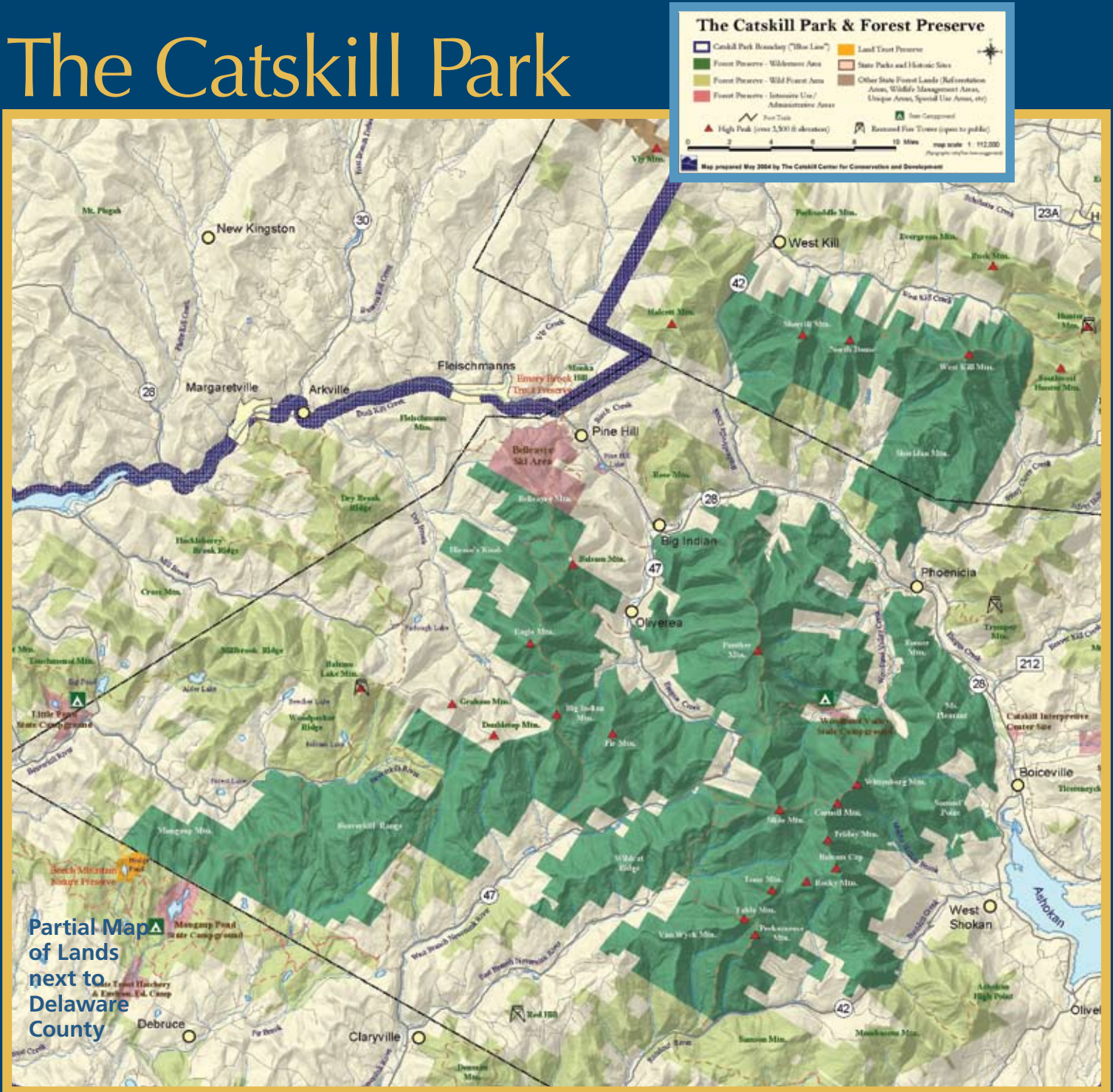


# The Catskill Park



Credit: Catskill Center for Conservation & Development

It is important to understand that, unlike most parks in the United States, the Catskill Park is not one single, contiguous block of protected land. When we speak of the Catskill Park, we are referring to the overall land area containing both public and private land of approximately 287,000 acres. We call this "inside the Blue Line," which is the designated boundary of the Park. When we speak of the Catskill Forest Preserve, we are referring specifically to the public, state-owned lands that are "Forever Wild."

It is the overall mix of land uses that is the hallmark of the Catskill Park and key to the unique attractiveness of the western Catskills. Here, there are no gated park entrances; no toll booths for collecting fees and handing out park information. Access is made from meandering

roadside parking areas leading to the trails and lakes. Visitors looking to experience the great outdoors should come with their research done and maps in hand or on the advice of a knowledgeable lodging host.

What visitors find entrancing and unexpected is not just the beauty of pristine spruce-fir summits, rugged rock outcrops, vast forest tracts, hidden lakes, boulder-studded trout streams, and graceful waterfalls, but how they are mixed with open hay meadows and dairy pastures, magnificent reservoirs, secluded homes in quiet hollows, undulating railroads, old barns and stone walls alluding to our agrarian past, and bustling, colorful Main Streets. All these things together give the western Catskills its charm and identity.