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Preliminary Design of the Maurice Hinchey Catskill Interpretive Center in Mount Tremper, NY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE 14-30

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Department of Environmental Protection Announces Commitment to Provide Funding and Watershed Content to Catskill Interpretive Center

Funding underscores DEP's ongoing support of tourism, outdoor recreation in Catskills

The New York City Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) today announced that it will contribute funding to the future Catskill Interpretive Center in Mount Tremper, N.Y. as part of the City's commitment to support environmentally friendly economic development, tourism and outdoor recreation in the Catskills. DEP will contribute \$20,000 each year for the first five years the center is open. This funding will help the Catskill Interpretive Center pay for operation and maintenance costs. In exchange, the interpretive center will allot space for DEP to display information about the City's water supply system, the Catskill and Delaware watersheds, and information about recreation on water supply reservoirs and lands in the Catskills. There are currently more than 120,000 acres of City-owned property open for recreation in the Catskills, half of which are public access areas that can be used without a DEP permit.

"Our contribution to the Catskill Interpretive Center underscores the City's strong support of tourism and outdoor recreation throughout the Catskills," DEP Commissioner Emily Lloyd said. "Since 2008, DEP has nearly tripled the amount of water-supply land that is open for recreation without a permit, and we have begun new programs for hiking, boating and licensed outdoor guides. The Catskill Interpretive Center will help visitors find these unique outdoor attractions more easily, while also educating them about the New York City water supply

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and its connection to the Catskills. We hope our support of the interpretive center compels others to contribute funding and volunteer their time to help this important project thrive.”

“We are very thankful for this commitment to the Catskill Interpretive Center by the New York City Department of Environmental Protection,” said Catskill Center Executive Director Alan White. “This is an exciting new partnership. Our public lands, both Forest Preserve and protected Watershed properties, have the potential to rebrand the Catskill Mountains as a major ecotourism destination.”

“I welcome this commitment of the New York City DEP to grant \$20,000 for each of the next five years,” said Sherret Chase, chairman of Friends of the Catskill Interpretive Center. “It is a major commitment to the stable operation of the Catskill Interpretive Center, and, most importantly, it is an indication of partnership in the interest of the Catskill region.”

Located on a 62-acre site on Route 28, the Catskill Interpretive Center will be the first information center dedicated to the Catskill Park, which comprises all of New York City’s reservoirs west of the Hudson River. It will serve as a gateway for tourists and residents, providing comprehensive information on outdoor recreation, cultural activities, and tourist attractions in the Catskills, as well as natural history interpretation and forest preserve information. The 1,800-square-foot center will be designed and constructed by the state Department of Environmental Conservation and operated by the Catskill Center. As it is developed, the interpretive center site will also include a fire tower, hiking trails, amphitheater, pavilion, sculpture park, picnic area and dog walk.

DEP manages New York City’s water supply, providing more than one billion gallons of high quality water each day to more than 9 million residents, including 8.4 million in New York City, and residents of Ulster, Orange, Putnam, and Westchester counties. This water comes from the Catskill, Delaware, and Croton watersheds that extend more than 125 miles from the City, and the system comprises 19 reservoirs, three controlled lakes, and numerous tunnels and aqueducts. DEP employs nearly 6,000 employees, including almost 1,000 scientists, engineers, surveyors, watershed maintainers and others professionals in the upstate watershed. In addition to its \$68 million payroll and \$157 million in annual taxes paid in upstate counties, DEP has invested more than \$1.5 billion in watershed protection programs—including partnership organizations such as the Catskill Watershed Corporation and the Watershed Agricultural Council—that support sustainable farming practices, environmentally sensitive economic development, and local economic opportunity. In addition, DEP has a robust capital program with over \$14 billion in investments planned over the next 10 years that will create up to 3,000 construction-related jobs per year. For more information, visit nyc.gov/dep, like us on Facebook at facebook.com/nycwater, or follow us on Twitter at twitter.com/nycwater.

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