



## Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway Defining a Regional Entity

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The state and county highways that surround and cross the **Shawangunk Mountains** offer spectacular views, pastoral farmlands, and scores of historic and natural landmarks. But as beautiful as these routes are, there is no unified system to guide travelers through them. A group of local officials and planners envision bringing all of the assets of the **Shawangunk Ridge** and its surroundings together, creating the state's fifteenth Scenic Byway.

A State-designated scenic byway offers an alternative travel route, off major highways and out of daily travel patterns, while telling a story about New York State's natural beauty, heritage, and recreational resources. Since 1992, the New York State Department of Transportation has awarded over 2,000 miles of roadway. Among these are routes featuring Lake Erie, Lake Ontario, the St. Lawrence River, Lake Champlain, the Adirondacks, the Finger Lakes, the Delaware River, and the Erie and Barge Canals.

About 65 miles long, the **Shawangunk Mountains Scenic Byway** will link together the towns, villages, and hamlets around the mountains, creating a regional entity. Shaped by the natural formation of the northern **Shawangunk Mountains**, and outlined by the Byway corridor, planners envision the Byway connecting the mountaintop nature preserves to rail trails and waterways, and to historic and other tourist attractions.

In the Town of Wawarsing, the proposed route follows **Rte. 209** through Kerhonkson to Wawarsing, passing the entrance to **Vernooey Kill State Forest**. Following **Rte. 209** into Ellenville, the Byway turns left at the intersection of **Canal & Main Streets**, going east on Canal St. through the center of the Village at **Liberty Square**. Continuing to travel toward the Ridge, the route passes the **Chamber of Commerce Visitor's Center**, the **D & H Canal Lock and Rail Trail**, and the trailheads at **Berne Road Park**. Following Canal St. out of the Village, the route goes by **North Gully Falls** and begins to climb the Ridge. Following **Rte. 52**, the Byway passes the three overlooks offering a view of the Rondout Valley below and the **Catskill Mountains** in the distance. The route continues up the mountain passing the turn to

Cragsmoor and **Sam's Point Preserve**. At this point, the Byway begins its descent into Walker Valley.

In addition to having special resources, a scenic byway must also have a plan that will address certain basic questions: What is needed to make the byway safe and enjoyable for travelers? How will tourism be managed? What will be done to preserve the distinctive character and beauty of the byway? A Corridor Management Plan is currently being developed by the members of the Byway Steering Committee, representing the towns and villages along the route, and the Advisory Representatives, along with public participation at local meetings. The final draft of the plan requires the approval of all the participating towns and villages, in addition to Ulster and Orange counties.

Why create a Scenic Byway? The plan being created will become the official plan for the roads along the route. It will indicate how, over time, these roads will be

