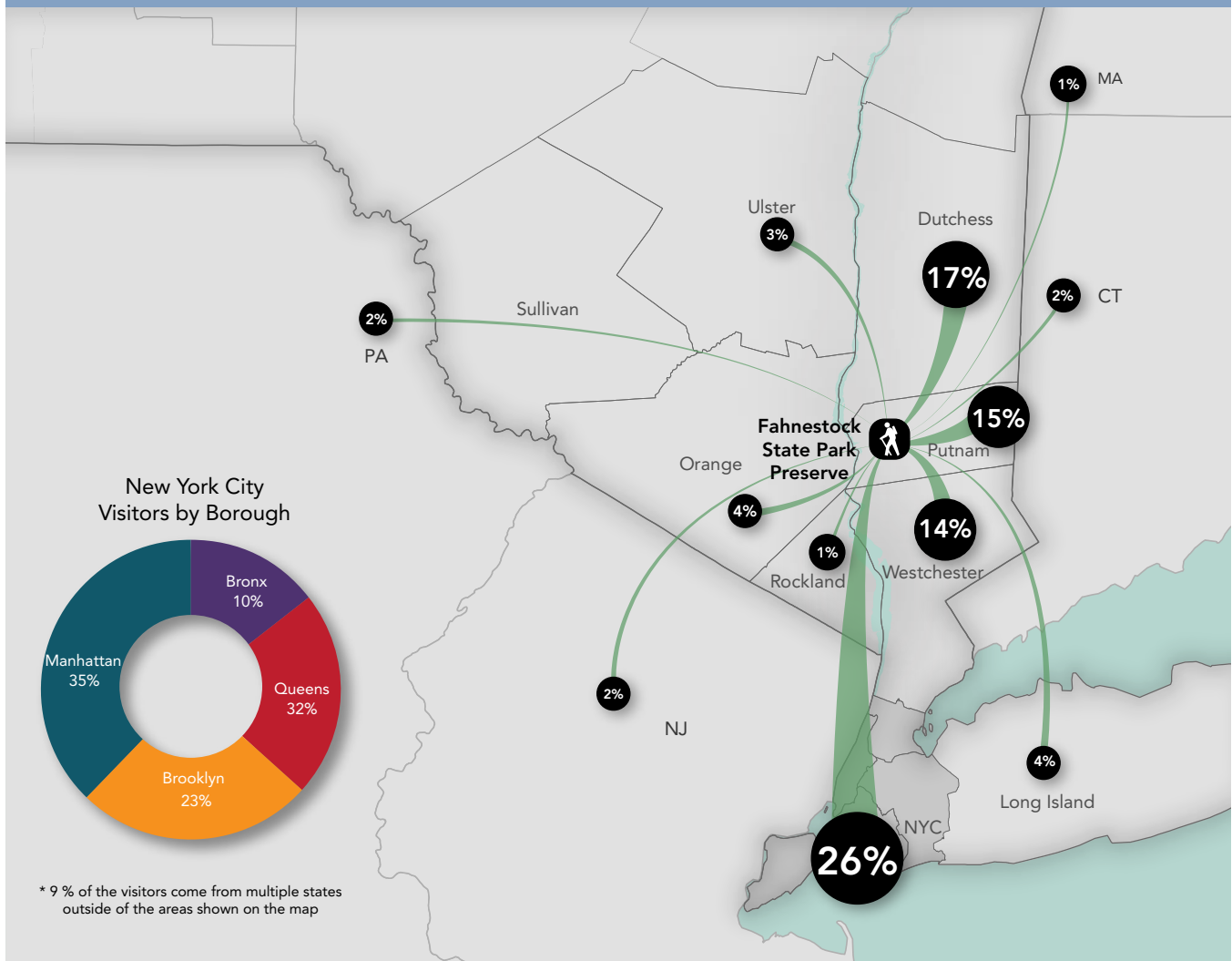
"There's so much to do—watch the kids swim, go boating, play on the beach. There's something for everyone, and it's inexpensive."

One-Stop "Parking" An Hour North of New York City

As the 270,000 hikers, swimmers, campers, birders and anglers who visit annually already know, Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park is a recreational mecca. Located in the eastern Hudson Highlands, just an hour's drive from Manhattan, the park appeals to city sightseers and local residents alike. Visitors come looking for an escape to nature, and find it in a swim and picnic at Canopus Lake, a stroll in the Butterfly Garden at Hubbard Lodge or a hike along the Appalachian Trail.

This issue of *The Pulse of Parks* reports on sample survey of over 450 Fahnestock visitors from July through September 2014. Read on for insights about the park's regional economic impact, its diverse users and beyond.

Fahnestock's visitors come from over five states



Visitors come from Hudson Valley and beyond

As the map above reveals, nearly half (45 percent) of all visitors to Fahnestock travel to the park from the New York City metropolitan area, with 30 percent from the five boroughs and Long Island alone.

About a third (32 percent) hail from Dutchess and Putnam counties; this group in particular recognizes the value of Fahnestock as a community asset so close to home.

The final group of visitors arrives from other areas of the Hudson River Valley, or from states such as New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Connecticut and beyond.

Regardless of origin, the survey found that visitors of diverse backgrounds, young and old alike, find a needed and family-friendly escape in the park.

"A hidden jewel"

"We came once and just keep coming back"

"The park is convenient and clean. There are good trails for kids and Fahnestock is very family-friendly."

"Great location, close to the city."

State's investment pays regional dividends

Visitors to Fahnestock have an economic impact on the Hudson Valley region. About half of all visitors buy food and beverages en route, with around the same number stopping for retail purchases or entertainment. Sixty percent of these purchases take place in New York City, Cold Spring, Fishkill, Beacon and other places along the Route 9 corridor.

In all, it is estimated that visitors make a total economic contribution of \$14.5 million to the local and state economy.

The quintessential park

With its collection of lake swimming, hiking trails, campgrounds and more, Fahnestock is a convenient outdoors “one-stop shop.” Quickly after leaving the parking lots or more populated areas like Canopus Lake, hikers and bikers can easily escape into a natural playground. While visitor rates peak during warmer months, Winter Park, popular with cross-country skiers and snowshoers, keeps Fahnestock busier than most outdoor areas in the wintertime. The park also enjoys “repeat customers,” with nearly nine in ten frequenting a specific, favorite area such as the hiking and biking trails.

Serving diverse groups of park visitors

Fahnestock enjoys a dedicated and diverse user constituency. While weekday visitors are predominantly from surrounding communities, weekends see park attendance swell and are marked by increased numbers of Spanish-speaking visitors who keep the park humming and contribute to the park’s reputation as a welcoming destination. During the average week, three in ten visitors are non-white—usually Hispanic or Latino, but also African-American.

The park particularly appeals younger visitors, with the median age around 30 years. About half of park-goers are children or teens under 18, meaning Fahnestock especially appeals to active visitors.

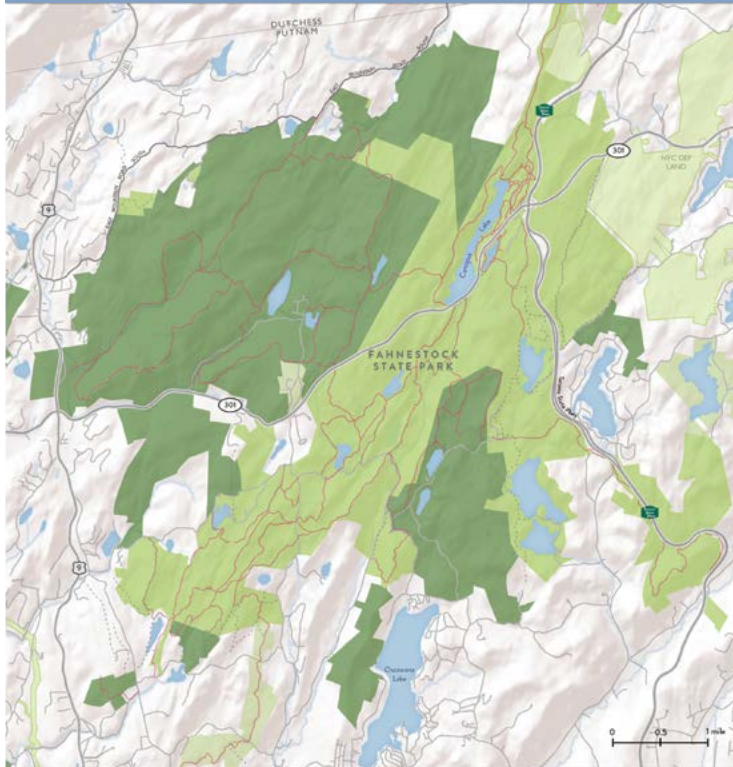
Visitors' wish-list of improvements

For decades, OSI and other conservation groups have painstakingly stitched together Putnam county greenspace, expanding Fahnestock piece by piece as parcels come available. The end result is a prized but disconnected park where roads and development sometimes bump against Fahnestock’s boundaries, making it difficult to determine in places where parkland begins.

For their part, visitors request expanding and improving parking lots and investing in better signs to make Fahnestock more accessible; improvements to bathrooms is also a top priority.



OSI's impact on Fahnestock State Park



The Open Space Institute, a leading regional land conservation organization, has long been involved in expanding Fahnestock. Thanks to OSI's efforts in the area, the park has doubled in size since the early 1990s. In addition, OSI's Alliance for New York State Parks program has raised \$1.2 million in private funds and grants toward the revitalization of Fahnestock's Canopus Lake visitor complex.



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For more information

This report is part of a series of New York State Park user demographic studies. Previous reports have focused on Minnewaska State Park Preserve, Jones Beach State Park, Harriman State Park's Lake Welch, and Walkway over the Hudson and are available for download at www.osiny.org/Publications_Alliance.

The Open Space Institute's Alliance for New York State Parks works to protect and enhance state parks and historic sites for present and future generations. To learn more, visit www.osiny.org/alliance.

About This Study

A capital needs assessment completed in 2010 by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation identified a statewide backlog of more than \$1 billion. The state parks suffered from broken and outdated facilities, the result of decades of insufficient funding for regular maintenance and infrastructure improvement. Recognizing the parks' importance to all New Yorkers, Governor Cuomo and the state legislature have taken strong steps to remedy the problem.

To evaluate the merits of continued investment, the Open Space Institute, with the support of the Dyson Foundation, commissioned a visitor survey of Clarence Fahnestock Memorial State Park. The study, aimed at finding out who visits the park and how they value it, was conducted by the Economic & Strategic Planning Consultancy of Randall Gross / Development Economics.

Surveyors conducted a quantitative demographic study of over 450 visitors 14 weekdays, 9 weekend days, and the Labor Day holiday, over the months of July through September 2014. The sample presents with a 4.6% margin of error at the 95% confidence level. The results are meant to inform park planning and communication efforts and also to provide input on specific questions relating to park utilization.