

Motion to Intervene – Docket # P-15056

The Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway - Statement in Opposition to the Proposed Ashokan Pumped Storage

Submitted by the Central Catskills Chamber of Commerce, Inc. Administrator

We are offering this statement in opposition to the recent request for permit by Premium Energy Holdings of Southern California to build a pumped-storage hydroelectric facility within the boundaries of our Forever Wild lands of the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation that manages the protected Catskill Forest Preserve and the highly regulated and protected Catskill Watershed lands and reservoir system that provides billions of gallons of pure drinking water daily to downstate and upstate residents, owned and operated by the NYC Department of Environmental Protection. This proposed project would have a devastatingly negative impact on our tourism-based economy and our people.

This poorly envisioned plan submitted by Premium Energy Holdings demonstrates a lack of knowledge and awareness of our location. Certainly, appropriate green technology is a goal for everyone, and you would find that our communities are embracing ways to modernize our energy systems but not at the destruction of protected lands and water. One must be able to find new solutions without destroying successful systems already in place. The NYC DEP Reservoirs and Water Delivery System protects the clean waters of our Catskill Streams long known for its Trout Fishing habitats.

The Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway (CMSB) is managed by the Central Catskills Chamber of Commerce, Inc. with oversight by the Rte 28 Leaders Group made up of elected officials of the 6 municipalities along Route 28: western most Towns in Ulster County including the Towns of Olive and Shandaken and the Eastern most Towns in Delaware County including the Towns of Middletown and Andes and the incorporated villages of Fleischmanns and Margaretville.

The CMSB is a catalyst for regional and sustainable economic growth creating extensive marketing strategies to increase tourism travel. Our website: www.ScenicCatskills.com, social media, events, and regional tourism advertising has made a positive impact on our region's growth since our establishment in 2015.

Living within the NYCDEP Watershed Region as well as the NYS DEC Catskill Park and Preserve, we have learned how to create and sustain a viable economy within the regulations and protections of our protected lands and waterways.

The following text was included in the submitted Comprehensive Plan.

“The extensive process for achieving the formal designation of this proposed route by the State of New York would bring greater recognition and interpretation of the resources that make this place special. The NYS DOT Scenic Byway designation is an intensive and rigorous process that requires this sincere commitment of each municipality through community participation. The benefits are great and lasting with increased travel and commerce due to the popularity of scenic byways across the nation. Scenic Byways become appealing

destinations, filled with unique assets: increased services for the tourism population and varied outdoor experiences such as hiking, rail trails, historic streams for flyfishing and arts and cultural events. Tourism is our economy.

The Catskill Park and the New York City Watershed, in particular, are defining elements of this wild and scenic region. Communities along the route are fortunate to be located within such a unique and environmentally pristine area; yet their economic health depends in large part on maximizing the relationship between the natural qualities of the area and the visitors who wish to experience the beauty of the region and its many offerings. This Comprehensive Plan sets a strategy for strengthening these connections while preserving the character of the route, and in doing so it is an affirmation of the collaborative spirit that has guided this nomination process.

This corridor management plan puts forth a comprehensive nomination to designate sections of State Routes 28, 28A, 214, 42 and local roads (approximately 76 miles) as a scenic byway.

The Central Catskills Collaborative membership of elected and appointed officials of each byway municipality has completed an extensive marketing strategy, supported creation of community-based events, established an advertising campaign including recognizable logo, tourism guide magazines, banners, and brochures and distribution to increase tourism visits and improve our ability to expand the tourism economy so valuable to our rural communities and destination locations including Belleayre Mt Ski Center, now under supervision of the Olympic Regional Development Authority.

The Catskill Region – its rich natural and cultural history and other defining characteristics is the setting for the nomination for establishing the RTE 28 State



Route 28 Roadway is transformed into a NYS Scenic Byway. To understand and embrace the protection, enhancement, and promotion of the corridor’s scenic and intrinsic qualities are a key strategy in the region’s future economic vitality.

In the 1920’s, the predecessor of Route 28 was known as the Esopus valley road. As the protected lands of the Forest Preserve grew in size and automobiles became more accessible to the general public, the region became popular for recreation pursuits, such as camping and scenic travel. With the rise in motor touring, scenic views from the roads of the Catskills were increasingly being celebrated in travel brochures and literature. Receiving special attention were the sweeping views from the roads that crossed the recently constructed Ashokan Reservoir along the dividing weir and dam:

Focus on Route 28 Understood

To fully understand the effort to work towards nominating the Route 28 roadway Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway, it is necessarily helpful to survey the interest focused on Route 28 over the years. Among the numerous proposals, opinions, discussions, and techniques put forth in planning the corridor’s well-being, several common threads have emerged that help support this goal. Essentially, the communities, government agencies, and organizations having interest in the Central Catskills have expressed a desire to protect the scenic attributes

along the corridor, and they share the understanding that protection and promotion of these attributes is integral to the economic well-being of the region.

The travelling experience along Route 28 has long been popular among tourists, and the scenic quality of the route has been celebrated in many ways. National Geographic included the 43 miles from Kingston to Margaretville in its Guide to Scenic Highways and Byways. *The popular Route 28: A mile-by-Mile Guide to New York's Adventure Route* gives a comprehensive description of the entire route (from Kingston to Warrensburg), providing detailed information about businesses and offering historical tidbits and other descriptions of sites along the corridor. *In 1993 Scenic America* named Route 28, from Kingston to Dunraven "one of America's 10 Most Endangered Scenic Byways" citing the threat of strip development and recommending a comprehensive regional plan for corridor management."

Excerpts from the Catskill Mountains Scenic Byway Comprehensive Plan presented to the NYS DOT Scenic Byway Advisory Committee – May 2015.